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Men in Female Occupations - Gender Flexible Models for Gender Transformations or for Hegemonic Masculinity?"

Marie Nordberg

Jämställdhetscentrum, Karlstad University and Göteborg University

The labour markets in the Nordic countries are sex-segregated. Women work in some occupations and men in others. The aim of this lecture is to discuss the discourses on men, masculinity and femininity articulated in the Swedish debate concerning men in female occupations. I will also connect the discourses to the practices that are established in the work places and point at the implications from a gender equality perspective. In the debate concerning men in female occupation the meaning of masculinity, femininity and gender equality are often taken for granted. But, as I will point at, different masculinity and gender equality concepts can be found, which sometimes create tensions and ambivalences for male workers. There is some confusion. Are they mainly employed as nurses and pre-school teachers or mainly as men? And what tasks and what kind of masculinity are they supposed to practice? In my lecture today I will focus mainly on male pre-school teachers, although also male nurses and male women's hairdressers are included in my study. The study was done during 1996-1999 and 17 men and 17 women working in female occupations were interviewed. I also observed fourteen of the men at twelve different work places, spending 4-6 days at each. The aim was to study constructions of gender and sexuality and articulations and practices among men and women working together in female occupations and to relate them to discourses articulated in the debate on men in female settings. The practices at the work place were also related to the efforts to undermine the contemporary gender order articulated in the gender equality politics in Sweden (SCB 2004, p. 7).

Sweden has one of the most sex-segregated labour markets in Europe (Ohlson & Sundgren Grinups 1994). This can be historically explained by the large public welfare sector that offered part time jobs and what was seen as suitable work for women. Although, in spite of a lot of political projects to undermine the sex-segregated labour market during the last forty years, men and women still work in different sectors and occupations. The amount of men working in the nurse profession was in the beginning of the 21st century about 7% and the male pre-school teachers about 2-3%. But, even if they are few, men has went into the most female quantitatively dominated occupations to a larger amount than women has went into strongly gender segregated and male coded occupations as truck driving and house building. The Swedish diagram on next page show the sex-segregated Swedish labour market in 2003. The dark colour is the amount of women and the lighter the amount of men.

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Men who goes in to a female occupation often gets a higher salary and better positions than their female colleagues (Robertsson 2003; SCB 2004). Apparently they ride what Christine L. Williams (1995) has called “the glass escalator”. As shown in the figure on next page is “grundskollärare”, the primary-school occupation, the only occupations among the ten most frequent occupations were women as a group have a higher salary than men. It is the same in the pre-school occupation. Although this depends on that there are few carrier positions in these occupations and that the salary is connected to how many years one have been working in the same occupation. Men often leave the occupation after some years and thereby do not get as high salary as women who stays in the same sector. Women are placed to the left in the figure and men to the right.

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Before discussing the discourses that are connected to the pre-school occupation in the gender equality debate I will try to clarify my theoretical point of departure.

Masculinity as discourse, performances and materialised in practices

Inspired by the philosopher Judith Butler (1990, 1993) I understand masculinity and gender identity as produced in performative verbal negotiations and materialised in daily repeated practices where different discourses on masculinity, femininity and sexuality are articulated, embodied, reproduced and renegotiated. Masculinity and femininity is in this way seen as linguistic, relational, multiple and historical specific subject positions that over time are materialised in our bodies. The masculinity and femininity positions that we are culturally offered are often contra dictionary and ambivalences and new positions are constantly produced. Masculinity is thereby seen as fluid, contingent and constantly under production and pressure and intersects with class, ethnicity, sexuality, age and nationality. Masculinity is constructed in relations to other

signs and positions in the language and thereby often changes due to situation. In the same way is identity fluid and constructed through ongoing identifications with multiple identity positions, for example as man, worker, husband, Swedish, heterosexual and homosexual etcetera. It is hereby more correct to speak of masculinities, femininities and identities. Butler points to the performativity in speech and other bodily acts. The categories we use, what we say and our practices construct us and the world in a certain way that temporarily excludes other opportunities. But, because masculinity and femininity has no essential ground the concepts are dependent on daily repetitions in social settings and is thereby always possible to change and practice in new ways. Butler argues that it is heteronormativity that constructs the categories “men” and “women” as two exclusive, different, opposite and complementary groups that are supposed to attract each other.

As a complement to Butler theory I have used Bob Connell’s (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity in my analysis. Connell underpin that men both are positioned and positions themselves in relation to a hegemonic masculinity concept. He emphasise that hierarchies exists in gender relations between men and between different masculinity concepts as well as between men and women, masculinity and femininity. Class, ethnicity and sexuality intersect according to Connell with gender and therefore a lot of different masculinities and masculinity formations are materialised and lived. In Connell’s concept hegemonic masculinity is the top position that all other positions are related to and define themselves against. *Hegemonic masculinity* can be defined as a historical changing stereotype of a “real man” that no men fully can embody, which legitimates the patriarchal gender order and men’s advantages in society. The term *complicit* is used by Connell to point at a position and group of men that maintain the hegemonic norm without being in the front line. This group of men negotiate with women and often try to live gender equal in their daily life. The *subordinated masculinity* is the opposite, marginalised and unmasculine position. In the contemporary West society Connell understands this position to be occupied by gay men and men who embodies femininity and are interested in female coded areas. Thereby these men and their masculinity formations like women are marginalised in the society. Connell define hegemonic masculinity as:

(T)he configuration of gender practise which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and subordination of women. (Connell 1995, p.77).

The concept is considered to be hegemonic because it has become a seldom-reflected part of daily life, is institutionalised and works as a hidden and naturalised norm in politics, law and organizations. The hegemonic masculinity and its regulating norms are often taken for granted, but are also under pressure. Other groups in society, like the women’s movement, have questioned both the contemporary male hegemony and the norms connected to the hegemonic position. The hegemonic norms are both stabile and fluid. When demanded by changes in the society new elements from other masculinity formations is integrated. Hereby the norms are updated so they still can guarantee and legitimate men’s advantages and positions in society. In other words, one important point in Connell’s concept is that a new hegemonic and more gender equal masculinity concept is not to be taken as a guarantee for a real shift of the dominance of white, heterosexual, middleclass men. With this in mind I now will discuss some of the discourses articulated in the debate on men in female occupations.

Important discourses in the debate on men in female occupations

In the gender equality debate on the importance of men in pre-school several important discourses can be found that often interacts. Below I will discuss ten discourses that in different ways construct an appropriate position for a man in a female occupation. Later I will also exemplify how some of these interacting positions was articulated and lived by some of the male workers in my study.

1. Men as role models

2. The problematic female norms and settings

In political documents and in the curriculum male pedagogues often are constructed as gender equality models both for children and for other men (discourse no 1). The ideal male pedagogue is in the official report *Barnstugeutredningen* (SOU 1972:26 and 27), published 1972, described as a role model for gender flexibility. At the same time the female workers are constructed as problematic (discourse no 2). Women are supposed to reproduce a traditional gender order by doing female coded tasks and in the document the importance of male identification is underpinned:

The childcare workers are mainly women. The same circumstances can be found in primary school. This is serious because many children lack male identification in their home. Further on, the circumstance that only women take care of children can consolidate traditional ways of comprehending gender roles and gender prejudices among children. If children not from early ages experiences that both men and women take part in care and education of small children and do the same tasks it will be difficult to change attitude. (SOU 1972:27, p. 45)

The discourse on the importance of men as gender flexible role models for children is also articulated in political documents on gender equality:

A larger amount of men in childcare is of great worth for pedagogic reasons because children repeat what we do more than what we say. Male childcare nurses, and pre-school teachers are important models for children.(Proposition 1987/80:105. Anmälan till prop. Om jämställdhetspolitiken inför 1990-talet)

The male pre-school teacher is together with the male nurse considered as a kind of gender equality vanguard for three reasons. First, as was exemplified above, they are understood as important role models for children growing up. Secondly they are considered as important role models for other men and women on how a man can act and behave. Thereby the male pre-school teacher and the male nurse are supposed to, only by being in the occupation, change the female coding of nursing and childcare. Thirdly, are the men themselves supposed to change, get better contact with feelings and become more emotional and nicer by doing care work and develop into “better” men. Hereby the male pedagogue and the male nurse are seen as important *male* role models and are constructed as a front troop for a new, more modern and gender equal masculinity formation.

3. “The New Man” and “The Traditional and Problematic Man”

The discourses on the new man and on the traditional man are flowing from one country to another and are filled with different contents geographical and over history. In Sweden the two opposites was articulated when the gender equality program was launched as an official policy in the 1960th and 70th. “The New Man” was constructed as a modern masculinity formation, while “The Traditional Masculinity” was constructed as the problematic and pathological opposite:

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

The masculinity concept that was presented as a better, healthier and more modern masculinity are fetched from alternative movements as the environment, peace, gay and women movements and was symbolised by "the velour man". By wearing soft clothes as opposite to the normalised male suit, a man could present himself as a modern, gender equal, gender transgressing and radical man. Although this new masculinity ideal was, as in line with Connell's (1995) masculinity theory, contested and renegotiated after a couple of years. Discourses of gender differences were highlighted in the late 1980th and "The New Man" was reconstructed and connected to a new content. The velour man was no longer presented as a hero. Instead he was parody and connected to homosexuality. In the 1990th "The New Man" still was supposed to be nice and emotional, but was now supposed to act and look as a "real man". And, is not as the velour man, supposed to contest and undermine hegemonic masculinity and the gender border by embodying femininity. The Swedish journalist and author Jan Guillou discussion on masculinity in a book from 1991 can exemplify the new discourse:

Then followed a recession for us real men. Some opportune friends really fell through during this period. They went to camps for men, caress each other at the bottom (I knew, I was there as a reporter), began to talk with a whimpering and childlike voice, dressed themselves in a waistcoat, a bricklayers shirt and trousers without fly and wore if it was possible a baby in a reins on there breast. The velour guys. (Guillou et al, *Stora Machoboken* 1991, p. 147-148)

Notice how Guillou in the quotation construct himself as different, as a real man, in opposition to the velour guy and subordinate the velour guy by both connecting him to homosexuality and presenting him as a wimp (compare Connell 1995). In the gender equality debate the discourse that stress similarities between the sexes are changed and from the middle of the 1990th the importance of bringing in "male perspectives" in pre-school and other female occupations are highlighted. Now two different masculinity concepts are connected to men in female occupations. On one hand *the gender transgressing man* and on the other hand *the real man that is supposed to bring male perspectives* to pre-school. The two opposite and competing masculinity discourses constitutes an ambivalence concerning how a male pedagogue should behave and act and what kind of role model he is supposed to be. The ambivalence can be illustrated by a correspondence in a paper for pre-school teachers printed in 2000:

There are so many thoughts in my head. How should a male pre-school teacher act? What is expected? Shall I be Macho-Lasse or Uncle Barbro, or both or none of them? The answer might seem easy: Be yourself! But it isn't so easy. Where is the border between being a man and being effeminate? Is it manlier to do wood work than to sew? What is included in my role as a pedagogue? (*Förskolan* no 7, 2000, p. 52)

4. The fear of femininity and effeminate men

The discourse that constructs femininity as something threatening and unnatural for men can be found in Guillous text above. The anxiety on male femininity can be connected to the hegemonic heterosexual norm in society. According to that masculinity and heterosexuality are so tight connected in the West (Amussen 1999; Butler 1990; Connell 1995) gender transgressions are often interpreted as signs of homosexuality. On

the contrary, heterosexuality is often linked to men embodying the hegemonic masculinity norms. The homosexual man is thereby mostly constructed and imagined as an effeminate man, not as a masculine man. Many men in female occupation therefore considered it as important to position oneself both as heterosexual and as “a real man” to avoid being connected to effeminacy and homosexuality. The discourse on femininity as problematic for men and the importance of being a masculine man can also be found in the discussion on problematic boys in pre-school and school. In a book discussing gender equality one of the academic writers stress:

Several researchers have noted that childcare workers strengthen female behaviour among children. Boys react by overdoing masculinity and behaving aggressive. Because they lack men to identify with they seems to construct a “desidentification”, where some male stereotype characteristics are strengthened as a way to maintain one’s position in the female dominated setting. (Thorsell in: Baude 1992, p. 102)

Two different way of describing the problem with femininity for boys can be found in this discourse. On one hand the boys are supposed to over communicate masculinity as a reaction to the female milieu as in the quotation above. On the other hand boys are supposed to become wimpy and effeminate in the female milieu. An example of the latter understanding can be found in Bertil Nordahls (1987) book: *Vilse i Damdjungeln*. (Lost in the female jungle)

5. Fatherhood as a lack in society.

In the 1970th the importance of a good relation between mother and child was highlighted in sociology and psychology. During the same period men’s role in the family was renegotiated. Some caution was directed to families without a man. In the 1980th the focus shifted from a discussion of problems in mother and child relations to an interest in and an anxiety about the relation between father and child. The male pre-school teacher became hereby, as exemplified earlier in the quotation from the *Barnstugeutredningen*, highlighted as an important male role model and substitute for a missing father. At the same period a conservative discourse was articulated that connect the missing father to problems in the society and to a lack of male authority. In this discourse traditional masculinity was presented as the solution for problems in families and in schools. The female staffs were accused to lack authority and the female setting was articulated as problematic for boys. The same discourse can be found in the Christian fatherhood movement in US (Eldén 2002).

6. Masculinity as a lack and marginalised in school and pre-school. Men as subordinated in female occupations.

This discourse can be understood as a restatement of a feminist discourse. By repeating the same discourse that feminist have used to point at women’s subordination in society and in male sectors in an opposite way, men are highlighted as marginalised and as subordinated losers in female occupations. This discourse is common in media and in the debate today in Sweden. One problem is that masculinity in this discourse is understood as a given and unitary concept. There are no problematisation and discussion concerning what kind of masculinity that is supposed to be lacking. Is it the velour guy’s masculinity or is it a more traditional masculinity?

7. Male workers reproduce men's advantages and subordinate women in female occupations as well as in the rest of the society. Men as winners and women as losers.

In gender research is the feminist discourse highlighting men's patriarchal advantages common. In this discourse are women and men, with inspiration from Marxism, often constructed as two opposite groups. Men are seen as the empowered winners and women as the subordinated losers. Men in female occupations are hereby mainly understood as having advantages and women as subordinated even in their own areas. The problem with this discourse is that men and forms of masculinity that are subordinated in relation to other men and masculinities seldom are noticed and discussed. The male workers are in this discourse often constructed as problematic just because they are men and the research is mainly directed to the problems that men are supposed to bring to or meet in female occupations. Hereby the personal development connected to care works and the daily companionship between men and women often are downplayed.

8. Gender Equality consider as quantity, as the number of men and women working in an occupation or workplace.

In the debate and in the policy documents gender equality is mainly addressed as a quantitative problem. Equality is supposed to be established when the gender division is at least 40% of one sex and 60% of the other in a sector or work place. This discourse takes its point of departure from organization research and Rosabeth Moss Kanter's (1977) thesis that minority groups are stereotyped and excluded from decisions in organizations. Although, as the sociologist Christine L. Williams (1995) has discussed, men in female occupation are not subordinated in the same way as women in a male sector are. In Sweden is the discourse of gender equality as a question of quantity well established. The political ambition has mainly been directed to change the number of men and women in sex-segregated areas in the labour market by policies, laws and state financed projects. But the question is, can an equal number of men and women in a workplace really be taken as a guarantee for more gender equal relations and practices? By presenting case studies from two pre-schools I will later on problematise that conclusion. Will the gender order be undermined and transgressed more radically when men are working in the occupation, as the official report *Barnstugeutredningen* stressed? Or is changing the contemporary gender order a complex task, not easily solved by putting more men into female occupations and more women into male dominated areas?

9. Heterosexuality contested and under pressure by male gender transgressing

This discourse is articulated in the quotation from Guillou's text above. Guillou connects in his statements on masculinity the *velour man*, gender transgressions and gender bending to homosexuality. In this discourse are especially male gender crossing problematized and considered to in a problematic way undermine the heterosexual order. Queer theory has highlighted heteronormativity a powerful discourse regulating how to dress and move our bodies, how to tell stories and jokes, who to love and attract, what areas to be interested in and what job to work in (Butler 1990; Rosenberg 2002). Men and boys showing interest in female coded tasks and areas are hereby often considered to be deviants from normality that in a problematic way will undermine both the gender dichotomy and the heterosexual order. Interpreted as a question of heterosexuality the pre-school teachers Staffan's strong disidentification with the *velour man* and a masculinity considered to be "too soft" is understandable. By

distancing from the velour man Staffan can position himself as a real and heterosexual man:

These velour guys who worked during the seventies, they wanted to show that it was men that worked. But it was like it should be soft men doing that kind of work. I rather prefer normal men. One could be interested in sports and one does not have to be a coward. Just this, that one should be tender. But one does not have to be oversensitive and highlight tenderness. It is enough to be as you are. (Staffan, pre-school teacher)

10. Stereotypes

There are also some powerful stereotypes and media discourses connected to nursing, childcare and hairdressing that male workers have to deal with. In hairdressing the stereotype of “the effeminate and gay hairdresser” is common. In pre-school it is “the velour man” and “the pre-school paedophile” and in nursing it is “Sister Arne”, a joke and cartoon of a man in woman’s uniform having a female title. To avoid being connected to the effeminate stereotypes, and thereby also to deviance from heterosexuality, some of the male workers in my study emphasised and saw it important to embody stereotypical hegemonic masculinity norms. But on the other hand, which I think is important to notice, for some of the men the stereotype had opened up for new ways of acting. If one is working as a hairdresser one is supposed to be effeminate and play with gender stereotypes. Hereby the stereotype of the effeminate male hairdresser makes gender bending easier and probably more unproblematic for a male hairdresser than it might be for a man working in a masculine coded sector.

Gender equality as a part of the Swedish pre-school curriculum

In Sweden are gender equality and the importance of undermining gender stereotypes stressed in the curriculum in pre-school as well as in the rest of the education system. In the curriculum from 1998 one can read the following passage:

Adults ways to treat girls and boys, as well as the demand and expectations that laid upon them contribute to shape girls and boys conceptions of what is consider to be feminine and masculine. Pre-school shall work against traditional gender formations and gender roles. Girls and boys shall in pre-school have the same opportunities to test and develop abilities and interest without limitations from stereotype gender roles. (Skolverket, Lpfö 1998).

At the same time that undermining of gender stereotypes is articulated as an important task for the pedagogues there exists two competing discourses on gender equality. In one discourse is gender equality highlighted as sameness. It is thereby stressed as important to challenge gender stereotypes and to transgress gender borders. In the other discourse is gender equality highlighted as *positive difference*. In this discourses men and women are separated and considered to be different, but not in a hierarchical way. The importance of regarding men and women as complementary and to take advantage of both male and female perspective in society, workplaces and schools are stressed. In the Swedish gender pedagogy work in pre-school and in other school forms these two discourses are connected to different presumptions and practices directed at the children:

1. Gender pedagogy as highlighting sameness and stressing the presumption that boys and girls had to be treated the same way.

2. Gender pedagogy as highlighting gender difference and stressing the presumption that girls and boys had to be treated different because they have different needs and lacks due to culture and/or biology.

In the interviews and at the workplaces I observed two different positions and practices connected to these gender pedagogy discourses was constructed for the male pre-school teacher. Although, before describing the two cases from my pre-school study, it is important to underline that there are not one kind of men or of women working in the female occupations or only two male positions available. The cases described below cannot be generalised. Some of the men in my study considered the occupation as a nice and healthy place free from the male jargon, hierarchies and expectations they had met earlier working in a male dominated area. Other stressed the opportunity of doing sports and other tasks that earlier had been leisure activities and underpinned that they liked to be with children. Some men had work injuries and were working in the pre-school because they could not stay in their earlier work area. Few of the men and women interviewed had chosen the job as an explicit gender equality project. Although, the role model discourse was often repeated from a gender equality perspective.

Sven, Pontus, Per and Johan – two different interpretations of the role model

Sven, educated in the 70ths, presented himself during the interview as a velour guy. Together with the younger and newly educated Pontus he worked in a nursery for 1-5 years old children. Both Sven and Pontus repudiate the male norms they earlier had met in male dominated areas. Per, a pedagogue that had worked for more then ten years in childcare, articulated as Pontus and Sven the role model through the discourse on gender equality as sameness. The male pedagogue was portrayed as a gender flexible man that undermined the traditional gender order by doing female coded tasks:

When I see it in a glamour way, I feel like a transgressor. “Now, we are going to change this” (the gender order) /../ There are no one of the ladies who tell me to do things, but I try to do as much as possible. I think children must see that one can clean the tables and so on, even if you are a man. Do the dish, take care of washed clothes. It is not because I think they really look, but some of it they might notice and bring with them. (Per).

Johan, educated in the 90ths, had as Per been in childcare for about ten years. Recently he had changed workplace and was now working in a nursery with children in ages between 3-5 years. In contrast to Sven, Pontus and Per, Johan articulated the role model through the discourse on gender equality as difference. Thereby he constructed the male pre-school teachers position and task in a different way:

I think I see my occupation in a more professional way (than women). I was taught it under my education and then I know that I have to follow what I am supposed to bring to the children. And I also talk about it. I think the day care institutions have become so female. What do we most often do together with the children? We sew, we weave. Lots of things like that. But then we won't recognise, what do we really do for tasks that are boyish? I mean, I don't say you ought to stop seeing and weaving and things like that, because it is important for training mobility. But, what do we do to show that it is possible to be a boy? Because, everybody knows. Everybody talks of, that boys occupy more space (than girls). They demand more. But, what do we do? How many in the personal do wood work? How many do wrestling with them? How many build hoods in the forest and things like that? (Johan).

In Johan's argumentation the discourse of the problematic and feminised setting and the discourse that highlight boys and masculinity as marginalised in pre-school can be found. Johan constructs boys and girls as two uniform groups with different interests and different needs. He also interprets masculinity in a gender polarised and stereotypical way.

Two different practices

The different interpretations of the role model, and of masculinity and gender equality, presented above was materialised in two different practices and gender regimes. In Sven and Pontus nursery the children was seldom called "boys" and "girls" or dived in to sex-segregated groups. Sven, Pontus and their female colleague Gun altered between the tasks. A short description from the field study can illustrate their daily practice:

Sven and Pontus are busy cleaning the table after lunch with fifteen children. They talk about the food and about the children being a little bit noisy and request them to be quieter. Sven lifts up one child, hugs it and sweeps the child's hair with tenderness. Then he carries it to the nursing room and giggling puts on a clean napkin. He and Pontus then discuss the children's sleeping periods. Later they went to the yard with the children. Pontus plays with little Marcus in the sandpit while Susanne, a female pre-school teacher, is playing football with some girls and boys. She also joyfully hunts the children on the playground while they are laughingly trying not to be caught. Sven is discussing the different parts of a flower with a boy and together they smell the scent of the flower.

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In Sven and Pontus nursery boys and girls often played together and altered between female and male coded activities. But Sven and Pontus practises are not unproblematic from a gender equality perspective. Trying to avoid reproducing gender stereotypes and traditional masculinity the male pedagogues had closed the woodwork room. Hereby neither boys nor girls got the opportunity to get skilled in this male coded area.

In Johan's nursery some of the activities were changed after Johan's entrance. Once a week, the children was dived in to sex-segregated groups and was presented different activities. While Johan, as a role model for masculinity and male perspectives, offered the boys male coded activities, his female colleagues introduced the girls to other activities considered as more suitable for girls. One day I was invited to take part in the boys' meeting, although girls ordinary not were allowed:

Johan, the boys and I are on our way to the forest to build a hut. Under Johan's command the boys drags branches, wood and twigs to the hut. They intensively take part in sawing and hammering. Some of them call Johan "the boss". On the way home, we talk about hockey teams and shout out their names and songs. Later in the nursery I pass two boys washing their hands. One of them says to the other: "Girls can't work! The other boys smiles and answer: "No, they can't!" Later, when the pre-school teachers take a coffee break Johan tells his colleagues about the activity in the forest. Ewa smiles and comments: "Then the boys can be boys!" and propose: "Maybe I and the girls can bake buns and come to the hut and serve you and the boys coffee, buns and lemonade."

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Johan connected often masculinity to certain areas and tried to make the pre-school a more masculine place. The pedagogues in this nursery comprehended girls and boys as two different and polarised groups with different needs. They also stressed that it was best if the pedagogue did the tasks that he or she was good at. Thereby Johan came to handle the computers and woodwork. In this nursery the children was often called “boys” and “girls” and was often divided into sex-segregated groups. Boys and girls played in different groups and seldom crossed the gender border when they were free to choose activity. When Johan entered the nursery the female pre-school teachers left the male coded tasks they earlier had been doing to him. Hereby a polarised and traditional gender regime was established. Although, which can be seen as a paradox, the dividing of boys and girls and differences in treating them was articulated as a gender equality project. The discourses that construct masculinity as a lack and highlight boys as marginalised in pre-school were together with the discourse pointing out gender equality as difference constructing this practise as the most adequate.

The masculinity concept practiced in the boys activities – being good at sports and making sports an exclusively male domain and recurrently articulate and maintain difference from girls and things connected to girls – have a lot of similarities with the masculinity concept that Frosh et al (2002) highlight as a hegemonic and problematic masculinity construction among boys. This concept of being a popular boy is according to Connell (2000) problematic because it often dislocates boys from success in school.

Conclusions and discussion.

As I have exemplified did Sven and Johan conceptualise masculinity and the male workers position through different discourses. Sven mainly interpreted the pre-school work through the subject position “pedagogue”. Thereby he primary emphasised female coded tasks as service and considered them to be a natural part of the job. He and his colleague Pontus repudiated the hegemonic masculinity norms and tried to expand what is considered to be masculine by incorporating feminine positions. Johan, on the contrary, interpreted the pre-school teachers work mainly through the subject position “man” and thereby emphasised gender as a category. Because Johan primary conceptualised the milieu as female and understood masculinity in a certain way it became important for him to renegotiate the pre-school teachers position and the pre-school activities. By offering the boys certain activities he tried to make the pre-school more manly and more in line with a traditional, regulating and stereotype masculinity concept.

I think it is important to change the sex-segregated labour market and discuss the gender stereotypes and discourses that prevent men from taking the opportunity to go into female coded occupations. But, as I have shown by the case studies, it is also important to analyse and problematise the practices and gender relations that are materialised in the workplace. The discourse on gender equality as a question of quantity and other discourses articulated in the debate about men in female occupation need to be highlighted and critical discussed. As I have highlighted by exemplifying the materialisation of two different role model discourses, male pedagogues cannot be taken as a guarantee for a subversion of the traditional gender order. It is a heavy load to put on their shoulders.

Masculinity and femininity can as I have discussed, be understood and performed in different ways. And to complicate it further, men and women are seldom practising only one position, as often taken for granted in the debate. In Sven's nursery it was mainly women who took up "masculine" positions, while Sven and Pontus often embodied "feminine" positions. As I see it, it is important to regularly *discuss the masculinity and femininity concepts and gender equality discourses that are constructed, normalised and practiced* in pre-schools. It is also important to discuss *the effects and practical consequences of the discourses* and to *analyse how different gender configurations and practices relate to gender equality goals*. Further, it is of great importance to discuss the consequences of highlighting the male pedagogue primary as a *male* worker and to problematise the essential understanding and highlighting of "male" and "female" perspectives articulated in the contemporary gender equality debate. What kind of masculinity is taken for granted in the discussion of masculinity as a lack and in the contemporary understanding of boys, men and masculinity as marginalised in the pre-school setting?

Men entering a female occupation actualise a lot of stereotypes and discourses among colleagues, children and their parents that historically has been connected to the category "men". Thereby male pedagogues often are pushed to take up male coded positions and task, even if some of the male workers have chosen a female occupation because they are not so skilled in male coded areas. The male pre-school teacher can easily become a sporting, physical woodwork and computer skilled playmate. Hereby the masculinity positions offered both male workers and boys in the pre-school risk to become unnecessary limited and restricted. More than lacking are, because of these expectations, the hegemonic masculinity norms always present in the form of a normalised concept that both the male and female workers measure themselves and the pre-school setting against.

The hegemonic discourse highlighting the female occupation as problematic for male workers is, which I think it is important to be aware of, concealing that new neoliberal management discourses, economic strains and down sizing have eroded the public sector. Both male and female workers leave public care work because of the working conditions. Sven phoned me one year after the study was finished and told me he had left his job. "We got two more children in the pre-school group and less personal. Then I said to my self it was enough! I really long for the children, but the salary I got in my new job in a male dominated occupation tell me to stay in this sector. Now, I and my family can afford things we just could dream of earlier". Pontus, Sven's colleague, left some months earlier because of the paedophile debate. "I think about it every time I change a napkin and get nervous. Things can so easily be misinterpreted" he told me. When male workers leave the female occupations they often, as Sven and Pontus, go into a male dominated sector, while women leaving their job as pre-school teachers and nurses often only change workplace or educate into another occupation in the female dominated sector. And, which is important to notice, another female worker often replaces a woman leaving the female sector, while another man more seldom replaces a male worker. Thereby the amount of women leaving a female occupation often gets invisible both in the statistics and in the debate.

How is it then possible, in spite of problematic working conditions, to persuade more men to take the opportunity to work in a female coded occupation? In my lecture I have discussed and problematised some of the taken-for-granted in the arguments articulated in the debate on the importance of men in female occupations. I also have highlighted some problems inherited in the gender equality concept. By the emphasise of gender in the gender equality politics follows, as exemplified in the description of

Johan's highlighting of the position "man" and dividing of boys and girls and Sven's deliberate neglect of male tasks, a focus on masculinity and femininity. This highlighting of gender and masculine and feminine identity positions constructs as I have discussed an obstacle for gender transgressing in pre-schools. In hairdressing, an occupation that has not been highlighted as a front troop occupation for gender equal male role models in the debate, gender was not highlighted in the same way in the female saloons as in the nursery wards and pre-schools I visited. Male and female hairdressers did the same tasks and did not construct the male and the female hairdressers positions as separated.

To conclude, the female occupations in the public sectors can not offer the same carrier positions as and are often lower paid than male dominated occupations in the private sector. Changing the sex-segregated labour market is thereby also a question of how women, women's work, the female sectors and caring are valued and described in society. Men crossing the gender border are punished both in salary and concerning available carrier positions, while women entering the male sector are better rewarded in these aspects, even if they do not get the same salaries and advantages as their male colleagues. But, not to forget, and as all the male workers in my study underlined, there are other rewarding qualities offered in care work. As Staffan expressed it: "I love this job. In which other occupation do you feel that someone is waiting just for you every day? Think of all the children waiting just for you, seeing you through the window and shouting 'He is coming! He is coming!' That's what I call I good job!"

At last I will offer some questions to be further discussed:

- How can men (and women) be persuaded to transgress the gender border and undermine the sex-segregated labour market? Is the best way to highlight interesting parts and the qualities of the occupation? Is the best way to present the variation of men (and women) working in the occupations? Or is the best way to use the gender complementary discourse and point at a lack of men, masculinity and masculine perspectives in female occupations?
- What can be the effects of the discourses mentioned for men going into female occupations? What can be the effect for the women already working in the occupations?

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