



# **Feminist pedagogy meets men's studies?**

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# Feminist pedagogy

- Introduction to Masculinity Studies (BA course, Center for Gender Studies, Vilnius University, 2003-2007)
- Sociology and Anthropology of Gender (MA course, Dept. of Sociology, Vytautas Magnus University, 2011-current).
- An article about my experiences in teaching – “Who’s Afraid of Men? Researching Men and Teaching Masculinity Studies” (2007).
- A gender sensitive education: deconstruction of the concepts of “men” and “masculinity”, their interdependencies with class, race, sexual orientation; the reflection on student-teacher relations, relations between men and women students, and relations among men students.

# Feminist pedagogy and men's studies

- Among the problems facing feminist and masculinity teachers are how to conceptualize their categories and how to articulate the interdependencies and conflicts between them, their divisions, the effects of masculinities and men on women and of women and femininities on men (Kegan Gardner 2002, 9).

# Categories: theories and methodologies

- More attention to methodological issues in undertaking feminist- informed empirical research with men/teaching masculinity (Pini, Pease 2013).
- Methodological approaches to the study of men and masculinities should be interrogated (life history methods (Connell, 1995), critical autobiographies (Jackson, 1990), memory work (Pease, 2000) and autoethnography (Philaretou and Allen, 2006)).



# Teaching/research: power dynamics

- Research/teaching on men and masculinities thus should be understood as existing within the gendered social relations of university life.
- The research/teaching encounter between the woman researcher/teacher and male participant as illustrative of, and embedded in, the social relations of power, including gendered power (Pini, 2005).
- Female/male researchers need to consider how gender impacts on the process of the interview. For instance, while feminist research encourages women who interview women to do so with solidarity, empathy and friendship, this may not always be appropriate when men interview men (research in men's prisons – young female researcher vs. male researcher; ruling class men or violent men).



# Teaching/research: power dynamics

- Power in research/teaching as multi-dimensional and fluid rather than singular and fixed, so that the gendered power relationship of female researcher/male researched is rendered visible in all its dimensions.

# Classroom as a space of control

- In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, bell hooks examines the classroom as a locus of oppression and as a potential site for liberation.
- bell hooks: economic model of education: the professor has the currency of knowledge and deposits it into the students' minds where it is stored and withdrawn at a later date.
- Classroom rituals of control and the unjust exercise of power frequently reinforce this dynamic of the powerful professor and the passive, objectified student. This results in the students' primary lesson being obedience to authority. Such a classroom reinforces societal hierarchies and domination.

# Classroom as a transformative space

- Central to bell hook's vision of classroom transformation is the goal of the classroom becoming a democratic setting where everyone's presence is affirmed and valued.
- Teaching encourages everyone to become more engaged in sharing and reflecting on gender/masculinity issues.
- The teacher must move attention away from her own voice to that of her students'. hooks' democratic classroom challenges the fundamental assumptions of hierarchical education and she recognizes that this decentralization of authority.
- An effective feminist pedagogy for men must raise their consciousness to an awareness of many contradictions of masculinity (Orr 1993). I would add contradictions in feminism too.

# Pitfalls and failures

- Attention to the issues of embodiment, sexuality, and emotion and an array of conflicts *within* masculinity. Men as “gender traitors” (Robinson 2002, 144).
- But also some pitfalls particularly when one tries to articulate the binary of “good” and “bad”, hegemonic and alternative masculinities. This binary often does not work in explaining empirical material (be it a film or literary work).
- Concerns about the failure of research on men and masculinities to destabilize gendered power would seem particularly urgent given the ascendancy of neo-conservatism and associated backlashes against feminism.

# Pitfalls and failures

- Masculinity and feminism are fantasies, but they invoke differently situated desires. As contemporary social phenomena, the two exist in complex presents with which individuals and groups identify differently, yet both simultaneously appear as ideals that are not realized here and now. (Kegan Gardiner 2002, 11).
- Judith Kegan Gardiner: Masculinity is a nostalgic formation, always missing, lost, or about to be lost, its ideal form located in a past that advances with each generation in order to recede just beyond its grasp.
- Jonathan A. Allan: To study/teach masculinity is not just to study the bigger topics of toxicity, violence, and sexuality, but also to recognize the ways that these bigger topics affect and inform the daily practices, the quotidian, and the seemingly meaningless, which are, in many ways, meaningful.



# Pitfalls and failures

- Jonathan A. Allan: “Masculinity, I argue, resides in a cruel optimism that highlights not only the shame of masculinity, but also the dread that is felt in having been shamed, being shamed, and the possibility, if not promise, of being shamed once more and again”.
- Judith Kegan Gardiner: Feminism, in contrast, is a utopian discourse of an ideal future, never yet attained, whose myths celebrate alliances that manage conflicts within comprehensive metanarratives and narratives of comprehension.

# Pitfalls and failures

In this regard, feminism and teaching masculinity or men's studies essentially interrelated:

- “There is always some truth in the suspicion that feminist study of masculinity means attacking men” (Robinson 2002, 151).
- We might say, in fact, that the true subject of masculinity studies (if not men's studies) is how men have responded to feminist constructions of masculinity. (Robinson 2002, 147).



# Sexism

- prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender, especially against women and girls.
- behaviors, conditions, or attitudes that perpetuate stereotypes of gender roles based on one's biology (biological sex).
- lower pay for equal work, unpaid domestic work, or devalued feminized work.
- perpetuation of traditional gender roles portrayed and reinforced in the media.
- a belief that one gender is superior to or more valuable than another gender.
- sexist action that leads to the mistreatment of both women and men at the individual as well as institutional level.

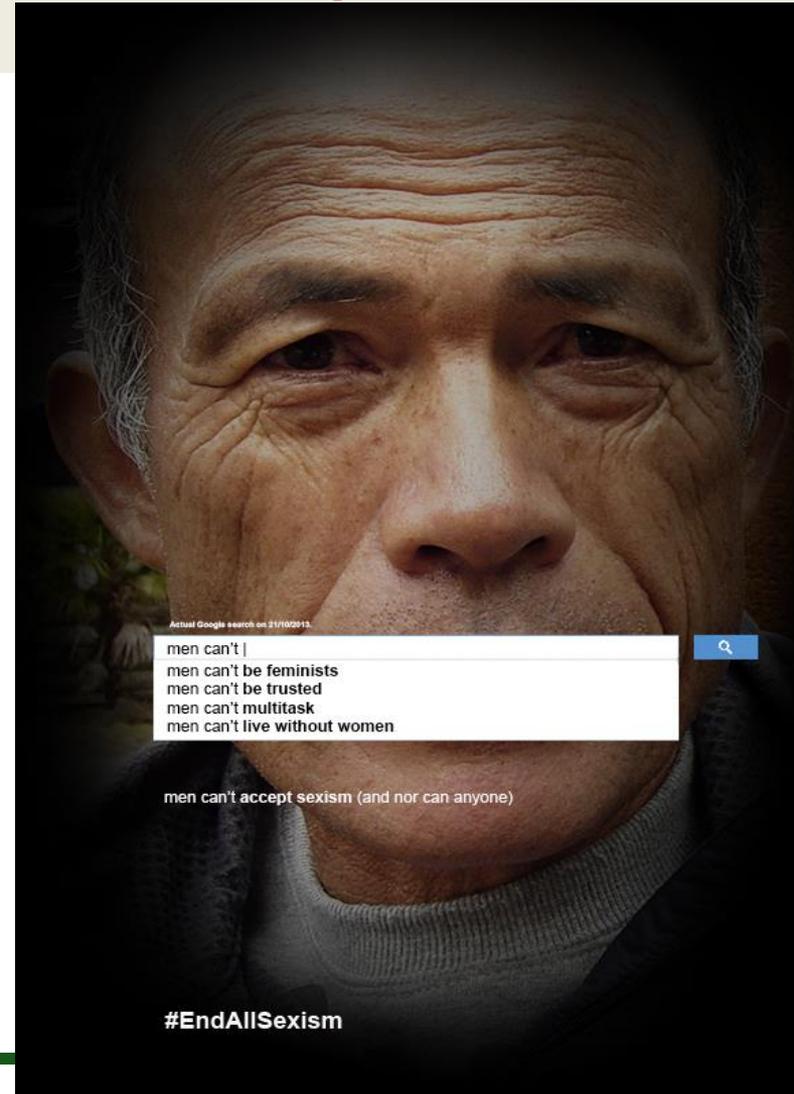


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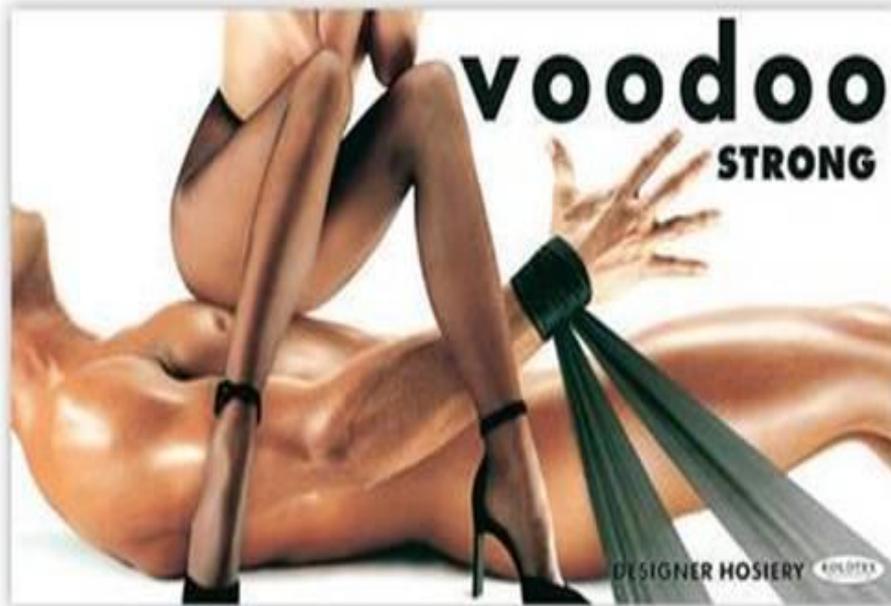


# Misogyny and misandry

- the extreme form of sexism
- hatred of females
- hatred of males
- traditional binary gender system and its outsiders (for instance, bisexuals, transgender, intersexual and queer people).
- biology as destiny
- Are you a "real man"?
- Why are you not "womanly" enough?
- Labelled "abnormal" or freak for not following the "normal path" of becoming/being men and women.



# Reverse or “second” sexism



- men as victims of discrimination and social gender expectations.
- to address the limitations of gender roles on both sexes including men.
- hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic femininity as oppressive concepts for both women and men.
- for instance, gay or bisexual men are viewed as traitors to male privilege and as threats to male dominance and the natural order.
- men who are even slightly effeminate and not necessarily gay are suspect.
- David Benatar, *The Second Sexism: Discrimination against Men and Boys* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).



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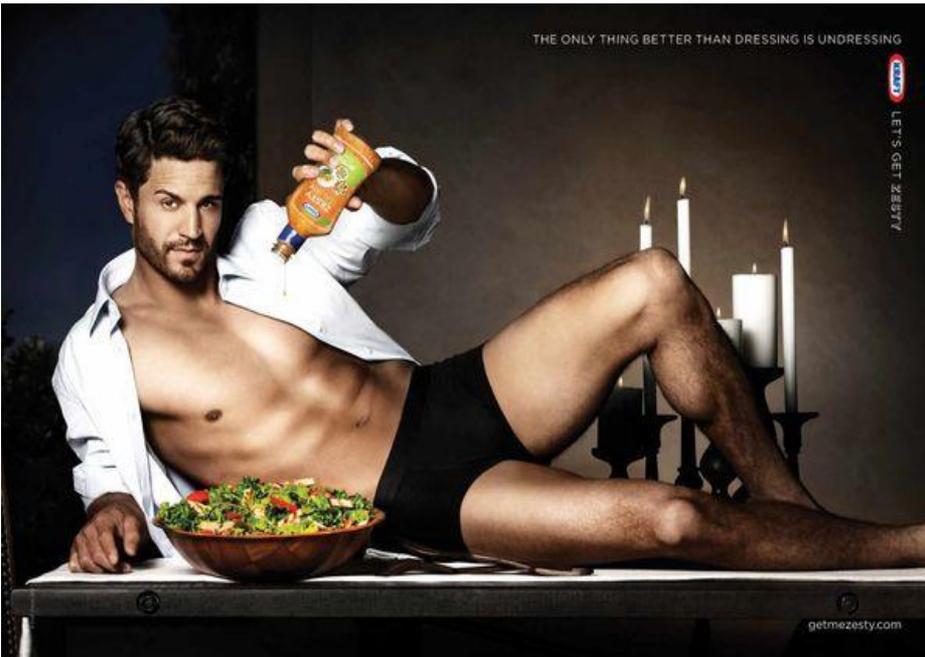
# Reverse or “second” sexism



- after divorce men can face burdensome alimony payments even in situations where their ex-wives are earning substantially more than they are (it is based on the reactionary image of female domesticity and male breadwinning stereotypes).
- David Benatar: men receive custody of children in only about 10 percent of divorce cases in the United States (in Lithuania, women receive custody of children in about 95 percent of divorce cases).
- physical violence (including sexual violence) against men is often minimized or seen as normal.
- To be fair, sexism against men is often perpetrated not by women but by other men.

# Reverse or “second” sexism

- the social system harms both women and men who are caught up in a systematic limitation due to their prescribed gender roles
- men suffer because of the same gender role stereotypes that hurt and restrict women – but in different ways.
- men are supposed to be active and violent – so their claims to domestic rights are denigrated and violence directed against them is shrugged off as natural (“Men are violent by nature”).



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# Reverse or “second” sexism



- David Benatar:
- state policies and/or social norms that primarily encourage men, but rarely women, into military conscription and combat, causing millions of men to die or suffer physically and psychologically.
- men are also victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, but state institutions and society in general take such violence less seriously.
- He argues that sexual assault is underreported in case of both sexes; but the reporting rate is even lower when the victim is male, and if reported, people are less sympathetic to male victims.
- the shorter life expectancy of men as compared to women (in Lithuania, 68.5 for men and 79.5 for women).
- greater severity of the first sexism does not imply that the second sexism should be denied, ignored or tolerated.



# Women are not from Venus, and men are not from Mars



- Denaturalizing sex, the concept *sexism* suggests the solution to gender inequity is in changing our socially sexist culture and institutions.
- Extracting social behavior from biological determinism frees both women and men from stereotypic gender roles and expectations.
- The National Organization for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS) – progressive movement that emerged in the early 1970s: profeminism, gay-affirmation, antiracism, and enhancement of men’s lives.
- Warren Farrell and the National Coalition for Free Men (right-wing movement – “Men as a disposable sex”) – early 2000s.

# Women are not from Venus, and men are not from Mars



## NOMAS:

- the analysis of many major issues of average men's lives and the burdens of the traditional male role: fathering, workaholicism, aging, mental health, spirituality, competitiveness, sports, and prisons.
- A number of disadvantages of being a male
- the new banner of "Men's Culture": poetry, dance, music, and story-telling.
- "having fun" and "being silly" as "revolutionary" acts for men.
- sponsored such "task groups" as Men's Studies, Ending Men's Violence, Homophobia, Fathering, Gay Rights, Spirituality, Men and Mental Health, Men and Prisons, Child Custody, Men and Aging, Pornography and Prostitution, and Men's Culture.



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# Solutions?

- Not to conflate “masculinity” with “men” and to reject traditional/alternative model, good/bad masculinity, oppressor/oppressed paradigm.
- At the same time to free oneself of the individualizing illusion (an individualist approach to gender and masculinity).
- Rather, differences between genders, within genders, and outside of the standard gender binary need always to be articulated with reference to social hierarchies (Kegan Gardiner 2002, 13)
- To study/teach masculinity in relation to systems of power requires that we develop a more nuanced and sophisticated conceptualization of complicity and resistance (Robinson 2002, 151).

