

«(Un)doing masculinity? Men working in women's occupations»

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1. Introduction

Still today occupations are gender segregated. There are occupations that are predominantly taken up by either women or men. However, research on men working in women's occupations, their career trajectories and identities is still limited. Nevertheless, a still growing body of research, especially in occupations with more established organizational settings, has developed over the last 30 years. Unveiling men's situation in women's occupations, research has mainly focused on health care and nursing (Asakura & Watanabe 2011; Cottingham, Johnson & Taylor 2016; Dill, Price-Glynn & Rakovski 2016; Evans 2008; McDonald 2013; McDowell 2015; Panopio 2010; Price-Glynn & Rakovski 2012), care work (Husso & Hirvonen 2012; Näre 2010; Nyaga & Torres 2017) child care and early childhood education (Buschmeyer 2013; Choi 2018; Chen 2019; Chen & Wang 2020; Hellmann, Nakazawa & Kuramochi 2015; Nentwich, Poppen, Schälin & Vogt 2013; Warin 2006, 2019), primary school teachers (Cushman 2005; Simpson 2004, 2005; Smedley 2007), body-related professions such as hairdressing (Chen 2017) and beauty work (Ahmed 2006), service jobs such as flight attendance (Ferguson & Ayuttacorn 2019; Simpson, 2004, 2005) administrative support (Van Antwerpen & Ferreira 2010), as well as domestic labour (Näre 2010) and cleaning services (Choi 2018). In terms of less structured work, Agadjanian (2005) have investigated the female profession of street vending and Scott, Grov and Minichiello (2021) explored the experiences of male sex workers. Some studies have also compared distinctive situations for men across different female-dominated jobs (Cross & Bagilhole 2002; Hayes 1989; Lupton 2000; Simpson 2004, 2005, 2012; Ma & Yeh, 2008).

These studies reveal that men working in female-dominated occupations often experience 'identity dissonance' (Warin 2006). They are held accountable as men and at the same time as professionals in their respective fields. Research on men in female-dominated occupations hence sheds light on the significance of context in the construction of gendered identities. Are male identities equally contested for those working across various types of

female occupations? How do men cope with these challenges? Do men experience discrimination in similar ways that women experience token status in male-dominated professions? Or are they as men rather in a privileged situation and 'riding the glass escalator'?

Research on men in female-dominated occupations has provided us with some answers. In a nutshell, findings mainly concern men's ambivalent privilege and their strategies in the face of identity challenges. First of all, men working in female-dominated professions are often 'jockeying for position' (Edley & Wetherell 1997). They are experiencing 'identity dissonance' (Warin, 2006) and hence pressured to perform as men as well as professionals. The resulting insecurity needs to be 'managed' (Collinson, 2003). Research shows that men engage in two distinctive strategies here. One is boundary work, distancing themselves from female colleagues and female connotated tasks in their jobs. A second strategy is practicing 'alternative' masculinities (Lupton 2000; Cameron 2001; Cross & Bagilhole 2002; Buschmeyer 2013). 'Appropriating' femininity (Pullen & Simpson 2009) eases the conflict between their masculine and professional identities. Both the strategies of boundary work and the creation of alternative masculinities allow men to cope with identity dissonance (Nentwich et al. 2013). Furthermore, masculinity is closely connected to status and privilege (Connell, 1995; Williams, 1992; Simpson 2010; Schwiter, Nentwich & Keller 2021). For instance, men earn higher wages compared to women, both in male and in female-dominated occupations (Budig 2002; O'Reilly et al. 2015). Evidence suggests that masculine qualities are more appreciated and remunerated even in predominantly female professions (Williams 2015, p. 390). While masculinities' connection to power and more broadly to hegemony is a constant and rather stable finding, more recent evidence shows that it is nevertheless more complicated and complex than previous studies of the 'glass escalator' (Williams, 1992) have suggested.

In this chapter we provide an overview of this research, systematically exploring the theoretical insights on the performativity of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995; Wetherell & Edley 2009, 2014; Edley & Wetherell 1997) and revisiting the possibilities for undoing masculinity, understood here as developing alternative positions (Nentwich et al. 2013; Kelan 2018). We at the same time look at cases of doing masculinity, such as men engaging in 'protest masculinity' (McDowell, Rootham & Hardgrove 2014) when working in precarious jobs. The chapter is structured chronologically, following the development of academic debates, as well as discourses, on men in female-dominated occupations over the last 30 years. We start with

those early studies that shed light on men's privilege and the 'glass escalator.' We then move on to explore insights from studies on marginalised men and from an intersectional perspective highlighting that privilege is often more ambivalent than originally claimed. Lastly, we look at recent research investigating men working in female-dominated occupations from an identity perspective. In particular, we discuss this research's insights into how male identities are formed by hegemonic masculinity, which is highly dependent on the specific context of the female-dominated occupation. We then share some concluding thoughts on the doing and undoing of masculinity.

2. Token position and the patriarchal dividend: Men benefiting from hegemonic masculinity

Research studying men working in women's occupations shows that men typically enjoy certain privileges. This is different from women working in men's occupations. Women often occupy a token position that characterizes them as the 'the lacking Other.' Often perceived as not having the same competences as men in these jobs, women mainly receive a negative token effect that puts them under additional pressure to perform and conform to gender norms (Kanter 1977). However, this is different with men in a token position. They seem to benefit from hidden advantages when in the same situation, unlike token women who are subjected to the 'male gaze' (Simpson 2010, p. 221) and would rather aim for invisibility by keeping a low profile. Men in highly visible positions are generally earning higher wages compared to women, both in male and female-dominated occupations. They also profit from default privileges granted by gender relations in society at large (Budig 2002). In sum, existing research has sufficiently shown that 'qualities associated with men and masculinity were more highly regarded and rewarded than qualities associated with women and femininity, even in predominantly female professions' (Williams 2015, p. 390). While women face a 'glass ceiling,' men ride the 'glass escalator' (Williams 1992).

As a matter of fact, the token position has different consequences for women and men. While being perceived as different is often a positive asset for men in female professions, women describe their token position as an uphill battle. This is what Connell (1995) refers to as the 'the patriarchal dividend.' She describes a general privileging effect that is bestowed on men just because they are men. The 'patriarchal dividend' is an effect of hegemonic

masculinity (Connell 1995). Hegemonic masculinity is a power relation that produces different hierarchical positions for men and women. Hegemonic masculinity is performed in everyday practices and also in the workplace. She identified specific 'performed' masculinities regarded by society as the aspired form of masculinity, such as being competitive and risk-taking (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). The performance of hegemonic masculinity is 'mobilized' (Martin 2001) for instance by exclusively socializing with men, peacocking or competing with other men and displaying heroic forms of masculinity (Kelan & Wratil 2017). Engaging in what is seen as hegemonic masculinity, men are constituting a hierarchical relation between different men and different masculinities as well as with regards to women and femininities.

Evidence from nursing in East Asia illustrates how men navigate to secure their positions. Examining the occupational experiences of 12 male nurses in rural Japan, Asakura and Watanabe (2011) found that these men prioritized their breadwinner status and the importance of financial security. They cemented their masculinity and male identity by supporting female colleagues and showing masculine strength where their help is needed, while also developing a 'positively' dependent relationship with doctors to perpetuate their dominant position. By establishing these ties with female nurses and doctors, they are able to create a stable position and even stand out in a female-dominated profession. Similarly, Tzeng & Chen (2008) have shown that male nurses in Taiwan tend to adapt to initial pressure and would selectively enter medical units or intensive stations that require and value their physical labour, which very much reinforces their masculine qualities. They simultaneously subscribe more to the aspiration of climbing the occupational ladder to match their 'breadwinner status.' Though a minority in this profession, they enjoy more authority and are on equal ground in their communication with doctors. Paradoxically, social and gendered expectations of men, shaping much of their subjective development at work, are critical to fostering their professional advances while also precipitating their withdrawal from this career. In both instances, instead of toning down their masculinity in a profession associated with feminine caregiving and emotional labour, male nurses in Japan and Taiwan continue to practice the hierarchical dynamics of hegemonic masculinity and exhibit dominance through their alliance with doctors.

While the display of hegemonic masculinity is a norm that is rarely met by real men, they nevertheless are granted a privileged position. That is, men do not have to represent the

norm of hegemonic masculinity in all their interactions other than to buy into and be supportive of it (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2018). Connell argues that even men who perform masculinity in alternative ways are benefiting from hegemonic masculinity as they do not actively challenge it (Connell 1995, p. 79; Wetherell & Edley 1999, p. 337; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, p. 836).

Research investigating men's privileged positions in women's occupations additionally shows that men are often very aware of the special treatment they are receiving. With regards to gender, Simpson (2004) demonstrates that the men working in female-dominated occupations she interviewed in the UK all felt very comfortable about working in female-dominated fields. Furthermore, they describe working with women as something very positive in the context of being 'fast tracked' in their careers and receiving special consideration. For example, they report getting away with more mistakes compared to women and recall being granted more authority because they were men, which is often associated with an over-estimation of their expertise. While these effects are not necessarily perceived as positive and men also describe negative effects, Simpson's study suggests that men are indeed aware of the privilege they are granted when working in a female profession.

A recent study by Schwiter, Nentwich and Keller (2021) analysed positioning practices by men working in childcare and nursing in Switzerland. Also here, men are very much aware of situations in which they are receiving more positive attention compared to their female colleagues. However, talking about these situations, they do not frame them as an effect of privilege but rather find different explanations for the special treatment they are receiving. For instance, they would attribute the extra attention to the differences of their male bodies and their specific individual competences and skills. Hence, although very much aware of receiving positive attention, they are refusing to interpret this treatment as a result of privilege. Providing different arguments and understandings, they are actively silencing privilege by explaining it away.

Taken together, we see different effects for women and men working in gender atypical professions. While men typically receive positive treatment in token positions, women tend to experience exclusion (Williams, 1989). In addition, men rarely actively contest the 'pedestal effect' from which they benefit (Peretz 2018, p. 2). Therefore, various studies reveal that

privilege and the 'patriarchal dividend' is something actively achieved and maintained by men in women's occupations (Schwiter, Nentwich & Keller 2021).

Marginalized masculinities and intersectionality: Men experiencing disadvantage and discrimination

It should be noted that male privilege is not granted to all men equally as more recent research on intersectional masculinities, men doing intimate work and those in precarious jobs is pointing out. For instance, gay, disabled or working-class men are often unable to access some of the privileges attributed to their gender (Wingfield & Myles 2014, p. 1213). In nursing for example, race, ethnicity and citizenship seem to be more important than gender when explaining wage differences in the US (Price-Glynn & Rakovski 2012). For one, black male nurses are not mistakenly identified as doctors as is often the case with their white counterparts. As Wingfield (2009) revealed, black male nurses in the US tended to be mistaken for janitors or housekeeping staff. This attests to how stereotypes of black men working in unskilled jobs are reproduced and their professional competences denied (Wingfield 2009, p. 19). In the case of Norway, employment patterns of male immigrant nurses are more similar to native-born women than to native-born men (Karlsen 2012). This demonstrates that privilege is 'not monolithic' but 'unevenly distributed' (Coston and Kimmel 2012, p. 97) and much dependent on the social categorizations attributed to a person, consequently informing whether an individual will experience privilege or rather marginalization.

When denied male privileges and status, men in fact engage in practices that highlight specific forms of masculinity. An example is that male sex workers in Hong Kong focus on the skill aspect of their craft and emphasize professionalism and their adamant adherence to work ethics, substantiating their craftsman masculinity (Yau and Kong 2021). These men go to great lengths to retitle the nature of their work and redefine an occupation perceived to be feminine to safeguard their masculinity. Similarly, in the field of early childhood education, men working in nurseries in Switzerland emphasize their professional work and career objectives to secure masculinity (Tennhoff, Nentwich & Vogt et al. 2015). In Mainland China's ongoing developmental context, however, male sex workers focus on possibilities of grander pursuits their temporary undertaking may provide, as a transitional 'steppingstone' that could help them fulfil their entrepreneurial dreams. Understanding their illicit sex work as transient and aspiring to become small business owners by first engaging in 'informal employment,' these

men exhibit an alternative 'guerrilla masculinity' (Yau and Kong 2021, p.564). Here, guerrilla masculinity characterizes the strategy of dabbling in irregular and transitory work in the hope of achieving something bigger. Either way, these types of strategic masculinity that grant meanings to more marginalized, highly volatile and less organized jobs conform to a repertoire of hegemonic masculinity that is linking maleness to skill, ventures, and entrepreneurship.

However, in female occupations with rigid hierarchies, men's positive treatment can be rather qualified. For example, a study (Ma & Yeh 2008) that investigates men in traditional women's work in Taiwan found that male nurses are often 'passed' when it comes to promotion as a result of gender oppression in the workplace and have to accomplish more than their majority female counterparts in order to be considered. Similarly, in the world of hairdressing where tiered internal structures are in place and accreditation is valued, male stylists must strive to advance their skills and earn credentials lest they be 'squeezed' out of competition in a female dominant environment. Contrary to the notion of their riding the glass escalator, men doing service work that requires and entails some degree of intimacy and care risk not only the refusal of service from some clients, but also being marginalized in their professions should they fail to climb the occupational ladder.

This is particularly the case with men working in early childhood education. As masculinity is associated with being rational, distant and less emotional and often also connected to physical violence, men can be perceived as unsuitable carers, particularly if the work involves close physical contact. Not only are their competences sometimes doubted, but they can also be perceived as dangerous. As the following quote by Sargent (2005, p. 254) puts it: 'Women's laps are places of love. Men's are places of danger.' Men working with children are at risk of being perceived as potentially dangerous for children, particularly through highlighting their sexuality. For instance, studies show that mundane tasks requiring physical contact with children, such as changing diapers, putting children to sleep, dressing or comforting a child, when done by men expose them to the risk of being perceived as paedophiles (Brody 2015; Nentwich et al. 2013; Eidevald, Bergström & Broström 2018). Male early childhood workers hence need to position themselves in relation to the discourse of paedophilia (Eidevald, Bergström & Broström 2018). Being permanently under suspicion limits men's ability to develop professionalism, interferes with their relationships to children and also excludes men from certain tasks. In consequence, they either give up and leave the

profession or are resisting this pressure. Many try to cope with such predicaments by avoiding certain tasks, doing them in a way that minimizes suspicion or engaging in the task while ignoring the personal risk involved (Eidevald, Bergström & Broström 2018). In a similar vein, studies on Indian and Sri Lankan male domestic workers (Chopra 2006; Näre 2010) have clearly suggested that they are expected to 'mute their maleness' and desexualize encounters to minimize the sense of threat and danger brought to urban households.

Studies of men in female-dominated occupations have also highlighted that there are particular groups of men experiencing disadvantage and discrimination in their jobs (McDowell 2014; Christensen & Jensen 2014). That is to say, the privileging effects of masculinity are closely connected to the intersectionality of masculinity with race, class and sexualities (Coston & Kimmel 2012; Wingfield and Myles 2014). Understanding intersectionality therefore allows us to understand more clearly 'how being a man can be a category of disempowerment and lack of privilege rather than a privileged position' (Christensen & Jensen 2014, p. 70). A case in point are men from rural villages employed in garment factories in northeast China. They work alongside women workers who constitute over 90 percent of the workforce in these garment factories. The men are typically tasked with largely unskilled 'heavy-lifting' duties as opposed to women's skilled sewing. The replaceable nature of these men's work, compounded by dismal job prospects and exclusion from promotion, resulted in their marginalization which spiralled 'into an industrial underclass' (Kim 2015, p. 151) status. Seeking to neutralize their doubly disadvantaged position, that is, their rural background and their low rank on the internal factory hierarchy, they engage in 'protest masculinity' (McDowell 2014). By binge drinking, disruptive behaviours and producing rancour and other anti-social tendencies, they defy norms and orders within the factory, prove their 'untamable' character (unlike the female workers) and reclaim their masculinity.

In sum, there is now considerable research showing the complexity of patterns of privilege when gender, race, class, citizenship, etc. are analysed in intersection. Overall, there is a general convergence on how men from different social strata and work circumstances '(hyper)actively' preserve their masculinity in female occupations, albeit to different degrees and adopting various strategies. The type of 'female work' men do, depending on whether it pertains more to subservience and taming of the body (e.g., factory work, sex work) or to

delivering care (e.g., childcare, nursing, hairdressing), likely determines how they respond to compromised or jeopardized masculinity. Nevertheless, men working in female-dominated professions often need to prove their masculinity, reaffirm the script of hegemonic masculinity and find ways to solve the conflict between their professional and gender identities.

3. Struggling with identity and searching for alternatives: Men engaging in alternative masculinities

As we have already seen, men working in women's occupations are not only positioned as privileged but often actively seek to achieve privilege. This can be understood as resulting from their struggle for position and needs to be interpreted as an effect of power (Collinson, 2003). Men in female-dominated professions are shifting between male and female subject positions and need to constantly manoeuvre between hegemonic and alternative masculinities (Hrženjak 2013; Tennhoff et al. 2015). In practice, men in nursing do not always emphasize their difference from female colleagues. They might at times also activate a feminine 'nursing identity' when talking about their work as nurses (McDowell 2015). Men engaging in alternative forms of masculinity could also be 'embracing' (Wingfield 2009) or 'appropriating femininity' (Pullen & Simpson 2009). In so doing they are changing the meaning of masculinity and are coming up with new solutions to the identity dissonance they are experiencing (Nentwich et al. 2013). By practicing 'alternative masculinities', men are actively counteracting hegemonic masculinity (Buschmeyer 2013).

However, men engaging in alternative masculinities are often perceived to be challenging the norm of hegemonic masculinity. As they are disrupting gender order, their legitimacy is at stake. In consequence, men need to engage in various discursive practices to legitimise their position. The variable and highly situative self-positioning that can be observed in these moments can be explained by Gherardi's (1994) concept of 'remedial work.' Remedial work is performed when the gender order needs to be re-installed and most often this is done by emphasizing hegemonic masculinity. Hence, alternative masculinities are rather fragile and rarely taken up consistently. Rather, men have been described as 'jockeying for position' (Edley & Wetherell 1997), a metaphor highlighting the constant discursive struggle of men aiming at legitimizing their masculinity in both alternative and hegemonic ways.

An example is provided by a study of male sex workers in Hong Kong (Yau & Kong 2021). It shows in detail how sustaining masculinity while at the same time being expected to retain a certain bodily docility is a risky balancing act for men and requires deliberate efforts. Resonating with what discourse psychological research has already highlighted, accounting work is indispensable to men's manoeuvring of identity dissonance (Wetherell & Edley 2014). While men do affirm their position of privilege in one situation, they counter or resist it in another (Wetherell & Edley 2014).

Nentwich et al. (2013) have analysed the positioning practices of men working in early childhood education in Switzerland. Interpreting the constant manoeuvring of nine male early childhood workers in qualitative interviews, they show that men are engaging in hegemonic masculinity as well as alternative forms. More specifically, they engage in the former by building 'male niches' (Williams 1989). By emphasizing the 'rougher games' they play or playing football with the kids and by 'claiming skills, interests and interaction styles that are stereotypically labelled as masculine' (Nentwich et al. 2013, p. 7), they construct a legitimate position in the female field of early childhood education. A second practice for emphasizing difference is referencing the 'symbolic' position of the father. Often prompted by the interviewer's question about differences, referencing the symbolism of the heterosexual 'ideal family,' as one of the interview partners put it, was adopted by informants as a highly effective reaction that creates legitimacy. Sometimes men also referred to their position as the 'male breadwinner' as an important aspect of hegemonic masculinity to bolster their own masculinity, soothing identity dissonance and doubt.

While men resorted to these three practices to construct a masculine identity in a female-dominated field, they at the same time also engaged in practices stressing equality in the sense of equal treatment. A classic example that marks moments of exclusion is when men working in the nursery are not allowed to change nappies. By being excluded from a very common task when taking care of small children, they are becoming the suspicious, 'unwanted other.' 'Emphasizing equality' thus emerges as an important practice men are engaging in 'for reinstalling men's legitimate position' (Nentwich et al. 2013, p. 337). A second practice that focuses on installing sameness with regards to women is 'appropriating femininity.' Here the skills or characteristics male childcare workers need to be competent in and that are traditionally perceived as feminine are brought to the fore and 'internalized' as expressing

aspects of their personality. For instance, they would describe themselves as rather 'calm and sensitive,' attenuate the role of football and rough play and emphasize singing and reading out fairy tales as an expression of their true personality (Nentwich et al. 2013, p. 13). As such, these men are creating an alternative form of masculinity that counters the gendered connotation of these tasks and thereby allows them to resolve identity dissonance. Finally, male childcare workers in this study emphasized their professional capacity. On the basis of their pedagogical skills, interests and experience, these men are creating legitimacy for their position. Emphasizing their professional identity, they are bypassing the gendered positions here as they are not referring to gendered differences or sameness. In this case, alternative masculinity is enacted without actually being labelled as such (masculinity). Emphasizing professional identity, both the masculine gender identity and the profession's female connotation are left aside.

'Alternative masculinity' in Nentwich et al.'s study (2013) is analysed as a specific way of positioning with regards to hegemonic masculinity. Men might claim female traits and competences as being part of their personality or invest in a professional identity that does not reference gender at all. Nonetheless, what is striking with these findings is that it does not seem to be a new type of masculinity but rather a constant shifting of positions. Claiming sameness with their female colleagues in one moment, the very same men also invested in niche building and as well hegemonic masculinity in another moment of the interview. These moves of 'jockeying for position' (Edley & Wetherell 1997) are indicative of a context for identity dissonance: there is not just one position and none of the positions is easy to stabilize.

Another case in point for the fragility of men's position in female-dominated occupations is the citizenship or migrant status of male workers in female occupations (Nyaga & Torres 2017; Panopio 2010). Research by Nyaga and Torres (2017) on Filipino live-in carers in Toronto offers another glimpse of how gender, race/ethnicity, class, citizenship status and skill intersect to affect men doing women's work. Given that Canada's Live-in Caregiver Program only recognizes women as caregivers, its policies are oriented towards disciplining and overseeing 'female foreign bodies' in the private space, somehow leaving men 'with minimum surveillance' (p. 57). This may be interpreted as reverse male privilege. Despite a 'male dividend' from the policy end, the irony is that for men to enter a highly sexualized field of work, more acute scrutiny and screening on the part of the employer during the hiring

process are expected. In fact, it is very much due to the ethnic characteristics Canadians project onto Filipinos, primarily being submissive and docile, that Filipino men are even permitted to do caregiving work. Additionally, in comparison with the higher threshold and gatekeeping for alien and racialized bodies to enter the public sphere, live-in services in the private realm constitute a more accessible alternative for Filipino male migrants.

Engaging with femininity however does not necessarily mean that femininity is 'appropriated' to a male gender identity. In India, where caste divides and stigmatization have defining influences on one's social status, men are willing to redefine their work as not just barbers that are of a lower social rank, but as more feminized 'beauticians.' By detaching themselves from mere hair-cutting practices that are caste-based, they turn to a more modernized, though feminine, profession to liberate themselves from 'the status of a polluted caste' (Ahmed 2006, p. 174). Hence, engaging with female connotated tasks can also be a deliberate strategy men adopt to gain status. In a similar vein but more economically oriented, the often feminized profession of nursing has come to be conceived in the Philippines as an opportunity guaranteeing upward mobility and monetary rewards. Filipino male nurses working in London (Panopio 2010) regard themselves as global workers with coveted skills meeting global shortages. Such an understanding, placing emphasis on their success and valuable contribution, removed them from visible threats to their masculinity, though nursing is still considered an effeminate profession in the UK. More interestingly, Filipino male nurses tend to prioritize the maximization of their earning potentials, even preferring to 'stay on the floor' for more shifts (hence boosting their income) and sidestep the opportunity of being groomed into managerial positions, an indicator of male privileges in previous studies. Social mobility can indeed be an important motive also for working class men to enter a female-dominated profession (Lupton, 2006). It is however to be noted these Southeast Asian men (whether Indian barbers and beauticians or Filipino nurses) are often pushed or propelled by an aspiration to be liberated from caste stigma or profit-oriented pragmatism, rather than by a motivation to undo masculinity.

Other examples of how men in domestic service work shift between positions abound. Indian male helpers only have to show femininity in front of their male employers but feel rightly entitled to uphold their masculinity by refusing female bosses' requests, such as 'washing women's underwear' (Chopra 2006, p. 160). On the other hand, whereas Sri Lankan

men are perceived as 'effeminate and submissive' by their Neapolitan employers, they themselves exploit such false feminized impressions, through which they maintain appropriate hierarchical distance. This strategy, almost a cultural and ethnic 'trait' (Näre 2010, p. 72), consciously deployed by male cleaners and carers, can be interpreted as men 'jockeying for position' to secure places in a women's occupation. Meanwhile, to align themselves with images of hegemonic masculinity despite the feminine work they do, Sri Lankan men observe a traditional gendered division of labour in their own household and emphasize their breadwinner status.

Digging deeper into men's strategies to cope with identity dissonance we can see that context is crucial for the doing of masculinity. Men are navigating norms of masculinity by shifting between positions. Like this, they can either call for alternative masculinities or engage in a more strategic display of femininity while at work. What is crucial across all these studies is that men workers are concerned to constantly re-emphasize their difference from women and femininity by reaffirming masculinity in one way or another. Interestingly, this is often done through an emphasis on the male body. While Asian men working in service jobs or care work in western households are 'muting the maleness' of their body at the workplace (Chopra 2006; Näre 2010), the male nurses and childcare workers interviewed in Switzerland actually refer to their male body as a legitimate reason for being different. In light of strong norms of gender equality, differences linked to the body seem more acceptable than benefiting from male privilege (Schwiter et al. 2021).

Conclusion: Doing and undoing masculinity at work

Research on men in female-dominated occupations provides some answers to questions of doing and undoing masculinity. First of all, men working in these occupations are experiencing 'identity dissonance' and research has highlighted several strategies for coping with this experience. As their occupational identity is connotated with femininity, doing masculinity becomes more complex for them. As we have shown, there are different responses to this challenge. While some men engage in 'niche building,' others are 'appropriating femininity.' They either emphasize masculinity and re-interpret aspects of their job to stabilize their masculine identity, or they re-interpret masculinity to make it fit with the tasks they are engaging. Both strategies help them decrease the experience of identity dissonance. However, it is important to see that both strategies are rather fragile. Building male niches might backfire

and make men look like they are not competent to do the job, as the example of male childcare workers and nurses shows. Engaging in alternative masculinities, however, does not result in stable subject alternative positions for these men but an experience of 'jockeying for position.' Lacking a stable alternative position, they have to engage in manoeuvring between these positions to stabilize their identity.

We have furthermore affirmed that men in women's occupations are often in a privileged situation. White middle-class men from Western societies are riding the glass escalator. This is rather unlike what we know of white middle-class women entering male dominated occupations, who are excluded from the actual job. While both women and men are experiencing 'boundary work,' the result is strikingly different. While women are excluded, men are pushed to higher positions or into different fields. Boundary work does not necessarily label them as incompetent, but as more competent to do other things. Despite these obviously privileging effects it would be hasty to conclude that male privilege and the 'patriarchal dividend' can be claimed by all men. Expanding the research perspective beyond western white middle-class masculinity, it becomes obvious that not all men are equally capable of benefiting from hegemonic masculinity. Privilege seems to be 'unevenly distributed' as Coston and Kimmel (2012, p. 97) have suggested and men are also experiencing exclusion and discrimination. Being denied a masculine position, men engage in several practices securing their masculinity. They would emphasize professionalism or entrepreneurialism as important features of hegemonic masculinity or display what has been called 'protest masculinity' (McDowell 2014) to reclaim their masculinity. While hegemonic masculinity is a pattern that cuts through situations and is easily available to some men, in other instances active work and conscious efforts are needed before privilege attached to hegemonic masculinity can be claimed and achieved. Research particularly highlights these explicit instances of doing masculinity by men in a female context.

Having said this, masculinity seems to be highly contextualized in how it is done and also if it is done. Hegemonic masculinity is a norm that is always in the background as soon as men enter the scene (Nentwich & Vogt, 2021). However, research on men working in women's jobs has shown that it is only activated if masculinity or male privilege is at stake. Through doing masculinity in a female-dominated context men are attempting to reclaim a privileged position. However, hegemonic masculinity is rarely contested or challenged.

Although men working in female-dominated occupations are often perceived as undoing gender, this is not necessarily what they are aiming at. Research suggests that alternative masculinities are not as motivating to men in these professions as we might have believed or identified, particularly from a western perspective. More often men are more prone to stabilize hegemonic masculinity than to undo the norms of hegemonic masculinity. Alternative masculinities hence are not abundantly available and are still in need of being stabilized in the female-dominated context of women's occupations.

4. Literature

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