‘Skateboarding is like dancing’: Masculinity as a performative visual culture in art education

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the construction of skateboard masculinity as a performative visual culture, related to the conditions for masculine subject positions in upper secondary school visual art and media education. The empirical material comes from visual ethnographic research in classroom and discourse analysis of one pupil’s skateboarding video and an interview with the same pupil. The results show that the masculinity performed in both the visual art classroom and in pupil’s skate video is complex and moves between homosocial expressions and intimacy, risk-taking and visual culture enacted as being cool and an outsider. The analysis implies a linkage to a neo liberal ideal in which the values of play and pleasure as a crucial aspect of counterculture are connected to entrepreneurial individualism, consumer creativity and market trends.

KEY WORDS

visual art education; masculinity; performative; visual culture; skateboard

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Visual art education and research in Sweden, a gendered history

Art education as a subject in Swedish schools has undergone many changes. The idea of free creative expression has influenced art education immensely, already in 1956 through the writings of Herbert Read. In this discourse children in particular should have opportunities to express their emotions through creative work. This was a break with the tradition of linear drawing and depiction, and it created a counter-discourse about free expression that is still predominant in visual art education (Lind, 2010; Lind, Hasselberg, & Kühlhorn, 1992; Nordström, 1994; Wikberg, 2014; Åsén, 2006). Through this change the school subject of art gradually transformed as it turned towards expressionism and romantic, modernist ideals. Dalton (2001) argues that this had led to a feminisation of the subject of art in schools in the west. According to Åsén (2006) there are three main themes in the history of visual art and visual art education: drawing as depiction, drawing as a means of expressing inner emotions and art as a means of communicating. Furthermore, these traditions co-exist in mixed layers within contemporary Swedish visual art education.

In the research on visual art education, the issue of gender differences has been a reoccurring topic. Recent research emphasises how children and young people use visual means to disrupt gender differences by trying out gendered subject positions in their visual representations (Göthlund & Lind, 2010; Hellman, 2013; Lind, 2010; Saar, 2008; Öhman-Gullberg, 2008). Gender differences in art education performance has been studied by Marner, Örtegren and Segerholm (2005) who demonstrate that girls outperform boys especially in visual art classes in school, and that art education is perceived by pupils as something feminine and as a pause from more important schoolwork. The notion of visual art as a subject for expressing emotions causes pupils to perceive the subject as feminine (Wikberg, 2014). The 2005 national evaluation of the compulsory school in Sweden suggests that working with film and digital media in visual art education would be motivating for boys (Skolverket, 2005). Nevertheless, this same evaluation points out that girls are more active in working with digital imaging than boys. This active interest in visual art probably has an impact on the academic grades, which works out to the girls' advantage (Skolverket, 2015). Furthermore, recent research in the field of visual art education stresses that child and youth culture should be regarded as visual culture and communication (Hellman, 2013; Lind, 2010; Öhman-Gullberg, 2006, 2008) and as aesthetic, creative events in public space (Andersson, 2006). Visual

culture here refers to how seeing is always a social and cultural construction that shapes people's ways of seeing and acting (Mirzoeff, 2002; Rogoff, 2002; Rose, 2012; Sturken & Cartwright, 2009). Swedish research on visual art education reveals didactic implications, indicating that working with visual culture with pupils can construct in-between spaces for young persons. This means destabilising the subject position of the "pupil" in school and opening up for becoming the "other". By shifting the subject position, new ways of understanding and learning are made available (Göthlund & Lind, 2010; Hellman, 2013; Lind, 2010). In the present article, I analyse the skateboarding practices of male pupils as a performative visual culture in relation to the gendered visual art classroom. There are few research studies that have explored the perspective of male pupils in this context. The present investigation will attempt to make a contribution to the research by connecting masculinity as a performative visual culture with visual art education.

The aim of the paper is to critically investigate the construction of skateboard masculinity as a performative visual culture, using discourse analysis of ethnographic field notes, one pupil's skateboard video and an interview with the same pupil. Furthermore the discourse of skateboard masculinity will be discussed and related to the conditions for masculine subject positions in upper secondary school visual art and media education. The aim is addressed through the following specific research questions:

- How is the discourse of skateboard masculinity constructed in the visual art classroom and in the pupil´s skateboard video?
- In what ways is masculinity displayed and negotiated?
- How can skateboard masculinity be analysed and discussed in relation to visual art education?

In an attempt to answer these questions the article is structured as follows. First, I present the article's theoretical framework. The next section deals with methods, where visual ethnography is addressed and the context of the investigation introduced. Thereafter, the analysis and results are presented. The article ends with a concluding discussion on how the discourse of skateboard masculinity can be understood in a visual art education context.

Masculinity as a lens through which to view gender

Central to this paper are issues of masculinity and our understanding of young people's relationship to visual art education. Masculinity is a concept frequently used in the academic discussion around boys in school, and repeatedly referenced in this literature is the concept hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Epstein, 1998; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). Connell demonstrates how hegemonic masculinity in school is enacted by a small number of dominant boys who are applauded and admired by other boys who cannot reproduce their performance (1995/2005). Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the framework of gendered practice that structures men as dominant and women as subordinate. It is the (successful) claim to authority by men, rather than violence or direct acts of domination that forms hegemonic patterns. Masculinity is further divided into positions of domination, subordination and complicity, which together interplay and maintains the structure of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). Nevertheless, the different subject positions in hegemonic masculinity are either connected to control and power or to subordination and complicity, which implies that there is not much room for change or resistance (Ottemo & Johansson, 2013).

According to Haywood and Mac an Ghail (2012), a post-masculine approach entails disconnecting the linkage between masculinity and patriarchal dividend, while still acknowledging these power structures. Thinking differently about masculinity thus leads to destabilising the concepts and adopting a more complex and entangled understanding of the dynamics of cultural subjectification (Haywood & Mac an Ghail, 2013). In other words, to think outside the binary categories we need to explore gender detached from heterosexuality (Haywood & Mac an Ghail, 2012; Hills & Croston, 2012). Weston (2002) presents an idea of maleness outside masculinity that opens a space of ambiguity, through the concept of the *unsexed*. The ambiguity is about moments when gender becomes undefined and masculinity (and femininity) is dislocated. That is to say, moments when the heterosexual matrix is decentred in the liminal space between masculinity and femininity. The concept of the unsexed resonates with Sedgwick's concept of liminality (1993) and signifies a multiplication of gender categories in which diverse masculinities are situated (Weston, 2002). According to Sedgwick (1985), homosociality puts into play the desire of identification between men, which entails negotiating individual empowerment as well as maintaining the structures of masculine dominance. Thus, homosociality is closely intertwined with hegemonic masculinity

and its power structures. Anderson (2012) brings forward the inclusive masculinity, which entails focusing on a more sensitive and intimate masculinity, in which emotional intimacy and physical tactility are central (Anderson, 2012; Hammarén & Johansson, 2014; Mc Cormack & Anderson, 2010).

Masculinity and gender are inescapably connected to a performative embodiment. In the present study, I will focus on how masculinity is played out in the classroom and in one pupil's skateboarding video. It is from complex a discursive positioning that masculinity is viewed as fluid and unstable (Dalley-Trim, 2007; Harris, 1995). Through body styling and repetitive acts, heterosexual masculinity is often performed as naturalised and operates as a site for the construction and elaboration of masculinity (Butler, 1990). Certain taken-for-granted masculinities are enacted performatively through style and ways of acting in school. Essentially, this means that the body operates as a communicative site for the construction of masculinity (Kehily & Nayak, 1996, 1997). Embodiment is regarded here as being enacted within specific discourses and as interplay between gendered structures and lived experience.

Visual ethnography and visual representation

The study takes its point of departure from visual ethnographic research and one pupil's artefacts to investigate skateboard masculinity. Two different but interrelated research methods are employed. On the one hand, I follow and carry out visual and written documentation in an upper secondary school art classroom. On the other, my research method includes discourse analysis of a pupil's skateboarding video and the transcript of an interview with the same pupil. Skateboard pupils were often absent from class, thus it was difficult to plan interviews in a group. After a few failed attempts, I finally conducted an interview with only one pupil.

Visual ethnography and peripheral participant observations

Participant observations took place during a two-month period from October to December 2014 in a course entitled *Visual Communication*, which was scheduled twice a week. Visual ethnography is an explorative method linked to performance and performativity (Bagley, 2008). Denzin (2001) writes about a *performative sensibility* and using art-based approaches to represent educational ethnographic research. This involves enhancing perspectives (Barone and Eisner, 2012) and exploring bodily knowing, thus stretching the ways in which

ethnography can share knowledge of the diversity and complexity of lived experience. The performance-sensitive way of knowing includes moving away from analytical distance towards knowing that is generated through the sensuous and immediate nature of performance (Denzin, 2003). It combines empathetic approaches with critical reflective ones. In the present study, it meant exploring skateboard masculinity by following hunches and trying different methods and approaches in order to gain knowledge about pupils and their learning. Furthermore, all pupils were informed about the research project and gave their written consent regarding their participation in the study. The pupils' photographs were visually edited and blurred, and pseudonyms were used to preserve the anonymity of the pupils (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011).

The skateboarding pupils were not very interested in interacting with the teacher or with me; they ignored my presence in class for the most part. I therefore took the position of a *peripheral participant*, which is the role of a newcomer in a group. The peripheral participant is not yet a full member of the group, but does affect the group through partial participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This meant that I respected the integrity of the skateboard group and participated in situations where I believed that my presence was not intrusive.

School and the skateboard video context

According to the school´s webpage it has a special focus on young people who are disengaging from school. In other words this school can be said to assume a social responsibility for young persons with difficulties in school, actively attracting them by offering studies in culture, sport or creative subjects. The course Visual Communication was an individual option for pupils, and according to the teacher of this course the pupils enrolled in it had made a negative choice. Because courses in mathematics and foreign languages are rewarded with extra credits, all so-called ambitious pupils chose to enrol in these courses. The Visual Communication course had 24 pupils enrolled, but there were only 8-15 pupils present during my observations. Most pupils were male, and all were in their last year of upper secondary school, 18-19 years of age.

Wilhelm and his friends attended the Social Science Programme with a specialisation in skateboarding. On the day of the interview, Wilhelm was the only skateboard pupil who showed up. During the interview, Wilhelm gave me access to his full-length film, a 38 minute-long skateboard video that he had recorded and edited a year ago. The video features

Wilhelm´s skateboarding friends, eleven skateboarders who are displayed for three minutes each in the film. The film is narrative in the sense that it has an introduction and some ending scenes. The skaters in the film are all male and about the same age.

Discourse theory as method of analysis

Discourse theory is used here as a method for analysing skateboarding masculinity as it unfolds in the classroom, the interview and the skate video. Applying discourse theory as an analytic tool involves breaking a discourse down into smaller parts. This is done in order to see the construction of the discourse and the positions of different *signs* and elements in it (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985/2001). In a discourse, signs can be stable and fixated or instable and ambiguous. The signs that are particularly important in the discourse are termed *nodal points*. Where signs are ambiguous there are always struggles to fixate their meaning. These instable and ambiguous signs are called *floating signifiers*, and they cannot be fully articulated within a discourse (Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985/2001). The "floating" nature of signs is significant to all discourses. Various subject positions appear dispersed within discursive formations. As Laclau and Mouffe put it:

> *The practice of articulation therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity*. (1985/2001, p. 113, italics in original)

In other words, discourses are always contingent, overlapping and in movement, although they may seem hegemonic during a certain time period. The subject is thus distributed and ambivalent as it is part of many different discourses. The discourse theory is used to analyse classroom observations; thereafter, the skateboard video and the interview with Wilhelm are analysed and explored.

Skateboard masculinity in the visual art class room

The empirical materials analysed here are field notes and photographs from classroom observations. One dominating group in class was the skateboard guys. Attendance in class varied, I only saw some of the skaters once during my field observations while others were more frequently present in the classroom. Inactivity was a distinguishable feature; the skateboard pupils were most often watching videos on You Tube or communicating with others using a mobile phone or laptop. Sometimes one of them was sleeping, or leaning over

the table with his eyes closed. The pupils did not move or talk very much. It seemed to me that they were waiting for class to end, taking the chance to sleep, watch and discuss video clips, but never disrupting or disturbing the class.

Fig. no. 1 and 2. Skateboarding guys in the classroom on two different occasions. Most of them were wearing “hoodie sweaters” and focusing on their laptop or cell phone screens.

The skateboarding pupils were preoccupied with their laptop or cell phone screens and did not interact or talk much with one another. Through their body language, they demonstrated a disinterest in what was going on in the classroom, ignoring the activities there. However, some interactions occurred within the skateboarding group.

> Morris is absent today. In the beginning of class Wilhelm is lying over the table and seems to be asleep. Keith enters the room and sits down beside Wilhelm. Wilhelm wakes up and starts reading from his laptop screen in a concentrated manner. The guys talk a little bit, quietly and not very often. Sometimes they yawn and stretch. (Field notes, 2014-10-02)

The academic underachievement of boys is an educational issue in Sweden as well as globally in many industrialised countries (Arnot, David & Weiner, 1999; Connell, 2005; Ofsted, Office for Standards in Education, 2005; SOU 2010:51; Walkerdine, 1998; Öhrn, 2002). There were many indications that the skateboarding guys were part of a masculinity discourse in which studying is not “cool”. Their inactivity can be seen as a sign of resistance to an institutional practice that forces pupils to subject themselves to classes that might not appear to be very meaningful to them. The boys in the skateboard group mostly ignored the teacher and me, as well as the other pupils. Nonetheless they showed closeness and some affection for each other as demonstrated in the following field notes.

> Morris joins the two guys sitting at the large table; he stands behind one of the guys sitting down and starts rubbing the other guy´s shoulders for a while. Then Morris leans forward supporting his elbow and arm on the guy´s shoulder and looks at the

> laptop screen. They laugh together. Morris stands like this, close to his friend and with body contact for quite some time. [I was surprised because for some reason I expected them to be tougher towards one another. I did not expect their physical contact and closeness.] (Field notes, 2014-10-09)

The masculinity performed in the classroom was never disruptive or aggressive; instead the skateboard guys demonstrated friendship and even physical closeness and intimacy. This can be described as homosociality or as inclusive masculinity. The skate pupils always sat together and I never saw them speak to other pupils in the classroom. The masculinity expressed was the opposite of the disruptiveness of "the lads", described in many educational studies (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Dalley-Trim, 2007; Lucey & Walkerdine, 2000; Willis, 1977). The positioning of the cool skateboard pupils involved a visual style and ways of moving and talking that worked inclusively and bonding within the skate group, but that was extremely excluding with regard to others in the room. The performative visual culture was about what the skateboard guys might conceive of as things they could or had to do – if they were to have a liveable life in school (see also Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody, 2006).

In the classroom, the skateboard group exercised privileges related to a hegemonic masculinity in society. This dominant masculinity was enacted in a silent and passive manner in the classroom. It was visible in seemingly natural acts of confidence and assertiveness, in their postures and ways of moving and talking in the room. This group of young men clearly demonstrated their disinterest in other persons and what was going on in the classroom. They gained their status by acting cool, dressing right, sticking close together and ignoring their environment. This was a forceful way of exercising both power and resistance to the idea of school and their subject positions as pupils. Thus, a nodal point in the discourse of skateboard masculinity was the body, involving ways of demonstrating "coolness" by bodily movements and visual style. The masculinity enacted in the classroom was hegemonic, yet several articulations of physical closeness and intimacy among the skateboarding peers indicated an inclusive masculinity. Regarding the articulations of both hegemonic and inclusive masculinity, there seemed to be a space for ambiguity and temporary dislocation of the assertive, hegemonic masculinity. Thanks to the evident hegemonic position and masculine capital, transgressions of gender norms could be permitted (Anderson, 2005).

At the end of the film project, I interviewed Wilhelm about his skate video from the preceding year. All the skateboard pupils chose to work with skate videos for the film project although few pupils completed their videos during the film project.

All Talk, No Treasure – talking about a skateboard video

In the interview, Wilhelm talked about his skateboard video, *All Talk, No Treasure*. Here excerpts from the interview are analysed together with still shots from the skate video, as these materials are intertwined. I investigate and analyse skateboarding as visual style, thereafter I discuss the discourse of skateboard masculinity and its relation to the visual art classroom.

Skateboarding style and the importance of the visual

Wilhelm emphasises the importance of style in skateboarding. He talks about a look that can be intimidating and somewhat aggressive. When he tries to explain this skateboard style, he refers to how it is incomprehensible for a non-skater:

> Yes, I know, one might think, well some skaters look like a little bit… dangerous, or not dangerous, but... but it´s like a style kind of, it´s a lot about… Well, style in skateboarding, it´s like, it´s… ehh, an incomprehensible thing if you don´t skate.

At the same time, Wilhelm points out that the media are manipulating the image of skateboarding as something that is "bad" and involves destruction, aggression or illegal activities, thus connecting skateboarding with resistance to white middle-class values. Furthermore, he tells me that there are skaters who draw upon this image, documenting and spreading footage of vandalising parks etcetera in social media. Karsten and Pel (2000) argue that skateboarders have their own rules concerning the use of public space; one informant in their research expresses that if there are no skate parks, then one has to skate on public objects because they are not used anyway. But skating in public space and "changing the rules" through play can also be seen as revolting against normative spaces and instead privileging the sensory and sensual, such as touch, balance, timing and intense bodily focus, where body, board and public space are renegotiated (Borden, 2001).

Wilhelm's skate video has clear references to visual aggressive expressions that are depicted in a playful manner, or in video clips that flash by rapidly. Although this is not a dominant

feature, it is present. This style is mostly represented by video sequences in black and white with high contrast, or different handshakes. In a brief video clip at the beginning of the film, a person is fooling around in a balaclava. A filter is added to the clip, giving it the appearance of a surveillance camera video and an authentic depiction of a robbery. Hanging out in backyards is part of this style, as well as smoking and wearing caps.

Fig. no. 3. Fooling around with a balaclava, looking like a robber.

Fig. no. 4. The hand sign of the horns, a frequently used sign in a heavy metal discourse.

Fig. no. 5. Skating on a car in the backyard, wearing a hoodie to hide his face.

Fig. no. 6. Smoking and watching, wearing caps.

Articulations in this style include dressing with caps, baggy clothes and smoking. These articulations are connected to a discourse of the young male outsider (Atencio & Beal, 2011; Atencio, Beal & Wilson, 2009). This discourse is visually present here as handshakes, the balaclava, wearing a hoodie that hides one's face, smoking and the act of skating on an old car. Laclau and Mouffe remind us that "… every nodal point is constituted within an intertextuality that overflows it" (1985/2001, p. 113). This means that discourses are always overlapping and that one sign is part of several discourses. Signs or articulations in practice form chains of meaning or networks of signs that construct meaning within a discourse. Here the nodal point of the body is contextualised by middle-class skating young men "adding" a sense of visual aggressive style while at the same time openly demonstrating closeness and engaging in intimate relations within the skate group. This is simultaneously a counter-

hegemonic masculinity that brings forward a non-competitive, alternative "outsider" masculinity and a homosocial practice that is very much part of creating hegemonic masculinity by excluding "the other". The style of clothes and body language depicted in the film can be said to reinforce an aggressive style enacted through vandalisation or wear and tear on public spaces and objects, by skateboarding on them. It also implies that skateboarding is not only a performative masculine enactment, but also an appropriation, making the public space a masculine space (Kidder, 2013).

However, Wilhelm talks about a new style in skateboarding, which involves wearing slim trousers and maybe even a suit jacket over a tank top. This style is a trend that borrows signs from the middle-class businessman.

> And you could say that… the guru of trends is called Dylan Rieder. He has kind of a style, he has like really slim trousers, cuffed at the bottom, and maybe white socks or something. And he has maybe a tank top, like tucked in, and like good-looking hair, you know, looks like he just came from some office job or like.., well he just takes off his suit jacket and starts skating.

You Tube video clips of Dylan Rieder depict a masculine body that is white and thin but muscular, with tattooed arms. Rieder smokes and curses frequently in the You Tube videos. In the photographs I find online, he represents metrosexual masculinity, looking modern and bringing middle-class fashion into the styles of skateboarding. This style was especially adopted by one pupil and captured in a photograph and field notes from the classroom:

> I notice that Morris is wearing socks with a streaked pattern, and that his trousers are really slim and cuffed at the bottom. I ask Morris if I can take a photo of his socks. He stretches his leg towards me and lifts his trousers up a little bit.

Fig. no. 7, 8, 9. Field photograph of Morris's rolled up trousers and socks. Skate trend-setter Dylan Rieder wearing slim trousers and a tank top. [Pictures edited by the author.]

During the interview, I understood that especially Morris was inspired by the style that Dylan Rieder represents. Morris also had a haircut and styling similar to those depicted in the photographs I found of Rieder. In this case, the body and its visual style was a nodal point in skateboard masculinity, and it was articulated as metrosexual, wearing slim, cuffed trousers, having a fashionable haircut, indicating an awareness of one's looks. Metrosexual masculinity brings an ambiguity to masculine norms, making visual the complex and contradictory nature of this identity. Thus, metrosexual masculinity entails a movement towards a more inclusive and less homophobic masculinity. However, metrosexuality may be more of a media construction connected to consumption (Anderson, 2012; Edwards, 2004), than a gendered change in hegemonic masculinity and its power structures, as defined by Connell (2005). The image of this masculinity connotes a reflexive and philosophical masculinity, slightly blasé or even depressed looking, acting "cool". This masculinity combines signs of the outsider with signs of a middle-class office look and metrosexual masculinity.

Clothing style is not the only important feature of the skateboard style; the body and its movement are also essential to the style of skating. Wilhelm explains:

> …because skate isn´t only skate, it´s much more, it´s like art, and it´s like dance in some ways too, because people that dance tells us "it looks like you're dancing when you skate".

There are many visual examples of this in Wilhelm´s skateboarding film:

Fig. no. 10. Dancing on a car, in perfect balance.

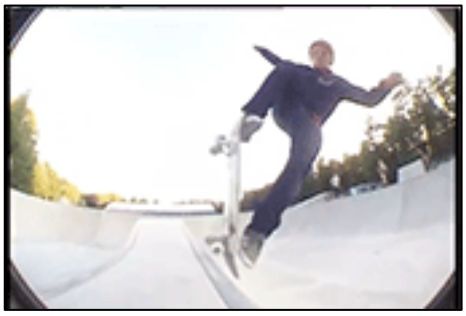

Fig. no. 11. Almost like ballet…

Fig. no. 12. Skate trick or dance?

Fig. no. 13. Dancing movements - balance, timing and rhythm…

Skateboarding is like dancing; it is a way of opening up skateboard masculinity to a broader sense of performing masculinity. It is not *only* about performing high jumps or taking risks by skating on dangerous locations or falling. Aesthetics is an essential feature of skateboarding that involves different styles and awareness of the body and movements when skating, and perhaps more importantly when being photographed or filmed. On the other hand, this means that visual documentation of skateboarding has led to a courageous and inventive use of space by skaters, and created a need to design and distribute subcultural media and skate products. Thus, skateboarding is an industry that gives skaters the opportunity to make subcultural careers as, e.g., filmmakers, photographers, video editors, journal writers, designers, graphic artist and so on (Snyder, 2011). There is a entrepreneurial aspect of skating that is also described by McRobbie (2002), who emphasises young people's ambitions and desires to achieve success on their own terms, and thus become part of the consumption culture and commercialisation of subcultures. In this regard, style and the visual in the skateboard discourse are connected to hegemonic masculinity through the interplay between entrepreneurial capitalism and the commercialisation of skateboarding. Patterns indicating a business masculinity (Connell, 2005) - where individualisation and neo-liberalism are in focus, emphasising competitiveness and ruthlessness - can be seen here as new patterns of hegemony in gender relations.

At the end of the interview, I asked Wilhelm about his skateboard film project in the present course, called Visual Communication. Somewhat reluctant to talk about it, he hesitated before answering:

> Well, it has been kind of lazy; I just placed the camera and skated past it. I could have done it more, like ten times more advanced, really. But I feel like, well, maybe I don't have to make such a big effort for, well for, like, this assignment. I feel I could have done it so much better […].

Wilhelm's response, "*it* has been kind of lazy […]", perhaps referred to the whole course and the lack of activity in the classroom. It was evident that he did not consider the course important and that he under-performed academically.

Contingent skateboard masculinity and the visual art classroom

The pupils in this empirical example had the possibility to produce a skateboard video in school, but at the end, they did not complete their project work. I address the skateboard masculinity in relation to the visual art classroom in the following discussion.

The skateboarding guys constructed themselves as “cool” and “outsiders” in the school context. This involved their rejection of white middle-class values and was expressed through their visual style and enactment in the skateboard video. As the empirical examples demonstrate, disinterest in education, even in making skate videos in an educational context, was an important ingredient of the masculinity performed in the classroom. ”Disinterest” helped to ensure social legitimacy by concealing one´s self-interest and was accomplished by shifting focus from personal benefits to social “necessities”. Skateboard subculture embodies artistic and countercultural sensibilities, as it reject the formal organisation of and centralised authority in education (Atencio & Beal, 2011). Skateboarding is sometimes idealised as a socially inclusive street culture, but in my fieldwork girls were completely absent and ethnic minorities did not play a significant role. These findings concur with the results of recent research on alternative sports and gender (Atencio & Beal, 2011; Atencio, Beal & Wilson, 2009; Bäckström, 2005, 2013; Dupont, 2014, Kidder, 2013; Wheaton, 2007). The cool and outsider lifestyle in school often involves thinking strategically in packs (Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody, 2006). This kind of every day thinking in packs articulates a masculine power structure and involves the territorialisation and appropriation of public space through skating. Along with their pack thinking as cool skating males, the skate guys constructed themselves through an anti-school and anti-mainstream discourse. In this context, it seemed almost impossible for these young men to engage in visual art education, as it was viewed as a feminine subject that entails expressing one’s feelings. In the logics of the skate pupils, *not* to engage in the visual art classes made sense. The skateboard masculinity tactic was to undercut dominant narratives about rules in education and to enact alternative moves and meanings that might also be seen as necessary for coping with boredom and resisting subjectification in school.

Research on visual culture in visual art education demonstrated that it could create spaces where pupils could experiment with subject positions and find alternatives to their position as “pupils in school” (Hellman, 2013; Illeris, 2015; Lind, 2010). However, this was not the case

in the current research example. The history of Swedish visual art education and the research on it are highlighted as gendered in this article. The gendered history of visual art education is relevant to the discussion here since this research example indicated that the male skateboarding pupils, both verbally and through bodily performance, expressed their disinterest in the course. In the Visual Communication course, the pupils had the opportunity to produce films and skateboard videos. However, none of the pupils completed the project. They had access to cameras and video-editing programs; nevertheless, in this course, narrative aspects were emphasised, along with the storyboard process rather than technological aspects. Recent research in the Swedish national evaluation of the visual art subject in compulsory school disclosed that girls outperformed boys, also in digital techniques (Skolverket, 2015). This might indicate that the construction of skateboard masculinity and the disinterest demonstrated in the classroom signified academic risk-taking and rejection of school as a formal institution that positioned them as "pupils". In this context, the cool outsider masculinity was enacted by refusing to be controlled and to some degree, dismissing visual art classes as pointless.

Entrepreneurial aspects were involved in the discourse of skateboard masculinity. The visual culture of skateboarding, involving photographing, filming and editing photos and videos, along with the distribution of these visual materials in social media, was important to the skateboarding boys to have the chance of being discovered. The skateboarding guys seemed to be more interested in a subculture career in the skateboarding industry rather than an academic one. This could be understood as the young people's desire for success on their own terms, resisting "boring" career choices (McRobbie, 2002; Snyder, 2011). The entrepreneurial artist as playful, risk-taking and creative has much in common with the postmodern economic man and individualistic, neo-liberal ideals (Turkle & Papert, 1990).

The body was a nodal point in the skateboard masculinity, both in the skateboard video and in the visual art classroom. The negotiating movements in the specifics of the skateboard discourse unfolded through complex and contradictory signs and articulations. The masculinity exercised in both the visual art classroom and in Wilhelm´s skate video was complex and in movement between homosocial expressions and intimacy, risk-taking and the visual culture enacted as being cool and an outsider. Skateboarding can be seen as a performative, embodied practice involving excitement, physical danger and sensual aspects that are enacted in urban spaces and skate parks (Borden, 2001). Thus, skateboard masculinity

is deeply intertwined with an understanding of oneself as male through the performative presentation of self to others (see also Kusz, 2008). In the classroom situation the body can be seen as a performative surface for expressing a cool skateboard masculinity and resistance to the subjectification required in educational systems. The skateboard group in this research example consisted of young men who performed a powerful masculinity in a subtle and largely silent way. This masculinity was constructed by style and aesthetics, by looking and acting cool. It was through the strong sense of group belonging, and the associated exclusion of others, that hegemony was constructed.

Altogether, the skateboard masculinity unfolds here as hegemonic, where powerful forces are at play. Concurrently, there were evident signs of homosociality and inclusive masculinity that might cause us to think that hegemony was being dissolved and decentred. But as Sedgwick (1985) suggests, homosociality between men is a sensitive register where desire and identification are essential to negotiating individual empowerment and maintaining the structures of masculine dominance. The analysis in this research implies a linkage between the discourse of skating as an alternative street sport and the idealisation of the outsider seen in contemporary Western culture (see also Atencio & Beal, 2011). At the same time as otherness in relation to main stream discourses is expressed through skating, these expressions and visual cultures are commercialised and made into mainstream fashion, reflecting a creative class in a post-industrial society (Florida, 2002). The outsider skate discourse is not socially inclusive, as it position young men from a mainly white, middle-class background as a homosocial and hegemonic group. Skateboard masculinity reflects a neo-liberal ideal in which the values of play and pleasure as a crucial aspect of counterculture are connected to entrepreneurial individualism, consumer creativity and market trends (see also Atencio & Beal, 2011; McRobbie, 2002; Snyder, 2011). In the light of these values, the discourse of skateboard masculinity is closely linked to the bodily performance in the visual art classroom. Traditions in the history of visual art education are made visible through this research example and are intertwined with contemporary entrepreneurial and neo-liberal values. Hence, there are substantial limitations to the possible masculine subject positions in the visual art classroom.

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