From De Beauvoir To Butler
How gendered categories have been used in five classical texts on gender

Författare
David Sandin

Handledare
Glenn Sjöstrand
Abstract
The focus of this thesis is to investigate how gender related concepts have used in practise from Simone De Beauvoir’s “The second sex”, to Judith Butler’s “Bodies that matters”. The other texts used are “the traffic in women” by Gayle Rubin, “Gender: an ethnomethodological approach” by Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKenna and “Gender and power” by Robert Connell.

In my theoretical part I use the idea that categories are human inventions and that no categories including those important to the gender issue are more correct than any other and that the usefulness of categories can only be measured by the usefulness of the theories attached to it. I am also inspired by the theory of critical realism that claims that research must focus on the internal mechanisms that causes the effects that we are observing.

The method used is an adaptation of philosophical concept analysis where I have analyzed how gender related concepts such as “men” and “women” are used in my empirical material. The focus was to create an understanding of how gender categories where used in the texts that I where analyzing. There is also a metatheoretical approach where the empirical material is used in order to get an understanding on how to create new theories.

The conclusions of this thesis is that the theoretical concept of gender has developed from a description of how social forces affected people in the category “women” different from those in the category “men” to a more and more intricate philosophical and theoretical discussion of how to understand and analyze this difference.

The second conclusion is that all the authors of my material are struggling with how the relation between the sexed\gendered bodies and the social characteristics of men and women should be explained. This leads to a number of problematic conclusions that I claim can be solved by not using specific theories about gender but instead focusing on general social theories based on causality and internal relations that explains the phenomena that are studied.
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1 Introduction

The idea of gender is today something that should be familiar to all students of sociology and the sex gender distinction is at the core of most feministic literature. It has also created the new interdisciplinary subject of gender studies that is being taught at universities all over the world.

Although the theory of gender has been so widely spread the concept of gender is still problematic. The question of what gender is and what kind of relation it has to sex is causing trouble for many contemporary writers and some have raised the question if gender as an analytical tool serves any purpose today. One critique is that gender theories only concern white heterosexual middle class woman in the western world (Hawkesworth 1997: 650 f), the other common critique comes from the post-structural movement who among other things claim that the body have disappeared in gender analysis and that this reproduce misogynic and dualistic assumptions (Grosz 1994: 3) and that the idea of gender unifies ideas that should be treated as diverse (Hawkesworth 1997: 651).

For me the interest in the gender problematic started a few years ago when I was reading feministic literature and realized that the concept of gender was problematic in several ways. That was the starting point for my bachelor thesis in sociology in which I studied three sociological dissertations with gendered perspectives from which several of my ideas and concepts in this thesis are taken. In my bachelor thesis I found that in the dissertations I studied the researchers used both common sense approaches and more theoretical perspectives on gender and that the views on how gender should be understood in many cases where very vague. This led me to the idea that I should study how some of the leading figures in gender studies interpret and understand the question of gender. When writing about how gender is described throughout its history I will inevitable interpret it through my own cultural background. When I read my material I will read it through the perspective of someone who studied gender and have been taught what the perspective of gender means. Even though this is a critical examination of the gender concept, my views on the subject have been shaped by the classes on gender I have taken and the books about gender I have read. As with us all, my own interpretation of gender is inevitable linked with how gender has been viewed by researchers and by society as a whole.
1.1 The disposition of this thesis

The first chapter of this thesis consists of a short introduction to the gender issue, how it was first used and it’s development over time. Since this is also part of the aim of this thesis it is more of a general overview than a thorough investigation. In the second chapter I will outline the purpose of this thesis which is how the gender categories have been used in practice from the beginning up till today. In the third chapter I will go through the theories I will use when I analyze my empirical material; these are not gender theories but instead theories about how to view and analyze categories and concepts from a sociological perspective. The fourth chapter consists of the methods I used in this thesis, they can be characterized as a combination of a conceptual analysis influenced from philosophy and meta theorizing, which is a method for understanding and creating new theories. In this chapter I also describe and motivate how I selected my material, which texts I have used and why. The fifth chapter is my empirical part, here I review the texts which I have selected and also analyze them individually from the purpose of the thesis. In the sixth and final chapter I analyze all texts together from my theoretical view to see what they have in common and how they differ from each other and what conclusions that can be drawn from them from my meta theoretical approach.

1.2 An introduction to gender

The idea that the differences between men and women are caused by social effects and not due to some essential properties or biology is not a new one. Simone de Beauvoir’s book “the second sex” originally printed in 1949 is by most seen as the first text in this gender tradition and the phrase “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” (De Beauvoir 1993: 281) is considered the first example where being female is not seen as something innate (Carlson 2001: 17) and is also one of the texts that I analyze in this thesis. Gender as a concept in the modern term was probably first used by John Money in 1955 when he described gender role as to “mean all those things [behaviors] that a person says or does to disclose him or herself having the status of boy or man, girl or woman, respectively” (Diamond 2004: 592) but it was Robert Stoller’s account of gender from 1968 where gender was defined as the cultural and psychological differences between men and women that was later adopted by the feminist movement (Carlson 2001: 19). Later the clear distinction between the biological sex and the cultural gender was beginning to get problematic and the view that the biological is something unchangeable and given became questioned by a lot of writers. One of the first was Gayle
Rubin in “the traffic in women” from 1975 (Carlson 2001: 22) which I analyze later in this thesis.

The position that the distinction between men and woman is something completely social seems to be almost none existing. The only exception to the rule that I have found is in Christine Delphy’s writing. According to Delphy no biological characteristics can be the reason for membership of the group woman or man. These groups are social groups and under some circumstances people with male biology can be members of the category woman (Cealey-Harrison & Hood Williams 2002: 26). This is not an easy terminology to come to grips with, and Delphy herself seem to have problem with this theory because she also writes “Male unpaid workers are exploited not because they are men, but because they are young or old: whereas female unpaid workers (daughters, sisters, mothers and wives) are exploited because they are women” (Delphy & Leonard 1992: 130).

Gender studies have been influenced by many other fields; psychoanalysis and Marxist theory have had a huge impact on gender theories from De Beauvoir to current writers such as Judith Butler and Robert Connell and the poststructural movement have had a vast influence on the gender concept of today. Still there is a lot of disagreement on what gender is and how it should be interpreted, this debate originates not only because of different theoretical perspectives but also on the discipline, studying gender from an economics’ point of view is different from study it as a sociologist for instance. If it is individuals or a social gendered structure that is studied will have an effect on how gender is seen (Carlson 2001: 28ff) and political and practical matters can as always have an effect on once studies. Some researchers such as Jean Grimshaw (Carlson 2001: 51) claim that there is no such thing as a separate non-social biology or a non biological social science. For Grimshaw the biological can change and are dependent upon the social but cannot be completely reduced to the social (Carlson 2001: 51). Moira Gatens criticizes the distinction between sex and gender and writes that the common gender assumption that the body is neutral in relation to the formation of consciousness is wrong and therefore there are specific experiences of how it is to be feminine that only biological women can experience. For example can only a biological woman understand the experience of menstruation (Carlson 2001: 54ff).

Another question is what explanatory value these differences between men and women have. One way to describe these differences is through the dichotomy of essentialism and
constructivism. In essentialism difference between men and women are explained by innate properties. These properties are usually described in a biological terminology such as: women take care of children because the female biology makes women better equipped to do that. In constructivism differences between men and women is instead created by praxis, ideology and representations (Carlsson 2001: 91). In feminist theory the idea of essentialism is used in a number of different ways, first and foremost as an original female essence, outside and untouched by the social order. It can also be seen as the system of totality and universalism of female oppression that exists everywhere regardless of culture and historical setting, but it can also be found within the discourse of feminism itself, the very assumption that supposes unity in the diverse and imprecise category that woman is (Fuss 1989: 2). Constructionism on the other hand claims that there is not female essence and that all ideas of anything outside of the social order are historically constructed, that the natural is constructed by the social. For constructionists the differences between men and women exists because of social causes, they are not natural or given (Fuss 1989: 2f).
2 The purpose of this study

The main purpose of this thesis is to study how gender related concepts has been used in practice from Simone De Beauvoir’s “The second sex”, which by many is seen as the first study from a gender perspective, up to today where Judith Butler’s “Bodies that matters” is the latest study in the gender tradition that I will base this thesis on. More specifically I will investigate how the authors of my material define and use these concepts both implicitly and explicitly, what theoretical consideration they take when using gender related ideas and what consequences those theoretical considerations lead to.

Since the beginning those who write about women from a social perspective had to deal with the conflicting ideas that women are both a biological and a social category. What should be considered a “gender related concept” is not entirely obvious. In my thesis I will make the assumption that all terms referring to “men” “women” and “gender” is gender related. In most cases I will consider the term “sex” to be a gendered term unless the circumstances clearly makes such a connection useless or wrong. I will also attempt to be as true to the writers definition as possible, but still try to make a thorough analysis of how gender theories are used in practice in my material.

Most of the authors that I will study are not sociologists and to study them from a sociological point of view is of course to do them injustice in many ways. All of these writers have however contributed in many ways to the sociological theories and are cited as among the most influential when it comes to gender theories in sociology. Therefore I believe it is important to study the texts from a sociological perspective in order to find out how gender as a concept is used in them.
3 Theory

First we must understand that all categories of the world are invented. All abstract entities such as categories, classes and relations are products of the human mind (Goodman 1972: 173); still these abstractions are necessary in order to understand the world around us. It is also important to remember that all categories are created from ideas already at hand, (Goodman 1978: 6). The makings of abstract entities are a remaking of old entrenched categories, and for new ideas to be accepted they must fit in with the existing view of the world. The reason for this is that a radical change would have no contingency with previous knowledge and would be regarded as completely meaningless. This effectively makes change into a bounded practise that is ruled by habit and praxis (Douglas & Hull 1992: 71).

The categories of men and woman are probably the most entrenched and taken for granted categories that exist in the world today, but this is in itself no reason to use these categories in sociological research. Using a theory of gender where men and woman are used as theoretical categories can only be justified if the theory specifies what those categories can explain in that theoretical model. The fact that men or women have different properties, ascribed or innate does not in itself explain anything, because any two groups will have different properties. Nor can the fact that women all over the world have common characteristics itself explain why woman is used as a social category because common characteristic does not in itself create a category. The reason for this is that any two objects will share some common characteristics; in fact any two objects will share an infinite number of characteristics (Goodman 1972: 443f). For example a dog and a paper clip are both less than a 100 meters long therefore they are in the class of “objects less than 100 meters long”. Since they are also less than 1 km long they are also in the class “objects less than 1 km long”. These categories probably look as ridicules to the reader as they do to me, but there is nothing logically wrong with them. The reason why they seem to be wrong is that we in ordinary life rarely sort objects into groups solely on the basis of their sizes. Instead there seems to be more general rule of thumbs that determine how we see the world and how categories are created\(^1\)

\(^1\)You can read about how people sort objects into categories in Similarity and Categorization, Ulrike Hahn and Mitchell Ramscar, editors, Oxford University Press, New York.
One of the foundations of all research is the concept of causality, what are the mechanisms that causes the social facts we observe? One problem with causality is that statistical correlations cannot by them self justify an idea about causality. Just because we know that in the past all bowling balls have fallen to the ground when dropped is no guarantee that it will happen in the future. This is known as “the problem of induction” and goes back to David Hume’s “An enquire regarding human understanding” first published in 1748 (Hume 2000; sect 4). In the case of the falling bowling balls we don’t doubt that they will continue to fall to the ground in the future because our theory about gravity which are ruling falling objects is believed to be the same. When it comes to the social sciences things are slightly different, first because laws of society can change, but mostly because there are no agreement on what constitute a causal mechanism is social sciences. Causal analysis have been said to be about explaining (Danermark et al 93: 2003) or what determines, produces or leads to a specific effect (Sayer 1992: 104). From the first part of this chapter we know that groups cannot be used as a theory to explain social phenomena. We also know that because of “the problem of induction” correlation is not enough for a causal analysis. I will however make the assumption that individuals can have can have causal powers and affect other people, I will also assume that social relations between individuals can act as mechanisms. But since this thesis is about how gendered categories are used my main analysis will be about how ideas of mechanisms and powers are used by the writers of my material.

Another distinction that is important to make is between external and internal relations. An external relation is when the existence of two objects is independent of each other. The tree outside my window can exist without me and so can I without the tree. Where in an internal relation one object cannot exist without the other, for someone to be oppressed there must be at least one oppressor and there would be no teachers without pupils. Sometimes the relation is asymmetric, the existence of houses is not dependent on house owners but without houses there would be no owner of houses, (Sayer 1992: 89f). It is also important to remember that because one particular property is internal between two categories that do not mean that other properties also are internal, (Sayer 1992: 91). The fact that teachers tend to be older than pupils is not determined by their internal relation but instead caused by external factors. This is particularly important to remember in cases where there are a lot of statistically correlated phenomena in a group since this could mean that an internally determined cause erroneously are seen as the reason for the correlation. As an example we can compare Marxist class theory with gender theory. From a Marxist point of view “the working class” are those in a society
that don’t own their means of production. This is a category connected to the theory of exploitation, and therefore “not owning property” is internally related to exploitation because not owning your means of production will according to Marxist theory automatically result in exploitation by those who own the capital. (Pålsson Syll 1998: 165f). This can be contrasted with a theory of gender that says that being a woman (that is being seen as having specific biological characteristics that put you in the category women) means that you are being exploited by men because you are a woman. In addition this exploitation of women has no cause in the fact that they are women, instead this is caused by social factors completely unrelated to those biological facts that we use in order to create the category of women (Delphy & Leonard 1992: 130). This means that there is an internal relation between being in the working class and being exploited but there is no internal relation between being a women and being exploited even though almost all research shows a strong correlation between being a women and being in a position of exploitation.

Structures are seen by Sayer as “sets of internally related objects or practises” (Sayer 1992: 92) which I believe is a very useful definition of structure from my perspective because it makes it possible for me to make a distinction between categories that are founded solely on ideas of similarities and those that are created through an idea of internal relation. But the point that I make is that in order for us to say what is an internally determined structure we must have an idea, a theory that explains to us why a relation is internally determined, empirical investigations and facts can in them self never explain that. For us to understand that teachers and pupils are internally necessary for each other we must have a theory about the roles of pupils and teachers. This also means that if we understand that categories are invented and not discovered we also must understand that a category can only be what it is defined to be, a category can therefore never change so it becomes something else without turning into a new category. This is because if a category changed, the definitions that make up the category must also have changed. Of course the external relationships can change but those are of no importance to our understanding of the categories.

If we combine the statements in this chapter we see that categories need to be joined with theories about the world in order to be useful. Those theories can never be created solely from empirical observation; instead we need to make conjectures about a mechanism. This together with the idea of the difference between internal and external categories and that structure are internally related categories we can create a theory about what categories that are useful in
sociological theory and how they should be defined. First is that the components in the theory needs to internally related and the only way for them to be that is through an idea about mechanism. In the cases of externally related categories we can only observe a statistical correlation with unknown causes. Second, the categories created this way is only useful in explaining phenomena where the mechanism involved is believed to play a role for causing those phenomena. From this I strongly believe that categories should be defined with a specific mechanism in mind and only be used when this mechanism are a causing factor.

In my bachelor thesis I found that difference between men and women can be described from four different points of view. In the first no actual interpretation is made of the differences between men and women. They are only seen as statistical correlations and no theoretical implications are made. The second interpretation is that there is a common sense interpretation of male and female within a specific culture or social setting, but it does not correspond to a male and female interpretation by the researcher who studies it. The objects that are studied are male and female but the theories used to explain the differences are not based on ideas on male and female differences. An example of this is if a researcher studies how women are being treated differently from men on the labour market uses a general theory of discrimination instead of a theory on how women are being discriminated. In the third interpretation the concepts of men and woman are theoretical and gendered ideas are used as analytical tools. Some examples are the theory of the sex/gender system or the idea of homosociability. According to the concept of homosociability, the biological sex of the individuals involved is crucial for the theoretical understanding of the problem. A male professor can have a homosocial relation to a male student. If the professor is female the relation can no longer be analyzed as a homosocial, even if the social content of the relation is identical to that of the male professor and student. The meaning here is that biology determines the social analysis and interpretation. The last interpretation that I found is to regard social events as a direct result of differences in biology. This is usually referred to as essentialism or biological determinism. The differences between men and woman are explained in terms of genes, chromosomes, hormones and so on. Other versions of this are non biological determinism where the differences also are considered to be essential or given; instead it is explained as god given or in other ways taken for granted. It is also important to keep in mind that what the informants believe to be the reason for a specific cultural expression does not in any way mean that the researcher should adopt the same belief. When doing research it’s the relevant theory that decides what interpretation is true.
4 Method
The method I am using in this thesis can be considered a form of what in philosophy is called conceptional analysis. When reading the material I try to find how the authors use gender related concepts, what they mean to the author and how those concepts relate to each other. It also means trying to get a deeper understanding what the concepts really are, how they are defined and what assumptions the authors use, either implicit or explicit. This is done by carefully reading and rereading the texts, (Carlsson 2001: 10). When I find what I see as inconsistencies in the use of concepts and category I try to find new ways to analyze the concepts or alter them in such way that the inconsistencies are removed but without changing the purpose the categories have for the author.

4.1 Meta theorizing
Meta theorizing has been described as “the systematic study of the underlying structure of sociological theory” (Ritzer 2008: A-1) There are a number of different ways to do meta theorizing, This thesis can be described as being done as a prelude to a development of a theory, this is done by carefully study other theorists and react to their work (Ritzer 2008: A-3). Since some of my theorists are not sociologists this thesis can also be described as a different type of meta theorizing, where one turn to other disciplines in order to create a deeper understanding of sociology (Ritzer 2008: A-2f). Practically for this thesis it means that when I read my material I look for ways to interpret their use of gendered language as concept in the theoretical meaning that is used in my theory, that there is a meaning behind the common sense use of terms such as “man” and “woman”. The basis for this is that gender in the commonly understood sense is central to the writers understanding of the difference between “men” and “women” even if this is not explicit in their texts.

4.2 Selecting my material
Because the purpose of this study is to analyze how the idea of gender has been used since it was first introduced it was important for me to use the material that is considered to have the most impact on gender studies. At the same time it is important keep in mind that this is a sociological study and that many of the studies done on gender are of little relevance to the sociological field. With that in mind I will argue that most scholars who study gender claim
that Simone de Beauvior’s “the second sex” is the starting point for the idea of gender even though de Beauvior never used the term herself. Donna Haraway for instance wrote “…all the modern feminist meanings of gender have roots in Simone de Beauvior’s claim that one is not born a woman (Haraway 1991: 131). I believe that the importance that Beauvior have had on gender cannot be underestimated and that it is simply impossible to exclude her from my study without missing an essential part of the idea of gender even though she was a philosopher and not a sociologist.

The second text that I will use is Gayle Rubin’s (1975) “the traffic in women”. Rubin was probably the first who used the idea of the sex/gender system (Carlsson 2001: 22)” by which society transform biological sexuality into products of human activity. (Rubin 1975 159) This is perhaps the first time where the distinction between sex and gender has been problematized, something that has had profound impact on gender studies up to this day (Carlsson 2001: 22).

The third text, “Gender an ethnomethodological approach” by Wendy Mckenna and Suzanne Kessler is perhaps the least known book in my selection but is also one of the most interesting from a sociological point of view. Cealey Harrisson and Hood-Williams referred to it as a “…neglected but important ethnomethodological account of gender attribution”, (Cealey Harrisson and Hood-Williams 2002: 9) and Mary Hawkesworth called it ”a remarkable and insightful approach to the study of gender” (Hawkesworth 1997: 675).

The fourth book, Connell’s "Gender and power" “which blends strains of Marxism, existentialism, and poststructuralism in developing its account of gender, is richly deserving of close examination” (Hawkesworth 1997: 669) is another modern classic in gender theory. It attempts to create a practised based theory of gender and is therefore ideal for my purpose to understand how the concept and theory if gender has developed.

Judith Butler is arguable the most influential writer on gender today. Her theory that gender should be viewed not [...]as a set of attributes, but as a "doing," a performance that constitutes the identity that it purports to be]” (Hawkesworth 1997: 663) is an idea that have been both criticized and praised. Her writing is not only rhetorical and political, it is also known to be extremely hard to penetrate and understand. None the less Butler is today impossible to ignore when writing a thesis on the development of gender theory. Even though Judith Butler have
developed and improved her theories since writing “Bodies that matters” I still choose to use almost exclusively texts from that book. The reason for this is partly due to time restrain, but mostly because I find her later texts not that different, and that they from my perspective does not bring enough new ideas into her theory that makes it meaningful to study them in depth.

I decided early to limit my empirical material to five books and therefore there is a lot of interesting literature that I am not able to examine in this thesis. I will here discuss briefly some of the books that I thought about including but in the end did not make the cut. The oldest one is Ann Oakley’s “Sex gender and society” first published in 1972, it’s undoubtedly a classic in the field but to me it felt obsolete and not very innovative even for that time in contrast to the books from that time that I did chose. Another book that I wanted to use but in the end where excluded is Nancy Chodorow’s “The reproduction of mothering” from 1978. It has a psychoanalytical approach that has been very influential but since Beauvoir, Rubin and Butler all have psychoanalytical views I felt that it would be too much with another book with those influences. Since Judith Butler also is the best known writer in the postmodern and poststructural field I decided to exclude both Sandra Harding’s “The science question in feminism” from 1986 and Donna Haraway’s “Simians cyborgs and women” published in 1991.

In my next chapter I will go through my empirical material. The texts are in chronological order, starting with the oldest one “the second sex” by Simone de Beauvoir, from 1949 followed by “The traffic in women” from 1975 by Gayle Rubin, “Gender: an ethnomethodological approach” was written in 1978 by Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKenna, “Gender and power” by Robert William Connell (now Raewyn Connell) from 1987, and the last text which I will use is “Bodies that matters” by Judith Butler from 1993. These texts I will be reviewed individually where the focus will be the parts which are of interest to my thesis. Since this is a thesis with a specific aim most of the contents of these books will be excluded and it is important to remember that these are not book reviews in a traditional sense. I will also within each individual review analyze the text to try to see what conclusions that can be made from the aim of the thesis. In the final chapter which will be my analysis I will put together the analyses I made and see what new conclusions can be made from the overall perspectives of these texts.
5 Empirical study

5.1 The Second Sex

“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” These are the famous words from the introduction to the second book of “the second sex”. It continues “No biological psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produce this creature” (de Beauvoir 1993: 281). The question of how civilization produces the female figure can according to de Beauvoir be answered through psychoanalytical theory and the existentialistic philosophy of Sartre. In the second sex most, but not all of women’s problems can be explained through historical and social circumstances. This is clearly a move away from Sartres existentialistic theory where ontological freedom is taken for granted (McCulloch 1994: 38). According to existentialism we are condemned to be free and no action can be freer than any other, what matter is if it an authentic or an inauthentic act. From an existentialistic point of view the fundamental ontology of both women and men is that they are free, everybody can choose their own destiny. A man can be a homosexual by virtue of past experiences and behaviour but he is still free to be something else. No human has any true nature that he or she by necessity must have. (McCulloch 1994, 60f) But an individual can be made into an object “the other” by being defined by other people’s images of them. A Jew is being defined by others anti-Semitism, a waiter by the expectations people has of how a waiter should behave and so on (McCulloch 1994: 57f).

For de Beauvoir women in our society have a special position where it is impossible to be anything other than the other. Being a man does not in itself constitute any attributes in the way that being a woman does. A man can be a waiter, a philosopher or a number of other identities and can thereby choose not to be any of those. A woman are always primary a woman, an identity given to her by men and something that cannot be chosen away (de Beauvoir 1993: 29), and that mankind is derived from man in so many languages tells us something about the social structure of the world. This situation is by no means unique for women, African-Americans, Jews and the proletarians have faced similar experiences. De Beauvoir especially mentions the similarity between blacks in the USA and women. Both faced a situation where a dominant group used paternalistic argument about the black man’s merry soul and the irresponsible submissive woman. And in both cases the argument stems
from facts that the dominant group itself had created. What differentiates women from blacks and other groups is that they are scattered among the men and they don’t refer to themselves as women except at feminist conventions (de Beauvoir 1993: x1 ff).

This line of reasoning is a shift from a philosophical argument to a sociological, which although not really supported by Sartre’s existentialism is the reason that “the second sex” has been so important for the study of gender up to this day. What is interesting for the purpose of this thesis is that from an existentialist viewpoint there is no need to differentiate between men and women, everybody is essentially free and all of us run the risk of falling into bad faith and becoming the other. The fact that women are the other to so much greater extent than men is no different from the fact that blacks in the USA under the racial segregation laws where the other, therefore de Beauvoir’s existentialist argument about women’s situation has in my opinion nothing in itself to do with gender but with how a dominant group can create a situation that results in the subjectification of that group.

De Beauvoir starts her book with a biological description of the sexes, both in humans and in other species and how these differences have been viewed throughout history. It is clear that her own belief is that there are biological differences between men and woman and that biology has greater influences on females of the human species than in any other species: “Woman – the most individualized of females – seems to be the most fragile, most subject to this pain and danger, she who most dramatically fulfils the call of destiny and mostly differs from her male” (de Beauvoir 1993: 26). The female biology is a key element for de Beauvoir in her understanding of the female but it is not the reason for the female subordination. It’s a limiting factor but it does not explain the hierarchy of the sexes or condemn her forever to a subordinate role in society. Biology must be viewed in an ontological, social and psychological context (de Beauvoir 1993: 34-38). But one thing that I find striking about this description is the lack of theoretical analysis. Here the female body is not viewed from the psychoanalytical perspective that she later uses. Women’s fragility is simply taken for granted and so is the female biology. In comparison to the later gender studies that I analyze de Beauvoir’s analysis lacks any doubts about how given the female biology is.

With de Beauvoir’s existentialist and social description in mind it can be hard to understand her widespread use of a sexed biological language, but we must remember that de Beauvoir also where very influenced by psychoanalytical writers especially Lacan. Beauvoir’s writing
about the development of childhood and femininity has been seen as a development of Lacan's concept of the alienation of the ego, something that is sadly lost in Parshley's translation of the second sex where alienation (aliénation in French) in most places are translated as projection or identification (Moi 1994: 157). For de Beauvoir the new born girl and boy are equally alienated, but after the age of three to four the boys will be denied kisses and comfort more than girls. This unfavourable treatment is compensated through the higher value that parents puts in boys penises than girls vaginas which seems to have no existence at all, especially since she cannot hold on to it the way boys can (de Beauvoir: 282ff). This has a profound effect on girls; they will be more occupied with what happens inside of them compared to the boy whose penis can act as an alter ego, an object from which he can gain his subjectivity, a symbol of autonomy, transcendence and power (de Beauvoir: 292). This does not mean that men and women have different destiny because of their different biology, on the contrary Beauvoir insists that it is social factors that explains women’s subordination.

The relationship between the social and biological in de Beauvoir’s writing has raised a lot of questions (Moi 1994: 163) but from the perspective of this thesis a reading where the penis in itself creates the difference in male and women has some appeal. Because if that was the case we have a theory where being a man (as being born with a penis) would act as a cause for the differences we see between men and women. This is however not the way de Beauvoir see it and I must for a number of different reasons concur with her. First of all because it does not go well with her existentialistic and psychoanalytical reading ², but more importantly I see no reason to make this kind of essentialistic analysis. There are no good empirical reasons to believe this should be true and from the perspective we have on men and women today such a theory would seem very obsolete and not in congruence with our current knowledge.

From de Beauvoir I will now make a leap in time over 25 years to Gayle Rubin’s essay “the traffic in women”

² I am here influenced by Moi’s interpretation of Beauvoir (Moi 1994 163f)
5.2 The traffic in women

In her essay from 1975 Gayle Rubin trying is to answer the question what is the …“nature and genesis of women’s oppression and social subordination” (Rubin 1975: 157). In order to understand this problem Rubin paraphrases Marx: “what is a domesticated woman? A female of the species. The one explanation as good the other. A woman is a woman. She only becomes a domestic, a wife, a chattel, a playboy bunny, a prostitute, or a human dictaphone in certain relations”. (Rubin 1975: 157) This is the starting point for Rubin’s idea of the sex/gender system which is the …“set of arrangements by which a society transform biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied.” (Rubin 1975: 158)

At the centre of Rubins analysis is the idea of the exchange in women. The concept is borrowed from Lévi-strauss’ the elementary structures of kinship, here marriage is a form of gift exchange where women are a gift that produces kinship where men become related to each other. This separates the exchange in women from other kinds of gifts exchanges because it locks the parties in a permanent relation, a kinship. This makes the relationship of marriage not so much a relation between a man and a woman as it is between groups of men (Rubin 1975: 173f). The basic analysis here is that Rubin makes a comparison between gift exchange and marriage, but also that it is taken for granted that marriage creates kinship. Of course “kinship” is a theoretical model used by Rubin in order to make an analytical point. It divides people into related and not related to, and that this distinction is made through the exchange in women. Rubin’s point of using this theory is not to try to understand how men are related to each other, but to explain woman’s social position.

This theory is a mixture of culturally constructed facts that are unrelated to the biological definitions of men and women, such as the idea of gift exchange. But it also takes the categories of men and women for granted. As far as I know, the only thing in principle that separates the relationships between men and woman and other kinds of relations is their ability to produce children, and that part is not mentioned in Rubin’s text, therefore I see no reason why a relation between two men could not create “kinship” in the same way as a relation between a man and a woman does.
What complicates the picture even more is that under some circumstances biological women can get the role of the man and thereby marry a woman. Other examples of unconventional marriage are between older and younger men (Rubin 1975: 181). To add to the confusion Rubin writes that men also can be trafficked, not in the status of men [...] but as slaves hustlers, athletic stars, serfs or as some other catastrophic social status] (Rubin 1975: 175f) but its only women that can be trafficked only because of their status as women (Rubin 1975: 176). These examples raise the question of why it is so important for Rubin to emphasize the fact that it is women who are being exchanged when she gives examples of the opposite. From my reading of Rubin the exchange of women in not occurring simple because they are women, a woman can’t be exchanged to just any man. The woman must have a specific status of being marriageable for her to be trafficked to that particular man, just being a woman is not enough (Rubin 1975: 189). This raises the question of what roles the categories of men and women really play in this theory. It is easy to consider a situation where men are trafficked the same way as women are. The essence of this theory seems to be the creation of kinship through the exchanges of kin. Since Rubin writes that under some circumstances biological women can become men (Rubin 1975: 181) there is no need to assume a specific theory on the traffic in women that differs from other kinds of kin making exchanges.

Kinship is an exchange not only in women but also in things like lineage, rights and children, which differs between men and women. To Rubin the subordination of women comes from the way sexuality is organized, a product of the organization of sex and gender. In that system the exchange in women is an important part but it’s not the only way a sexual system can be organized, (Rubin 1975: 177). From this text it is clear that Rubin is referring to a specific subordination of women. Women are subordinated in a way that men cannot be. Why this is the case is not clear, men are also trafficked and if kinship produces subordination there is no reason to assume that only women can be victims of that system.

Rubin use a critical reading of Freud and Lacan to see how a psychoanalytical theory can be used to produce the idea of kinship. According to Rubin psychoanalysis is a theory that can explain the creation of the sex/gender system and why people are sexed and gendered (Rubin 1975: 183). To Rubin Lacans theory insists that psychoanalysis is a theory about information and that Freud wrote about how language and culture imposed meanings to the biological bodies (Rubin 1975: 188). For Rubin the Oedipus is a system that determines whom an individual are able to mate with. The Oedipal crisis occurs when a person learns whom he or
she safely can desire. According to Lacan, a child has the alternative of having a phallus or being castrated, where the castrated child gets the status of “woman” while the child with phallus becomes a “man”. Having a phallus also means a position of dominance over women, which creates the penis envy. The phallus also is a symbolic gift within families from father to son and between families as an exchange in women. This makes the phallus a symbol for the difference between gift and the giver which is important for Rubins interpretation of kinship (Rubin 1975: 190f). The Oedipal analysis starts with the idea of the pre-oedipal androgyn who just discovers the differences between the sexes. The children also discover that some sexuality is prohibited, that the mother belongs to the father and that the two sexes have different rights. The boy fears that his father will castrate him and he therefore disowns his mother. In return the boy receives the phallus by the father, which later can be used to receive a woman of his own (Rubin 1975: 192f). For the girl the situation is different, unlike the boys, which has an incest taboo on some women, the girls have an incest taboo on all women. Since a woman only can be loved by someone with a phallus. The girl, who don’t possess a penis cannot have a woman and will feel castrated by the father. And since the mother cannot give her the phallus she will turn against her mother in anger and disappointment (Rubin 1975: 194f).

The problem with this analysis from my perspective is that if we start with the assumption of androgyn, why is it necessary for the child with the penis to identify with the parent with the penis? Rubin writes that [..“the idea that men and women are two mutually exclusive categories must arise out of something other than a nonexistent “natural” opposition.”] (Rubin 1975: 179f) but according to psychoanalysis the difference between the sexes is assumed to naturally create a category even though there are other differences that could create a different set of categories. The idea of the phallus also creates some problems; if it’s only something symbolic what does it mean to possess and to lack one? And if it is the possession of a symbolic phallus that creates the boy what does it mean for our definitions and understanding of what it means to be a man or a woman? Since the social differences between men and women vary enormously the only way to measure if someone is a man or a woman from a psychoanalytical point of view seems to be to measure if an individual possesses the symbolic phallus or not. This will create a situation where the psychoanalytical understanding of what it means to be a man and a woman will be something completely different from both our everyday life views and the definitions that are made in studies with a gendered perspective. The situation does not improve if we assume that the phallus is not symbolic but the “real life
penis” how could the male sex organ in itself fill the functions that it is supposed to do according to psychoanalytical theory? And why is it impossible for the female sex organ to function in the same way? Another problem is that according to Rubin there is no incest taboo for the girl to the father, which, besides all other problem with this assumption creates a problem for Rubin’s theory of kinship, the father is after all, according to the idea of kinship, not supposed to marry the daughter but to give her away to some other man.

A closer look at Rubin’s usage of the category “women” reveals that is not completely consistent. For the most part her writing is consistent with a biological definition of woman, but she also writes about the “transvesticism” that permits a person of one biological sex to become a member of the other sex by the means of a special “sex change” ritual (Rubin 1975: 181). Here we have two incompatible definitions of the gendered categories. One that stems from “sexed” biology, and one cultural, where you become a member of a sex by participating in a ritual. There are of course no given definition of what a woman is like; all categories are potentially true as I wrote in the theoretical chapter. But using different definitions of what seems to be the same categories creates certain problems, interestingly Rubin touches this problem when she writes that [...the idea that men and women are two mutually exclusive categories must arise out of something other than a nonexistent “natural” opposition.] (Rubin 1975: 179f). Rubin does not deny that men and women are different, but she writes that from a natural standpoint “men and woman are closer to each other than either is to anything else” (Rubin 1975: 179) and that the suppression of male traits in females and traits categories in men suppresses all of mankind (Rubin 1975: 180). Rubin does not however elaborate further on what it could mean not to categorize men and women into mutually exclusive categories. Even though Rubin sees the possibility that the cultures she studies should loosen the idea that men and women are separate categories, it does not seem to cross her mind that she could do the same thing in her analysis of men and women. As we have seen, Rubin’s analysis depends on the fact that it is women who are being exchanged as women and not as something else. One important thing to remember is that even though the categories are used in the cultures that are studies it does not mean that the researcher should use the same categories in her understanding of said cultures. What categories a researcher should use should always be determined by the relevant theories, not the everyday usage of the categories in the neither the studied culture nor the researchers everyday culture.
For Rubin, gender includes both identification with one sex and that sexual desire is directed towards members of the opposite sex. Rubin also claims that “the incest taboo presuppose a prior, less articulated taboo on homosexuality” (Rubin 1975: 180). The reason for this is according to Rubin that since that “A prohibition against some heterosexual unions assumes a taboo against non-heterosexual unions” (Rubin 1975: 180 italics as in original) and that it is the same rules and relations that that create the oppression of women that suppress homosexual act and the oppressions of homosexuals. But Rubin also realizes that this is a simplified account of sexuality. There are a number of different forms of sexuality in the world, from “cross-cousin-sexual” where you have to marry your cousin, to institutionalized homosexuality. But these examples show according to Rubin that the idea of gender divisions and heteronormativity is ever present. Even though some cultures allow more freedom to express differences in gender and sexuality, all societies constrains the behaviours and personalities of men and women (Rubin 1975: 180f). As I wrote before, Rubin is not consistent in her writing about what constitute gender. If it includes identification with ones sex, how should we understand transsexuals? Being transsexual means by definition that you don’t identify with your sex. And if it means that your sexuality is directed to the opposite sex then homosexuals don’t have a gender, or at least a different gender than heterosexuals. When considering how pluralistic Rubin´s account of sexuality is, it is hard to understand why she continues to use homosexuality and obligatory heterosexuality as theoretical terms. Homosexuality and heterosexuality are western and relatively modern concepts and it is clear that Rubin understands that, even though it is not clearly written in the text. I think a better approach would have been to use a theory of how different cultures regulates sexuality and behaviour without using ideas of gender and heterosexuality which clearly only are understandable from a western perspective.

In the next part of this chapter I will leave the psychoanalytical viewpoint for a while when I go through the text “Gender: an ethnomethodological approach” by McKenna and Kessler

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3 The first known use of the word "homosexual" is from a text from 1869 by Karl-Maria Kertbeny (Journal of Homosexuality, Vol. 19, No. 1)
5.3 Gender: an ethnomethodological approach

In their book from 1978 Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKenna are trying to understand how gender is constructed and why this always results in the construction of only men and women and nothing else. The aim of their study is to find out what rules and characteristics are used in order to tell who is a man and who is a woman. In their view both the biological “sex” and the social “gender” is constructed, for them there is no distinction between the two and gender is the term used for both social and biological differences (McKenna & Kessler 1978: 5ff).

Throughout the book they are dividing the question of gender into three areas. Gender assignment, which is the gender you are assigned to at birth; gender identity, which refers to if you feel like a man or a woman (or in some cases as something else) and gender role, which is the prescribed behaviour for individuals of a certain gender in a society (McKenna & Kessler 1978: 8ff).

Their analysis is based on five parts; the first one is a cross culture analysis on how gender is viewed in other cultures and how gender is viewed and produced there (McKenna & Kessler 1978: chapter 2). The second part is an analysis on how the sciences of biology and medicine create gender and uphold the idea that there are two and only two unique genders (McKenna & Kessler 1978: chapter 3). The third part in the fourth chapter is about development aspect of gender and includes study on how children draw and identifies boys and girls (McKenna & Kessler 1978: chapter 4). The fourth one consists of interviews with transsexuals on how they see themselves and how others categorize their gender (McKenna & Kessler 1978: chapter 5) and the fifth one is a research on how people characterize drawings of individuals with a mixture of gender specifying features, (long hair, breasts, penis, vagina, and so on) (McKenna & Kessler 1978: chapter 6).

In their cross cultural analysis McKenna and Kessler uses an example where a child gets an “intersexed” gender assignment to draw the conclusion of “…the possibility of a third gender category”, (McKenna & Kessler 1978: 37). Even though there seems to be a lack of reliable data on the subject of the existence of a third gender (McKenna & Kessler 1978: 37), their reluctance to make a clearer statement seem a bit odd to me. From my theoretical perspective there is no reason to doubt that there could be an infinite numbers of genders assigned to
newborns. When considering McKenna and Kessler’s otherwise very radical views on gender, why is the existence of cultures where there is a third gender so hard for them to accept?

Even though McKenna and Kessler does not assume that you have to be a man or a women they still assume that being male or female are valid categories and useful for our understanding of what people are and how they behave. McKenna and Kessler never question the rightness of making gender attribution and they never try to explain what a gender attribution can and cannot be. It seems to be related to the categories of men and women, but they also claim that it can be related to the categories of hunter or potter (McKenna & Kessler 1978: 40), but from the context in which this appears it seems that they mean that being a man could mean being a hunter, not that the category of hunter in itself is a gender category. In the book they write that “there has never been a report of a culture with no gender categories” (McKenna & Kessler 1978: 37), but if this statement is true or not depends on our definition of gender categories. And in the same way that western anthropologists comes from a culture where we assume the existence of only men and women we also comes from a culture where we assume the existence of genders. Since according to my theory all categories are correct there is no absolute need to divide them into gendered and non-gendered categories. Returning to the cross cultural analysis, McKenna and Kessler claims that in some cultures the role that people performed and not their genitals was seen as the criteria for if that person where man or woman. But if this was the case how is it possible to distinguish between gender roles and a division of labour? Only by assuming that for instance weaving is a female attribute can you say that someone who is weaving is a woman. Does this mean that the idea that roles can determine gender is wrong? Not necessarily, one way to interpret it is to say that some cultures have an inherent essentialistic view of what it means to be male or female, like a woman (someone who were assigned the female status at birth) is supposed to weave, but that this essential role can be changed if it is viewed as unfit for this particular individual. (This supports my idea of gender as a general rule of thumb that can be more or less rigid).

In their examination of biology McKenna and Kessler says that the biological facts about men and women are grounded in everyday attribution on who is a man or a woman. They first determine who is male or female and only after that, different biological criteria such as gonads or chromosomes are viewed to be male or female. I believe this is a very interesting point, but it does not answer the question of what a man or a woman is or how that attribution is made. After all most people can very quickly agree on the gender of most individuals and
this means that there must be some common criteria for almost all men or women that make it possible for us to determine an individual’s gender.

To McKenna and Kessler gender is what you are described as, you are a man if you are regarded and treated as such (McKenna & Kessler 1978: 39). For McKenna and Kessler what defines a person as a man is if he has a cultural penis. A cultural penis is “… one that is assumed to exist and which, is believed, should be there” (McKenna & Kessler 1978: 154), since a penis usually can’t be seen, it cannot be the reason why people believe a person is a man. Instead the penis is assumed to be there if an individual have other characteristics that are seen as male. Further, a cultural penis is something that belongs to men; a woman can have a physical penis and still be defined as a woman if the attributing person is able to ignore the penis culturally (McKenna & Kessler 1978: 154). This raises the question what the cultural penis really is, the terminology looks suspiciously circular; it is something that a man has if you believe he is a man and something he does not have if you believe she is a woman. You attribute someone a man if he has a cultural penis, and he has a cultural penis if he behaves according to what you believe a man should behave. Here I think McKenna and Kessler are making a crucial error. We must make a distinction between how we define what it means to be male and how we in everyday life recognize someone as male. Another possibility is that most people have neither a clear definition of what a man or a woman is, nor a typical way to recognize someone as male nor female. Perhaps there are only more or less arbitrary “rules of thumb” that are used; rules that are almost always working and therefore never questioned.

Given the fact that the purpose of McKenna and Kessler’s study is to understand how people construct gender in everyday life it is perhaps not so strange that they don’t see the need for how people define what male or female is. McKenna and Kessler claim that their own uses of the gendered nouns come from the attribution they made in interaction with that individual (McKenna & Kessler 1978: 19). When discussing gender identity McKenna and Kessler claims that the question of gender identity only can be answered through self attribution, you have male gender identity if you feel like a male and female if you feel like a woman (McKenna & Kessler 1978; 8f). The cause of your gender identity is according to McKenna and Kessler probably prenatal hormones (McKenna & Kessler 1978: 121) but one question that never gets asked is how someone is able to identify with one gender or the other. For someone to feel like a male that person must have information on what maleness is. It can’t be
gender assignment that is the cause of one’s gender identity because then there would be no transsexuals. And being attributed to the category male cannot be enough because that requires that both those who attribute and the individual who gets attributed knows what it means to be male. If a girl grows up without any knowledge of males or “maleness”, for instance in an all female society, would it be possible for her to be a transsexual and have the desire to become a man? Even if prenatal hormones is the cause of gender identity how can for instance a transsexual know she feels like a women if what makes her a woman is that she is attributed as one? The only way out of this circularity is to define that something makes us either male or female. One can imagine that what attracts transsexual is the male role or perhaps more probably a dislike of their biological sexed characteristics such as a penis or breasts and a desire to have what they see as the correct one.

The fact that McKenna and Kessler’s does not make a distinction between the definition of what a man and a female is and what characteristics that are used to label someone a man or a woman can cause some confusion on what their finds really mean. After all it is possible to view someone as a man because of his physical appearance and later come to the conclusion that you where wrong and that the person actually where a woman based on your definition of what it means to be a woman.

In the next book that I analyze Connells “Gender and power” we leave the micro level for a more macro levelled structural approach to male and female


5.4 Gender and power

Robert Connells book is an attempt to create a “systematic social theory of gender” and investigate how different gender issues fits together (Connell 87: ix-x). The book has four parts and an introduction. In the introduction some basic facts about the different situation men and women have are outlined. The first part consists of three chapters on gender theories. The second part is about the social structures of gender. The third examine personality from a gendered perspective and the last discuss gender from a political and ideological perspective.

Since my purpose is to study Connell’s views on gender my focus will be on part two and three. In the first chapter of part two Connell argue that there are three major structures that affect gender. These are power, sexual division of labour, and what Connell refers to as cathexis, a structure that has to do with desire and the production of hetero- and homosexuality. It also incorporates gendered antagonism such as hating men or women, distrust or trust in gendered relations and the emotional relationship regarding the rearing of children (Connell 1987: 97).

Power can according to Connell be a lot more then brute force. It can be to have access to more resources. It can also be the ability to define what is true or morally correct. Even though many acts of power seem to be individual, an understanding of structure is necessary to make power intelligible. Power is mostly in the hands of men, who arrange things in order to make it difficult for women to get access to the male power structures (Connell 1987: 107). But men’s power is not without constrains, if monogamous marriage is part of the male hegemonic practise then adultery creates tensions between men and in order to uphold the definitions of hegemonic masculinity homosexuals and other who undermine those distinctions often is subject to oppressive actions. There are also institutions where women have power, such as friendship network and non-market productions as well as institutions where men’s powers are more concentrated such as the military. This makes the gendered power structures divided into central cores that are controlled by men and more peripheral areas where the power structures are more contested (Connell 1987: 108f). To Connell power is also a practise, sometimes disorderly and filled with anomalies. In some local settings women can have control in areas that are considered male. This can be the origin of a cultural change but it can also provoke actions to re-establish the cultural male norms into this setting.
These policing actions are something that requires energy and the spending of resources which in itself can be a limiting factor to men’s powers (Connell 1987: 108ff).

What is interesting for me is that Connells definitions of power do not include any gendered dimensions; it seems that according to Connell power is not in itself gendered. Instead power is something that men have more of than women, even though women still can have power especially in some situations. Connell here gives the impression that he is referring to the statistical correlation that we can observe that individuals who are males also have more power. But if this is the case how should we understand the concept of male power structures? From the text it seems that a male power structure occurs when being male and having qualities that are in accord with the idea of how one are to behave as a man are rewarded with power. But Connell also writes about situations where women have power. Are we supposed to understand those as female powers structures or just occasions where women happen to be in charge? What further complicates the issue is that Connell’s practise approach makes it plausible that women can have power in male power structures The problem here is that having power because one is male and behave according to male expectation is viewed as different from having power because one is behaving in accordance with other social norms such as being white or having a specific social background.

The simplest version of the sexual division of labour is an allocation of different jobs to different categories of people. When this becomes a constraint on practise a social structure is emerging. One example is that men get different jobs then women, something which is seen in almost all gender studies in workplaces. This in turn leads to different training and education of men and women. A consequence of this is that it becomes rational for employer to hire men and women to different jobs (Connell 1987: 99ff). This sexual division of labour goes beyond the individual workplace. It is instead a process that creates categories of workers where we get special occupations that are considered female, some jobs such as receptionist or airhostess couples special skills with a particular femininity, some jobs are associated with a gay personality such as the fashion industry and others with a more dominant masculinity like in business (Connell 1987: 101ff). Connell argue that gender divisions are a fundamental part of a capitalist society where the two most important principles of organisation are the gendered logic of accumulation and the political economy of masculinity. Gender based accumulation is when economic benefits are accumulated to some groups more than others. This creates an incentive for men who in general benefit from this accumulation to preserve
the exclusion of other groups from this accumulation practise. The political economy of masculinity is when the definition of masculinity is mobilized as an economic resource. The fact that men should not engage in child care is very deep seated and since men to a larger degree than women control the division of labour it is “their collective choice not to do childcare” (Connell 1987: 106) and this help keep men in power (Connell 1987: 105f).

The description that Connell makes on how work is allocated and how this leads to differences in education which in turn makes difference of hire practises rational can from my perspective be viewed in two ways, one as a description of something unique to gender and one as something that is general to many structures of labour relations. How Connell views this is not obvious from the text, on one hand he writes about how jobs get allocated to different people, not just men and women. But on the other hand all of the examples are gender based, and the ideas of a specific gender based accumulation and a political economy of masculinity seems to point to the fact that he sees masculinity as something different from other kinds of structures and categories. I especially find it hard to understand why a general accumulation of economic benefit to men should create an incentive for a man to preserve the exclusion of women into a group more than the exclusion of a man. Any kind of inclusion into an economic group of this kind will be a threat to the accumulation of benefits to the people already in the group. One might argue that men have ideological and cultural reasons to only include men into a group or that people have incentives to invite people into an organisation if they believe that they themselves will benefit from it but that is not what Connell is arguing here. The only reason I can see to why Connell includes this kind of argumentation is a belief that men somehow are different than women simply because of their status as men.

Sexuality and emotional attachments is according to Connell something social, there are structures that governs how and under what circumstances a person can become emotionally involved in another (Connell 1987; 111f). What differentiates these structures that Connell refers to as cathexis from the structures of labour and power is that they in many cases require some kind of reciprocity and are not necessarily based of a common experience or situation. In heterosexuality which is the hegemonic sexuality in most part of the world this reciprocity is unequal in its exchange since men have more power than women (Connell 1987: 113). Sexuality is regulated both as a set of prohibitions such as -you cannot desire your relatives; and incitement -you have the right to love someone of the opposite sex. The structures of
sexuality creates standardized sexual appeal, men are supposed to be masculine and even more important, women are supposed to be feminine. The structures that creates heterosexuality also creates the definition of the categories within a partner can be found, and maybe more important the categories where a partner cannot be found (Connell 1987: 112).

From Connell’s earlier description of power I find it hard to distinguish the principle of power which is to define what is true or morally correct from the structure of cathexis which defines who you can or cannot desire. According to Connell sexual relations differs from other relations in the sense that they sometimes require reciprocity and that they are not necessarily based on common experiences. But I cannot see the advantage of making these kinds of distinctions even though it is not false in any way to add a structure that deals exclusively with what is right or wrong sexually from other aspects of right or wrongness. When Connell is referring to inequality in heterosexual relationship because men have more power than women I think he is making a mistake. From he’s description of power earlier we cannot draw the conclusion that there is a rule that men have more power than women in a relation, although it is probably true that they often have. What we can say however is that powers are rarely equally distributed in any relation and that it will shift depending of setting and over time. Connells practised based approach makes it even harder to understand the advantages of analyzing power from a gendered perspective

Connell refers to gender as a historical process in the sense that it gives a particular content to a specific category. He does make a distinction between biologically determined categories of sex such as child birth and suckling and the social categories of gender that is created by social practise and politics. Social categories do not always have a set of shared interests. As an example Connell writes that although “twins” is a social category there is no easily recognizable interest that all twins share (Connell 1987: 137). A common interest occurs when there is a possibility for advantage or disadvantage for collective practise. In the case of sexual categories oppression and inequality creates a common interest. Connell also stress that common interest does not have to be articulated, there are groups with motives for collective actions that for different reasons are not able to realize them. One example is according to Connell female workers in the Soviet Union (Connell 1987: 138). Connell describes gender not only as individuals but also as a property of collectives and historical perspectives. Gender is not determined by biology but deals with it in the sense that gender is a practise regarding the reproductive divisions of male and female which creates a demarcation from other social
practises (Connell 1987: 140). Connell writes here that there is a difference between groups that does not have a common interest and groups that have but cannot articulate this. I question this first because I believe that if a social category can be thought of it is also possible to create situations where this group can benefit from collective practises. And even if we could not think of such situations we cannot in any conceivable way have knowledge of all interest a group possible can have. Connell writes that we are to view gender as a property of collectives and a practise regarding the reproductive division and male and female but he never argues for why these kinds of division is important to make from a sociological perspective. Connell seem to be arguing that gender is important because of the practise to make a demarcation between the female and the male but the fact that it is a common distinction to make is not in itself enough to make a sociological theory.

When it comes to the psychology of gender the most common perception according to Connell is that men and women have different personalities, temperament and abilities (Connell 1987: 167). But although the focus have been on differences most of the facts shows that men and women are similar and that clear differences are hard to find (Connell 1987: 170). There have been lots of studies where these differences have been examined, usually in the way that one set of traits have been viewed as female and another set of traits are viewed as male, where a male trait is something that statistically correlates with being male and female traits with being female (Connell 1987: 167f). In more advanced theoretical models there are a number of female and male sexual types. One example is Beauvoir’s view that a woman can be for instance a prostitute, a lesbian or an independent woman (Connell 1987: 175). These femininities, the sexual types of women does not need to have anything in common according to Connell and can in some cases have more in common with masculinities, the male sexual types. What the femininities do have in common is that they are “formed in relation to the image and experiences of the female body” (Connell 1987: 179), the social definitions of woman’s place and the opposition of the feminine and masculine and this makes the static ideas of sexual character have to be replaced by theories and histories that deal with the production of sets of psychological forms. To do this Connell uses the three major structures that affect gender discussed earlier and show that they create a gender order in society as a whole formed around the structural fact that men have a global dominance over women. Most men benefit from this domination which means that most men will try to maintain practises that institutionalize this domination (Connell 1987: 179). The global domination is also the basis for “the hegemonic masculinity”, that one form of being a man is
considered superior in relation to subordinated masculinities for instance gay men. Connell claims that there is no corresponding hegemonic femininity; the reason for this is that women have very few institutional power structures available where they have power over other women. This also have the effect that there are no subordinated femininities and Connell concludes that this leads to more ways to be a woman compared to being a man (Connell 1987: 183ff).

Connell claims that femininities are formed in relation to the image of the female body. The consequences of this thought require serious consideration given Connell’s anti essentialistic view of male and female. Obviously these ideas refer to social experiences of the body; the body in this sense cannot have any causal relation to femininities without becoming essentialistic. But in what way are these social experiences different from the according to Connell biological activities of child birth and suckling? And if they are formed in the image of the female body does this mean that there are social experiences that men cannot have because they lack a female body? And if this is the consequences of Connell’s theory then biology in practise determines how social experiences must be understood. In hegemonic masculinity there is a correct way to behave and if someone violates these rules different types of punishments or sanctions can be administered. But I believe that this is true for all structures not just hegemonic male one, another question that should be asked if it is the structures that are male or if it refers to the individuals in the structure. If it is the first example that is true it is possible to have a male structure that consists of all females. If the second example is true then we again have the situation where biology determines how structures are analyzed.

The last book that I will analyze is Judith Butlers “Bodies that matters” where the perspective is poststructural and influenced by psychoanalytical ideas
5.5 Bodies that matters.

In her book “gender trouble” from 1990 Judith Butler introduces the idea of gender as performativity. Gender as performativity means that gender is produced through a reiterative practice; a woman does female things because it is culturally expected of her to do that. And by doing what is culturally expected of her the discourse of what women are gets reproduced. This has sometimes been interpreted in a way that would make gender a deliberate and singular act or that gender is something idealist\(^4\) or immaterial, and in “Bodies that matters” Butler introduces the concept of materialisation in part to answer this kinds of interpretations. Butler does not deny the existence of sexual differences but she claims that those differences are regulated by practices that marks and forms the materiality of the body. For Butler sex as a category is always normative; an individual categorized into a sex realizes the norms that go along with that categorization and will in the normal case comply with them. This compliance with norms reinforces the view of what sex is and how sexed individuals should behave. Gender is not simply something that is imposed on a given sex or even a given body. What the body and the sex is, it’s “materialization” is constantly recast through the dynamics of power and norms. It is also impossible to distinguish the gendered identity from an individual’s general identity, identity is always gendered. This gendered identity is linked with other norms on what to be, and makes some identifications, such as heterosexuality possible and disallows other (Butler 1993: 2).

Butler’s idea of materialization is at least partly something sociological; the process of how identities are formed in a culture is something that can be investigated through sociological investigations. That is not to say that materialization is strictly sociological, how materialization should be understood and treated in practical research is a topic that needs to be investigated even though it is beyond the scope of this thesis. The theory of this thesis is that categories are arbitrary constructions and that changing the content of a category or how it is used is impossible without creating a new category distinct from the old one and this makes how Butler uses categories and theorizes about them central to my analysis.

One thing that Butlers theory of materialization has in common with other gender theories is that it does not make a distinction between how the categories are understood in an everyday perspective and how the theory explain the categories. How the idea of the lesbian is

\(^4\) Idealist should here be interpreted as the philosophical position that everything is consisting of ideas
materialized in everyday life must be distinguished from what it is said to be within the context of materialization. Materialization is a theory about how the world is created over time by our actions and thereby creates the illusion of stable categories with innate properties, (Butler 1993: 11). A problem with this analysis is that if the concept “women” is materialized in one way in a specific culture and another way in another culture, how can we then claim that they both are part of the category “women” in any meaningful way? Materialization does not answer the question of what a woman or a lesbian is. What it explained is how a lesbian or a woman is created. But it is also a theory with political ambitions; to show that categories do not need to be materialised the way they are. Butlers view is that invoking a category always means referring to something normative (Butler 1993: 1). A problem is that we must make a distinction between what is objective, such as the facts that in our culture it is something different to be materialized into a heterosexual than being materialized into a homosexual; and what is subjective and normative, such as being a heterosexual is considered normal and good and being homosexual is considered unnatural and bad. An individual can be viewed as gay both by a homophobic group and by a gay community but the attitude the two groups has towards the gay individual will probably be very different. The norm that a man is not to have sex with another man is not the same thing as saying that that man is a homosexual. In fact the ban against gay sex is a lot older than the categorization of people as homosexual.5 Butler’s own use of categories is very hard to accurately pinpoint. Her main interest is how categories are used in society, how they are discursively produced and how they can be used in a political context (Butler: 1993 30).

Butler is herself troubled by identity categories, (Butler 1993: 228f). My interpretation of Butler’s writing is that a materialized category becomes something real in the sense that being a lesbian is something more just its definitions and the consequences of those definitions. Since Butler also describes categories as normative we end up in a situation where norms create what is real. For Butler this is not a problem; on the contrary, one of her aims is to show that the heterosexual norms and behaviours are not more normal or original than the lesbian or “drag” way of life and by doing that change or rematerialize the world and how we view it, (Butler 1993: 127f). Butler's problem with the identity of different classifications is basically the same as the other theories of gendered categories, that they must be viewed as

5 The first known use of the word “homosexual” is form 1869 (Journal of Homosexuality, Vol. 19, No.1) and ban against homosexual acts goes back at least to the book of Leviticus that is believed to be written 550-400 bc Rendtorff & Kugler (2006: 15ff)
real in order to use them as a basis for an analysis of society. But if they are real the categories themselves must contain information that makes it possible to distinguish between what belongs in the category and what does not. This gives categories an essential meaning that cannot change without destroying the categories and change them into something else. Butler’s approach to this problem seems to be to use the categories in her theory as understood by some general understanding of the category by the dominant culture in society.

For Butler language itself have a relation to the material. And for her it is impossible to have any knowledge that is outside language, (Butler 1993: 67). This does not mean that Butler subscribes to an idea of linguistic constructionism, on the contrary she claims that this would mean that sex is either unconstructed or that it is part of a linguistic monism where everything is language (Butler 1993: 6). The material world always appears to us through our ability to hear, see or through any of our other senses. But what appears to us is also determined by how our language is referring to the material. Butlers language theory is influenced by Derrida´s theory of language, for both Butler and Derrida language, thoughts and matter are similar and influence each other, there are no reality independent of language and thoughts. There can be no references to a pure body that exists before or outside of language (Butler 1993: 10), and language does not discover a given body. It is instead performative in the way it contours and delimits the bodies it is referring to (Butler 1993: 30).

Butler uses the term citationality where an object gets its identity from a continuous citation of law like norms. Similar to a couple becoming married when a priest pronounces them husband and wife, someone is considered to be a lesbian because people keeps calling her a lesbian. The rules of what a lesbian is and how she should behave are continuously quoted in the sense that people talk about lesbianism in the same way over and over and thereby create the idea of what it means to be lesbian (Butler 1993: 13f). This definition will change as culture changes and it is not universal in any sense of the word, for instance the definition of lesbians within the homosexual community can be different from the definitions within the dominant culture. Both these categorizations will affect the individuals that view themselves as a lesbians and it will cause them to change through the process of materialization. Butler’s use of citationality also have the effect that a category becomes real and “true” when it has been quoted enough to be part of a specific culture. Butler writes that “materialization… “produces the effect of boundary, fixity and surface” (Butler 1993: 9). But also that sex emerges from a process of materiality (Butler 1993: 10). From the theoretical perspective of
this thesis no category can ever be truer or realer than any other, categories are never a part of the world, they are only lenses through the world is seen and from this perspective the category of sex is no different from any other. From my argument it follows that a category like lesbian and the content of that category such as being attracted to female is identical. Butler however seem to be arguing differently, for her what it means to be lesbian can change but it will still remain the same in the sense that it is still lesbian. This produces two distinct matters, categories that draw up the boundaries of the possible analysis and the content of those categories that are changing due to materialization. But if the category becomes materialized and the content of the category also becomes fixated through citationality this will mean that categories are something more than its content. This would make being a lesbian something more than being seen as one, seeing yourself as one or having some property that are viewed as lesbian, such as being attracted to women. It would mean that the category of lesbianism exists in some objective way that transcends all properties that we now view as lesbian. The only conclusion that is possible to draw from this is that Butler view´s categories as something objectively real but unobtainable in the Kantian way, as something analytical unchangeable that is being created through the process of materialization and not as subjective concepts that only exists in the minds of the individuals that uses the concept. This is a very controversial claim and something that goes against Butlers own account of her theory. Nevertheless this is the only interpretation that I see possible in order to make sense of Butler´s writings.

Butler’s theory about gendered and sexual identities has been influenced by the psychoanalysis of Freud and to a greater extent Lacan. According to Lacan an individual have three levels within them. First is the imaginary which is the individuals’ perceptions, images and imaginations. It’s origin lies in the image that the individual have of himself, both as perceptions of the body itself and by mirroring yourself in other people. The second is the symbolic, which include spoken and written language and other symbolic systems that depends on codes and structures for its meaning. The symbolic is made up of signs that get its meaning in relation to other signs. To Lacan the subject is an effect of the symbolic. Every individual is both an element in such a structure that is made up of differences such as gender and a user of linguistic structure. In Lacan´s theory the human subject can be revealed through psychoanalytical methods. Lacan´s the third level is the real, the biological which exists prior to the imaginary and the symbolic and is independent of those (Carlson 2001: 189f). One of Lacans concepts that are most important to Butler is the idea of the phallus. To have the
The phallus is according to Lacan to be socially male and to be the phallus is to be socially female. This distinction is made when the child starts to use language and therefore becomes a symbolic individual. A girl wants to be and tries to be the phallus, first for the father and later for other men, whereas the boy will try to have the phallus for the mother as a child and later for other women, (Carlson 2001: 1921f). Since Butler does not believe in a distinction between the physical body and the social and psychological gender she reformulates Lacan's theory so the three levels collapses into the imaginary level and this has the effect that the phallus is not necessarily something that only men can have but also lesbian women because having the phallus does not need to be symbolized by the penis but can be symbolized by any body part. A lesbian would not have a phallus in a traditional sense and this would create a crisis to what it means to have a phallus. If women where to have this lesbian phallus this would lead to the possibility of different sexual and anatomical resignifications so that the phallus could mean something different from the heterosexual and masculine that it signifies today (Butler: 1993 88 ff). What I find interesting with Butlers deconstruction of Lacan's theory is that even though she question that the phallus have to be male, she never doubts the existence of the phallus itself. From her reasoning it is obvious the phallus is a part of those categories that I described in the earlier paragraph, those that are viewed as something objectively real but with a content that can change. Apparently there is a specific “male” sexuality symbolized by having the phallus even though it also can be a lesbian sexuality. For Butler it is clear that the phallus has a privileged status in today’s society and that is has it because of a reiterational practise (Butler 1993: 89). But the reiteration of a structure does not in itself make it obvious that this structure should be the basis for the understanding of a phenomenon. It can very well be so that what are seen as a phallus or a male sexuality are simply misinterpretations of phenomena that are best described as something else. From a psychoanalytical viewpoint the idea of the phallus is created in order to explain the specificities of male and female sexuality. If these norms are to be questioned why should we keep using a terminology just because it is commonly referred to?

The main difference between my perspective and Butlers, is that she treats categorizes as real but always changing, whereas I treat categories as mental objects that only have value when trying to understand or change the world and need to have a corresponding theory that links the category causally or intentionally to the question that is studied. Butlers view that the body is not naturally given or that there is no given definition of where the body should begin and end, is a analysis that you as easily can draw from my theory as from Butlers post-
structural theory of materialization, but her unwillingness to accept any kind of stable references must mean her own use of these references can refer to anything that the idea of materiality allows it to be. To Butler categories only appear to be stable, but a stable category is vital for Butlers own analyses of what categories are and how they can be used. This has created a debate about if materialization means that gender must have a central core that is given or if gender can be materialized in any imaginable way. No matter what solution to this problem you choose, this creates a problem for Butler’s view on categories, you will end up with either an idealist gender position where gender can mean anything or an essentialist position where you need to have at least a core that is unchanging and given. This means that she ends up in a position where she both assumes categories as something given at a specific moment and as something constantly changing. As an example we see that in the chapter “phantasmatic identification” Butler writes “if a man can identify with his mother and produce desire from that identification”… “he has already confounded the psychic description of stable gender development. And if the same man desires another man, or a woman, is his desires homosexual, heterosexual, or even lesbian?” (Butler 1993: 99). Here Butler starts by identifying someone as a “man” which means that she must have a definition, or at least a general idea of the category of man means. When she later writes that “he has already confounded the psychic description of stable gender development” (Butler 1993: 99) she is making a distinction between being a man (the “he has already”) and having a gender (the “confounded the psychic description of stable gender development”) but if the gendered description is confounded, how can Butler identify the individual as a man in the first place? One can of course argue that she identify him as a man because of his male biology but that would mean that she does make a distinction between biological and the social, something which she always denies.

To me categories are only subjective views of the world that can never tell us anything unless coupled with a theoretical link to causality. That’s why we in order to understand the discrimination against lesbians cannot refer to a citational practise but to a theory that explains norms and morals and why those norms lead to discriminatory behaviour. Of course one can argue that the purpose of Butlers theory is different from mine, Butler’s agenda is not out to explain but to change, to problematicize categories, make way for a new understanding of them and for a different political agenda (Butler 1993: 30). If as Butler claims, the contents of

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*It is impossible to make a thorough examination of these claims in this thesis. As examples of this debate see for instance Carlson 2001 for a discussion in Swedish or Vasterling 1999 in English*
categories changes over time, what is the connection between the earlier use of a term and the present usage of it? Is there a causal relation between how the category queer was used in the 1950s compared to what it means now and how it might be used in the future? When analysing categories there seems to be two possible points of departures, the first is to start from some sort of definition of what you want to study, as an example: a lesbian is a woman that is attracted to other women. The other is to study the use of the terms itself: where lesbianism becomes the study of how the word lesbianism is used. The problem is that Butler claim to use neither and this causes a lot of confusion and diminishes the usefulness of her theory.


6 Conclusions

In this chapter I will see what conclusions that can be drawn when analyzing my material in light of my theories. Since my theories are quite different from the theories used by the authors of the texts I have used, my analysis will probably be very different from their view. There are a lot of similarities between the texts in my material, but there are also considerable differences. Three of the texts Beauvoir’s, Rubin’s and Connell’s investigates what it means to be a woman in society and the other two McKenna and Kessler’s and Butlers investigate how the gendered concept in them self are viewed.

In my theoretical chapter I stress that all categories need to be accompanied by a theory or at least an idea about causality in order to make sense to the author. When reading my material I see that there are both differences and similarities between how the writers picture these links. The categories that are of interest to both me and the creators of these texts are the sexed or gendered categories, women and men, feminine and masculine. None of the writers seem to believe that men and women have an internal relation, men and women does not seem to be causally dependent on each other for their existence. The real interesting problem that all authors face is also the one that is at the core of the modern gender problem, how the relation between the sexed\gendered bodies and the social characteristics of men and women should be explained. The only one who seems to believe that biology play a significant causal part in the behavior of women is de Beauvoir, but her conclusion based on other facts is that women’s subjugation is not biological but social in character, an idea that in many ways founded the modern gendered perspective.

When explaining what causes women’s special situation they all use different theories each of which has different advantages and problems but none of them offers any real explanation to why they should be especially applicable to women. They all take the differences between men and women for granted and fail to make any distinction between correlation and causality. In this perspective Butlers idea on materiality is especially interesting, it is clearly an idea about causality, on how bodies are created. But not just any bodies but the bodies of men and women. The materialization process must therefore be internally related to those categories. What we must remember is that there is a difference between claiming that an
individual becomes affected by the norms of society and the claim that this is causing the existence of a category.

In my sample of texts there is a strong influence from psychoanalytical writers, Even though this selection undoubtedly is very skewed I still believe it tells us something about the influence that psychoanalysis has had on modern gender theories. From a theoretical gender perspective psychoanalysis have the benefit of supplying a theory of the development of male and female that is not obviously biological in nature. The problem is that it takes the male and female for granted, for de Beauvoir this is not so much of a problem, she regards men and women as different and psychoanalysis can provide her with an answer of why. For later writer who does not make a clear distinction between the social and the biological a psychoanalytical text have to be analyzed differently but at the centre is always the development of the boy and the girl and their development into different categories and here the idea of the phallus is essential to explain how this happens. By making the phallus something that both men and women can have Butler avoids making it essentially male, but she still claims that the phallus produces male sexuality, which is still is a reference to some unique “male” quality.

Other types of theories that are used in these texts are existentialist theory (Beauvoir), kinship theory (Rubin) ethnomethodological theory (McKenna & Kessler) and power, sexual division of labour, and cathexis, (Connell). What unite these theories is that are not only applicable to the male and the female, and it’s very hard for me to see how gendering these theories add anything to their usefulness even when analyzing the relation between the genders. This is after all the normal way to analyze problems in sociology when we deal with groups that are taken less for granted than men and women. The only reason for doing that seems to be to emphasize the importance of the difference between the male and the female. It seems unavoidable that theories about the male and female will either refer to some kind of inevitable male or female quality or essence or that they use the concept of gender as an addition on an existing theory without really considering how that addition really helps with the explanation. From this we can draw the conclusion that all of the authors use gender related ideas as analytical and theoretical tools, something which is in accordance to third of the views I found in my bachelor thesis that I describe in chapter three.
If we look how the gender concept have developed over time, we see that what started as a description of how social forces affected people in the category “women” different from those in the category “men” become a more and more intricate philosophical and theoretical discussion of how to understand and analyze this difference. This was probably inevitable given how granted we take the gender categories and the continued strive for an academic status of gender studies. One problem with this is that gender theories tend to more obscure and harder to grasp over time when theorists try to come to grips with the problem with gender theories. I am not sure if my ideas on gender solves anything but given the fact that the practical definition of men and women are based on perceived sexed biology I can’t see any workable solution that recognize this fact without resorting to some kind of biological assumptions about gender. Of course this does not mean that we should stop making gender studies, that women are not generally discriminated or that the relation between men and women are uninteresting, it only means that these questions should be studied as any other question without special theories regarding the identity of men and women.

The metatheoretical method did give me some new insights for how a theory should be developed. That causality should be the basis for analysing data is nothing new and have gained more interest among sociologists because of the theory of critical realism. Using gender theory as an example highlights the problem of using categories that are vaguely defined or have no obvious causal relation to the problem that are studied. A potential problem with this view is that in many cases we see such a strong correlation between group membership and the data that we collect that we must draw the conclusion that there is a causal relation there but we are unable to come up with any kind of causality that can explain these facts. In gender studies this can definitely be a problem but I believe it can be solved by acknowledging the fact that we don’t know what caused this correlation and that more research into it is needed.
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