Designing for imperfection

An inquiry into how a participatory design thinking process can support a social entrepreneurial initiative in counteracting perfectionism amongst young women

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“Being vulnerable presupposes courage. The vulnerability is hidden in us and is covered up, because everything needs to be so perfect and polished. Everything you struggle with is put away. That’s why being vulnerable demands you to have the courage to speak up about the things that are considered taboos”

Quote by a listener of the podcast Fries Before Guys in one of the workshops of the design process
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And finally our thanks go to Brené Brown for giving us a language to understand ourselves and the society around us.

“When we deny the story, it defines us. When we own the story, we can write a brave new ending”

Thank you all so much.

Anne Bach Stensgaard & Ida Lydholm Nymand
Abstract

The thesis investigates how design approaches for social innovation can support social entrepreneurship in solving the complex social problem of rising perfectionism amongst young women. To do this, the authors firstly create a genealogic narrative of discourses of perfection and imperfection amongst young Danish women as constructed by various actors in different spheres of Danish society. Secondly, the authors develop and conduct a participatory design thinking process for the Danish podcast *Fries Before Guys*, a social entrepreneurial initiative. The podcast is said to actively support the imperfection discourse by emphasizing the inherent worth of young women independent of their achievements or appearances. In the participatory design thinking process with the podcasts and a group of their listeners, new formats for the podcast are developed, focusing on enhancing interaction and community. Thirdly, adopting a relational constructionist view of opportunity formation, the authors show how the design process can be understood as an opportunity formation process in which ideas, needs and value were relationally and communally created. Based on the creation of needs, the thesis stresses the ethical responsibility of designers, entrepreneurs and inquirers as they, through their work towards social change, actively engage in the discourses of perfection and imperfection. It is suggested that design processes can support social entrepreneurship through the development of new ideas, and also by becoming processes of social value creation. Finally, practical and theoretical contributions of assuming a relational constructions view are developed, as well as a suggestion for future inquiry.
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Chapter 1: An imperfect inquiry

The four girls are almost halfway through the process of letting go of the chase of the perfect, and it has occurred to Amalie that the perfect person, she pretends to be on Instagram, is a persona, she cannot live up to in real life, and that this is one of the main reasons why she is feeling so miserable.

The quote is a teaser for the third episode in the TV-series ‘The Perfect Girls’ by the Danish Broadcasting Corporation, which in spring 2018 sparked a debate about the ideal of perfection among young women in Denmark (“De Perfekte Piger” 2018). In the program, four girls meet regularly over six weeks to support each other in letting go of the ideal of perfection.

Perfectionism is increasing among young people in the Western world (Curran and Hill 2017). This is a huge challenge as the impossible goal of perfection is closely connected with several mental disorders, such as stress, anxiety and depression. In Denmark, close to one in four young women suffers from poor mental health (H. A. R. Jensen et al. 2017).

It is exceedingly complex to understand why perfectionism is on the rise, how it relates to stress, anxiety and depression among young people, and what can be done to tackle the problem. In recent years, the challenge of solving complex social problems, traditionally a task of government institutions and philanthropic organizations, has entered the sphere of the business world and been attempted by a variety of actors. Social entrepreneurs are increasingly seeing resources where others before them have seen problems, for example through hiring people with a visual handicap to do telemarketing or hiring ‘troublesome’ teenagers to clean up after street events in the city (All Ears 2018; FRAK 2018). Design for social innovation is also getting in the mix, contemplating, as an example, the creation of sustainable products, services and cities, with initiatives such as the IDEO circular design guide (Ellen MacArthur Foundation and IDEO 2017). Could social entrepreneurship, with the support of design approaches for social innovation, help young women like Amalie in letting go of perfectionism? That is the focus of this thesis.
**Perfectionism is a complex social problem**

Curran and Hill (2017) argue in their study of perfectionism in college students from the USA, Canada, and Britain that there has been an increase in perfectionism over the last 27 years. Why is the rise in perfectionism problematic?

Perfectionism can broadly be understood as a combination of excessively high personal standards and overly critical self-evaluation (Frost et al. 1990). Neff (2011) makes a link between poor self-worth and perfectionism, because perfectionists tend to see things in black-and-white terms: “either I’m perfect or I’m worthless” (Neff 2011, 70). Striving for perfection can, thus, be very stressful, as perfection is not a realistic state (Neff 2011). People strive for perfection because they want to experience love and belonging, and they assume they are not worthy of it unless they are perfect. Tragically, striving for perfection instead increases the risk of poor mental health, because the struggle to accomplish perfection is a never ending journey (B. Brown 2010).

Several psychologists connect perfectionism and poor mental health (Bardone-Cone et al. 2010; Curran and Hill 2017; Flett and Hewitt 2002; Murray et al. 2012; Park, Heppner, and Lee 2010; J. Scott 2007). Over the last two decades, the amount of people experiencing poor mental health has been on the rise (Murray et al. 2012). A recent report by the Danish Health Authority present a survey of the percentage of Danes experiencing a poor mental health. Between 2010 and 2017, the percentage has gone up 3.4 percent for all Danes. Across age and gender groups, the problem is most prevalent among young women (16-24 years), where it is estimated that 23.8 percent experience poor mental health (H. A. R. Jensen et al. 2017). Although it should also be acknowledged that mental health issues have other causes (see for example Patel et al. 2007), Curran and Hill (2017) argue that the increases in perfectionism have the potential to explain some of the increases in the mental health issues and other related issues.

Where does the rise in perfectionism come from? Many psychologists link perfectionism to mental health issues and low self-worth, yet they are cautious in making causal inferences. Curran and Hill (2017) argue that the increase in perfectionism can be found in cultural changes in the US, Canada and the UK. They argue that neoliberal governance has influenced the cultures of these countries to become more individualistic, materialistic and socially antagonistic, which has created more competitive environments and more unrealistic expectations for young people.
It should be safe to say that perfectionism amongst youth and the related mental issues, can be seen as a complex problem, without any apparent solutions. In the social entrepreneurship literature, complex social problems are often referred to as *wicked problems* (Dorado and Ventresca 2013; Nicholls 2008). This is also how we understand complex social problems in this paper. This term is borrowed from urban planning, and is used to describe ill-defined societal problems of an inherent complex nature that have no single definitive formula for resolution (Rittel and Webber 1973). Furthermore, “there are no true or false answers” to wicked problems, instead solutions will be judged as either ‘better’, ‘worse’, or ‘satisfying’, implying that the assessment criteria of the solution rest on certain values and ideological preferences (Rittel and Webber 1973, 163).

Social entrepreneurship and design agencies focusing on social innovation are some of the fields of research and action concerned with solving complex social problems. In the following, we give a brief account of how these fields are concerned with solving complex social problems, before turning to how this connects with perfectionism.

The social in entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship witch is concerned with solving complex social problems is often referred to as social entrepreneurship (Dorado and Ventresca 2013). Yet, as a relatively young field of research, there is little consensus on the definition of social entrepreneurship (Johnson 2004). Consequently, social entrepreneurship takes on a variety of meanings. Some researchers refer to social entrepreneurship as not-for-profit businesses, some as a responsible way for commercial businesses to build partnerships across sectors, and others as organizations aiming to catalyze social change (Mair and Martí 2006). Additionally, some researchers focus on *social entrepreneurs* and their characteristics instead of social entrepreneurship, hence focusing on the ‘people’ instead of the ‘process’ of social entrepreneurship (Hjorth and Bjerke 2008; Mair and Martí 2006). This individual-focused approach has also been prevalent in entrepreneurship research in general (Gartner 1988).

In this paper, in line with Mair and Martí (2006), we focus on social entrepreneurship, which we define as: “a process involving the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs” (37). We prefer this approach as it invites us to view social entrepreneurship as emerging dynamically in social interaction.
In spite of disagreements about the definition of social entrepreneurship, it seems that most researchers agree on the purpose of social entrepreneurship: it is a “driver of social change” (Roberts and Woods 2005, 46) that “address social needs” (Mair and Martí 2006, 37), it has a “problem-solving nature” and produces “changed social outcomes and/or impacts” (Johnson 2004, 2). Furthermore, social entrepreneurship sets itself apart from a general understanding of entrepreneurship in its relation to profit. As Hjorth and Bjerke (2008) argue: “Differences [...] are centred on long-term versus short-term focus; profit as means versus profit as end; using profit to serve people versus using profit to gain further profit” (104-105). It does not mean that ‘regular’ entrepreneurship cannot have a social aspect and that social entrepreneurship cannot be carried out equally well on a for-profit basis. Instead, it means that the main focus for social entrepreneurship is social value, whereas the main focus for regular entrepreneurship is economic value (Mair and Martí 2006).

This leads to the question of social value. How are we to decide which initiatives or businesses count as ‘social’ and which count as ‘just’ businesses? Mair and Martí (2006) cite Venkataraman (1997) on that businesses in general create value for society by creating, for instance, new jobs. In the current capitalist economy jobs are of significant importance, thus, job creation solves an important problem and creates social value. This does not represent the majority of positions on the concept of social value. Certo and Miller (2008) argue that “social value has little to do with wealth creation, but instead with the fulfillment of basic and long-standing needs such as providing food, water, shelter, education, and medical services to those members of society who are in need” (267). Similarly, Mulgan (2010) defines social value as “wider non-financial impacts of programs, organizations and projects, especially on the well-being of individuals and communities and of the environment”. Auerswald (2009) also adheres to the definition of social value as ‘well-being’. The definitions of the social in social entrepreneurship is thus up for discussion, but we position ourselves closest to the definitions focusing on human, communal and environmental well-being. Yet, it should be noted that this definition still requires contextual interpretation as to what constitutes well-being.

Figuring out how to solve a complex social problem is challenging. However, field of design can support the quest for solutions.
Design is more than an 'aesthetic wrapper'

In the last decade design approaches have gained ground in all spheres of society. Many design approaches are increasingly focusing on social innovation, and are praised for their potential to solving complex social problems (Manzini 2015). To design can be defined as to “[device] courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones” (Simon 1996, 129). Adopting design approaches for solving complex social problems is not new, but it has received increasing attention in recent years (T. Brown and Wyatt 2010). In 1972, Papanek released a book on the responsibilities of the designer and advocated that designers focus less on profit and concern themselves more with their moral responsibilities (Papanek 1972). In 1992, Buchanan draws attention to how design thinking can help solve wicked problems (Buchanan 1992). He believes that more organizations should turn towards design practices, because the interdisciplinary nature of design has potential to combine theory with practice for the purpose of “enriching human life” (ibid. 6).

Manzini (2015) claims that after the financial and economic crisis in 2008, design for social innovation has moved to the center of the political agenda. A design approach can help solve pressing issues of our time through activating, sustaining, and orient processes of social change towards sustainability (Manzini 2015). In line with Manzini, Brown and Wyatt (2010) argue that thinking like a designer is an efficient way to better understand the whole system and infrastructure around a user’s needs in order to solve a complex problem. By working actively with fostering a culture of learning through breaking down the fear of failure and encouraging early prototyping companies can better deal with finding solutions for complex, social and overwhelming problems (ibid.).

An approach commonly used in tackling complex social problems is co-design, i.e. design processes that include co-creation as a main element. Many people have rediscovered the power of collaboration to increase their capabilities in problem solving (Manzini 2015). This design approach differs from other design approaches in stressing the importance of engaging potential users in the design process. According to Sanders and Simmons the value that stems from a co-design process can benefit both companies, customers and society, and advocate for design processes where the outcome provides value for all (L. Sanders and Simons 2009). Following the perspectives and challenges presented above, our inquiry centers on how design approaches can support social entrepreneurship in solving complex social problems, more specifically the complex social problem of increasing perfectionism among young women.
Our inquiry

The main question of our inquiry reads:

*How can design approaches for social innovation support social entrepreneurship in solving the complex social problem of rising perfectionism amongst young women?*

To provide an answer to this, we have planned and facilitated a design process with and for the hosts of the podcast ‘Fries Before Guys’, a popular podcast by two young Danish women. The podcast promotes the view that young women should accept themselves as whole human beings. The podcast can be characterized as a social entrepreneurial initiative, as it aims to change how young women relate to themselves as having to be perfect. Our collaboration with them revolved around increasing interaction and community among them and their listeners. To guide us in our inquiry into the design process with Fries Before Guys, we have developed two sub-questions:

*How does contemporary Danish society construct discourses of (im)perfection around young women?*

*How can we, through a design process, support Fries Before Guys in creating new formats for interaction and community amongst young women?*

In the rest of the chapter, we outline our inquiry approach and process, and go into detail with the practicalities and the structure of the paper. Firstly, we present our collaborators and the design process.

Fries Before Guys and the design process

Fries Before Guys is a Danish podcast created by two Danish women in their mid-twenties: Nanna Elizabeth Hougaard and Josephine Frederikke Kirstein Kuhn. They created the podcast in January 2016, when they were 24 and 22, respectively, and have since released more than 70 episodes. In 2017 alone, the podcast had over one million downloads (App. 7b).

The podcast revolves around the friendship between the two women. This is also what inspired the name Fries Before Guys, which is American slang for *Female Friendship Before Guys*, the female equivalent to the expression *Bros Before Hoes* (Urban Dictionary 2014). In each episode, the two hosts have an hour long conversation with each other about topics that are important to them in their lives, such as friends, mental health, education, love, sex,
family, their bodies, the future and feminism. They have succeeded in creating an almost therapeutic space for themselves and their listeners to be vulnerable and to reflect on their lives as young women.

The vast majority of their listeners are young women, mostly ranging from 16 to 26 years old. According to the listeners, they like listening to a podcast that deals with issues that are also present in their own lives in a way, they can relate to, i.e. two young women talking about their personal experiences and emotions. Another quality of the podcast highlighted by the listeners is the way the two hosts talk with one another. The podcast is described as a place, where there is space to be a whole human being, and where the hosts describe difficult thoughts and feelings in a way that makes the listener feel less alone with their own thoughts (App. 6b).

Our collaboration with the podcast hosts began in December 2017, and developed into a design process, which we designed and carried out with the hosts and the listeners. The concrete aim of the design process was to develop the podcasts into more than a podcast by designing new formats that focus on interaction and community between the listeners and the podcast hosts (App. 9b). As a part of the design process, we conducted several interviews with the hosts, we participated in public events with them and their listeners and we facilitated six workshops for the listeners and the hosts. Before we explain how the design process relates to our inquiry process, we present ourselves and our motivation for this inquiry.

Our starting point

“Your choice to examine a particular issue, topic, or situation emerges in the context of our own community-based participations” (McNamee and Hosking 2012, 46). Following this, knowing more about us and our motivation to conduct the design process and write this paper might give the reader with a better point of departure for reading and understanding this paper. ‘We’ are Anne Bach Stengaard, 26 years old, and Ida Lydholm Nymand, 28 years old. In relation to this paper, we are first and foremost the authors and aspiring academics, but we are also two young Danish women and thus part of the target group of the podcast. We would like to briefly explain how our ‘community-based participations’ have led us to writing this particular thesis:
Anne: When I started listening to the podcast in April 2017 I had been going through three months of severe heartbreak after a four years long relationship had suddenly come to an end. I was struggling to focus on my studies and work and to cope with this new experience of complete loss of control. A dear friend of mine recommended me to listen to Fries Before Guys and when they launched an episode on heartbreak, I felt compelled to give it a try. I quickly got into a habit of taking long walks several times a week while listening to the podcast. I have listened to all episodes and the podcast has completely changed my perspective of what is meaningful to me in my life. Since I begun to listen to the podcast I have spent much time thinking, reading and talking about topics such as the value of connection and vulnerability, living in the present and letting go of control. I wished to explore these topics further in my thesis and I was utterly fascinated about how the ‘entrepreneurs’ behind this podcast had changed me in such profound ways. How, I wondered, might other entrepreneurs help young women create better relationships to themselves and the world around them?

Ida: At the beginning of our collaboration with the Fries Before Guys hosts, I did not know the podcast very well. About a year and a half earlier, I had, on the recommendation of a friend, listened to about half of an episode, but did honestly not like it very much. My main motivation was therefore not tied to the podcast itself, but rather to the idea of doing something with my thesis that had an actual impact on somebody’s life. I dreamt of doing a thesis in which I would not just be researching something that someone else had done (as most of my earlier university reports had been), but actively participating in and creating something more tangible. When Anne and I started collaborating, we quickly discovered our joint interest and passion for vulnerability and connection, and for changing the culture surrounding especially young women. When Anne brought up Fries Before Guys as potential collaborators, I gave them another listen and found them both inspiring and delivering an important message.

As should be clear by now, we are both personally and professionally very engaged in the topics of this thesis. The distinction between being personal and professional has during the inquiry process only existed as concepts in our minds. In reality, we have been navigating between both positions at all times. Similarly, we have assumed several roles, sometimes simultaneously, during the inquiry process. Firstly, we assume the role of facilitators of the design process, second that of inquirers into the same process, and lastly, we are also part of the target group for the podcast, i.e. Danish women from around 16 to 26 years old.
The inquiry process and the design process

Our thesis consists of and deals with two processes: the design process and the inquiry process. In the following, we aim to give the reader an understanding of what these processes are and how they relate to one another.

As explained earlier in this chapter, what we term the design process is the process, we have facilitated, with the aim of creating new formats for Fries Before Guys and their listeners. The inquiry process is the process of inquiry into this design process. As illustrated in Fig. 1 below, the design process is thus an integrated part of the inquiry process.

Fig. 1: the relationship between the inquiry process and the design process.

Both processes can be viewed as inquiry processes and are intertwined. For the sake of understanding the differences between the two, we conceptually differentiate between the two. Thus, when we refer to the design process in the paper, we refer only to the design process, we have created with the Fries Before Guys podcast, which is presented in full in Chapter 3. When referring to the inquiry process, we refer to everything that influenced the creation of this paper, including the design process.
Conceptual language of our inquiry

Inquiry, inquirer and participants

Often, the terms *research* and *science* are understood to imply practices “for objectively discovering how things are” (McNamee and Hosking 2012, 4). As we do not ascribe to the post-positivist idea of objectivity, we choose instead to use the word *inquiry*. Similarly, we describe ourselves as *inquirers* instead of researchers and we call the people, we have engaged with in our work, *participants* and not respondents or informants, because we would like to underline that we view the participants as active co-constructors of our inquiry.

Material

In the various kinds of inquiry practices with our participants, we reconstruct the practices with different techniques such as taking photos, recording sounds and writing texts. Throughout the paper we refer to these different kinds of reconstructions as our *material*. We do not call our material *data* as this term can lead the reader to think that the material has some kind of essence of truth and holds meaning in itself. We instead adopt the view that the material creates meaning in relation with us and our participants, and is essentially our interpretation of the situations in which they are made. The word material is better at describing this ‘emptiness’ of the material itself than the word data.

Reconstructions and reflections

In chapter 4 we reconstruct themes from our material based on different concepts and themes. We choose not to call this an *analysis*, but instead a *reconstruction*, as the processing of our material entails reconstruction through interpretative work. In chapter five, we reflect on our reconstruction and thus term the chapter a *reflection* instead of a *discussion*.

Contemporary Denmark

In this paper, we focus on the process of design and social entrepreneurship in *contemporary* Denmark. By contemporary Denmark, we simply refer to the Danish society in 2018. We could also have characterized our context as *postmodern* Denmark, but we have chosen the term contemporary, which we perceive as a less contested in order not to create confusion around or make the reader focus on the different meanings of the word postmodern.
Structure of the paper

The structure of the present is as follows. In Chapter 1, we present our inquiry process, both in terms of the overarching fields of inquiry, the concrete design process, which our inquiry is practically concerned with, as well as our own motivation for engaging in this inquiry. We also consider the philosophical assumptions that guide our inquiry, and practical concerns of how to carry out the inquiry. In Chapter 2, to provide an understanding of the ‘reality’ of young Danish women, we construct a genealogic narrative of discourse of (im)perfection in contemporary Danish society. In Chapter 3, we reconstruct the events of the design process, as well as present the theoretical and practical considerations in developing our design approach. In Chapter 4, we present the main theoretical positions on opportunity in entrepreneurial research, and reconstruct our design process again, this time through the theoretical lens of opportunity formation. Through this reconstruction, we reflect on the outcome of our design process and how it can be seen as an opportunity formation process, by simultaneously forming ideas and creating and enhancing experiences of needs and value. In Chapter 5, we reflect on the ability of our design process to support the social entrepreneurial initiative of the Fries Before Guys podcast hosts, and consider possible wider implications for the fields of social entrepreneurship and design for social innovation. We also sum up our inquiry process and the outcomes, and evaluate our work from different perspectives. Finally, we present suggestions for further inquiry.
Philosophical assumptions

In this section of the paper, we explain our point of departure in relation to philosophy of science. We begin with a brief introduction to five paradigms within philosophy of science presented by Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Heron and Reason (1997). Secondly, to describe our own stance in relation to philosophy of science, we refer to McNamee and Hosking (2012) to explain the meta-theory relational constructionism, and to explain more in depth what this meta-theory means for the inquiry practice. Finally, as a supplement to McNamee and Hosking, we refer to Berger and Luckmann (1991) to explain how assuming that reality is socially constructed (in contrast to a realist ontology) does not make reality ‘less real’ to people in society.

In 1994, Guba and Lincoln identified four ‘competing paradigms’ in informing and guiding inquiry. They define a paradigm as “the basic belief system and worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (Guba and Lincoln 1994, 105). The four paradigms, they identified, are: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism. In 1997, Heron and Reason (1997) proposed a fifth ‘participatory’ paradigm, which was later included by Guba and Lincoln (Guba and Lincoln 2005; Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba 2018).

The five paradigms differ in their ontology (what is the form and nature of reality), their epistemology (what is the nature of the relationship between the inquirer and the inquired) and methodology (how the inquirer go about finding out about the inquired) (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Secondly, the paradigms differ in practical inquiry issues such as the aim of inquiry, values, ethics and the quality criteria. In other words, the choice of paradigm is fundamental to how an inquirer practices inquiry. At the same time, the assumptions of each paradigm are basic beliefs, because they must be accepted simply on faith, as there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness (ibid.).

Consequently, our choice of relational constructionism is a choice of which inquiry practice, we would like to engage in, be associated with and assessed by: “Identification with a particular ‘tradition’ or set of shared fundamentals is effectively a matter of becoming a member of a particular professional community” (McNamee and Hosking 2012, 22). Out of the five paradigms mentioned above, we are closest to the participatory paradigm. We give a thorough account of our views in a moment, but for now we would like to mention that we agree with Heron and Reason in the critique they pose of the constructivist paradigm, when
suggesting the participatory paradigm. They argue that the constructivist paradigm is “unclear about the relationship between the constructed realities and the original givenness of the cosmos” (Heron and Reason 1997, 275). Constructivists claim that the real world is a mental construct that does not exist outside the person who creates it. A participatory worldview, on the other hand, is fundamentally experiential. Heron and Reason (1997) argue that “the mind’s conceptual articulation of the world is grounded in its experiential participation in what is present” (277). In other words, human beings encounter the physical world with their bodies prior to understanding the world with their language.

We adhere to this view and most other points made by Heron and Reason in their explanation of the participatory paradigm, but we use relational constructionism as the basis for our inquiry. Therefore, we turn to the *meta-theory* of relational constructionism now. We call our ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions our *meta-theory*. We could also have called it our *paradigm* (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Fundamentally, we consider meta-theory and paradigm to be the same thing, but will use the word meta-theory, as this is the preferred term by McNamee and Hosking.

**Our meta-theory: relational constructionism**

The term relational construction is chosen because different authors mean different things with the terms social construction, constructionism, and constructivism. By using another term, readers might be less quick to assume they know what the term implies (McNamee and Hosking 2012). Furthermore, it directs attention to relational processes (ibid.). Relational processes are important because “relational construction is focused on how we make relational realities in relational processes” (McNamee and Hosking 2012, xv). By adopting this meta-theory, we do not reject research by other meta-theories. Rather, we see other meta-theories as different inquiry practices with their own legitimacy, but also as meta-theories that would have made us orient ourselves in the world in a radically different way than the one, we are interested in (McNamee and Hosking 2012).

**Ontology**

Relational constructionism assumes a relativist ontology, focusing on relational realities created in human interactions with the world. Relational constructionism thus: “gives ontology to relational processes as they (re)construct local realities” (McNamee and Hosking 2012, 36), implying that what ‘exists’ are in fact relational processes: “Relational
constructionism de-centres (but does not reject) the assumption of a ‘real world’ and instead speaks of ‘relational realities’ - what people make real through their interactions” (Hosking and Hjorth 2004, 259). Relational realities are constructed through these processes of relating, and are understood as local-social-historical constructions (ibid., 261). This implies that multiple realities can exist at the same time.

Even though these realities can be conflicting, people still experience the world as stable and ordered (Berger and Luckmann 1991). The everyday life is perceived and presented as objectivated ‘reality’ and therefore also taken for granted as such (ibid.) Berger and Luckmann (1991) argue that this perceived objectivity of the world is a humanely produced, constructed objectivity. So how do people produce this reality? Berger and Luckmann (1991) explain how reality is made of sediments that come from the use of language. The experiences people have with each other become social, when they get objectivated in a sign system, such as language. Language makes it possible to transmit social experiences from one generation to the next and in this way intersubjective sedimentation takes place (ibid.). In this way, “language becomes the depository of a large aggregate of collective sedimentations, which can be acquired monothetically, that is, as cohesive wholes and without reconstructing their original process of formation” (ibid., 87).

Relational constructionists view language as a social action and as constitutive of the world around us, and thus as a way to make the world make sense. Different ways of talking and writing about the world invites us to different ways of relating to each other and to different actions (McNamee and Hosking 2012). Language thus performs an important role in constructing reality. However, the construction of relational realities is not only influenced by conceptual language (ibid.). Instead, relational constructionism centers relational processes and suggests that these relational processes (which are often, but not only, language-based), shape our relational realities (McNamee and Hosking 2012). Relational realities basically include everything: "These relational realities include constructions of what it is to be a person, of ‘the world’, of (a particular) self in relation to (particular) others, of self-other boundary, of science, and so on” (ibid., 36). They also inform our understanding of the existence of both physical objects around us such as technology and nature and more abstract concepts such as love, freedom, justice or democracy (ibid.).

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1 McNamee and Hosking do not explicitly describe their ontological stance with any term. It is our reconstruction of their work to name it ‘relative’. As they do stress that they do not reject a real world, we interpret that McNamee and Hosking agree with Heron and Reason’s point mentioned above. Namely that the relative ontology is restricted by the physical world we experience with our bodies prior to experiencing the world with our mind.
Epistemology

The assumption that everything is constructed in relational processes also applies to human knowledge about the world, essentially blurring the lines between ontology and epistemology in relational constructionism. The view that ‘knowledge’ is also a relational reality, radically redefines the subject-object differentiation in inquiry compared to positivist and post-positivist inquiry, where there is a clear distinction between the subject (the researcher) and the object (the researched) (McNamee and Hosking 2012).

The default relation between the inquirer and the participant in relational constructionist inquiry is not a hierarchical one, where the inquirer is the expert and the participant is the research object (McNamee and Hosking 2012). Relational processes may construct hard subject-object relations, because these are common in many inquiry processes, but they may also construct a softer self-other differentiation (ibid.). In relational constructionism, inquirers and participants are interlinked in the construction of knowledge. This means that the ‘findings’ of the inquiry are created in the inquiry process and thus were not there to be discovered or inferred before the inquiry (ibid.).

The relativist assumptions of the world and knowledge influences how we view the theory that we refer to in our paper. Because language is not representational of an objectively observable world, the words we use do not refer to any ‘essence’ or any objective reality, but are seen as different possible interpretations created through local-cultural, local-historical relational processes. Many of the concepts we use in this paper are contested among scholars and have been defined in several different ways. We do not regard any of these definitions to be more ‘right’ or ‘true’, instead, we view the different definitions as different ways of constructing relational realities. This also applies to theoretical definitions and theoretical frameworks. They are not ‘true’ ways of looking at the world, but instead tools that help us make meaning of and navigate and act in the world around us.

The aim of relational constructionist inquiry

Relational constructionism dissolves previous hard distinctions between research and social change. Professionals working with social change are considered researchers, and researchers are considered change agents: “all research intervenes in the lives of those who participate as well as in the lives of the researchers themselves” (McNamee and Hosking 2012, xvi). Relational constructionism therefore focuses on inquiry instead of research (or change work) in order not to differentiate between the two practices. Inquiry thus entails active participation
in the world, resulting in reconstructions, i.e. changing the world, when engaging with it. The aim of inquiry is changed from determining what is true about the world (as in post-positivist science) to a practice of telling how the world might be or could become. Inquiry could strive to be open up new possible identities and worlds (Hosking and Hjorth 2004). As McNamee and Hosking (2012) write:

If relational realities arise out of relational engagement (conversations, performances, dialogues), then we must pause and reflect, we must ask in what other ways we might talk about or perform this topic, this issue, this problem. We do not have to inquire or write as if the world is, or should be, just one way. Rather, our inquiries could open up new possible ways of being human and new possible ways of “going on together” (43).

The active participation in changing relational realities and creating new ways of relation and being human puts ethical considerations and values at the center of inquiry. As McNamee and Hosking (2012) write: “we are interested in what might help [...] the various participating forms of life and their organizing activities” (81). Who is the judge of what ‘helps’? This is a central concern in relational constructionist inquiry. McNamee and Hosking (2012) argue that what constitutes better ways of thinking and living should “be locally determined and not assumed to be arrived at via some objective process” (81). Thus ethics and values are present and central throughout the entire inquiry process, as inquirers are required in their practices to be attentive to the local as they engage with it.

The aims of our inquiry

In general, it is not our ambition to investigate something to be able to describe how it actually is. Our aim is to engage with and reconstruct the world through the design process, and to here tell a story of how our design process could be understood with relational constructionist eyes. In the final chapter of this thesis, we revisit these aims to consider whether we have lived up to our own engagement.

On a practical level, it is our aim that we, through our design process, can develop new formats/ideas for the Fries Before Guys podcast hosts with which they can expand their concept. This relates to a larger societal aim of supporting initiatives that support young women in letting go of perfection and/or improve their mental health. In our design process, we aim to give the participants the possibility of defining the best solutions for themselves, by giving them the power to design such solutions.
In terms of academic contributions, our aim is to examine how a design process can support social entrepreneurship. By assuming a relational constructionist view, we hope to open up new possible ways of seeing and talking about design processes and social entrepreneurship.

*The scope of our inquiry*

A final consideration in this section is that of generalizability, i.e. who or what we are saying something about and for, and to what it can be applied. This ability to say something that applies to a wider audience/target group is often a main concern in post-positivist science (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

Relational constructionism is concerned with the study of and engagement in relational realities, which can be understood as *local-social-historical constructions* (Hosking and Hjorth 2004). Relational constructionist inquiry is thus not viewed as “trans-historical” or “transcultural” (McNamee and Hosking 2012, 31). That being said, a local-social-historical construction or relational reality can be more or less broadly defined depending on the focus of the investigation:

‘Local’ could be as broad as ‘Western’, post-enlightenment constructions of science. Equally, local could be local to a company during a particular period in its history, local to a particular community of practice ‘within’ that company, or local to a business network in Southern Sweden (Hosking and Hjorth 2004, 263).

In our inquiry, we engaged in different relational realities depending on our focus. One part, the design process, engages in a young (mainly) female community surrounding the Fries Before Guys podcast. The formats developed in the design process are thus developed with this specific community in mind, and not considered applicable to other communities, although inspiration might be taken from our process.

Other relational realities, with which we engage, are those of the academic community focusing on social entrepreneurship and design, and of practitioners of design for social innovation. Our academic and practical contributions based on our experiences with the design and inquiry process are thus thought of as contributions to these relational realities.
The inquiry process in practice

In this section, we describe the role of methods in relational constructionist inquiry and briefly outline the methods, we use in our thesis process: autoethnography, ethnography and different forms of interviews. Finally, we explain how we have approached and reconstructed material in our thesis and how the quality of our inquiry can be assessed.

Methods

McNamee and Hosking (2012) have several points of consideration, when it comes to methods and relational constructionism. Firstly, they make the point that there are no relational constructionist methods, arguing that in relational constructionists inquiry anything that positivist science would call a method can be used (ibid.). Methods are not attached to a particular meta-theory and have no meaning in and of themselves, but are instead guided by meta-theoretical assumptions:

What becomes central for the constructionist is how we use any particular method. Our assumptions guide the questions we ask, how we try to answer them, what we count as ‘data’, what we count as ‘fact’, the language tools we use, what we recognize as rigor, and so on (ibid., 61).

When dealing with the question of methods, relational constructionists are therefore concerned with how we practice our methods or ‘do’ our inquiry rather than the choice of specific methods (McNamee and Hosking 2012). Therefore, while we introduce the methods we also explain how we practice them. Additionally, we use the quality criteria that we outline in the end of this chapter as guidelines for how we practice the methods.

Autoethnography

Our primary method is autoethnography. Autoethnography seeks to describe and systematically analyze an inquirers personal experience of an inquiry process in order to understand cultural experience (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2010). We use the method to recreate the design process and the process of writing this thesis. Each of us wrote an autoethnographic journal throughout the thesis process, which means that we wrote down our own personal reflections on what we have experienced throughout the inquiry process. Our guiding questions for writing our autoethnography centered around (1) the activities that we undertook and planned to undertake, (2) how the way we behaved influenced the activities,
(3) what we learned and (4) felt during and after the activities. Additionally, in line with the autoethnographic tradition, we gave special attention to our relations to the participants of the inquiry, especially the hosts of the podcast:

Autoethnographers often maintain and value interpersonal ties with their participants, thus making relational ethics more complicated. Participants often begin as or become friends through the research process. We do not normally regard them as impersonal "subjects" only to be mined for data (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2010).

Writing an autoethnography is a way to acknowledge subjectivity, emotionality, and our own influence on the inquiry (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2010). We aimed at practicing critical self-reflection about topics such as our preconceived ideas about the inquiry process and our relation to each other and our participants as a way to generate new action potentials for us and our participants (McNamee and Hosking 2012). In other words, we wrote the autoethnographies as a way to make sense of ourselves, our experiences, and our relationships. Thus, we consider writing autoethnographies as a way of knowing and as a method of inquiry.

Ethnography

In our thesis process we also use ethnography. Ethnography is a research methodology that involves the observation of, and participation in, particular groupings and aims to engage with questions of how a particular group operates (Neyland 2008). We use the quite broad term ‘ethnography’ to cover two methodological practices that we engaged in: Firstly, we participated in live events hosted or co-hosted by the two hosts of Fries Before Guys, where we talked to the participants. Secondly, we participated in the design process workshops with the hosts and the listeners, where we at the same time facilitated the workshops. Although we are inspired by ethnographic methodology, we are aware that our ‘observations’ are not objective descriptions of a field. Instead, we create relational realities through our relational engagement with the other participants in the field.

We consider our ethnographic practices a form of reflexive ethnography, which means that we see ourselves as inquirers and the participants as reflexively engaged in the production and maintenance of the relational reality (Neyland 2008). On a practical level, during and after the events and workshops we reflected on a series of relationships between us, the listeners and the hosts and on how we through our relational practices made sense of the world (Neyland 2008). We paid special attention to our experience of emotions,
atmosphere, relationships, and interactions between people. We also made both sound recordings, photos, and notes while being engaged in the ethnographic practices and discussed our reflections with each other and other participants during and after the events and the workshops.

**Interviews in different forms**

We conducted both oral and written interviews during our process. We conducted these interviews in order to plan our design process with the hosts, make guidelines for our collaboration clear and follow up on the process. These ongoing dialogues were an important practice for us in order to build and maintain our relation to the hosts and to continuously adjust the design process with them and their listeners.

The way we used written interviews was in the form of short structured written mail interviews. They took place after each of the workshops we did with the listeners in order for us to receive feedback and to understand the listeners experience. Interviews in as an ongoing relational process that is co-constructed, hence the interview text and notes are also treated as relational texts (McNamee and Hosking 2012). The mail interviews with us asking predefined questions and the listeners replying in a short form recreates what happens during the workshops and after the workshops ended. This also means that we did not conduct interviews with the aim of ‘finding out’ about certain topics without influencing the people we ask. Instead, the focus of our interviews is to co-construct relational realities and to make space for the interviews to transform meaning and practices (ibid.).

**Narratives and reconstructions**

Writing and reading material necessitates reconstruction. Reflecting on material requires even greater reconstructive work (Varpio et al. 2017). In other words, inquiry is a process of construction itself (McNamee and Hosking 2012). All inquiry can thus, given our relational constructionist stance, be viewed as narratives or storytelling/making (ibid.), in the sense that what makes texts “narrative” is: “sequence and consequence: events are selected, organised, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience” (Riessman 2005, 1). The present paper thus represent the resulting narrative(s) of our inquiry process. The reconstruction of the this narrative is not ‘done’ as we publish it. As argued by by Riessman (1993), a written narrative is re-constructed every time someone reads it.
As we are essentially creating narratives (and relational realities) with our inquiry, McNamee and Hosking (2012) emphasize that: “As an inquirer, you should make the rationale for your choices clear and be aware that these decisions could have been different, thereby constructing potentially different relational realities” (51). Throughout the paper, we aim to be as explicit as possible about our choices, and how these affect the narrative, we create as opposed to other narratives.

In general, our narrative is created, as most academic narratives, through a synthesis of a multitude of previous academic texts or narratives. Furthermore, we have included textual representations such as official reports, newspaper articles and blog posts, as well as visual media and live events, especially in the creation of our genealogic narrative in Chapter 3. A large part of our paper is based on our experiences from the design process, in which we have created material such as our autoethnographic diaries, ethnographic notes, interviews, workshop scripts and a large number of post-its with thought and ideas from the participants. This material has been the basis of our reconstructions and reflections in Chapter 3, 4 and 5.

As a general point, it is worth mentioning that we have given thorough consideration to which words, we use in the paper. Language as an essential tool to create our reality and our understanding of the world around us, which is why we have explained some of our considerations in regards to this under ‘Conceptual Language’ above. We also use illustrations as often as possible to provide a better ground for understanding how different elements and concepts are connected.

Quality

In the final section of this chapter, we reflect on how to “explore (judge?) the “soundness” and utility” (McNamee and Hosking 2012, 97) of our inquiry process. This is an important discussion in all communities of inquiry, but maybe especially important in relation to constructionist inquiry, as relational constructionism is often criticized for being relativist and thus allows that ‘anything goes’ in relational constructionist inquiry. McNamee and Hosking (2012) argue that this is not the case, but highlight the importance of being aware about the quality criteria. Then how do we judge “what counts as good research, on what basis, and on what criteria?” (McNamee and Hosking 2012, 97). This is essentially a question of exploring the quality of inquiry processes, and the basis of and criteria for this judgment varies among meta-theories.
McNamee and Hosking (2012) present three interrelated themes, which can guide reflections on the quality of an inquiry process: (1) reflexivity, (2) dialogue and eco-logical ways of being in relation and (3) ethical and aesthetic aspects of construction. In the following, we briefly present the three themes, to return to them in chapter 5, where we use them as guidelines in an assessment of our inquiry process. We present them here, so the reader can keep them in mind, when reading the rest of the paper, as we have done while being engaged in our inquiry process. This is done to give the reader a better chance of assessing our inquiry as presented here and of assessing our assessment in the end of the paper.

Reflexivity

Our inquiry as relational constructionist entails embracing that we, in the inquiry process, simultaneously reflect on and re-construct the guiding premises and interests: “As we examine the world, we change it” (McNamee and Hosking 2012, 99). Thus, it is important to reflect, as we go along, on our choices and their implications for our inquiry as well as the world around us.

Reflexivity is usually encouraged in post-positivist research in relation to choice of research design and procedure, as well as the outcomes of the research. McNamee and Hosking (2012) argue for an ‘extended’ reflexivity, which also includes reflections on the significance of the philosophical paradigm. Reflexive practices thus entails considering which possibilities our choices open up or close down in the inquiry process (ibid.). Reflexivity should also include the context of our inquiry in considering the practical potential of the relational constructionist discourse applied in particular cases. This might be rephrased as a question of how ‘helpful’ our inquiry is to local lives, or what we want to achieve with our inquiry, and relates to our own motivation and inspiration for doing the work, we are doing (ibid.).

Dialogue and eco-logical ways of being in relation

McNamee and Hosking argue that dialogue, when viewed as a special kind of talk, is the key to opening up to the ‘other’. This is grounded in the assumption that self and other are fundamentally interrelated and entails letting go of subject-object constructions, i.e. assuming an “eco-logical (as opposed to ego-logical) view of personhood” (McNamee and Hosking 2012, 102). In dialogical practices all postulates of what is true, rational or good are open to
suspicion. In this way, McNamee and Hosking (2012) argue that dialogue can “provide the space in which ‘new’ realities and practices are fashioned” (102).

**Ethical and aesthetic aspects of construction**

Finally, McNamee and Hosking (2012) consider the *ethics* and *aesthetics* in their assessment of inquiry processes. In assuming a relational constructionist stance, the notion of *ethics* centers the entire inquiry process. As inquirers are part of reconstruction the world with which they engage, ethics becomes a question about which forms of life are invited or supported and excluded or suppressed. Relational ethics is thus about coordinating multiplicity and continuously opening up new realities. This interest in multiplicity and relations is also termed relational *responsibility* by McNamee and Hosking. To be relational responsible (ethical) is to be attentive to the process of relating and how this opens up possibilities rather than closes them down, as well as constructs softer rather than harder self-other differentiation (ibid.). As we co-create realities with people and groups, the scope of practical-moral or ethical interests is broadened to paying attention to the futures that might be, given our actions, and how we wish to ‘go on together’ (ibid., 110).

For McNamee and Hosking (2012), *aesthetics* concerns the questions of how to speak and write, when we are not speaking or writing about ‘truths’. It is as simple as avoiding dogmatic, right or wrong language in the style of representation and positioning oneself in such a way that alternative understandings might be considered. McNamee and Hosking (2012) refer to Rhodes and Brown (2005) for five suggestions on how to write and talk responsibly: (1) view writing as a creative act, blurring distinction between fact and fiction to create more interesting and readable accounts, (2) be vulnerable as the ones being ‘researched’ are, (3) recognize that you are not just inquiring into people, you are also inquiring into yourself, (4) write (and speak) in a style that is accessible to the multiple communities connected with your research, and (5) acknowledge that your words and actions are part of generating meaning and consider what world, you are inviting others into.
Our inquiry process in short

In this chapter, we present our interest in the rise in perfectionism and how it is argued to affect especially young people and their mental health. We also express our interest in social entrepreneurship and design approaches focusing on social innovation and their ability to alleviate complex social problems, such as increasing perfectionism and experiences of poor mental health. Based on this, we develop our question of inquiry and sub-questions and present the design process with the host of the Fries Before Guys podcast, which constitutes the focus of our inquiry.

Furthermore, we explain our philosophical stance in the meta-theory of relational constructionism and go on to consider the practical elements of our inquiry process, i.e. methods, narratives and reconstructions of our material and the quality criteria, we adhere to.

In the following chapter, we draw on Foucault (1977) in creating a genealogic narrative of discourses of (im)perfection in contemporary Danish society. This is done to create an understanding of the context in which our design process is situated, and which, as we show in Chapter 4, can be understood as having an impact on what is created in the design process. For now, we turn to the discourses of (im)perfection.
Chapter 2: Genealogic narrative

In this chapter we write a narrative about how contemporary Danish society constructs discourses of (im)perfection around young women. This is one of the sub-questions of the paper, presented in Chapter 1. The narrative is inspired by the Foucauldian genealogy and we thus refer to the narrative as a genealogic narrative.

It is our ambition that this narrative give the reader an understanding of the situatedness of Fries Before Guys and the design process, we have conducted with them and some of their listeners. With the narrative, we aim to tell a story about how the discourses of (im)perfection are shaping the ways in which young women relate to themselves in various aspects of their lives in order to show how the rise of perfectionism can be considered a complex social problem.

We begin by outlining three different discourses of (im)perfection. Secondly, we give an overview of genealogy as an approach by referring to Foucault’s (1977) work and interpretations of his work by others. We then give a brief account of Rose’s (1996) operationalization of Foucault’s concept of genealogy and explain how we use this operationalization to answer the guiding question of the chapter. Finally, we tell our story of how contemporary Danish society construct discourses of (im)perfection around young women.

The discourses of (im)perfection

The discourses of (im)perfection are relevant to understand as they form the situatedness of the podcast Fries Before Guys and our design process. Furthermore, the genealogic narrative demonstrates a story of how perfectionism can be considered a complex social problem. In this section, we explain how we understand the phenomena of discourses of (im)perfection, that is, the way people in society relate to and talk about ‘perfection’ and ‘imperfection’. We begin by defining discourse and perfection.

We understand a a discourse as a “practice according to the rules, which determine how something can be spoken of, from where something can be spoken of, and who can speak when” (Villadsen 2006, 97 our translation)². Discourses, in the view of Foucault, are

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² In this chapter we have translated several quotes from Danish. For the sake of readability we have chosen not to mention it in the reference every time the quote has been translated.
not only language and words, but also the institutions, technologies and social practices that language is attached to. Thus, when we make a genealogic narrative of the discourses of (im)perfection, we do not only look at language, but also at how the discourses are anchored in material institutions of society (ibid.). A discourse can be viewed as performative in that it constructs people as objects that can be governed and regulated according to the rules (ibid.). To us, the performative aspect of the discourses of (im)perfection is interesting, as this will help us understand how the discourses affect young women’s relationship to themselves in the contemporary Danish society.

In very general terms, perfection means “the state or quality of being perfect” (Oxford Dictionaries 2018b), likewise imperfection means “the state of being faulty or incomplete” (Oxford Dictionaries 2018a). Hence it follows that discourses of (im)perfection imply the act of assessing the degree to which ‘something’ or ‘someone’ is perfect or faulty. Assuming that something or somebody can be perfect is the philosophy of perfectionism, which can be defined as “a doctrine holding that perfection is attainable” (Oxford Dictionaries 2018c).

From a relational constructionist view, we argue that using the words ‘perfect’ and ‘imperfect’ creates the assumption that perfection is possible or attainable, and consequently opens up the doctrine of perfectionism. Though we as relational constructionists do not believe in the independent ontological existence of ‘self-worth’, ‘perfectionism’ or ‘mental health’, we do recognize that the phenomena might be experienced as real by young women in our society. Thus, we are interested in what this relational reality about an imagined state of perfection means for young women in our society.

We create a grid of intelligibility as a way to structure our genealogic narrative. A grid of intelligibility is an apparatus or a system of relations that can be used as a frame for an analysis to make it easier for the reader to understand the relationship between the elements of the analysis (Foucault 1990). Our grid of intelligibility consists of three discourses on perfection: perfection, imperfection and perfect imperfection. See Fig. 2 below.
The three discourses describe three different guiding principles that young women can reflect themselves and their lives in. The discourse of perfection suggests that there is a perfect way to be a young woman and that young women should strive to live up to this ideal. The imperfection discourse, on the other hand, refuses the ideal of perfection and emphasizes that young women should instead accept themselves as they are. We view the perfection discourse as more widespread in society than the imperfection and have illustrated this by making the circle of perfection bigger than the circle of imperfection. Furthermore, we have noticed that the two discourses become intertwined and how the more dominant perfection discourse continuously influence the less prevalent imperfection discourse. As a result, when it is relevant we draw the reader's attention to the third discourse of perfect imperfection, which depicts a perfect way to be an imperfect young woman.

We adopt the view that the podcast Fries Before Guys represent an example of social entrepreneurship engaging in the imperfection discourse. We return to the implications of this at the end of our genealogic narrative. Finally, we should note that we only focus the discourses of (im)perfection in relation to young Danish women in the age of 16-26 as this is the target group of the podcast Fries Before Guys. But other genders and age groups are likely to experience similar ways of relating to themselves, just as people in other countries, especially countries of a Western culture.

3 The podcast hosts have read this chapter and agreed that they also view their work as contributing to the imperfection discourse. See App. 22b.
Foucauldian genealogy

In this chapter, we aim to tell a story of how contemporary Danish society constructs discourses of (im)perfection around young women. As mentioned in Chapter 1, perfectionism is on the rise. In order to understand this complex social problem, we are concerned with how this rise has come about in our society. We make use of the concept of genealogy by Foucault as this approach is concerned with understanding the history of the present. The genealogic approach is well-suited to further examine the society around a phenomenon, in this case the discourses of (im)perfection.

Furthermore, the philosophical assumptions of Foucault’s work correspond well to those of relational constructionism. A central tenet of the genealogic approach is the notion that phenomena of our time do not have an essence or any origin, but that society still attach meaning to phenomena. Genealogy is concerned with examining how this meaning has come about, thus, we apply the fundamental principles of the genealogic approach to tell a story about how the Danish society is constructing the discourses of (im)perfection.

Genealogy as history writing

Foucault describes genealogy as the analysis of descent and emergence (Foucault 1977). This should, however, not be mistaken as a quest for the origins of things. Genealogy examines how our contemporary, taken-for-granted forms of knowledge and institutions are in fact historical creations, formed through numerous events, accidents and errors, continuities and discontinuities (Villadsen 2006). Genealogy is often called “history of the present”, because it’s point of departure is the conflicts of the present (ibid., 88).

Genealogy is best understood in comparison with traditional history writing, as Foucault is inspired by Nietzsche and his critique of this practice (Foucault 1977). Nietzsche criticizes traditional history writing for aiming to create a unified, linear narrative governed by one principle: to find the true origin of things and logically connect events of the past with the present. Nietzsche claims that traditional history writing, i.e. the documentation of historic development through steady paths of causal logics and monumental tales of the birth of civilizations, only serves to confirm and enhance the current understanding of ourselves and does not help us to question the current state of things (Villadsen 2006).
Adhering to this critique, Foucault claims that genealogy is not searching for the origins of any concept, simply because a concept or phenomenon has no origin, no "monotonous finality" (Foucault 1977, 76):

There is “something altogether different” behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms (ibid., 78).

Foucault argues that there are no causal logics that can be used to trace back to the exact essence of things, and history is not a linear story of continuous progress towards today. Reason and the world as we perceive it was made from chance (Foucault 1977). Foucault writes that genealogy “opposes itself to the search for “origins”” (ibid. 77), and aims at problematizing the perception of phenomena as constant, given or natural (Villadsen 2006, 90). As Foucault (1977) writes:

The search for descent is not the erecting of foundations: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent in itself (82).

In contrast to traditional history writing, Foucault adheres to this critical form of writing ‘effective’ history that should help us explore the boundaries of what we are with the intention of enabling us to exceed it, by problematizing and questioning the phenomena and thereby showing that things could have been different and can be different (Villadsen 2006).

Genealogy, knowledge and truth

Because there are no origins of the phenomena we experience today, there are also no universal truths about these phenomena. Foucault argues that knowledge will not detach itself from its empirical roots or the initial needs from which it arose to become universal truths. He thus argues that knowledge will never be or become objective truth about the world, and that ‘knowledge’ rather creates a “progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence” (Foucault 1977, 96), implying that ‘knowledge’ enslaves people to certain understandings of the world. Instead of a quest for knowledge, the aim of ‘effective’ history is to destabilize ‘knowledge’ and shake the contemporary understanding of taken-for-granted phenomena. As Foucault puts it: “‘Effective’ history differs from traditional history in being without constants” (Foucault 1977, 88). The genealogic project is thus not to create new ‘truths’, but
rather to make people aware that even though phenomena appear real, they are still mobile, changeable and can be questioned or retold.

**Genealogy and its sources**

Foucault writes: “Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary [...] Genealogy, consequently, requires patience and a knowledge of details, and it depends on a vast accumulation of source material” (Foucault 1977, 76-77). The researcher or writer aiming to write a genealogy must first develop an extensive archive of source material on which to base the genealogy. The genealogist does not go much into depth with each source, but uses the archive to identify central sources for the creation of the genealogy (Villadsen 2006).

How does one create such an archive and select sources for the genealogy? Foucault does not provide much guidance, but following Andersen (1994), Villadsen outlines three guiding principles: firstly, the choice of sources is determined by the issue, the genealogy addresses, rather than the ambition to construct a coherent history of events. These sources are not necessarily the ones deemed central in traditional history, but can just as well be marginal texts. Secondly, the relevant archive of texts is identified through the system of references that texts carry, which must be registered by the genealogist. Lastly, the genealogist appoints, based on the constructed archive, the texts that are given the status of ‘monuments’, which are the texts that the genealogic analysis spends the most time on. These are described as exemplary texts, i.e. texts that clearly or illustratively show the central discursive rules, breaks or discontinuities of the analysis, and reflexive texts, i.e. texts that problematize the current practices, theories or institutions (Villadsen 2006).

In relation to the present narrative and our archive of sources, a few things are worth mentioning. First of all, it is important to emphasize that our genealogic narrative is not a full genealogy of the kind promoted by Foucault. Due to time and space constraints, we have not developed a comprehensive genealogy, but rather what could be thought of as an genealogically inspired narrative. Our archive is thus not as extensive as Foucault would have wanted it to be, yet we still believe that it is extensive enough to create the ‘convincing’ narrative. A genealogy is written based on selected sources from the archive, and the same is the case for the present genealogic narrative. What is presented here is only an excerpt of our archive. It is also worth mentioning that we have mainly used Danish sources. However, we have also occasionally drawn on sources from other Western countries. We do not see this as
problematic as it is rather few instances, and because the discourses of (im)perfection can be observed in other Western countries as well. Finally, when citing key people, we present them by name and profession, even though we do not do so in the rest of the paper. This is because we find it important to give the reader an idea of the position of these people in contemporary Danish society.

**Genealogy, active change work and entrepreneurship**

Why is it useful to adopt the genealogic approach, and what is the aim of it? The main goal of genealogy is to critically assess or problematize phenomena of contemporary society that are taken for granted as natural or stable to intentionally destabilize the ‘immobile’. In Foucault’s work, this is done primarily to develop a platform from which to criticize the current understanding of things in contemporary society (Villadsen 2006). Hjort argues that instead of merely criticizing, the genealogic approach can also be used to identify possibilities for change. Hjort (2004) argues that using genealogy:

> the purpose of research can shift from building positions from where we cast critique upon society into one where we enhance our possibilities to actualize forms of participation in shaping society and to multiply the ways we can participate (223).

Genealogy can thus become a tool to shape society through active participation. In order to shape society in the desired direction, we need to be aware of and question our practices and the practices of society. Hjort (2004) uses Foucault to direct our attention towards these practices:

> “People know what they do; they often know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what they do does” (Foucault, cited in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982: 187). The question of what ‘what they do’ does is the question of practices (221).

Hjort argues that discursive approaches, such as genealogy, turn our attention towards practices, and that becoming aware of the potential consequences or outcomes of practices is important in achieving change (Hjort 2004). Expanding on this point, Hjort argues that genealogy can be used tactically in entrepreneurial endeavours both by directing us towards possibilities for change and by helping us create the desired change through narratives. Genealogic storytelling, what Hjort calls tactical research, has a distinctly entrepreneurial element: “tactical research as in a discursive approach called genealogic storytelling, directs
us towards those potentialities, those virtualities that can become actualities through differentiation, divergence and creation” (Hjort 2004, 227-228).

What does this mean for our genealogic narrative? This approach is a “move from a priority of scientific rationality over narrative/literary wit” as Hjort (2004, 223) describes it. In our narrative, we are not aiming to tell the one true story about how young women relate to themselves through the discourses of (im)perfection, but we are going to tell a story of how we can understand the societal context of our inquiry. Our genealogic narrative thus serves the purpose of situating the Fries Before Guys podcast within a larger societal context. It also serves the purpose of opening up new understandings of the influence of perfectionism on young women in contemporary Denmark, and potentially spark dialogue about new ways of dealing with the problems related to perfectionism. We elaborate more on these points and on the implications of societal discourses for social entrepreneurship in the final section of this chapter.

**Operationalization of the genealogic approach**

To operationalize the genealogic approach, we draw on the framework for genealogic analysis by Rose. In his genealogy of subjectification, Rose looks at the techniques and practices in different contexts of human life (“schools, families, streets, workplaces, courtrooms”) that invent, refine and stabilize subjectification (Rose 1996, 130). He does this to dismantle the ways in which our understanding of what ‘the self’ is poses regulatory ideals in contemporary society and to emphasize that this understanding is coincidentally created in the intersection of histories, such as different forms of thought, regulation, organization and so on (ibid.).

Inspired by the writings of Foucault, Rose develops a framework with five different paths of investigation: problematizations, teleologies, strategies, technologies and authorities (Rose 1996). We use this framework to investigate techniques and practices that create and sustain the discourses of (im)perfection that influence how young women relate to themselves. Although we do not aim to write a genealogy of subjectification, we find the framework proposed by Rose useful in guiding our genealogic narrative. Below we briefly outline five paths of the framework.
Problematizations

“Where, how and by whom are aspects of the human being rendered problematic, according to what systems of judgement and in relation to what concerns?” (Rose 1996, 131). Problematizations are articulations of what is deemed problematic thoughts, behavior or expression in a certain belief system. Problematizations are thus concerned with what subject should not do, say or be according to certain regimes. Rose argues that our notion of normality is formed as a reaction to this unwanted or dangerous behavior (ibid.).

Teleologies

“What forms of life are the aims, ideals or exemplars for these different practices for working upon persons?” (Rose 1996, 133). Teleologies are the ideals or models of the person inserted in different practices, defining what subjects should strive to become, i.e. what the ethical ideal of the individual is. Rose argues that it is important to be aware of the heterogeneity and specificity of these ideals of personhood, as well as the way in which “they are articulated in relation to specific problems and solutions concerning human conduct” (ibid. 133). He argues that many different models exist and influence human beings simultaneously, however many programmes or regimes attempt to install one single model across different sites and practices (ibid.).

Strategies

“How are these procedures for regulating the capacities of persons linked into wider moral, social or political objectives concerning the undesirable and desirable features of populations, workforce, family, society, etc.?” (Rose 1996, 133). Examining strategies is to examine how different governments of conduct steer human beings towards their notions of ideal subjects. These strategies are enacted both through forms of authority and apparatus deemed political and non-political (experts, courts, family etc.). The investigation of strategies also concerns itself with how these governments of conduct link to moral, social and political objectives and desired outcomes. Rose emphasizes the political with an example of liberal programmes of government, which strategically have concerned themselves with the problem of how ‘free individuals’ can be governed such that they enact their freedom appropriately (Rose 1996).
Technologies

“What means have been invented to govern the human being, to shape or fashion conduct in desired directions, and how have programmes sought to embody these in certain technical forms?” (Rose 1996, 131). According to Rose, the way people experience themselves as certain sorts of persons is the result of human technologies that take being human as their object. Technologies are hybrid assemblies of everything from knowledge and instruments to people and spaces that are governed by a more or less conscious goal. Examples of technologies could be the school or the prison, but also what Rose calls ‘the pastoral relation’, i.e. a relation of spiritual guidance between an authority and a member of the flock (Rose 1996, 132).

Authorities

“Who is accorded or claims the capacity to speak truthfully about humans, their nature and their problems, and what characterizes the truths about persons that are accorded such authority?” (Rose 1996, 132). In his investigation of authority, Rose not only looks at the people that are considered authorities in relation to speaking ‘truths’ about human beings, but also the apparatuses through which they gain said authority and the extent to which the authority of the authorities depends on a claim to positive knowledge, to experience and practical judgement, to capacity to solve conflict and so on. The focus on authorities thus entails a focus on all the persons, things, modes of thought and types of judgement that seek, claim, acquire or are accorded authority and the ways in which this authority is authorized (ibid.).
The genealogic narrative

In this section, we write a genealogic narrative on three discourses of (im)perfection: the discourse of perfection, imperfection and perfect imperfection. We tell the story about all three discourses structured under the five paths of investigation mentioned above.

The narrative focus primarily on three themes. These themes emerged as especially relevant in our archive, when we investigated the discourses of (im)perfection in the lives of young Danish women. Firstly, there is the theme of education and work, secondly, the theme of body and physical appearance and thirdly, mental health and issues with phenomena such as stress, anxiety and depression.

Problematisations

In the discourse of perfection certain practices, appearances and mindsets are deemed problematic. Generally, it is problematized when young women do not perform in every aspect of their lives. Researcher Brené Brown describe it in this way: “Look perfect, do perfect, be perfect. Anything less than that is shaming” (B. Brown 2015, 85).

In education and work, the discourse of perfection problematizes not getting top grades as well as not knowing what you wish to do with your life. Young women should have a clear plan for what they want to achieve, yet should not spend too much time figuring this plan out, as they should already know. Not having a plan or being in doubt is not acceptable. As Helle Rabøl Hansen, PhD from Aarhus University (2017) expresses it:

All students are in these years pushed to complete studies in straight lines, without regret, in a high pace and at a high level, but there is an extra (and overlooked) pressure on the girls, because it takes higher and higher grades to get access to the programmes that many girls apply to.

Performing below average or even on average is not acceptable and whether in school, at work or in their free time, young women should not waste their time, skills or resources.

Whether on social media or in real life, young women should always look perfect. Looking untidy, not wearing the right makeup or the right clothes is perceived as character flaws or signs of weakness. Similarly, it is not acceptable to be physically weak, to not work out or to be overweight (“De Perfekte Piger” 2018). Social media plays a large role with regards to acknowledgement of appearances and not getting enough likes or having too few followers on social media is a sign of being a loser. As a high school boy states: “If she only
has 50 [followers on Instagram] or something like that, then I would dump her” (Willer and Østergaard 2017, 12).

To further reinforce the pressure of being perfect, the discourse implies that young women should not struggle to perform, as they should be authentically perfect. If they struggle, they should not show it to the world. As Brown (2015) puts it: “the real struggle for women - what amplifies shame regardless of the category - is that we’re expected (and sometimes desire) to be perfect, yet we’re not allowed to look as if we’re working for it” (87). Young women should not show their vulnerability or lose control of how they are perceived. The perfection discourse is based on a system of judgement, where the worth of a young woman equals her performance. Young women should naturally be in control, and it is on them personally, if they do not succeed or perform well enough. If a young woman is not perfect, she is not good enough as a person (Torp-Pedersen 2014; Hessellund 2016).

In the discourse on *imperfection*, it is generally deemed problematic if young women think or feel like they should be able to do and be perfect. It is problematic if young women believe that everything depends on themselves as individuals, on their own skills and perseverance. This critique is illustrated in an ironical short video “Stress is something other people get. You’re not weak, right?” by the Danish radio channel P3 (P3 - DR 2017).

With regards to education, work and mental health, young women should not strive for perfection, as this is believed to lead to stress and poor mental health (Thomsen, Schmidt, and Rasmussen 2018). As high school principal Henrik Vestergaard Stokholm says: “The chase after the perfect creates stress and unhappiness. It is *bullshit* and it doesn’t exist” (Nielsen 2017, emphasis in original text). This discourse is evident in the debate about what has been termed ‘straight A-girls’, where many criticize the pressure that these girls experience (Hessellund 2016). Finally, in relation to body and appearance, it is problematic that young women struggle with how they look and that they try to change how they look instead of accepting their bodies as they are (DR3 2018, 2016).

In the discourse of *perfect imperfection* it is deemed problematic when young women do not feel good about being imperfect at all times in relation to both work, school, appearance and mental health.
Teleologies

In the discourse of perfection, the ideal is not only to be perceived as, but to actually be perfect socially, professionally and personally.

Within the ideal of the perfect life, there are several related ideals to be identified. Firstly, there is the emergence of straight A-girls, which relates to the education system and what young women expect of themselves. Straight A-girls always receive top grades, have the right personality and the right competencies for entering the competitive job market. Young women believe that this is what is expected of them, what they should do to make everybody happy (Hjortdal 2015). In relation to the job market, another ideal has emerged - the ideal of the resilient employee. Since 2007, there has been a large increase in the use of words such as ‘robust’ in job postings, illustrating the praise for people able to cope with an ever-changing and fast-moving workplace (Holst 2015).

Generally, the ideal is that of performing at maximum potential, which is achieved by constantly improving oneself. This can be seen in the intense increase in how-to guides of how to achieve everything from life-changing habits to reach maximum potential within the first 90 minutes of your day to habits of highly successful people (Brinkmann 2017). It is thus on the individual young woman if she does not feel happy or performs well enough, and it is a project of never-ending self-improvement.

When it comes to body and physical appearance, the ideal is a healthy, slim, strong body (“De Perfekte Piger” 2018). In the last couple of years the ideal body is no longer ‘just’ slim, it should also be strong and healthy (Munch 2015a). The perfection discourse dictates not only eating beautiful, healthy foods (App. 4), but also exercising right and enough: “Everyone can get thin, but getting strong demands you to work hard and have self-discipline” (Munch 2015b), as a young, strong woman with many followers on Instagram expresses it.

In the realm of mental health, the ideal is a constant state of happiness. Young women should stimulate a mindset which is able to deal with all difficult emotions and turn them into either happy emotions through a reframing of one's situation or into a learning opportunity and thus also a positive experience (Davies 2015).

Turning to the discourse of imperfection, the ideal is to accept human beings as imperfect. The aim is to accept diversity and differences both in terms of performance, appearance, feelings and mental capability.
Regarding education and work life, the ideal is for young women to do something that interests them and makes them happy, even if it has nothing to do with receiving the right grades or entails shifting education and career focus several times. It is accepted that young women can and will fail, that they struggle and doubt themselves and what they want to do with their lives. They should not put too much pressure on themselves in this regard (Alvi 2016).

In relation to body and physical appearances, the ideal of the imperfection discourse is for young women to accept their bodies as they are. Most notably within the discourse is the term *body positivism*, which became mainstream in 2015, both in the US and in Denmark (Ospina 2016; Brok 2015). The body positive movement encourages people to adopt a forgiving and affirming attitude towards their own and other peoples bodies (Wikipedia 2018). The body positive movement has existed since the 1960ies, but has grown popular with the emergence of Instagram, where people, especially young women, upload pictures of their bodies on Instagram and add the hashtag #bodypositivism. Typically, the bodies they display do not live up to the contemporary beauty ideals, and thus posting these pictures is a way to support a broader representation of bodies on social media (Wikipedia 2018).

With regards to mental health in the imperfection discourse, young women are encouraged to talk openly about taboos and topics that are often considered ‘wrong’ in the perfection discourse. Female bloggers invite their readers to contribute with personal stories about topics such as stress, mental diagnoses, weight issues, self-harm and childlessness (Thorsfelt 2018). One blogger explains: “I want to make people share their stories so we can finally realize that we all share the same thoughts and worries and that no one of us can live up to the ideal pictures that the filter based social media and women’s magazines represent” (M. M. Andersen 2018).

Initiatives in the analog world also aim to bring people together to talk about difficult and neglected feelings. In Copenhagen, a woman has launched a heartbreak support group (Melander 2018), and a popular theater performance on the topic of grief has inspired a focus on loss. The main actress explains its popularity based on a notion that many people experience no room for grief in their hectic daily lives:

> We live in a society where we have to grow and produce all the time. But if you are in mourning you need to go on standby, and your surroundings need to understand that that is just how it is supposed to be. Losing is just as big a part of life as creating (Birk 2018).
The imperfect discourse quickly develops into a *perfect imperfection* discourse. This discourse emphasizes being perfect at all the elements in the imperfection discourse. Basically, a young woman is to demonstrate how she is balanced and rational in all her expectations for life. As trend expert Pia Hammershøy Splittorff puts it:

> But it is a kind of designed imperfection. You still choose, which parts of your imperfection you share with others. The ideal of a perfect life is still intact. And then, the examples we see of people worshipping imperfection and portraying in to each other, becomes just another part of their staging of themselves (Gråbæk 2015).

The perfectly imperfect ideal in education and work is to be able to listen to and follow your heart in everything you do. With regards to mental health, the ideal is to constantly be able to embrace, cope with and share every feeling you get, also the negative ones. This discourse is supported by influencers such as Avalon Khan and femmeemilie that continuously emphasize the importance of always staying true to yourself and going ‘the heart way’ (Khan 2018; Jacobsen 2018).

This relates to being perfectly imperfect on social media, where the ideal is to be prepared to and feel good about sharing everything in your life, from emotional failures to belly rolls and double chins. It exerts a new kind of perfection pressure on young women, who might not feel comfortable with doing so (App. 4).

In relation to body and appearance, the ideal is to always feel good about yourself. In this sense, being body positive can build a new sort of pressure on young women, where they have to completely accept and love their bodies as they are at all times. Being body positive thus becomes yet another thing to learn to excel at (Fink 2018). Similarly, it is not enough to be body positive, young women also need to look a certain way to express their body positive attitude. Some women have even stopped posting pictures with the hashtag #bodypositivism as they have experienced other women being offended because they were too close to the beauty ideals (Hurlock 2017).

**Strategies**

Certain strategies in contemporary Danish society guide young women to act according to the teleologies of the *perfection* discourse. We focus on two central strategies: neoliberal ideology and growth. Simultaneously with presenting these strategies, we discuss implications of them.
Neoliberalism subscribes to competition and performance as a way to enhance and measure worth and value, and views almost everything in life as a commodity to which more or less worth can be assigned (Curran and Hill 2017). In general, performance is a key feature of being a perfect young woman. Sociologist Anders Petersen argues that performance in school, at work, with friends and on social media has gained the status as the ideal of the good life (A. Petersen 2016). And though this holds true for all Danes, Petersen says he is especially worried about young people: “The young people say that ‘perfection is the new normal’. They need the straight As, the right peer group, participation in voluntary work, and everything needs to be documented on social media” (Eriksen and Højbjerg 2016).

The strategy of competition supports the strategy of performance. Political scientist Ove Kaj Pedersen claims that the competition strategy stems from the idea of nation states competing against each other in the era of globalization. It has become a basic condition that all countries are taking part in an international fight about competences, knowledge and resources (Pedersen 2011). Competition on a macro level trickles down to the micro level of young women’s everyday lives: “And no matter how well we do, someone else always seems to be doing better […] and we feel we aren’t winning in the game of life” (Neff 2011, 6). Thus, competition guides young women effectively to perform their best (Lykkegaard 2018).

The “performance culture” is also closely linked to the “political fetishism of pace” and the paradigm of effectiveness, productivity and progress, i.e. the strategy of growth (Hjortdal 2015). In political debates and arguments in contemporary political Denmark, growth is often considered a goal in itself in order to ‘keep up’ with other countries: “The government wishes to see growth and development in all Denmark […] But since the financial crisis the growth has been slower than in the countries we usually compare ourselves with” (Regeringen 2015). The constant focus on growth comes with an inherent belief that what we have is not enough, which has led to a culture of scarcity (Brown 2015). “Scarcity thrives in a culture where everyone is hyper aware of lack. Everything from safety and love to money and resources feels restricted or lacking” (ibid., 26). In this culture, young women need to focus on being productive, effective and to improve at all times in order to keep up with the competition of others, who are also constantly focusing on growth (Brinkmann 2014).

Due to the contemporary belief in meritocracy, the only way to grow is to work hard. Meritocracy is the idea that value, status and success of a young woman is the direct outcome of her own effort (Curran and Hill 2017). Thus, all young women become their own brand and they are the only spokeswomen for themselves in the competition against others.
Meritocracy also implies that failure can only be ascribed to the young woman's own performance. Therefore, young women will criticize themselves if they fail to succeed. In general, the critique that is voiced in contemporary society is more often directed towards the individual than towards society and culture as a whole, which reinforces the young women’s perceived need to perform to feel valuable (Willig 2013).

In the discourse of imperfection other strategies support young women to behave suitably to the teleologies. Central are the strategies of what we term humanism and compassion.

In humanism one of the key messages is the concept of human dignity, which refers to the inherent value and worth of human beings (Robbins 2014). No matter more stable characteristics such as gender, age, race or less stable characteristics such as work performance, physical appearance or mental health, all human beings have the same inherent worth (Rosen 2012). In this view, young women do not need to perform or self-improve to have value. Instead, young women are encouraged to resist the pace of modern life (Brinkmann 2014).

Along these lines, young women should embrace that life is a matter of chance. Instead of blaming themselves when they experience failure and hardships, young women should accept not being in control of how their lives work out (Brinkmann 2017). Rather than adopting a linear perception of time, they should endorse a more cyclical perception of time, where everything has its time (ibid.). Because all humans have their own function and are part of a cycle in nature (ibid.), it does, for instance, not make sense for young women only to strive for society’s contemporary ideal of a “flexible, innovative, proactive and self-leading human being”, as there is also a need for young women, who devote themselves to sustaining traditions and embracing repetition (ibid., 128-129).

According to the strategy of compassion, the secret to a happy life is to come to terms with oneself (Brinkmann, 2014) or in other words: to accept being imperfect. Young women are being taught how to be mindful of their feelings of imperfection and accept their feelings instead of exaggerating or fighting against them (Neff 2011). In connection with this view is the recognition of the common human experience of imperfection. As researcher Kristin Neff (2011) puts it:

Most people don’t focus on what they have in common with others, especially when they feel ashamed or inadequate. Rather than framing their imperfections in light of the shared human
experience, they’re more likely to feel isolated and disconnected from the world around them when they fail (62).

Furthermore, young women should remember that they are worthy even though they are imperfect and they should use these human experiences to connect with other humans instead of feeling isolated. Showing and sharing vulnerability with others will make them feel more connected to their friends, families and peers on social media (Brown 2015).

Technologies

Technologies come in many different constellations. For instance, it includes types of relationships, and it seems prominent that in the discourse of perfection, every relationship, including our relationship to ourselves, becomes one of constant assessment, control and improvement with the goal of achieving perfection. In the discourse of perfection, our worth as human beings is linked to these assessment technologies that permeate our lives (Torp-Pedersen 2014). We are graded in school, evaluated at work, diagnosed by doctors and psychiatrists, measured and weighed by personal trainers and dieticians and liked or not on social media.

The educational system as a whole can be characterized as a technology, within which there are several technologies that seem to support and co-construct the perfection discourse. Firstly, there are technologies such as the educational plan (Undervisningsministeriet 2018b) and the educational readiness assessment (Undervisningsministeriet 2018a) in primary and secondary school that accentuate the need for young men and women to have realistic and clear plans throughout their studies and work lives. Furthermore, the education cap prevents young Danes from beginning a second bachelor or Master degree in Denmark within six years from finishing their first degree, aiming to get young Danes to ‘choose right’ the first time they choose a bachelor degree (T. K. Jensen 2017).

Secondly, there are several technologies designed to make students hurry through their higher education. In order to incentivise young Danes to apply for higher education quickly, they can multiply their grade point average from their high school education with 1.08, if they apply within two years of finishing high school (Uddannelsesguideren 2018). Another technology accentuating speed in education is the study progress reform, which makes it compulsory to study a minimum of 45 ECTS credits per year, when studying a university degree, thereby aiming to make students finish their studies within the nominated
time. Often, the debate around the reform was framed as a competition between different countries, where Denmark was lagging behind (SDU 2016).

Lastly, the technology of quantitative grading and very little qualitative feedback, especially in higher education, is worth considering. The grading technology reduces young men and women to numbers and the purpose of their studies is similarly reduced to the sole aim of getting a job (Hjortdal 2015). For many young women, it is not their own interest in the topics they study, that motivate them, but rather getting top grades (Willer and Østergaard 2017).

Similarly, the labour market constitutes a technology, which to some extent emphasizes the perfection discourse. Within the labour market, there are technologies to ensure that employees develop in a direction desired by the employer, as well as stay in competition with their colleagues. An example is the Employee Development Conversation, a yearly conversation between an employee and his/her boss. The conversation is compulsory in public workplaces and widespread in private ones (K. M. J. Jensen 2018). As the name suggests, the conversation is about how the employee can develop at the workplace. The conversation is an example of the growth trend mentioned above, where people are expected to grow and improve themselves (Brinkmann 2017), and encouraged to increasingly turn critique inwards instead of outwards, when they experience difficulties in life (Willig 2013). Another technology is that of short term contracts and project hirings, which are especially prevalent in hiring young people entering the workforce (ibid.). These technologies make employees insecure about their job prospects in the future, which fosters a culture of competition amongst colleagues.

There are also a variety of technologies, which support the discourse of perfection in relation to body and appearance. Over the last couple of years, personalized training has gained ground through the introduction of smart watches and associated apps, such as apps that can keep track of a person’s training, sleep cycles, meditation sessions and calorie intake (Skytt 2016). Likewise, the demand for personal trainers and coaches has grown (Leonhard 2016). The combination of the two makes it possible for people to keep track of their performance at all times.

The technology of social media is important, as it plays a large role in the discourses around perfection. In general, the news consumption of young people has become highly personalized, and has changed from news consumption through traditional media to social media like Facebook and Instagram (Ritzau 2016). The content on the social media platforms has become a mix of content from many different, previously separate arenas:
The public and the private, as well as the personal and the professional, jostle side by side in social media. The lines of separation are far more blurred and far more fragile than in institutional media outlets (Hermida 2016).

The news content has thus to some extent become a hybrid between personal and professional content (Nicey 2016). Through instant sharing and real-time feeds, the online and offline life becomes intertwined, especially for young men and women for whom friendships and social life takes place on social media at least as much as in the physical space (Kofoed and Larsen 2016).

An important feature of social media platforms is that the news feed on the social media platforms is personalized to and by the individual user (Hermida 2016). This contributes to the creation of echo chambers, where users are primarily exposed to news, opinions and content that is aligned with the interests of the user (Hosanagar 2016). This mechanism can reinforce the perfection discourse, as they might be lead to believe that what they see on social media is representative of the real world. Especially, Instagram has been accused of destroying the self-esteem of young women as they come to believe that they are not good enough because they compare themselves with the edited, filtered pictures or ‘reality’ on Instagram (S. Petersen 2018).

In relation to social media, an integrated technology plays a central role: liking. The like-button on social media platforms has created a new practice of liking posts, pictures, actions on social media. This practice permeates everything from dating apps, where liking is the first step to making contact with another human being, to traditional media, where articles and content can be liked to express opinion, to social media, where basically everything is evaluated based on the amount of likes, it receives. Larsen emphasizes that the option of liking photos and other content fosters a certain practice. It becomes a quantitative way of being acknowledged (App. 4). For many young people, it is not important who likes their photos or who their followers are, but rather the number likes and followers (Willer and Østergaard 2017). This technology thus supports reducing comparison and acknowledgement to quantity. Furthermore, as there is no ‘dislike’ button on major social media platforms, disapproval or failure is inherent in not getting enough likes or not having enough friends or followers. Inactivity becomes the same as disapproval (App. 4).

One technology that plays a role in the discourse of imperfection is exactly that of social media. As a counter reaction to the superficial filter ‘world’ on Instagram, some users have
started to post ‘less perfect’ pictures, and this has made many people speak of ‘cleaning your feed’. Psychologist Rikke Papsøe says: “They [the more honest users] challenge the idea that you have to be perfect, because no human beings are perfect. Therefore, it’s a great idea to follow these kind of Instagram-users [instead of the other kind]” (S. Petersen 2018). Furthermore, social media such as Snapchat has created a practice of sharing more imperfect pictures of everyday life, which can greater feelings of friendship and intimacy amongst young people (Kofoed and Larsen 2016).

But in general, when we turn to the imperfection discourse, it becomes apparent how difficult it is to identify technologies that support the teleology of being imperfect. Small communities around the imperfection discourse are emerging. A group of young people in Copenhagen has sensed the same need of a space of being without filter and more honest and has started the media called SEIN mag (SEIN magasin 2018). They explain the demand for this magazin as a result of their need to mirror themselves in stories that are more authentic and imperfect.

SEIN must be a magazine for and to those people who are in the midst of their youth. A space where you are allowed to cry and to laugh, and where you understand that you are not alone if you don’t experience that everything in your life is perfect (Thorsen 2017).

Authorities

Within the discourse of perfection, the authorities are to a vast extend established institutions in Danish society. Governmental agencies and departments release publications and guidelines for new regulations on matters related to especially young people's education and work (Uddannelses og Forskningsministeriet 2018; Styrelsen for Forskning og Uddannelse 2018). Along the same lines, representatives from banks and think tanks take part in the public debate about young people’s performances regarding the same topics (M. L. Hansen and Heiberg 2017). These authorities usually come from the departments of economics and business and base their reports, opinions and suggestions on economic analysis, economic logic and an economic view of human nature (Lønstrup 2015).

When it comes to young women's physical appearance the authorities are more commercial. Companies selling for instance clothing and beauty products communicate to young women through either traditional advertisements in magazines, television or posters in the city scene or through new advertisement channels such as Facebook and Instagram. However, because traditional advertising does not work in the same effective way as it used
to with previous generations (Schawbel 2015), more and more companies communicate with young women through different influencers that young women perceive to be more authentic (Weinswig 2016). Influencer marketing has grown a lot over the last ten years, which can be seen in the growth of blogger-networks such as the Danish platform Bloggers Delight, which consult companies in finding the best influencer for their product (Larsen 2018).

In the discourse of imperfection, some authorities also come from established institutions such as universities, but they generally have another educational background than the authorities from the perfection discourse. A prominent example from the public Danish debate is Svend Brinkmann, a philosopher and psychologist, who base most of his writings on philosophical texts. Since 2014, Brinkmann has published three critical books on the self-improvement tendency in Danish society that have reached the bestselling lists. Brinkmann has almost 80,000 followers on Facebook (Facebook 2018b) and has been nominated as one of the most influential intellectuals in Denmark by two national newspapers (Aalborg Universitet 2017).

The authorities of the imperfection discourse that focus specifically on young women do not usually base their authority on affiliation to academia, and most of them communicate to the young woman through social media. An example is Katrine Gisinger, who became well known among many Danes, when she posted a video featuring herself and a handful of her young female friends walking around the streets of Copenhagen in their underwear (Abildgaard 2017). Gisinger focuses on making young women accept their bodies as good enough even though they do not live up to contemporary beauty standards. She reaches the young women through a podcast called “Imperfectly Perfect” (Gisinger 2018) and through her Instagram account. Her opinions are based on individual stories from her own life and sessions from her business as a cognitive dietician (Instagram 2018).

It is interesting to consider what is characterized as truths in the different discourses, that is, what give the authorities their authority. In the perfection discourse, truth is largely based on ‘harder’ positivistic facts, such as economic value or quantitative measures (grades, likes etc.), whereas in the imperfection discourse, authority is largely based on ‘softer’ knowledge, such as philosophy and personal stories or experiences. This should be evident throughout the genealogic narrative, where many more examples of different authorities are also found in the examples used.
Implications of societal discourses

In the above, we have created a genealogic narrative about discourses of (im)perfection constructed in contemporary Danish society. As our narrative shows, the (im)perfection discourses are created by a multitude of actors in different societal spheres and on different levels of interaction. This highlights how the discourses of (im)perfection can be seen as constituting a complex social problem. Why is this important to write about? Curran and Hill (2018) consider their research on perfectionism to:

raise important questions about how we are structuring society and whether our society’s heavy emphasis on social comparison, and the sorting, sifting and ranking that follows, is benefitting young people.

Similar to Curran and Hill, our narrative might bring awareness to ways of talking about and relating to perfectionism and spark dialogue about of consequences and ‘usefulness’ of these practices.

It is also our intention with this narrative to emphasize the importance of considering societal discourses, and how one might be contributing to them. Especially social entrepreneurs aiming at alleviating complex social problems should consider the implications of societal discourses. Throughout the chapter, we highlight how we see the discourses of (im)perfection as intertwined in the way that young women relate to themselves. Because the discourses are intertwined, navigation between them becomes increasingly complicated. As perfectionism has been argued to be linked to low self-worth and poor mental health, the same could be said about the discourse of perfect imperfection, as it implies the same kind of pressure of perfection on young women. Emphasizing being imperfect can thus easily become perfect imperfection and thus not function as the counteraction against perfectionism, it might have been intended to be.

Hjort (2004) emphasizes that discursive approaches in entrepreneurship can help us become aware of our practices. This can open up new possibilities of changing these practices in the service of meaningful change. As mentioned, we consider the Fries Before Guys podcast as part of the imperfection discourse, which to us also constitutes the ‘better’ of the three alternatives in promoting healthy ways that young women can relate to themselves. Through our design process, we thus implicitly support the imperfection discourse. We have kept these considerations of the societal discourses in mind throughout our inquiry process and draw on the genealogic narrative in later chapters.
Chapter 3: The design process

The main purpose of this chapter is to tell the story of how we through the design process supported the creation of new formats and how this unfolded through various interactions. The aim of the design process was to develop the podcast into more than a podcast by coming up with new formats that could enhance interaction and a sense of community between the podcast hosts and their listeners. We planned and executed the design process from January to April 2018, including both the podcasts hosts and their listeners as co-designers in the design process.

We begin with describing the planning steps before the actual design process began, including both the practical aspects and an overview of the historical development of design approaches as well as an explanation of how we have developed our own design approach. The rest of the chapter outlines what happened in the design process, describing the five phases Plan, Explore, Synthesize, Ideate, Prototype & Test.

Planning the design process

Before diving into the design process, we briefly explain its structure. We divided our design process in five phases: Plan, Explore, Synthesize, Ideate, and Prototype & Test. How these phases were created and what aims we identified for each of them, is described below. Fig. 3 provides a visual overview (see also the Process plan, App. 5).

It is important to note that even though it appears like the phases were clearly separated, this was not the case. Ideation happened in the Plan and Explore phases, exploration continued
throughout the entire process and concept selection and development was an ongoing thing. The division of the phases is done for the sake of understanding in this paper, and also sometimes served to push ourselves to take new steps while in the process.

It is also important to note that the activities in the Process plan (App. 5) are only those in which material for the design process was actively produced, thus not all activities related to the process are represented. Examples of activities not included are forms of communication or promotion on Facebook and Instagram, e-mails, informal catch-up meetings, activities of a purely social manner and a live recording event at Aalborg main library. These activities are described in the autoethnographic diaries (App. 1, 2).

Even though the first phase is called Plan, planning was an essential element of all phases and went on continuously between ourselves, the podcast hosts and the listeners. For the most part, what was to happen in the different phases was developed as the process unfolded. For each workshop and meeting, we developed scripts. Usually when we were done facilitating one workshop, we would start working on the script for the next one.

A final point related to that of planning: There are notable differences between the scripts and the Process plan. This is because the scripts show our plans for the workshops, yet these plans usually changed during facilitation. We did not update the scripts afterwards, as we wanted documentation of our initial plans. The Process plan, however, has been updated along the way to illustrate what ‘actually’ happened.

Phase 0: Plan

*Aim: to understand the design challenge and plan the process.*

*Defining the challenge*

In the fall of 2017, while listening to the Fries Before Guys podcast, Anne noticed the hosts expressing doubts about how to proceed with the podcast. Anne, a big supporter of the podcast and a student of innovation and entrepreneurship, got the idea to turn these doubts into a thesis project. She contacted the two hosts, Nanna and Josephine, and on December 8 we all sat down together to talk about a potential collaboration (App. 6a). From the first meeting we defined several challenges and narrowed down the focus of our collaboration (App. 6b).

On January 7, 2018, we met with Nanna and Josephine again, this time for our first interview (App. 7a), which marked the official beginning of our collaboration. The interview
was of an exploratory nature and revolved around the story of the Fries Before Guys podcast and the perceived value of the podcast (App. 7b).

After the initial meeting and interview, the design challenge was still very loosely defined. The podcast hosts had expressed that they wanted us to help figure out how to develop new formats for the podcast, especially focusing on formats that would increase listener inclusion and community development. However, they also wanted us to “contribute with what we were good at” (App. 7b), thus providing a flexible starting point in regards to what we wanted to work on and how we wished to work on it.

*How to solve the challenge*

Based on the initial conversations with the podcast hosts, we developed a design challenge that could guide us in developing the next steps. The design challenge read:

*How can we, based on ‘the conversation’, develop new formats (for the Fries Before Guys hosts and their listeners) that focus on interaction and community?* (App. 8a).

In this statement we incorporated both our own wishes to create something tangible, i.e. formats, as well as the wishes of the two podcast hosts, i.e. the focus on interaction and community.

We started thinking about how we could best solve this by diving into different design approaches. We started imagining a design process, which would include both ourselves, the podcast hosts and some of their listeners at all stages. To gain inspiration on the different possibilities, we started researching different design schools’ approaches and how this had developed over time. See a historical overview below.

*Getting inspired*

A range of different approaches have evolved with different takes on how to design and for what purpose. For our purpose, the most interesting ones to go into depth with are participatory design/co-design and design thinking, as these provided the foundation for the development of our own approach.
Historical overview of design approaches

Over the last seven decades, there has been an increasing tendency for designers to open up their working processes and invite potential users and customers in (Sanders and Stappers 2008). Starting from participatory design in the 1960s, there are now many different ways of approaching a more inclusive design process. Below we briefly explain how this tendency has developed over time to set a frame for the point of departure in our own design process.

Participatory design was developed in certain projects in the 1960s in Scandinavia, where the approach was also called cooperative design or the Scandinavian approach (Bødker 1996; Asaro 2000). The idea was simple: people influenced by a design should be heard in the design process (Robertson and Simonsen 2012). Thus, participatory design aimed at engaging end-users in the development phase of a new project or design. For instance, workers could contribute with their knowledge and expertise in the design of new computer systems for the workplace (Bødker 1996). The participatory design approach had two important pillars: Firstly, participatory design aimed at democratic involvement of users. This was based on the notion that the introduction of a new design would involve controversy rather than consensus, and that these disputes could be accommodated by involving users in the development of the designs. Secondly, participatory design aimed at engaging users in the design process simply because the existing skills of the users were seen as a resource for the process and would contribute to a better result (Bjögvinsson, Ehn, and Hillgren 2012).

In the 1980s in North America, the participatory design movement developed into user-centered design. Prior to the emergence of this approach, users would only be used to test a product or service at the end of the development process. This approach, however, placed the user at the center of the development process to ensure that the design met the needs of the user (E. B.-N. Sanders 2003). Social science researchers and designers started working closer together, yet their roles were still very distinct: The researchers functioned as an intermediary between the user and the designer (Sanders 2003).

In the 1990s, the human-centered design approach emerged. This approach implied a shift from seeing people primarily as ‘users’ to viewing them as situated in a broader, social arena, therein implying the ‘human’ aspect (Steen 2011). Furthermore, the roles of the researcher and the designer began to blur as the user was invited even further into the development process (Sanders 2003). In general, the designer’s personal creative process was toned down and instead both the designer and the researcher focused on understanding people’s needs, desires and experiences and on facilitating practices that could make the user creative (Giacomin 2014).

Participatory design and co-design

Participatory design pioneered inclusive design in Scandinavia in the 1960s. The approach has since then developed from being employed primarily in Scandinavia on issues concerning IT-systems and the organization of workplaces to being applied worldwide on a broad range of issues. Nowadays, the approach is termed participatory design by some scholars and co-
design by others (E. B.-N. Sanders and Stappers 2008). We use the terms interchangeably in this section depending on the preference of the scholars, we refer to.

Participatory design has much in common with human-centered design approaches in regard to the involvement of users in the design process and share many tools and techniques with other approaches (Robertson and Simonsen 2012), but participatory design cannot be reduced to user involvement:

The basic motivation remains democratic and emancipatory: Active participation needs to define Participatory Design because if we are to design the futures we wish to live, then those whose futures are affected must actively participate in the design process (5).

A central element of participatory design is thus the empowerment of people to take part in the development of better futures for themselves. In relation to this, the researcher or designer in participatory design is encouraged to practice reflexivity, reflecting on how to involve users as full partners in design and on one’s own involvement and role in a design process (Steen 2011).

Sanders and Stappers (2008) refer to participatory design as co-design: “We use co-design in a broader sense to refer to the creativity of designers and people not trained in design working together in the design development process” (6). In line with participatory design, they are concerned with how co-design can help distribute “control and ownership” amongst more people and solve complex societal problems (Sanders and Stappers 2008, 9).

Co-design differ from user-centered design processes in the way the participants understand their roles. In co-design, the roles get mixed up and the person, who will eventually be served through the design process, is given the position of expert and plays an important role in idea generation and concept development (Sanders and Stappers, 2008). Furthermore, there ceases to be a sharp distinction between the researcher and the designer, with the researcher serving as translator between the user and the designer. In fact, the researcher and the designer might be the same person and will often take on the role of a facilitator (Sanders and Stappers, 2008).

Being inspired by a participatory design process was not enough for us. Earlier in our studies we had been introduced to design thinking. We appreciated how this approach contributes

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4 This term should not be confused with the widely used term co-creation, as this is an innovation process that is not necessarily motivated by the same values as co-design. Instead, co-creation is focused on the usefulness of a co-creational mindset in for instance designing valuable products for consumers in competition with other companies (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Thomke and Von Hippel 2002).
with some very tangible tools in regards to how to design the design process itself and how to
make the people, we design with, comfortable with being creative. Thus, we looked further
into design thinking.

Design thinking

In general terms, design thinking is used to describe a way designers work. The definition of
design thinking is elusive, but we define design thinking as both a mindset and a method.
Rowe coined the term design thinking in his 1987 book titled Design Thinking (1987), but it
has only been in the last decade that design thinking has gained popularity in research
institutions and businesses (Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla, and Çetinkaya 2013).

A cornerstone in the mindset of design thinking is the notion that everyone is able to
be creative (Kelley and Kelley 2013). Being creative is conceived to have a broader meaning
than being ‘artistic’. Instead, creativity is “using your imagination to create something new in
the world” (ibid., 3). The roles in design thinking can thus, as in participatory design, be
blurred. The term ‘designer’ is used for everyone, who takes part in a design thinking process
(researchers, clients, users, customers, colleagues, etc.). Brown (2008) describes the design
thinking mindset of a designer with five words: Empathy, integrative thinking, optimism,
experimentalism and collaboration. Firstly, the designer must be able to emphasize with the
people, he or she is designing for and with. Also, the designer should not only rely on
analytical thinking, but be able to embrace contradictory aspects of a problem. Furthermore,
the designer should have an optimistic outlook on the design challenge, should be willing to
experiment and to collaborate with people of many different backgrounds and disciplines.
Other words that are commonly used to characterize a design thinking mindset is human-
centered, iterative, ethnographic, visual and innovative (russo 2016, 39–40).

Fundamentally, design is about process. Central to design thinking is the concept of
different phases of the design thinking process. All authors mention the importance of a
‘fuzzy front end’ of the process, which means that the first phase is highly focused on
opening up the topic or problem that is being investigated and to learn as much about this
before continuing with other phases. Different authors and practitioners talk about a number
of three to six phases and they also give the phases different names(Nussbaum 2004; T.
Brown 2009; Osterwalder et al. 2014; W. Berger 2010). What the authors have in common is
the idea that different phases of a design thinking process need different mindsets and
methods, which is why they differentiate between the phases instead of operating with just
one phase. In each phase, the different design thinking methods are representations of the mindset that can be used in a design thinking process to enable the right mindset among the practitioners and participants (Russo 2016).

When is design thinking useful? The approach is utilized by many different businesses, public institutions and non-profits. In contrast to participatory design, which is built on the value of empowerment, organizations apply design thinking for different purposes. They are all focused on solving a problem and meeting users needs, but the problem or the need can be more or less regarded as a complex societal issue. IDEO is an example of how many organizations are increasingly using design thinking to create more than ‘just’ business value: When IDEO was founded, it was not focused on design thinking although it had a human-centered approach, and it was mostly focused on creating business value on the economic bottom line (Nussbaum 2004). Over time IDEO has increasingly turned into a proponent of design thinking. Especially within the last decade and with the launch of the network OpenIDEO in 2010 (OpenIDEO 2018), the nonprofit IDEO.org (IDEO.org 2018a) in 2011 and the Circular Design Guide (Ellen MacArthur Foundation and IDEO 2017) in 2017, IDEO has used design thinking to focus on solving complex social problems.

Our approach

We decided to use a synthesis of design thinking and participatory design. Why a synthesis of the two? The two traditions share many similarities. Sanders and Stappers draw attention to the fact that both design thinking and participatory design have fuzzy front ends, and that this end of the design process is growing the more the designers involve the users (Sanders and Stappers 2008). Other authors argue that participatory design and design thinking are basically the same, but that design thinking has succeeded better in articulating itself to a business and management crowd (Bjögvinnson, Ehn and Hillgren 2012).

Still, we decided to include both perspectives, as we regard them as having different strengths. Firstly, we chose to include the perspective of participatory design to make sure to involve the important stakeholders throughout the design process, i.e. the podcast hosts and their listeners. Secondly, participatory design is focused on empowerment of the participants, which we considered key to our design process and our motivation to conduct this inquiry. In addition to this, we chose to include the perspective of design thinking as this approach first of all suggest that everyone is able to be creative and contribute with concrete value for the
design process. This fits with our belief in why we would like to involve the hosts and the listeners: not just because we believe they ‘deserve’ it, as the results of the design process will be designed for them, but also because we believe they are able to offer valuable insights in the process. Secondly, design thinking is a powerful approach to support us in designing the design process itself. Design thinking offers the mindset to think in phases and equip us with the concrete tools to use in each phase. Fig. 4 is an illustration of our synthesis.

![Diagram](image)

**Fig. 4: our synthesis of participatory design and design thinking**

**Making a plan**

Our synthesis of design thinking and participatory design entailed working iteratively through different design phases (design thinking), and including participants or users in as many aspects of the design process as possible with the aim of empowering them to create desirable futures for themselves (participatory design).

We decided on four phases (calling the planning phase *Phase 0*) and, in accordance with design thinking, defined the initial aims of the different phases to be: (1) *exploring* the perceived value of the podcast, the community feeling and feelings of inclusion as well as possibilities for interaction; (2) *synthesizing* the material from the exploration phase to *find our focus* in relation to experienced needs, the value we wished to create and the identification of development potential; (3) *ideating* to generate a multitude of ideas for further development of Fries Before Guys and *conceptualizing* by developing selected ideas into more concrete concepts of future formats, and; (4) *prototyping* the developed concepts in order to *test* them, get feedback on them and further develop the concepts. A natural fifth
phase would be *implementation*, but due to time constraints of the thesis, we entrusted the podcast hosts with implementing the concepts of their choosing.

Getting the green light

On January 29, after making the preliminary plans, we met with Nanna and Josephine again. As we wanted to include both them and their listeners in different ways in the design process, we needed to get a green light on the process from them. This was the first time, we presented them with our design challenge as well as the outline of our inclusive plan of how to solve this challenge (App. 8a). They were luckily on board and so the following day, we outlined the design challenge for ourselves in a short design brief (App. 9b). This marked the official launch of our design process.
The four phases of the design process

Phase 1: Explore

*Aim: exploring several themes with the podcast listeners and their relationship with the podcast. Themes include: relationship to and perceived value of the podcast; experienced community feeling and feelings of being included in and being able to interact with the podcast and its hosts.*

*Digging deeper*

True to the design thinking approach, the first thing we wished to do was to get a better understanding of the podcast listeners, their relationship to the podcast and their needs in more general terms.

In the Plan phase, we had asked Nanna and Josephine if they would share some of the messages, they had gotten from their listeners over the last year. They sent us excerpts of 20 anonymous messages and 11 videos, all from listeners describing the podcast and what they experienced getting from it. On our request, they had also asked their listeners if they would be willing to participate in workshops with us and we had gotten more than 40 replies.

Based on this, we decided to plan a number of explorative ‘listener workshops’ using different design thinking tools to help explore the different topics of interest to us. We decided to go with three workshops with 6-8 participants in each.

*Meeting the crowd*

Our first chance to interact with the podcast listeners was, however, not in a workshop. On February 2, the podcast hosts hosted an event at Huset in Copenhagen (Facebook 2018a). The event called *Fries Before Guys Conversation Salon: Gender, Body and Culture* (our translation) featured five female speakers that gave 10-30 min talks on different topics. Afterwards, a female DJ went on and the floor was cleared to make space for dancefloor. The idea was to invite the podcast listeners into the conversation ‘space’ of the podcast. The hosts wanted to create a feminist community feeling and hoped that the talks would inspire debate and reflection among the participants (App. 10a).

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5 Not included in Appendices due to sensitivity of content.
For the event, our main tools for interaction were two reflection boxes. For the boxes, we created cards, which each had one question for reflection printed on them (App. 10a). Each box had the cards lying next to them along with pens for the participants to write down their answers on the cards before sliding them through the small openings in the boxes.

The event was sold out. The talks went well, the vibe was positive and the dancefloor afterwards lively. The podcast hosts had directed attention to our boxes in their introductory speech, and many participants wrote extensive answers on our cards (App. 10c). Two days after, on February 4, we met with Nanna and Josephine. The event was the first open event with speakers that they had organized, and so we evaluated the event with them as a part of our Explore phase. The meeting contributed with valuable insights for both parties and some of the first ideas for future formats of the podcast (App. 11b).

Creating an exploratory workshop

On February 5, we spent the day preparing for our three exploratory workshops. We went through the messages and videos from listeners, we had gotten from Nanna and Josephine. Focusing on “value creation” we identified keywords of what the listeners expressed as valuable to them in relation to the podcast. Based on these keywords and our design brief, we developed questions that we felt needed answers. We grouped the questions under general topics that we wanted to explore deeper (App. 2), and then developed a workshop concept in which each section had the aim of exploring a specific topic (App. 12a).

We put a lot of thought into how to engage the participants and create the right space for sharing personal stories, thoughts and feelings. Instead of just letting the conversation flow (or potentially not flow), we incorporated tools and exercises in each section of the workshop to spur dialogue. The exercises had the participants drawing, brainstorming on post-its, doing a collective mapping session and reacting to drawings of situations (App. 12a). To create an atmosphere that invited participants to share personal stories, we decided to hold the workshops in our own apartments, where we made sure to have plenty of beverages and snacks. To get in the mood of the podcast, we decided that everyone should share a story about how an episode of the podcast had moved them in some way. Inspired by the idea that sharing personal stories gives others the courage to do the same, we decided to start by sharing personal stories of our own and use our personal experiences throughout the workshops.
Action!

At 7 pm in the evening, also on February 5, we held the first workshop at Anne's apartment. We had planned a two-hour program, but even though we shortened some exercises during the evening, it still took half an hour longer than expected. The vibe was great, the participants very engaged and when we finished around 9:30 pm, all the participants expressed joy of having taken part in the workshop and that it had been a positive and enlightening experience (App. 12b).

On February 8 and February 21, we ran the last two exploratory workshops using the same script as in the first one (App. 13a, 14a). In the last one, on recommendation of the participants in the earlier two workshops, we extended the schedule with half an hour, but still went 20 minutes over (App. 14b).

In terms of our experience, the workshops were similar in some aspects. In each workshops, six women participated, ranging from ages 19 to 30. The participants all engaged actively in all exercises and shared what seemed to be quite personal stories and experiences (App. 12b, 13b, 14b).

Although similar the workshops also differed from one another. Especially the second workshop stood out as being more vulnerable than the others. The participants in this workshop moved us almost to tears a couple of times with the stories, they shared (App. 1, 2). One of the participants was even moved to tears herself at the end of the workshop, and said that she felt like she was leaving stronger than when she arrived (App. 13b). For some reason, an especially open and vulnerable space was created in this workshop.

Phase 2: Synthesize

Aim: to find our focus in relation to experienced needs or problems by identifying the design potential.

Making sense of it all

After the third workshop, we both felt like we had hit a point of saturation in terms of knowledge about the podcast listeners and their thoughts on the different topics, we had identified in the Explore phase. The next step was to try to make sense of all the material from this phase. The material included the listener messages and videos that we got from the
podcast hosts⁶, the cards from the Conversation Salon (App. 10c), the podcast hosts’ reflections on that same event (App. 11b) and of course all the material from the three exploratory workshops (App. 12-14).

Creating meaning in all of this was a process of several steps (App. 15a). Firstly, we separately went through all of the material, writing what we thought to be essential ‘learnings’ on post-its. We then shared our learnings with one another and while doing that created themes. This resulted in an immense ‘map’ of post-its and themes, divided in sections focusing on description of the podcast, value of the podcast, rituals for listening to the podcast, experiences of listener community and interaction (App. 15c). From these themes, we created two things: definitions of each theme (App. 15b) and a relational map, which we called ‘the value map’.

The story of the value map

To be able to communicate our themes and learnings to both the podcast hosts and other participants in the upcoming ideation workshops, we created a relational map of the themes related to a description of the podcast and its value. See Fig. 5 below.

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⁶ Not included in Appendices due to sensitivity of content.
Fig. 5: the value map - a relational map of the value of the Fries Before Guys podcast
Frameworks, such as a relational map, are used as a visual representation of patterns and systems, and is argued to be a great way to identify key relationships and develop a design strategy (IDEO.org 2018b). The map visualizes a story that we created based on the material from the Explore phase. This was a story of what the listeners experienced, when listening to the podcast and how it influenced their lives in different ways. The story started in the descriptions of the podcast (in blue in Fig. 5), and created causal links between this and the perceived value (in pink in Fig. 5).

The map consists of four ‘branches’. Each branch begins with themes describing the podcast (in blue), which are the basis for the themes of value described by the listeners. Definition of each of the themes can be found in App. 15b. Let us briefly outline each branch:

First of all, Nanna and Josephine are described as ‘good company’ and as a kind of friendship to the listeners. Listening to the podcast makes the listeners feel safe, experience less loneliness and feel joy. But standing on the sideline of the friendship between Nanna and Josephine also makes some listeners jealous of their friendship, especially if they do not have the same kind of friendship in their own lives.

Secondly, the podcast articulates taboos and difficult subjects in an illuminating and reflective manner. This gives the readers a space, where they can take the time to reflect upon themselves and their lives. Listening to the hosts reflecting enlightens the listeners with new perspectives on life and they start to appreciate differences between people. Following this, the listeners begin to reflect on their relationships with people around them, which makes them value good relationships more and have better and new types of conversations with other people.

Furthermore, the podcast is described as a female community, which is both relatable and inclusive. The way Nanna and Josephine talk to each other makes the listeners feel seen and not alone, they experience being part of a (feminist) community and feel connected to the common humanity of human beings, which gives them hope for the future.

In their conversations, Nanna and Josephine are characterized as authentic, honest, at eye level and open, vulnerable and brave. This gives the listeners ‘a new language’ for reflection which makes them more self-aware. This self-awareness makes the listeners accept and acknowledge themselves and they also experience a higher level of self-worth and self-respect, especially in relation to their own bodies and sexuality. Experiencing this makes the listeners describe the podcast as empowering and pushes them, in a positive way, to adopt an attitude of saying ‘fuck it’ to worries that are not important, which gives them a sense of being the boss in their own lives. Finally, this gives them the courage to act on the things in
their lives that are important to them and last but not least, the courage to be themselves and open up and show their whole selves to other people.

_Rephrasing the design challenge_

After mapping the perceived value of the podcast and creating the value map, we reformulated our design challenge. Instead of focusing on ‘the conversation’ as central, we decided to make the perceived value of the podcast a central element. The new design challenge read:

_How can we, based on the perceived value of Fries Before Guys, develop new formats that focus on interaction and community?_ (App. 5).

By letting go of the conversation as a central element of the formats, we wanted to give more space for different ideas and especially wanted to allow room for focusing on the value related to empowerment and courage, which is described in the value map above.

_From insight statements to ideation_

After having synthesized our material into a comprehensible value map, we also developed _insight statements_ based on the themes in the map (App. 16b). Insight statements are brief sentences that help point the way forward in a design process. The statements are made by rephrasing the themes of the material into short statements, which feel like a core insight of the exploratory inquiry (IDEO.org 2018b).

The next step was to prepare for ideation with the podcast host and their listeners. We did this by selecting the eight insight statements, we felt had the most design potential. The idea was to further select three or four of the eight statements and rephrase them into _How Might We_ questions, thereby bridging to the Ideate phase. A _How Might We_ question is the translation of an insight statement into an opportunity for design. Beginning each question with “How might we…”, these questions suggest that a solution is possible and offers the designer the possibility to answer the question in a variety of ways (IDEO.org 2018b). At IDEO.org, designers usually work with three to five insight statements (IDEO.org 2018b). We wanted the podcast hosts to be part of the final selection of insight statements and the development of _How Might We_-questions. Therefore, we pre-selected eight insight statements, which formed the starting point of our Ideate phase (App. 16b).
Phase 3: Ideate

**Aim:** to generate a lot of ideas for further development of Fries Before Guys and develop some of these ideas into more comprehensive concepts of future formats

**Ideating with Fries Before Guys**

On March 2, we met with Nanna and Josephine for the first ideation workshop of our process. We started the workshop with a presentation of our work so far, focusing on the story of the value map, and how the Explore phase had led to different insights. We also presented the rephrased problem formulation focusing on the perceived value of the podcast and then presented the eight pre-selected insight statements (App. 17a).

We then collaboratively selected three insight statements, which were rephrased into four How Might We questions, one example being: *How might we inspire more young women to be courageous (honest, vulnerable, believe in themselves, push own limits)?* These questions were used in a brainstorming session, where they were placed one by one in the center of the table and used to generate solution ideas. All the ideas were then evaluated by using a prioritization grid. A prioritization grid looks like a system of coordinates, where one axis is one parameter (for instance from ‘Difficult to realize’ to ‘Easy to realize’) and the other axis is another parameter (for instance from ‘A little courageous’ to ‘Very courageous’) (MindLab 2017). When all ideas are placed in the grid it is easier to evaluate which ideas to continue with and which to discard.

The four grids, one for each How Might We question, and the ideas in them formed the output of our first ideation workshop (App. 17c). After the workshop, we (Anne and Ida) grouped the ideas into some main ideas groups, which we planned to use in the ideation workshops with the podcast listeners (App. 17c).

**More ideation fun!**

The first workshop with podcast listeners took place on March 13, where we met four podcast listeners. Two of the participants had been part of the previous explore workshops, whereas the other two had not. As with the ideation workshop with the podcast hosts, we started out with a presentation of the value map, telling the story of the perceived value of the podcast (App. 18a). The participants responded with words of recognition (App. 18b).

This time we had prepared three how might we questions on which to brainstorm. After explaining the brainstorm rules and the concept of How Might We questions, we
brainstormed on one question at a time. The three brainstorms resulted in a multitude of ideas on post-its, which were then grouped into clusters of similar ideas. The participants were then given five dot-votes to decide and vote on the ideas, they wanted to develop further in the second half of the workshop. Three groups of ideas were selected (App. 18c).

After having dinner, the second half of the workshop commenced. We started out with a presentation of selected ideas from the ideation workshop with the podcast hosts, and then urged the participants to spend 15 minutes on idea development of these ideas as well as the three groups of ideas selected from their own brainstorm. This idea development took place without the participants communicating with each other, each participant with their own post-its to write suggestions on. The final phase of the workshop entailed going through the ideas and post-its in a plenary discussion. The output of the workshop thus consisted of a multitude of new ideas, as well as the participants’ reflections on how to develop the ideas further into fuller concepts.

We had planned to carry out two ideation workshops, the second one on March 21, but unfortunately had to cancel the last one do to last minute cancellations from the participants. Due to time constraints, we decided to proceed to the Prototyping and Testing phase.

**Figuring out what to ‘deliver’**

On March 22, we met to figure out what we were to deliver to the podcast hosts. Until this moment, we had refrained from talking about a deliverable as we wanted the design process to be as open as possible.

The approach, we took, was to firstly gather all the ideas that had been created throughout the design process (App. 19b). The plan was then to map out the ideas and form groupings from which we could choose some for prototyping and testing (App. 19a). We mapped out and group the ideas in overall themes, but this spurred a longer discussion of the different variations of similar ideas, and of the dimensions on which these ideas variated. Furthermore, another discussion formed around how to include the needs and wants of the many different participants and perspectives in our design process. It seemed false and in contradiction with our basic beliefs to narrow our deliverable down to just a few selected concepts.

From these discussion, we arrived at the idea of creating a catalogue of the different ideas grouped in the overall themes created in our idea mapping session (App. 19c). The
dimensions, we had discussed, would serve as inspiration for the podcast hosts for them to consider different ways to vary ideas and develop ideas further. This idea catalogue felt like a major break through and marked the transition into the final phase of our design process.

Phase 4: Prototype & Test

_Aim: prototyping the concepts in order to test, get feedback on and further develop the concepts._

How to test a catalogue...

The next challenge, we faced, was that of how to test an entire catalogue of ideas. Instead of being inspired by the different methods for prototyping, we had collected, our prototypes were inspired by how we wanted to test them. In the ideation workshop, one of the participants suggested that we do a follow-up event, or as she put it, a beer-coffee-wine night, where all the participants could see what had come of the process and socialize (App. 18c).

This comment sparked the creation of an event, where we could present the outcome of the design process, i.e. the idea catalogue, while at the same time testing the ideas and getting feedback on them.

To be able to present all the themes and ideas, we decided to create posters: One poster for each theme, explaining both the overarching theme including its purpose, and the more concrete ideas within each theme. In order to fit everything on a visually pleasing poster, we condensed the text in the idea catalogue (App. 20a), and required the help of two graphic designers, who created visual icons for each theme and create the poster layouts. This resulted in seven posters (App. 20b). We also wanted to include the dimensions from the idea catalogue and to have tools for spurring dialogue at the event, inspired by the idea of a conversation starter for brainstorms. We therefore also had the graphic designers visualize the dimensions on cards, which resulted in seven dimension cards (App. 20c).

_The big night!

For the event, we invited both the podcast hosts, the listeners that had participated in the different workshops and made an open invitation to other listeners of the podcast. A week before the event, we closed registration for the event, as we reached the maximum number of participants with a good mix of both familiar and new acquaintances.
The event took place in the evening, on Monday April 23 in a cozy café. We hung the posters on the walls, where there was space to stand around them and talk, and lay out the dimension cards on the tables alongside post-its and pens. When the 25 participants had arrived, we presented our collaboration and design process together with the podcast hosts. We then facilitated an hour of feedback and brainstorm based on the seven posters, using the cards as conversation starters (App. 21a). The participants made notes on post-its and put them on the posters, so we could synthesize all the new ideas and iterations after the event (App. 21c).

**Deliverables**

Throughout the design process it was an ongoing conversation between the podcast hosts and ourselves what we were to deliver to them. In the end we decided to create an idea catalogue with the posters from the event as the foundation, including the feedback from the test event and considerations about implementation, resources and further adjustments. Furthermore, the idea catalogue also contains the value map and other important insights from the Explore phase. The final version of the idea catalogue is to be finished after the deadline of this thesis, but the feedback from the test event can be found in App. 21c.

**From ideas to needs and value**

In this chapter we have told the story of our participatory design thinking process created with the hosts of Fries Before Guys and some of their listeners. We also presented the literature that inspired us to create a practical synthesis of design thinking and participatory design. Our design process consisted of five phases: Plan, Explore, Synthesize, Ideate and Prototype & Test. The story is told in a linear manner, but in reality the five phases overlapped. To sum up, the design process resulted in a wide range of ideas for new formats for the Fries Before Guys podcast. Due to time constraints we had to finish the design process after our test event in the end of April, 2018, and thus leave the implementation of the new formats to the two podcast hosts.

In the following chapter, we tell a different story. This is a story of how our design process can be seen as contributing to the creation of new ideas, but also value and needs for the participants. We argue that this constitutes an opportunity formation process, and that opportunities in general can be viewed as relationally and communally formed. This is considered in depth in the following chapter.
Chapter 4: Opportunity formation

The main question of our inquiry is how design approaches can support social entrepreneurship. In this chapter, we provide an answer to this in relation to our own design process and supporting Fries Before Guys.

In the previous chapter, we told the story of how our design process unfolded with Fries Before Guys and the listeners, who participated. We also showed how our participatory design process resulted in a wide range of ideas. Creating new ideas for the future is exciting, but it does not necessarily entail the creation of value. An interesting concept related to value creation in entrepreneurship literature is that of opportunities. Our understanding of a social entrepreneurial opportunity is that it is: a situation in which an idea is implemented and creates value for a user by alleviating needs of the user.

In this chapter, we show how our design process can be understood as an opportunity formation process. As our definition of opportunity includes the concepts of idea, needs and value, this chapter focuses on the creation of ideas, needs and value in our design process, and how this can be viewed as related in an opportunity formation process.

Firstly, we give an account of our understanding of the concepts of ideas, needs, value, and opportunity. Secondly, we provide a brief overview of the main theoretical discussions on the concept of opportunity in the entrepreneurship literature. We adopt the view that opportunities are formed relationally and communally in interactions between people and society. Thirdly, through a relational constructionist reading of the material from our design process, we show how the design process can be understood as an opportunity formation process as it creates and enhances needs, value and ideas, thus constituting the formation a social entrepreneurial opportunity.

Concept definitions

The concepts ideas, needs and value can be defined in a variety of ways. We do not attempt to arrive at any ‘final’ definition of the concepts. Instead, we explain how the concepts have been used by us and our participants in our design process and how we use them in this chapter. Subsequently, we explain how ideas, needs and value are related and how the three concepts together can constitute an opportunity.
Ideas

Throughout our design process, we used several different terms to describe potential future scenarios for the Fries Before Guys podcast. Sometimes, we talked about solutions, because we were motivated by problems. Sometimes, we talked about formats as a way to stress that a podcast is just one kind of format for a solution and that there are many other kinds of formats. The term we used the most was ideas. In the following, we use the term idea to describe all developmental stages of potential future scenarios of the Fries Before Guys podcast. The term idea thus covers all the following terms: solution, format, and concept. An idea can be understood as “an image in mind” or “a plan for action” (Merriam-Webster 2018a) and is the term used in design thinking to describe the: “transition from identifying problems into exploring solutions for your users” (d.school, n.d.). Sometimes, when an idea was developed further, we talked about concepts, which is a term used in design thinking, when specific ideas have been described more thoroughly (d.school, n.d.).

Needs

Our design process was to a large extent focused on needs. One of our main aims was to understand the needs of the podcast listeners and to develop ideas based on alleviating those needs. Depending on the concrete situation, we sometimes used the words wants, wishes and problems during the design process. In the following, we use the word needs to encompass all of the above. In a broad sense, a need can be understood as “a lack of something requisite, desirable or useful” (Merriam-Webster 2018b). It can denote a requirement for survival, but also a physiological or psychological requirement for the well-being of an organism (for example a human) (Merriam-Webster 2018b). A need can similarly be used to describe inclinations to act aimed at achieving safety, care or esteem, and is an important part of human motivation (Katzenelson 2018).

Value

A substantial part of the design process was focused on understanding the value that the listeners experienced from listening to the Fries Before Guys podcast in order to reproduce it in new ideas. Our follow-up mails to workshop participants and the last interviews at the test event likewise focused on understanding the value, the participants experienced in the workshops (App. 12c, 13c, 14c, 18c, 21d). In these investigations of perceptions of value, we
asked the participants what they had ’gotten out of’ the podcast and the workshops. This presented our working definition of the concept of value. In very general terms, value can be understood as the “relative worth, utility, or importance” (Merriam-Webster 2018d), and thus is dependent on the individual experience and unique situation. In this chapter, we focus primarily on the value of the design process, yet also consider implications for the perceived value of the podcast. As it turns out, the experiences of value are of the two are very similar.

Opportunity

Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines opportunity as: “a favorable juncture of circumstances” and/or “a good chance for advancement or progress” (Merriam-Webster 2018c). In the entrepreneurship literature, several scholars have dissected or redefined the concept to consist of ‘ideas, beliefs and actions’ (Venkataraman 1997; Sarasvathy et al. 2010) or to be equated with the environment surrounding an entrepreneur (Gartner, Carter, and Hills 2003). In this paper, we argue for a different understanding of the concept: An opportunity is a situation in which an idea is implemented and creates value for a user by alleviating needs of the user.

In design literature, the concepts of ideas, needs and value are often closely linked. We draw on the framework of the Value Proposition Canvas by Osterwalder, Pigneur, Bernarda and Smith (2014) to exemplify this. The aim of the Value Proposition Canvas is to help create value for customers that can turn into value for a business. It consists of two parts: The Customer Profile describes the needs of the customer. It describes the functional, social and personal/emotional jobs of the customer and the gains and pains related to getting this job done: “A customer job could be the tasks they [the customers] are trying to perform and complete, the problems they are trying to solve, or the needs they are trying to satisfy” (Osterwalder et al. 2014, 12). The other part of the canvas, The Value Map, describes the potential value of a product or a service. It describes the features of a product or service that creates gains or relieves pains. With the Value Proposition Canvas, Osterwalder et al. (2014) emphasize that: “products and services don’t create value alone — only in relationship to a specific customer segment and their jobs, pains, and gains” (29) and therefore the aim of the Value Proposition Canvas is to achieve a Fit between the two sides of the canvas (ibid.).
Adopting this view, value is created, when it satisfies needs and thus value and needs are two sides of the same coin. How does this relate to ideas and opportunities? Osterwalder et al. explain that the *Value Proposition Canvas* is a tool to help develop and evolve ideas (Osterwalder et al. 2014). They acknowledge that many ideas are created in a design process, but that not all ideas should be developed into real products or services - only the ones that achieve a fit between needs and value for the customer (Osterwalder et al. 2014). Thus, ideas and opportunities are not the same, but are connected as the opportunity in our view is the situation in which the idea is successfully implemented, i.e. creates value by alleviating needs. In this chapter, we argue that ideas, needs and value can be viewed as formed or enhanced throughout our design process, and that it can therefore be understood as an opportunity formation process.

If opportunities are dependent on the creation of value, it is relevant to consider how one judges the existence or formation of an opportunity, i.e. how one assesses how value has been created. In much entrepreneurship literature, opportunities are inferred from market creation and the creation of economic value (Godley and Casson 2015; Eckhardt and Shane 2003). As we are concerned with social entrepreneurship in which the main focus is not on gaining profit, but solving social problems, we must assess opportunities differently. It is proposed that whether social entrepreneurial idea can be considered an opportunity should be evaluated based on its ability to do that (Zahra et al. 2008). As we have argued that value is an individual experience unique to a specific situation, this assessment must be largely individual.
Theoretical positioning

Many prevalent definitions on entrepreneurship revolve around the practice of exploitation of opportunities (Stevenson 1983), and the concept of opportunity has been argued to be a crucial element of entrepreneurship research by many scholars (Kirzner 1997; Shane and Venkataraman 2007; Gaglio and Katz 2001). Inspired by Gartner et al. (2003), we distinguish between the different approaches based on their ontological views of the nature of opportunities:

We differentiate between the discovery view of opportunities, in which opportunities are understood as objectively existing independent of entrepreneurial activity (Kirzner 1997; Shane and Venkataraman 2007; Venkataraman 1997; Schumpeter 1947; Gaglio and Katz 2001) and the creation view, in which opportunities are created or emerge in processes involving entrepreneurial activity and the surrounding environment (Gartner, Carter, and Hills 2003; Popp and Holt 2013; Sarasvathy 2001). In the following, we summarize and discuss the main theoretical positions and the assumptions within each perspective, finally arriving at our own approach to the formation of opportunities.

The discovery view

In the discovery view, opportunities are understood as concrete realities waiting to be discovered, evaluated and exploited. As Shane and Venkataraman (2000) put it: “Although recognition of entrepreneurial opportunities is a subjective process, the opportunities themselves are objective phenomena that are not known to all parties at all times” (220). Who are the opportunities known to?

The answer has long been the entrepreneur and thus dominant theories in entrepreneurship have focused on the characteristics of the entrepreneur. With his concept of creative response, Schumpeter (1947) attributes special abilities to the entrepreneur, giving him/her abilities to perceive and act on the opportunities created by shocks in the economy. Another example is Khilstrom and Laffont (1979), who argue that entrepreneurs tend to have a greater preference for uncertainty than non-entrepreneurs. Similarly, Gaglio and Katz (2001) present a schema focused on the special abilities of perception inherent in the alertness of the entrepreneur. These scholars exemplify a individual-centered view to opportunity discovery. Yet Gartner (1988) argues that this approach is unfruitful in explaining entrepreneurship and encourage scholars to focus instead on what the entrepreneurs do.
Adhering to Gartner’s critique, many scholars have shifted attention to understanding the nexus of entrepreneurs and opportunities instead. Shane and Venkataraman (2000) instead focus on factors that influence the probability that particular people will discover an opportunity. They build on economic literature of alertness, observation and informational asymmetries (Hayek 1945; Arrow 1974) as key in the discovery of opportunities. Kirzner (1997) and Shane and Venkataraman (2000) argue that information asymmetries about man-made ‘errors’ in the market constitute opportunities and that alert individuals can, when discovering the information, discover the opportunities. The exploitation of opportunities thus rest on individuals. Kirzner’s perspective is largely opportunity-centered in the sense that the entrepreneur is given a rather passive role, as he/she happens upon the opportunity more or less by coincidence. The entrepreneur could thus be anyone, as long as they are ‘alert’ to the objectively existing information previously overlooked (Kirzner 1997, 70-72). Similarly, Venkataraman (1997) suggests that the individuals discover opportunities, because they possess valuable objective information that others do not, but also supports the emphasis on the cognitive abilities of the entrepreneur in being able to exploit opportunities (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000).

Alvarez, Barney and Young (2010) challenge Kirzner and Shane and Venkataraman in expressing that they still focus on identifying those people in society who prefer to become entrepreneurs:

This perspective asserts that individuals who are entrepreneurs and those that are non-entrepreneurs must differ is some important ways. Without these differences, anyone in an economy could become aware of and then exploit an opportunity. [Because] entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs differ, […] not everyone in an economy will know about particular opportunities, and even if they do, not everyone will be predisposed to exploit them (26).

Shane and Venkataraman (2000) claim that this is not the case. Instead they “are describing the tendency of certain people to respond to the situational cues of opportunities - not a stable characteristic that differentiates some people from others across all situations” (201). In other words, they explain how some people in some situations respond to information and not how certain people in all situations respond to information.

Another discussion within the discovery view is whether the objective opportunities can be understood *ex-ante* (before) their exploitation or *ex-post* (after) exploitation of the
opportunity. Alvarez, Barney and Young (2010) argue that because the discovery view of opportunities is “that these opportunities exist independent of individual’s knowledge of them” (26), the discovery view requires individuals to have an ex-ante understanding of the opportunity. Yet the discovery view “holds the nature of the world, and specifically the opportunity in this case, subject to empirical investigation” (Alvarez, Barney, and Young 2010, 16). Thus, in principle, the existence of an opportunity can be ‘tested’ before it is exploited. This does not fit with how the discovery view suggests how to validate the existence of an opportunity: “The only reliable confirmation that a previously unseen or unknown valuable opportunity does in fact exist occurs when a market has been created for the new item” (Eckhardt and Shane 2003, 339). In other words, the observable activity of market creation is key to any validation of entrepreneurial opportunities, and therefore opportunities can only be inferred ex-post from market behavior (Godley and Casson 2015). This poses a difficulty to the objectivist understanding of opportunities.

Godley and Casson, therefore, suggest to remove the entrepreneurial opportunity from the center of any research agenda as it constitutes vast operational difficulties. Instead, Godley and Casson suggest focusing on entrepreneurial actions and how these shape entrepreneurial opportunities. They assume that ‘problems’ (not opportunities) exist independently of the entrepreneur, but that it is up to the entrepreneur to create a market for a solution to that problem. They attribute entrepreneurs special cognitive skills with which they can ‘diagnose’ problems that customers are not aware of themselves and thereby create an opportunity (ibid.). Taking this approach Godley and Casson assume a more processual view of opportunities, which is similar to the creation view of opportunities.

The creation view

Scholars adopting the creation view argue that opportunities do not objectively exist, but are socially constructed in the mind of the entrepreneur in an interplay between the entrepreneur and his/her context (Popp and Holt 2013). The opportunities thus do not exist independently of the actors making sense of them. The creation view therefore entails an ex-post understanding of opportunities. As Alvarez, Barney and Young (2010) express it: “In opportunity creation neither the supply nor demand exists prior to individual action: instead the individual through their actions develops both the opportunity and the market” (27).

Gartner et al. (2003) describe opportunities as “socially constructed, subjective and the product of an individual’s (organization’s) actions, rather than viewed as a set of fixed
circumstances that must be responded to” (109, emphasis in original text). Drawing on insights from strategic identity and organization theories (Daft and Weick 1984; S. G. Scott and Lane 2000), Gartner et al. (2003) propose an *enactment* perspective in which opportunities are viewed to emerge out of the imagination of the individuals by their actions and their interactions with others. In this view, opportunities are conceptualized as emergent cognitive and social processes. In the enactment perspective, opportunities emerge or come into existence out of the day-to-day activities of individuals, positioning individual sense-making activities as a constituting element in opportunity creation (Gartner et al. 2003).

Similarly, Sarasvathy (2001) proposes a theory of effectuation in relation to entrepreneurial decision-making. She argues that the decisions and actions are part of shaping the future, i.e. entrepreneurs play an active role in *creating* opportunities through their actions. Popp and Holt (2013) present the notion of entrepreneurship as *making present*, meaning that opportunities are actively created by the entrepreneur. They also argue for blending the understanding of opportunity and context:

> In doing so, we move away from the idea of ‘origin’ as a unitary moment of enlightened commencement by a person of specific traits, or the mere outcome of structural forces, and instead conceive of it as a constant interplay of person, becoming and place, set within the experiential flow of history (Popp and Holt 2013, 10).

The perspectives presented so far place constitutive emphasis on the cognition of the entrepreneur in creating opportunities. They assume that opportunities, so to speak, originate in the mind of the entrepreneur (Popp and Holt 2013), through decision-making and action (Sarasvathy 2001) or individual sense-making activities (Gartner et al. 2003). The creation view is thus a processual view of opportunities, in which the entrepreneurial activity creates opportunities, i.e. opportunities do not exist without this activity (Gartner et al. 2003).

This view is criticised by Fletcher (2006) for putting too much emphasis on individual capabilities of the entrepreneur. She instead proposes the view of opportunity *formation*. Fletcher (2006) adheres to the processual view of the emergence of opportunities, but also brings in a relational constructionist perspective and thus gives more emphasis to political, social and cultural aspects of an opportunity formation process. As Fletcher (2006) writes:

> The act of realizing a business idea is always relational. It always connects to something else that is going on, has gone before or will come again in the future. In this sense, it is possible
to argue that the accounts people construct about opportunity emergence are expressions of relationship to the culture, society and the institutions (of capitalism, family, market economy, enterprise discourse) in which they have been reproduced (434).

To sum up, the different theoretical perspectives on entrepreneurial opportunities differ in their emphasis on defining if everyone has the abilities to become entrepreneurs, what characterizes an entrepreneur in terms of cognitive abilities and access to information, whether opportunities can be viewed as an objective phenomena or is created through different processes, if their existence can be understood and verified ex-ante or ex-post their exploitation, and if they are created by the entrepreneur or by a community of individuals relating to broader societal, economic and political processes.

Given our ontological stance on the relational construction of realities and rejection of objective realities, we do not find the discovery view of opportunities fitting as a framework for our inquiry. Furthermore, we consider the creation view too focused on individuals, and thus limited in its ability to account for why opportunities are formed at a specific point in time.

Instead we adopt a relational constructionist view, and argue in line with Fletcher that the formation of an opportunity can be seen as a relational one in which the participants in the formation process are constantly relating to the things around them. Thus, in this view, an opportunity is not created in the mind of an individual or through individual actions, but instead formed by the relations between participants in a societal context.

In the following, we show how our design process can be seen as an opportunity formation process, which is relationally and communally constituted. We also show how the creation of ideas, needs and value in this process is embedded in the discourses of (im)perfection in our society.
The opportunity formation process

Fletcher (2006) suggests that opportunities are relationally and communally constituted and focuses on the idea as the constitutive element of the opportunity formation process. Following our definition of opportunity, we take an extended approach and focus on the formation (and enhancement) of ideas, needs and value in our design process. In the following, we use the material from the design process to examine how ideas, value and needs can be seen as relationally formed in the interactions between the participants of our design process, and how these are influenced by previous conversations, experiences and thoughts of the participants. In this, we place special focus on the previous experiences with the Fries Before Guys podcast. Furthermore, the influence of the societal embeddedness is included by drawing on the discourses of (im)perfection from our genelogic narrative in Chapter 2.

The guiding elements in the present reading are thus: the design process, in which the dialogue happens, the (previous) experiences and understandings of the participants, especially those concerning the Fries Before Guys universe, and the discourses of (im)perfection. We begin our reflections with the ideas, moving on to value and needs, before finally discussing how these concepts can be seen as intertwined in an opportunity formation process.

Ideas

As explained in Chapter 3, we created a multitude of ideas throughout the design process. Though we did not focus explicitly on idea generation before the ideation phase, ideas were constructed in all stages of the process from the first meeting with the podcast hosts to the last test event with the hosts and some of their listeners. In this section, we do not give an overview of the ideas, but instead show how the ideas can be seen as relationally and communally formed.

Ideas formed out of the experience of the workshops

Many of the Fries Before Guys listeners, who participated in our workshops, enjoyed meeting other listeners and based on these positive experiences, they started getting ideas that were similar to the experience of interacting with other listeners. After talking about how easy it
was to feel at home with the other listeners in the workshops even though they were all strangers, one listener said:

There is such a good basis for conversation cafés! For instance with Fries [the podcast hosts]. It would be a really safe forum in which to share [thoughts]. If I knew that a stranger was listening to Fries, I would instantly want to talk with them (App. 13b).

Similarly, the listeners also began talking about how they could create an “informal listener friends group” and that meeting face-to-face instead of online “had a huge potential” (App. 14b).

As part of our workshops, we facilitated conversations about personal topics, which made the participants get to know each other and made them want to meet up again for a future event. As one participant explained: “We added each other on Facebook before we parted ways and all agreed that we now have an opportunity to go to the next Fries event ’not alone’” (App. 18d). This way, the participants got a ‘Fries event buddy’, which was one of the ideas that was articulated in the very same workshop (App. 18c). Similarly, another participants described one of the events as a “success” because: “I have gotten two new Facebook girlfriends through the workshops, you have arranged and I’m really fond of them!” (App. 21e). This experience relates to the idea of ‘Fries listener speed dating’, which also came up in our workshops.

Previous experiences

Several of the ideas that were generated in our design process built on previous experiences. Fletcher (2006) argues that:

The idea emerges through pieces of dialogue that are themselves fragments of previous conversations, experiences, thoughts and happenings. Ideas are always related to some previous understanding or experience (433-434).

Adopting this view, the ideas developed in our workshops also stem from other ideas, experiences and thoughts that the participants had already had. In our workshop, one participant suggested meeting at dinners in listeners private homes, as this was something she had done with people from the Burning Man Community in Copenhagen (App. 18c). Another participant suggested an event, where listeners could read texts and stories aloud, they had
produced themselves, an idea inspired by similar events such as Spoken Word (App. 18c). The podcast hosts came up with an idea they called ‘The Fries Monopoly’ inspired by the popular radio show ‘Mads and the Monopoly’ (App. 17c). The participant of the ideation workshop had an easy time developing this idea further as they were also familiar with the radio show (App. 18c). Similarly, participants also developed an idea about ‘body parts workshops’, which was based on a TV show that pictures different women and men’s genitals and on a participant’s experience with a ‘stomach therapist’ (App. 18c). Finally, at almost every workshop, we discussed the idea of an online forum for listeners of the podcast, where they could debate the topics discussed in the podcast. When describing this idea, the hosts and participants referred to previous experiences with platforms such as Hestenettet.dk, Woman.dk, Facebook groups, etc. (App. 12b, 13b, 14b, 17c, 18c).

**Societal embeddedness**

Many of the ideas developed in our design process built on the idea of sharing personal stories and being vulnerable with people that are practically strangers. In regards to the influences of societal discourse, this can be seen as influenced by the imperfection discourse in which young women are encouraged to share their personal problems publically in order to let everyone know that we all have the same problems. An example of seeking support from strangers is the ‘heartbreak support group’ mentioned in Chapter 2. This specific example of a contributor to the imperfection discourse was brought up in the ideation workshop for inspiration for new ideas (App. 18c). In this way, the idea of being vulnerable amongst strangers from the imperfection discourse can be seen as influential in the possibilities imagined by the workshop participants.

In this section, we have shown how the ideas created in our design process can be seen as formed by the interactions in the moment, and with the influence of previous experiences of the participants, as well as the understanding of which practices are possible in the society, we were all situated in. The ideas can also be seen as formed by the experiences of value and creation and enhancement of needs in the workshops. Before elaborating on this point, we consider how needs and value articulated in our design process can be seen as relationally and communally formed.
Needs and value themes

We now turn to the formation of needs and value in our design process. Needs and value can be seen as articulated in our material in a variety of ways. For the sake of understanding, we have grouped these articulations in six themes, each describing different perceived needs and/or value: reflection and learnings, gratitude and joy, appreciation and connection, courage and vulnerability, inspiration and empowerment, and lastly, community.

Creation of Themes

The first influence on the formation of themes came from ourselves. Before initiating the collaboration with the podcast hosts, we were both motivated by working on topics relating to our own perceptions of the unhealthy youth culture, relating to the discourse of perfection. Both of us had recently finished the book *Daring Greatly* by Brown (2015), which had given us a language for understanding our dissatisfaction with the societal discourse. This made us especially prone to think in concepts such as: vulnerability, whole human beings, authenticity, connection, community, learning.

Another influence came from the podcast hosts. In the initial meetings of our collaboration, they gave their interpretation of what their listeners value in the podcast, as well as what their listeners’ needs are. This understanding came partly from listeners messages to the hosts, partly from their own experiences. The hosts mentioned needs such as having deep conversations, being close with others, showing vulnerability, expressing difficult feelings, feeling normal and to learn more about themselves (App. 7b).

These thoughts and articulations posed the basis for our design process (App. 9b) and must be considered as part of the formation of the themes. Practically, the themes were developed through various readings and reconstructions of our material. Before deciding on focusing on the concepts of needs and value, we read through our material to consider what had happened in the design process. Several areas of interest were created, out of which we chose to focus on the creation of needs and value due to our focus on social entrepreneurship and social value creation. Focusing on the concepts of needs and value and needs, we read through and reconstructed the articulations of the participants as well as the diary entries accordingly. After identifying a multitude of different expressions of value and needs, we grouped them into overall themes.
Presentation of the themes

In the following, we briefly present the different themes of needs and value and give examples of how they were articulated in our material. The examples are only a small sample of the vast material, we have produced during the design process.

Reflection and learning

This theme describes the need to and value of getting new perspectives, new knowledge and to learn. It describes reflection in general and especially on oneself, self-awareness and lastly, expressing thoughts not previously articulated. These topics were articulated by the participants as needs. As an example, many participants highlight their need to have deep conversations and reflect on their lives with other people, but because their everyday lives can be busy, they sometimes do not take the time for these conversations with their friends. “Instead the podcast fulfills this need in my life every week” (App. 12b), one participant explained.

Gratitude and joy

The second theme is a rather simple one, which encompasses gratitude and joy, as well as feelings of appreciation and enthusiasm. In general, joy and appreciation were expressed as value of our workshops by all the participants in our design process. This is especially linked to the atmosphere of the workshops, which is described as both “positive and joyful” (App. 14b), “nice, fun and energetic” (App. 14b) and “fun and exciting” (App. 18c). One participant expressed that she was happy that she had the courage to show up alone because “what an energy boost I left with! So many cool women in this town, wow!” (App. 21e).

Appreciation and connection

The theme of appreciation and connection includes a variety topics. It describes feeling understood, seen and heard, feeling accepted and acknowledged as your authentic self, feeling connected to other people, acceptance of difference and feeling safe.

These feelings were articulated both as needs and value in our design process. As an example, many participants mentioned a need to be accepted for who they are, also when they are not at their best. A participant shared how she did not experience being understood, when feeling depressed after having been victim of two assaults: “My friends only liked me,
because I was fun and full of initiative. But now that I was feeling bad, what was my role then?” (App. 14b).

In regards to value, several participants described the workshops as a safe space, which made sharing opinions and personal stories easy. Several participants mention how the atmosphere was very non-judgemental. As one participant, who had attended two of our workshops expressed it:

These workshops have been a space, where I was not afraid of being judged. I would not be afraid to say something controversial. I walk around with many things inside me that I wish I could talk to someone about. The workshops have been a space where this was possible (App. 21d).

Many participants also expressed feeling valued. One participant said that she enjoyed having conversations with strangers in a space, where she “felt heard, understood and acknowledged” (App. 14c), and another participant emphasized how the experience of being listened to was “extremely rewarding for one’s self-worth” (App. 14c).

Courage and vulnerability

The theme of courage and vulnerability includes several feelings and abilities as well. In our material, it is primarily related to being brave and vulnerable in terms of sharing thoughts and feelings with others, both with friends, family and strangers. This theme is also expressed by the participants as both needs, they perceive to have and value, they experienced in the design process. Many participants expressed a need to share difficult thoughts and have deep conversations: “I only have one friend who also listens [to the podcast]. I would like to share it with more [people] […]. I need to talk to other people about my thoughts” (App. 13b).

Similarly, one of the experiences that has been expressed as creating the most value in the design process has been sharing personal stories. A participant described a feeling of relief after sharing very personal stories and getting a positive response: “I shared some very personal topics - this is exactly the essence of my positive perception of the workshop! Why does all the ‘personal’ have to be taboo … It’s nice to open up and be received well” (App. 14b). Another participant, who had shared how she had been victim of an assault, explained: “I think it’s important to share these things with the world to break taboos and also as a process of healing for me” (App. 14c).
Inspiration and empowerment

The theme of inspiration and empowerment is rather simple, but important. It was not articulated as a need in our design process, but several times as a value of the workshops. Many participants mentioned how they felt inspired after the workshops by the conversations which made many of the participants think about subjects, they had not considered in depth before (App. 12c, 21e). Some participants also described the workshops as therapeutic room for them. One participant even said that she left the workshop feeling stronger (App. 13b).

Community

The theme of community includes feelings of being part of a community that share the same values, to feel supported and not alone. It is also about feeling ‘normal’ and connected to the rest of the human race (or at least the female part). This was articulated as both needs and value in our design process.

Several participants expressed the need be part of a bigger community and that they believed that a Fries Before Guys community could be a community, where you could be both courageous (App. 18c), fight loneliness (App. 18c) and empower each other (App. 21b). Some participants mentioned that the workshops made them feel part of a community and that this made it easy for them to talk to the other participants during the workshops (App. 21d, 21e). Other participants referred to this feeling as a feeling of realizing how many women are out there, who also listen to Fries Before Guys and deal with similar issues in their lives (App. 18c).

Needs

In this section, we reflect on how the different needs articulated in our design process were formed. We divide the reflection in an examination of needs formed in the design process, needs formed by Fries Before Guys and needs formed by society. This is not to say that the formation of needs is a linear process, but merely for the sake of understanding. The formation of needs is a complex, nonlinear process between old and new experiences, relations and thoughts.

Needs formed in the design process

Throughout the workshop in our design process, many participants met each other for the first time. Many participants, who expressed a need to interact more with other listernes,
mentioned that they had not even considered the existence of other listeners before they were invited to our workshops. One participant mentioned how she had never thought about other listeners before (App. 12c), but that she could not let go of the thought after our workshop and kept reflection on it afterwards (App. 12d). Likewise, another participant, who attended our idea generation workshop, described a dream, she had of being able to spot other listeners in public: “I had my own bike shop and I put Fries stickers on people’s bikes. I don’t know what that is about […], but I would like to have a Fries sticker on my bike. It would be a way to spot other listeners” (App. 18d).

The need to meet other listeners is a new need for some participants. As one participant told us: “My desire to meet other listeners at Fries events has emerged in your workshops” (App. 21d). For other participants, the need has been strengthened:

I’ve been confirmed in that there is a need for this community. Many people need a place to go. People wouldn’t show up if it wasn’t significant to them. This podcast is not just able to entertain, but can also be used, and that is what makes it important (App. 21d).

**Needs formed by listening to Fries Before Guys**

Some needs that the participants expressed in our design process can be seen as formed by listening to the Fries Before Guys podcast. For instance, several participants explained how they had not thought about their need to reflection on their lives before they began to listen to the podcast (App. 12b, 13b). One participant explained:

While listening to the podcast, it kind of hit me that I can take time to reflect upon my life. I had almost forgotten about that! Now I try to remind myself to reflect. For instance, I sometimes walk instead of bike, in order to have time to reflect (App. 12b).

Another need that they had not thought about before they listened to the podcast is to be emotionally courageous. Because the podcast hosts are perceived as courageous, the listeners have become aware of that possibility (App. 12b). A participant told us that she had not been provoked to think about this before: “I haven't noticed a discourse in society about being brave and courageous. Only one about being brave when it comes to physical stuff, but not emotionally” (App. 12b). Yet after listening to the podcast, some participants felt the need to practice being courageous themselves. One participant told us how she was dealing with an eating disorder some years ago that she did not tell anyone about, because she did not have
the courage to be honest. “But after listening to the podcast, I have learned how to express the story and that people would like to listen to it” (App. 13b).

Related to this, many participants have experienced that listening to the podcast has made them realize how much they need deep conversations, which has made them raise their standards for their relationships and made them try to provoke these kind of conversations. One participant explained:

After I started listening to the podcast, I have realized how important these deep conversations are for me. Now, when I start dating a new guy, I always notice if he is good at that or not. It’s a big turn off if he is not (App. 12b).

**Needs formed in the societal discourses**

Finally, several of needs created or enhanced through the design process and through the Fries Before Guys podcast can also be seen as influenced by the societal discourses. As we argue in Chapter 2, the discourses of (im)perfection affect how young women relate to themselves. The perfection discourse contributes to a pressure on young women, which makes them feel like they need to be perfect to be good enough. This leads to the feeling of having to constantly perform and improve. A participant explained how “society is sometimes very busy” and that she sees the podcast as a counter reaction to this, for instance by practicing self-reflection: “Everything needs a certificate and a tick in a box. You can’t get that by practicing self-reflection, but it’s still important!” (App. 12b), one participant explained. In order to stop striving for perfection and embrace being vulnerable and imperfect the young women need to be courageous. In this way, the perfection discourse contributes to the creation of a demand for courage, if they want to be different. The participants articulate this too. One participant said:

Being vulnerable presupposes courage. The vulnerability is hidden in us and is covered up, because everything needs to be so perfect and polished. Everything you struggle with is put away. That’s why being vulnerable demands you to have the courage to speak up about the things that are considered taboos (App. 14b).

This also relates to taking decisions in one’s life that are not part of how a perfect young woman in supposed to act. A participant explained that she quit her job to make time for
another project in her life. This made her financial situation very unstable and she felt the need to be courageous and accept vulnerability to do this. “I have a dream that I want to follow! When you go against the norms in society, you place yourself in a situation, where you are vulnerable” (App. 14b).

The perfect imperfection discourse also contributes to the ‘fake performance’ that many young women feel like they need to practice in order to be good enough. One participant explained: “I’m so tired of all this impression management in society. I get really provoked by the trend on Instagram that says that now everything needs to be imperfect, because it is also just a fake set up!” (App. 14b). Consequently, the young women need to be courageous to neither strive for the ideal of being perfect or being perfectly imperfect.

Above, we have shown how the needs expressed in our design process can be viewed as formed through both the design process, the podcast Fries Before Guys and the discourses of (im)perfection in society. Furthermore, looking at the reconstruction of needs as relationally constituted has indicated that when needs are being met (by the podcast or by our design process), it can lead to an enhancement of the needs. We return to this point at the end of the chapter. First, we look at how the design process met some of the needs that were expressed by the participants.

Value

In this section, we reflect on how the different kinds of value articulated in our design process were formed. When participants mentioned the value, they have experienced from the design process, they talk about the value as if the value is created ‘in’ the workshops. We illustrate how the experiences of value can also be seen as relationally reconstructed in the moment, through previous experiences with listening to Fries Before Guys and through the discourses of (im)perfection.

Value formed relationally in the moment

The moment when participants experience value is relationally reconstructed. Their experience of value is affected both by us as facilitators, their own behavior and by the other

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7 To remind the reader: The discourse of perfect imperfection denotes an ideal of being imperfect in a perfect way.
participants in the room. Many participants emphasize how our approach to facilitating the workshop was important for their own behavior in them: “Ida og Anne started out sharing something of themselves and I think that gave most of the participants the courage to do the same” (App. 13c). This contributed to creating the right atmosphere for sharing: “It was super cool that you both from the beginning created an atmosphere that set the stage for an honest and intimate conversation” (App. 14c). The participants also expressed their own responsibility in creating the right atmosphere for vulnerability.

I am convinced that the good conversation only emerges in a space, if everyone feel like and dare share something of themselves. And now that I had signed up for the workshop, it would have been a bit pointless, if I was not ready to participate and contribute with something myself (App. 12c).

Value formed through listening to Fries Before Guys

In our view, value is reconstructed in relation to previous experiences with value, for instance listening to Fries Before Guys. Many participants highlighted how knowing that the other workshop participants were listeners of the Fries Before Guys podcast made them feel more comfortable about showing up to our workshops all by themselves. As one participant shared: "It made me feel very safe about showing up today, that I knew that you are all dedicated listeners. Normally I can feel unsafe, but I didn’t today” (App. 13b). It also helped the participants relax and be themselves throughout our workshops: “Just the fact that I knew that the other participants were also Fries fans meant that I wasn’t nervous about seeming too self-centered or overly reflective “ (App. 12c). In this way, the participants were able to bring their previous experiences of the value from listening to the podcast with them into the workshops. In this way, similar value was reconstructed during our workshops One listener reflected upon this:

We have transferred an auditory space to a physical space. Had it been a focus group about something else, it would not have turned out this way. It’s a community because we are all listeners. If you listen to Fries, you are a decent human being, you share values and reflect upon yourself - I trust you instantly! (App. 14b)
**Value formed through societal discourses**

The participants’ conception of what value is can be viewed as based on previous reconstructions, such as previous conversations about what is valuable. In this view, the imperfection discourse can contribute to the reconstruction of the value of the design process. By focusing on, as an example, the value of being vulnerable with other people and breaking with taboos and notions about ‘what is normal’, the discourse of imperfection shapes the understanding of what is valuable. As one participant remarked: “I am sometimes exposed to a discourse in society which indicates that you should feel ‘normal’ and ‘feel secure’ about who you are” (App. 12b). Other listeners highlighted different blogs, podcasts and Instagram accounts that all tap into the being imperfect discourse as inspiration for ideas (App. 18c), implying that the way these influencers talk and write about what is valuable to do or be, influences the participants’ view of which value their ideas should focus on creating. The same can be said about the participants’ perceptions of our workshops as valuable to them. Had they not been exposed to the discourse of imperfection emphasizing sharing personal stories and being vulnerable as vulnerable, the participants might not have had a positive experience of this in the workshop. In this way, bringing the understandings of the imperfection discourse into our design process supported the creation of the value in our process.

In the above, we have shown how the experience of value from our design process can be viewed as formed through relations in the moment, through previous experiences with listening to Fries Before Guys and through the discourses of (im)perfection. Other quotes in our material suggest that experiences of value can be part of both the formation of ideas and the formation or enhancement of needs.
Opportunity formation

We have shown how ideas, needs and value can be understood as emerging in our design process. We argue that both the interactions in the design process, the previous experiences, thoughts and feelings of the participants and the societal discourses influence the formation ideas, and the creation and enhancement of value and needs. In this section, we explore how the formation of ideas, needs and value is intertwined, arguing that the formation of all three can be seen as constitutive of opportunity formation. In this way, we argue that our design process can be viewed as an opportunity formation process. Lastly, we consider what this means in relation to supporting social entrepreneurship.

Ideas, needs, value

The formation of ideas, needs and value in our design process is intertwined. In a design process, it is usually assumed that needs already exist, and what is to be developed are ideas of how to cover those needs. This hopefully lead to value as the ideas are implemented (Osterwalder et al. 2014). In our design process, many ideas were created in this way with specific needs in mind, and with the intention of creating value in implementation. However, value and needs were also created or enhanced in our design process and that influenced the creation of ideas.

Firstly, our design process contributed to the creation or enhancement of needs, which then often led to new ideas. An example of this is the need of a community of Fries Before Guys listeners. Most participants had never considered the existence of other listeners, and even less the possibility of interacting with them. The experience of interacting with other listeners in our workshops was perceived as valuable, which then led to a need to interact more with listeners. This spurred the development of ideas for platforms of interaction between Fries Before Guys listeners. As one participant reacted to the experience of a workshop:

It’s nice to have a community that you can meet with but which at the same time does not require you to commit. You can use it a little more professionally, but at the same time it’s personal, and you can share thoughts on topics such as body ideals or feelings - I need that it my life! (App. 21d)
An experience of value of the workshops thus led the participants to wanting more, i.e. created a need for them, which then again led to new ideas. These experiences of value of our design process sometimes also led directly to new ideas. As an example, a participant shared this consideration after a workshop:

> What we did yesterday is actually the kind of event you could/should make for listeners, who want to meet up. If there is a moderator or an overall topic, then we are all ready to meet up alone in a ‘stranger’s’ house and have very deep and personal conversations - that is something you could do more of! (App. 12d)

Here experience of the workshop led to the formation of a new idea, basically of doing exactly the same.

**Articulations increase experience or feeling**

Another interesting ‘observation’ in our material was that the articulation of a need or of an experience of value by others often led to an enhancement of the feeling of need or value in the participants. An example of this, in relation to needs, is the need to have deep conversations with other people. The articulation of such a need by others led to the enhancement or ‘discovery’ of the need for some participants. As one participant explained:

> Through the workshops I’ve come to think about if I have anyone in my life that I’m close to and who I can be vulnerable with, because this is a topic that has been very prevalent in our conversations. I’ve also begun to think about asking my friends why they are friends with me - normally that’s something you only ask your boyfriend (App. 21d).

Similarly, the articulations of the value of the podcast made some participants ‘realize’ of how valuable the podcast had been for them. In the workshops we talked about the value the participants experience from listening to the podcast. This articulation of the value strengthened their experience of the value, they get from listening to the podcast. As one participant said: “I did not know how much the Fries girls had actually influenced my everyday life, but this became more and more apparent to me [in the workshop] and that was a good experience” (App. 13c). Another participant mentioned: “I’ve come to think about how much I’ve developed with the podcast - you can forget about that - but through these workshops I’ve been reminded about that” (App. 18c).
The design process as an opportunity formation process

Returning to the concept of opportunity and how our process can be understood as an opportunity formation process, we defined opportunity as *a situation in which an idea is implemented and creates value for a user by alleviating needs of the user.*

In the above, we show how ideas, needs and value can be seen as created in our design process and how they can be understood as relationally and communally formed. Based on this, we argue that our design process can be seen as an opportunity formation process, in which opportunities to create value were formed between us, the hosts of Fries Before Guys and the listeners, who participated in our design process. This formation was based on previous experiences, thoughts and conversations of the participants including the podcast hosts and ourselves), as well as our cultural, social and political context.

As our understanding of opportunity entails value creation, it is thus only understandable in hindsight, i.e. ex-post. Furthermore, we argued above that, although relationally constructed and defined, value is a subjective experience. Thus, the only way of assessing if value was created in our design process is by positive confirmation from the participants and through our own experiences. The articulations of the value of our design process centered on emotional courage, vulnerability, reflection and community. These themes are very similar to the perceived value of podcast (see Value Map Chapter 3), and to what we defined in our design challenge as the aim of the developed ideas (App. 16b). Through our design process, the value we intended to create with the implementation of ideas in the future, was thus created already in the process of developing these ideas. This is considered below in relation to how design can support social entrepreneurship.

**Supporting social entrepreneurship**

In our question of inquiry, we center on how design processes can support social entrepreneurship. In this chapter, we have shown how our design process by including the podcast hosts and their listeners can be viewed as an opportunity formation process, creating value for the involved. Interestingly, the value created was similar to that of the podcast and the value, we wished to create with the implementation of the ideas, we developed. In this way, one could argue that our design process itself furthered the goal of the social entrepreneurial initiative of the Fries Before Guys podcast. In our case, one could argue that
design processes by becoming processes of opportunity formation thus can become social entrepreneurship themselves.

In relation to the value of the ideas created in the design process, we cannot predict anything definitive. This is due to the experiential and situational nature of value. Did we create or enhance potential for value creation in the future? Many participants expressed that they had become aware of how much potential the Fries Before Guys community has by participating in our workshop (App. 18c). As one participant put it: “There is a strong will in this female community. There is a will to interact with those who take part in the events [...] It contributes to confirm your worth in the world” (App. 21d). At the test event, a participant summed up the evening by concluding that the podcast is not enough: “There is more potential. We can open up for interesting topics. It is super important, because there is a need for these conversations” (App. 21b). These quotes implies that there is more potential to work with in the future.

An interesting aspect of this, is that our design process has not only created ideas, but has also contributed to the creation or enhancement of needs for the participants. As everything is relationally created, we all participate in the creation of different ideas, needs and value continuously. We argue that ethical considerations should be present in both social entrepreneurship and design processes, which we reflect further upon in the following chapter.
Chapter 5: Further reconstructions

In this chapter we first reflect on the reconstructions of our inquiry in Chapter 4. We begin with considerations of the reconstruction of needs in relation to the discourses of (im)perfection presented in Chapter 2, and our design process. This leads to reflections on the ethical responsibility of social entrepreneurs and designers for social innovation as actively involved in creation of needs, while trying to solve complex social problems.

We continue with a summation of our inquiry as presented in this paper and based on this develop practical and theoretical takeaways for practitioners and inquirers engaged in the fields of social entrepreneurship and design for social innovation. We then critically assess our work, firstly based on the quality themes proposed by McNamee and Hosking (2012), as presented in Chapter 1. Secondly, we draw on different meta-theoretical and practical perspectives to critique our choice of approach and suggest alternative foci, our inquiry could have assumed. Finally, we present possibilities for future inquiry focusing on creation of needs through articulation on a broader societal level. In this regard, we consider the recent contribution of Feldman Barrett (2018) on the ‘origin’ of emotions a relevant perspective for future inquiry.

Reflections of the creation of needs

Due to our relational constructionist stance, we everyone and everything as constantly reconstructing relational realities through their interactions. These interactions also include the reconstruction of needs, as illustrated by the reconstruction our design process in Chapter 4. In our view, the needs of young women are thus not given, but constructed for through different interactions, including interactions with the discourses of (im)perfection. This sparks two questions: Which needs are the discourses of (im)perfection reconstructing? And which needs do we want to reconstruct, when engaging in interactions with young women, such as our workshop participants? We begin with the first question.

Needs in the discourses of (im)perfection

We live in a relational reality, where many young Danish women experience poor mental health and and where perfectionism is said to be on the rise. Understanding how this relational reality has been constructed and how it shapes the needs that young women
experience in their everyday lives is an enormous task. In our genealogic narrative of the discourses of (im)perfection in contemporary Denmark in Chapter 2, we tried to at least spark a dialogue about this. We illustrated how the discourses of (im)perfection can be viewed as constructed through techniques and practices in several different contexts of human life. Specifically, we examined the construction of the discourses through a framework with five different paths of investigation: problematizations, teleologies, strategies, technologies and authorities. Especially the paths of problematizations and teleologies describe the needs that these discourses could be said to reconstruct for young women. For a sum-up of some of the important needs, see Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perfection</th>
<th>Imperfection</th>
<th>Perfect imperfection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>- Wear perfect make-up and trendy clothing</td>
<td>- Do not judge your own and others people's physical appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Healthy, slim and strong body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>- Never in doubt</td>
<td>- Talk openly about taboos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Be resilient</td>
<td>- Constant state of happiness</td>
<td>- Find support in other people dealing with the same issues as yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do not struggle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and work</td>
<td>- Top grades</td>
<td>- Do what makes you happy, but accept doubt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Right competencies for a competitive labour market</td>
<td>- Clear career plan</td>
<td>- Accept failure, struggling and vulnerability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Performing maximum potential in school, work and in free time</td>
<td>- Use time efficiently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Needs in the three discourses of (im)perfection

A general point that can be made from our genealogic narrative is that the discourses of (im)perfection are not constructed by any single entrepreneur, institution, industry or the like. Instead, the discourses are constructed by a multitude of actors across space and time. The same can be said about the needs that are reconstructed through the discourses and about the
formation of opportunities as illustrated in Chapter 4. As we are all part of a societal context and constantly engage with the people and things around us, it is, in a relational constructionist view, impossible not to constantly take part in constructing discourses and relational realities. Related to the discussion of creation of needs in our design process, we must then not try to stop creating needs, as this is not an option. Instead, we must consider thoroughly which needs we are constructing through our relational engagement with each other and the things around us.

By focusing our inquiry on the Fries Before Guys podcast, we have supported and given voice to their practices and constructed relational realities with them and their listeners. As we argued in Chapter 2, we view the Fries Before Guys podcast as a social entrepreneurial initiative mainly engaging in and supporting the imperfection discourse. This was one of the key motivations for us to collaborate with the Fries Before Guys hosts and their listeners to begin with. Yet, we should notice that before we embarked on the journey of the design process with the hosts and their listeners, we had not considered that this process would also contribute to creating needs. Now that is has become apparent to us that the creation of needs can be seen as an outcome of any social interaction, we stand by our choice of collaborators and our focus in the design process. In our view, we would rather contribute to the construction of needs in the imperfection discourse than needs in perfection and perfect imperfection discourses (see Table 1 above). For instance, we would rather construct a need for young women to not judge their own and others’ physical appearance, than to construct a need to look healthy, slim and trendy at all times. Furthermore, we would rather construct a need for young women to open up about personal issues and seek support in other people than construct a need to be in a constant state of happiness and never doubt their choices. Finally, we prefer to construct a need for young women to accept failure, struggling and vulnerability than a need to perform at maximum potential in school, at work and in their free time in order to feel worthy. In short, we believe constructing these needs can be a better way to go on together and construct a relational reality of greater well-being.

As designers motivated by achieving social change, we believe that awareness of possible creation or enhancement of needs pose important challenges in engaging with a community or a group of people in practice. It poses ethical questions as to what we as designers take part in creating besides potential solutions. We unfold these consideration below.
Ethical responsibility

Because the discourses of (im)perfection and the needs constructed through these discourses are not created by anyone in particular, everyone has an ethical responsibility of the discourses and needs one is reconstructing. Yet, as we are concerned with the fields of design and social entrepreneurship, we reflect on the ethical responsibility of these practices in particular. As a way to make this reflection more concrete, we focus on the responsibility of designers and entrepreneurs, as they are the people who take active part in changing the world around us.

Ethical responsibility of entrepreneurs

According to Spinosa et al. (1997), entrepreneurs belong to the group of people who take active part in shaping which needs are going to be prevalent in the future. This is due to Spinosa et al.’s understanding of entrepreneurship as “history-making”, understood as changing the way in which we understand and deal with ourselves and the things around us. The way entrepreneurs change our understanding is by disclosing new spaces. A disclosive space is “any organized set of practices for dealing with oneself, other people and things that produce a relatively self-contained web of meanings” (ibid., 17). We do not go further into depth with how the entrepreneurs disclose new space, as that is not relevant here. What is relevant is that, according to Spinosa et al. (1997), entrepreneurs, in disclosing new space, choose a certain set of practices and values above the already existing set of practices and values and that is what makes history. In this way, entrepreneurs take part of determining which needs will seem important in the future, as people around them experience needs once these needs have been articulated by the entrepreneur (ibid.). In this view, taking action is what gives entrepreneurs more responsibility. Through disclosing new worlds with new needs, entrepreneurs have power to influence society with their values and thereby drive societal change - both ‘good’ and ‘bad’.

Spinosa et al. (1997) are concerned with entrepreneurship in general, but we argue that these points are especially relevant for social entrepreneurship. In the literature on and debate about social entrepreneurship, there is much focus on how social entrepreneurship can create value and solutions (Johnson 2004; Roberts and Woods 2005; Mair and Martí 2006), but not much attention is given to how social entrepreneurship practices are also part of the construction of needs.
Ethical responsibility of designers

Designers also play an important role in constructing the needs in society. Manzini (2015, 1) argues that in a world “in rapid and profound transformation, we are all designers”. He defines design as “a culture and a practice concerning how things ought to be in order to attain desired functions and meanings” (ibid., 53). Thus, everyone who acts on improving the state of things, be it individuals, public entities, organizations, businesses or voluntary associations, are designing (Manzini, 2015). Yet, he differentiates between diffuse design (which is what everybody does and can do) and expert design (performed by design experts) (ibid.).

Design experts bear the important role of supporting non-experts in designing and are thus in a position to become effective change agents (Manzini, 2015). One way expert designers do this is by constructing the common “idea of well-being” (Manzini 2006, 10). The needs of consumers and users are influenced by the idea of well-being and designers take an active role in shaping it: “In conceiving and proposing products, services and lifestyles, designers play an important role and consequently have an equally important responsibility in generating social expectations in terms of well-being” (Manzini 2006, 10). Designers continuously take decisions about the form and functionality of the products and services, they design. These decisions are based on criteria that deal with that is good, bad, right or wrong. Thus, when designers promote certain ideas of well-being with the products and services they design, they also make ethical choices (Manzini 2006).

Ethical responsibility of us as inquirers

It can be argued that everyone, whether they are aware of it or not, takes part in the creation of needs by engaging with people and things in the world. Thus, it follows that everyone has a responsibility for which needs are being constructed through the discourses in society. It can also be argued, that (social) entrepreneurs and expert designers, due to their active involvement in entrepreneurship and design practices, have a special responsibility in the construction of needs. This has implications for both inquiry processes like our own and for the practice of social entrepreneurship. In the next section, we go into further details with practical recommendations, we wish to highlight for social entrepreneurship based on our inquiry. For now, we turn our attention to our own responsibility as inquirers, and in this context as expert designers.
In the design process, we performed the role of expert designers supporting the participants in designing ideas. We acknowledge the responsibility that comes with this role. By engaging with the participants in our design process, we unknowingly took part in reconstructing similar kinds of needs in the imperfection discourse that we also took part in reconstructing by supporting the Fries Before Guys podcast in general. As examples, the needs for the participants to be accepted for who they are, to be vulnerable in terms of sharing thoughts and feelings with others, to have deep conversations and reflect on their lives with other people can be seen as formed or enhanced in our design process (see Chapter 4). Again, we prefer to contribute to the reconstruction of these needs for young women rather than to reconstruct needs closer related to the perfection and perfect imperfection discourses. Yet we also feel obliged to help alleviate them. As mentioned in Chapter 3, it is not a part of our inquiry or design process to implement the ideas of the design process with the Fries Before Guys podcast and thus we are not part of alleviating the needs, we contributed to constructing for and with the participants. We consider this an important reflection for (expert) designers in engaging in and facilitating design processes including the people, they are designing solutions for.
In summation

In this section we summarize our inquiry and provide an to our question of inquiry. We then consider the aims of our research and develop practical and theoretical considerations for both practitioners and scholars of social entrepreneurship and design for social innovation.

Our questions of inquiry

This paper presents an inquiry into a participatory design thinking process, which we created and facilitated for and with the Fries Before Guys podcast hosts and some of their listeners. Our inquiry into this design process was based on our question of inquiry:

*How can design approaches for social innovation support social entrepreneurship in solving the complex social problem of rising perfectionism amongst young women?*

By adopting a relational constructionist stance, we argue that our design process can be seen as having supported the social entrepreneurial initiative that is the Fries Before Guys podcast in two ways: Firstly, the design process resulted in the creation of an idea catalogue containing ideas for development of the Fries Before Guys podcast in new formats. This provided the podcast hosts with concrete ideas for continuing their entrepreneurial endeavour of furthering the discourse of imperfection. The ideas were furthermore developed based on experiences of needs and value of their listeners, and thus can be viewed as having potential for value creation in the future. Secondly, the design process itself can be viewed as an opportunity formation process in which ideas, needs and value were created. In relation to value creation, the participants described the value of the design process as similar to that of the podcast. The needs created or enhanced in the design process were similarly articulated as within the discourse of imperfection. In this way, the design process can be viewed as a social entrepreneurial endeavour on its own, contributing to the creation of both value and needs adherent to the discourse of imperfection.

In this way, we suggest that design approaches for social innovation can support social entrepreneurship through both the development of new ideas and by becoming processes of social value creation themselves.
To provide a convincing inquiry, the answer above was developed in four steps: Firstly, we create a genealogic narrative to show how discourses of (im)perfection around young women can be observed in contemporary Danish society. We tell a story of how discourses of (im)perfection are reconstructed by a multitude of actors in different spheres and on different levels of interaction in Danish society, and suggest the influence these discourses can have on the way young Danish women relate to themselves. We do so to provide an understanding of the context in which the design process is situated.

Secondly, we present our participatory design thinking process, conducted to support the Fries Before Guys podcast hosts in creating new formats for interaction and community for their listeners. We consider the Fries Before Guys podcast a social entrepreneurial initiative, as the hosts, through their work, seek to actively support the discourse of imperfection by emphasizing the inherent worth of young women independent of their achievements or appearances. The design process, which we created for and with the hosts and their listeners resulted in an idea catalogue of different formats the podcast could be developed into, in this way potentially supporting the reconstruction of the discourse of imperfection.

Thirdly, through a relational constructionist reading of our material, we show how the design process can be considered an opportunity formation process, as it created situations in which ideas were implemented and created value for the participants by alleviating needs of the participants. Thus, by assuming relational constructionist views, the design process can be understood as a process, which entailed not only the construction of ideas, but also the construction or enhancement of needs and value for the participants. We show how these ideas, needs and value can be seen as reconstructed relationally and communally through the interactions in the design process, the previous understandings, experiences and thoughts that the participants brought into the process and political, cultural and social context, represented here in the discourses of (im)perfection.

Finally we have reflect on the ethical responsibility of designers, entrepreneurs and inquirers like ourselves. Through the genealogic narrative and our opportunity formation process, we propose the view that everyone in society reconstructs certain discourses, and through these discourses reconstruct certain needs. We stress the enhanced responsibility of designers, entrepreneurs and inquirers as they due to their actions deliberately choose to engage in certain practices over others and thus take part in social change.
Contributions of our inquiry

In addition to our question of inquiry, we also consider our aims of inquiry, presented in Chapter 1. Below we revisit these aims and use them to develop considerations for practitioners of social entrepreneurship and design for social innovation respectively.

Practical contributions

On a practical level, our aim has been to develop new formats for the Fries Before Guys podcast through a design process which engaged both the hosts and their listeners. We aimed at giving the participants the possibility of defining the best solutions for themselves by giving them the power to design such solutions. Based on the participants’ articulations of the value of the workshops and the feedback on the developed ideas, we consider the design process a success.

Based on the design process, we present four considerations for practitioners of social entrepreneurship and design for social innovation:

The synthesis of participatory design and design thinking: Based on our experiences with incorporating design thinking and participatory design in our process, we encourage practitioners of different approaches of design for social innovation to ‘join forces’. In our inquiry we have found the synthesis of participatory design and design thinking to be a fruitful combination.

More focus on the value of the process: It is our experience that when focusing on value, many designers and social entrepreneurs tend to focus on the value of the output of a given endeavour. Based on our design process, we recommend practitioners to consider focusing more on the value of the process itself, and how they can actively use it to empower and create value, especially when including ‘users’.

Actively reflect on and use societal discourses: In order to create meaningful initiatives that adhere to the ideals of the practitioners, we urge practitioners to critically reflect on societal discourses related to the field in which they are engaged and be aware of how they contribute to these discourses. This might provide a better understanding of which futures, practitioners are actively engaged in creating.
Ethical responsibility for change: Our last contribution relates to the ethical responsibility of practitioners of all disciplines actively aiming at changing the status quo. In engaging with the world, it is important to be aware of what one might be contributing to and consider the consequences of this. In our example, this related to construction or enhancement of needs. Based on our experience, considering ethical responsibility is especially for designers engaged in participatory design processes as they might be creating expectations or needs that they are not part of alleviating.

Theoretical contributions

On a theoretical level, we hoped that, by assuming a relational constructionist view, our inquiry would open up new possible ways of seeing and talking about design processes for social innovation and social entrepreneurship. Through our inquiry, we have developed a relational constructionist understanding of these fields of inquiry.

Firstly, our inquiry serves as an example of how a design process for social innovation can be seen as a sort of social entrepreneurship itself in its ability to serve as a opportunity formation process. Understanding design processes as both opportunity formation processes and as social entrepreneurship opens up new ways of looking at design for social innovation. Secondly, we suggest that processes of design and social entrepreneurship can be seen as elements of processes, which recreate ideas, needs and value for and with the people engaged in or affected by these processes. Fletcher (2006) argues that utilizing social constructionist ideas in entrepreneurship inquiry enables a distinctive theoretical understanding, which helps to account for “the ways in which cultural/social practices travel and migrate thereby contributing not only to the construction of social reality but also the formation of new opportunities in new contexts” (423-424). Our inquiry presents an example of how design for social innovation and social entrepreneurship can be understood as situated within societal discourse, and how these discourses play a formative role in these practices. Harnessed in the right way, we argue that incorporating considerations of societal discourses in the understanding of social entrepreneurship and design processes can contribute with new perspectives in the respective fields of inquiry.
Quality assessment

As promised in Chapter 1, we now revisit the entirety of our inquiry process, including the design process and the present paper, to assess the quality of our work. The main question, we ask ourselves in the following is thus whether we have been ‘good’ relational constructionist inquirers.

McNamee and Hosking (2012) develop three themes to guide quality assessment of relational constructionist inquiry processes, which were presented in Chapter 1 to give the reader an opportunity to keep them in mind, while reading. The themes are: (1) reflexivity, (2) dialogue and eco-logical ways of being in relation, and (3) ethical and aesthetic aspects of construction (ibid.). In the following assessment, we provide a brief recap of a theme before diving into the actual assessment.

Reflexivity and practical know how

*Reflexivity* entails thinking about your choices throughout the inquiry processes, and considering the consequences of these choices. It also concerns the context and practical potential or *practical know how* of the inquiry applied in different contexts McNamee and Hosking (2012).

In the following, we thus reflect on how well we have considered our choices through the inquiry process, starting with our philosophical stance, our research design and approach to the researched, as well as our methods. We also reflect on our collaboration with the Fries Before Guys hosts, and finally consider the practical implications and potential of our inquiry.

*Meta-theory, design of inquiry and our approach to the researched*

One of the first choices, we made, in our inquiry process, was that of our theory of science, and thus our philosophical stance with regards to science. Our relational constructionist meta-theory has guided our inquiry processes from the beginning. We argue that taking philosophical assumptions into consideration can widen our understanding of our possibilities for action as well as the consequences of those actions.

Throughout the present paper, we have tried to draw attention to the implications that our meta-theory has had for our choices in the inquiry process. One example of this is the choice of using the theory of opportunity formation by Fletcher (2006) to interpret our
material on our design process. Furthermore, we have not tried to impose on the reader that our view or philosophical stance is the only ‘true’ stance. We have acknowledge, and still do, that our meta-theory is also a relational construction, and that other possible interpretations exist and have their place. Finally, we have tried, to the best of our abilities, to follow and ‘stay within’ the relational constructionist meta-theory. This has not always been an easy task. As McNamee and Hosking write themselves: “students [...] commonly share a narrow view of research, one that is circumscribed by the discourse of post-positivist science” (5). We have definitely felt the challenges of moving into unknown territory, and as Anne writes in her diary:

It is probably difficult for us to think in this way because we in school have been taught to think according to another paradigm (more positivist). So it continuously fucks with our default that we are writing a more social constructionist thesis [...], where you are almost trying to ‘unlearn’ everything that you have learned during your education (App. 1).

This has been challenging, and whether or not we have succeeded in being ‘proper’ relational constructionists is the question of this very assessment, and also up to the reader to decide for him/herself.

We have thus been aware of and reflected on the implications our choice of meta-theory has had on subsequent choices throughout the inquiry process. A critique of our meta-theory and its implications for practice will be elaborated after this assessment, when we consider what an alternative research design could have meant for our inquiry process.

Let us turn to the design of our inquiry, i.e. the framework that has been created to answer the research questions. Our research question revolves around participatory design processes and the potential role of such processes in supporting social entrepreneurship. This question was posed after agreeing to collaborate with the Fries Before Guys hosts, and we thus based our inquiry design on the fact that we would be creating and facilitating a participatory design process to help two social entrepreneurs in developing their initiative. Taking our relational constructionist stance into consideration, we thus chose to focus on the relational aspects of the design process, meaning the moments of interaction between ourselves and the participants. In order to stay open to what ‘happened’ or was created in the process, we thus created a explorative research design, which was not guided by a pre-defined hypothesis of what might happen. Using methods of (auto)ethnography and interviews served the purpose of keeping us focused on the interactive moments. In the
design process, we also consciously left many of the decisions in planning open as long as possible to be able to mold the process after the participants and the interactions.

**The choice of collaborators and social issue**

In Chapter 1, we write our own personal motivations for engaging in our design and inquiry process, and we have reflected on this motivation throughout the process, especially in relation to our role as facilitators and the blurring lines between professional and private in the relationship with the podcast hosts. Ida reflects on this in her autoethnographic diary:

> I am not a fan of separating private and professional [...] because we are part of the field anyway and attentive of our influence. I think it’s important [...] that we also give something of ourselves in the relationship, and that they feel safe sharing something of themselves. [However], we still have to work together, and it is important [...] that we put the job before the personal relationship to the Fries girls [the hosts] (App. 2).

A critique of our design process could be that we have not been critical enough of the Fries Before Guys concept and the positive impact of their initiative. We acknowledge our enthusiasm about the initiative and dealing with young women’s mental health issues. However, relational constructionist inquirers are encouraged to defer judgement, center on appreciation and focus on the creation of ‘better’ futures (McNamee and Hosking 2012). This has been the nature of our collaboration with the podcast hosts, and also the guiding principles of our design process. If the listeners believe that the podcast is valuable to them, then who are we to judge if it is or not?

**Practical usefulness and potential**

As a final element in the assessment of our reflexive practices, we consider the practical usefulness and potential of our inquiry process.

Firstly, we consider the design process. Both the participants and the podcast hosts have expressed how valuable the process has been to them. From the perspective of the listener participants, this is exemplified in quotes in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. Examples of the usefulness or value of our design process to the podcast hosts were expressed in our final interview with them, in which they described the process as having ‘broadened their horizon’:

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8 With regards to our own practice of methods, specific considerations are available in App. 3 - as it overlaps substantially with the present evaluation, we have chosen not to include them here.
It has made us think about opportunities. How can we become more than a podcast? [...] it has been a kind of push, and our thoughts have become way more concrete. Now we can relate them to concrete ideas [...]. It has structured our own thoughts (App. 22b).

With regards to potential for practical usefulness in the future, the idea catalogue provides ample guidelines for implementation of the concepts developed in the design process. Furthermore, some concepts were actually tested (by accident?) in the design process with positive response, hinting that the potential to create further value is there. The implementation of these ideas could potentially help in improving mental health for young women in Denmark.

Another implication for practical usefulness are the practical takeaways presented in the section above. Seeing design processes as processes in which needs and value is formed alongside ideas could have implications for the way especially designers engaged in social innovation practice their trade. We hope that our inquiry can feed into the already ongoing discussion of ethics in both design and entrepreneurship, both in regards to creating social value and otherwise.

Finally, we also see the question of practical usefulness in relation to ourselves. Embarking on a relational constructionist journey of inquiry has been a learning process for the both of us. Furthermore, the inquiry itself has influenced us. As an example, as we are both young, Danish women, inquiring into and writing the genealogic draft on the discourses of (im)perfection has had an impact on how we relate to ourselves and the societal discourses. As Anne writes in her autoethnographic diary after completing Chapter 2: “By writing this chapter I feel like I have in some way seen through it [the discourse] and therefore easier can let go of being perfect” (App. 1).

Dialogue and eco-logical ways of being in relation

*Dialogue* is about the way we talk to others and ourselves. This entails letting go of hard subject-object constructions, something which could also be thought of as an *eco-logical way of being in relation*. It is thus also about moving away from searching for the ‘right’ knowledge and methods, to center activities on being relationally engaged, and to being attentive to what others understand as help (McNamee and Hosking 2012).

The next topic of our assessment is thus the use of dialogue as a practice. We first consider the subject-object constructions in the design process and the broader inquiry
process. Thereafter, we turn to how dialogical practices have been a part of our inquiry process, and what this has entailed for our inquiry. And lastly, we consider some of the main challenges we encountered in relation to letting go of hard subject-object relations, and how dialogical practices have helped us overcome these challenges and potentially shape new practices.

**Subject-object constructions**

Eco-logical ways of being in relation or letting go of subject-object constructions has been one of the main differences between this inquiry process and the previous inquiry processes, we have engaged in as students. It has not been without challenges, yet it has somehow also come natural to us. To start with our design process, our idea of participatory design is exactly the blurring between the researcher and the researched. We have still assumed the role of facilitators, yet the fact that we are both part of the ‘target group’ of the inquiry process, i.e. young women between the ages of 16 to 26, and listeners of the Fries Before Guys podcast, and that we were not ‘passive’ facilitators, but engaged personally in the workshops, created a personal relationship between ourselves and the participants.

With regards to the inquiry process, our inquiry has focused on the design process - the same process that we have participated in and planned. We are thus not separated from our ‘object’ of inquiry, which again creates a soft subject-object construction, as we are essentially inquiring into ourselves as well.

**Dialogical practices in general**

Following the idea of inquiring into oneself, a significant dialogical practice, which we have engaged in in this inquiry process, has been that of writing an autoethnographic diary of all the main activities in the inquiry process (App. 1, 2). In these, we have engaged in reflective dialogue, primarily with ourselves, but they have also formed the basis for dialogue between the two of us and the rest of the material from the inquiry process.

In the design process, we have engaged in dialogical practices and in facilitating dialogue between the participants to the best of our abilities. In this way, the ideas of the design process are an outcome of this dialogue, which has sometimes been between us and the workshop participants, sometimes between us and the podcast hosts, and also at the final test event, between all three ‘parties’.
One could also argue that we have engaged in dialogical practices in the inquiry process in general. As explained above, the process has been explorative and open-ended. The content of this paper has been created in a dialogue between ourselves and the material from the design process, of course also counting our societal context and our previous understandings and thoughts.

**Main challenges and overcoming them**

Lastly, we reflect on the main challenges in staying in soft subject-objects constructions. One ongoing challenge has been that of staying open and explorative, both in the design process and the inquiry process. It relates to dependability, and fears of not delivering or living up to expectations.

In the inquiry process, it related largely to overcoming our post-positivist training as students. As McNamee and Hosking (2012) experience, when teaching about relational constructionism: “students feel deauthorized as researchers, because they have been told that a good researcher knows ahead of time” (12). In not knowing anything ahead of time, but diving head first into a participatory design process and inquiry process has been filled with both insecurities and doubt about the academic work, we were doing. In the design process, these fears primarily related to what we were to ‘deliver’ to the podcast hosts as neither the process nor the expected output was determined beforehand. As Anne writes, she often had: “a feeling of us building the plane while in the air, and that there are a lot of things, we get done in the last minute [...]. A part of me would like to be more in control and two steps ahead, but on the other hand, I also think that we prioritize right as we go along” (App. 1).

This challenge of staying open has been overcome by continue dialogue both in the autoethnographic diaries (as shown in the excerpts above) and between the two of us. We have also spent a great deal of time voicing these fears and matching expectations with the podcast hosts.

**Ethical and aesthetic aspects of construction**

The attentiveness to what others understand as help, as well as the pragmatic, practical focus on ‘what we are doing in this context at the moment’ (being relationally engaged), leads us to the question of ethics (McNamee and Hosking 2012). From a relational constructionist view, the question of ethics is fundamentally about considering the futures that might be given our actions, and how to make livable futures (ibid.).
Multiplicity and conversation in the inquiry process

In the present paper, we have included many different perspectives to build the narrative of our story. This includes perspectives from the literature on social entrepreneurship, the approach of genealogy and an examination of the discourses of (im)perfection, theory on participatory design and design thinking, theoretical perspectives of entrepreneurial opportunities and lastly research on ethical considerations in social entrepreneurship and social innovation/design. We have included these perspectives, because we found it necessary in order to give the reader a fuller understanding of our inquiry process and the context and implications of our inquiry. Furthermore, these perspectives have been part of shaping the relational reality from which we write, and thus not including them would seem misleading or distort the story, we have aimed to tell. One could worry that we have not been clear enough in communicating the connections of this multitude of perspectives, and argue why these have been chosen. Another concern is the superficiality. As we can only write a limited number of pages, one could argue that a more in depth account of fewer perspectives would have made a stronger thesis, yet as the world in our view is constructed by a multitude of influences and actions, we find it fitting to give a similar account in our thesis. A last critique of our work concerns the theories chosen to participate in the inquiry. To give the reader an understanding of other possible perspectives, we have tried to present different and contradicting theories and account for our choices in terms of which theories we have used and how they adhere to the same philosophical assumptions as we do in the present inquiry.

Multiplicity and conversation in the design process

In the facilitation of our participatory design process, we have aimed to create space for the participants to share their thoughts and opinions freely. Many participants (see quotes in Chapter 3) and the podcast hosts have expressed that we had done exactly that. In Nanna’s words: “You have been really good at creating a space where you don’t need to be perfect, which has made me less nervous,” and Josephine added “I’ve not felt insecure with you, I’ve rather felt at home” (App. 22b).

A critique of our attempt at multiplicity is that of listening to many voices. We have engaged more than 30 women, yet these 30 women might not represent a very diverse picture of the podcast listener community. This is due to the fact that they have all volunteered and showed up, most of them alone, which a ‘less fortunate’ or listener suffering from social
anxiety or just very low self-esteem, might not do. We could have thought of other ways of engaging those that did not have the time and (mental) resources to show up in person.

Another critique relating to multiplicity of voices and stories is that we have only engaged with women, who were listeners aka fans of the podcast. On this basis, we could all to some extent agree on the discourse of imperfection as the ‘good’ discourse, and part of a potential ‘solution’ to young women’s poor state of mental health. We have thus not been critical of neither the Fries Before Guys concept nor the imperfection discourse, however, it is part of a relational constructionist approach to be appreciative and to focus on ‘better’ ways of living together. Furthermore, we have acknowledged our own stance on the issues, thus making it clear that this was our starting point for engaging in the inquiry process in the first place.

New realities - better ways of going on together?

Have we contributed to the creation of relational realities that we perceive as better ways of ‘going on together’? We have reflected on the societal discourses of (im)perfection, and developed the argument that the imperfection discourse for now constitutes the best offer in terms of better livable futures for young Danish women. Furthermore, we have examined our own design process with young Danish women, and seen that we (all of us together), in addition to creating value, also created and enhanced needs. This has been the subject of ethical considerations in the first part of this chapter. Here we thus only highlight that these considerations are important, when engaging in relations with others. Our main concern is that of having participated in the creation and enhancement of those needs, and at the moment of writing not being engaged in meeting them.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics is about style of representation, and communicating ethically. It is about how to speak or write, when we are not dealing with or trying to communicate something as ‘truths’ (McNamee and Hosking 2012). To this end, McNamee and Hosking (2012) argue that our style of representation should be inviting and open-ended, which might entail small changes in phrasing from ‘this is how it is’ to ‘this is how it might be’, thus avoiding dogmatic, right or wrong language and allowing the consideration of alternative understandings. In the following, we are inspired by Rhodes and Brown’s (2005) five suggestions on how to write and talk responsibly, which were outlined in Chapter 1.
**Style of representation**

Our first consideration in terms of style of representation has been that of not presenting in a way that implies the truth of our statements. We have thus actively aimed at ‘this is how it might be’ formulations, both in the present paper and also in the design process. Whenever presenting our ‘findings’ to participants or the podcast hosts, we have emphasized, as we did in Chapter 3 with the value map, that it is our interpretation of our material, and thus a story, we are telling. In relation to being vulnerable, we have first of all actively used ourselves in the design process, leading to feelings of insecurity and responsibility for the well-being of others. The lack of control in both the design process and the inquiry process has also spurred feelings of vulnerability and taking risks. In our engagement with different communities, i.e. the participants, the podcasts hosts, and with the present paper, the academic community, we have considered our style of representation. Thus, the writing in the present paper is more formal, than it has been in the design process. Similarly, we have used instructive texts in the beginning and end of each chapter to help the reader in making the connections, we are making ourselves.
Alternative approaches

As a final consideration before moving on to our suggestions for future inquiry, we develop critiques of our choice of inquiry approach and reflect on how our inquiry could be understood from a different philosophical perspective as well as what another inquiry design might look like and contribute with. The critiques are developed firstly on critiques of relational constructionism and secondly on a critique of micro-level initiatives aiming to solving complex social problems. We use these critiques to suggest ways our inquiry could have been approached differently.

Critiques of relational constructionism

In the following, we base our critique of the relational constructionist meta-theory primarily of critiques of social constructionism. We consider this relevant, as relational constructionism has similar assumptions about the nature of the world and of what can be known about it, which is exemplified in our Chapter 1, where we draw on both McNamee and Hosking (2012) and Berger and Luckmann (1991).

The ‘anything goes’ critique

The most prevalent critique of social and relational constructionism is that of the relativism of reality and consequently also of the knowledge about it. This critique comes from the positivist and post-positivist mate-theories, which assume an objectivist epistemology (Guba and Lincoln 1994). The objectivists argue that the radical relativism of all knowledge means that ‘anything goes’ in social or relational constructionist inquiry, as no clear guidelines exist for what is ‘true’ or not.

We begin with the discussion of what can be known about the world. In relation to social problems, objectivist concern has been voiced about the relative existence of social problems. If social problems are not ‘real’, but instead based on articulations and interactions, then the less fortunate will be forgotten as they are not able to articulate their needs. These needs will thus not be met (Best 2006).

Another concern voiced by objectivists about social problems is that of solving these problems. If social problems are not ontologically stable, it becomes increasingly difficult to implement lasting solutions. Similarly, if they are assumed to be relational realities produced out of relational processes, it becomes very difficult to assess from where these realities arise
and impossible to create causal links on which to base broader initiatives for alleviation. As a response to this critique, social and relational constructionist do not claim that ‘everything is up in the air’, but argue that our relational realities are relatively stable, also across generations, because of language sedimentations.

A last objectivist critique can be turned towards the active involvement of the inquirer in ‘helping’ to co-construct better futures. What constitutes ‘better futures’ is defined locally between the inquirer and the participants in the inquiry. It is an important part of the inquirer’s task to be reflexive and ethical in this position. This again relates to the concern from objectivist that ‘anything goes’, as both what constitutes ‘helping’, ‘better futures’ and being ‘ethical’ cannot be defined, and could thus be anything, depending on the interpretation and argumentation of the inquirer. McNamee and Hosking (2012) acknowledge this trap and develop several quality ‘themes’ including reflections on how to be ethical, as a way to “explore how a relational constructionist stance avoids rampant relativism while simultaneously embracing the possibility of multiple and often diverse constructions of quality and ethics” (95). The quality assessment of our inquiry in the section above was developed based on these same criteria. Many elements of these themes, such as ‘multiplicity’ and ‘helping’ are still up to the inquirer to further define in relation to the relational realities of the specific inquiry.

What could an objectivist inquiry look like and how would they approach solving (complex) social problems? With regards to social problems, objectivists would argue that these could be defined objectively. An inquiry could thus be concerned with developing these definitions, and universal frameworks for solving them. Some suggestions for frameworks with the goal of meeting human needs are proposed developed on the basis of: “moral imperatives and human needs that are trans-societal and transhistorical” (Eitzen 1984, 11) and “an overarching ethical framework” (Collins 1989, 90). Another inquiry might focus on the identification of causal links between perfectionism, mental health issues and cultural practices or societal organization in order to solve these problems on a large scale.

*Living up to programmatic relativism*

Another critique of social and relational constructionism comes from subjectivist camp, i.e. the critical theory and constructivist meta-theories (Guba and Lincoln 1994). They forward a ontological critique, arguing that, in empirical studies, researchers are often not able to live
up to the programmatic relativism inherent in social and relational constructionism. They argue that empirical inquiries often end up deeming some phenomena problematic, while leaving others undealt with or assumed unproblematic. The unproblematic phenomena often end up serving as basic assumptions for the empirical inquiries (Woolgar and Pawluch 1985).

In our inquiry, this critique might apply to how we have dealt with the notions of perfectionism and mental health issues. In some way, although we acknowledge that our understanding of these phenomena are created in relational realities, we base our inquiry on their ‘existence’, without going more into depth with them. An interesting alternative perspective, could be investigating the individual perception and experience of perfectionism, stress, anxiety and depression.

From micro to macro

In this paper and our design process, we have been interested in how we can support social entrepreneurship in solving complex social problems with a design approach. Specifically, we have focused on the rise of perfectionism and the problem of poor mental health among young women in Denmark. Our attempt at supporting a solution to this problem has been to facilitate a participatory design thinking process with the aim of designing ideas for furthering the Fries Before Guys concept. In this section, we would like to question how we could have supported social entrepreneurship in solving the complex social problem of how young women relate to themselves using a different approach.

In the field of social entrepreneurship several authors argue in favor for solving complex social problems collectively (Kirsch, Bildner, and Walker 2016; Acaroglu 2016; Kania and Kramer 2011; T. Brown and Wyatt 2010). This is due to the kind of problems that much social entrepreneurship is concerned with. Social problems are often understood as systemic problems, which means that the problems do not exist in isolation, but instead are surrounded by other problems (Acaroglu 2016). As Kirsch, Bildner and Waler (2016) put it:

The work our entrepreneurs face today is more complex than ever and requires a set of tools and a framework designed to address the complexity inherent when innovations are integrated into existing systems like school districts, welfare agencies, health departments, and corporate structures.
Thus, Kirsch, Bildner and Waler (2016) encourage social entrepreneurs to think about the problem that they wish to solve as a system that needs to be changed, not solely as a narrow entrepreneurial opportunity. Systems thinking is a way of looking at a problem as a series of interconnected and interdependent systems rather than a lot of independent parts (Acaroglu 2016). When looking at a problem more isolated, entrepreneurs often end up treating symptoms instead of causes (Acaroglu 2016) or not even solving the problem at all, because the solution is not embedded into the local context or the larger system (Brown and Wyatt 2010). When looking at the problem of how young women relate to themselves, one solution could be using therapy to support young women, who experience anxiety, stress or depression. This might help the individual young woman, but it does not tackle the roots of the problem. On the other hand, making young women aware of how certain societal discourses affect their relation to themselves and others, might help the young women to start thinking differently, but it does not necessarily challenge the greater discourses or structures making these young women feel anxious, stressed or depressed.

Thus, some might argue that what is needed is collective action of several actors to achieve collective impact. This approach to solving complex social problems entails that a group of actors from different sectors commit to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem (Kania and Kramer 2011). The reasoning behind this approach is that no single actor is responsible for any major social problem, and therefore no single actor can solve it. Instead, it is proposed that social change comes from well-coordinated cross-sector interventions (Kania and Kramer 2011).

We acknowledge the critique that one social entrepreneurial initiative such as Fries Before Guys might not (directly) be able to change societal structures, which can be perceived to be influencing how young women relate to themselves in contemporary Denmark. However, we would argue that initiatives focusing on all levels of society are important, and in terms of ‘helping’, potentially changing the way 30 or 200 young women relate to themselves should not be neglected as unimportant as all relational processes feed into the creation of new relational realities.
Future inquiry

We conclude this paper with considerations of future inquiry. We briefly outline perspectives that pose interesting questions for further inquiry, centering on the articulation of needs and how we create or alleviate experiences of perfectionism and mental health issues.

In our inquiry we developed the view that we could be seen as partaking in reconstructing needs for the participants throughout the design process. We also showed how the societal discourses could be seen as part of this process of needs creation. The relational and communal creation of needs on a broader societal scale pose, we believe, an interesting and important area for future inquiry. As we highlighted in Chapter 1, mental health disorders in general are on the rise. In this paper we have linked this to the rise of perfectionism, but future inquiry could investigate whether the rise is also connected to society in general focusing on mental health issues. In recent years, mental health conditions have attracted increasing attention not just in Denmark, but globally (World Health Organization 2002). This is for instance reflected in the inclusion of mental health in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations 2018). By many, it is considered a positive development that mental health disorders are increasingly given more attention relative to how much attention physical illnesses have receive for many years (Bradshaw et al. 2014).

However, recent inquiry on where emotions ‘come from’ suggests that talking and writing more about mental health issues could itself lead to more young women experiencing mental health issues. Scientists have long assumed that emotions are automatic reactions to things people experience, arguing that emotions are hardwired in the brain and the body. Yet, psychologist and neuroscientist Feldman Barrett (2018) propose a ground-breaking theory on how the brain constructs emotions in the present moment based on concepts that the individual has been ‘taught’ by the society the individual grew up in. We suggest future inquiry look into the relational construction of emotions, and what understandings this could provide in relation to the rise in mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and stress and the increasing articulations of these problems. This is also relevant to the phenomenon of perfectionism and the articulations of this in contemporary Danish society. Can we, by articulating issues of concern, end up enhancing the experience of them instead of alleviating them?
Bibliography


