"I’M NOT SO MASCULINE. I TRY TO USE MORE OF MY FEMININE SIDES."

- Reproductive and subversive gender formations among male Swedish pre-school teachers, hairdressers and nurses.

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Introduction

In Critical Studies on Men has masculinity mainly been linked to men and femininity has often been constructed as the opposite pole to masculinity and as something that men avoid and distance themselves from (for example Connell 1995; Ekenstam et al 1998; Kimmel 1997; Kuosmanen 2001; Nilsson 1999; Segal 1997). The term masculinity has been used to describe men’s lives, experiences, discourses and concepts that constitute male subjects. “Masculinity” has become a kind of “trade mark” for studies on men. The term femininity can seldom be found in book titles or titles of research projects concerning studies on men. The analytic terms masculinity/masculinities has been criticised for classifying men like subcultures and thereby miss the hybridisation of discourses and cultural flows that both reproduce and change gender orders (Demetriou 2001; Nordberg 2000, 2002). By using the term masculinity/ties it is possible to study masculinity norms as a concept both linked to and free from the male body. But, as the sociologist John MacInnes (1998) has point out, is the term masculinity also problematic and restricted because it mainly is associated to men and thereby reproduce the gender dichotomy. Jeff Hearn (2000) argues for abandon the term and instead focus on men as a social category and highlight men’s practices.

In Women’s Studies is femininity often in the same way linked to women and masculinity are looked upon as a problem. Due to this, in my opinion, unhappy dualism is the concept that construct men and women as two totally different categories are upheld. The often unproblematised link between men and masculinity in Critical Studies on Men has contributed to that men’s materialisation of femininity, ”male femininity” and women’s materialisation of masculinity, ”male femininity”, has been mostly unnoticed (Gardiner 2002; Halberstam 1998, 2002). Maybe this is due to that the main research has been on problematic masculinity formations and not on subversions and change.

In the labour market in the west are individuals today often expected to be flexible and to materialise and move between both femininity and of masculinity concepts (Adkins 2002). New hierarchies where gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationalism and age are intertwined are created. To analyse this new hierarchies we, as researchers on men and masculinity, might question the contemporary analysis concepts and discuss new ways to analyse constructions of gender that can make new gender formations and their complexity more comprehendible.

The aim of this paper is to discuss and extend masculinity and femininity as analytic tools by connecting Critical Studies on Men with Queer Theory and post-structural feminism. By taking point of departure in Judith Butlers (1990, 1993) concept of gender as performative, fluid and constructed by heterosexual discourses I intend to discuss some problem with comprehending femininity as a negative opposition to men and masculinity. The aim is to develop analytic tools that can be useful in research concerning men’s (and women’s) gender formations in late modernity. In the first part of the paper I make some points about how researchers often connects masculinity mainly with men and discuss some problem with the masculinity and femininity concept. Then I suggest Judith Halberstams (1998,2002) concept of “Female masculinity” and “Male femininity” as a fruitful way to override and subvert the stabilisation of the connection between men and masculinity and relate Halberstams
Does critical studies on men and masculinity stabilise the connection between men and masculinity?

In both Critical Studies on Men and in Women’s Studies the connection between the ideology of masculinity and men has been highlighted and problematised. Men and their materialisation of masculinity have mainly been seen as a problem, while femininity has been conceptualised as both a positive otherness and as a patriarchal oppression of women. Femininity is thereby mostly theoretically looked upon as an constructed otherness that men distance themselves from (e.g. Connell 1987, 1995, 2002; Kimmel 1997, 2000). Because of the interest for problematic practices among men and problems connected to masculinity is women’s subversions of the masculinity concept and men’s subversion of the femininity concepts seldom theorised. Connell, Kimmel and Hearn, some of the leading researcher in Critical Studies on Men, connect the concept of masculinity mainly to men and their practices. For Michael Kimmel (1997, 2000) masculinity is constructed mostly between men in male settings. According to him, femininity is, by men, comprehended as a negative pool that constructs men as subordinated and less masculine and as not heterosexual enough. Femininity is according Kimmel used to othering other men, other social groups of men and to othering women. By the way Kimmel conceptualise femininity/ties is the dichotomy that connects masculinity with men and femininity with women not questioned. Neither are women’s constructions of masculinity and men’s positive constructions of femininity discussed.

Robert Connell transcends the gender dichotomy in some ways, by pointing at gender as positions and comprehending the embodying of gender concepts as a fluid and instable process. He mentions that women can construct masculinity and embody the concept. The problem with Connell (19987, 1995) is that he comprehends femininity in the contemporary west world as always subordinated, as always negative connected with the hegemonic masculinity position and thereby problematic for men to materialise. Connell argues that the subordinated masculinity in the west today is gay men and men comprehended as effeminate. But, which is important, at the same time he stress that the characteristics that is connected to the hegemonic masculinity position is fluid.

Jeff Hearn (1997, 2000) abandons the concept of masculinity and highlights men’s practices. As Kimmel (2000) and Connell (1995, 2002), he is mainly interested of how men as a group uphold their privileges and of the problems men causes in society. In his writings Hearn mentions that women can embody masculinity. But because he focus on men’s management and practices in organisations, he is not so interested in the way women subvert the masculinity concept in their practices and of how men use and embody the concept of femininity in their daily practices.

So, in spite that Kimmel, Connell and Hearn are critical to patriarchy, they reproduce the gender dichotomy and the common focus on men because they construct men and women (sex) as a stable dichotomy and mainly connect men with masculinity. The dichotomy is also repeated in some post-structural research. In spite a focus on fluidity and variation and on how masculinity and femininity as ideologies are constructed and made normative is masculinity mainly in discussions of the constructions linked to men (for example Gutterman 1994, Nilsson 1999). In my opinion, the contemporary research in critical studies on men and masculinity are focusing mainly on men and masculinity, while in Women’s Studies the research focus is more on both men and masculinity and women and femininity. The term femininity/ties is used for talking about women’s identity processes and practices and masculinity/ties are used as a concept for the constructions of a male identity and men’s practices. So to conclude: in both Critical Studies on Men and in Women’s studies little attention is put on how men use femininity as a positive concept and how women subvert masculinity concepts and embodies new ways of being manly. When the sex dichotomy is upheld and taken for granted it sometimes hinders researchers to ask new and important analytical questions to the material. In gay and lesbian studies and queer the sex dichotomy has been more problematised and men’s and
The sociologist John MacInnes (1998) argues that masculinity and femininity are problematic concepts linked to patriarchy and modernity. According to MacInnes masculinity and femininity, introduced as a concept in the nineteenth century, is the patriarchal answer to how to explain that gender inequality consists in a liberal and modern society where the individuals opportunities and contract relations are highlighted. He points at the problematic double meaning in the concept: masculinity is both freely social floating and can be performed by women, but is also linked to the male body. Masculinity is associated to and seen more natural for men then for women and is expected to be performed mainly by men. As MacInnes argues patriarchy and men’s advantages and privileges could be kept in a modern democratic and secularised society by changing the attention from the male body to masculinity. Men’s position could thereby be explained by that men have socially learnt the characteristics, not only located to male bodies, which were best suited for some tasks. 1 He writes:

Because it inherited the material and ideological legacy of the patriarchal era, modernity presented men (and women) with the problem of rationalizing and explaining men’s greater power, resources and status without recourse to the straightforward patriarchal assertion that men’s natural right to rule them. The concept of masculinity (and the corresponding concepts of gender and femininity) was the solution to this problem. Differences between men and women which in pre-modern patriarchal context could have been defined as naturally determined (the result of sex) had now to be imagined as socially produced – as masculinity and femininity (the result of gender).” (MacInnes 1998: 7, italics in original).

The problem with the dichotomy masculinity and femininity as linked to different characteristics is that it still constructs some characteristics as male and other as female in spite of the body that performs them. The masculinity concept opens for analyses that can problematice the ideology and is useful for deconstructing the link between men and masculinity (e.g. Connell 1987, Ekenstam et al 1998, Kimmel 1997, Nilsson 1999). But the concept is also, because of the concepts inherited association to male bodies (sex) that MacInnes points at, restricting and problematic in research, especially when masculinity and men are linked together as common is in Critical Studies on Men. Even if the goal is to deconstruct the link and problematic practices connected to the ideology, women and women’s materialisation of masculinity and men’s materialisation of femininity often disappears from the analyse because men are focused and linked so tight together with masculinity (compare Brod 1994).

MacInnes take his part of departure in the subordination of femininity and women. But what will happen if the status of femininity change in society, if femininity and masculinity concepts become more intertwined and femininity become more desired than masculinity? Will women then be selected to higher positions more often than men and will men try to be more feminine? Or will men’s way of doing femininity be more estimated than women’s? I think MacInnes discussion of the concepts is important, because if the hegemonic gender discourses that individuals repeat take new forms and men become more positive to femininity and try to integrate the femininity concept, they still will gender characteristics, things and tasks by using the concept. We can subvert the masculinity and femininity and change the code, but the gender dichotomy will exist as long as we use the concept.

The concept was introduced in the nineteenth century when the two sex model and the model of gender as complementarities was established (Laqueur 1994, Kimmel 1997). In Sweden the concept is first mentioned in literature in the middle of the nineteenth century and according to the historian Gail Bederman the term “masculinity” was mentioned as unusual in Merriam och Websters lexikon as late as 1890th (Bederman 1995). The concept was during the twentieth century used in psychology for

1 Women repeated the concept of femininity in the same way to argue that women were better suited for the nurse, pre-school, elementary school teacher and social worker occupations than men (see Florin 1990, Nordberg 2003, Salomonsson 1998 Williams 1995).
measuring men and women’s characters and in sociology masculinity and femininity was discussed as sex roles (Connell 1987, 1995). The concept was also useful in the distinction between sex and gender in “second wave” feminism (see for example Nicholson 1997). By using the concept feminists could discuss the cultural and social gender coding and point at contingencies and instabilities in the coding.

**The concepts of masculinity and femininity in Second Wave feminism**

When introduced by Second wave feminism the gender theory was used for highlighting masculinity and femininity as cultural and contingent categories. By pointing at the arbitrary and instability in the concepts feminists could problematise what was considered to be “natural” for women. The aim was to disentangle sex from gender in the fields where natural differences between male and female has been proposed. As Ann Oakley puts it: “sex is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible differences in genitalia, the related difference in procreative function. “Gender” however is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classifications into “masculine” and “feminine” (Oakley 1976: 16). It was argued that both conceptions could be found in individuals, in both men and women and that what was considered as masculine and feminine changed between cultures and over time. Feminists has used the concept of masculinity and femininity to analyse how gender is social and cultural constructed, how different characteristics, attributes, things, occupations and places is gender coded and how this coding is contingent (see for example Acker 1990, Connell 2002, Hirdman 2001, Scott 1988). The sex categories men and women have not been questioned in the same way until recently.

In feminist post-structuralism and queer theory the sex categories themselves has been highlighted as cultural constructions connected to heterosexuality and the dichotomy between sex and gender has been questioned (e.g. Butler 1990, 1993). The focus has been on how heterosexuality and sex categories are reproduced and normalised as regulating concepts by exclusions and marginalization of other alternatives. But in spite of this questioning of stabile sex categories, the post-structural research is often reproducing the dichotomy where masculinity mainly is connected to men and femininity to women (see for example Nilsson 1999). Examples from transvestites, transsexuals and settings, like drag show, where gender is troubled are used for exemplifying the contingence (e.g. Butler 1990, Kulick 1998). However, as Halberstam points out, female and lesbian and their subversive forms of masculinity are not considered very much in critical studies on men and masculinity, in spite of that Butlers discussion open for those kinds of analysis.

In some way, but not unproblematic, I find the second wave and the post-structural feminists use of the masculinity and femininity concept more fluid than how the concept is commonly used in contemporary Critical Studies on Men. When discussing characters as gender coded and contingent placed on the body, the second wave feminist could focus on how both masculinity and femininity was connected to individuals. By doing that feminism also could problematise the strong psychological interest in difference between men and women and the psychological interest in measuring grades of femininity and masculinity in individuals to construct normality and deviance.

**Judith Halberstams concept of “Female Masculinity” and “Male Femininity”**

In Queer Studies has Judith Halberstam used the term “female masculinity” to discuss women that bodily perform masculinity, for example by wearing certain clothes, hair styles and act in certain ways considered to be manly. Halberstam exemplifies with “butches” and “drag kings”, but emphasises that female masculinity should not be limited to lesbians. The term female masculinity can also be useful for studying tomboys. Sheena/ Brandon in the movie *Boys don’t cry* could, as I interpret the term, be one example of a woman performing female masculinity.

Halberstams (2002) argues that masculinity researchers ought to put attention to “female masculinity” and stresses that an analyse of female masculinity and of women’s way of doing masculinity is political important for changing the patriarchal gender order. By using the concepts of female masculinity and male femininity and by presenting subversive gender formations that transcends the dualistic categories, the connection between masculinity, men and power can be destabilised. Halberstam stresses that the deconstruction of the link between femininity and women and masculinity and men is an important political alternative to the ambition to change the gender
order by showing variations among men (masculinities) and to the contemporary focus on negative consequences of masculinity norms. She also argues that feminist studies by the coupling of men and masculinity and the focus on negative forms of masculinity “constitutes a serious obstacle to new and serious thoughts on gender and its relationship to social change” (2002: 352). Without leaving the hegemony of men, Halberstam points at some marginalized aspects of gender – lesbians and gays resistance and subversions of the concepts.

In my opinion Halberstams concept can be elaborated. The concept of male femininity and female masculinity can highlight how masculinity is materialised by women and femininity by men. Male femininity and female masculinity can be studied in many ways; as aesthetic performance, as configurations of practices and as subject positions. By using the concept the border between Men’s and Women’s Studies could be transgressed and the analytic tools (masculinity and/or femininity) – not the focus on men or women – could be the point of departure. The concept can be used for studying for example how some concepts of femininity is comprehended as unthinkable for some men, who at the same time desire, materialise and try to integrate other concepts of femininity in their gender identity and practices. Used in that way the concept of female masculinity and male femininity can be not only an alternative, but also an extension and complement to contemporary analytic tools.

The Swedish sociologist Thomas Johansson (1995) has get near female masculinity in his discussion of how female body builders materialise a muscular body that is comprehended as male and masculine.2 The historian Jonas Liliequist (1999) has in the same way come in contact with male femininity in his research of unmanliness. Liliequist discusses unmanliness by using example with men that take interest in female tasks, wear clothes and decorate themselves in ways that can be comprehended as female. But, in contemporary research, discussions of men’s construction and materialisation of femininity and women’s of masculinity are mainly found in Queer Studies. Don Kulick (1998) has for example studied male transvestites and Arne Nilsson (1998) has in his study of male homosexuality in Gothenburg in the middle of the twentieth century, discussed men’s performance of femininity.

The figure below shows how the concept of masculinity and femininity has been analytical connected to men and women in second wave feminism and psychology, in Critical Studies on Men and by Halberstam. Halberstam understands the concepts as fluid, as discoursive and as a performance. Masculinity and femininity can be performed and materialised both by men and women and female masculinity are in her oppinion not always constructed and performed in the same way that male masculinity is.

![Fig 1](image-url)

However, by using the concept, Halberstam still has the problem inherit in the concept. The way women do gender are constructed as masculine, and thereby the dichotomy is reproduced. Some way

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2 Johansson do not use Halberstams concept. He discusses the female body builders as abjects, an understanding that Halberstam is critical to because the term abject construct female masculinity as deviation.
clothing and moving the body is considered to be masculine and other to be feminine. As Derrida (1978) argues, we have to use the terms we inherit, but can deconstruct, subvert and in stabilise them. By repeating terms in new chains of equivalence and in new contexts the meaning and connotations connected to terms can be changed.

In the last part of the paper I will exemplify how I, inspired of Butlers and Halberstams discussions have used “male femininity” as an analytic tool in my analyse of men’s identity constructions in female occupations. But, before exemplifying from my study I will relate Halberstams concept to Lisa Adkins discussion of new expectations in the late modernity labour market concerning new forms of gender performance and ways to relate to the femininity.

**Expectations of both femininity and masculinity in the late modern labour market**

The sociologist Lisa Adkins (2002) argues that people in the labour market today are expected to flexible perform and move between both masculinity and femininity concepts. Thereby masculinity and femininity can be comprehended as positions that can be highlighted in different situations. Adkins argues that new concepts of gender hierarchies are emerging in late modernity that are difficult to analyse with the gender theories that often is used today. New ways of performing gender are constructing new hierarchies, often hidden under what seems to be gender equality. In the new labour market men are, according to Adkins, expected to and are rewarded if they perform qualities and characteristics coded as feminine. Men are encouraged to be social, emphatic, anti authoritarian and to use emotional labour (compare Hochschild 1983). On the other hand women are supposed to act like men in many settings. Adkins stresses that men’s performance of femininity is more rewarded than women’s performance of masculinity and thereby patriarchy and men’s advantages are reproduced. I think Adkins overestimate the rewards for men performing femininity. If she had deconstruct the concept of masculinity and femininity further she might have noticed that some ways of being feminine still are comprehended as negative and unthinkable for men, while others are more rewarding than earlier. Further, she does not put much attention to variations concerning how masculinity is conceptualised and performed in different ways by both men and women and how the gender concept change between different social situations and settings.

Halberstam argues, in the same way as Adkins, that women who in their aesthetic appearance transgress the sex border become more social subordinated than men. Halberstam exemplifies with women who have hairy bodies, beard and a manly face and argues that their bodies are considered to be ugly and grotesque, when men who are female like and androgynous are considered to be attractive. If Halberstam has compared the “ugly” women with men performing femininity in body language and aesthetics, not androgyny, the marginalization of men materialising some kinds of femininity has been obvious. Both women and men can perform androgyny and bee seen as attractive, because they mix the categories. But if women and men transgress the sex border to much in the body aesthetics they often become social problematic. In the new labour market it is in my opinion androgyny as aesthetic appearance and moving between qualities and characteristics that are comprehended as masculine and feminine that are rewarded. Not to transgress the male and female sex, which is connected to gender inversion and for men linked to the stereotype of the “effeminate homosexual man” (Lundahl 2001, Nordberg forthcoming).

The Norwegian sociologists Øystein Gullvåg Holter and Helene Aarseth (1994), who deconstructs and discuss different historical forms of patriarchy, stresses like Adkins that gender performance in late modernity is becoming a kind of play where gender concepts are more equal at the same time as femininity and masculinity is highlighted (see also Hirdman 2001, MacInnes 1998). Holter and Aarseth argues that patriarchy and men’s advantages are more hidden in the late capitalism form of patriarchy, which they call “ the andrognate”. In the andrognate the family consists of two wage-owners and sex/gender hierarchies are mainly constructed round highlighting technical skills, economy and marketing. At the same time reproductive areas like nursing and childcare, where many women works, are seen as less important and marginalized.

In Sweden has some forms of masculinity since the 1960ths been constructed as problematic and destructive for men in the gender equality policy. At the same time the Swedish gender equality project and feminists have argued that another masculinity concept with more female coded characteristics, are more appropriate for a modern man both in private and at work (Klinth 1999,
Nordberg forthcoming). If the female dominated reproductive areas are marginalized in late modernity at the same time as flexibility and characteristics considered to be feminine is rewarded in the labour market and in the private sphere how do men working in these areas construct their gender identity?

**Constructions of gender and sexuality among men working in female occupations in Sweden**

Taking departure in Judith Butlers concept of gender as performative, fluid and produced by discourses and Halberstams and Adkins discussions concerning male femininity I have analysed male and female workers speech and practices in different situations and settings. The discussion below is based on 31 interviews with men and women working as pre-school and primary school teachers, hairdressers, nurses in Sweden and field observations at eleven workplaces collected between 1996-1999. By using discourse analysis I have analysed how concepts of masculinity, femininity and heterosexuality are structuring gender identity, gender formations and practices. In Sweden, as mentioned above, a special concept of masculinity was problematised when the gender equality project was grounded in the 1960th. A description of a destructive form of masculinity constructed from sociological and psychological research was highlighted and used as an argument to persuade men to change their practices and to encourage them to support women’s strives for equality. The description of the destructive and traditional (business) masculinity was constructed as the opposite to modernity. Olof Palme, the Swedish prime minister, used for example the description in an article in *Journal of Social Issues* 1972:

> The interpretation is that the social pressures on the man to assert himself, to fight his way in life, to be aggressive, and not to show any feelings create contact difficulties and adaption difficulties. Sociologists consider that one should not speak of 'the problem of woman's role in society' but of 'the sex-role problem' in order to emphasize that the problem also concerns the traditional male role (Palme 1972 In: Klinth 1999:257).

As an opposite to the “traditional man” the description of “The New Man”, a more modern masculinity concept, was presented. “The New Man” was described as a democratic and pro-feminist man that had internalised more of the characteristics that was coded as feminine. A modern man should be anti authoritarian, emotional and express and speak about his feelings. In short, to be a modern man was to behave more womanlike. In the 1960th the aesthetic gender border was questioned and the unisex fashion was introduced. “The New Man” could be recognised by the clothes he wore, at least it was though so. Since the 1990th gender difference has been more highlighted and the concept of “The New Man” has changed in some ways. The contemporary “New Man” is expected to aesthetical look like a man and bee aware of the sex difference, but in his practices show more characteristics considered to be feminine (compare Adkins 2002).

The results from my study shows that the concepts of masculinity and femininity often is repeated by men in female occupations and by their female collegians. By using the concept both male and female workers reproduce hegemonic gender formations and tries to subvert the gender order. The concepts are intertwined with sexuality discourses that construct some femininity concepts as problematic for men to perform. In the construction of an male identity some concepts of femininity is in great demand, while other concepts concerning dressing, soft movements and tasks that also is linked to the stereotype of homosexual men as effeminate are seen more problematic because of the heterosexual hegemonic norms. Below I present and exemplify four analytical relation categories (or positions) that I have used in my understandings of how men construct their identities: *femininity and women as opposite, masculinity and men as opposite, femininity as desired and male femininity as opposite*. I have used the same analytical tools while analysing women’s identity constructions and speech about their male collegians, but will not discuss them further here.

**Becoming a male worker – femininity and women as opposite**

The entrance in a female occupation actualise the category “man”. Under the interviews and when talking to colleagues most of the men positioned them self as different compared with female workers. During the last decades gender difference has been emphasised in the gender equality discussion.
concerning men in female occupations. Men in child care and pre-schools are expected to bring other perspectives and tasks to the institution that are supposed to be missing when mainly women work there. This discourse is repeated both by men and women in the occupation. Staffan, for example, construct a male identity as a pre-school teacher by repeating gender stereotypes and arguing that male pre-school teachers are more professional and thereby different from female pre-school teachers:

We men are more spontaneous and have maybe more need for freedom (than female pre school teachers)/../ I think we are more professional. Not that we are better, but we have an attitude showing that we know why we are there (at the pre-school)

The male nurse Bengt construct a male identity by using well known stereotypes of women as caring and, men as activity directed heroes and daily caring as not acquiring educated skills:

I don’t think we men are so involved in caring, so involved and near children and their mothers as women are. I don’t believe we are /.../. I think that I myself, haven’t such a large need to care as women has/.../. When children get healthy, when it’s action, fast decisions, I like best. This ordinary care, I don’t think it is less exiting/.../ You get an adrenaline kick and have the opportunity to use your skills, not only give children food and change napkins and so.

In spite of that both Staffan and Bengt in their daily work do the same things as their female collegians they construct themselves as different. By using masculinity stereotypes and patriarchal discourses on gender complementary they reproduce the gender order at the same time as they subvert it in their practices.

Becoming a male worker –some masculinity concepts and men as opposite

In the male workers identity constructions also other kinds of men are positioned as different. Both difference to traditional men and to men that are considered to be too soft and effeminate are highlighted. With Connell’s model of the hierarchy between men their positioning could be understood as “complicit”. Their identity is constructed through the discourse of “The New Man” in the version from the 1990th, where it is important to both be a non traditional man and to aesthetic look like a “real man”. Thomas, who work as a primary-school teacher, positions men he had worked with earlier in a male occupation as different, traditional and problematic by actualising the gender equality discourse:

When I think of these factories and engineering plants that have been male dominated, it has been another type of jargon. I have adopted it, but I feel in a way that it hasn’t been my way of being, because I am conscious of these female and male things and these show offs that many men go around and perform, how they try to live up to a role. I think that has been very typical. When I worked in the factory, it was only talk of sport and of women and they comment in a special way. They had a special jargon when talking of women: ‘Hmm, That one!’ I used the same jargon myself. (Italics added)

Anders, a male hairdresser, position himself in a similar way by using the gender equality discourse where “destructive masculinity” is problematised and contrasted to a more modern and emotional way of being a man:

I don’t like this kind of maleness, this crude, beer drinking, hazard and horse race interested maleness. A man shall be emotional, softer and open for other ways of being and without prejudices. Men shall be more soft, it isn’t about femininity behaving that way.

Staffan, a pre-school teacher, positions himself in opposition against “traditional and destructive masculinity “, but is also negative and opposite himself to a masculinity concept connected to the stereotype of the 1970th male pre-school teacher, a man who in his opinion came to near femininity:
These “velour guys” who worked during the 70ths, they tried to show that it was men that worked. But it was like it should be soft men doing that kind of work. I would rather prefer normal men. One could be interested in sport and one don’t have to be a coward. Just this, that one should be tender. I mean, one could be tender, but one does not have to be oversensitive and highlight tenderness. It is enough to be as you are. (Italics added)

Staffan speak through hegemonic masculinity concepts and thereby constructs tenderness and some ways of being sensitive as unmanly and connected to cowards.

**Becoming a new kind of man – femininity as desired**

When I applied the analytic question if femininity also was desired by men I found a lot of quotations in the material where femininity was mentioned and used in positive ways in the male identity constructions. Many men were speaking of them self as lacking, longing for and daily using sides and characteristics that they considered to be feminine. However, by using the dichotomy masculine and feminine they, at the same time as they integrated both ways of being in their male identity construction, also reproduced the gender order. As I interpret it, these men have integrated the discourses of gender equality and of “the new man” in both their identity construction and daily practices and thereby comprehend femininity as some thing desirable. Sven, a pre-school teacher who often during the interview emphasise the importance of gender equality, points out:

> I don’t have this definitive manly way to say: “We do it this way!” Maybe I have more of this female way of being. I think and weigh both advantages and disadvantages against each other /../ I think that men shall use more of their feminine sides and see things more complex. Not only see things black or white and say “we do it this way”. I would like to see more of such sides in myself (Italics added)

In his identity construction Sven reproduce the difference between masculinity and femininity characteristics. By doing that characteristics still are coded as feminine and not constructed as gender neutral or manly characteristic. By integrating femininity he extends what is possible for a man, but he does not subvert or transcend the gender dichotomy. In spite of his emphasise on gender equality and similarities between men and women, the discourse of gender as difference is powerful in his speech:

> I believe that people shall be of two sorts, that there is a meaning with the (sex) difference. This male and female ways of being, I have many of them inside my self. Maybe I have little more of the female way of being. I think before I decide and consider advantages and disadvantages against each other. Maybe, because I am a man and am here, I believe that the male ways of being are highlighted by some women or they might bring them out better. (Italics added)

In their use of the concept of masculinity and femininity the men often construct gender as complementary by repeating the Jungian-discourse of human psyche as consisting of two complementary parts that must be in balance for a good living:

> Manliness, it is to be the one who you are and permit oneself to show the female part of you. Yes, exactly as it is a male part in all women, there is a female part in every man. It is about yin and yang, black and white. I believe that everybody has a female part in some way and if you regret that part I think you become more macho (Thomas, primary-teacher. Italics added)

However, by working in a female occupation with female colleagues and by integrating femininity in their male identity the men also comprehend that they have changed themselves and becoming nicer and more emphatic. Staffan, a pre-school teacher, state for example:

> I have become more sensitive, that is a sign of that we (male pre-school teachers) have been feminised. I notice other things. I still play Tarzan and Batman, but I can also, I hope, notice more
than ordinary men do. I would say, I don’t know, but I think I have become a better human being.
(Italics added)

**Becoming heterosexual – male femininity as opposite**

When I deconstructed the speech on femininity and how men used femininity concepts and repeated it in different ways I noticed that while femininity as characteristics often was desired, femininity connected to body language, dressing and tasks connected to the stereotype of the “effeminate homosexual man” at the same time was constructed as problematic. While the male workers could integrate femininity connected to what they comprehended as women’s way of being, femininity that was connected to homosexuality was unthinkable:

One should dare to show a feminine side *without being feminine the wrong way* /.../ Yes, that is probably the picture you get of guys that are so feminine. Yes, those who like and maybe dress in women’s clothes, those who have different sexual direction. They often become so effeminate, *almost more feminine than a woman*. (Thomas, primary-school teacher. Italics added)

The heterosexual matrix is powerful. By taking the female position in their work and on other situations men in the female occupation are rewarded for performing both masculinity and femininity and thereby being more complete (compare Adkins 2000). But this reward does not include taking up a feminine position in body language and in aesthetic appearance. Doing that would open up for a questioning their heterosexual position. It was not important for most of the male worker to be manly in characteristics, but it was important to bee seen as heterosexual and to avoid to bee comprehended as an effeminate gay. As Jesper, a male nurse puts it:

I would say that men who go for nursing are more manly, yes, not more manly but heterosexual (Italics added)

Anders, a hairdresser that positions him self as gay, stressed the same opposition. For him femininity was desired, but not femininity that was connected to homosexual men and to subordinated sexualities:

I don’t knew if I appreciate women more because I am gay and relate to them more, not as sexual partners, but to how they are and what they do /.../ We (gay men) permit ourselves to have a feminine side. It is not important for us to be manly /.../ A man shall be soft, but still a man and he shall be able to bake a cake, set the table and make it aesthetic. He shall be able to do the cleaning and all things that is considered as important in life /.../ I accept transvestites, but I am not so interested. It is not funny to see things like that /.../ People believe that gay men are feminine, everybody does. Men that don’t perform femininity are not considered to be gay. They (other persons) think that they could see who is gay by looking. They think that gay men do like this (moving his wrist softly in the air). We (gay men) are afraid of these gestures to. We detest femininity.

To be gay and perform masculinity concepts in body language and dressing is less problematic than the intersection of feminine aesthetics and subordinated sexuality. Even if femininity as characteristics in many ways is included in the male identity in Sweden today are patriarchal traditional masculinity and heterosexuality still hegemonic and thereby rewarded concepts. The stereotype that men in female occupation are gay and effeminate both restricts how men can perform femininity and open up for subversions of the aesthetic gender border. In Sweden male hairdressers are often supposed to be feminine and not heterosexual and men can be “open” gay in the occupation. Becoming hairdressers in a mixed saloon men has, because of the stereotype connected to the occupation, the occupation focus on fashion and aesthetics and because the occupation is comprehended as an artistic one, a freedom to extend traditional masculinity concepts and to materialise male femininity. However, like Anders, many male hairdressers, independent of sexuality direction, finds the stereotype of the effeminate male
problematic and over communicate hegemonic concepts and traditional aesthetic masculinity to subvert the stereotype. Many male nurses and pre-school teachers do the same.

**Analysing stabilisation, change and subversions of the gender and sexuality concepts.**

In research it is important to focus on hierarchies, marginalization and how normativity is constructed and regulated and how power orders are stabilised, intertwined and change forms. In the research we often reproduce the same hegemonies that we try to deconstruct. By deconstructing femininity and analyse how individuals, both men and women, use the concepts of masculinity and femininity both change and stabilisation can be analysed. At the same time the categories and concepts themselves can be deconstructed and subverted if we in our research practices can loose the link between men and masculinity and also put attention to women’s way of doing and subverting masculinity and to men’s subversions of hegemonic masculinity forms and positive ways of doing femininity. As Halberstam puts it: “Why not detail the forms of masculinity that emerge from the project of disentangling maleness, manhood, and masculinity” (Halberstam 2002:362).

Halberstam mainly discuss lesbians way of doing masculinity, but I think her concept can be extended also to other forms, both minority and common, of masculinity and femininity performed by both men and women. Women and men both reproduce and subvert hegemonic femininity and masculinity constructions. The challenge is to focus on both stabilisation and change at the same time, and to see how these are intertwined. If men and masculinity are linked together to tight in research it is easy to miss how women also reproduce, subvert and embodies the concept. If masculinity is only looked upon as problematic, the subversions and alternative that can open for less oppressive gender constructions are missed. I also find it problematic to take for granted that men mostly are afraid of to bee seen as feminine. If we can deconstruct both femininity and masculinity and put attention to how the different concepts are used in different way and what kind of femininity and masculinity that is subordinated in different situations and settings I think Gender Studies can catch both stabilisation and change in a more complex way. The dichotomy between Women’s Studies and Critical Studies on Men, that I think is upheld by the link between men and masculinity in the research, can then be transgressed.

We need also to be ware of the desire and pleasure connected to gender categories and gender performance. I believe that we have to construct new discourses that can open for less oppressing ways to perform gender and be aware of how also new gender formations normalise, marginalize and regulate subjectivity. A way of doing that is to point both at reproductive tendencies and at subversion, resistance and alternative and marginalised gender concepts. As I have exemplified concerning men’s identity formations; the Swedish gender equality policy and the description of “destructive masculinity” forms are performative and have contributed to new identity constructions among men. The men that I interviewed had internalised the concept of “the new man” and femininity as something desirable in their identity constructions. I think it is not only a construction performed for a female researcher (compare Nordberg 1999). But, even if men and women often in their daily life move between different gender positions like Adkins argues, they are, as the men and women in my study, still homophobic. By repeating hegemonic heterosexual norms that regulate and marginalize some individual’s way of materialising gender and sexuality, they reproduce the patriarchal gender order that construct women and men as a heterosexual and complementary couple. To act like a woman is okay, but not to aesthetical look like, move your body and perform femininity as an effeminate (homosexual) man

However, it is not enough to focus on the concepts themselves, on subjectivity and on how individuals conceptualise and materialise gender and sexuality concepts. It is easy to overestimate change. As Jeff Hearn (2000) and Connell (1995) argues, we must also go to men and women’s practices and practical consequences of the gender concepts. Even if femininity as a concept has more equal status with masculinity as a concept today in the labour market, men as a social category still can be found in more power related positions in society and get higher salaries than women. Not all men are in powerful positions, but some men are. In Sweden, in spite of the state feminism and gender equality laws, there are still few women in high management positions in the private sector and the wage gap between men and women is still 15-20% (SCB 2002). We need to know more about how both men and women are selected to higher positions and how some concepts of masculinity,
femininity, sexuality and other categories are favoured in that process, while others are subordinated and marginalized in spite of the sex of the worker (compare Gunnarsson et al 2003). We must also be aware of the changing forms concerning how femininity and masculinity are used in the labour market and in society as a whole and how the concepts are intertwined with other categories. When deconstructing masculinity and femininity it is important to analyse how heterosexuality constructs some forms of masculinity and femininity performance as “natural” and other forms as problematic. We also need to beware of the global flow of discourses and how these are reproduced and changed in different local contexts and how these flows intersect with other discourses. For example how the diversity and performance discourses in new management practices is mixed with the gender equality discourse and the state feminism in Sweden.

**Conclusion**

In this paper I have discussed and tried to extend analysis of masculinity and femininity concepts. I have also exemplified how men in female occupation can use the femininity concept both to reproduce and subvert the gender dichotomy and how the heterosexual hegemony make some forms of femininity more problematic than other forms for men. The desire to materialise characteristics comprehended as female that the men in my study expressed can be linked the Swedish gender equality debate and also, as Adkins (2002) has point out, to new expectations of gender flexibility in the late modern labour market. Both women and men are according to Adkins expected to move between masculinity and femininity positions in their work practices. Adkins argues that men by performing femininity can be comprehended as more complete than women. In the Swedish pre-school debate men are seen as important for compensating a supposed lack of masculinity and “manly” tasks in the institutions daily practices. They are also expected to do tasks earlier considered to be female and subvert the contemporary gender order. Male pre-school teachers are thereby expected to be flexible and both materialise masculinity and femininity in another way than female pre-school teachers are expected to. Women in female occupations are not considered to be capable to materialise masculinity and to perform tasks coded as masculine without men. Men who find hegemonic masculinity concepts restricting and try to materialise alternative gender formations can by the discourse that connect men with special characteristics be marginalized and pushed to be more “manly”. Often these kinds of men has to handle expectations from both their female collegians and from children’s parents to do male coded tasks like computer work, wood work, sports and physical tasks at the same time as they try to subvert hegemonic masculinity concepts.

In the Swedish political debate, male politicians in the same way as many men in my study, present themselves, as prime minister Göran Persson has, as pro-feminists, anti authoritarian and emotional “new men”. But still no female politician has been elected to the prime minister post. I am inclined to argue that “The New Man” is the compulsory hegemonic masculinity position in Sweden. By repeating a feministic discourse and by comprehending themselves as “new kind of man” men can keep the power positions in society. Maybe the new man is a new hegemonic masculinity formation…

Although, in many contexts there also exists, as I have point at, subversive gender formations that seldom is noticed. Masculinity and femininity concepts are questioned and reconstructed in new alternative, less repressing and less power exercising forms. By relating positive to femininity and thinking of themselves as acting out femininity the men in my study in some ways tries to change their ways of being. To speech of and emphasise some characteristics as female, to look upon these characteristics as something desirable and to thereby trying to change their practices may be the first step in a new and less repressing male gender formation. The integration of femininity extends in some way what can be included in a masculinity concept, even if it still is called femininity and thereby reproduce the gender dichotomy. If the same characteristics in emphasised in both femininity and masculinity concepts the concepts might either might lose there strength or other characteristics will be constructed as feminine and as masculine.

By disentangling the connection between men and masculinity and women and femininity new gender formations can be highlighted more in Gender Studies. To study masculinity and femininity as concepts materialised by both men and women, also make transgressions between the dichotomy Women’s and Critical Men’s Studies possible. As I have discuss I find it a bit problematic that Critical Studies on Men has put so little attention to male femininity and female masculinity and often in
research reproduce masculinity as something connected with men. Halberstam's (1998, 2002) discussion of lesbians and gay men's subversion of hegemonic masculinity concepts is important. However, her concept could as I have argued and exemplified be extended to analyse also heterosexual men and women's subversive and alternative gender formations. Although it is important not to loose lesbians, gays and other marginalized groups out of sight by expropriating and extending Halberstam's concept to heterosexual contexts cause then we risk to reproduce the heterosexual hegemony and continue to make marginalized and non heterosexual masculinity and femininity forms invisible. And, as I have argued, we have to deeper concern how the concepts masculinity and femininity restricts our way of doing research. MacInnes (1998) highlight that the masculinity concepts is problematic because it is reproducing the gender dichotomy and constructs some characteristics as female and other as male. As I see it the concept is useful for focusing on how the gender dichotomy and patriarchy are constructed, reproduced and subverted. However, it is also important, as Jeff Hearn (2000) has argued, to highlight men’s and women’s practices and put attention to how, by these practices, some men keep their privileges and construct problems for other men, women and children. Men and women, masculinity and femininity are social constructed groups and categories with material consequences and therefore we as researchers must both questioned the categories and highlight them in research. We also have to highlight and discuss both reproduction and subversions at the same time. Let us begin with exploring more about female masculinity and male femininity…

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