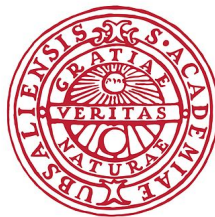


# **Becoming a Woman Through Tomboyism**

A Qualitative Study of the Female Gender Identity of the Tomboy

By Anna Alvemark

2021-05-31



UPPSALA  
UNIVERSITET

Masters Programme in Sociology at the Department of Sociology

Examiner: Fredrik Palm

## Abstract

This thesis concerns the female gender identity generally known as the tomboy – a non-marginal gender identity. As a result of the non-marginality and complexity of this gender identity research on the subject is sparse. Moreover, previous research has not shown a limitation of tomboyism to homosexuality. This study aims to explore the specific socialization route in which such gender identity formation is acquired and to make clear, its main stages, determining factors and key agents as well as the social-psychological and emotional experiences of tomboys. An evaluation of the consequences of this particular type of socialization, in relation to these women's work and family lives has also been made. The empirical material was collected through the qualitative method of deep interviews. An interdisciplinary theoretical framework including theories from sociology, gender studies and social psychology have been used in the analysis of the empirical material. The specific socialization route of the respondents was found to consist of five distinct stages. The different stages are characterized by: *a separation from femininity, identification with and adapting masculine behaviors and attitudes, resisting gender norms and/or mainstream culture, being sanctioned and integration of masculinity and femininity*. The primary key agents were found to be the parents and other role models that were either male or performed an unconventional femininity. The consequences of taking this particular socialization route was the formation of a female gender identity that cannot be categorized as traditionally feminine or masculine, according to the heterosexual matrix (Butler 1993) nor can it be understood as a cross-gender or queer gender identity. Moreover, the tomboy identity formation is found to cause ruptures in the heterosexual matrix as proposed by Renold and Ringrose (2008). It is concluded that further research on the heterosexual gender identity of the tomboy is needed in order to fully understand both the particularities of it and its impact on the heterosexual matrix.

Keywords: tomboy, gender identity, social psychology



## Table of Contents

1. Being and Becoming: The Thoughts That Led Me Here.....	1
2. Research Goal and Research Questions.....	3
3. Disposition .....	3
4. An Historical Perspective on the Emergence of Tomboyism.....	4
4.1 Etymology .....	4
4.2 How the Social Phenomenon of the Tomboy Came to Be .....	5
4.3 Cultural Representations of the Tomboy.....	6
4.4 Tomboy Role Models Within the Music Industry.....	7
5. Previous Research.....	8
5.1 Identifying the Tomboy.....	9
5.1.1 <i>Queer Theory</i> .....	10
5.1.2 <i>Masculinity and Femininity Studies</i> .....	11
5.1.3 <i>Heterosexuality in Critical Gender/Sexuality Studies</i> .....	13
5.1.4 <i>Tomboyism Defined by the Actors Behaviors</i> .....	14
5.2 Socialization: Significant Others and the Heterosexual Matrix .....	15
5.2.1 <i>The Role of Peers During Gender Socialization</i> .....	15
5.2.2 <i>Agency and the Heterosexual Matrix</i> .....	16
5.3 Sports, “Rough and Tumble” Play and Toys.....	18
5.4 Conformity and Puberty .....	19
6. The Theoretical Framework.....	20
6.1 Queer Theory: Marginality, Homosexuality and Resistance .....	20
6.2 The Sex/Gender, Culture/Biology Distinction .....	21
6.3 The Issue of Phallocentricism in Conceptualizing Cross-gender Identities .....	22
6.4 Role-rehearsal Through Game and Play.....	24
6.5 A Dramaturgical Perspective on Gender Performances .....	26
6.6 Emotions as a Form of Social Control .....	27
6.7 Subcultures: Exercising Resistance Through Shared Identities .....	28

7. Method .....	29
7.1 The Data Collection Method: Semi-structured Narrative Interviews.....	29
7.1.1 <i>Deep-interview Through a Narrative Inquiry</i> .....	30
7.2 Ethical Considerations.....	30
7.3 Quality Considerations .....	32
7.4 The Interview Guide.....	33
7.5 Limitations.....	33
7.6 The Sample.....	33
7.7 The Interviews .....	34
7.8 Processing and Coding the Empirical Material .....	35
8. Analysis of the Empirical Material .....	36
8.1 Key Agents During Primary Socialization .....	36
8.1.1 <i>The Mothers: “She Was a Very Strong and Independent Woman”</i> .....	37
8.1.2 <i>The Father and “Doing Things Together”</i> .....	39
8.1.3 <i>Siblings</i> .....	40
8.1.4 <i>Role Models and Idols</i> .....	41
8.1.5 <i>Discussion: Key Agents During Primary Socialization</i> .....	42
8.2 The Role of Peers, Toys, and Games During Yearly Childhood .....	43
8.2.1 <i>The Choice of Toys</i> .....	43
8.2.2 <i>Choosing “Rough and Tumble-Play” – Adapting Masculinely-coded Behaviors</i> .....	44
8.2.3 <i>Discussion: Peers, Toys and Games During Early Childhood</i> .....	45
8.3 Middle Childhood – Play Turns into Heterosexualized Game.....	45
8.3.1 <i>Heterosexualization of Friendships and Trying to Adapt to the Girls Games</i> .....	45
8.3.2 <i>Sanctions Due to Manners and Appearances</i> .....	47
8.3.3 <i>Sports, Activities and Interests</i> .....	48
8.3.4 <i>Discussion: Middle Childhood</i> .....	49
8.4 Adolescence: A Time of Great Change.....	50

8.4.1 Puberty: Attuning to the Heterosexual Matrix.....	50
8.4.2 Finding Shelter Within Subcultured Groups.....	52
8.4.3 Gaining the Freedom to Play “Both Roles” .....	53
8.4.4. Discussion: Adolescence.....	53
8.5 Tomwomen: An Integration of Femininity and Masculinity .....	54
8.5.1 Personal Fronts, Manners and Attitudes .....	55
8.5.2 Being Friends with Like-minded .....	56
8.5.3 Home Life and Romantic Relationships.....	56
8.5.4 Discussion: The Tomboy’s Working and Family Life.....	57
9. Conclusions: The Journey of a Tomboy .....	57
10. Discussion.....	59
10.1 Empirical Findings in Relation to Previous Research.....	59
10.1.1 Role Models, Resistance and Heterosexualization During Primary Socialization.....	60
10.1.2 Sports, Games and “Rough and Tumble” Play .....	61
10.1.3 Conformity and Puberty.....	62
10.1.4 Adult life .....	62
10.2. Empirical Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework .....	63
10.3 Empirical Material in Relation to Method.....	64
10.4 Implications for Future Research .....	64
Literature.....	1
Appendix 1.....	1
Appendix 2.....	1

# **1. Being and Becoming: The Thoughts That Led Me Here**

When traveling through life, we are in a constant process of being and becoming. Life can be seen as an ever-changing, always moving journey that we travel together, as collectives and as individuals within those collectives (Jenkins 2008). Most often, when children are born into modern families, the first part of the journey is chosen for us, by others. The route is mapped out by those individuals that are closest to us – our care takers. Eventually, as we grow older and have learned more about ourselves and our social reality, we come into a position of choosing our own routes in life. However, all the stops we have made up until then – all the interactions with different individuals and collectives of people we have had – have now, in some way become a part of us, a part of who we are. And as we keep traveling into the future all the people that we meet, and all the events that we come to experience, will be a part of forming who we are and who we will become. The process of being and becoming a social being never stops, one does not simply reach a point where one comes into being and stops becoming.

For me – as for most people – the need to understand this process and who I am in this world, has been a constant wonder, one that have become more and more pressing as my journey through life have proceeded. Eventually, this inescapable urge of wanting to understand my own being and becoming led me to the university. The experience of taking my first university course: *Sociology and Social Psychology* can be likened to finally reaching the open sea during a journey on a narrow river. Here – floating on the sea of knowledge – the possibilities of gaining deeper understandings of the processes of being and becoming seemed endless. From the very moment I was born, I have always loved the water, it's always made me feel safe and this experience was like falling in love all over again. I felt like I had come home – I was in my element.

As I dove deeper into the waters of Sociological Social Psychology I found that, understanding the process of being and becoming is also one of the main interests of sociological social psychology. Furthermore, I learned that one's childhood experiences – one's socialization – greatly influence the route one choose to take later on in life. Hence, analyzing my childhood experience would help me as I keep trying to understand who I am in this world. There trough, for me, as for many aspiring social scientists, what first sparked my interest and desire to make further enquiries is rooted in my subjective experiences, interests and journeys through life.

Looking back upon my own childhood, I have realized that many of the activities and games that I preferred are generally coded as masculine – seen as games and activities most often performed by boys. Moreover, that most of my childhood attitudes and behaviors correspond with those attributed with girls who are commonly identified as *tomboys*<sup>1</sup> – a gender identity that is generally defined as a girl who behaves and has attitudes that are culturally coded as masculine. I have also come to understand that the parts of me that were formed along these passages of my journey still holds some of their forms within me today.

These insights about my own journey made me wonder if my experience of being and becoming a woman meant that I had experienced a *different* type of socialization than that which is normally considered to be the standard tour? Since, I – a now 39-year-old woman – often experience myself to be different to many of the other women I interact with. I wonder if my childhood had been different to theirs? Looking even closer, I wonder if the course I took included a *specific* type of socialization route? I wonder if other women that define themselves as tomboys have had similar experiences as me? And if so, could this specific route be mapped out?

Now, fully immersed in sociological social psychological theories and research, I see an opportunity to use these theoretical tools and attempt to answer these questions. Not only to gain an understanding of my own subjective experience, but to also understand a wider group of women who have made similar journeys. The purpose of this work is not however to describe and gain a deeper understanding of an unusual and thoroughly subjective experience of being and becoming, but rather to identify the distinct type of identity formation to which my personal experience belongs, and to contribute to further elaborations in sociological and socio-psychological terms.

I therefore aim to examine other women's experiences in more general socio-psychological terms – through making it the research topic of my thesis. Furthermore, I aim to understand, which of the souvenirs that have been picked up along the journey that stays with the tomboys and how these (masculine) souvenirs are manifested in these women's lives today.

---

<sup>1</sup>In Swedish this gender identity is generally known as a *pojkflicka*.



## **2. Research Goal and Research Questions**

The overall goal of this thesis is to study gender identification as a process. In particular, the aim is to explore the acquisition of a female gender identity through the process of socialization, which includes a form of distancing from gender norms. The particular female gender identity of interest here is the expression of a *tomboy* identity. A gender identity that is commonly known to be a “boyish” girl – a girl behaving and inhabiting behaviors and attitudes generally seen as those belonging to boys. The more concrete objectives include the exploration of the possibility of identifying a particular type of socialization, the main factors for its taking place, the socio-psychological aspects of the experience and the significance the respondents may be willing to attach to it today. Research questions:

- Which are the main stages, determining factors and key agents in this particular type of socialization process?
- What can be said about the socio-psychological aspects and emotional experiences of the socializee?
- How can the tomboy identity be understood in relation to sexuality and gender norms?
- How can this particular type of socialization be evaluated in respect to its consequences on the future life and career of these women?

## **3. Disposition**

In the coming chapter an historical background of the emergence of the female identity formation generally known as the tomboy will be given. Upon that chapter, a literature review of previously conducted research on tomboyism will be made. Following this chapter, the theoretical framework used to analyze the empirical material, will be laid out. Next, the method of data collection and how the empirical material was processed and analyzed will be given. This chapter includes the ethical considerations taken during the course of the study, the process of finding participants, a description of the sample, a description of how the interview guide was constructed, how the interview situations were set up and descriptions of the actual interviews. Following the chapter on the research methods the analysis and the results are presented and discussed. The last chapter concerns future implications for further research.

## 4. An Historical Perspective on the Emergence of Tomboyism

Using the expression *tomboy*, is not an uncommon way of describing a boyish girl today. In order to gain a deeper understanding of what lays behind the expression it will be helpful to review both the history of this expression and the history of the social phenomenon of the tomboy. This overview, will also show that the tomboy phenomena is intimately entwined with important societal events, culture and changes and how the tomboy character has been carried through history in the form of cultural representations. Moreover, this chapter serves as a way of becoming acquainted with the particularities of the tomboy gender identity and to differentiate it from *other types* of female gender identities. It is herein believed that the tomboy gender identity should be understood as separate from more stable gender identities such as that of transgender individuals<sup>2</sup> and/or queer identities<sup>3</sup>. This separation is of importance to this work and will be further explored below.

### 4.1 Etymology

A most common assumption in the history of the tomboy phenomena is that the expression “tomboy” emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup> century with its first appearances in English-language literature (Abate 2008). However, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2019) the term tomboy was first used in 1592. The etymology of the word is said to be “Tom+boy meaning a ‘rude, boisterous boy’” (*The Online Etymology Dictionary* 2019). A most common explanation for the ‘Tom’ is that it adheres from a *tom* as in a male animal e.g. a tom-cat. When applied to a girl the; meaning is transformed into “a wild, romping girl, girl who acts like a spirited boy could also mean strumpet, bold or immodest woman” (*The Online Etymology Dictionary* 2019). Another common explanation for the expression is that it is connected to the male name Tom that was very common during the (supposed) time of the expressions emergence that it was used as a parable for *a* man or “a common man”, as in the British saying “(any) Tom, Dick

---

<sup>2</sup> “Refers to gender identity and includes people who identify as female or male but were born or assigned the other sex at birth, people who identify as neither female or male, as a combination of both, or as genderfluid” (Griffin, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> “Word for strange or odd which was reclaimed in the 1990s to refer to people of divergent sexual orientations who might be part of the LGBT communities. Intended to transcend the binarisms of lesbian and gay and to signal the fluidity of sexed and gendered identities, queer has socially become increasingly identified with a particular sub-section of the LGBT communities as a highly fashion-conscious, stylized group of people. Queer is thus both a practice and a disposition” (Griffin, 2017).

and Harry” meaning “any man”, in the same way Americans use the name Joe in expressions such as “regular Joe” or “average Joe”<sup>4</sup>. An often-given example of this type of use of the name Tom is the title of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s classic novel from 1852, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. None of these theories have, however, been scientifically proven so they are all plausible explanations to the expression's origins as of now, but one thing cannot be denied, namely, that both *tom* and *boy* represent something masculine.

## ***4.2 How the Social Phenomenon of the Tomboy Came to Be***

The phenomena of women assuming male-gender-appropriate behaviors and attitudes or in other ways utilizing masculine identities in order to gain access to positions traditionally reserved for men can be found as far back as non-modern history. Two historical examples would be Joan of Arc who fought in the Hundred Year’s War in the 15<sup>th</sup> century dressed as a male soldier and our Swedish Queen Kristina who reigned between 1632 and 1654, who in turn was recorded as behaving – in a way that at the time was considered to be – masculine. Joan of Arc’s gender expression can be seen as a more stable gender identity since she was trying to be passed off as a man – a cross-gender identity. Queen Kristina on the other hand aimed to position her-self as a man by adapting masculine behaviors and attitudes while still being recognized as a being a woman, this is a performance that lie closer to that of the tomboy. Kristina could also be considered to be queer although that would – if keeping to the most common way of using the expression *queer* – mean that she would also have to be homosexual. There have indeed occurred much speculation surrounding Kristina’s sexuality but as of now, homosexuality has not been scientifically proven.

However, the history of the tomboy identity as a socio-cultural phenomenon should most probably begin with much later historical events, namely from the time when women’s playing of men’s roles in organizational and public life became a mass practice involving all classes and not only the poor. During the First and the Second World War women came to play important roles and lately, the significance of their contribution to the war efforts have become a subject for research. During these times of war, women took over many different types of jobs that were left vacant after the men went to the front (Wynn & Wynn 2017). The analyses of the time period when women joined the civilian labor force have revealed that these women

---

<sup>4</sup> In Swedish the equivalent to “Tom, Dick and Harry” and “average/regular Joe” would be “en vanlig Svensson” or even “Svennebanan”.

continued to maintain their femininity and female identity while at the same time acting and behaving in roles that were considered as exclusively suitable for men before the war (Honey 1981). The history of how women entered the world of men, how they became more “mobile” and “self-reliant individuals” as they began taking over male’s roles is without any doubt extremely relevant to the topic of the present study, but will not be included in its focus (Litoff & Smith 2002). The brief reference to it here serves only to illustrate the possibility to talk about tomboyism as a phenomenon which merits serious sociological attention in both macro- and micro-sociological aspects.

### ***4.3 Cultural Representations of the Tomboy***

Different types of cultural expressions have since long been prominent elements of our every-day-reality. Considering that one of the base-line understandings of self-identification and self-expression is that it is a continuous process of internalizing our every-day-reality in order to make sense of it and externalize ourselves into it (Berger & Luckmann 1966) the importance of reviewing these cultural expressions becomes clear. Therefore, in what follows, examples of cultural representations of the tomboy identity and other types of female gender identities throughout history will be laid out. In literature for example: characters inhabiting the traits of a tomboy are represented in for example *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee 1960) by the character “Scout” and in the more contemporary book *A Song of Ice and Fire* (Martin 1996) that is part of the *Game of Thrones* series, here represented by the character Arya Stark. The later, a series of fantasy novels that have had great success not only in the form of literature but also as a tv-series (Benioff & Weiss, 2001-2019). In terms of gender identity, the character of Arya Stark appears as a queer figure insofar that she performs a quite masculine gender identity. An alternative gender identity but at the same time not connected to homosexuality, and therefore a gender identity that corresponds quite well with the definition of a tomboy in this thesis.

In the movies, the tomboy-character appeared on the screen already in the 1940’s (Abate 2008) but didn’t reach its popularity peak until several decades later. The peak came in the 1970’s when female tomboyish heroines were featured in movies from most of the largest Hollywood studios (Halberstam 1998, p. 188). Movies of this era even “tended to imagine girlhood as tomboyhood” (ibid), which further points to the non-marginality of this gender identity. This era’s rise in tomboys on the screen came at a time where American women were “winning” both politically and socially, and gaining economic freedom (Abate 2008). This was a time where the second wave feminist movement aside from sexual freedom also brought up issues that lead to skepticism regarding the current views on childrearing, parenting practices and the

“naturalness” of conventional gender roles (Halberstam 1998, p.188). All these factors also contributed to more progressive and experimental parenting styles emphasizing feminist traits such as independence and individuality rather than feminine traits such as obedience, submissiveness and conformity when raising their daughters (ibid).

#### ***4.4 Tomboy Role Models Within the Music Industry***

In the time era of the 1970's and 1980's women in different male dominated industries such as the music industry more frequently adapted masculine performances and attitudes to gain access to otherwise closed rooms. A woman that can be seen as an important pathbreaker, not only braving her own life-path but creating a whole new path for those who came after was Suzi Quatro. She was a performer who was able to bare the same traits and attitudes on stage as well as off stage – who became the role model of a real tomboy.

Quatro was pioneering for her time, starting her career already in the 1960's – a time when most mainstream female singers channeled the largely male rock rebellion through singing about their “macho boyfriends” (Oglesbee 1999, p. 29). In an interview from 2012 Quatro herself said:

“I was the first to be taken seriously as a female rock 'n' roll musician and singer. (...) I played the boys at their own game. For everybody that came afterward, it was a little bit easier, which is good. I'm proud of that (...) It was gonna be done by somebody, and I think it fell to me to do because I don't look at gender. I never have. It doesn't occur to me if a 6-foot-tall guy has pissed me off not to square up to him. That's just the way I am. If I wanted to play a bass solo, it never occurred to me that I couldn't. (...) That's why it had to fall to somebody like me” (Callwood 2013).

This quote is a fine example of a “tomboy attitude”. She is a woman who have chosen a different route to travel on, still a tomboy, but also a woman. Somewhere along her journey she has acquired what can be seen as a masculine souvenir that she has kept throughout her life journey. This souvenir has stayed with her – as she has come into motherhood, into heterosexual marriages and so on – sometimes in the bottom of her suitcase but never the less it has always been accessible.

Analyzing one of her performances Auslander (2004) says “I have characterised Quatro's cock-rocker performance as one based in a productive tension: when a masculinely coded performance style is juxtaposed with a femininely coded body, both sets of significations are present – neither cancels the other out [sic]” (p. 10). Moreover, Auslander says that a queer reading of Quatro's performances would not be satisfying in gaining a deeper understanding,

since “she does not exhibit an ‘essential ‘personality’”. Instead, she enacts the polymorphousness, undecidability and performativity of identity” (p. 13).

During the 1990’s an important subculture that originated in the music industry was the Riot Grrrl movement that sprung up (Downes 2012). A specific branch of American punk rock that fronted women that came as a:

“responds to the cultural and political marginalization of young women and girls [in order] to challenge and resist the gender power relations of music subcultures. Riot grrrl created a series of sonic moments to create punk-feminist community and provoke young women and girls’ subcultural resistance and exploration of radical political identities” (Downes, 2012, p. 204).

The Riot Grrrl movement is of specific importance to this thesis as we shall see later.

What can be seen in this overview is that the phenomenon of the tomboy character took on a clearer shape during the second half of the twentieth century. Moreover, that “the phenomenon of the tomboy personae – a woman with a femininely coded body that is juxtaposed by her performance of masculinely coded tasks” (Auslander 2004, p.10) have since then, even more so come into focus.

However, since the second wave feminist movement the discourse on gender identity formations and gender roles has progressed, both the general and academic discourse. Even so, to simply call this complex identity formation a cross-gender identity – an often-occurring label within current research on gender identities – might not be enough to understand the workings of the tomboy identity and its possible effects on our social reality both on a micro and a macro level. Instead the subject calls for a deeper understanding of women’s experiences of tomboyism through a scrutinizing scientific examination that can contribute to future understandings of gender, the relationship between different gender identity formations and their societal roles.

## **5. Previous Research**

Research concerning gender identities, reaches over the borders of many disciplines and tackles a number of different subjects. When reviewing gender identity research specifically focusing on tomboyism it becomes apparent that the research is scattered across multiple disciplines. Therefore, this literature review will include many different disciplines all though mainly from gender studies, developmental psychology, sociology/social psychology and educational

studies. The review also shows that the literature on tomboyism is scarce, the subject has not been extensively studied and it's even been argued, that this identity formation is one of the most overlooked female gender identities (Abate 2011).

The first section (5.1) titled *Identifying the Tomboy* accounts for the different understandings and definitions of tomboyism according to different disciplines and their respective theoretical standpoints. This section will further an understanding of the positioning of this thesis and the theoretical standpoints that will be taken herein. In the coming section (5.2) *Socialization, Significant Others and the Heterosexual Matrix*, the process of gender socialization in relation to tomboyism will be explored, focusing on the important role of family and peers during this time. Next, a section covering research made on the behavioral characteristics of tomboys such as interests, games and mannerisms will be laid out in section 5.3 – *Sports, Rough and Tumble, Play and Mannerisms*. The tomboy identity is generally attributed to girls, however, since one of the objectives of this thesis is to investigate the consequences of being a tomboy during childhood, studying the transition into adulthood in general terms is of great importance. Therefore, in section 5.4 *Conformity and Puberty*, research concerning the transformational stage of puberty in relation to different gender identities will be explored.

### ***5.1 Identifying the Tomboy***

It would be logical in a work like this to start by clarifying how tomboyism is defined. However, this proved to be more difficult than simply extracting a definition through reviewing previously conducted research, since, previously conducted research contains no *one* definition of tomboyism. Rather, there is a multiplicity of different views on what constitutes the tomboy gender identity. This comes as a result of: 1) the variety of disciplines the phenomenon has been studied in, 2) the spread of aspects of tomboyism that have been studied and 3) the various theoretical perspectives that it has been studied through (Carr 2007). Therefore, in this section, I will start by presenting and relating different definitions of tomboyism to different theoretical perspectives. This will work as a clarification of how tomboyism is defined in this thesis and how the theoretical framework of this thesis is related to other theoretical perspectives and previously conducted research. In order to do this, some theoretical concepts will have to be laid out.

Even though many of the studies have been carried out within different disciplines, using different theoretical perspectives, in common for most of the studies is the conception of gender as socially constructed. This means that gender is to be understood as; contextual, specific to

social groups and that its meaning changes over time (Morgan 1998; Thorne 1993). To complicate things more, constructivism cannot be said to be one unified theoretical perspective. Within gender studies – which is where a big portion of research on gender identity is conducted – a particular type of constructivism is often applied, where gender is viewed as performed through one's repetitive actions (Butler 1990; Connell 1987). These theories of *performativity* are housed under the roof of “queer theory” and this is where this review will start. The first three sections will position this thesis in accordance with the aim and in relation to previous research.

### 5.1.1 Queer Theory

A prominent perspective within the field of gender studies that specifically focus on gender identities is the perspective known as *queer theory*. The name aside, queer theory cannot be said to be *one* unified theory or even perspective it is rather a collection of different theories and perspectives. In an attempt to sum up the “perspective/s” Berg and Wickman (2010) write: “the core of queer theory is a critical analysis of the assumption that there is a taken for granted relation between *sex*, *gender* and *sexual desires*, a relation that is uniform and ‘natural’” (p. 10). However, to not over-complicate things it will be referred to here as *a* perspective. Within queer theory, gender identities that are classified as cross-gender identities are frequently studied, generally this means that an individual identifies themselves as the opposite sex.

One of the leading theorists within this perspective is Judith Butler whose theories have been widely used in research fields outside the narrower perspective of queer theory, research on tomboyism is no exception. Therefore, in order to understand coming parts of the previously conducted research on tomboyism, Butler's concept of the *heterosexual matrix* will first have to be made clear (1990). According to Butler, the heterosexual matrix is a structured system that consists of all the expectations and (hetero)norms that are put upon all individuals within every society. The heterosexual matrix is structured around the gender binary of man and woman. Butler says, this structure limits us to only act out our gender in accordance with the sex ascribed to us at birth, and in a manner that is in accordance with what is perceived to be heteronormative. Moreover, Butler sees gender as performative, hence it is through our repetitive actions that gender is produced and reproduced – a process that keeps the heterosexual matrix in place (1992).

When emphasis is put on the performativity of gender, tomboyism can be defined as: “[a] particular gender identity or gender performance in which a woman enacts certain supposedly



masculine traits and may style herself in terms of appearance in an androgynous or masculine manner” (Griffin 2017). What is also notable with this definition, and different to most definitions of tomboyism, is that here tomboyism is not understood as restricted to girls, but that it can also be performed by a *woman*. Jack (formerly Judith) Halberstam who is one of the leading researchers within the field of cross-gender identities conceptualizes female cross-gender identities as *female masculinities* and defines tomboyism as “an extended childhood period of female masculinity” (1998, p. 5). In what follows previous research conducted on masculinities and femininities will be accounted for. This section will aid the positioning of this thesis in relation to gender studies.

### 5.1.2 Masculinity and Femininity Studies

This overview of gender identity research gives further insight into why the tomboy as a normalized heterosexual gender identity is a rare topic within these fields. Let’s start with the research on masculinity, this research mainly concerns the very definition and conceptualization of masculinity. There are many different views on what masculinity “is”, however in *The Dictionary of Gender Studies* the post on masculinity reads:

“Traits and qualities conventionally associated with boys and men. These may be physiologically defined in terms of physical appearance and biological properties, but more commonly masculinity is considered as socially constructed and hence circumscribed by the norms applied to boys and men in a given culture.” (Griffin 2017).

Studies on masculinity are most often carried out within the discipline of gender studies, termed *critical* masculinity studies and draw into question the fixed binary of femininity and masculinity and the view of these as opposites (ibid). Surprisingly, research on one of the most commonly studied types of femininity is actually conducted under the roof of masculinity-studies and concern *female masculinity* (Halberstam 1998). On femininity, the post in *The Dictionary of Gender Studies* reads:

“[Femininity] Refers to the quality of acting or being like a particular version of a woman which conforms to certain gender stereotypes. Such stereotypes vary across cultures. They may include having long hair, wearing various forms of clothing that restrict movement such as tight skirts and dresses, long, figure-covering garments, being submissive, nurturant, softly-spoken and docile, or enacting a subservient role to men.” (Griffin 2017).

This makes me wonder, if this is the way femininity is defined within gender studies it is not so surprising that female masculinity is studied under the roof of masculinity since this definition leaves very little room for unconventionality. It is also notable that while the post on femininity correspond well with how traditional femininity is generally perceived<sup>5</sup> with examples of feminine traits, the post on masculinity includes no such descriptions. Nor is masculinity described in the post as stereotypical. This further makes one wonder about the state of femininity-studies, a concern raised in the introduction to a special issue of the *European Journal of Women's Studies* (2018). Guest editors Ulrika Dahl and Jenny Sundén write that when they searched the archive of the journal, they found 300 articles and book reviews containing the word “woman” and about a dozen containing the word “femininity”. After doing an overview of the content in these articles they were left:

“(…) wonder(ing) why, and *despite* the potential of Butler’s approach, we still seem to be caught up in the idea that femininity is always and only tied to oppression, subordination, sexualization and objectification. We are left with a feeling that femininity cannot be conceptualized outside of heteronormativity, false consciousness, and ultimately, that it remains tied to a sense of being subordinated, limited and stuck” (Dahl & Sundén 2018 p. 270).

This alleged view on femininity ties in rather well with the definition of femininity made in *A Dictionary of Gender Studies* (Griffin 2017). The question concerning the lack of research on femininity is interesting for this thesis, considering the aim of this current work is to further understand a female gender identity. Furthermore, Dahl and Sundén is urging for a “conceptualization of femininity outside of heteronormativity”. This is on the one hand, in line with the aim of this thesis but on the other hand, much of Dahl’s research specifically concern the lesbian identity called *femme*<sup>6</sup> that is a *marginalized* homosexual gender identity. Therefore, to say that this thesis is in line with Dahl’s or any research conducted within queer study becomes problematic since one must then first decide whether tomboyism is connected

---

<sup>5</sup> The general conception of what femininity will be a reference point in the coming analysis of the material the referred to as *traditional femininity*.

<sup>6</sup> The term femme comes from the French word for woman and refers to a lesbian who is feminine in dress, actions, and identity. In the past 20 years, many femmes have also come to be referred to as “lipstick lesbians” (Myers 2013, p. 182-183)

to or even restricted to homosexuality. Studies aiming to connect and/or disconnect (Carr 2007) tomboyism and sexuality occurs within the literature and is a subject that cross-cuts many disciplines. Carr (2007) says that it is not uncommon that studies using queer theory create a conflation between tomboyism and lesbianism which in turn makes tomboyism into a marginal gender identity. Perhaps the non-marginality of tomboyism starts to become clear already during the introduction of this thesis in the historical overview of how “the tomboy phenomena came to be”. An early (1977) influential article titled *Tomboyism* reported that a study found that 51% of the adult respondents reported to have been tomboys during childhood and that 63% of a sample with girls aged 11-14 also did so (Hyde, Rosenberg & Behrman 1977).

This thesis aims to widen the view on heterosexual female identities, to (in a way) re-conceptualize femininity *inside* the bounds of heteronormativity. Something this study however have in common with Dahl’s statement, is an interest in the agentic elements of the process of identity formation. The aim is also to do this without, making a “conflation of heterosexual with heteronormative [that] reduces heterosexual subjects to the status of cultural dopes, of social robots” (Beasley 2010, p. 206-207). Moving on the question of heterosexuality studies will be discussed.

### **5.1.3 Heterosexuality in Critical Gender/Sexuality Studies**

In an article titled *The Elephant in The Room: Heterosexuality in critical Gender/Sexuality studies* Chris Beasley (2010) writes that heterosexuality “appears self-evidently nothing special [within the field of critical gender/sexuality studies]” (p. 204). She then goes on to argue that:

“Such accounts remain mired in the old “sex wars” divide that largely cast heterosexuality in “sex-critical, sex as danger” terms. Heterosexuality, according to this stance, is immured in gendered inequality with the emphasis on its nasty and normative features (...) heterosex, if mentioned at all, is still rendered as unpleasant or dowdy and as offering little of interest in terms of social change” (p. 205).

The sex-critical studies on heterosexuality is only one example of how heterosexuality is most often “limited and discussed in themes such as trafficking, slavery, rape in war, themes largely dominated by gendered representations of male victimizers and feminine victims” (p. 205). She does not claim that these subjects are not important but argues that studies on heterosexuality should offer more of a smorgasbord of accounts – a reconsideration of “heterosexuality and its pleasurable possibilities” instead of viewing heterosexuality as “a monolith, as the undifferentiated platform for inculcating and doing heteronormativity” (ibid). Studies focusing

on other aspects than “the nastier elements” of heterosexuality can offer a range of insights, amongst them the possibilities for social transgression/innovation – important factors in the undoing of “the nastier elements” (ibid). Instead, within the field of critical gender/sexuality studies it is mainly assumed that marginality is synonymous with opportunities for social change: minority sexualities are deemed almost inherently oppositional, as the “home” of queer (p. 206). Beasley (2005) have earlier argued that “a ‘queered’ (subversive) heterosexuality is, with few exceptions, seen (usually implicitly) as an oxymoron” (p. 112) – a queered sexuality that could possibly be seen as the tomboy gender identity formation. On the same topic, Nancy Fischer (2013) writes that sociology has not always been able to “see straight” and that there has been a taken for granted-ness of heterosexuality:

“Today, “seeing straight” means going beyond just making heterosexuality visible and analyzable (although that project remains important). “Seeing straight” also means seeing how heterosexuality—as an institution and a discourse—shapes our everyday lives. It means looking at the relationship between heterosexual and homosexual, and between men and women. And it means looking within heterosexuality as a category, capturing the diversity of heterosexual identities and experiences, and considering how institutionalized heterosexuality is changing.” (2013, p. 507).

This study aims to go beyond the quite rigid view on heterosexual identities as something taken for granted and look *within* the bounds of the matrix to see the possible ways *out*.

#### **5.1.4 Tomboyism Defined by the Actors Behaviors**

A most common definition of a tomboy is as “a boyish girl presenting herself in accordance with what would be perceived as being male and behaving in a masculine way, a girl who has interests, toys, dress and act like a boy” (Abate 2011). Another quite similar way of describing a tomboy is as: a girl whose preferences in activities are not limited by what is traditionally considered to be feminine (Van Volkom 2003), and “the tomboy plays along with the “boy’s games” (Bailey, Bechtold & Berenbaum 2002; Plumb & Cowan 1984). Moreover, these definitions can all be seen as putting focus on tomboy’s preferred activities such as sports and games and therefore goes hand in hand with the common perception of gender as performed or defined by one’s actions – as proposed by Butler. Developmental psychologist Carrie Paechter, “see tomboyhood as a way of being, performing, or understanding oneself as female that has significant elements that are stereotypically associated with masculinity” (2010, p. 233). Paechter’s definition points to something that is important – that these girls are “understanding oneself as female” which means that tomboyism is not to be seen as a cross-gender identity.

These girls are not identifying *as* boys, tomboyism is rather to be understood as a behavioral phenomenon, an attitude and manners that leads to a specific way of acting.

## ***5.2 Socialization: Significant Others and the Heterosexual Matrix***

Within sociology tomboys have been studied both through the study of children and through examining women's childhood experiences in retrospect. These studies focus on the process of socialization – the processes of acquiring a sense of self and learning how to relate to society. In this process, parents, other care-takers, siblings and peers – all the individuals closest to a child – play an important role. Research into the family constellations and relations of the tomboy have, all though moderately, been previously studied. These studies show that, girls growing up in families where the parents are less traditional in their gender roles are more prone to engage in masculinely coded activities (Van Volkom 2003). Tomboyism can in itself be seen as an unconventional gender role and in a three-generational study of women 67 % responded that they would describe themselves as tomboys during childhood (Morgan, 1998). Within these dyads of mothers and daughters 56% of both mother and daughter reported being tomboys, in 11% of the dyads both reported not being tomboys and in the remaining 33% there was no correspondence. This strengthens Van Volkom's argument, if we consider tomboyism to be an unconventional gender role, inhabited by these mothers (2003). Another study showed that having a brother/s (especially older brother/s) does not, make it significantly more likely for girls to become tomboys and/or engage in masculine activities (Van Volkom 2003). The result of Van Volkom's (2003) study are interesting considering these results seemingly stands in opposition to most sociological theory on socialization, where the individuals close to a child greatly influence their sense of self. The relationship between tomboys and siblings will also be further studies and analyzed in this thesis, as well as other close relationships of the respondents both during childhood and throughout the rest of their lives. Socialization into society also means that the individual becomes a gendered actor. Gender socialization is often studied as a specific part of one's socialization route. When studying tomboyism, understanding the actor's experiences of their gender socialization is very important. Therefore, the next chapter is dedicated to research on gender socialization in relation to tomboyism and more specifically the role of peers in this process.

### **5.2.1 The Role of Peers During Gender Socialization**

Individuals outside the immediate family also play an important role in children's gender socializations. In a participant observational study on children in elementary school, popularity

amongst peers was found to play an important role in gender socialization (A. Adler, Kless & Adler 1992). The findings showed how boys and girls constructed idealized forms of femininity and masculinity within their peer groups and behaved in accordance with these gender formations. The ability to behave in accordance with the idealized gender formations then affected the children's level of popularity. High status for boys came through their ability to succeed in sports and other athletic activities, being tough/cool, having social skills and succeeding in cross-gender relationships – friendships that cross over the borders of gender. While girl's level of popularity came through social skills, academic success, their parent's socio-economic status and their physical appearance. Hence, the level of popularity to be gained through acting in accordance with the constructed idealized forms of femininity and masculinity made adapting to them desirable. What can also be seen in these results is that agency plays an integral part in the process of gender socialization. Following this argument, in the coming section, tomboyism in relation to sexuality, the heterosexual matrix and agency will be further explored.

### **5.2.2 Agency and the Heterosexual Matrix**

Much research on tomboyism concern the intersection of gender and sexuality. Through these studies, it has been shown that heteronormativity is a strong feature in children's everyday life. It has also been shown that, in school-based interactions mixed-gender relations are most often heterosexualized, in turn making boy-girl friendships a source of sanctions by peers (Davies 1989; Renold 2006). However, children are also seen to manipulate the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1993) and occupy certain gender subject positions – such as engaging in the boyfriend/girlfriend discourse – in order to legitimately strike up friendships with the opposite sex (Thorne 1993). Renold (2006) write “tomboyism has the potential to offer girls within an increasingly heterosexualized pre-teen girlhood an escape route from compulsory heterosexuality and the male heterosexual gaze” (p. 505). She argues that this comes as a result of the fact that girls who identify as boys and/or engage in masculine or boy's attitudes and activities are not positioned outside the boundaries of normative gender sexuality, this can be made visible through comparing the homosexualization of boys who embrace femininity (ibid). Renold's study also show that tomboys were not subjected to sexual harassment as they were seen as “one of the boys” at the cost of not being seen as a romantic subject by the boys. Tomboyism there through becomes a source of motivation for rejecting femininity. In another study, girls were found to either oppose or reject normative femininity as a way of gaining social power (Paecher 2007, p. 9). One method to do so was through “rail[ing] against the

perceived limitations of being female” (Reay 2001, p. 162). However, other research show that other girls depict tomboys as traitors of girlhood (Francis 1998) and how the sometimes-self-proclaimed tomboys in turn openly criticized the “Girley girls” (Reay 2001). The epithet “tomboy” have been seen to be used as a marker of respect that guaranteed friendships amongst both boys and girls and the self-proclaimed tomboys were seen to move freely in-between the boy and girl groups and assuming both gender attitudes (Reay 2001). These findings portray a quite complex relationship between sexuality, heteronormativity and tomboyism.

A possible explanation to the difficulty of pinning down the workings of the tomboy gender identity proposed by Renold (2006) is the difference between two different types of tomboyism. One that involves a “cross-gender identification” whereby girls “invest in ‘being a tomboy’” and another that is much more “fluid and mobile enterprise” whereby the girls use both the strategies of trying-on and taking up either the masculine or the feminine identity depending on the occasion, not rejecting at the same time there, so to say, ‘girlyness’ (Renold 2001, p. 503). This is a differentiation Renold deemes necessary, considering how girl’s now access activities, such as playing sports, that was previously concaved as traditionally masculine which made possible doing or liking “boy’s things” while still identifying as a girl (ibid).

Through conducting an interview study Lynn Carr, explored an “agentic social psychological theory of gender identification” (Carr 1998, p. 549). From the study, she then puts forth some considerations to take into account in building such a theory. First, that “gender consciousness” can be seen as key in understanding individual motivations for “gendered practices”. Second, the importance of agency in gender identity formation. Although “individuals may not perform identificatory practices merely of their own choosing, it is through their daily external and internalized (embodied) practices of resistance and conformity that gender identities are created and maintained” (p. 549-550). When it comes to tomboys, these practices of conformity and resistance can be seen through the several common themes in participant’s explanations for their tomboyism. These themes can be categorized into two moments of consciousness – “the rejection of femininity and the choice of masculinity” and be seen as two moments of agency – “active resistance and active conformity – each consisting of a score of gendered practices” (p. 535). The categories are theoretical, ideal types and can be used as an analytical device, she adds. Although not universal, she found five themes in the explanations of the reasons for becoming a tomboy: “(1) aversion to feminine activities and preference for masculine ones, (2) dislike of feminine roles and female role models, (3) perceived need for emotional and physical

protection from men, (4) awareness and coveting of the advantages of masculinity, and (5) desire for the attentions of male role models” (Carr 1998, p. 535; Carr 2005). Moreover, the study found that, after rejecting femininity, most tomboys persist in an active resistance, at the same time as they embrace masculinity. This resistance is often motivated by significant other’s instructions to conform and even shaming when attempting to make them, change their posture, dress and manners. As confirmed by many studies, the pressure to conform grows as the participants grow older (Carr 1998). On the contrary to this, a speculation has been made that girls experience simultaneous pressures to be typical as well as unique, and that different girls balance these simultaneous forces in different ways (Halim, Ruble, & Amodio 2011, p. 937, 944). Similarly, to Halim, Ruble and Amodio’s (2011) argument, Carr (2005) found that tomboys embrace the female sex but reject what is commonly perceived as a feminine presentation, which shows a conscious separation of sex and gender (p.127). As we move on, research further concerning agency, now in the form of the tomboy’s choice of activities will be laid out.

### ***5.3 Sports, “Rough and Tumble” Play and Toys***

Since tomboyism is often defined by girl’s choice of interests, research into the tomboy’s choice of activities, games and play makes up a large part of previous research. In an article following a three-generational study, the authors argue that tomboy behavior within research is traditionally divided into seven categories of activities and behaviors: sports, rough and tumble (R&T) play, toys, role-playing, mannerisms and companions” (Morgan 1998, p. 795). “Mannerisms” includes the use of boys clothing and rejecting girl’s clothing and “acting” like a boy (e.g., cussing)”. R&T are games that are mainly played outside and are mainly made up of games with elements of physical activity – the type of games where one is “not afraid to dirty one’s clothes”. The study found that the top three activities within the category “sports” were football, baseball and fishing. In the category “rough and tumble play” the top three behaviors reported were climbing trees, getting dirty and playing war games. Top three within the category “toys” were, trucks, wheeled toys (bikes, skateboards) and action figures. The “companions” category reflected statements about playmates such as “all my mates were boys”. The “role-playing” category reflected playing out a male role fantasy play (e.g. Luke Skywalker instead of Princess Leia) (p. 796). Sports, R&T and boy toys defined the tomboy experience for most of the participants as it was mentioned by at least 75% of the 315 self-defined tomboys. These findings all point to the importance of a child’s games, play and activities in the process of socialization in which one forms a sense of self.



Furthermore, a connection has been found between athleticism and self-esteem in children (Halim, Ruble, & Amodio 2011). Athletic tomboys showed high levels of self-esteem and contrary to the expectation of tomboys having lower self-esteem than non-tomboys, only the non-athletic tomboys showed a lower self-esteem than non-tomboys. The expectation on tomboys having lower levels self-esteem than other girls was made due to a known susceptibility to a self-esteem drop in adolescent girls, often leading to depression and “because of lower feelings of gender typicality and greater awareness of male-female status disparities” (Ibid, p. 6). In this thesis, the participant’s childhood activities, games and whether they participated in sports will be further investigated as a means of understanding the process of forming a tomboy gender identity. As we move forward we will continue to follow the tomboy into puberty, a time that is trying for most girls and this is the case also for the tomboys.

#### ***5.4 Conformity and Puberty***

In the three generational study the reported average age of starting to behave tomboyish was 5.82 with no variation of the cohorts (Morgan 1998). The reported average age of no longer behaving as a tomboy was 12.59 with the youngest generation reporting a significantly lower exit age than their mothers. Several respondents did however report that they had never ceased being tomboys (Morgan 1998). During adolescence pressure is often put upon girls to conform to gender appropriate behaviors, the pressure raise as they hit puberty (e.g. Griffin 2000; Hyde & Jaffee 2000; Halberstam 1998; Morgan 1998). It’s been found that tomboyism and being “one of the boys becomes less and less viable the closer children get to adolescence” and most tomboys are seen to adapt a more heterosexual/traditional femininity in (Renold 2006, p. 504; Halberstam 1998). Several reasons have been reported for girls giving up tomboyism such as: pressure from “peers”, an “interest in boys”, “growing up”, “family”, “social norms” and “changing schools” (Burn, O’Neal, Nederend 1996; Morgan 1998, p. 795). A common theme is physical and/or emotional maturation – “puberty stepping in” (Carr 2007, p. 442). “Maternal warnings” during adolescence is yet another reason for conforming to a more traditional female gender identity (ibid, p.443). Then again, in several studies women have reported not ceasing to be tomboys at all (Burn, O’Neal, Nederend 1996; Morgan 1998). Moreover, Morgan (1998) says “it is not clear whether girls cease the [tomboy] behavior or [merely] stop claiming the label” (p. 790). Halberstam, who is one of the most prominent researchers on female masculinity write in her book with the same title (in a very short passage about tomboys) that the tomboy identity formation often is seen as healthy and a sign of independence and self-motivation but also that “it is in the context of female adolescence that the tomboy instincts of

millions of girls are remolded into compliant forms of femininity” (Halberstam 1998, p.6). Furthermore, that gender conformity is pressed upon all teenage girls, not just the tomboys and that:

“female adolescence represents the coming of age as a girl in a male-dominated society (...) adolescence for boys represents a rite of passage and an ascension to some version (however attuned) of social power, for girls, adolescence is a lesson in restraint, punishment, and repression” (ibid).

This might be so but then the question arises, what happens to tomboys after puberty? This is a question we cannot find refined answers to within the literature on previously conducted research and so it will be investigated further in this thesis. Findings have however shown how girls who are tomboys may reap benefits from this later on in life, such as a higher self-esteem and better physiological adjustment and being better suited for assuming the new roles that are opening up for women (Van Volkom 2003).

The “roles that are opening up for women” and the possible advantages and how these women evaluate their tomboyhood is something that is of interest in this study, and further exploring this is made possible considering the respondents are adult women. The question of rejection of femininity and/or embracing masculinity will also be addressed both in the respondent’s childhoods and in their present lives. These benefits are again pointing to tomboyism as a strategy used in order to gain access to rooms and advantages out of reach for women in a western society. A society structured by the heterosexual matrix that is forced upon all individuals making the ability to maintain such strategy hard.

## **6. The Theoretical Framework**

In this chapter, the theoretical framework for this thesis will be laid out. The framework will later be used to analyze the empirical material and help to further position this thesis in relation to other fields within gender studies. Most of the theories used in this framework adheres to the perspective of symbolic interactionism, however theories belonging to gender studies will also be incorporated. This chapter will start with the positioning of this thesis and the study of tomboyism in relation to queer theory.

### ***6.1 Queer Theory: Marginality, Homosexuality and Resistance***

Theories critical of *heteronormative* structures such as the heterosexual matrix (Butler 1990) rejecting the sex binary to give way for viewing gender identities as more fluid and ambiguous

(Griffin 2017). Due to queer theory's focus on homosexuality this theoretical perspective has provided many opportunities for gender activism (Griffin 2017). There are however ongoing discussions concerning whether the perspective can be applied when analyzing heterosexual individuals as well (Berg & Wickman 2010). A proposal that has been met with resistance and the field is still very much restricted to studying marginalized homosexual gender identities. This apprehension towards using "queer(theory) without the homo" (Berg & Wickman 2010, p. 82) is perhaps one of the reasons why the tomboy is mostly absent in research within this field, since tomboyism has not been found to have a direct connection to homosexuality. Another discussion concern the applicability of parts of the theoretical body of queer theory due to the lack of attention of the micro-relational aspects of queerness and the individuals *own* experience of being queer (Berg 2008). In an attempt to remedy this knowledge-gap Martin Berg (2008) combined Butler's theory on performativity with George Herbert Mead's social psychological theories belonging to the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism in his dissertation. Following this example both Butler and Mead will be used in the construction of the theoretical framework. Using both queer theory and sociological social psychological theory provides an opportunity to analyze and understand both the structural aspects of the process of the gender identity formation and the micro-social aspects of it. Another issue with using queer theory alone is the critical stance taken on binarism that is not in line with the view on sex and gender taken in this thesis which will be laid out in the next section.

## ***6.2 The Sex/Gender, Culture/Biology Distinction***

Most contemporary feministic thinking and research adhere to some kind of constructivism when it comes to the conceptualization of gender and reject the dichotomy of the sexes. There are however theorists that in different ways emphasize the importance of taking biological differences into account when studying gender. Donna Haraway for instance said in an interview that, we should not see biology as a *thing*, or passive object but rather as "a *logos*, [that] is literally a gathering into knowledge" (Penley, Ross, Haraway 1990, p. 11).

Haraway is an influential, but also contested feminist theorist, that often point to the potential loss of seeing biology as "the Other" when considering gender, and gives an example of how this is expressed:

"For example, "sex" as an object of biological knowledge appears regularly in the guise of biological determinism, threatening the fragile space for social constructionism and critical theory, with their attendant possibilities for active and transformative intervention, which were called into being by

feminist concepts of gender as socially, historically, and semiotically positioned difference. And yet, to lose authoritative biological accounts of sex, which set up productive tensions with gender, seems to be to lose too much; it seems to be to lose not just analytic power within a particular Western tradition but also the body itself as anything but a blank page for social inscriptions, including those of biological discourse. The same problem of loss attends the radical "reduction" of the objects of physics or of any other science to the ephemera of discursive production" (Haraway 1988, p. 591-592).

Haraway hover over the biological and cultural/social aspects of sex and gender without solely choosing either explanation. Biological differences are understood as, for example chromosomal, neurological, hormonal and other physiological aspects of the sexes that affects our being in the world in different ways. This can be compared to for example Butler's theories that completely dismiss the possibility of there being any sex differences in relation to gender. For Butler one even materializes through the performance of gender, hence, what sex one belongs to is determined through the performance of gender and not the other way around (1993).

The theoretical framework constructed for this thesis will have a similar outlook on the sex/gender relationship to that of Haraway; biological sex-differences will not be denied, nor will the cultural aspects of the construction of gender. At the same time, the weight will not be put solely on one or the other when it comes to understanding the process of acquiring and forming a gender identity. What this foremost means, is that on the contrary to most queer theory, the standpoint taken in this thesis is that there is a gender dichotomy, rooted in the biological sex binary. The investigations carried out in this thesis does however, focus on gaining a deeper understanding into the cultural and social aspects of acquiring the specific gender identity of the tomboy.

In the following section, another discussion concerning conceptualizations of female identities in modernity held within gender studies will be presented. This discussion puts the tomboy identity in the center, arguing that it can be seen as a female identity with the potential to re-structure the heterosexual matrix. Moreover, the agentic elements of forming an identity is discussed in this section where tomboyism is considered to be a conscious strategy.

### ***6.3 The Issue of Phallogentrism in Conceptualizing Cross-gender Identities***

A large part of feminist thinking and theorizing adhere to the perspective of structuralism and/or post-structuralism, in which the coming theoretical discussion is rooted. The purpose of

this section is not to lay the grounds for an understanding of this perspective, therefore an in-depth description of these perspectives will not be given. This section will rather work as an overview of a theoretical discussion particularly concerning the understanding of the gender identity of the tomboy and its possible effects on the heterosexual matrix. Reviewing this discussion will facilitate the choice of the appropriate theoretical tools needed to carry out a viable analysis of the material collected for this thesis.

In more recent feminist theorizing a “resurgent patriarchy” has been acknowledged as:

“part of a neo-liberal postfeminist time, that re-establishes the heterosexual matrix (Butler 1990) through politics bringing with it a ‘postfeminist masquerade’ [that is] demanded of girls and women” (McRobbie as cited by Renold & Ringrose 2008, p. 313).

Young women are, according to McRobbie (2006) employing a set of “technologies” in order to perform this “postfeminist masquerade” either through performing a hypersexualized femininity or in the form of being “phallic girls” (p. 10). McRobbie says:

“Phallus-bearing women are women who have been enabled, within the terrain of neo-liberal, postfeminist culture, to join their male counterparts in hegemonic masculine pursuits and pleasures (such as the ‘ladette’, the ‘violent girl’). (McRobbie 2006, p. 10. Quoted by Renold & Ringrose 2008, p. 316).

Renold and Ringrose calls this a rather bleak view of young women’s agentic abilities to challenge the heterosexual matrix and cause ruptures in it (ibid, p. 315). They also argue that McRobbie’s (and others) line of thinking “relegates femininity and feminine desire in the service of, and enslaved to, the phallus and are as such “trapped” by it”, instead they argue that young girls of today cause ruptures in the heterosexual matrix (2008, p. 316). Through Butler – who has also criticized the phallus as a marker of girl’s active resistances and desires – Renold and Ringrose argue that girls *do* rupture the heterosexual matrix, in a way that cannot be reduced to “mimicry of the phallus/of masculinity” (ibid, p. 317). Taking normative femininity as an example – Butler would see this gender identity as a “citational practice actualized through (and thus an effect of) a series of repetitive performances that constitute the illusion of a ‘proper’, ‘pure’ or ‘fixed’ gender” (ibid). For Butler, there is no original femininity (or masculinity) since “the origin is irrecoverable and as performative as the copy” (Butler 1990, 2005; Renold & Ringrose 2008, p. 317). Between these performative repetitions gaps are created – gaps that leaves room for creative production – which facilitate the possibility for

social transformation, the heterosexual matrix is therefore both unstable and compulsory at the same time. Renold and Ringrose wants to further explore one of Butler's own questions: "what these social transformations might look like" (Butler 2006, p. 553) and "what qualifies as a strike or blow against heteronormative practices?" (Renold & Ringrose 2008, p. 317). Here, they use the tomboy identity formation to exemplify how girls can create ruptures in the heterosexual matrix. Renold have found that "there was one subject position, the tomboy subject position, whereby girls could occupy, exceed and rework not only gender norms (in which masculinity emerges from a 'female' body), but also sexual norms (in which female masculinity queers the heterosexual matrix)" (Renold 2005, p. 502). Renold therefore argues that it is not only gender that is being "queered" by tomboysim, heterosexuality is too. For this thesis, this is an important point. The aim is to deeper understand a non-marginal, female gender identity, one that has the potential of rupturing the heterosexual matrix from the *inside* of the matrix. It's a gender identity that is not to be seen as cross-gender – females identifying as males – nor is it to be understood as belonging to phallus bearing women. Moreover, this thesis is – on the contrary to the perspective of queer theory – not critical to the gender binary but rather takes a different stance on the sex/gender, culture/biology distinction.

In order to gain a detailed understanding of how institutionalized structures such as the heterosexual matrix are internalized through socialization, theories on the social construction of the self will be added to this framework. In line with Berg's (2008) dissertation, synthesizing Butler's theories with theories belonging to the perspective of symbolic interactionism is seen to enable a deeper understanding of the micro-social aspects of this process.

#### ***6.4 Role-rehearsal Through Game and Play***

The majority of the theories incorporated in this framework adhere to the perspective of symbolic interactionism, therefore a short summary of the main viewpoints taken within symbolic interactionism will now be given:

"As their name implies, symbolic interactionist theories emphasize the mutual sendings and interpreting of gestures that carry conversational meanings. Gestures are symbols that mean the same thing to the sending and receiving parties in interaction. In symbolic interactionism, then, individuals are conceptualized as reading the gestures of others – words, facial expressions, bodily countenance, or any behavior that carries common meaning – in a process of mutual role-taking in which people mentally place themselves in the place of the other" (Turner & Stets 2005, p. 100).

Since the aim of this thesis is to understand the respondent's experiences of tomboyism, this means that it is essential to get to know and understand their experiences of the process of coming into a sense of self. It is through the process of *socialization* we come into a sense of self and later learn how to relate to wider society.

During the first phase of one's life *primary socialization* takes place. During this phase, the individuals closest to the child, often its care takers become its [most] *significant others*. These individuals mold the child into a social actor (Berger & Luckmann 1966). The child observes the significant others who:

“mediate this world to him [and] modify it in the course of mediating it (...) [selecting] aspects of it in accordance with their own location in the social structure and also by virtue of their individual, biographically rooted idiosyncrasies” (1966/1991, p. 151).

During primary socialization, we gain the ability to play different roles, an ability that comes through practicing how to *role-take* (Mead 1934). Roles are rehearsed through the act of *play* – a method of constructing and gaining a sense of self that is tied to a specific stage in early childhood. The process of play has been theorized by George Herbert Mead (1934), who argues that, during this stage the child “utilizes his own responses to stimuli which he makes use of in building a self” (p. 150). Through this process, the child develops a way of acting in relation to itself through staging and playing out different scenes that s/he has registered. At this stage, the child plays not with other people but with itself, acting out more than its own role – it learns how to take the position of the other through the practice of (ibid). While playing, Mead says, children have quite intelligent responses to stimuli, however, these responses are not organized, since children have not yet developed a complete and coherent sense of self (1934/1976, p. 119). During primary socialization, the child also starts gaining the ability of abstraction and can therefore make generalizations about reality (Berger & Luckmann 1966). To develop a more complete sense of self a child needs to come into the knowledge of how to organize the different roles it now has the ability to play. This process of organization has also been theorized by Mead, using the analogy of *game* as a way of further elaborating this second developmental stage. During the *game-stage*, or the *secondary socialization* – according to Berger and Luckmann (1966) – the child learns how to adapt the others attitude. Furthermore, it learns how to organize this attitude as belonging to a group that in-turn can be organized into wider society and part of a systematic social reality (Mead 1934/1976, p. 123). An example of one such group or category that the child is now able to identify with is gender.

These two phases are the breathing ground for the child's future ability to socially interact with society. Socialization is not to be seen as a process that can be completed. One is constantly socialized, learning how to play new roles and how to organize these new roles into the systems and structures that make up our society. Performing gender is one such role that we all must learn how to play. In the coming section a dramaturgical perspective will be added to this theoretical framework.

### ***6.5 A Dramaturgical Perspective on Gender Performances***

According to Erwin Goffman interactions leading to a sense of self and other can be understood by using the analogy of the theatre (1959). He therefore uses the term *performance* to signify an individual's interactions with others – with an *audience*: a particular set of observers, he or she has some influence over (p. 22). Goffman's theorizing of interactional performances is not to be understood in the same way as Butler's *performativity* as we shall see. Using this dramaturgical theory will further an opportunity to understand tomboyism in relation to the heterosexual matrix and how the matrix can take on different shapes depending on the *stage*, *actor* and *script* of a specific situation.

According to Goffman a performance can either take place *front stage* or *back stage*. Performing front stage means having to act according to a social script shaped by social norms – such as the heterosexual matrix – that works as a set of expectations the audience holds on the actor's performance. Back stage is often one's home or other private settings where behaviors can be unbounded by norms and free from expectations. Norms such as the heterosexual matrix can however exist back stage in different shapes (p. 70). Moreover, Goffman calls, the standard performance, or the regular set of social skills an actor employs while performing – a *front* (ibid). A front can become socially institutionalized, for example it can be a part of the heterosexual matrix such as “traditional femininity”, and therefore be used in different performances as it has taken on a stability and become a *collective representation* (p. 27). Taking on a particular social role therefore most often means taking on an already established front when performing it. We all have a *personal front* about which Goffman says:

“As part of a personal front we may include: insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex, age, and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures; and the like” (p. 24).

Some of these *signifiers* are more fixed than others, that are both mobile and transitory and can change, not only from performance to performance but from one moment to the next. These



*sign vehicles or technologies* (McRobbie 2006) can be divided up into two categories according to the type of information they send out: *appearance and manner* (ibid). Appearance signify to others the individual's temporary *ritual state* at that specific time, whether for example one is working and is therefore in a more formal ritual state or just relaxing on one's free time. An individual's manner "may be taken to refer to those signs which function at the time to warn us of the interaction role the performer will expect to play in the oncoming situation" (ibid). A female waitress for example may signal her ritual state – performing her job – by her appearance through wearing a uniform or carrying a note pad. Her manners – her behaviors, also signal to her audience how she is expecting them to perform. The expectations on one's manners stems from institutionalized social structures such as the heterosexual matrix and this is why un-conventional gender identities potentially crate an intelligibility chaos (Frye 1983).

Goffman argues that all tasks and social roles comes with fronts already attached to them, and that it is impossible to perform a particular task without fully taking on the role and the attached front (p. 27). On the contrary to Goffman however, Butler means that there are gaps in the web of the heterosexual matrix leaving small momentarily possibilities of change, these are the "ruptures" that Renold and Ringrose (2008) talk about. Understanding this in Goffmanian terms: the interaction between actor and audience is a dialectic process where the actors sometimes improvise and move away from the script. The stage, setting, and personal fronts or what McRobbie (2006) call technologies all contribute to how the *improvisations* take shape and how the audience receive them. According to Renold and Ringrose (2008) these improvisations have the ability to re-write the script – in the form of the heterosexual matrix. Here, one would have to take into consideration that Goffman's theory is in its 60's and a lot of social change have taken place since then. Therefore, in this thesis it is believed that when it comes to gender it is possible to improvise during a performance. Moreover, no human interaction is free of emotion, which means anticipating the actions of the other is always accompanied by an emotional reaction.

## ***6.6 Emotions as a Form of Social Control***

Charles Horton Cooley say that it is through the reaction of the other towards us that we come into a sense of self (1902). His concept of the *looking-glass self*, entails that when people read other people's performances, they also see themselves reflected back to them – like a mirror (Cooley 1902). This brings with it a public-consciousness, that can potentially keep actors from being judged when evaluated by others, judgement that could lead to sanctions which could in turn lead to an actor becoming an outcast (Cooley 1902/1983, p. 133). Cooley's main concern

was with the two emotions of pride and shame. Meeting the expectations put upon us by the other brings with it a sense of pride whereas failing to do so will create feelings of shame (Turner & Stets 2005, p. 107). The feelings of pride generated from meeting your audience's expectations also create emotions of commitment and solidarity with others (Cooley 1902).

Thomas Scheff later built on Cooley's notion of an individual's constant self-feelings, especially those of guilt and shame (Turner & Stets 2005, p. 154). Scheff argues that social sanctions from others not only lead to feelings of shame, but rather, that shame, if acknowledged also have the possibility of strengthening social bonds. Experiencing a mild level of shame after gazing in the looking-glass, gives the actor an opportunity to attune the performance so as to generate emotions of pride instead (ibid).

There is a tension to be seen here, between the shame that comes from not fitting into the norm and the feelings of pride and solidarity one experiences when living up to the others expectations. An actor may therefore seek membership in a group where the very performance they were sanctioned for by another audience is deemed appropriate. This phenomenon was shown in previous research where tomboys consciously reject femininity and embrace masculinity as they are simultaneously pressured to be typical as well as unique (Carr 2005; Halim, Ruble, & Amodio 2011). However, this resistance and/or embrace of particular performances is not limited to gender but can also be found in the form of resisting mainstream culture for example.

### ***6.7 Subcultures: Exercising Resistance Through Shared Identities***

Subcultures were first theorized in the 1920's by the Chicago School symbolic interactionists and concerned deviance in the form of criminal behavior. Since then the subject has been studied frequently. There is no universal definition of what makes up a subculture but generally, it is a group of individuals that share an identity, hence, self-identification is gained through membership of a particular group (Brewer & Gardner 1996). Another characteristic of a subculture is a resistance of hegemonic mainstream culture on both a micro and macro level. On the micro level the resistance can be seen as a psychological defense mechanism – a strategy working as a protection against bullies, and peers (Williams 2011). Moreover, subcultures have the ability to appropriate new meaning to objects and styles belonging to mainstream culture and give them a whole new meaning (Hebdige 1979).

However, the members of a subculture might have been members of the dominant culture once but have now chosen to be marginalized on the contrary to being structurally marginalized

(Vannini & Williams 2009). In line with this argument Turner et al. (1987), argues that the process of forming a collective identity means that there is “a shift towards the perception of self as an interchangeable exemplar of some social category and away from the perception of self as a unique person” (p. 50). This line of thought can be applied to the play stage in one’s socialization where the individual gains the ability to understand oneself in relation to wider society.

## **7. Method**

When conducting this study, a set of qualitative methods were employed. In this chapter, the method of data collection and the analytical process will be motivated and described. Furthermore, the process of sourcing participants, a description of the interview situations and an overview of the sample will all be accounted for as well as the guidance system that was used to ensure the study’s quality. The ethical considerations that were made when conducting this study will also be laid out in this chapter.

### ***7.1 The Data Collection Method: Semi-structured Narrative Interviews***

This is a social psychological study and it is of importance that the choice of method is made in accordance with the thesis's perspective (Galletta 2013). The overall aim of this study is to explore the acquisition of a particular female gender identity through the process of socialization. This aim requires the examination of the participant’s experiences and interactions with their immediate surroundings in retrospect. This means aiming to gain an understanding of their socio-psychological and emotional experience.

“A social institution can be fully understood only if we do not limit ourselves to the abstract study of its formal organization, but analyze the way in which it appears in the personal experience of various members of the group and follow the influence which it has upon their lives” - Thomas and Znaniecki (1918/1927, cited in Chase 2008, p. 60).

It was therefore deemed most appropriate to collect the empirical data through the qualitative method of semi-structured deep-interviews. Other methods of data collection such as surveys would not be sufficient in gaining insight into the aspects of the interviewee's experiences needed in order to meet the study’s aim (ibid).

### **7.1.1 Deep-interview Through a Narrative Inquiry**

The data collection method was inspired by the method and perspective known as *narrative inquiry*. A narrative is created through retrospective meaning-making where a shaping and ordering of past experiences takes place (Chase 2008, p. 64). This is a way of “understanding one’s own and other’s actions – organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole – connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time” (ibid). In describing what happened the narrator communicates its point of view which includes their emotions, thoughts and interpretations (Ziebland 2013). This method seeks to get the participant to talk about what is most important to them, for them to describe their experiences using their own words (ibid). The inter-social abilities of the interviewer play’s an important role when using this interview technique, since how the interviewee present their account is also analyzed. The gender of the interviewer in relation to the interviewee is also a factor that could affect how respondents’ report, other factors are race-ethnicity and class that can all create barriers (Williams & Heikes 1993).

## **7.2 Ethical Considerations**

When conducting research, ethical considerations is of utmost importance. To primarily make sure that the individuals that are affected by the research are not in any way put in harm's way. This means ensuring that they are not at risk of attaining physical injuries, psychological trauma and/or feel violated or humiliated in any way. Traditionally, frequently raised concerns within western research are those concerning: codes of consent, confidentiality, trust (Silverman 2000) and that the research is worth wild and does not make unreasonable demands on participants (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston 2013, p. 78). These ethical considerations are most often concretized in the form of guidelines by a professional association (ibid). In Sweden, The Council of Science have issued four ethical research requirements: the information requirement, the consent requirement, the confidentiality requirement and the requirement of usage (Vetenskapsrådet 2017). The information requirement puts forth the need for giving the participants information about the study’s aim and under what conditions they participate. This requirement also states that participation is voluntary and that the participant can discontinue their participation at any time. The consent requirement stipulates that the researcher must have the participants consent of their participation throughout the full duration of the study, in some countries this requires participants to sign an informed consent form (Silverman 2000). Furthermore, this protects the participant from pressures to participate. In Sweden, informing participants about the nature of the study and their rights and a verbal agreement is most often

enough within the social sciences, even though differences may occur (ibid). In this study, the participants were informed by a cover letter sent to them before the time of the interview. The supervising professor – in the role of a more experienced professional – was consulted on how to proceed in these matters. Consulting a senior professional with significant knowledge about the field is a sufficient way of securing that the proper ethical considerations needed to conduct research on a professional level are being made (ibid).

The confidentiality requirement means that only the researcher should have access to the personal information of the individual's partaking in the study. Furthermore, that the participants are anonymized in the presentation of the results in a way that they cannot be identified by others. Lastly, the requirement concerning the use of the data collected, which stipulates that the empirical material is not to be used for commercial and/or non-scientific purposes. Nor is the material to be used as grounds for decision-making and/or actions that impact the participant without their consent (e.g compulsory care or other types of care).

Considering the aim of this theses the probability of putting the participants at risk or in harm's way are deemed to be very small. Perhaps talking about their childhood could bring up painful memories possibly connected to different types of trauma. However, the participants were informed beforehand of what themes and subjects the interview-guide would cover. Hence, they could decide whether or not they wanted to partake based on their experiences and the possibility of memories being triggered since all participation was completely voluntary.

Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls and Ormston (2013) argue that when thinking about ethics, this high level of reasoning (as above) is not particularly useful when conducting research since all of these principles comes with a "yes but" (p. 78). Therefore, the principles must in some way always be translated into

“a set of detailed decisions that fit the circumstances of the particular study in a way that iterates and tries to find the right accommodation between ethical principles, quality considerations and practical constraints” (ibid).

Moreover, they write that good ethical qualitative research is a matter of being able to anticipate possible unexpected events and respond to them in a reflective and thoughtful way. This can be done by putting the participant's interest at heart when making decisions and through that build an ethical conscience (ibid). In line with this thinking a set of quality considerations have been employed and used as a guiding system when conducting this study which they will now be accounted for.

### 7.3 *Quality Considerations*

When using a qualitative method, it is not meaningful to speak of the validity and reliability in the same way as one would when using a quantitative method (Kvale 1997). Qualitative research can rather be discussed through looking at set of *quality criteria* to strive for (Larsson 1994, p.163). Staffan Larsson (1994) has developed a set of criteria that can be used in order to ensure the quality of qualitative research. Summarized into three major categories these criteria concern *qualities in the representation as a whole, the qualities of the results* and *validity criteria* (p. 163). These are not to be seen as separate but should rather be used together as a way of ensuring the overall quality of the research. In this study, these criteria for ensuring the quality of the results have worked as a guidance system throughout the study.

The first category points to the importance of conducting the study in accordance with the theoretical perspective of the thesis. Furthermore, the perspectives, standpoints and positioning of the study in relation to previous research should be presented in a clear way. This will in turn lead the reader through the text in a manner that entails an internal logic. When presenting the research, efforts shall be made to obtain harmony between the research aim, the perspectives, the social phenomena in focus, the method of the data collection and the execution of the analysis. It is also advised that the researcher has considered the ethical aspects of the possible effects of the study and its chosen methods on individuals or collectives of individuals that participate in it. Importance is also put upon the significance of being truthful (p. 165).

Concerning the quality of the results Larsson (1994) puts emphasis on the meaningfulness, structure and addition of theory. Qualitative studies often aim to depict a social phenomenon as a way of giving it new meaning, which calls for the necessity of presenting the results and analysis in a rich and nuanced way at the same time as being structured and precise. Larsson argues that, if one manages to harness this tension the possibility of a fruitful analysis is great and the presentation of the result will then reflect the patterns found in the empirical material. Moreover, Larsson is of the opinion that all research should aim at contributing to the further development of theory. The results of a study should furthermore be relevant in relation to already existing research within the field and contribute to new insights into the phenomena in focus (Larsson 1994).

## ***7.4 The Interview Guide***

The interview guide (Appendix 2) consisted of questions adhering to four major themes. The themes were carefully constructed in accordance with the research goal (Galletta 2013). Furthermore, attention was but on the arrangements of the questions in order to guide the participants through the interview in a deliberate progression suited for understanding the respondent's experiences (Galletta 2013). The interview guide therefore followed a chronological order where the first theme was "family" in order to get an understanding of the participant's family and living situations during childhood. Focus lay primarily on their relationships with their primary caretakers but also considered who their role models were and the nature of their relationship to possible siblings. The second theme "school" consisted of questions about the experiences of primary and middle-school and mainly focused on friends and what types of games and toys the respondents preferred. This section also contained questions concerning after school activities, preference of clothing, hairstyles and peer's and grownups reactions towards the respondents. The third theme concerned "puberty" and held questions about the body, sexuality, their appearances and their friendships during this period. The fourth theme concerned the "present time" and included concerning friendships, relationships with family, sexuality, home life, work life and their preferences in hairstyles and types of clothing. During the course of the study, as themes and likenesses in the different interviews became clearer, the questions changed somewhat. This enabled the possibility to find important aspects of the phenomenon that lay outside of the initial interview guide.

## ***7.5 Limitations***

This study's focus lay not on homosexuality but can rather be seen as belonging to the field of critical heterosexuality studies. The study's focus is on adult women (over 18 years) and does not include transgender individuals. Class and race have not been taken into account when choosing the sample. The sample is not limited to a specific age group or generation the only age requirement is that the respondents are over the age of 18. Marital status and/or parenthood have neither been limiting factors. Subjects of different nationalities than Swedish, have not been studied. The entry requirement for participation in the study beyond the above stated limitations was "self-proclaimed tomboy".

## ***7.6 The Sample***

Finding participants did not come without some difficulty. Since there are no specific locations where women fitting into the sample are typically found. To find participants, posters were put

up on notice-boards where a variety of individuals circulate such as the university's different institutions, sporting facilities and supermarkets. Posts were made on Facebook pages and within a number of closed Facebook groups, these will not be mentioned by name here due to the ethical considerations concerning the participants right to anonymity and confidentiality. Most respondents made contact by email after seeing the posters at the university but two contacted me through the Facebook messenger service. Four of the participants were recruited through my personal social network.

The sample is made up of ten women between the ages of 18 and 47: 18, 22, 25, 27, 30, 36, 38, 38, 38 and 47 years. The age span is a result of the study's focus on women in their active years. This wide age span also allows for a comparison of the respondents, experiences in relation to age, which are interesting since factors such as political policy, view on gender and different public discourses can differ with the time period in which the respondents grew up. This choice of a somewhat wide age range is also a result of future plans to further peruse research on this subject, hence this study can be seen as a pilot study. The participants own perception of themselves as being tomboys while growing up made up the qualification of tomboyism. No additional limits were put on this aspect since this limitation in combination with the other limitations made possible the selection of the desired sample. The tomboy identity is not a marginal identity, nor is it explicitly homosexual, in this study the subjects are therefore mainly heterosexual but for two of the participants that are bisexual. Including the two bisexual women can be seen partly as a trial, this study is considered to be a pilot study for future investigations into the subject. These two interviews where the first two to be conducted at the start of the project, where the outline of the study where perhaps not as sharp as it would later become. Bisexuality and the meaning of it can be further discussed but for this project these two interviews are deemed valued since the only element of sexuality that come into focus in the analysis is the participant's attraction towards the opposite sex.

## ***7.7 The Interviews***

Each of the ten interviews lasted about 45 minuets. Two types of locations were offered the respondents, one more formal setting, a public setting and a home setting. Four of the interviews were conducted in group study rooms at Blåsenhus, four of the interviews were conducted in a home setting, the remaining two respondents chose public settings. A decision was made not to bring the interview guide to the interviews with the intent to avoid making the interviews too structured by strictly following the guide and also aiming to create a more informal, relaxed conversation rather than a formal research interview. I rather let the



respondent's answers shape the course of the interview to create a relaxed atmosphere and establish good rapport which made possible an open and honest recollection of the respondent's experiences. A conscious decision was made to disclose that I also consider myself to have been a tomboy during childhood, with the aim of establishing rapport and build trust. This was done right before the start of the interview so as to motivate my interest in this subject. No details of my own experiences were disclosed either before and/or during the interviews, since this could potentially misguide the respondents and create a social desirability bias. I asked all respondents for permission to record all interviews, all agreed.

To achieve a narrative discourse, mainly open-ended questions were used aiming to get the participants to talk about their experiences as freely as possible. Respondents were sometimes prompted by encouragements to further go into detail on certain topics so as to fully gain insight into areas of interest. During the interviews acknowledgements of having heard and understood what the respondents are describing were made by nodding and saying "mm, mmhm" while still remaining neutral to what was being said, hence not reacting to the answers with emotion. Reacting with emotion can possibly lead to social desirability bias were the respondents attune their answers so as to induce certain reactions in the interviewer.

### ***7.8 Processing and Coding the Empirical Material***

The recordings of the interviews were transcribed and anonymized. Transcriptions were read thoroughly in the form of word document on the screen. Reoccurring themes were highlighted and themes of interest commented on. Once the material was processed in this manner it was organized into four *general codes* according to specific time periods in the respondents lives. These four categories also correspond with the theoretical framework in order to create meaning from the empirical material (Aspers 2011, p. 169). The group codes were: *Early Childhood*, *Primary/Middle School Years*, *Puberty* and *Present Time*. For example, the category of *early childhood* corresponds with the theories on primary socialization. Separate Word documents were then created for each theme and quotations referencing the specific themes were copied and pasted into its respective document.

Subjects frequently occurring within the material then became general themed codes creating a themed structure (Hjerm, Lindgren & Nilsson 2014, p. 63). For example, within the category *Early Childhood* many of the respondent's spoke about their relationship to their families and other role models they had during this time period. Therefore, subcategories within the category *Early Childhood* were *Family* and *Role Models*. *Primary/Middle School Years* had

subcategories concerning *Friends, Games, Play, Clothing, Intersects and Activities*. *Puberty* concerned the teenage years and contained the subcategories as *The Body, Sexuality, Friends, Sanctions, Subcultures* and *Gender Roles*. The category *Present Time* included topics that had been handled in previous categories, *Friends, Clothing* and so on and touched upon how the respondents viewed these elements in their current lives. This category also included the themes *Work Life, Family Life* and *Romantic Relationships*. The empirical material was structured according to these themes within each Word document. The themes found within the material meant that adjustments in the theoretical framework had to be made in order to enable a deep analysis of the material. The process of coding the material was therefore not a passive process of simply categorizing the material into already made “boxes” but rather an active process of creating meaning (Aspers 2011, p. 166). The material was then analyzed by applying the theoretical framework and will be presented below. The quotations from the interviews have been translated from Swedish to English.

## **8. Analysis of the Empirical Material**

In this section of the thesis the analysis of the empirical material will be presented. The material will be analyzed through the lens of the theoretical framework and related to previous research. Examples of the findings will be presented through quotations taken from the transcribed interviews. The respondents have not been given fictional names in order to not create bias in the reader. The presentation of the analysis has been divided up into five sections: *The role of family during socialization, the role of peers, toys and games during early childhood, middle childhood – play turns into heterosexualized game, adolescence: a time of great change and tomwomen: an integration of masculinity and femininity*. Each section ends with a short discussion.

### **8.1 Key Agents During Primary Socialization**

Considering the important role of caretakers and/or significant other/s during the socialization process (Berger & Luckmann 1966), the make-up of the participant’s families and the characteristics of its members will be analyzed first. This analysis also enables an overall understanding of the sample.

The participants grew up in a variety of different types of family constellations; six of them grew up in the same household as both their birth parents, all though one of those parent-couples got divorced when the participant was 15 years old. Two of the participants grew up

in single-parent-households with their mothers, in both these cases the father was absent. One of these two fathers sporadically kept in contact while the other was completely out of the respondent's life. One of the participant's parents got divorced when she was little and she lived almost part time with each parent with a little more time spent at her fathers. The last participant's father left when she was little, soon after that her mother married a man who adopted her and therefore became her stepfather. Generally, the only fact that is true for all of the respondents is that the mothers were physically present during their childhood. The graph bellow depicts the whole sample's family structures.

	Parents	Brothers	Sisters	Living Arrangements
R1	Married	3 (5, 8, 10 years older)		Both parents full time
R2	Separated			Mother full time
R3	Divorced			Both parents roughly part time
R4	Married	1 (10 years younger)		Both parents full time
R5	Married		1 (4 years older)	Both parents full time
R6	Married	1 (5 years older)		Both parents full time
R7	Separated			Mother and stepdad full time
R8	Separated	1 (2 years older)		Mother
R9	Married			Both parents full time
R10	Married		1 (5 years older)	Both parents full time

1. The table shows the family constellations and living arrangement of the respondents, the parent's marital status and siblings by gender. The first number in the columns "Brothers" and "Sisters" account for the number of siblings and the numbers within prentices account for how many years younger/older the sibling are.

### 8.1.1 The Mothers: "She Was a Very Strong and Independent Woman"

All the respondents acknowledged the important role of their mothers during the process of primary socialization. The empirical material shows how the main socializer of the respondents were there mothers and that the mothers performed an unconventional femininity both these factors can be seen in the cross table below (Figure 2). The cross table also shows the prevalence of respondents who considered the mother to perform an unconventional femininity and weather the respondents considered the parent/s to be role models or not.

	<b>Main caretaker</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Role Model</b>
R1	Father	Mother less present	Father
R2	Mother	Mother unconventional femininity	Mother
R3	Father	Mother less present	Father
R4	Mother	Mother unconventional femininity	Neither
R5	Mother/Father	Mother unconventional femininity	Both
R6	Mother/Father	Reversed gender traits	Neither
R7	Mother/Father	Mother unconventional femininity	Neither
R8	Mother	Mother unconventional femininity	Mother
R9	Mother/Father	Mother unconventional femininity	Mother
R10	Mother/Father	Mother unconventional femininity	Father

*Figure 2: Oversight of the respondents experience of their mother's femininity, main caretaker and if so who they saw as a role model.*

The participant's descriptions of their mothers all point to women that fall outside of the category of women expressing a traditional femininity. Many of the participants explicitly expressed that they did not consider their mothers to have stereotypically feminine personal fronts, manners and/or attitudes (Goffman 1959). R2 who grew up with her mother being a single parent – the father was out of the picture up until she was 16 years old – say this about her mother:

R2: "(...) she was a very strong independent woman who wanted to cope with everything herself, and not ask for help, oh she was very much "women can", we don't need men for this, or really, no one of any sex (laughter) it didn't have to be a man, you didn't need anybody for anything, rather – you should manage most things yourself".

What is described here is the mothers attitude of "managing on your own" an attitude that is not, traditionally seen as feminine. Other descriptions of mothers within the sample touched more upon the mother's external signifiers and appearances. Here is an example of that:

R5: Mum is perhaps not what you would call typically feminine. She's had short hair all her life and has never ever worn makeup, never bothered at all, with the things that may be considered a bit more feminine.

It was not uncommon that the participants described a discrepancy between the mother's manners and appearances. An example of this could be found in many of the parent's relationship that were often described as very traditional. Here is R4's recollection of her mother and of her parent's relationship:

R4: (...) my mother was at home with me full time during the first years and then she worked part time when I was little and my dad worked quite a lot

so I spent much more time with my mother. (...) Yes, eeh, she is perhaps a little bit contradictory then, I would say that my parents had a fairly traditional relationship and lived a fairly traditional life, but mum have always, always said that 'I always saw myself as a tomboy growing up' and 'I always thought it was more fun to be a boy'.

In this quote, we also see how the mother refers to her own growing up as bearing signs of tomboyism, something that is in line with previous research where it's been found that mothers who saw themselves as tomboys more frequently had daughters who were also tomboys (Morgan 1998). This was a common occurrence in the material, here are two more depictions of tomboy mothers made by R7 and R6:

R7: She is very dominant, so I think she also eeh, she is very similar to me, I think she also has a so-called "male brain" she has also always been career oriented and such. I also know that her father wanted a boy so when she was little she went around in boy's clothes and uh, came with her dad then, my grandfather to different things.

R6: (...) mum have also been very tomboyish, she was doing judo, and she is very though, knows what she thinks and she says it and doesn't give a shit about anything else (...)

When respondents were asked if they saw either of their parents as role models the two (R2 and R8) who grew up with their mothers as single parents said they did see their mothers as role models. Both admired their mother's strength and independence, the ability to pull through and manage things on their own. None of these two participants had other role models in their immediate vicinity but did however have idols in media which we shall see below.

For those respondents who grew up with both parents present, the majority also saw their mothers as role models, often simultaneously as their fathers. In these cases, where both parents were seen as role models they often inhabited very different personal traits and, had different personal fronts, manners and appearances from each other as seen in R6's description of her father above. The parents can be seen to compensate each other in personal traits and qualities.

### **8.1.2 The Father and "Doing Things Together"**

With two exceptions, fathers were present during all the of respondent's primary socialization. Of the seven participants who grew up with their fathers/step fathers present in their lives five characterized the relationship to them as being close or very close. Different styles of fatherhood could be observed in the material. The most prevalent style of fatherhood is a quite "strict" roll, a gender performance that can be understood as traditionally masculine.

The father or sometimes other men, mainly grandfathers, often performed traditional masculinities, even if there were exceptions such as R6's father who has a way of talking about and understanding emotions that would be considered more traditionally feminine:

R6: And dad, like, he's been so calm (...) and collected, rarely gets angry, is good at explaining his opinion and what he is thinking yeah and he can put words to his emotions, so. Dad, Daddy has been very easy to go talk to when I feel bad about something that I cannot understand (...) aah, they're really yin and yang, so much so that I probably look up to both, eeh.

The father/daughter relationships were often characterized by "doing things together" which often revolved around outdoor activities. Moreover, the importance of the father's role can be seen when it comes to social events, such as listening to and playing music together, just talking and hanging out. Most common was the shared interest in the daughter's activities, often different types of sports. In common for all the respondents who reported their father and/or other men as role models was the inclusion they felt when being allowed to participate in these men's activities. These included activities such as woodwork, working on the farm or hunting. Another experience that was commonly reported on was the male role model's patience with the respondents during these activities. It was also very common, that the men, often the fathers, supported their daughters in their choice of activities, most often football, but also activities considered to be more feminine, in many cases horseback riding but also dancing. A return to the respondent's experiences of sports and other activities will be made further on in this text.

Interestingly, the material shows some evidence that the behavior of some of the fathers and their interest in spending time with their daughters can be related to the fathers clearly stated preferences towards wanting to have a child of the male sex.

### **8.1.3 Siblings**

The siblings order of birth and the age differences can be seen from cross table 1. The respondents who had older brothers tended to relate to them as role models and often chose the same or similar activities and participation in sports as their brothers. Previous research does not show any significant relationship between having older brothers and tomboyism (Van Volkom 2003). However, the collected empirical material for this study shows that all the respondents who have older brothers chose the same or some of the same activities/sports, as their brothers – most often sports but also playing musical instruments. Two of the respondents reported being close to their two- and three-years older brothers during childhood, and they both reported deliberately choosing similar interests and activities as them. Only R1 reported

not having a close relationship to her brothers when growing up, as she recalls it this was mainly due to the age gap between them. Although the few times where she (R1) “was allowed” to join them in their activities, she more than willingly did, and she eventually choose to play some of the same sports as them. This points to the brothers possibly being seen as role models however, the father’s involvement and appreciation of the older brother’s activities and sports can also be seen as a motivational factor behind the respondent’s choice in the same activities. This could be a way of attracting attention and praise from the father or even from the brother/s which is a behavior that’s been recorded by tomboys in previously conducted research (Carr 1998, 2005). In the cases in which the respondents reported to have older sisters and no male siblings, an influence is difficult to discern. These sisters did not display tomboy-characteristics and did not therefore act as role models in that respect.

#### **8.1.4 Role Models and Idols**

Both R2 and R8 who grew up with their mothers as their primary caretakers had role models in the music industry. R8 idolized the hard rock singer Ozzy Osbourne for his attitude, clothing and music. Osbourne can without a doubt be seen as a rebellious man, performing an unorthodox masculinity. R2 also found her role models in the music industry and said that:

R2: Yes! I liked the hard rockers. I, loved Cheer. It (laughter), since the first time I saw "If I can turn back time" (little laugh) then and there, when she stands there, an independent woman among all the men, just like one of the guys, though she is very feminine, she is one of the guys in that video, it was love at first sight (a little laugh) I knew that, that is one tough gal. Eeh another was Samantha Fox. And then I had Billy Idol (laugh) as well as Steven Tyler from Aero Smith. So, they were probably the ones I thought were, the coolest, and I still think so!

I: What was it about them? Was it their attitude or their style, how they expressed themselves, do you remember wha..

R2: I think I, I thought they, it was all of it. They had a *tough* style they broke off from the norm, it wasn't smooth, it wasn't beige pants and a white sweater, it wasn't buttoned down shirts, there were no suits. It was anything goes and it was colorful, and there were big hairs, but also, what they had was, that everyone had poise, everyone had a certain strength, or still have. Eh, like, or that was what they conveyed or in any case that was what it felt like. Especially the females, it felt like they were in control, there was no one who went in over their heads.

R2 and R8 seem to be drawn to specific types of personal fronts and manners (Goffman 1959) performed by both the male and female idols. These personal fronts and manners are

characterized by: strength, poise, coolness and the independence to choose one's own path without taking other people's opinions and/ or the general norms into account. Just like Suzi Quatro these musicians were pathbreakers during their time and their performances caused ruptures (Renold & Ringrose 2008) in the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1993). Neither these female performers, nor the respondent's mothers, performed these unconventional gender roles by simply performing, stereotypically masculine repertoires. These women are therefore not simply bearers of a phallus (McRobbie 2006) but rather heterosexual females, some of them quite feminine who still manage to cause ruptures in the heterosexual matrix as proposed by Renold and Ringrose (2008).

#### **8.1.5 Discussion: Key Agents During Primary Socialization**

Being exposed to a significant other (Berger & Luckmann 1966), in this case the mother who perform an unconventional femininity is seen to be one of the determining factors of tomboyism in this material. The respondent's mothers are to be seen as key agents in the formation of a tomboy gender identity. However, the mothers did not exclusively perform an unconventional femininity. There were reports of more traditionally feminine performances and especially personal fronts that were most often performed front stage when the mother worked or went to social events. Even though the respondents had less access to observe their mothers during these times it is of importance that they had some opportunity to observe a more traditional female gender performance as well.

Many of the respondents reported to have engaged in activities with their fathers and/or other male role models. The inclusion of the respondents made by these men points to a form of indifference towards the respondent's gender also pointing to an unconventionality in their attitude towards gender. However, many of the respondents depicted their fathers as "strict" and quite traditional in their gender performances. The image of the strict father involves a definite lack of emotionality, instead the fact that they care for the respondent is often established by the time they spend together with their daughters. The time spent with these male role models meant that the respondents had a substantial amount of opportunities to practice taking the (masculine) role of the other and learning the social script of male actors.

Many of the respondents also reported to have idolized rock musicians, both male and female. The female musicians performed an unconventional form of femininity whereby attitudes and manners are influenced by the male musicians rather than imitated – they are transformed into an unconventional type of femininity. The same can be said about the male rock musicians



such as Steven Tyler (that one of the respondents named as a role model) whose personal front and manners are influenced by his female colleagues without him in any way being a cross-dresser or performing a cross-gender identity. These musician's gender performances, as well as the respondent's mother's gender performances are being carried out by heterosexual individuals and cannot therefore be understood as neither queer nor cross-gender in the way these concepts are used within research today.

Of the six respondents that had siblings four had brothers which also points to the proximity of male significant others. Another interesting matter here is the prevalence of participants that are the only child. There are four participants with no siblings, and one with a ten-year younger brother – meaning she was the only child during the main part of her childhood. What is also notable here are the quite large age gaps between many of these siblings and the fact that, of those six participants that have siblings five are the youngest child and the sixth is the respondent with the ten-year younger-brother – possibly pointing to a pattern.

The mothers, fathers, other role models and siblings are all found to have been key agents during the respondent's gender socialization processes. The majority of these key agents are either of the male sex or perform an unconventional female gender identity.

## ***8.2 The Role of Peers, Toys, and Games During Yearly Childhood***

In this section, the respondent's relationship to peers, toys and games during early childhood will be explored. This section concerns early childhood, defined as the time period up until the age of six. During these ages toys are a big part of children's lives. Today most toys are gender-coded which was also the case during the late 1980's and 1990's when most of the respondents grew up (with the exception of R4 and R7 who grew up in the early 1980's). Considering the importance of toys in a child's life, the type of toys they choose to play with holds important information about that child's sense of self, preferences and attitudes.

### **8.2.1 The Choice of Toys**

During the first half of the yearly childhood both boy's and girl's games and toys were reported to have been played with, the respondents did however eventually separate themselves from girly toys and games at a later age:

R2: Sure, I had my Barbie dolls and I thought it was great fun but it was probably when I was younger (...) they disappeared and wasn't swapped out by something else that was girly, instead there were more boyish things, a lot of basketball, a lot, biking around.

Since four (R1, R4, R6, R8) of the respondents had brothers, toys that were generally seen as masculinely-coded were available in their homes during their childhood. Amongst the respondents without brothers, R7 for example reported mainly having girl's toys before her stepfather, who she reported "wanted a son", came into her life and brought a substantial amount of boy's toys into their home. R4 reported her mother to have been more "gender conscious" than most parents which she felt affected the type of toys she had access to as a child. Moreover, she expressed that: in the early 1980's (when she grew up) toys were not gendered in the same way as they are now. However, there is a discernable preference for the type of games that the boys played that grew stronger over time.

### **8.2.2 Choosing "Rough and Tumble-Play" – Adapting Masculinely-coded Behaviors**

The most commonly given reason by the respondents to why they rather played with the boys was that they saw themselves as being very "physical" and preferred to "move around" and be active outdoors. Here are some expressions of this preference:

R5: I thought it was more fun to do what the guys did so then I started hanging out with them (...)

R1: (...) the guys were wrestling around and playing games like, "King of the hill" and (...) then I wanted to play and throw [myself] around and it was fun then it was the guys who did that so then I played with them.

R5: Mm, in kindergarten, or my earliest memories so to speak. I remember that I was hanging out with, boys, because I, if I remember correctly, I was quite active, I liked to climb a lot and be outdoors and it felt like girls would rather play with dolls and I thought it was more fun to do what the guys did so then I started hanging out with them, but sometimes I liked to play with dolls and then I played with the girls eh ah.

R1: (...) especially when I was little, like in kindergarten, then I almost had more boys for friends, I think. We played "Karlsson på Taket", with this guy, under like a table, in kindergarten, I remember it to be a standard game. So, I played a lot with guys then, and with girls, but, it was almost... or there were more boys at that time (...)

Bicycling, running, building cubby houses, climbing, various games where you chase each other and wrestle each other, were amongst the favorites for all of them. This is in line with previous research that have shown that the top four activities of tomboy are sports, climbing trees, getting dirty and playing war games (Morgan 1998, p. 796). The type of playing

categorized as “rough and tumble play” were the most often occurring style of playing in the empirical material which is in line with previous research (Carr, 1998; 2005).

All but one of the participants reported having had friendships with, or primarily played with boys at least up until they started school at the age of six. Two of the respondents saw this as a result of there simply being more boys than girls in the neighborhood or in the group of children they belonged to when placed in childcare. R4 reported that she had many cousins that were boys that she spent a lot of time with them during yearly childhood.

### **8.2.3 Discussion: Peers, Toys and Games During Early Childhood**

The respondents innate need to be active and physical drove them to playing and being friends with the boys at this stage, leading to a separation from what is considered the “girly” toys and games and the embrace of masculinely coded performances. Male friends were key agents in the respondent’s gender socialization process during early childhood. In previous research rejection (Paecher 2007) of femininity was seen in tomboys. In this material however, the respondents were rather found to prefer playing with the boys and *separated* themselves from femininity in order to instead *identify with- and adopt masculinely coded behaviors*. These behaviors grew stronger as they entered middle childhood and came to hold role models both inside and outside of the family.

## ***8.3 Middle Childhood – Play Turns into Heterosexualized Game***

Through further analysis of the material, it can be seen that the next stage of developing a self is characterized by the respondent’s abilities to make generalizations about reality and the ability to categorize these generalizations into a wider societal structure (Mead 1934). During this stage, the respondents became more aware of the reality outside the home and gained the ability to model their behavior on specific role models and peers. The results show that role models both inside and outside the family played an important role in many of the respondent’s processes of developing a self and forming a gender identity.

### **8.3.1 Heterosexualization of Friendships and Trying to Adapt to the Girls Games**

In line with previously conducted research (A. Adler, Kless, Adler, 1992; Harris, 1998), the empirical material show how peers greatly influenced the respondents acquisition of a gender identity. Middle school is seen to be a time-period where play becomes heterosexualized (Davies, 1989; Renold, 2006), and as a result of this boy-girl friendships become a source of

sanctions from peers. Here is one of the respondents experience of one such event, at the age of nine:

R9: (...) these two boys were sort of teased because I was with them, since they had to hear from some older guy things like: [spiteful laughing], you play with girls, ah you are girly-guys, and then, then it was weird for them so then they pulled away a little bit.

The older boy is here seen to induce feelings of shame (Turner & Stets 2005, p. 154) in the younger boys for going against the norm of the heterosexual matrix (Butler 1993) and emotions there through become a form of social control. Due to sanctions like these, boys withdrew themselves from playing with the respondents who then found themselves having to socialize with other girls to not be alone – something that would prove to be somewhat difficult at this stage in their development.

When asked about friends during middle school R2 said:

R2: “Friends, were, I had quite a hard time, because I didn't understand the girls. I did *not* understand the game, I didn't get it. I mostly hung out with the boys (...) their play and talk was more fun than the girls' I realized, I just remember that I *didn't* understand what they (the girls), what they were playing or *why*”.

All of the respondents reported “talking behind your back” to be a most disliked social behavior of the other girls and instead reported to prefer the more “direct communication” of the boys. Here is another account of such behaviors:

R5: “Aah, I do not like it (talking behind someone's back), I think it is very mean. Unnecessary things that people said behind their backs and things that weren't, ah, but it was just stupid and I remember that I did not like it and it was just stupid (...) the guys, they just didn't do that and (...) it was nice to hang out with people who were just easier to hang out with and who wasn't as critical as the girls were, in my class”.

The respondents are seen to have a difficult time playing the social-game of the girls. In the next quote R1 finds herself disappointed with the experience of playing football in an all-girls team:

R1: “Mm .. No, it (the football team) was really girly, girly as in...there was this, talk behind each other's backs (...) when you were little then it was just like having fun and we were running around and kicking a ball, just

having fun, and so, you could play some trial game against the boys' team and that, and then when you got older it was just, not a nice atmosphere and the girls were nasty to each other (...) I didn't want to keep hanging out with those girls”.

What was also apparent in the empirical material concerning the respondent's encounters with girls in groups during this stage, was that they were taken by surprise. Meeting girls in groups and experiencing their social performances and scripts at this age seemed to the respondents like stepping into “a whole new world”. They could not understand the other girl's repertoires, signifiers, personal fronts and manners nor the significance of them. Here is R3 comparing her experiences of playing with boys with that of playing with girls.

R3: “Ah but no there was no problem, there (with the boys) you could jump between gangs, you could be with anyone, you could talk to everyone, in my experience, it was not the same (as with the girls) you didn't have to define yourself as much and say, we're best friends (...) for example, you hung out alone with one girl, when you went home after school, this was in primary school, uh and then perhaps you met some of the other girls in the class and they were in a bigger group then, (...) I didn't feel comfortable in the situation with the larger gang like it was, it is this typical thing where you don't really know what intentions the others have, because it is not clear”.

What can be seen in this sample is that R3 have attached a particular front to girls in groups that brings with it an expectation of a particular type of performance (Goffman 1959). Moreover, she explained that she felt threatened by girls in groups.

By the end of middle school however, socializing in groups with both boys and girls did occur. Romantic interests between boys and girls often existed within these groups, however the relationships were reported to have been verbal agreements rather than sources of social interaction of a romantic kind. Sanctions due to cross-gender friendships were common but not the only type of sanctions that occurred during this time period. Respondents also reported having been sanctioned due to their manners and appearances.

### **8.3.2 Sanctions Due to Manners and Appearances**

Visually expressing one's identity through conscious choices and modifications of one's personal front through clothing, hairstyle and manner was a common practice amongst the respondents during this and other time periods. The respondents reported having consciously avoided clothing and hairstyles that would be considered traditionally feminine such as dresses, skirts and pink clothing during this time period. Instead, the description of their clothing of

choice often matched the description of the type of clothing that their mothers wore, most often “jeans and a t-shirt”. For most of the participants however – both during primary and middle school – this was more so a choice based on practicality and comfort rather than on a desire to dress masculine or to *be* a boy. Only R4 explicitly expressed a desire to *be* a boy during a short period of time during middle school: stating that she even wanted to be called by a boy’s name. Other reasons given for wearing male coded or gender neutral clothing were that they inherited clothes from their older brothers or as a result of the time period in which some of the participants grew up. The respondents that grew up in the late 1970’s through to the early 1980’s grew up in a time period where children’s clothing in Sweden for the most part was not explicitly gender coded. The empirical material does show that the respondents who grew up in the 1990’s more frequently reported to have been sanctioned by peers due to their personal fronts. This differentiation can be seen to be connected to the availability of different type of children’s clothing during these different eras.

Concerning the respondent manners, there were reported instances where teachers reacted to their atypical gender behaviors such as talking to friends in class, frankly expressing their opinions or getting up to mischief. The teachers and/or other grown-ups were reported to have reacted with harsh reprimands and expressed that they were “very disappointed” in the respondents. However, several of these respondents experienced that teachers and other school personnel reacted more lightly towards the same type of behavior when conducted by boys. R3 reported that this form of gender discrimination against her often induced feelings of anger.

During middle-school many of the respondent reported that they had engaged in different after school activities. What these were and the reasons for choosing to spend time performing them will therefore be presented in the next section.

### **8.3.3 Sports, Activities and Interests**

The straining social games of other girls drove many of the respondents to engage in afterschool-activities where some of them found it easier to make friends and some found sanctuaries from having to socialize. It was common for the respondents to engage in different sports, among which football was the most prevalent form. The second most common activity amongst participants was horseback riding. However, few of the respondents saw the stables as a place for making friends and socializing, instead many of them talked about a deep connection with the horses and how they appreciated that these connections did not require much verbal communication in order to build trust. Other favorable aspects of horseback riding

reported was the speed, sense of control, feelings of freedom and the sense of it being somewhat dangerous – emotions that traditionally are perceived to be more frequently sought after by male actors. In common for most of the activities reported is the preference for being physically active – a preference that was also found to be the root-cause of the respondent's choices of games during early childhood.

#### **8.3.4 Discussion: Middle Childhood**

During this time period sanctions from peers become a form of social control thorough inducing emotions of shame (Cooley 1902, Turner & Stets 2005) in the respondents and other peers that attempt to play across gender lines. These emotions of shame forced many of the respondent to seek friendships with other girls or to engage in afterschool activities. Emotions can be seen to play a prominent role in how the heterosexual matrix is enforced upon the respondents during this age. Despite these emotions towards other girls and their behaviors none of the respondents reported having talked negatively in public about femininity in the same way as what could be seen in previous research (Reay 2001). Nor were the respondents found to have explicitly used masculine manners and personal fronts to gain respect (Francis 1998).

When studying the sample, it also becomes clear that the participants did not have the adequate social skills in order to play the girls social *game* (Mead 1934) and therefore often failed to make female friends. This is likely to be a product of the respondents having embraced masculinity during early childhood and thus missed opportunities to practice taking the role of the other (Mead 1934). Another reason for their difficulties in playing the social game of the girls can be attributed to the fact that many of the respondent mother did not perform traditional femininity (Goffman 1959). The lack of a traditionally feminine significant other meant that there were no such performances that the respondents could have modeled their behavior on. When difficulty arose concerning the ability to interact with other girls many of the participants turned to activities outside of the school curriculum where they could find girls with similar interests further developing their self-identity. For some, this became a sort of “escape” from having to play the girls social game.

The next stage in the respondent's lives includes attending high school and entering puberty – a turbulent time for many adolescent girls.

## ***8.4 Adolescence: A Time of Great Change***

This developmental stage coincides with puberty whereby girls from a biological standpoint become women. How big the step between childhood and womanhood is, differs from girl to girl and is connected to many different factors, both biological and social in nature. This is true within the sample too where the respondents have had quite varied experiences of this developmental stage. However, a few discernable patterns can be seen in the empirical material. One such pattern is an integration between the previously attained masculine manners, attitudes and personal front with the newly found feminine attributes more in line with the heterosexual matrix. Completely separating the process of puberty and the social process of acquiring a gender identity is not possible. Therefore, in this section these two aspects will be analyzed simultaneously.

### **8.4.1 Puberty: Attuning to the Heterosexual Matrix**

Two aspects of this stage frequently reported as distressing were the changing body and expressions of sexuality both from peers and their own. Another important part of the respondents experience of this stage were expressions of gender identity through their personal fronts and performances (Goffman 1959). More than half of the respondents experienced aspects of this developmental stage distressing in some way. However, a couple of the respondents reported this stage in their development to have been “normal” or “no big deal”. One respondent did not want to go into detail about this time period at all.

The age in which girls biologically enter puberty is individual. The actual age in which the respondent entered puberty seem to have greatly influenced their experience of this developmental stage. For R5 who got her period and started to develop breasts at the age of 16 the hard times relating to her bodily figure came as a result of developing later than her peers. On the other hand, R2 who got her period at the age of 11, and started to develop breasts quite early recalls having a hard time accepting her bodily changes and the pressure to act accordingly and says:

R2: “When the breasts came and you understood that, wait a minute, this is power (...) I suddenly realized that I could get guys' attention, through that. And then, since you had not practiced being a girl, and it happened so quickly, there was also a pressure on having sex. And to find that role and it took many, many years for me to find it and to understand it and to get a healthy relationship to all of it. I liked my feminine body but couldn't really handle it in a healthy way and I knew that if I wore that low-necked shirt to that house party then I will get, attention for it and then I don't have to be



the loud, rough, or you mustn't be like that, it didn't go hand in hand as well".

She described the experience of puberty and the sudden change in her male peer's performances as a "shock". The behavior of the boys had changed and they had developed new interaction habits and manners that the respondents did not have access to. Boys all of a sudden became unreliable and untrustworthy which made the use of previously acquired interaction skills and ways to relate to male peers when in their company impossible.

At this stage, many of the respondents came to realize that their personal fronts, especially their choice of clothing regulated the amount and type of attention they got from male peers. Clothes came to be sign vehicles for their attempts to perform the collective identity of the female sex (Goffman 1959). What can also be seen in R2's statement is a discrepancy between her new found feminine personal front and her manners and attitude as she recalls that "you mustn't be like that [loud and rough]". This shows that she perceives her audience to have expectations on her gender performance – a more normative gender-performance – one that is in line with the heterosexual matrix.

Other common experiences were difficulties in socializing with female peers. R9 recollects one such issue:

R9: "I didn't feel quite as developed [as her peers] in a lot of different ways, I wasn't really there, I just wanted to go home and go out in the woods with my big shirt and not do anything while everyone else in school was like "aah we're going to do this and this today, aah, go and buy makeup" and it was really, all of a sudden everything became really girly (...) I just thought, it was a whole new world since I had not even seen it at home since my mother was not, she wore make-up incredibly rarely (...) maybe less than my dad thought she should".

In this statement, it becomes clear that R9 does not fully understand the other girl's traditionally feminine behaviors. She particularly points to aspects of both her own and the other's gender-performances through the use of specific sign vehicles.

Another re-occurring experience of the respondents were sanctions from both male and female peers due their appearance. Here is one example told by R6:

R6: "Mm .. Shit, so that's really *shit*, it was, super tough, but yes, there were a lot of appearance stuff, people were bothered with how I looked eehum, and then, ah I didn't fit into the norm in a way, just this thing that girls should hang out with girls and that we should talk about periods and tampons and

condoms like eeh[?]. And the guys, they talk about their cars and how the girls look and that some started getting breasts and it was really, like that, and I don't understand why it was such a big deal why can't you just be? Then I met a guy, once as, there was, probably where I've had enough. I was so *fucking angry* (...) He said that I "should shave off the mustache", aah, and it hits you harder, the words than it does if it's physical, because I had been able to defend myself if it had been [physical], but when it's something mental, to me, because I had never experienced that before, I did not know how to defend myself, so it was, it was difficult. There was a lot of that".

This experience induced great levels of shame, sadness and anger in her (Turner & Stets 2005). It is evident that this stage in the respondent's lives were socio-emotionally difficult.

#### **8.4.2 Finding Shelter Within Subcultured Groups**

In more than half of the sample the teenage years included some type of aversion from the norm regarding their personal fronts. They adapted distinct styles based on cultural references, and became members of so called subcultures. They were members of groups or gangs of both boys and girls who shared the same style of clothing, interests, values and listened to the same type of music. They reported being punks, rockers, skaters, indie pop kids, hip hoppers, and/or just wore all black clothes. R7 recalls being friends with a likeminded male friend:

R7: "We were both creatives and dressed in all black (...) It became an identity, you know (...) it didn't matter to him [a friend] that I was a girl, he wasn't interested in me in that way, it was really nice, we could just be friends, and we were, really good friends".

As can be seen in the quote aversion from the norm created a sense of belonging and identity – a shift from a perception of self as a unique person and instead being a part of a social category (Turner, Hoggs, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell 1987, p. 50). Here is another example of resisting the type of femininity prescribed by the heterosexual matrix through becoming a member of a sub cultured group:

R4: "(...) I found other ways [than being a boyish girl] to express myself but still being who I was but within like a, as a girl... mm.. ah I don't really know what to say but 'being me as a girl' so to say, even more so when I was older and became a punk for a while and like there was, I felt like I could be tough or do whatever, do things that *I* wanted to do".

R6: “It was fun to stand out because of the way people treated me (...) just to fuck with them and I thought it was nice, because then, in a way, they thought that ‘she doesn’t care’ [what we think of her] so I thought it was nice”.

These groups were often made up of both boys and girls and romantic heterosexual relationships did occur which meant that the respondents had a somewhat safe place to practice taking a feminine heterosexual role. Belonging to subcultured groups became an important part of coming into maturity and eased the transition forming a protective shield of sorts. This finding is also interesting in that it offers the possibility to see subcultures in a more positive light than usually assumed that also represents an interesting background for some recent developments in modern societies connected to removal of the pressure of gender identification. This process becomes the starting point of an ongoing integration of feminine performances.

#### **8.4.3 Gaining the Freedom to Play “Both Roles”**

As the respondents reach the end of adolescence the process of integrating the feminine performances they first got acquainted with during puberty with their already existing masculine performances became more prominent. R2 describes this in the following quote:

R2: “(...) suddenly you could vary the roles, choose how you wanted to be. If you wanted to be “the boyish”, you could choose to dress that way and if you wanted to be more girly (...) I liked that attention in one way but I thought it was tough too, it was a bit scary because it also demanded something from me and I didn’t know how much I should let it take from me. So, ah, it was special”.

What can be seen here is that even though R2 had mastered how to play a more feminine role she still found those performances somewhat uncomfortable. Many of the respondents referred to two separate roles that they eventually adapted and learned how to play. We will return to this as we analyze the respondent’s adult life.

#### **8.4.4. Discussion: Adolescence**

The changing body brought with it an unavoidable adaptation of the personal front. This process did not come without its socio-psychological and emotional difficulties. Through these hard times, the respondents had to practice how to take on a feminine role and perform according to the heterosexual matrix. In some aspects, they were unable to compete with the other girls who had been prepared for the heterosexual game through the process of

socialization. Therefore, a particular problem of this stage was that they did not feel comfortable with playing any of the two available social gender games hence they had to find middle ground and many of them did so through seeking membership in different groups.

Many of the respondents acquired memberships in subcultured groups forming specific group identities (Vannini & Williams 2009). The material show that belonging to a subculture gave these respondents “an escape route from compulsory heterosexuality and the male heterosexual gaze” (Renold 2006, p. 505). Mainstream culture and institutionalized norms concerning “sexiness” is far more forceful (ibid) outside the bounds of a subculture that possess the ability to appropriate new meanings to objects and styles belonging to mainstream culture and give them new meaning (Hebdige 1979). This means sexual and erotic capital within the subculture could mean something completely different than sexiness according to mainstream culture. Membership in the subcultured groups there through gave these respondents a space where they could express an unconventional femininity, leading to a reduction of the size of the leap from tomboyism to womanhood. Towards the end of adolescence many of the respondents felt that they mastered more traditionally feminine performances all though they did not refer to these as their “true self”.

### ***8.5 Tomwomen: An Integration of Femininity and Masculinity***

R2: Once you start letting your guard down and really let yourself be fragile and feminine but still realizing that I can have my attitude. I can have that what I thought Cheer and Samantha Fox were. Then so many doors opened in my life, all of a sudden I had good romantic relationships, friendships that were real and healthy, that didn't drag you down.

As adults, the respondents now inhabit a gender identity that is complex in relation to the heterosexual matrix and can neither be understood as traditionally feminine, cross-gender or as that of phallus bearing women. The respondents are, all but two (who is bisexual) heterosexual and can therefore not be understood as being queer. As we move into the respondent's adult lives the analysis show significant commonalities in the respondent's experiences and gender performances. At this stage, most of the respondent's sense of self has become more stable as well as their gender performances including their manners, attitudes, personal fronts and how they relate to others.

### 8.5.1 Personal Fronts, Manners and Attitudes

Adolescence was a time of many emotional trials and experimenting with different personal fronts in order to gain a better sense of self. In adulthood, however these aspects of being has become less dramatic and more stable.

Most of the respondents reported that they preferred to dress in casual clothing referred to as “jeans and a t-shirt/top”, adding that they have no problems wearing dresses and more feminine clothing, and enjoy that too. They all wore long hair at the time of the interviews, many of them reported that they wear make-up at times all though most often quite conservatively. They did not have personal fronts and/or appearances that can be regarded as particularly masculine.

The ability to take on more traditionally feminine roles as well as more unconventional ones was frequently reported. The more unconventional behaviors were reported as: having interests that would be considered more fitting for men, using language and/or a communication style and acting in ways that are culturally regarded as masculine.

Some of the respondents described the ability to perform different types of femininities. Here R3 describes the difference in the roles she performs:

R3: “(...) there is a not so innocent and pleasing [her own name] and one that I can use, when I hang out with someone, or when I, speak to an authority, or someone that I need something from, or girls in a group. Or I am more.. “the one I find that I am generally more” and it is a bit more, I’m a bit more straight-to-the-point, I don’t smooth things over and I don’t sit and smile if it’s not necessary”.

Noticeable here is that R3 refers to the more unconventionally feminine performance as her more “authentic self”. A frequently reported behavior in the sample was the employment of a very direct and open communication style described as being “straight-to-the-point”. This behavioral pattern becomes especially visible in many of the respondent’s statements about their work-life where they do not hesitate to voice their opinions or resolve matters of conflict. R7 talks about her work-life:

R7: “In fact, I never think I have had problems with men when I have been [communicating] straight because they are, they probably appreciate it, that you do not go around in circles and just insinuate things without saying exactly what you mean, because I think they do it too. So, my theory is that it’s more masculine, eeh so. And I don’t have this need that I have to be friends with everyone all the time so I can also stand up for what I think, and others can like it or not. But there are some [women] that are the same

actually, a girl now that I am very good friend with, we are both more like that, so we do not have to pretend or anything”.

Several of the respondents reported similar experiences and found co-operating and working with men to be easier than with women both when it comes to executives and co-workers. However, none of the respondents reported having problems working with women generally. Another theme that becomes visible in this quote is that of being friends with likeminded women, moving on, this will be the next point of focus.

### **8.5.2 Being Friends with Like-minded**

Several of the respondents reported being able to tell the difference between women who are “more like them”, with whom they preferred to be friends, and those who generally was called “girly” or “girls in groups”. There was a general tendency to be somewhat suspicious of other women. They reported knowing how to “play that game” (of other women) if they had to but most often did not enter that stage by choice.

R10: “I think I have always been like this, I have my group, and that’s enough for me. I take the energy I have and can give in a genuine way. And so, I still think that girl-groups, to me, are quite uninteresting. I have my girlfriends that I trust one hundred percent, who wouldn’t go and talk shit behind my back and all that. While, with a new one, you don’t know that, there’s quite a large possibility that there will be bullshit being said. Perhaps before you become really good friends’ ah, I can definitely be nice and play that game but I rarely let someone in”.

The main part of the respondents reported currently having male friends or preferring to hang out with their husband’s and boyfriend’s male friends. At this stage in their lives, they seem to display the abilities and have preparedness for playing both games (Mead 1934). This certainly gives them some advantages in maintaining a rich social life.

### **8.5.3 Home Life and Romantic Relationships**

Four of the respondents are mothers, all of which are living with their children’s fathers and two of them are married. Four of the remaining respondents have relationships with men and two are single. When asked what type of men they are attracted to all but one R6 responded: men that would not be considered to perform a traditional or “macho masculinity”. They did not describe these men to have feminine fronts or manners but rather described them as “having the ability to listen and to express their emotions”. R9 is currently in a relationship with the father of her children and has been for the last 15 years. She reported that he had never

commented on the way she looks, positively nor negatively. In her experience, it does not matter to him whether she has “hairy legs” and is dressed in a track suit or all “made up”, she feels that “he loves her just as much either way” and that this is great, since she can “always be her genuine self”.

R2, R6, R9 and R10 who are all mothers and live with their children’s fathers all point to the importance of being able to talk about all matters of life openly with their partners. Something that they all reported that they could. All but R6 have somewhat untraditional gender roles in their family lives where for example house chores such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children are equally divided between the two. They also report to have a shared responsibility in making sure the relationship is “healthy”. It was not uncommon in the sample that the men more so initiated such conversations. R6 and her husband did however have quite different views on how to communicate and resolve arguments, he had been brought up surrounded by very traditional gender roles in a different cultural context than her. This brought with it some difficulties concerning the relationship but also concerning the upbringing of their daughter related to views on sex and gender.

#### **8.5.4 Discussion: The Tomboy’s Working and Family Life**

It’s clear from the material both in their experiences of work life and family life that the respondents gender performances include elements that according to the heterosexual matrix would be categorized as traditionally masculine as well as those that would be categorized as traditionally feminine. This is true for a number of aspects of their performances such as personal fronts, manners, interests, social relations and close relationships. The complex gender identity of these now “tomwomen” can therefore be seen to cause ruptures in the heterosexual matrix as they challenge the way we traditionally perceive female heterosexual gender identities. All these aspects of tomboyism means that this female gender identity can be said to be situated both within the heterosexual matrix and outside of it.

### **9. Conclusions: The Journey of a Tomboy**

What can be seen through the analysis of the material is that there is a distinct socialization route taken by tomboys on their journey towards becoming women. The stops along this journey are not to be seen as separate from each other where the one following the other means the prior stage is completed. They are rather to be understood as socialization stages building upon each other like layers that together make up the complex gender identity of the tomboy. During these stages, the tomboy picks up different “souvenirs” that stays with them as she

journeys on through life. The distinct five stages are characterized by: 1) *a separation from femininity*, 2) *identification with and adapting masculine behaviors and attitudes*, 3) *being sanctioned*, 4) *resisting gender norms and/or mainstream culture* and 5) *integration of masculinity and femininity*.

Firstly, there is a period during which the tomboy goes through a *separation from femininity* – a process where the tomboy gravitates towards masculinely coded behaviors and creates a gap between themselves and femininely coded behaviors. In early childhood, the process of separation comes through internalizing the significant other's performances of gender roles. During this stage, the parent's gender performances were of great significance. For most of the respondents the mother was of particular importance during this stage. Since many of the respondent's mothers performed unconventional femininities the respondents internalized an unconventional femininity at an early age. Male role models who challenged the gender norms also played an important role during this stage of their gender socialization. Practicing to take the role of the other (both male and female) in most instances meant taking the role of an actor with an unconventional gender performance. The parents and other role models can be understood as key agents during the respondent's gender socialization process.

When the respondents started interacting with other children the separation from femininity was seen through the respondent's preference of games that are traditionally categorized as masculine behaviors: the boy's games. However, at this stage the preference towards the boy's games, did not mean that the respondents completely rejected the girl's games and behaviors. The respondents rather *separated* themselves through not identifying with these femininely coded behaviors, manners and personal fronts while still engaging in these types of performances at times.

Participating in the boy's games eventually lead to the respondents *identifying with and adapting, masculine behaviors and attitudes*. This does not mean that they identified themselves *as* boys, hence the tomboy gender identity cannot be understood as a cross-gender identity. All through the respondent's childhoods peers are also seen to have been key agents, during this particular stage male friends are of great importance since they "show the way" into the masculine coded games, attitudes, manners and performance of this time period.

This stage is followed by a stage characterized by the respondents *being sanctioned* during which he respondents were sanctioned by their peers for behaving in a way that goes against the traditional gender norms of the heterosexual matrix. Cross-gender-friendships also lead to



sanctions from peers which in turn lead to the respondents attempting to make friends with the girls. This proved difficult due to respondents lack of knowledge of the girl's social games which they now had to learn, much later than the other girls. This time period was found to be a difficult time psycho-socially and many of the respondent reported being emotionally hurt by other girls.

During the next stage, the tomboys entered puberty which meant that the gap between them and femininity created during early childhood, inevitably started to close. Many of the tomboys reported this period as difficult especially managing their sexuality in relation to others and performing a gender identity that felt genuine. As a way of coping with this situation many of the tomboys found a space where they could *resist gender norms and mainstream culture*. This behavior became a conscious strategy where the respondents subcultured identities were seen to create a sort of protecting shelter against sanctions. Inside this shelter – made up by a membership in a subcultured group – the respondents could perform a more unconventional femininity and were protected against the pressure of having to conform and comply with the heterosexual matrix. This stage was the start of a process of *integrating masculinity and femininity* – creating a gender identity that is nor traditionally feminine, or masculine, according to the heterosexual matrix. The respondents were found to inhabit both masculinley and femininely coded behaviors and attitudes without choosing to perform one over the other. This means that the particular route of socialization taken by these tomboys can be seen as a process of assuming a complex gender identity that can cause ruptures in the heterosexual matrix as they challenge the way we traditionally perceive heterosexual femininity.

## **10. Discussion**

In this last chapter of the thesis the results will be discussed in relation to previous research, the theoretical framework and the choice methodology. Lastly, implications for future research on the subject of tomboyism will be made.

### ***10.1 Empirical Findings in Relation to Previous Research***

The results of this study, especially that of the tomboy's ability to cause ruptures in the heterosexual matrix as proposed by Renold and Ringrose (2008) have been found to have bearing in the results of this thesis. This brings with it the importance of studying heterosexual gender identities and being able to “see straight” without problematizing all aspects of heterosexuality (Beasley 2012, p. 507). This becomes visible since a connection between

homosexuality and tomboyism have not been found in previous research nor in this study. This study's results are in line with Carr (2005) that found that tomboys embrace the female sex but reject what is commonly perceived as a feminine presentation which in turn shows a conscious separation of sex and gender (p.127). This means that tomboyism cannot be understood as a cross-gender identity or as queer. As for the non-marginality of tomboyism found in previous research (Hyde, Rosenberg & Behrman 1977) this qualitative study cannot contribute to that factor other than perhaps through the historical overview.

#### **10.1.1 Role Models, Resistance and Heterosexualization During Primary Socialization**

Carr's (1998) exploration of an "agentic social psychological theory of gender identification" and the five themes of explanations for becoming a tomboy (ibid, p. 543). Carr's first reported reason for tomboyism is "a dislike of feminine roles and female role models" (Ibid, p. 535) the empirical results of this study however, show that many of the respondents considered their mothers to have been significant role models. The empirical results rather show that the respondents' acquisition of a gender identity was greatly influenced by their mother's unconventional gender performances which has also been found in previous research (Van Volkom 2003). The empirical material also shows that other female role models such as musicians greatly influenced the respondents' gender socialization and performances. Another finding of this study is the influence of adult male role models, something that has not been explored in previous research in relation to the tomboy gender identity. This finding can perhaps fit in under Carr's explanations for the formation of a tomboy gender identity "a perceived need for emotional and physical protection from men", it was not however explicitly expressed in this manner by the respondents. The results rather lean more towards another of Carr's themes a "desire for the attentions of male role models". On the subject of male role models, results of another study (Van Volkom 2003) showed that having a brother/s (especially older brother/s) does not, make it significantly more likely for girls to become tomboys and/or engage in masculine activities. On the contrary to Van Volkom's study, the result of this thesis shows that most of the respondents did have brothers and that they chose to commit to similar interests as them. Many of the respondents believed that their choices were greatly influenced by their brother's actions.

Returning to Carr's (1998) study, another of the themes for reasons for becoming a tomboy is "aversion to feminine activities and preference for masculine ones" the empirical results of this study does show a preference for masculine activities but does not however show an aversion towards feminine activities. The last of Carr's themes is "awareness and coveting of the

advantages of masculinity” a factor that is not made visible in the empirical material (ibid, p. 453).

Another of Carr’s (1998) findings stipulate a persistent resistance towards femininity even after instructions and shaming to conform to femininity. In comparison, the empirical material show that, during middle school, many of the respondents reported to have been subjects to peer’s sanctions mainly due to their appearances and not being able to play the social game of the girls. This points to the fact that the respondents unconventional gender performances did not make them popular and is therefore in line with the, findings of Adler, Kless and Adler’s (1992) study where the ability to behave in accordance with the peers idealized gender formations affected the children's level of popularity. In accordance with previous research (A. Adler, Kless, Adler, 1992; Harris, 1998) the sample clearly shows how heterosexualization disrupts the respondents play during this time period. On the contrary to previous research (Thorne 1993) however, none of the respondents explicitly reported that they had manipulated the heterosexual matrix by using a boyfriend/girlfriend discourse to gain access to girl-boys friendships. Such behaviors would provide an “escape route from compulsory heterosexuality and the male heterosexual gaze” (Renold 2006, p. 505).

The speculation that girls experience simultaneous pressures to be typical as well as unique and that different girls balance these simultaneous forces in different ways (Halim, Ruble, & Amodio 2011, p. 937, 944) come to light in the empirical result. This becomes most evident through the respondent’s membership in subcultured groups. When conducting the literature review on tomboys very little was found on the connection between tomboyism and subcultures (that did not concern queer identities). Articles concerning female rock and punk musicians and their followers gender expressions, such as those referred to in the historical overview (Downes, 2012) was however found.

#### **10.1.2 Sports, Games and “Rough and Tumble” Play**

The exploration of the respondent’s activities, interests and what games, toys and manners they preferred showed that football and horseback riding were the most common sports preferred. Previous research found that the top three activities within the category “sports” were football, baseball and fishing (Morgan 1998, p. 795). The differences in these two results can possibly be attributed to both cultural and socio-economic factors. The prevalence of horseback riding within the empirical material is interesting in relation to the question of rejection/aversion of all things feminine since in Sweden this is an activity that is strongly associated with girls.

Another measured category in Morgan's study was "rough and tumble play" where the top three activities was reported to have been climbing trees, getting dirty, role play and playing war games (Morgan 1998, p. 795). In comparison, the empirical results of this thesis show that climbing trees was one of the most popular activities as well. No reports of "war games" were found in the result, perhaps the closest games to it was "king of the hill" and "wrestling". Respondents also frequently reported that most of their friends were boys during the early and first part of the middle childhood however role play was not commonly reported amongst games and activities reported by the respondents (ibid).

### **10.1.3 Conformity and Puberty**

The empirical material showed that puberty and overall adolescence was a stage in the respondent's development that brought with it quite a few challenges. The pressure on girls to conform to gender appropriate behaviors as they hit puberty (e.g. Griffin 2000; Hyde & Jaffee 2000; Halberstam 1998; Morgan 1998) could also be seen in the empirical material. "Maternal warnings" have been reported in the existing literature (Carr 2007, p. 442), something that was not found in the empirical results. Moreover, previous research state that tomboys are seen to adapt to a more heterosexual/traditional femininity in puberty (Renold 2006, p. 504; Halberstam 1998). However, the empirical results show how the respondents experimented with different forms of femininity where a traditional femininity were amongst others. Some of the respondents were even found to have performed very unconventional femininities such as those performed within the punk rock subculture. This points to a complexity in the process of becoming adults that is not explored in detail in previous research.

### **10.1.4 Adult life**

Even though the results of Morgan's three generational study (1998) showed that several of the respondents said that they had never ceased being tomboys research on heterosexual adults defining themselves as tomboys are absent from the literature. This is perhaps due to the unwillingness of studying unconventional heterosexual gender identities that fall outside of the field of queer studies. A sign of this is that literature on adult homosexual tomboys is readily available. Findings have however shown how girls who are tomboys may reap benefits from this later on in life, such as a higher self-esteem and better physiological adjustment and be better suited for assuming the new roles that are opening up for women (Van Volkom 2003). From the empirical material, it is clear that all the respondents have rich social lives and that none of them are outside the labor market.

## ***10.2. Empirical Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework***

Applying theories belonging to the perspective of symbolic interactionism made possible an analysis of the respondent's experiences on a micro level. The understanding and crystallization of the particular socialization route of tomboys was made possible through the use of Mead's (1934) theories on the socialization process. Moreover, Mead's theories on how to take the role of the other and come into a sense of self proved to be of great use in the aim of understanding the respondent's acquisition of a gender identity. The externalization of the respondent's gender identities came into light through the use of Erwin Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theories. The use of this set of theories brought with it a deeper understanding of the attitudes, manners and personal fronts performed by the respondents. While growing up many of the respondents experienced sanctions that led them to feelings of shame, the understanding of these processes was made possible through theories on emotional sociology that is incorporated in the theoretical framework (Cooley 1902, Turner & Stets 2005). An important stage of the respondent's formation of a gender identity was found to have been gaining membership in various subcultured groups. In order to understand this process and the meaning of this particular stage of the respondent's socialization, theories concerning subcultures played an important role (Becker 1963, Brewer & Gardner 1996, Hebdige 1979, Vannini & Williams 2009, Williams 2011).

The theoretical stance on the sex/gender, culture/biology distinction (Haraway 1998) was not actively used in the analysis. However, making such a distinction when conducting a study that concerns gender identity is of importance in order to position the study within the field. Understanding the tomboy as a heterosexual gender identity and an integration of behaviors and attitudes socially constructed as both masculine and feminine is quite different from the understanding of gender identities within the perspective of queer theory. Within queer theory homosexual individuals who are queer are seen to resist conforming to heteronormativity by rejecting all performances that are in accordance with the heterosexual matrix. The decision to not use theories adhering to the perspective of queer theory has therefore proven to be a satisfactory choice. The exception being Butler's (1993) theory on the heterosexual matrix that has been vital to the results of this study. The combination of Butler's theory and theories belonging to the perspective of symbolic interactionism worked out well in this study that took inspiration from Berg's (2008) thesis where he combined Butler and Mead. Furthermore, the result shows that the tomboy gender identity can cause ruptures in the heterosexual matrix which is in line with Renold and Ringrose's (2008) assumption of this phenomenon.

### ***10.3 Empirical Material in Relation to Method***

The choice of method is considered to have been sufficient for the aim of the thesis. The narrative method of deep interviewing resulted in rich material from which a deep analysis could be made. An important standpoint within this thesis has been the non-marginality of tomboyism and that this gender identity is not exclusively connected to heterosexuality. Within this study, the aim was to examine tomboyism as a heterosexual gender identity, however, it would have been interesting to compare homosexual women's experience of tomboyism to that of this sample.

Offering to conduct the interviews either in the respondent's homes or in a neutral location worked out well and seemed to have created the desirable level of comfort for the respondents and aided the process of building rapport. It is my experience that the participant's perception of the interview situation was that it was somewhat therapeutic. Some of them expressed that the participation led them to think more deeply about their life experiences and were eager to find out more about my findings in order to relate the knowledge to their own life experiences. The nature of their inquiries was often focused on the difficulties they have had in their lives or were currently facing. A couple of them explicitly expressed wanting to meet me again to talk about these things in order to further understand themselves and how their experiences of growing up has affected them. These factors taken together made me consider that what they wanted from this experience was a form of therapy. It is difficult to say if this affected the results, one could look at this as a sign of the participants experiencing a certain level of trust as a result of professionalism and/or a certain kinship between fellow tomboys. Disclosing to the respondents that I myself is a tomboy is deemed to have been a successful strategy as it helped build rapport and create a more informal atmosphere where the respondents felt comfortable to talk about the more sensitive topics.

The greatest limitation of using a qualitative method for collecting data is the ability to make generalizations about a larger population. Considering this, it would have been interesting to have incorporated a survey perhaps foremost in the aim of realizing the commonality of tomboyism amongst Swedish women within the same age span as that of the sample for this study.

### ***10.4 Implications for Future Research***

On the contrary to queer gender identities, tomboys do not reject performances that are traditionally seen as feminine, nor do they deny belonging to the female sex or being

heterosexual. Instead, behaviors that are masculinely coded are integrated into the female gender identity of the tomboy creating performances that are both traditionally feminine and unconventional. Moreover, tomboyism has not been found to be limited to homosexuality in this study or in previous research. The importance of studying not only homosexual gender identities known as queer identities but also heterosexual gender identities and the impact they might have on social structures becomes evident through the result of this study. Furthermore, studies concerning heterosexual gender identities have to be carried out without reducing heterosexual individuals to “cultural dopes” nor focusing only on “the nastier elements of heterosexuality” (Beasley, 2010).

Through this thesis, a possible connection between tomboyism and membership in various subcultured groups has been shown. Further research specifically focusing on the significance of a possible connection between heterosexual tomboys and subcultures would be of great interest when attempting to gain a deeper understanding of the process of socialization.

Moreover, since this female gender identity can be said to be situated both within the heterosexual matrix and outside of it tomboyism has the ability to cause ruptures in the heterosexual matrix (Renold & Ringrose 2008). Considering all these factors, the importance of future studies on the subject becomes clear. Adding the fact that tomboyism is not believed to be a marginal gender identity it is somewhat surprising that the literature is so scarce. This is especially true when it comes to the study of tomboys that have entered adulthood. More research is needed and I encourage future researchers to synthesize theories residing both within and without the field of gender studies in this endeavor as this has proven to enable a deep analysis of the subject.

## Literature

Abate, M. A. (2008). *Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Abate, M. A. (2011). Introduction: Special issue on tomboys and tomboyism. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 15(4), 407-411.

Adler, P. A., Kless, S. J., & Adler, P. (1992). Socialization to gender roles: Popularity among elementary school boys and girls. *Sociology of Education*, 65(3), 169-187.

Aspers, P. (2011). *Etnografiska metoder: Att förstå och förklara samtiden* (2., [uppdaterade och utökade] uppl. ed.). Malmö: Liber.

Auslander, P. (2004). I wanna be your man: Suzi Quatro's musical androgyny. *Popular Music*, 23(1), 1-16.

Bailey, J. M., Bechtold, K. T., & Berenbaum, S. A. (2002). Who are tomboys and why should we study them? *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 31(4), 333-341.

Beasley, C. (2005). *Gender and Sexuality: Critical Theories, Critical Thinkers*. London: SAGE.

Beasley, C. (2010). The elephant in the room: Heterosexuality in critical Gender/Sexuality studies. *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 18(3), 204-209.

Beasley, C., Brook H., and Holmes, M. (2012). *Heterosexuality in Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge.

Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B., Martin, G. R. R., Gerardis, V., Vicinanza, R., Casady, G., Strauss, C. (2012-2019). *Game of Thrones, the complete first season*. Warner Home Video.

Berg, M. (2008). *Självetts garderobiär: Självreflexiva genuslekar och queer socialpsykologi*. Lunds universitet. Sociologiska institutionen.

Berg, M., Wickman, J. (2010). *Queer* (1. uppl. ed.). Malmö: Liber.

Berger, P. L. & Luckmann, T. (1966/1991). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Repr. ed.). London: Penguin.

Brewer, M. B., & Gardner, W. (1996). Who is this 'we'? Levels of collective identity and self representations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(1), 83.

Burn, S. M., O'Neil, K., & Nederend, S. (1996). Childhood tomboyism and adult androgyny. *Sex Roles*, 34, 419-428.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.



Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (2005). *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Butler, J. (2006). Response to special issue. Troubling identities: reflections on Judith Butler's philosophy for the sociology of education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 27(4), 421-424.

Callwood, B. (2013). Glycerine queen, forever! – Music – Detroit Metro Times. *Metro Times*. Scranton, Pennsylvania, United States. Archived from the original on 14 December 2013, 3. Retrieved 14 February 2019.

Carr, C. L. (1998). Tomboy resistance and conformity: Agency in social psychological gender theory. *Gender and Society*, 12(5), 528-553.

Carr, C. L. (2005). Tomboyism or lesbianism? Beyond sex/gender/sexual conflation. *Sex Roles*, 53(1), 119-131.

Carr, C. L. (2007). Where have all the tomboys gone? Women's accounts of gender in adolescence. *Sex Roles*, 56(7-8), 439-448.

Chase, S. E. (2008). *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London: Sage Publications, Inc.

Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Cooley, C. H. (1902/1983). *Human Nature and the Social Order*. New York: Schocken Books.

Dahl, U., Sundén, J. (2018). Femininity revisited: Refiguring critical femininity studies introduction. Guest editors' introduction. *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, 25(3), 269.

Davies, B. (1989). The discursive production of the male/female dualism in school settings. *Oxford Review of Education*, 15(3), 229-241.

Downes, J. (2012). The expansion of punk rock: Riot grrrl challenges to gender power relations in British indie music subcultures. *Women's Studies*, 41(2), 204-237.

Fischer, N. L. (2013). Seeing “straight,” contemporary critical heterosexuality studies and sociology: An introduction. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 54(4), 501-510.

Francis, B. (1998). *Power Plays: Primary School Children's Construction of Gender, Power and Adult Work*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.

Frye, M. (1983). 'Sexism' in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*. New York: Crossing Press.

Galletta, A. (2013). *Mastering the Semi-structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Publication*. New York: New York University Press.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.

Griffin, C. (2000). Absences that matter: Constructions of sexuality in studies of young women's friendships. *Feminism and Psychology*, 10, 227–245.

Griffin, G. (2017). *A Dictionary of Gender Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Halim, M. L., Ruble, D. N., & Amodio, D. M. (2011). From pink frilly dresses to 'one of the boys': A social-cognitive analysis of gender identity development and gender bias. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5(11), 933-949.

Halberstam, J. (1998). *Female Masculinity*. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press.

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-599.

Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London; New York: Routledge.

Hjerm, M., Lindgren, S., & Nilsson, M. (2014). *Introduktion till samhällsvetenskaplig analys* (2., [utök. och uppdaterade] uppl. ed.). Lund: Gleerup.

Honey, M. (1981). The 'womanpower' campaign: Advertising and recruitment propaganda during world war II. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 6(1-2), 50.

Hyde, J. S., & Jaffee, S. R. (2000). Becoming a heterosexual adult: The experiences of young women. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56, 283–296.

Hyde, J. S., Rosenberg, B. G., & Behrman, J. A. (1977). Tomboyism. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21, 73–75.

Jenkins, R. (2008). *Social Identity* (3.th ed.). London: Routledge.

Kvale, S. (1997). *Den kvalitativa forskningsintervjun*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Larsson, S. (1994). *Kvalitativ metod och vetenskapsteori*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Lee, H. (1960/2015). *To Kill a Mockingbird*. London: Vintage Classics.

Litoff, J. B., & Smith, D. C. (2002). American women in a world at war. *OAH Magazine of History*, 16(3), 7-12.

Martin. T., R., R. (1996). *A Song of Ice and Fire*. London: Harper Collins.

McRobbie, A. (2006) 'Four technologies of young womanhood', paper presented at TU-Berlin Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Frauen und Geschlechterforschung, 31<sup>st</sup> of October.

Mead, G. H., & Morris, C. W. (1934). *Mind, Self and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Mead, G. H., & Arvidson, P. (1934/1976). *Medvetandet, jaget och samhället från socialbehavioristisk ståndpunkt*. Lund: Argos.

Morgan, B. L. (1998). A three generational study of tomboy behavior. *Sex Roles*, 39(9), 787-800.

Myers, J. (2013). *Historical Dictionary of the Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movements: Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements Series*. Plymouth: Scarecrow Press.

Oglesbee, F. W. (1999). Suzi Quatro: A prototype in the archsheology of rock. *Popular Music and Society*, 23(2), 29-39.

Online Etymology Dictionary (2019). <https://www.etymonline.com>. Retrieved 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2019.

Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford English Dictionary, <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.its.uu.se>. Retrieved 11<sup>th</sup> of April 2019.

Paechter, C., & Clark, S. (2007). Who are tomboys and how do we recognize them? *Women's Studies International Forum*, 30(4), 342-354.

Paechter, C., & Ebrary, I. (2007). *Being Boys, Being Girls: Learning Masculinities and Femininities*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Paechter, C. (2010). Tomboys and girly-girls: Embodied femininities in primary schools. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 31(2), 221-235.

Penley, C., Ross, A., & Haraway, D. (1990). Cyborgs at large: Interview with Donna Haraway. *Social Text*, 25(26), 8-23.

Plumb, P., & Cowan, G. (1984). A developmental study of destereotyping and androgynous activity preferences of tomboys, nontomboys, and males. *Sex Roles*, 10(9), 703-703.

Reay, D. (2001). 'Spice girls', 'nice girls', 'girlies', and 'tomboys': Gender discourses, girls' cultures and femininities in the primary classroom. *Gender and Education*, 13(2), 153-166.

Renold, E. (2001). 'Square-girls', femininity and the negotiation of academic success in the primary school. *British Educational Research Journal*, 27(5), 577-588.

Renold, E. (2005) *Girls, Boys and Junior Sexualities*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Renold, E. (2006). 'They won't let us play. unless you're going out with one of them': Girls, boys and Butler's 'heterosexual matrix' in the primary years. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 27(4), 489-509.

Renold, E., & Ringrose, J. (2008). Regulation and rupture: Mapping tween and teenage girls' resistance to the heterosexual matrix. *Feminist Theory*, 9(3), 313-338.

Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. Ormston. (2013). *Qualitative Research Practice: A guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: SAGE.

Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage.

Stowe, H. B. (1852). *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Leipzig: Tauchnitz.

Thomas, W. I., & Znaniecki, F. (1918/1927). *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America: Vol. 1*. New York: Alfred A., Knopf Inc.

Thorne, B. (1993). *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Turner, J. C., & Hogg, M. A. (1987). *Rediscovering the Social Group: A self-categorization Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Turner, J. H., & Stets, J. E. (2005). *The Sociology of Emotions*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Van Volkom, M. (2003). The relationships between childhood tomboyism, siblings' activities, and adult gender roles. *Sex Roles*, 49(11), 609-618.

Vetenskapsrådet. (2017). *God Forskningssed*. Stockholm: Vetenskapsrådet.

Vannini, P., & Williams, J. P. (2009). *Authenticity in Culture, Self, and Society*. Farnham: Ashgate Pub.

Williams, J. P. (2011). *Subcultural Theory: Traditions and Concepts*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Williams, C. L., & Heikes, E. J. (1993). The importance of researcher's gender in the in-depth interview: Evidence from two case studies of male nurses. *Gender and Society*, 7(2), 280-291.

Wynn, S. and Wynn, T. (2017). *Women in the Great War*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword.

Ziebland, S. (2013). *Understanding and Using Health Experiences: Improving Patient Care* (1st ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.



UPPSALA  
UNIVERSITET

## Appendix 1

Hej!

Under vårterminen 2019 kommer jag att göra en studie om genusidentifikationsprocesser där du har visat intresse för att medverka. Jag är intresserad av dina upplevelser av att ha varit en "tomboy" eller "pojkflicka" under uppväxten och hur du ser tillbaka på den tiden nu. Det finns idag ganska lite forskning kring dessa frågor och därför tycker jag att det är relevant att belysa upplevelsen av den här specifika identifikationsprocessen. Dessutom ser jag en möjlighet att vidareutveckla redan existerande socialpsykologisk teori. Innan intervjun utförs vill jag informera dig om några etiska riktlinjer som berör ditt deltagande i studien:

- Intervjun kommer att spelas in för att jag inte ska missa viktig information som framkommer under intervjuerna. Ljudfilerna kommer endast att vara tillgängliga för mig och det är bara jag som kommer att lyssna på och använda mig av dem.
- Deltagandet i studien är helt frivilligt. Det innebär att du när som helst kan avbryta din medverkan, både under intervjuerna och även efteråt, utan att behöva uppge skäl för detta.
- Alla personuppgifter kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt, det vill säga att det endast är jag som har tillgång till dessa. Det innebär även att ni i presentationen av studien kommer att vara anonyma.
- All information som framkommer i intervjuerna kommer endast att användas i forskningssyfte för att belysa de frågeställningar som denna studie syftar till att belysa.

Har du några frågor kring de här riktlinjerna, eller andra frågor kring intervjuerna, är du välkommen att kontakta mig. Om allt går som det ska kommer studien att, i alla fall delvis, vara tillgänglig via Uppsala universitet, Sociologiska institutionens hemsida i början av juni. Om det finns intresse av att ta del av den färdiga uppsatsen kan man även kontakta mig i början av juni så kan jag skicka en kopia.

Tack så mycket för er medverkan!

Med vänlig hälsning

Anna Alvemark

Telefon: 0707501408

E-mail: [anna.alvemark@gmail.com](mailto:anna.alvemark@gmail.com)

Handledare: Professor Vessela Misheva

E-post: [vessela.misheva@soc.uu.se](mailto:vessela.misheva@soc.uu.se)

Telefon: [018-471 1509](tel:018-4711509)

Postadress: Box 624

751 26 Uppsala

Besöksadress:

Engelskaparken

Thunbergsv. 3

751 26 Uppsala

## Appendix 2

### Interview Guide

#### Tema: familj/förbilder

Berätta om din familj:

- Har du syskon? Vilken relation hade ni när ni växte upp?
- Levde dina föräldrar tillsammans?
- Berätta om din mamma, hur var hon, stod ni varandra nära?
- Berätta om din pappa, hur var han, stod ni varandra nära?
- Hur var stämningen hemma?
- Hur fick det dig att känna/må?
- Såg du någon av dina familjemedlemmar som en förebild?
- Hade du andra förebilder/idoler till exempel på tv, musiker eller liknande?
- Vilken typ av kläder trivdes du bäst i?
- Var det någon som protesterade mot dina klädval eller uppmuntrade till vissa val?
- Hur fick det dig att känna? Hur reagerade du på det?

#### Tema: skolan (låg- och mellanstadiet)

Berätta om skolan:

- Trivdes du?
- Om ja, varför, hur, hur fick det dig att känna/tänka?
- Om nej, varför, hur, hur fick det dig att känna/tänka?
- Både på lektioner och på rasten?
- Var du "duktig" i skolan?

Berätta om dina kompisar:

- Vilken typ av leksaker tyckte du om att leka?
- Vilken typ av lekar?
- Vilka var dina favoritbarn/bästa kompisar att leka med?
- Lekte du med samma kompisar i skolan som efter/utanför skoltid?
- Såg de andra barnen dig som "en av killarna"?
- Upplevde du att du var en av killarna, att du passade in? Hur fick det dig att känna dig?
- Kände du att du ville vara en pojke eller bara *som* en pojke?

(Beteenden, utanför skolan, påverkan av andra)

Utanför skolan då? Berätta om vad du gjorde på fritiden?

- Var du med i några aktiviteter på fritiden?
- Hur fick det dig att känna?
- Varför valde du just den aktiviteten/ hade det intresset?
- Vad betydde de här aktiviteterna för dig?

(Andras reaktioner/bemötande)

- Reagerade människor i din omgivning olika på dig i olika situationer, hur? Hur fick det dig att känna?
- Upplevde du dig som annorlunda än de andra barnen, på vilket sätt? I vilka situationer?
- Bemötte/reagerade/behandlade barn och vuxna dig olika? Pojkar i jämförelse med flickor och män/kvinnor. Hur reagerade du på det?
- Upplevde du att vuxna bemötte dig på samma sätt som andra barn pojkar/flickor?
- Upplevde du att du tog risker, större/mer risker än andra, var mer äventyrlig, valde att göra saker annorlunda?

(Kläder, utseenden och uppträdande)

Vilken typ av kläder bar du helst?

- Vad påverkade ditt val av kläder?
- Klädde du dig annorlunda än de andra barnen?
- Reagerade andra barn och/eller vuxna på hur du klädde dig?
- Hade dina föräldrar/förälder synpunkter på hur du klädde dig eller såg ut?

### **Tema: Puberteten/tonåren (högstadiet/gymnasiet)**

Hur upplevde du puberteten?

- Hur reagerade du på att kroppen förändrades?
- Hur upplevde du den här tiden?

(Vänner)

Berätta om dina vänner under den här perioden.

- Var de pojkar eller flickor?
- Var de samma vänner som på mellanstadiet?

- Vad gjorde ni tillsammans?
- Upplevde du dig vara annorlunda mot de andra tjejerna?

(Sexualitet)

- Hade du intresse av romantiska relationer? Om du hade sådana hur såg de ut?
- Upplevde du att du skiljde dig åt från andra gällande det?

(Kläder, utseenden och uppträdande)

Vilken typ av kläder bar du helst?

- Vad påverkade ditt val av kläder?
- Klädde du dig annorlunda än de andra barnen?
- Reagerade andra barn och/eller vuxna på hur du klädde dig?
- Hade dina föräldrar/förälder synpunkter på hur du klädde dig eller såg ut?

**Tema: Nutid**

- Tror du att din uppväxt har gjort att du skiljer dig från andra kvinnor? På vilket sätt? I vilka situationer?
- Har du både manliga och kvinnliga vänner?
- Trivs du bättre i mäns eller kvinnors sällskap?
- Har du lättare/svårare att arbeta tillsammans med manliga/kvinnliga kollegor/klasskamrater?
- Om du skulle hamna i en situation på arbetsplatsen eller i skolan då du stör dig på en kollega till den graden att situationen nu är ohållbar, hur skulle du agera då?
- Vilken typ av män attraheras du av?



