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Sexual and Gender Diversity in Schools and Work Environment

Sexuality and gender are intertwined with everyday practises in school and workplace cultures. I analyse sexual and gender diversity and norms attached to them. I base my analysis on both interview and statistical data collected in my research projects on heteronormativity in schools and on sexual and gender minorities at work. My point is that it is important to understand the gendered and sexualised practises common in workplaces and schools, to be able to understand the situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. I elaborate this point by analysing the need to hide one's sexual orientation, the purpose of homophobic name-calling, and the significance of gendered styles and choices at work and schools.

Keywords: sexuality, gender, heteronormativity, work practises, school practises

Introduction

Interviewed 20 year old woman: *I suppose we did have one bisexual male teacher, in Biology. At least there was talk about it. He had a wife, but anyhow.*

Interviewer: *What did people talk about?*

Interviewee: *He was called a missis, a lady he was called. And he used to have a 2-inch layer of makeup on his face.*

Interviewer: *He was labelled bisexual because of that?*

Interviewee: *Yeah.*

A transsexual woman wrote in the questionnaire: *The training field and occupations I've chosen are quite manly, and I suppose I chose them – not that I gave it much thought – because they were easy and safe choices. Sometimes I wonder what kind of an occupation I might have chosen had I grown up as a woman, although it's, of course, impossible to say. Probably a typically female occupation, though, since I've always wanted to be quite ordinary.*

Gender and sexuality are meaningful to people. This comes out in the above citations of an interview and a survey answer. Sometimes people find gender or sexuality strikingly important but in most cases they are just a part of ordinary, everyday routines in schools and workplaces. When analysing the situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered and intersexed (lgbti) persons at work and in the schools it is vital to take into consideration of the gendered and sexualised practises which are part of the school and work cultures, and which are kept alive by all the people taking part to these practises.

In this article I will first explain what I mean with sexual and gender diversity and heteronormativity. Then I explore my point of the importance of understanding the gendered and sexualised cultures when researching sexual and gender diversity and the experiences of sexual and gender minorities. I concentrate on three topics: the disclosure of one's sexual orientation and homophobic name-calling, which are rather common topics in work environment and school research, and the significance of gendered styles and choices in schools and work, which is not so much analysed from the point of view of lgbti people.

I base my article on two research projects. I analysed how heteronormativity was maintained and challenged in school practises for my doctoral dissertation in sociology (Lehtonen 2003). For this research I interviewed 30 non-heterosexual young people around the country of Finland. They were between 15 and 20 years old and 14 of them were men and 16 were women. The other project is European Social Fund and the Ministry of Labour funded project called "Sexual and gender minorities at work" in which I worked as a project manager. In the project there was conducted a research to collect information on the situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in the Finnish labour market (Lehtonen & Mustola 2004). This study was carried out in the form of an extensive questionnaire survey with separate forms designed for sexual minorities and transgender persons. The questionnaire forms consisted mostly of close-ended questions, plus a few open-ended questions where the respondents were able to answer in their own words. The form for lesbian, gay and bisexual people generated 726 responses, while the one targeted at transgendered people produced 108 responses. (look more in Mustola & Vanhala 2004; Lehtonen & Mustola 2004).

Diversity and heteronormativity

Every one of us has a specific way of understanding and expressing our sexual orientation and gender. Sexual interest is directed either towards persons of the same sex, opposite sex, both sexes,

or neither sex. Sexual orientation can mean the way people see and understand themselves (sexual identification) or the way they feel about people (love, sexual interest, fantasies) or the way they construct relationships with people (sexual and love relationships). The term 'gender identity' refers to what people conceive themselves to be: a woman, a man, or something in between or beyond this categorisation. The plurality of gender is emphasised by the fact that people express their masculinities and femininities in various ways and by the fact that they are perceived by other people in different ways. During the life course, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression may change and take on different meanings. Sexual orientation and gender is constructed differently in various cultures and also historically.

All people are part of sexual and gender diversity. There are many heterosexualities, femininities (in women) and masculinities (in men), even if this is often rendered visible by the reactions to people who deviate from gendered and sexualised norms. Normative heterosexuality and gender normativity limits the visibility of sexual and gender diversity. These norms make it understandable to speak on sexual and gender minorities. The term 'sexual minorities' refers to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and other people with same-sex interests, while 'gender minorities' refers to transgendered and intersexed people. Trans people are defined as persons who deviate from the expected gender roles and transgress the gender boundaries (like transsexuals, transvestites and transgenders). 1)

The concept of heteronormativity refers to thinking characterised by a restricted view where a person can only be a heterosexual man or a heterosexual woman. Heterosexual maleness and heterosexual femaleness are seen as the sole, self-evident and natural premises of sexuality and gender. Other alternatives may be presented as inferior or less desirable. Heteronormative thinking is reflected in the institutions, structures, interpersonal relations and practices in working life: heterosexual maleness and heterosexual femaleness represent the natural, legitimate, desirable, and often the only possible alternatives of being a human and a member of a school or a work community. The impact of heteronormativity in schools and work environment depends on whether you are a woman or a man, heterosexual or non-heterosexual, or on whether you are someone who questions the expected gender patterns or someone who adheres to the more traditional gender roles. Owing to the fact that heteronormative assumptions of gender and sexuality are interlinked with so many of our everyday practices, heteronormative notions of gender and sexuality are perceived as natural. As a culturally and socially produced construct, however, heteronormativity is open to challenge. (Lehtonen 2003, 29-32; Lehtonen & Mustola 2004, 20-22)

Hiding all but heterosexuality

Most people do not openly discuss their same-sex feelings, relationships or sex experiences either with their school mates and co-workers. Only a few disclose their non-heterosexual self-definition to all of their school mates or co-workers. In comparison, heterosexual interests or relationships are not usually concealed in the school or work environment. On the contrary, they may be even used as a subject of brag and a means to improve one's status within the school community or work environment. (Lehtonen 2004a, 137-153; Lehtonen 2003, 183-184)

About half of all respondents of the sexual minority survey had come out to at least two of their co-workers. 2) The most typical strategy is to tell only to few, selected work mates about one's sexual orientation. Only a little more than one tenth of all respondents had come out to all of their school mates or co-workers. Women were more likely than men to disclose their sexual orientation to at least some of their school mates or co-workers. In other words, men tended more often to conceal their sexuality from everyone at school or work. Young respondents concealed their sexual orientation from their co-workers more often than older respondents (Lehtonen 2004b, 140). Most of the lesbian, gay and bisexual respondents have become aware of their sexual orientation already before reaching adult age in their school years, although men more often than women. Yet, there are many – typically women – who go through this process later, when they start their work career and acquire their first work experiences. While most women and men become aware and accept their sexuality already at school age, for some women the process is delayed perhaps due to a stronger social pressure to commit themselves to heterosexual relationships and, thus, to heterosexuality (see Lehtonen 2003).

Sexual diversity is maintained only partly visible by the fact that sexual minorities conceal their sexual orientation from most of their school and work mates. The part which is most visible out of the diversity is heterosexuality: heterosexual relationships, desires and identifications. Heterosexuality is expected and assumed for everybody by most co-workers and co-students. I emphasise this by analysing the interview stories of young people about their teachers' sexualities.

The teacher tends to be perceived as an asexual and neutral being, and even as a conventional and puritan figure – at least if we think of the traditional image of a Finnish elementary school teacher (Gordon et al. 2000, 166; cf. Epstein & Johnson 1998, 115; 122-123; 131). The non-heterosexual

young people I interviewed said they thought of teachers as "people without sex" or "asexual beings". The following examples show that the youth were not accustomed to talk about their teachers' sexuality – at least not with reference to the term "sexuality".

Interviewed 20 year old man: Yes, they told that they had a husband or a wife, and children. No teacher ever told about their own experiences.

Interviewed 15 year old man: At least not in a way that we'd know if someone was gay or lesbian or something, but otherwise they did [tell], if they had children or were married to another teacher at our school.

Sexuality was understood as sex or as homosexuality, but not as heterosexuality, even if marriage and family were included in the story. But marriage, an opposite-sex couple relationship or a child are no proofs of a person's heterosexuality, although they tend to be taken as such – as long as other signs do challenge the heterosexual assumption. The interviewees had heard about their teachers' families or children either directly from the teachers themselves or from other pupils, or they had seen the teacher's spouse or child at school. Having a family, being a mother or a father, is perceived as something asexual, even as something contrary to sexuality – or at least to being sexy (see Palmu 1999, 184). The pupils often know about their teachers' spouses and marriages. School festivities, annual outings of the class, camp schools and other special events at school are occasions to which teachers sometimes bring along their spouses or other family members. Partners who are brought along to school events are usually regular long-standing partners of the opposite sex, and bringing such a partner to school events is seen to confirm the teacher's heterosexuality (Khayatt 1992, 146-147). The marriage or engagement of a teacher may be revealed through a ring (see also Wallis & VanEvery 2000, 413). A ring around the ring finger justifies the assumption of a heterosexual marriage. One interviewee told that girls "always check if they have a ring" and conclude from that whether or not the teacher is married. Pupils actively ask teachers about their spouses, families and marriage. This is particularly common when getting acquainted with a new teacher or a substitute teacher. The conception regarding the teacher's heterosexuality is usually based on either an automatic assumption or the teacher's stories or behaviour. Unmarried teachers may be considered potentially gay or lesbian if they do not confirm to have opposite-sex interests through speech or behaviour.

Interviewed 18 year old woman: We laughed a lot at our form master who was a spinster. And then my history teacher, he was a strange bloke, who used to tell dirty jokes all the time, but he was an awfully wise man [...] Then we asked if he was married. He would never say as much but we knew that he wasn't married. And then we laughed at him: "Ha ha, who would have him, what would it be like for him to be with his wife and what would it be like for his wife to be with him". But this did not happen until the ninth grade, all this happened on the ninth grade. Then [...] we talked especially about our form master, whether she was a lesbian. But it wasn't really serious in that way. About our history teacher we never said that he'd be gay because he told such dirty jokes and in that way showed that kind of a heterosexual attitude toward women. But about the form master there was some talk, but it ended when someone saw her at the railway station and a man was seeing her off.

On the one hand, teachers are expected to be asexual, but on the other hand, they are expected to lead an exemplary life outside the school, which in practice means heterosexual marriage and family life (see also Epstein & Johnson 1998, 123). With regard to their sexuality, teachers are forced to balance on the borderline between the public sphere, i.e. the school, and the private sphere, i.e. outside the school. Some teachers who do not have "evidence" of their heterosexuality in the form of marriage or family, may deliberately express their sexual orientation in other ways. In the above story, the history teacher proved heterosexuality by telling "dirty jokes". A consciously held false front relationship with a member of the opposite sex may also serve the purpose, as does emphasising traditional gender positions through behaviour (see Epstein & Johnson 1998, 146). In fact, the public self-image that teachers uphold at school tends to contradict with the diversity of their sexuality in their private sphere (see Palmu 1999, 187).

According to my earlier questionnaire survey (Lehtonen 1995, 126, 138), only approximately ten percent of the homosexual and bisexual respondents had openly non-heterosexual teachers at school. Some responses concerning a teacher's non-heterosexuality were based on mere guesswork. Only a few teachers had told about their sexual orientation or had been disclosed. Some teachers conceal their sexuality for fear of unjust treatment or direct discrimination (Lehtonen 2004). Teachers who conceal their non-heterosexuality cannot talk about their couple relationships, the companions they live or travel with, what they did the night before or what kind of friends they have. These matters might reveal the teacher's non-heterosexuality to others. Heterosexual teachers do not have similar problems in talking about such matters, and pupils tend to at least know if their teachers are married or have children. Non-heterosexual teachers do not, however, need to be very

active in lying, hiding or inventing false front relationships to conceal their sexuality, since they tend to be automatically assumed to be heterosexual. What suffices is that they do not disclose their relationships. They may be considered single, old maids, or just people living alone.

The assumed homosexuality of a teacher does not always give rise to rumours or gossip – or at least the stories are not spread outside the class. Pupils may think that the matter would be detrimental to the reputation of the class and decide not to tell outsiders. Or they may think that the teacher, whom they may very well like, could get into trouble if other teachers, parents or other classes found out. The initiative to keep silent may also come from an individual student. One male interviewee remembered a classmate who abruptly ended all discussion on their teacher's sexuality by stating that it was no-one else's concern. What we are talking about here is an open secret, something that everybody knows but no one mentions. The whole class may be seen to be "in the closet" (see Epstein & Johnson 1998, 140-144). Sometimes people choose to overlook even fairly clear signs of a teacher's potential non-heterosexuality (cf. Epstein & Johnson 1998, 140, Epstein 1999, 36-38).

Some teachers who conceal their sexual orientation tend to avoid close relationships with their co-workers at school and avoid bringing up themes related to non-heterosexuality in their classes for fear of being disclosed (cf. Woods & Harbeck 1991, 141-166; Wallis & Van Evary 2000, 413). Hence, the resources of non-heterosexual teachers in teaching and addressing sexual diversity are not always put to use, particularly if they try to hide their sexuality and therefore often eliminate all signs of the existence of non-heterosexuality from around them.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers feel the need to balance in their everyday life at school in how they express and talk about important aspects of their lives to other members of the school community. They consider carefully whether to tell about their couple relationship to their colleagues, superiors, students, or the students' parents (Valkonen 2002). If they decide to conceal their sexuality, they make deliberations as to how to do it: by not telling about it, by keeping silent about all personal matters, or by actively creating a fake image of heterosexuality. Both concealing and expressing their sexuality may affect their teaching, or their relationship with the other members of the school community. Openness or secrecy may thus change the teacher's position either negatively or positively. Co-workers may be supportive and respect the teacher who tells about his or her life situation, or the teacher may lose the colleagues' confidence and become subjected to nasty rumours and stigmatisation. Teachers who conceal their couple relationship and sexual orientation may also be reluctant to deal with themes connected to sexual diversity in their

classes, and avoid intervention in cases of homophobic name-calling or other negative phenomena affecting lesbians, gays or bisexuals. Through openness, in turn, non-heterosexual teachers can provide models for a diversity of lifestyles to students and other members of the school community. Secrecy is energy-consuming and distressing to some teachers, while openness gives strength for others and allows them to better use all their resources in their work and work community (Opffer 1994, 301-304, 312-316; Griffin 1991, 167-196).

Students are interested in their teachers, including their teachers' family life and "private sphere", but teaching staff is more heterosexual in the eyes of pupils than it actually is if we look at the existing sexual diversity among teachers. The heteronormative culture at schools reinforces the tendency that, in practice, non-heterosexual teachers remain invisible in most schools and young people are left without models that could provide alternatives to a heterosexual adulthood. The same culture remains vital in most other workplaces, and in schools it is not only teachers who face the heteronormative culture and demands for hiding, but it concerns also the students who mostly hide their non-heterosexualities from each others.

Constructing masculinity with homo

Homo is a word that is generally used when calling someone names in the Finnish schools. All young people do not even associate it with sexuality. Name-calling, discrimination and other negative experiences connected with homosexuality manifested themselves in studies that have examined the school experiences of homosexual and bisexual people (see Lehtonen 1995, 161). The majority of homosexual and bisexual men have heard negative stories that are connected with homosexuality from their school friends. The ones that tell these stories are often boys who call other boys homo/queer/faggot or use the word as a swearword. Girls do not use it as often and the word lesbian is not generally used to the same extent or as a swearword with a similar meaning. (Lehtonen 1995, 129, 139-144.) Homophobic name-calling has not appeared in everyday usage as a more common phenomenon until the 1970's and 1980's in Finland (Löfström 1999, 220). The negative use of the word "homo" is not directed towards non-heterosexual persons mostly, even if this might happen sometimes too.

The homophobic name-calling is not limited to school culture only, but it can exist in workplaces as well. Slightly less than one third of the sexual minority survey respondents had witnessed name-calling in their places of work. Only a small minority of them had heard this type of name-calling

continually, most of the practise was occasional. When asked about their personal experiences of homophobic name-calling, eight percent of the respondents said they had been subjected to such behaviour. The number was a few percent higher among those who were open about their sexual orientation.

The starting point of many international studies (Harbeck 1991, Douglas et al. 1997) has been that the objects of homophobic name-calling are homosexual and bisexual boys, in particular. However, on the basis of my data, this does not seem to be the case in today's Finland. Homophobic name-calling is part of a wider culture of mostly boys at school and mostly men at workplaces, and it does not even always reveal the attitudes of the name-caller (see also Lehtonen 2002). Homophobic comments cannot be interpreted straightforwardly because they and their motivations are various. At times, they can be used, for example, for interrupting the classroom situations, gaining attention, humour, questioning the authority of the teacher, constructing masculinity as well as despising some students or teachers (see Lahelma 1996, 478-488; Nayak & Kehily 1997, 156-158). Students who make homophobic remarks are difficult to define as strictly homophobic. The reasons for making such remarks are so multiple that, on their basis, it is difficult to interpret what the actual attitude of the students towards homosexuality is. The same seems to be the case of workers in often male-dominated workplaces, where "homo" is used.

Many of the young people I interviewed told me that homophobic name-calling was typical and almost like a routine. One male interviewee said that every other word at school is "fucking queer". On the basis of the data, the phrase does not suggest anything to do with homosexuality but it is rather used as a general swearword or a word to call someone names. Expressly, certain boys used it of other boys, even though it can also be a way for the girls to react to the negative behaviour of boys, such as sexual harassment (see Gordon et al. 2000, 134). It is more typical to use the word homo as a swearword or as a way of gaining attention. However, it is often connected with certain situations. If someone gets upset in a fight, the word homo is used as a way to call them names. The word homo is also a sign or a signal of maintaining or crossing any sort of boundaries: the boundary between the right and the wrong kind of gender and sexuality, between stupid and wise, between immature and mature. In any case, this is often connected with a value judgement.

The word homo is often used with the word fuck: fucking homo/faggot. This phrase "fucking faggot" can be looked at as a combination of two strong words. In Finnish the most common way to use the word "homo" is to connect it to word "cunt": "cunt's homo" would be direct translation of

the typical name-calling. Combination of the female genitals and unmanly faggot acts as a reflecting surface in male socialisation when heterosexual masculinity is constructed in relation to femininity, femaleness and homosexuality (see Mac An Ghail 1994, 96-97). Homophobic name-calling is often linked with the connotation of meaning of effeminacy or girlishness in boys. For example, one male interviewee recalled that “surely there were those faggot and sissy shouts”. The wrong kind of masculinity is punished by homophobic name-calling. The gendered nature of homophobic name-calling is obvious from the fact that even if it is used as a synonym for stupid, it is generally not used of girls or if it is used it might be interpreted as a mistake.

Interviewer: Who has been called a faggot?

Interviewed 19 year old woman: No one in particular, in a way. It has just been thrown in the air if someone has wanted to say to someone else that you are a real idiot so they might have said that you are really faggot.

Interviewer: In your opinion, do boys and girls use it as often?

Interviewed: Maybe boys use it more but also girls use it.

The homosexuality in homophobic name-calling is typically understood as weirdness, unconventionality or girlishness connected to the man or manliness (Rofes 1993/1994, 38). If teachers interfere with homophobic name-calling, the students may argue that they do not mean anything by it. This prevents interfering with the phenomenon. When “fucking homo” is understood to be one of the everyday swearwords used in the school, interfering may seem unnecessary.

Because anyone, particularly any of the boys, can be chosen as the object of homophobic name-calling, questioning it requires a special kind of courage. It is difficult to interfere with homophobic name-calling or remarks even if one does not agree with that sort of talk because one could lose one’s reputation by objecting to them. The situations of homophobic name-calling were often connected with the regulation of hierarchy in a classroom and with the aim of strengthening one’s own position. Who was chosen as the object, depended partly on group dynamics, friendships and the controlling conducted by teachers. The dynamics of homophobic name-calling are emphatically linked with relationship networks: a group can protect from homophobic name-calling or at least set the limits for it: who can do it and to whom. On the other hand, homophobic name-calling might not be used at all with some sensitive boys because they might not be able to take it in a casual enough manner. What is more, homophobic name-calling can act as a way to strengthen the friendship: as a sign that the other is such a good friend that one can call him a homo/faggot.

Interviewed 15 year old man: They will not go and shout at a stranger. So if someone pushes someone like “bloody faggot”. So when there is an insider gang they shout at each other and sometimes at others. So it is different with the ones that know each other well.

The word homo in homophobic name-calling obtains new meanings. One interviewee recalled that someone at school said that “I was pissed off like a homo”. Accordingly, the word may also be used as a general word that strengthens the expression. Another interviewee told that it could be normal to say to friends: “Homos, let’s go for a coffee!”.

The internal maintaining of homophobic practices and the externalisation of them in the student culture is an attempt to negotiate a coherent masculine identity (Nayak & Kehily 1997, 138-140) . Constructing and maintaining masculinity can be difficult and it requires a continuous homophobic performance with which the image of one’s inner self is protected. At the same time, it is used to produce a boundary between self and others. These others are women, homosexuals and other victims of homophobia, whose role is to be the objects of violent reactions caused by the fears connected with masculinity. Nearly all of the interviewees had perceived homophobic name-calling as in some way negative. When a person has feelings towards another person of the same sex, he or she might need to take homophobic name-calling more personally than in other cases. I understand the making of homophobic remarks mainly as a gender performance, in which the young men participating in it perform on two levels: externally, as part of a group, in which the comments are made and internally – in relation to one’s own self (see Butler 1993, 238). As a result of homophobic culture and homophobic name-calling the boys learn not to express their feelings and weakness (Griffin 1995, 55) as well as to avoid intimate relationships or intimacy with other boys or friendships with girls.

Homophobic name-calling is often not about “really seeing” someone as a homosexual but the word homo is used in an otherwise degrading way. Situations, in which the object of name-calling or bullying, who is known or suspected to be a homosexual, can be examined as a nearly separate phenomenon. Often in secondary school, young people do not tell others that they are sexually interested in a person of the same sex or that they have sexual experiences with persons of the same sex. Two interviewees of mine had been labelled homosexual. With the help of their stories I will discuss the bullying of non-heterosexual young people and the possible labelling which develops as a process in the school community.

Despite the fact that during the period of bullying one of the male interviewees was dating a girl, he was perceived as a homosexual. Even though a student said that he or she is heterosexual, he or she might still be called names and labelled homosexual.

Interviewed 20 year old man: At the time I was dating a girl and I got a new hobby I started...

Interviewer: Did it not have any effect?

Interviewed: Well, we were regarded as quite a weird couple...

Interviewer: So no one believed you.

Interviewed: Well, they all thought I was a faggot. Once a faggot, always a faggot. And then I got a new hobby. I started to ride horses for real and everyone else was like into mopeds and I was in the stables all day and I'm not interested in motor vehicles except that I cared only about getting from one place to another with them. I was a weird boy.

Anoop Nayak and Mary Kehily (1997, 155) argue that the boys who have homophobic reactions are not scared of homosexuals as such but rather are internally scared of losing control and “turning into” homosexuals. The bullied ones may often feel that they are to blame for being bullied or they explain bullying with their own theories as my interviewee did:

But the boys were sort of scared of it in themselves so that if it sometimes came out, they were scared of their homosexuality and they have been watching themselves enough to have noticed that it might be quite neat. It is a fact that the guys that beat up homosexuals are the ones that have sometimes tried to be homosexual and they like it too much so they are afraid of it in themselves and they resist it by thinking that they are cool if they beat up a homosexual.

Another man, 16 year old interviewee had been bullied due to being homosexual. He had told about his sexuality to his classmates and apparently they had spread the information. His best friend had left him and labelled homosexuality as an illness after he had told him about his sexuality. Persons hanging around with a person that has been labelled homosexual might be “polluted” themselves (see Nayak & Kehily 1997, 147). Furthermore, he had been left alone by other boys. The boys of his own class shouted at him. The interviewee explained this with the need to show other boys that they have the courage to call someone a faggot: “you have to show other guys that you’re tough”. The boys who called him a homo at school might treat him friendly outside the school. This clearly

demonstrates that what is central in bullying is not insulting an individual, in particular, but rather group dynamics: the one that bullies expresses his or her place and role to the group by putting down another student.

But then when you meet the same guy that has called you a faggot and you see him outside of school without his friends so then he is like yeah nice to see you. Then when you go to the school the next day he is like fuck you.

Nevertheless, he told me that not all of the boys took part in homophobic name-calling. Especially those boys who were labelled as nerds did not bully him. It seems that the dominant and visible opposite side for the boys who had chosen the traditional role of “heterosexual” men was formed of the “nerds”, who were interested in computers, and who had gained visibility as their own group also in the media. He recalls that he has been bullied also physically but that he had found ways to fight against it. If he is bullied physically, he tells the teachers about it immediately but does not care to report “mere” name-calling. According to him, this has had the effect that the boys do not dare to bully him in fear of punishment, and he hears about the opinions of the boys mostly from the girls.

Homosexuality of a classmate might be too threatening to face so people refuse to believe it. When another 15 year old interviewee was called a homo and he admitted to being homosexual, the name-caller stopped and turned it other way around by saying that he is not serious. Even though homophobic name-calling is common at schools, people are generally not ready to cope with real gays or lesbians (compare Nayak & Kehily 1997, 154). Self-conscious sexuality might be experienced as threatening or disturbing, especially if one’s own sexuality is vague.

On the basis of the interviews it is impossible to say anything generalising about how much non-heterosexual boys and girls are bullied at school or whether they are called homo more or less than other students. Because non-heterosexual young men do not necessarily perceive the traditional role of the heterosexual man as suitable for them, I assume that they have more room for flexibility and motivation to choose hobbies or ways of behaving and dressing that are perceived as unmanly. This can increase their possibility of ending up to be bullied due to gender discipline, in particular. A similar situation can be found among non-heterosexual girls. If some young person is suspected or known to be homo- or bisexual, it can be claimed, based on my data, that this person is in a greater risk of ending up as the object of bullying – merely in the light of the known attitudinal climate –

than other young people. Homophobic name-calling and bullying linked with gender control are, nevertheless, a part of the lives of young people at today's schools. Some of the non-heterosexual young people have better abilities to analyse it and can, therefore, take distance from it. The ones that are in trouble are those young men who desperately want to be like "the real men" but are not very sure of their ability to do so. The vulnerability of heterosexual masculinity – which Anoop Nayak and Mary Kehily (1997, 157) have discussed – is most visible in them, and participation in masculinity rituals as a helper of the one who bullies can be most motivating.

The hierarchies and groupings between the students and their teachers of a school, different forms of name-calling and violence as well as the attitudes to them construct and control the possibilities connected to gender and sexuality. Through and with the help of them, young people perceive an image of the right kind of maleness, femaleness and sexuality, which is heterosexual. Young people create an image of their own sexuality by mirroring it to the practices of the school culture. They either strive towards realising the "right" models or questioning them but, nevertheless, these models act as building material. They offer the only possibility to cite gender, as Judith Butler has analysed (1990, 33).

Boys construct the idea of their own masculinity as well as the masculinity of others by using femininity and homosexuality, connected to both women and men, as the antithesis. Degrading attitudes towards women, the femininity of women, masculinity and sexuality, and negative attitudes towards homosexuality and the femininity of men construct an image of the position of both men and women. Boys maintain more actively and visibly the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour – or at least some of them do. Some boys control the possibilities of both other boys and girls. Similar kind of phenomena seems to continue with some men in their future workplaces as well.

Significance of gender

When studying lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender one might take into consideration of gender issues particularly by analysing what are the differences between women and men. When thinking of the plurality of gender, this approach can be questioned. In this part of the article I discuss aspects of gender, which broaden the view of the binary women/man dichotomy. I analyse the ways lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons are seen to have masculine and/or feminine characteristics, and how members of sexual and gender minorities are making gendered choices in their career.

The respondents of the sexual minority survey were asked to assess how their co-workers perceived their gender, in other words, if co-workers saw them as masculine, feminine, or both masculine and feminine. Here, differences appeared between the young respondents and the older respondents. According to the responses, older men were perceived as masculine (57 %) more often than younger men (37 %), while young men were more likely to be found either feminine (6 %) or both masculine and feminine (42 %). A substantial minority of the female respondents thought they were perceived as masculine women in their work community (10 % of younger and 16 % of older women), and almost a half believed to be seen as both masculine and feminine (46 % of younger and 51 % of older women). Young women (29 %) were somewhat more likely than older women (18 %) to be perceived as feminine women. According to one female respondent, again, her co-workers thought of her as a masculine man. It is obvious that gender styles are very much a part of the everyday working life (see Kuosmanen 2002). The perceived masculinity of women compared to the less frequently perceived femininity of men perhaps partially explains the fact that women's non-heterosexuality tends to be more often known at workplaces than men's. People's gender styles do affect the way others see their sexual orientation: for instance, masculine women are more likely to be thought of as lesbians than feminine women. (Lehtonen 2004b, 145-146)

It is vital to consider gendered styles of lesbian, gay, and bisexuals when considering their workplace status (or school status). Sometimes harassment, bullying or discrimination might be based more on the gendered style than on sexual orientation. Compared to women who were perceived as feminine and men who were perceived as masculine, women who were seen as masculine and men who were seen as feminine, as well as persons who were considered both masculine and feminine by their co-workers were more likely to choose fields with positive attitudes and not to choose fields with negative attitudes towards sexual minorities.

Homosexuality and bisexuality are often connected with stereotypic images (cf. Lehtonen 2000), which are often gendered: gay men are seen as effeminate and lesbian women as manly. While there are many masculine gay and bisexual men and many feminine lesbians and bisexual women, it is fact that rather many members of sexual minorities challenge gender norms by their behaviour and outlook. Masculine women tend to be perceived as lesbians and feminine men as gay. These stereotypic images and the factual gender plurality in sexual minorities create needs of negotiating at workplaces and schools. 18-year old female interviewee told about the stereotypic images and joking at her workplace:

I've been working as a cleaner [at a centre]. There are some young blokes, my age or older, and they have pretty straight attitudes, the way they talk. Sometimes you hear comments about someone who's working there like: 'That bloke's a faggot, for sure'. You hear all kinds of hinting like: 'At school, [he was] a real sissy'. Whispering behind the back but never straight to their face.

The same woman told about a male employee who fits the stereotypic image of a gay man. She told that people talked about him, too, but only behind his back.

There's this older bloke, I know he's definitely gay. He's a character. [...] The reactions are... I'm sure people know or guess but nobody says anything about it [openly]. People don't show him in any way that they know. Everybody takes him just like that. He's an okay bloke.

The young woman had not told about her own sexual orientation to her co-workers even though, she told, she had sometimes wondered if her rather masculine style aroused suspicions. Such a workplace culture – the joking behind people's back and the anti-gay stereotypes – is not likely to encourage people to be open about their non-heterosexual lives (Lehtonen 2002).

Some non-heterosexual young people consciously adopt a style of dress and appearance that challenges gender boundaries. This may cause confusion at workplace, and some employees may even be bullied or discriminated against for this reason. On the other hand, heteronormative workplace practices may require a certain kind of dress or appearance: girls in customer service tasks may be expressly demanded to use make-up, while boys are told to take off their earrings at work. For many non-heterosexual young people, however, having your own style of dress plays a major role in the construction of their sexual self-image (on lesbian styles at workplace see also Kuosmanen 2002). Hence, many consider carefully the nature of their potential workplace and work tasks, and whether their non-heterosexuality or their different gender expression would cause problems at work. Some respondents said that they protested against the gender order, and some discussed individual gender factors affecting work tasks and their career choices. The following response by a female respondent is an example of this:

My openly lesbian appearance – my hair cut and style of dress – has clearly closed doors before me in the labour market in that the jobs I've got have been mainly blue-collar, low-paid, seasonal, temporary jobs. The more middle-class the environment, the more of an outsider I've felt, and the

conclusion I've drawn from this is that I don't even bother to look for a more challenging job that would correspond to my training but, instead, direct my energies into my hobbies.

Gender is effecting in the career choices of sexual minorities also in the way that they have more potential than people in average to challenge the highly gender-segregated labour markets of Finland. Of both female and male respondents, many worked in female-dominated fields. While the number of male respondents in male-dominated fields was larger than the number of female respondents, their proportion was clearly smaller compared to the proportion of men in male-dominated fields in the whole population (Lehtonen 2004c). Male respondents also often had female superiors, which is more characteristic of female-dominated fields. According to a Finnish equality study by Lehto-Sutela (1997, 38), only 10 percent of young male respondents (under 35) and 8 percent of older male respondents (over 35) had a female superior. In the sexual minority survey, 49 percent of young male respondents (under 30) and 38 percent of older male respondents (30 or over) had a female superior.

Compared to women, men tend more often to avoid fields with perceived negative attitudes towards lesbians, gays and bisexuals. These seem to include male-dominated fields, such as the police, the fire department, security, the customs, the military, construction and technical fields, and forestry – all fields that do not attract many women, non-heterosexual or not. Similarly, compared to female respondents, male respondents were more likely to stress the importance of a positive attitudinal climate. Perhaps female-dominated fields such as the health care, the beauty care and various service occupations provide such a climate. Even many non-heterosexual people seek occupations that are in line with the traditional division of work into men's and women's occupations. There is, nevertheless, a higher tendency among non-heterosexuals to choose occupations across gender lines than on the average. A significant number of lesbians, gays and bisexuals in the sexual minority survey worked in places where the majority of their fellow employees were of the other gender. Thus, a fair share of them challenged the prevailing gender segregation in the labour market. Of the male respondents, in particular, considerably many worked in female-dominated fields.

The similar story with the sexual minority experiences may be told of the transsexual respondents in the gender minority survey, who crossed gender lines in even more complex ways (Lehtonen 2004d). Transvestites, in turn, worked more often in male-dominated fields. For them, it is easier to conceal their gender identity/expression at work. Very few transvestites reported to express their gender identity or their transvestism at work. In fact, a great majority conceals it (cf. Leinonen

2003, 94). Of the transsexual men, most expressed their gender at work, while quite many of the transsexual women concealed the gender they found their own or were careful in expressing it. Almost half of the transvestites worked in male-dominated fields and only a minority in female-dominated fields (see also Huuska 2002, 37). Similarly, of the transsexual women, most worked in male-dominated fields, although many also worked in mixed fields or female-dominated fields. Of the transsexual men, again, the greatest proportion worked in female-dominated fields. In addition, several of the transvestites and transsexual men reported to work alone. (Lehtonen 2004d)

A significant number of the transvestites and transsexual women reported about a clear division between male and female employees in their workplace, whereas transsexual men worked more often in fields with a less clear gender division. One third of the transvestites and approximately two-fifths of the transsexual women were employed in fields where no clear division prevailed between female and male employees. Most transvestites had a male superior. Similarly, transsexual women and transsexual men tended to have male superiors although not as often as transvestites. One third of both the transsexual women and transsexual men had a female superior, whereas one in every nine transvestites had a female superior. In comparison, gay and bisexual men had clearly more often female superiors than transvestite men. In the two surveys, the respondents that were most likely to have female superiors were lesbians and bisexual women. (Lehtonen 2004d)

Do trans people then challenge the gender division in working life? If we look at transvestites, it appears that they tend to choose their occupations fairly much in line with the prevailing male gender expectations, similar to men on the average (cf. Huuska 2002, 37). In comparison, gay and bisexual men are more likely to cross the gender line in working life. Regarding transsexual men and transsexual women, again, the answer is a bit more complex. From the perspective of their biological sex, transsexuals cross the gender line: for instance, transsexual men, i.e. biological women, pursue male-dominated fields more often than other biological women and, on the other hand, as men work more often in female-dominated fields compared to other men. Thus, they tend to challenge the gender division on two levels. On the other hand, some transsexuals may have chosen their occupation before identifying themselves as transsexuals and may have conformed to the prevailing gender expectations before embarking on the gender-reassignment process. A transsexual woman, for instance, may have chosen a male-dominated field while still thinking of herself in male terms, or while still trying to live in the male role.

The significance of gender and the gender division was discussed in many of the open-ended responses by transgendered people, particularly in the stories of transsexual respondents. The following citations are from two transsexual men, neither of whom found "female fields" suitable for themselves:

I quit studying dance in my teens because, at that time, I found it impossible to reconcile my gender identity with the (rather female-dominated) field.

I have consciously avoided female-dominated fields, and I've never even found any interest in them.

Gender experiences in youth, and various ways of expressing gender were also discussed in the responses. Some of the transsexual respondents said that had they been brought up as individuals of their gender and not of their sex, they might have done other kinds of occupational choices. The situation of transsexuals seemed to allow more flexibility as to how to make occupational and career choices: some choices could be based on the biological sex, others on gender. Transsexual woman respondent told about her thoughts regarding her occupational future after emerging as a woman:

At school, I have a clear female identity. It's been accepted and recognised. But officially I emerged as a woman only a while ago, and the tensions aroused by that are still quite strong. It disturbs my studying. And I worry both about getting a traineeship place this coming spring and later a job as a transsexual woman.

Gender expectations were influential, and some respondents told that they had decided not to choose certain fields because of them. A biological woman with a transsexual identity reports:

Having a female body, I could forget about becoming a fireman. Although I don't think it would have been a real option for me when growing up anyway, or how do I know if I never got to be a boy?

A transvestite man describes how he chose a male-dominated field even though he was not career-oriented as generally expected from men:

I studied and now work in a male-dominated field. My gender has not really affected my choices. Now that I think about it, it might have been easier for me to choose a female-dominated field of study. If I chose my study field now, my gender might play a role in my decision. School time experiences have played a role in my occupational choice mainly in that, since starting the upper secondary school, it's been very hard for me to find the field I'd like to work in. My gender may be an anguishing influence in this because I keep thinking that men are expected to be career-oriented, which I'm not.

A transsexual woman explains the strong influence of her gender on her choice of occupation:

My choice of occupation has been very much influenced by the gender I find my own. I could not enjoy working in a male-dominated field. The nurse's occupation has always been thought of as a very feminine occupation in Finland. I feel that my occupation in some ways reinforces my gender identity.

While the above respondent sought reinforcement for her gender identity from her occupation, the following respondent, a biological man with a woman's identity, reported to have tried denying her gender experience by the occupational choice she made:

After comprehensive school, I chose metal industry because I thought working in a really manly field could "cure" me. Thinking back, it was the stupidest decision in my life.

One respondent who finds it difficult to fit in the prevailing gender division told that this has, in fact, made it easier to challenge the gender division and the gender expectations in working life:

Thanks to my "plural gender", I may have avoided thinking about myself as, say, a woman in the sense that I would have anticipated meeting barriers because of my womanhood. On the other hand, I express my genders – or the cocktail of the gender characteristics that I find my own – in ways that are acceptable in our culture, so my gender expression – despite the fact that it challenges the "normal" binary gender opposition – does not work against me. All things considered, I feel like a lucky person.

Sexuality and gender interact in many ways with the choices people make regarding training, occupation and career, and people assess their influence in different ways. This becomes apparent

from the responses of both the survey carried out with transgendered people and the one conducted with lesbians, gays and bisexuals. People do not make occupational and workplace choices independent of the reality of their lives, and gender identity and gender expression are among the significant factors influencing these choices. Even though respondents did not always see a direct connection between their sexual orientation or gender identity and their occupational or workplace choices, often these had an indirect influence in their choices.

In light of the results of the two surveys, the experiences of transsexual women and transsexual men appear in many ways similar to those of lesbians, gays and bisexuals. Transvestites, in turn, tended to make occupational choices similar to men at large. Similarities between the groups could be found particularly between transsexual women on the one hand, and gay and bisexual men on the other hand, as well as between transsexual men and lesbian women. Thus, gender seems to play a central role, as does the need to question the position allotted and the model expectations directed to men and women. Transsexual women and gay and bisexual men are confronted with male images that not very many of them want to pursue. Transsexual women who have generally been treated as males in their youth prefer a female position, and gay and bisexual men often feel constrained by the heterosexual masculine models. Similarly, transsexual men and lesbian women tend to find it difficult to identify themselves with the models and values generally attached to femininity.

Conclusive remarks

To understand the situation and position of sexual and gender minorities (lgbti) more deeply in the school and workplaces, it is significant to consider and analyse the larger context of those places. Heteronormative practises, and the ways in which sexuality and gender is intertwined with the everyday working and studying, is effecting more on lgbti persons than merely the few situations where lgbti topics are discussed or raised up verbally or visually. When focusing of the openness and coming out stories of lgbti persons in the liberated tone “Come out where ever you are”, the heteronormative pressure and automatic assumption of heterosexuality and the many practises of hiding one’s sexuality can be left in marginal position in the research. The responsibility of the workplace and school cultures from the point of view of gender and sexual diversity should not be left to few lgbti persons, who might face the problems of the cultures. The responsibility lies with the institutions and employers to take care that the work environment and school is safe and sensible for diverse people (Lehtonen 2006). The same problematic is common with the analysis of homophobic name-calling. To understand it better, a researcher must take the whole phenomena

under focus, and not just limit the view on gays, bisexuals and maybe lesbians who experience homophobic name-calling.

In the research on LGBTI people in the schools and workplaces gender is usually only tackled as a background factor. Clearly sexual and gender minorities are challenging gender norms in many ways with their styles, behaviour and choices. This can be seen as a resource, not something to be ashamed of. Maybe the need to prove sexual and gender minorities to be as normal as others, read heterosexual masculine males and heterosexual feminine females, has made some researchers reluctant to discover the gender-challenging styles and choices. The normalisation need can be questioned, particularly if we want to learn more on everyday lives of LGBTI persons and the ways in which heteronormativity can be maintained and challenged in the work environment and school practises.

End notes

1) All the concepts relating to these minorities and diversities are under constant negotiation and vary from country to country. The concepts used here are more typical for the Finnish context and my own research. More detailed information on the gender minority groups at www.valt.helsinki.fi/sosio/tutkimus/equal.

2) Also gender minority survey respondents answered that half of them are open at work. Transvestites though mostly hide their gender identity, but transsexuals are often open at least when they are in the gender-reassignment process. (Mustola 2004; Lehtonen 2004d)

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