

# Abstract

*Jämställdhetens spjutspets. Manliga arbetstagare i kvinnoyrken,  
jämställdhet, maskulinitet, femininitet och heteronormativitet*

(The Spearhead of Gender Equality. Male Workers,

Gender Equality, Masculinity, Femininity and Heteronormativity)

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Despite gender equality policies and state feminism Sweden has one of the most gender segregated labour markets in Europe; few men are today working in non traditional occupations such as nursery school teacher and hospital nurse and women's hairdresser. Taking its point of departure in poststructuralist feminism, critical studies on men and masculinities and queer theory, this dissertation offers an analysis and discussion of the Swedish equality discourse, as well as the variation of male worker's gender formations materialised in three non traditional occupations. The aim of this dissertation is to investigate what discourses were repeated and fused to the gender equality discourse in the occupations studied. By using ethnography, interviews and a translocal perspective it is shown how discourses flow between situations, sometimes simply getting repeated and reified, sometimes actually being contested and changed. Empirically it is based on thirty-one interviews with men and women working as preschool teachers, nurses and hairdressers and a discourse analysis of policy document and news paper articles. Thirteen male workers has been observed at their work places from four to five days each and eleven workplaces has been observed. The preschool teachers have also been observed at two meetings of a network of male preschool teachers. Starting with the Gramscian concept of hegemony, there is a presentation of the theory of discourse in Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe and the thinking of Judith Butler, of sex as a position in language, performative performance and materiality. There is also a problematisation of the model of hegemonic masculinity in Connell, as well as the concept of femininity and masculinity, concerning the different forms of masculinity and the idea that femininity is always a negative identification.

Two discourses on masculinity were constructed in the sixties, one the negative, "Traditional Man", and the other, the positive "New Man", constructing femininity as something desirable, often being symbolised by the gender transgressive "Velvet Man". Male preschool teachers and male nurses were considered as important role models for the policies of gender equality and the discourse turning them into a "Vanguard of Gender Equality." In the workplaces two different positions of the male workers were found; the male worker as gender transgressive and positively equal and the male worker as *Other*, a person supposed to provide a male perspective and behaving different from the female worker. These positions are connected to two different hegemonic masculinities: *the stereotypical masculinity*, emphasised by Connell, and *the reflexive masculinity*, constructed around the ideal of an authentic self realizing subject. Gender equal relations and gender equal discourse and practice was most prevalent among the hairdressers. It is argued that the emphasis on men as role models is trapping them in a polarised gender order, accentuating the difference of male nurses and preschool teachers, thereby paradoxically confirming the discourse that the policy of gender equality set out to change.

*Keywords:* Gender equality, masculinity, femininity, heteronormativity, gender order, preschool teachers, nurses, hairdressers, hegemony, performativity.

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