Bartłomiej Lis
University of Wrocław

Socialisation towards normative masculinity: institutions and mechanisms of shaping the heterohabitus. Examples[1]

Men who turn out to be dominantly homosexual in their mature lives as well as those who identify themselves with the socially and culturally developed category of being gay are not subject to socialisation to a masculine role that would differ from the dominant discourse on gender while they are boys or adolescents. Gays, just like heterosexual, bisexual, and all other men, in accordance with the initial identification of being men by anatomy, are nurtured accordingly to this "observation" (a performative procedure of "masculinising" a boy's body starts, together with forming in a young man the proper behaviours and ways of acting, thus shaping a specific, clear gender disposition). The first habitus, found in later possible "reconstructions", is practically always a habitus filled with heterosexuality as an immanent part of human nature. Traces of preparing boys to being normative men are also easily identifiable in gay narrations on childhood and adolescence. The understanding of masculinity which is dominant in the discourse and in which the heterosexuality of a person is a crucial element was a topic of socialising practices also in reference to homosexual men (Levine 1998, p. 55). The readiness to accept such a perspective, naturally brought different results with each gay that I spoke with during my research[2], but despite rare "exemptions" from the normative acting out of one's gender, my interviewees agreed to their gender role being defined in this way. It was not always an easy feat, but I dare say that such cases of gender non-conformism can be discovered by an avid researcher in the stories of heterosexual men as well.

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[1] The article is an adapted chapter from my Ph.D. thesis entitled *Normy płciowe a strategie tożsamościowe gejów. Socjologiczna analiza tożsamości płciowej mężczyzn homoseksualnych* [Gender Norms and Gay Identity Strategies. Sociological Analysis of the Gender Identity of Homosexual Men] defended in 2013 at the University of Wrocław.

[2] While preparing my Ph.D., I collected narratives of homosexual men (aged 17–69, self-defining as gay; 40 interviews). I used the deep interview method, standardised to a degree. I conducted the research in large and mid-sized Polish cities (Wrocław, Gdańsk, Warsaw, Bielsko-Biała) in 2008 and 2009.

This article presents some of the mechanisms of shaping the heterosexual habiti of boys, focusing on the institution of peer groups.

Peers: gender protectors, and the attitude
towards feminised/non-normative boyhood

The stories of homosexual men on the topic of their childhood are very diversified. Some perfectly fill the traditional understanding of boyhood, where long-lasting open-air games, team sports, and other typical pastimes are to "forge" the men of the future. Naturally, there are also narrations which serve as illustrations of the stereotypes of feminised gays. All bear the traces of the normative impact of the environment: if a person speaks of a normal, traditional childhood, and speaks positively of their functioning within this childhood, it is a sign that the socialising actions were aimed at a boy whose internal predispositions were not in conflict with the content of the socialising practices. If an interviewee speaks of the troubles of growing up and facing the verbal abuse of those in the environment who do not accept his non-standard behaviour, a researcher sees the sign of impending stories of coercing a specific normativity. In both cases, the activity of peers, especially boys, in the area of creating the proper understanding of gender within a person is indisputable, regardless of the degree of success of replicating it later.

During the interviews, I collected many testimonies of "regular", "street" upbringing, in which the interviewee was to no degree a subject of "normative admonition" from peers, be it boys or girls (*expressis verbis*, because "normative admonitions" were naturally voiced in the background). Examples of individuals visibly diverging from the expected style of boyhood are more interesting from the viewpoint of the analysis of gender-normalising practices[3]. Other children, younger and older alike, primarily boys, are especially active in the area of guarding gender correctness[4]. We can rest assured that non-normativity in this area will be seen and properly categorised. This is the consequence of the cultural compulsion to either mark an individual that falls outside of the norm sanctioned by statistics, exclude one from the dominant group of "proper attitudes", punish non-conformism, or a symbolic call for "one of their own" who is brave enough to act differently from the prescribed role of a boy/man. The practices governing "gender purity" whose

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[3] This inability/difficulty in reproducing masculinity, naturally, may also be related to men, who are currently mostly heterosexual. I expect that similar research on such a group could bring relevant data, although it is possible that because of the defined status of "feminised boyhood" it would be more difficult to acquire such testimonies (because of the fears of how the researcher might take it).

[4] Emma Renold, a social researcher, studied a group of boy and girl students in an elementary school in Great Britain. She concluded that unfavourable behaviours towards "girlish" boys can also be found among some girls. It is a group which we could call, using Raewyn Connell's vocabulary, emphatic/subordinate girlishness, acknowledging the rules of the patriarchal majority, including those of hegemonic masculinity (Renold 2002, p. 424).

execution is the domain of normative boys are mostly related to children of the same gender. The assortment of possible tools to negatively sanction non-standard behaviour of some boys is diversified. The most common tools are "laughter" and "challenge" with the basis of these violent actions most commonly being the perceived femininity/effeminacy of an individual. Some of the words used to describe my interviewees in their boyhood were: lady, girl, girls' king, girlie, dandy, faggot, tomboy, pantywaist, queer or softie. Associations with femininity, or lack of masculinity, were the most common way of verbally punishing an individual. Symbolic deprivation of masculinity, equalising one with the "worse sex", was on one hand a sanction that corrected the unacceptable behaviour of a "peer", and on the other a way to distance oneself from the non-normative behaviour in accordance with the rule of "fag discourse" according to the sociologist C. J. Pascoe[5].

> In secondary schools, mostly in the first two grades. There was a group that decidedly did not like me, despite not knowing me at all and most of the time boys from that class followed me and called my name, diminutively: "Michałek, Michałek" (*Mikey, Mikey*), naturally followed by the word "fag" thrown into the air. They ran after me around the school and called me these names. I was naturally annoyed and always sent a curse or two their way but I could not help it. As it turned out later, one of the boys, from that class, is gay. […] I do not know the reason behind this. Maybe because I spent time with girls, maybe because I was the school's activist, maybe my way of being which came into light, one of my **uncontrolled behaviours**, way of gesticulation, speaking loudly – I always speak loudly when something excites me and this is not much of a masculine trait. Maybe these were the reasons (Michał, 23).

Michał, while attempting to explain the nature of the unpleasant name-calling, recognises such elements of his behaviour which – if noticed – are usually perceived by some groups as un-masculine, or feminine. Diminutive names symbolically put him in the position of a "baby". It is one of the ways of depriving one of their masculinity. He also points to the fact that there are non-heterosexual individuals among the oppressors who mastered the normative syllabus to a higher degree. This, again proves that sexuality does not necessarily need to be associated with gender and that homophobic behaviour dismisses the suspicion of an individual being homosexual, ergo – unmanly.

Przemek told me his difficult relations with the boy part of his lower secondary school class:

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[5] According to Pascoe, adolescents use the terms "gay" and "fag" not necessarily to offend the boy who is indeed so sexually inclined but rather in order to discipline other young men and warn them against un-masculine (i.e. feminine) acts in the future. Constant use of homophobic language in adolescent cultures (especially boys) serves more functions than the mere stigmatising and exclusion of non-normative sexuality. "Fag discourse", as the sociologist calls it, is a recurring story, whose usage by the subject, even for a moment, stabilises their wobbly masculine identity. It is only possible to reach this state at the expense of taking away someone else's masculinity (by calling them "a fag") (cf. Pascoe 2005, 2007).

> […] clashes started, especially in the lower secondary school, between myself and those hetero-peers who like playing football, always keep close together, and who like such "manly", in parentheses of course, pastimes. There was even some simpleton name-calling, well. Generally, all throughout the lower secondary school stage, from the very beginning, they took it into their heads that I was gay; **even I did not exactly know this for myself** and I never spoke about it or even suggested it. But they took this into their heads and it was always known I was gay and it was so all throughout the lower secondary school. Sure, it was never a "gay" but rather a "fag", this was the way it looked. **They were very heterosexual**, all the time quoting lines from porn films. You can actually imagine this: a bunch of guys that tried their best to be ultra-cool while for me they were pathetic. And still are. (Przemek, 20)

This story is an example of specific behaviours, habits, manners (in this specific case: preferring the company of girls and reluctance to play sports) which served to prove that if a boy does not completely accept the rules of normative masculinity, he is automatically associated with being homosexual. The interviewee did not know himself if he was gay, we can conclude that he was rather told he was gay based on a set of stereotypical traits. Further, the interviewee includes the adjective "heterosexual" into the description of "masculinity" and the behaviours of his adversaries. For him, it is no surprise that part of the traditionally understood hegemonic masculinity lies in heterosexuality.

Yet another account follows a similar pattern. Mateusz was very early to recognise his sexual desires as mostly homoerotic. He performed a coming-out, not hiding his preferences from the environment. This news caused a series of aggressive behaviours of homophobic origins as well as an assumption of a homosexual man becoming faithless to the idea of masculinity (where masculinity was understood as heterosexuality) (Redman 2000, p. 488).

> I was very quiet, calm, I learned and still do learn because I like it and so I was a subject of mobbing, so I did not have a lot of friends. There was also this fact that I declared myself a gay, which was a real pisser. At school I was beaten, called names, I did not have a lot of friends – I rather spent time online or reading books. Once, after I was beaten, I was sent to hospital. I remember it to this day, I was told: "Why do you have a dick? **It's for fucking**. For fucking, not to play around with it or to do blowjobs to others." (Mateusz, 17)

The oppressors call upon the understanding of activity, domination, and insertion during sexual intercourse as attributes of masculinity. Every other, even imaginary, (un)use of the male sexual organ is treated as improper, unworthy of man. Knowledge of Mateusz's homosexuality allowed others to feminise him, which was treated as a justification of the violent behaviour towards him (Barron, Bradford 2007, p. 242). The vulgar questions which he was asked are also a symbolic call for what the oppressors deserve, and demanding the unambiguity of the world, so that it is clear and legible. Homosexuality of one of their peers brings unease and may undermine the declared system of the organisation of gender and sexuality.

"Sexual tools" as a way to humiliate a non-normative boy were also used by Jarek's "peers". All that was needed to classify him as a victim was the fact that he liked to listen to music by Madonna, made friends with girls, was a good student, and was obese.

> A lot of boys did this thing in primary school where they pulled down their pants and covered the… with their hands. Not only was this directed at me but this was a trend so I also… In my case they did something like this: they pulled down their pants, pointed their "things" out but they covered them with their hands and pretended to be copulating. And they said to put it in their mouths or to do oral sex (Jarek, 26).

Symbolically degrading the weaker boy whom they perceive as unmasculine takes on the form of a figurative submission, inscribing the target into the passive sexual role, with a functional objectivization of the misfit – since he is feminised in a way, let's show him his place in the gender/sexual order of things (cf. Lis 2010, pp. 145–146).

One of the interviewees pointed me to the fact that "corrective behaviour", a form of punishment for specifically understood gender lack of normativity, is usually performed in groups. It is a ritual which makes sense if it is performed in front of an "audience". An increased audience also means that more people want to or feel obliged to join such practices. According to the philosophy of the "fag discourse", the oppressing activity contains as much sanctioning of lack of masculinity in the anatomical man as prevention: showing to others that one is masculine, which can also include depriving others of their masculinity.

> I remember I was called a "dandy" for a long time; the other name was "lady". This was the result of my behaviour, way of being. It was always a behaviour of the whole group towards me, never of individual people. Nobody talked to me personally that there was something in me they didn't like; everything was always cool – it was just when they came together as a group, they tried to act. (Filip, 20)

Some of the interviewees, when talking about their childhood and adolescence periods, recalled that it was easier for them to find common grounds with girls than with other boys. They pointed out that such contacts were characterised by a lower level of competition, ease, lack of the need to prove oneself. The interviewees were also accompanied by the reluctance to accept one of the elements constituting "boys' masculinity": fights within the gender group and picking on girls (cf. Epstein 2006).

> If we talk about friends, most of them were girls [laughs – BL], I did not make many friends among boys. I did not prefer typical boy games. My mum says: "you always preferred to pick flowers, play with your grandma, not play gins with your friends". So I spent my childhood playing girls' games, I liked it more, maybe because I grew among dominant women – there were a lot of women around, the only men were my dad, some uncle and grandpas, and apart from that, all women, cousins, sister, mum,

grandmas […] I really enjoyed playing shop, house, and I did not have much contact with other boys. Boys were out there but me and the girls had the world of our own. I did not take part in typical boy games, like football which I hate, really despise. Boys in kindergarten were used to the fact that I stayed with girls and we did things of our own, they did things of their own, we did not get in each other's way. It was preordained, it was a division of roles, I do my things, they do theirs; they run around in the playfield, we spend time on some meadow but it was not a problem. It was in the lower secondary school that things changed. (Przemek, 20)

As far back as I can remember, I liked playing with girls. I had a load of girl friends, girl peers, girl mates. It was different than with boys who pissed me off, they ran around, had idiotic games of their own, like shooting guns. I was totally disinterested in them. Things came about on their own; we spoke the same language so when I made friends, it was always with girls, I don't even know how it happened. I have a sister who is a year older than me; we were of similar age, she had her friends so there were more girls than boys around. They often came with some blanket, spread it out on the lawn, took out their dolls – I always took part. We played Chinese jump rope, hopscotch. Sure, boys were quick to start calling me names such as "lech" and so on. (Kuba, 27)

Both Kuba and Przemek when answering questions on childhood friends and games confirm the stereotype of a gay who finds himself in the centre of a women's world, although this is not representative of all homosexual men, which I am going to develop further. Here, I would like to point to the fact that the interviewees told these stories with smiles on their faces and a discreet shame could be felt. Embarrassment with never having boy (ergo: heterosexual) friends, which concludes that their friendships are not real? This is related to the archetype of men's friendship, boys' games, and James Matthew Barrie's fairy "Neverland". The sociologist Dwight Fee, based on his research, concluded that for a lot of homosexual men, friendship with other men, especially of those men who are heterosexual, is something desirable, and possibly, because of its rarity, something valuable (Fee 2000, pp. 57–58). It is definitely safer from the perspective of peer opinion, as confirmed by Patryk:

It was always painful to me that in secondary school – earlier, in primary I kept with boys and girls, but in secondary school it was only girls – and this exactly was painful to me because at that time I still relied on the opinion of others. It hurt that I did not have relations with other boys, that they kept together and I was not with them; so what did it make me look like? That I am different and surely, everyone thinks straight away "there is something wrong with him". And this was sort of a trauma to me. (Patryk, 24)

Spending time with only girls in the kindergarten and early school may be grounds for questioning the "boyhood" of a boy, just like it is likely that later lack of female company (in mature life) may result in the assumption of a man's homosexuality. Patryk felt this pressure and realised the importance of having male

friends. In culture, such acquaintances are mythologised and presented as socially more attractive, bringing higher gains, than a friendship with a woman.

Ease in making friends with girls, mentioned by the above interviewees, did not have to be so easy two or three decades ago. In the words of Irek, even the idea, the attempt to strike such a friendship was internally dampened. The interviewee was not even able to learn what consequences his acquaintances with girls could have for his social functioning within the peer group.

> Sure, I had some closer friends, I got on better with girls, but at this age girl friends were an absolute no-no. To have a girl friend is unacceptable because this will turn into you know "they love each other dearly" or something like that. That these two are a couple. So yes, that was a time when conversation went on sort of smoothly, but it did not mean that I started some more serious relations. It was only in the secondary school when I actually started having girl friends. In primary school, none. I think that the group pressure, you know, boys sticking to boys, girls to girls, this was strong enough so that I also did not accept this. (Irek, 45)

In the testimonies of older interviewees one can see that the pressure of the environment was a solid blocker to undertaking any action that might disturb the "boy reputation", but also a sign that the practiced antipathy to girls was fully internalised and the exclusion of girls from the closest circles was dictated by personal predispositions. Leszek says:

> I never played with dolls, I did not play house with girls, I did not jump rope. They made me play the game once and I was very unhappy, because I thought this game was so un-boyish. I was thinking "God, what am I doing with those women?" I had some kind of subconscious distaste for girls. I wanted to be a good sport so I endured the jump rope but I did not take any satisfaction from playing. Sure, playing football was no satisfaction to me either but this was something I could live with because it was a boys' game. Boys played it, while jump rope was mostly for girls and this was totally unacceptable. (Leszek, 44)

For some interviewees, their emerging sexual non-normativity which could, but did not have to, be noticed and stereotypically associated with the opposite sex (while still considering its binary character) was overlapping with another, more visible and "scandalous" non-conformism. For Miłosz, the membership with a Goth subculture meant additional problems with being accepted by those in the environment. The aesthetics of the subculture includes painting one's face, dying one's (long) hair, applying piercing all over the body, and wearing platform shoes. These elements are not associated with the sexuality of the members.

> I think this was the end of primary school, just before summer holidays. I remember we went out with a group of friends into the streets and to school wearing this heavy makeup, and we left school later. So we almost got beaten up. First, they remarked delicately that only girls can wear makeup and when we did not react, they started

a cat-fight. A typically Polish one – "you fucking faggot!" etc. I remember we escaped just then and this was all. And there were similar troubles at school. Maybe we should remove him, place him somewhere else, maybe we could use a psychologist, etc. (Miłosz, 25)

Such a narration is proof of the normative understanding of gender roles which is dominant in Polish society. Each insubordination in the area of male corporality, body style, is practically immediately associated with being homosexual or is a reason for consultation with a psychologist. People are reluctant to broaden their horizons on how much one may deviate from the traditional model of masculinity and still function as a man in a society.

Excess weight, education, sport

Not only decisive feminisation of a growing boy (smooth movements, late mutation of the voice, "improper" clothes, a "girlish" hobby or simple overrepresentation of girls within the group of friends) can be grounds for a negative peer reaction. Also other, seemingly more neutral, behaviours or personal traits can be named "unmanly", breaking some cultural norm of masculinity. This is the case with e.g. excess weight, reluctance to play team sports, or achieving high marks in education. This is the way Irek explains his alienation at school and his problems with peer relations.

I used to blame my obesity then. However, I think it was a set of different things: fat, sluggish, good learner – a swot! It is not a group which is well liked. They are getting all the top grades and so, see, he learned this stuff and you did not spend time learning, right, you dumbo? Also, when there are social games, just like let's kick the ball together, or do something else together, that normally brings people closer, I did not participate. I didn't play. I simply wanted to talk, and they wanted something else; well, heck, Irek was a different sort of guy and that's that. (Irek, 45)

Yet another of my interviewees shared his view on the reasons for the aggression which he was a victim of in his childhood.

For example, if it shows that I am in love with a girl and I am still a scapegoat, it means this has got nothing to do with my emerging homosexuality. Also, I thought I knew boys, also from the group of aggressors, who – or so I suspected, felt – could be homosexual or have some other reasons for being different and they found their place easily. They could be within the group of aggressors or completely outside the circle of violence. (Tomek, 23)

Homosexuality as an erotic preference (if it is unrecognised/unnoticeable) does need to be, as we see, a reason for peer exclusion, just as the fact of being in-

terested in girls does not save one from being excluded. Harassment constructed around "lack of masculinity" does not need to be a simple consequence of a singular example of a boy's lack of normativity. It is not a rule for every obese boy to become a victim. The exclusion is definitely a configuration of a number of factors, where being overweight is but one of them. Similarly to obesity being associated with being passive, powerlessness, softness, potential for penetration (Padva 2002, pp. 281–292), being diligent at school and achieving good grades is seen by some youth subcultures as signs of a lack of masculinity. Debbie Epson showed in her research that the reluctance of some boys to participate in a successful educational process is associated not only, as some claim, with class origins, but also with a specific understanding of masculinity. Schoolwork, also because of the mostly female teaching cadre, is sometimes interpreted as unmanly, and thus a danger to a masculine, heterosexual, status of a student. The gay interviewees that the British scientist talked to for the purposes of her research often indicated that achieving good grades was a reason for school violence, including hate speech of a homophobic character (Epstein 2006, p. 289).

Analogously, lower sports achievements, or avoiding physical education classes, can be a pretext for name-calling or ridicule. The natural space in which manhood may and should build up within a boy is the metaphoric football field. Repeated absence from physical education classes or unsatisfactory sports' results are to prove the lack of masculinity. What is important, the measure of physical fitness, strength, and fortitude lies in participating in team sports almost all of the time. Successes in other forms of physical activity, such as swimming or dancing, do not need to limit suspicions of homosexuality (lack of masculinity).

> I like sports, when I play them on my own. I despise football. Twenty-two idiots with a ball. I prefer swimming, I do not like anything that has something to do with a ball. When I was little I was a goalkeeper and was hit on the head with a ball, pretty hard. At school I always tried to see a doctor and sometimes begged her to be relieved from physical education for the whole year. I was happy then. When playing sports, I would be in bigger trouble from the other boys. They would massacre me with a ball – I knew it because they told me. I tried to leave the sports hall and sit somewhere, just not be inside there. (Mateusz, 17)

Sport, as has been said a few times above, is an important element in the shaping of the masculine identity, especially football which holds enormous cultural capital and symbolises "the true masculinity" (Barron, Bradford 2007, p. 250). Thus, gender differentiation takes place – marking one as different from girls as well as subordinating the alternative, non-masculine versions of boyhood (Renold 2002, p. 283).

Paweł, yet another one of my interviewees, felt excluded from his class because of his obesity, which disabled him from fully participating in physical education classes. Lack of specific skills associated with strength and physical toughness was perceived by his peers as something non-masculine.

> Is masculinity perceived as associated with physical fitness? It may be, or so I think that people associate it this way. Well, I used to be fat, very fat, I had a belly, full cheeks, and so on, so during physical education, because of my physical limitations, some things didn't work out. And then people laughed. Since then, I did all I could not to take part in PE classes. If I was ever rejected, it wasn't because of my homosexuality but within a specific context – physical education classes. I could feel humiliation then, to some degree. I tried to keep away from them as much as I could and it did not work out. So I would not do it. I did not have motivation to show everyone that I can stand on my hands. (Paweł, 27)

In the words of Barron and Bradford, "wrong – non-sporty – bodies can easily be marginalised and excluded" (Barron, Bradford 2007, p. 249). At the end, I would like to quote Irek, who told me about the difficulties with him failing to understand the rules of the "manhood game". The man took a long time to learn the binary gender setup and what the society expects of him. His words reveal the constructive, cultural character of gender identity. The obviousness, as it turns out, is not understandable to everyone just by the fact of one being born a man or a woman. The interviewee complained about not having a guide to the "masculine world" since his father did not play this role, and that he had to reach the understanding of (traditional) masculinity, which took him a long time on his own. Finally, his biography, at least according to his narration, seems to testify to the defeminisation of his early childhood behaviours and the acceptance of normative masculinity – something that used to be inaccessible and incomprehensible, although already considered early on as attractive.

> Actually, I had to develop my own model of masculinity much later. I was an outsider. All the time, even in primary school, I had an impression that people asked me "what are you acting? Are you a boy or a girl?" and I said "I am Irek". I always had a feeling that I am above the division. That some must behave so-and-so because he is a boy and someone needs to behave so-and-so because she is a girl. I am me and that's that! I am me! It was only after some time, I don't know, maybe because of stronger socialisation, that I simply constructed my notion of what a man means and that's that. It wasn't because I missed it. Sure, after I thought on it for a while, I realised that I do not completely know what it's all about. Why they are different, and I don't know what it's all about? (Irek, 45)

Crossing the gender norms in the early years and its consequences

Leaving the gender-ascribed role is a cultural and social scandal which in the eyes of the normative majority calls for appropriate sanctions. Being reprimanded by peers and family is of a pedagogical character. It serves to draw the attention to the behaviours of the individual who does not fit the stereotype of "a normal boy". The critique of gender non-conformism is a ritual which needs to be constantly

present. Proper words, gestures, looks and deeds need to be applied in a situation which accentuates the extraordinariness, the spectacularism of the non-normative behaviour. Examples of the gender non-normative behaviours that can meet the negative reaction of those in the environment have been stated above. Here, these can be supplemented by "unboyish" hobbies / interests, such as dance, or unconventional methods of spending free time.

> For instance, I have never played football. This sport was never attractive to me. A few times, however, maybe more, I played Chinese jump rope with girls which was, like, an extra pretext to take it out on me. […] I only remember that my physical education teacher was worried and told the girls not to play with me, not to ask me to join them to play. They told me that. (Robert, 29)

> […] I liked playing the cable [jumping over a rope – BL], which was mainly a girls' game. This also always called for some reaction from those in the environment. I remember there were these two girls – sisters, and their parents commented my way if I **"maybe shouldn't go kick some ball"**. (Michał, 23)

The "care" for "gender hygiene" of children, as evidenced by the two quotes above, seems to be a general duty, an obligation of the older or more competent people, also third parties. As it turns out, even children's games have gender, and the involvement of "improper players" can have consequences for their future identity, also, as we can guess, their sexual identity.

In the reaction to the crossing of the norms, the most common tool used to express the "unusualness" of such activity is laughter (*cf.* Lis 2007, pp. 265–268). It may be a mere message to the young person and the observers of the event that one has the awareness that whatever is happening is "not serious". It is a show, a game, a moment of loose theatrical carnival. A boy putting on his mother's dress, clumsily applying lipstick to his small lips, is an element of a show for adults. The accompanying laughter is neither a mockery nor is it harmful, but it is hard not to perceive in it some concealed socialising functions.

> We dressed up when we were kids; those were quite common games to us. We put on mum's clothes, put on makeup; especially missing the lips when you're five, that was funny for the adults. (Adam, 19)

Functions of (non)verbally regulating the area of permissible behaviours may differ. Correction – erasing the improper, bad habits; punishment – symbolic compensation to a chaos which has permeated into the ordered social space due to the "erroneous" reading of the male/female role; prevention – showing others that non-normativity cannot be praised and also showing, by one's "police" stance, that we fit into the behavioural mainstream, that is "we learned our roles so well that we can be a waypoint to others". It needs to be said, however, that there is a general lack of "gender competences" of the reacting people, whose competences have been learned through socialisation and are in no way obvious/natural.

The "key" according to which the oppressors ("educators") read the non-normativity of their peers is rather expansive. It encompasses not only "girlish", anti-"boyish" behaviour but also issues related to sickness, obesity or high achievements at school – all these can be reasons to deprive their victim of their masculinity. Examples of gender non-normativity, in any understanding, can be found in the biographies of homosexual as well as heterosexual men. Taywaditep writes that gender non-normative boys gradually de-feminise their behaviours so that only traces of such behaviours can be found in their adult lives. This is the consequence of the pressure of those in the environment as well as valuing of the behaviours that the specific culture considers "masculine". Fear of being ridiculed, beaten or excluded from group activities may be a sufficient regulator of the gender behaviour of boys (Taywaditep 2002, p. 6). Although I have noted numerous stories of traditional, conformist childhoods which are proof of successful gender socialisation, here I have focused mainly on those narratives that allow us to see the normativity-setting procedures and their effects.

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Summary

Socialisation towards normative masculinity:
institutions and mechanisms of shaping the heterohabitus. Examples

This article is an exploration of mechanisms that relate to constructions of dominant straight masculinity. The collected narratives reveal the regulative role of violence and reveal the interplaying dynamics of the community, family, peers and schools; the boys are involved in constant negotiation over multiple and intersecting identities.

Keywords

masculinity, socialisation, heteronormativity, habitus, oppression, childhood