Emotional regimes and feeling rules in Swedish feminist comics

- Breaking or abiding by the rules?

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Abstract

This study examines how Swedish feminist comic artists express emotional regimes and feeling rules as displayed by comic characters. Guided by Arlie Russell Hochschild's understanding of feeling rules and emotion management together with Erving Goffman’s decoding behavior methodology this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of gender emotion management norms. The study uses triangulation, combining analyzes of five semi-structured interviews with Swedish feminist comic artists and visual analysis of roughly 130 comic panels from a selection of Swedish feminist comic books. The findings indicate that Swedish feminist comic artists question and challenge existing feeling rules and, render new visual representations of male and female’s emotion management through their comic characters. Four character design techniques are found (1) mirroring, (2) non-stereotypical representation, (3) removing the male gaze, and (4) not emphasizing differences between male and female characters. A unique connection between expected emotion management and comic character’s body type is also found. This new finding implies that emotions and body type might be important to examine in future research. Unlike previous studies, the visual analysis suggests that emotion and gender need to be examined through several instruments to gain a more nuanced result. The findings motivate treating comics as a culturally significant source of data for future research.

Keywords

sociology of emotions, feeling rules, emotion management, gender, comics, feminism, social movements, Sweden
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1. Introduction

Human feelings are to some extent always managed (Hochschild, 1979). There seems to exist an agreement amongst individuals in their determination of suitable emotions to specific situations. It is, for example, in some cultural contexts inappropriate to laugh at a funeral, but you are expected to feel happy or grateful when receiving birthday gifts. Feeling rules represent the spoken and unspoken norms that dictate how individuals should feel and express their feelings in specific social settings. Emotional expressions are managed through emotion management. If a person breaks the expectations by deviant emotion management the social world will notice, react and point this out (Ibid.). Every society holds sets of emotional regimes, i.e., dominant normative feeling rules influencing individuals’ emotional expression. Emotional regimes contain different scripts and guidelines for acceptable emotion management within a specific social setting. Emotional regimes and scripts associated with these affect people differently depending on factors such as gender (Reddy, 2001: 127-129).

The expectations of men’s and women’s emotion management and the feeling rules connected to each gender are, therefore, dissimilar. Social roles such as being a mother, father, a woman, or a man create certain expectations of proper emotion management connected to the social role. Previous research argues that because women often lack independence in terms of economic resources, power authority, or social status in society, they have a higher demand for emotion management to compensate for those (Hochschild, 2003; Shields, 2002; Hess, Thibault, Adams, & Kleck, 2010). For instance, women often use emotion management such as avoiding aggression as a substitute for the resources they lack (Hochschild, 2003: 162-64). Emotional regimes are omnipresent and reproduced over time but they, and the feeling rules connected to them, are not static; they are constantly questioned and challenged, e.g., through different cultural art forms. When the emotional regimes change, so do the social roles and the expected rules surrounding them, and vice versa, when social roles change so does emotional regimes and the feeling rules surrounding them (Ibid.: 74-75).

One art medium that questions and challenges emotional regimes is the comic. Comics is a mass communication tool that can portray the social world, its actors and their interaction with one another in various situations by using images and words (McCloud, 2011). By combining these the reader both revives and grasps the information that the artist attempts to
communicate. Comic’s connection to culture and politics has its background in Underground Comix, a revolution of self-published or small press non-mainstream comic books that emerged in the 1960s in the U.S. (Chute, 2010). Comics published as part of the comix underground revolution explored topics still relevant in today’s comic production such as sexuality and violence. The revolution was also connected to the second-wave feminist movement during the 60s in the U.S., mirroring feminist topics and activities in the produced comics from the comix underground revolution (Ibid.). Despite feminist and activist roots, the history of comic production and consumption has mostly targeted a male audience, portraying female characters in weaker and more submissive roles than the male ones. This trend has, however, started to change back during recent years rendering female characters a more active and powerful role (Danziger-Russell, 2012). This development of creating a debate regarding gender norms through comics is also evident for Sweden (Strömberg, 2010). Since the late 20th century, feminist journals have brought up topics relevant for the women’s movement such as the gender wage gap and child care through comic characters (Ney, 2014). The comic as an art form is not automatically bound to accept the prescribed emotional regime, its script or feeling rules (McCloud, 2006). Although the connection to visual tools is not new in sociology of emotions, previous research is scarce regarding the relationship between comic as an art form, feeling rules and emotion management. Theories from sociology of emotions applied to the comic artist’s treatment of emotions in comics are a venue to identify and understand explicit as well as implicit emotion management among men and women in today’s society. Examining comics this study fills a gap and aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of emotion management norms related to gender and how deviation from these norms might be portrayed. Through this lens of feminist comics, gender inequality and the consequences for women, men, and society as a whole can be further explored.

I focus on the Swedish comic production and use triangulation, combining semi-structured interviews with feminist comic artists in Sweden as well as visual analysis of selected Swedish feminist comic books. Below I state the aim and the research questions, I provide a background of comics in Sweden, followed by a pre-discussion of theories and previous findings. Thereafter, I describe the methods, after which I present the results and discuss them in relation to the theoretical framework.

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1 The name Comix was used as a distinction from the mainstream produced comics.
1.1 Aim and research questions

By using the concepts of feeling rules and emotion management as associated with gender scripts, I examine how Swedish comic artists portray emotional regimes and feeling rules as displayed by their comic characters. What is the relationship, if any, between the ways in which feminist comic artists in Sweden relate to the gendered emotional regime and how they work to create, reveal or change implicit emotion norms? The focus lies on the questions: (1) how are emotions displayed in the comics? (2) how are they experienced by the characters? (3) how are those emotions related to the gender norms about emotionality? (4) how do the comic artists work to display emotions in relation to a feminist agenda?

In this study, I focus closely on Swedish feminist comic artists, meaning that studying or comparing how other Swedish comic artists possibly relate to gender emotional regimes in their work is beyond the scope of this study. In this study, I also use the definition of comics stated by Fredrik Strömberg (2010) in his work *Swedish comic history*. Comics are here defined as “fixed, juxtaposed pictures in deliberate sequence” (2010: 7). As argued by Strömberg, a broad definition might be necessary when trying to gain a historical, cultural and social understanding of comics.

Furthermore, the comic books and comic artists included in this study have all been published with a publicly recognized feminist label attached to them. The artists who have not been published may still have important information regarding gendered emotional regimes and emotional norms within comics in Sweden, but in this study, I have focused on work that is public, and thus open to study and has a wider circulation to the audience.

1.2 Studying comics in Sweden

Sweden is known as one of the leading countries with regards to egalitarian principles. Nonetheless, the everyday life of people remains challenging in terms of social norms that do not rhyme with the purported equality between subgroups of the population, such as men and women. Last year, the trade union *Unionen* in Sweden started the gender equality initiative ‘Mansplainingakuten’ (the mansplaining emergency) to visualize and work against the ‘master suppression techniques’\(^2\) of mansplaining at workplaces. *Unionen* used comics as a way of illustrating how mansplaining works and how it negatively affects individuals.

\(^2\) The term ‘master suppression techniques’ is used as defined by Berit Ås (2004).
strategy of using comics as a tool for creating a debate about gender norms is, as we have seen with examples from the Underground Comix, not a new phenomenon. During the mid-1940s, Sweden had its own Wonder Woman, Dotty Virvelvind (Dotty Whirlwind) who gained powers thanks to a hormone injection of a beetle, an ant, a spider and a falcon, turning her into an incredibly strong superhero, with excellent eyesight and flying abilities. Since the late 20\textsuperscript{th} and the beginning of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century feminist comics have been on the rise and has been published in different journals, comic books, blogs and other types of media (Strömberg, 2010). In the Swedish media, the early 21\textsuperscript{st} century has been described as the mark of a new feminist comic wave focusing on bringing a message to the public (Lidén, 2013). Given previous evidence of comic artists challenging norms in their way of portraying comic characters (Danziger-Russell, 2012) and the aim of this study, which is to examine the display of emotional regimes and feeling rules of comic characters, Sweden, with its strive for egalitarianism and its established feminist comic culture, becomes an important case to examine. Swedish feminist comic artists may be influential actors in a feminist political debate regarding emotion management. The artists creating the comics may, thus, challenge the emotional regimes, social roles and the feeling rules connected to gender and gender structures in society.

It is important to note that there is a technical difference between cartoonists and comic artists regarding drawing technique (McCloud, 2011). In Sweden, the term serietecknare is, however, used regarding both comic artists and cartoonists. In this study, I use the term comic artist indistinctively for these two styles, since the focus is not on the techniques but on the emotions that are altered or created by artists in relation to emotion management.

2. Theory and prior research

In this study, three major issues related to gender and emotion management are discussed: emotion management, visual representation in comic art and social/feminist movement. These are combined to illustrate how previous scholars have tried to understand emotion management and its connection to the social/feminist movements and their visual representation in art. The focus is on emotion management, but each topic will be presented below.
2.1 Sociology of emotions

In sociology, the efforts to explore human emotions can be traced back to previous grand theories. Max Weber (1978) discusses affective actions, bringing up the emotional motive of a social action. Émile Durkheim’s (1995) study of religion as a social phenomenon in his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* illustrates how rituals are connected to emotions and how this influences group activities emotionally. Emotions have also been understood and linked to the role theory outlined by Erving Goffman (1961). According to Goffman, an individual holds many roles and shifts between them depending on situations. When interacting, individuals relate to expectations connected to the role being held in that specific moment, while constantly negotiating and managing it (Ibid.: 76-77). Sociological theory of emotions includes different approaches to, and understandings of, how human emotions work with special focus on culture and structural frames, symbolic interactions, interaction rituals, power and status and emotions in exchanges. These approaches all build their theoretical framework on the classical sociological theories such as those delineated by Durkheim, Goffman, and Mead (Turner & Stets, 2006).

Sociological theories of emotions do not agree on whether emotions differ conceptually from feelings. Peggy Thoits (1989) defines emotions as containing four dimensions that do not need to coincide: evaluation of a situation, a sensation of change in body or mind sensation, a gesture or constraint of performing a gesture, and a cultural label to one or all of the steps. Arlie Russell Hochschild (1979) understands emotions as the deviance between an individual’s sensation of a situation and the social expectation. Most sociological authors, nevertheless, agree that emotions always have a socially and culturally formed meaning. The social and cultural understanding of emotions then influence social life, i.e., relationships and interactions with other people, or political events (Jaspers, 1998).

2.2 Emotion management and feeling rules

One way to explain how emotions are managed and expressed is through the theory of socialization. Individuals are socialized through upbringing and learn to manage their feelings according to social expectations. Conventions amongst individuals establish appropriate feelings, so-called feeling rules, and indicate if certain types of emotion management and expressions linked to these are accepted or deviant from social expectations (Hochschild 1979). According to Hochschild (2003), managing appropriate facial and bodily displays,
individuals have to use both so-called surface and deep acting strategies. A surface acting strategy refers to the method of disguising one’s emotion by displaying another emotion, more suitable for the situation. Deep acting is instead changing one’s own emotion to fit with what one should or wants to feel (Hochschild, 2003: 37-43).

The feeling rules connected to one society and culture become a compass in one’s inner dialog regarding what one is feeling and what one should be feeling in different situations. The balance between feeling rules and the individual is accomplished through emotion management. If a feeling rule is broken, one can notice this by the reaction from others or oneself, so-called rule reminders provided by ourselves or others to remind us to feel according to the rules (Hochschild, 2003: 57-58). To act and feel according to the feeling rules becomes a measurement of normality, while the individuals that break the rules are viewed as abnormal. To act according to what is stated as normal, hence, is linked to experiencing positive emotions of fitting in and being accepted within society and vice versa (Wettergren, 2013). In every society, culture, group, or gender, etc. there are different guidelines of what to feel or not to feel linked to emotional regimes (Hochschild, 1979). Several emotional regimes with emotional scripts connected to them, hence, co-exist at the same time. The measurement of normality and deviant behavior is, hence, viewed differently depending on society, culture, group or gender (Wettergren, 2013).

### 2.3 Gender and emotions

Previous studies (Hochschild, 2003; Shields, 2002; Hess, Thibault, Adams, & Kleck, 2010) show that men and women are faced with dissimilar emotion management expectations due to having different economic resources, power authority or social status in society. As a consequence, emotion management is important in different ways for men and women. Women, in general, lacking independence due to having less resources, authority or social status use emotion management as compensation. According to Hochschild (2003), some consequences related to this are that women, for instance, turn feelings into resources that they use as gifts while interacting with men who have a more independent position. Women are also expected to both handle aggression or anger by displaying niceness and, often use appearance and charm in defense of their subordinated position. In general, women are expected to handle and display emotions better than men. Men are, instead, expected to show a more aggressive facial and bodily display and to manage fear and vulnerability (Ibid.: 162-64).
More recent studies (Shields, 2002; Zaman & Fivush, 2013) have examined the relationship between childhood upbringing and gender emotion management and found similar patterns as those presented by Hochschild (2003). Shields (2002) found that children’s emotion management typically are socialized differently by, for instance, their parents depending on the child’s gender. The gender script for girls includes valuing empathy, expressing sadness and also, in general, to communicate emotions through facial expressions and to discuss and reflect on emotions frequently. Boys’ gender script does not encourage reflection or discussions regarding emotions (Ibid.). Furthermore, Zaman & Fivush (2013) found that parents’ engagement in their children’s emotion management also reflects expected gender emotion management. For instance, it is more common for mothers to frequently talk about various emotions with their children compared to the fathers (Ibid.). The socialization process to manage and display emotions depending on gender also continues through a person’s whole life (Schrock & Knop, 2014). Other agents of socialization, such as sports environments are connected to typical ‘boy’ or ‘girl’ sports cultures. Martial art and football are often associated with aggression and the male gender script. In relationships and professions, typical professions for women are related to female emotion management such as empathy (Ibid.).

Even though Sweden is known as one of the leading countries regarding egalitarian principles, social norms still influence emotional regimes and feeling rules bound to the Swedish culture and society. Holmberg (2003) interviewed cohabitant heterosexual couples without children and found that women were more emotionally expressive and also engage more in the emotion management within the relationship by taking the initiative to talk about various emotions with their male partner. More recent studies (Bengtsson, 2013; Hellman, 2010), examining Swedish pre- and primary schools demonstrate that children at an early age learn expected gender emotion management and experience shame if these expectations are not fulfilled.

2.4 Power-status and emotions

According to the power-status theory introduced by Theodore Kemper (2011), emotions are to a large extent linked to social interactions. While interacting, individuals are automatically part of a power-status relationship connected to what one wants and what one needs (Kemper, 2011). Individuals comply to the wants and needs of others either voluntarily or by force depending on the power-status relationship between them. Having a higher social position,
i.e., status, in an interaction usually has a positive influence on one’s possibility to receive what one wants and needs voluntarily from others. When status is not enough, individuals with the highest structural power can force his or her will and interest against the resistance of others and likely succeed in doing so (Weber, 1946: 180). Power tactics range from a high scale, such as inflicting physical pain, to subtle psychological moves like talking over, interrupting or ignoring someone. However, as receiving status is the ambition, individuals usually try to avoid using structural power as a solution in interactions (Kemper, 2011).

Emotions reflect the interaction outcome of a power-status relation. Kemper (2011: 34) links possible emotion outcomes deriving from the interactions as the following; fear-anxiety, an emotion linked to a decrease in an individual’s structural power, or an increase of someone else’s structural power. Happiness, an increase in a person’s status while sadness is a status loss. Anger usually follows the loss of status and is connected to the individual with whom one is interacting, and shame, a sense of not acting in the way one’s status claims.

The nature of emotions can also be understood from a biological perspective, something that sociological theories of emotions, in general, do not acknowledge or consider (Turner & Stets, 2006). Not surprisingly, studies of the effects of socialization on emotions have been criticized for taking a biased and limited approach to understanding a complex phenomenon. To view emotions as a pure product of culture is to ignore the biological and neurological origin of emotions (such as happiness, fear, anger or sadness) that occur across all human cultures (Ibid.). If there is a difference between emotions on a biological and social level, the socialization process may still have an impact on expectations regarding gender scripts and emotion management that provides emotional guidelines that differ between genders (Reddy, 2001). In this study, the focus lies on the social aspects of emotions, i.e., the societal and cultural influence on human emotions.

2.5 Visual representation of gender and emotions in art

Cultural artifacts such as art, literature, movies, and music are important means of spreading, reproducing and, challenging emotional regimes and scripts in society (Wettergren, 2013). Visual tools with their representation and the understanding of artworks have been examined in sociology since the 1970s (Rothenberg, 2014). Howard Becker (1982) investigated art as a collective action, while Pierre Bourdieu (1990), for instance, focused on whom, why and how
someone becomes an artist. The investigation of how gender is represented in art arose in connection with the second-wave feminist movement and has since then expanded (Rothenberg, 2014). The second-wave feminist movement recognized the issue of gender stratification – giving men, in general, more benefits, higher authority, power and status in society (Komarovsky, 1991). Women were in paintings, instead, visualized as passive objects, for a male audience and a male consumption (Berger, 2008). The objectification of women and the male-gaze is explained by Berger (Ibid.) as a consequence and as a strategy to reinforce the patriarchy. The man represents an active presence, valuing the object, i.e., the woman, and the woman, aware of the evaluation, represents the importance of being a desirable object to the man. One of the most famous and authoritative studies of gender in visual media is Erving Goffman’s (1987) examination of the display of individuals in social situations in Western society advertising photography. Goffman examined over 500 photos using a decoding method focusing on, among other things, facial expressions, body position, hands, eyes, knees, head posture, relative size and head-eye aversion of the models displayed in the photo. Through this, Goffman created six categories constituting a method of analysis; relative size, the feminine touch, function ranking, the family, the ritualization of subordination and licensed withdrawal. The result showed that women often portrayed less authority, were more submissive, sexualized, dependent and, were more emotionally expressive than men. Men, instead, portray authority, activity and less emotional expression. Goffman has been criticized for the technique of sampling, not using a random approach and drawing a biased sample (Lindner, 2004; Kang, 1997). However, more recent studies investigating gender roles through visual analysis using a random sample (Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Umiker-Sebeok, 1996; Kang, 1997; Lindner, 2004) support the results that Goffman obtained in his work of different gender representations connected to emotions, sexualization, and authority. Hence, based on results from previous research, the representation of gender within art such as photography or paintings, in general, differs between the sexes.

During the last couple of years, examining comics has increased, but it is still viewed as a relatively new phenomenon within academia (Strömberg, 2016). Comic studies in the Nordic countries are still few and dispersed within different fields. The reluctance to examine comics in academia can be explained by a negative attitude viewing comics as a cultural insignificance (Ibid.). Comics have, therefore, not been treated as an art form in sociology although it has an apparent connection to how society, gender, and emotional regimes are
represented in the produced art. In comics, different representations of gender can, however, be traced through events of history (Danziger-Russell, 2012). Female characters were represented as strong in connection to World War II, independent, working individuals portraying emotions such as anger. After WWII the representations changed, and female characters became man hunters, shallow and with a huge focus on their appearance. The second-wave feminist movement also influenced comics, and the representation of gender started to change and is still evolving back towards the independent, strong, active female character (Ibid.). Emotional expressions in comics are important in order to communicate a message about society, the characters and the development of the story (McCloud, 2006). To depict emotional expressions convincingly, artists usually mix facial expressions, body language, gestures and gaze direction portrayed by the character. These features together with context and words might make it possible to show the reader the emotional display of a character and at the same time the emotion management going on inside the character (through the characters’ inner thoughts) (Ibid.). Comics is, hence, a useful tool for getting an insight into society, societal norms and the functions within the given culture, societal history, and connections to politics and related changes within society (Chute, 2010).

2.6 Social movements, emotions and comics

Art and literature have always been connected to sociopolitical events and changes (Danziger-Russell, 2012), where the role of art can be both to spread information and question the current social situation (Wettergren, 2013). Unsurprisingly, the expectations of emotion management, individual identities, political and economic as well as other developments in society do not always match with each other. Divergences create tension regarding how individuals relate to the social expectations connected to social roles, appropriate emotion management and feeling rules (Jaspers, 1998). As already stated, the investigation of how gender is represented in art arose with the second-wave feminist movement. This gender awareness is also true for comics. One aim of a social movement is to challenge the assumptions of everyday life by confronting dominant feeling rules and emotion management. While reinterpreting and redefining everyday life, a social movement strives and calls for new feeling rules and emotion management to change the social reality (Flam, 2005). Thus, a social movement aims to change what fits into the normality by changing the emotions attached to abnormality, making the abnormality not visible and, hence, becoming normal and not seen as something deviant anymore (Wettergren, 2013). The emotion work done within
social movements varies depending on the group, where it, for instance, can change shame into pride or despair into hope. In previous research by Hercus (1999) anger is found as a common response in feminism environments. The emotion of anger can be a result of a greater awareness of the patriarchal oppression, sexist experiences, and lost opportunities.

The Underground Comix revolution in the U.S. emerging in the 1960s mirrored feminist topics and activities in their published comics, giving voices and portraying women’s thoughts and emotions. Thus, new ways of exploring and representing female characters going against previous stereotypes of being man hunters, shallow and with a huge focus on appearance were opened up for the public to explore (Danziger-Russell, 2012). In Sweden, feminist comics started to become visible during the second-wave feminism in the late 1960s through the journal paper The Women’s Bulletin (Kvinnobulletinen) linked to Group 8 (Grupp 8) (Schmitz, 2007). Group 8 focused on the gender wage gap, demanded that both child care and adoption should be free and the comics within The Women’s Bulletin mirrored the issues raised in the social movement (Ney, 2014). For example, the comic strips “Lena i livet: jag skulle söka jobb alltså…” (Lena in life: I would look for a job then…) urged women to demand higher salaries and “Lesbeth” addressed the lesbian movement (Ibid.). The Women’s Bulletin issued its last published number in the mid-1990s. Feminist comics were, however, still circulating through both Bang, Sweden’s largest feminist cultural journal, and through influences from The Riot Grrrls movement in the U.S. making Do it yourself, DIY, feminist comic fanzines creations more common (Hultman, 2014; Gunnarsson Payne, 2014).

The early 21st century has been described through the Swedish media as the mark of a new feminist comic wave (Lidén, 2013) and since then several feminist comic networks and artists have been publicly recognized. In 2005 the feminist separatist women- and transgender comic network Dotterbolaget\(^3\) started in Malmö to work against patriarchal structures. The network today still exists in Malmö but now also in Göteborg and Stockholm with a few hundred members. The Swedish feminist comic produced during the 21st century uses mostly humor and satire to raise questions from a feminist perspective to visualize, criticize and challenge social structures (Strömberg, 2010).

Feminist comics’ female characters have helped to question previous images of women and by doing so challenge social roles and gender expectations in connection with emotion management and feeling rules. The development since the 1960s in comic materials and the

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\(^3\) The Subsidiary, the name in Swedish could literally be translated into the Daughter Company.
changed representation of female characters as more empowered and with an active role is still an ongoing process today (Danziger-Russell, 2012). The comic art is a mass communication visual tool and thanks to its usage in social movements it may, hence, become a powerful way of displaying and challenging emotional regimes, social roles and the feeling rules connected to genders and structures in the art world and society.

3. Methodological viewpoints

When emotions are the focus of analysis, it has been proven meaningful to use mixed data collection methods to achieve multi-faceted answers to the research questions related to the study (Burkart & Weggen, 2015). To obtain empirical evidence on emotional regimes and emotion management of the comic characters’ relation to gender norms I am, therefore, combining semi-structured interviews with visual analysis as methods. Including visual images is a way to reveal more about the expected gender emotion management than a text alone can accomplish (Wiles, Coffey, Robinson, & Heath, 2012). By triangulating data from different sources, I can examine both the Swedish comic artists’ intentions and reflections about displaying emotions and comic character’s display of emotional regimes, expected gender emotion management and feeling rules.

The research tools I use in this study to examine if and how artists are displaying, revealing and or challenging emotional regimes, social roles and the expected feeling rules connected to gender, therefore, includes, first, interviews with the comic artists and second, visual analysis of the created artifacts, i.e., the comic books. The interviews provide a necessary insight to how feminist comic artists reflect and work technically with their production, this helps to examine how emotions could be both depicted and experienced by the comic characters. Additionally, analyzing the comic panels allows for an examination of the cultural artifact, i.e., the final produced comic book and its characters.

3.1 Collecting data through qualitative interviews

I use semi-structured interviews as one of the data collection methods in this study. As I aim to examine how Swedish comic artists portray emotional regimes and feeling rules as
displayed by comic characters, it was necessary to gain a contextual knowledge about the visual material (Margolis & Pauwels, 2011). The artists that became the informants were primarily interviewed about techniques of creating emotions and reflections concerning the decision making related to the production of the comic and the comic characters. In Appendix 1, the interview guide that I used is presented. The interviews lasted for roughly an hour each. The comic artists were given the choice to pick the location for the interview, and the setting varied between work and public places. One of the interviews was conducted over Skype. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

The Swedish feminist comic artists included in the sample of this study is based on two criteria. First, the comic artists had to identify themselves as feminist writers. Also, they and their comic books had to have a feminist label, either by the publisher, library, bookstore or public reviews. Second, the comic artists had to be auteures complètes, meaning that both text and drawing were produced by the artist. These criteria fitted roughly 40 Swedish feminist comic artists, the vast majority being women, who all had published at least one book.

To find the informants I used several strategies. Given the explorative aim of the study, I chose these research strategies to make sure that a diversity of genres, style, experiences, and demographics were included. I sent out emails to all the Swedish feminist comic artists that fulfilled the two sample criteria. Often, the comic artists did not respond, those who did either accepted an interview or declined due to lack of time. Snowball sampling was also used as a method, this, however, only resulted in one more informant suitable for the study. A total of five interviews were conducted and represent the interview material in this study. The informants were female, age ranging from mid 20s to early 40s and, representing the major comic group's demographic location of middle and south of Sweden.

### 3.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

In email conversations, informants and I agreed on one of their produced comic books to discuss closer during the time of the interview. The informants were also asked to choose a favorite section or frame within the selected comic book. This section or frame would later be displayed and discussed in the interviews. As further preparation before the interview, I made myself familiar with the published comic book related to the informant. By doing so, I could prepare follow up questions regarding sections and ask specific questions about the book.

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews is a method that allows the researcher to get more
information than just words (Galletta, 2013). The tone of voice is heard, the body language is seen, and when silence occurs, it is noted. This nonverbal communication holds information that can be vital for the researcher in order to understand the context and jargon situations. The semi-structured interview method also allows the researcher to plan with some already determined general questions and then during the interview go deeper into some of the topics that can come up (Ibid.). As already stated, I used an interview guide, this served more like a checklist than a guide in a strict term allowing the informants to talk about the topics in the order they preferred. According to Galletta (2013), the key to an effective interview lays in the researcher’s attention on the unfolding story of the interviewee while, at the same time, noticing topics that need to be clarified or topics that the researcher might want to go back to for elaborations. This is important if the researcher intends to achieve a deeper understanding of the topic. The clarification and meaning making is, therefore, the base and a crucial part of getting depth in the collected data. Through the interviews, I asked the informants to explain, elaborate and show examples of things that felt unclear. For example, the term ‘typical comic language’ came up several times and was elaborated both in words and with examples of techniques from the comic book. The typical comic language could, for instance, mean using arrows to point at objects or characters, or drawing a hat falling off someone’s head when surprised, even if the character is not wearing a hat otherwise.

3.2 Collecting data through visual images

Visual images are the second data collection method in this study. As it was already stated, the focus on comics is a rather new research area in academia, and as a consequence, there is a lack of specific techniques and approaches. However, as the theory section has shown, visual analysis is not uncommon when studying and gaining an understanding of different social phenomena (Margolis & Pauwels, 2011). As the aim of this study also lies on the created artifacts, i.e., the produced Swedish feminist comic books, it is necessary to investigate the characters emotion management to gain a deeper contextual knowledge about the visual materials.

The Swedish feminist comic books included in the sample of this study are based on the same two criteria as for the Swedish feminist comic artists. First, having a feminist label and second, the comic artist creating the comic book had to be auteures complètes. These criteria fitted roughly 50 Swedish feminist comic books, the vast majority being created by women, published between 1995 and 2017 with, for instance, satire, humor, manga, feminist erotica,
young literature age 12-15 genres and, autobiographies with pregnancy, abortion and body norms as themes. Satire, humor, and autobiographies represent the genres of the most published books. The comic books varied between 50 to 400 pages, including longer novels, short chapters, and, or single panels as the storytelling technique. Hence, comics are diverse in both genres and storytelling techniques. Guided by previous visual analysis research (Goffman, 1987; Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Umiker-Sebeok, 1996; Kang, 1997; Lindner, 2004) I focus on the content of images to generate a manageable sample to examine the emotional regimes and feeling rules as displayed by comic characters. As emotion management to a large extent is done together with others, the content of focus in this study is interactions between comic characters. Interactions are defined as adult comic characters, within the same panel, having a dialog with each other. To generate a rich sample, I performed two steps. First, I chose a book from each major comic book publisher, resulting in three books in total with satire, autobiography, and adventure as genres. Second, to cover the diversity of genres and storytelling techniques I added one more book from the major comic book publisher representing humor. This lead the selection to include four books in total representing humor, satire, adventure and autobiography as genres and longer novels, short chapters, a few and, or single panels as the storytelling technique. All of the books had female authors and were roughly the same length. Some of the comic books did not have clear panels when that was the case one page, or page spread was counted as an interaction panel if adult comic characters, within the same panel, were having a dialogue with each other. The interaction definition made the final empirical material roughly include 130 panels from the four selected comic books.

Being publicly published content, the comic panels and the comic artists creating these are not anonymized when illustrated. However, the empirical material is not related to the interviews, but both sampled and analyzed separately to protect the anonymity of the participants.

3.3 Analysis

The analysis has two parts. First, a thematic coding analysis of the conducted interviews to shed some light on the artists’ creating process. This process is necessary to understand in order to interpret how emotions are depicted and displayed in the comic books. Second, a visual analysis of the comic books to examine the comic characters’ facial and bodily emotional display in relation to expected emotional gender norms further.
3.3.1 Analyzing the semi-structured interviews

I use an inductive coding process to shed light on the production choices made by the comic artists when creating the comic book. In the initial analyzing phase, the transcribed interviews were read through one by one and in vivo coding was used to focus on the informants’ expressions. Focusing on how and what the informants mention is a central step in finding patterns and gathering conceptual strength from the data (Galletta, 2013). The interviews were read through and coded on several occasions to find patterns or dissimilarities. Codes that shared connections were clustered into broader thematic categories to help construct meaning from several initial codes. This process allows the researcher to focus on the aspects related to the research questions and take the meaning from the interviews to a higher level of abstraction (Galletta, 2013). Three thematic categories emerged; agenda, character design, and emotional display. Agenda includes what the comic artists want to communicate and the strategies in doing so. Character design describes the artists’ reflections upon creating a character, its traits, and appearance. Emotional display is the tools used to display the characters’ facial and bodily emotional display.

These themes are linked to an examination of if and how the artists relate to gendered emotional regimes and their strategies to create, reveal or change implicit norms in their finished product.

3.3.2 Analyzing the comics

The empirical analysis of the interaction panels focuses on how the image itself depicts norms and how emotions are illustrated and managed by the characters within the panel. Three analyzing steps are performed. First, I utilize parts of the decoding behavior methodology introduced by Erving Goffman (1987). Goffman focuses on social situations by examining the visualization of gender behavior from six categories; relative size, the feminine touch, function ranking, the family, the ritualization of subordination and licensed withdrawal. I take advantage of Goffman’s categories that have a clear connection to emotional display and power or status. Therefore, I utilize the relative size and functional ranking categories to examine which characters have the largest social weight power, authority and executive role within interactions. Relative size includes height and size, while functional ranking includes the activity of the character. Additionally, I utilize ritualization of subordination and licensed withdrawal to examine how emotion management is expressed by facial expressions and body language. Ritualization of subordination includes examining which character is lowering itself
physically (not standing erect), lying, resting or sitting on bed/floor, smiling, being naughty/puckish, arm holding and shoulder holding. Licensed withdrawal includes examining which character is covering its face, showing remorse, fear, shyness or laughter.

Second, through a combination of an inductive and deductive process, I have also added the category compound emotions as an addition to Goffman’s categories in order to analyze other emotions not included in his method but still important to norms of emotion management and feeling rules. Previous research (Hochschild, 2003; Shields, 2002; Zaman & Fivush, 2013) have, for instance, shown that anger expressions are associated with a male gender scripts, while women more often are expected to show sadness and have more emotional expressions in general. Additionally, social movement and comic studies have demonstrated how aggression can be linked to a female gender script (Hercus, 1999; Danziger-Russell, 2012). In the initial visual analyzing phase it also became evident that emotions of shame and stress were frequently visualized by the comic characters. The compound emotions category, hence, examines which character is expressing shame, stress, sadness, anger as well as lack of emotions.

Lastly, the interaction panels are also analyzed with an overall perspective combining Goffman’s decoding behavior methodology and the compound emotions category.

### 3.4 Trustworthiness, credibility, limitations and reflections

In qualitative research and when emotions are the focus of analysis, it is useful to combine data collection methods. Through triangulation, using both visual analysis and interviews, the researcher can shed light on the research question from different sources and at the same time provide credibility to the findings (Burkart & Weggen, 2015). The limitations of this study are related to the small sample and the rather narrow sampling criteria. First, only female feminist comic artists are represented in the empirical material. Male feminist comic artists’ strategies of portraying emotional regimes and feeling rules might have added valuable information. Comparing male and female artists is open for future research. Second, it is plausible that there are more feminist comic artists and feminist comic books in Sweden. By including only those that have a publicly recognized feminist label attached to them means that those without are overlooked. Although the final empirical material might seem small, the five interviews correspond to a sampling rate of roughly 12.5% of the feminist comic artist population, and
the selected comic books represent the major publishers and the largest genres. Given the study’s explorative aim of identifying patterns in how emotion management norms are created, revealed or challenged an analytical generalization is still possible to be drawn from the results.

One also has to be aware of possible publication and research bias. Comics are selected for publication by editors representing the beliefs connected to the publisher (Giarelli & Tulman, 2003). The major publishers of Swedish feminist comic books are Kolik, Kartago, and Ordfront with the interest of publishing comic books relevant to contemporary society. However, material that is believed to be too controversial, banal or abstract might not get published. The researcher might also be responsible for bias by consciously or unconsciously selecting data based on personal values, factors or judgments that might support an assumption (Ibid.). The comic sample selection in the study is built on the interaction definition, i.e., panels including adult comic characters, within the same panel, having a dialogue with each other should make the risk for research bias smaller. Still, this notion of bias is important to keep in mind. Furthermore, being part of the same Swedish culture, the comic artists and I share a similar understanding of expected emotional regimes, management and feeling rules connected to gender. This can both be an advantage and a disadvantage. Sharing the same culture suggests that I might understand context-related events or social phenomena in relation to emotional gender expectations brought up in the interview and within the comic books. However, sharing the same culture also makes me a part of the expected gender emotion management, which might lead to reproducing culturally-defined interpretations. In the interview situation, I tried to be unbiased. In the visual analysis process, I tried to follow the decoding behavior methodology. In this study, I aim to make the different steps of method and analysis as transparent as possible to have high trustworthiness and credibility.

Additionally, the study focuses on the production. How the comics are received by, and the impact the audience has on the comic is an important matter but beyond the scope of this study. The impact of the public is open for future research to examine.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations of this study are related to the interview process and the use of the comic data. The informants were informed about the aim of the study and gave their consent
to participate before the data was collected. They were also informed that participation was voluntary and that they had the right to, at any given time, withdraw from participation. All informants and their published comic books have been de-identified within the study for ethical reasons (this also includes de-identifying name of genres or comic characters related to the interview situation) (Gustafsson, Hermerén, Petersson, & Vetenskapsrådet, 2006). Regarding the usage of illustration from the comic data within the study, there is an ongoing debate within social science addressing the researcher's responsibility to protect the respondents from harm in relation of showing visual material. This debate is related to both public published data and data gathered by the research. Some researchers claim that anonymity is not necessary as long as there is consent to use the material while others argue that the researcher should honor their responsibility of anonymity (Wiles, Coffey, Robinson, & Heath, 2012). I have the consent from the artists to use their comic material in this study.

4. Results

The results are divided into two parts to provide an overview. First, the three thematic categories from the semi-structured interviews are presented. Second, the results from the visual analysis based on Goffman’s behavior methodology, the added category of compound emotions and the combination are shown, with illustrations from the analyzed comic books.

4.1 The interviews

A total of five interviews were carried out. All of the informants were women with an age range from mid 20s to early 40s. The informants’ genres, comic characters, and names have been de-identified. When quoted, the informants are referred to as Wasp, Mystique, Storm, Jean Grey, and Rouge.

4.1.1 Agenda

All of the interviewed Swedish feminist comic artists express a frustration of social expectations connected to gender, and how this, in turn, has an impact on individuals’ everyday life. Creating a comic book is a way for these artists to process personal and societal daily events that in some way have touched them. Social phenomena, such as sexism, the
twoness norm, fertility expectations, sexual abuse, the patriarchy, inequality in relationships and, the personal is political are examples of topics that are visualized and discussed by the artists. The finished comic book represents the result of the process and also becomes an effective way of communicating a message to the public. Illustrating social phenomena through comics is viewed as an easier and more accessible way of problematizing a topic, in opposed to, for instance, writing an article or, creating a public debate. The comic can sometimes communicate the message undisturbed and faster.

Wasp: Instead of writing “you are completely stupid!” It will get me nowhere by doing so. I will not reach a single person. It just gets awkward. It will be nothing. If I instead draw [the social phenomenon] and post it online, I can walk away and like “here you are!”.

Wasp’s example demonstrates how she is placing herself in an ongoing debate by making use of comics as a mass communication tool (McCloud, 2011). Depending on the narrative and the comic artists’ aesthetic method, the comic book varies from each artist as a means to process social phenomena. As an outcome, the choices connected to characters’ facial and bodily emotional display are linked to the expectations related to the genre each artist is working in. A graphic novel provides more space to develop the story and the characters, while in a satire the punchline connected to the social phenomenon is delivered in only a few frames. Due to this, conscious and unconscious, esthetical and, technical choices are made by the artists to tell and visualize their story. For example, Wasp has a clear agenda of identifying a particular social phenomenon using her characters and the topic brought up in the comic book.

Wasp: Some things are a political satire. Satire wants the reader to target a particular social phenomenon, and it tries to make you [the reader] think and act in some way [...]. Satire is often about the fact that the comic character should trigger something in the reader, the reader is supposed to be the one becoming emotional. I want you to get pissed.

Mystique instead focuses on challenging the reader’s perceptions by introducing comic topics in a non-traditional manner. Through this, she wants the reader to start reflecting about norms and how expected gender norms influence the reader’s narrative understanding of the comic book.

Mystique: I have tried to make the comic a ‘thought experiment.’ So, as a reader, when you read the comic, [you have to reflect upon] what you interpret in the comic, how
much are your preconceptions and, how much is the actual story [...] I think it is a
convention that we have to take into consideration and this is the ‘thought experiment.’

These examples show that some of the interviewed comic artists are operating as a social
movement by consciously using their comic book as a medium to illustrate and challenge how
norms are affecting the daily social life (Flam, 2005). Even if the topic connected to the comic
book is undoubtedly feminist motivated one of the interviewed comic artists opposes that
feminist comic artists need to have this clear agenda communicated to the reader when
creating comic books.

Storm: I also think a lot about the feminist comic culture, it exists an expectation that if
you are a woman and creates a comic that you should be extraordinarily kind, have a
social political agenda and protect the weak and vulnerable [...] There are expectations
on women who create to take a social responsibility [...] The woman has a
responsibility to explain and this I can think within other feminist comics, I believe that
there are many explanatory models all the time ‘why feminism’ or ‘pointer feminism.’

Storm’s statement is both an opposition to the expectation and demand of higher emotion
management connected to women (Hochschild, 2003) and also resistance to following the
gender scripts by representing women as socially responsible and caring. The artists that have
a clear communicated feminist agenda in their narrative are in some way following the
expected feeling rules connected to women at the same time as they are questioning the
norms. Storm’s resistance to this illustrates the complexity of expected emotion management.

### 4.1.2 Character design

The previous section outlined how Swedish feminist comic artists use different narrative and
aesthetic methods as a tool to illustrate social phenomena that have an impact on gender
expectations. An important aspect of the process of visualizing the frustration related to social
expectations and gender is the design of the comic characters presented within the comic
book. To communicate to the reader how a character should be interpreted, the five
interviewed comic artists use gender attributes, for instance, breasts for females and flat chests
for males. The character design process includes both appearance and traits, which also has a
connection to the drawing skills and preferences of the artist, and the narrative of the comic.
The five interviewed artists appear to have a fondness for their female characters. This
fondness is noticeable by firstly, the narratives frequently evolve around the female
defects, they are given more space in the comics, while the male characters have secondary
roles. Second, female characters have softer lines due to their body shapes making them more
entertaining to draw compared to male characters more straight body lines. And third, the facial and body representation of the female characters are more diverse.

From the semi-structured interviews, I identify four evident character design techniques that represent the most common design choices related to appearance and character traits used by the comic artists: (1) mirroring, (2) non-stereotypical representation, (3) removing the male gaze, and (4) not emphasizing differences between male and female bodies and appearance. As it will become evident, the designs of the comic characters represent different strategies for exploring and revealing male and female representation, and possibilities for the comic artists to redefine and reinterpret existing feeling rules and emotion management. The techniques are named after either the artist own expressions or as representing a distinct shared theme.

To investigate current norms and who is allowed to show one type of emotion and who is not Wasp, for example, uses the mirroring technique.

Wasp: […] How we read and place values to things based on gender. That is a technique that I use. Something so simple as just swapping, taking an act that is acceptable for one gender and letting someone with another gender perform it instead. Mirror oneself and social norms in this and, then being able to see “Ok, if I [the artist] think this is completely absurd just because I have changed the gender, then maybe I need to reflect some on this action and also on the norms connected to it.”

By swapping gender, Wasp quickly and effectively performs a test of the ruling societal and cultural norms, while at the same time also receiving an indication of the expected emotion management connected to gender. For instance, by mirroring a man’s societal and cultural accepted emotion management through a female character in the comic book, Wasp can problematize the impact these expectations have on gender bodily and facial display. As a consequence, the emotion management and feeling rules for men and women also get turned around creating a chance to redefine and reinterpret existing feeling rules (Flam, 2005).

The second technique of visualizing a non-stereotypical representation of female and male characters is a technique that allows the artist to explore gender roles. Sometimes, this technique is linked to the mirroring one by swapping character traits. For instance, Mystique uses character traits that are read typically female but instead places them on a male character in her comic.

Mystique: I think X [male character] is such a fun character because I could place a lot in X. All of these clichés that female characters usually are ascribed in my genre, but it
becomes so funny when they are visible in a young man who is a little vain and flamboyant and that you immediately interpret this as the person being gay. But instead, in this comic, it is obvious that this person is going to pick up women.

As with the mirroring technique, female and male emotion management and feeling rules are problematized through this easy, but effective, strategy. The technique of visualizing a non-stereotypical representation of gender also allows for creating and exploring new types of characters, without mirroring.

Storm: I’m interested in creating new female types, characters that are women who might be stupid or especially women that are a little evil or bad and make bad choices. I think this is exciting. Not being nice. I want to explore that. Unsympathetic. That is the goal.

This strategy goes in line with the opposition statement that Storm made in the previous section. As already stated, there is a higher demand from society of women’s emotion management due to their lack of resources and social status (Hochschild, 2003; Shields, 2002; Hess, Thibault, Adams, & Kleck, 2010). The socialization process also creates an expectation of women to, among other things, be empathetic and caring (Shields, 2002). Storm’s goal of creating the opposite, evil women, who are unsympathetic does, hence, deviate with the expected gender scripts for women.

The visualization of non-stereotypical representation of gender technique is a strategy used by all the comic artists to illustrate several male and female characters with various traits. The interviewed comic artists include male characters who show emotions, for instance, shame and sadness, or male characters that are helpless, soft or boring. While the female characters range from being less emotional, powerful, tough and independent, to be more emotional and weaker. By including several character types, Swedish feminist comic artists are questioning the representation of male and female and are following and adding to the trend that started after WWII (Danziger-Russell, 2012).

It is not uncommon that the comic artists illustrate their characters naked, usually their female characters. As already pointed out, the artists use gender attributes to communicate how a character should be interpreted, this then includes, for instance, showing breast and labia. As previous research has shown, women in art are often more sexualized than men (Goffman, 1987; Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Umiker-Sebeok, 1996; Kang, 1997; Lindner, 2004). However, the third technique that is commonly used by the interviewed comic artists represents removing the male gaze. By desexualizing their female characters, illustrating non-
skinny bodies, hairy legs, unshaved bikini lines or, other types of non-stereotypical body attributes, the comic artists question the common sexualization of women in art (Berger, 2008). The visualization represents a way for the artists to reject the mainstream representation, to claim and broaden the idea of the female body and what is typically associated with it. Playing with sexualization, Wasp uses this opportunity to represent a deviant emotional display for women.

   Wasp: No, she does not smile invitingly. They [the characters] often make eye contact with the reader and looks a bit pissed, not so much “come and take me” more like “come here, and I will kick you in the crotch” kind of (laughing).

Here, Wasp opposes women’s use of managing aggression and anger due to their lack of independence (Hochschild, 2003). Mystique uses the female body to further question the expected emotion management connected to women with non-stereotypical appearance, i.e., being heavier than the body norm.

   Mystique: She has a lot of character, which is also one of the things that make her attractive. Many times, fat people are perceived as automatically ugly, then they should be funny, or stupid, or evil.

Even when presenting a female character that in some way represents the stereotypical body norms, the artists’ perception of the female body is still present.

   Rouge: The Z persona is her fancy but at the same time she is in many ways an ideal, but maybe for her in a way that goes along with her self-image. It [the Z persona] is [has] some stomach and so on. But it is still someone that is attractive.

These examples show how expectations related to the female body are used by the comic artists to both challenge expected female emotion management and as a strategy to represent women in a non-sexual manner. Furthermore, some of the interviewed comic artists also criticize how male and female characters are portrayed in mainstream media, such as Disney or Pixar movies. The artists argue that it is important to visualize a variety of male and female characters, by removing the male gaze one can broaden characters’ appearance and create new representations.

According to Hochschild (2003) women tend to use their appearance and charm as a defense to their subordinate position. The strategy of using the body also becomes visible through the fourth technique, to deliberately de-emphasizing differences between male and female characters by drawing them alike. For example, Jean Grey focuses on representing bodies in a
way that is closer to reality.

Jean Grey: I think it is really problematic to emphasize differences of how the body actually looks [...]. I have just decided that there should not be such a big body difference [...]. It is some kind of gender equality ambition [...].

Also included in this technique is to place traits that are read as typical female on both male and female characters, or not using typically male characteristics like facial hair as a gender attribute compass.

Mystique: [...] All individuals have eyelashes. There is some kind of shock in this when you draw eyelashes on a character it is automatically a woman.

There, hence, seems to be expectations with how a body is visualized, which gender it ought to be related to and in return which feeling rules and emotion management that are linked to the illustrated body. By using the technique of deliberately de-emphasizing differences between the male and female characters’ bodies the comic artists can, for instance, visualize expected gender emotion management through their comics. Both Jean Grey and Mystique make a conscious choice of challenging and questioning the expected gender emotion management through their design decision related to the characters’ appearance by, for instance, drawing eyelashes, or by not following the mainstream idea of visualizing large male and petit female characters. Jean Grey also points out that she has discovered, throughout her character design process, that some bodies and some emotions or emotional expressions do not correlate well with each other.

Jean Grey: [...] for example that she [the female character] is very tall [...] and that makes it not possible to behave in a particular way, you [the artist] cannot apply certain kinds of traits related to the female gender role. It would just be strange if you [the female character] would start talking with a very bright tone of voice or being helpless. This would maybe work if you [the female character] were very petit, but if you [the female character] are larger, you would seem as almost stupid in the head or backward. So, how you [the female character] look also forms who you [the female character] is allowed to be too.

Expected emotion management and feeling rules might, hence, also be dependent on and connected to different body types. One type of body does not seem to be allowed, or at least it is not entirely accepted, to express certain kinds of emotions. It could, therefore, not only be one’s gender but also one’s body that influences expected emotion management.
4.1.3 Emotional display

The last two sections have outlined how the interviewed comic artists use their characters and agendas to create, reveal and challenge emotion management norms. Another important aspect of this process is to depict the emotions of the characters in an understandable way. To achieve the comic characters' emotional display and emotion management, the artist can use or mix several methods. Facial and body expressions, speech and thoughts bubbles, sound effects and variations of fonts such as uppercase, bold or wavy letters are some common strategies. These are in line with what McCloud (2006) previously stated as successful techniques to use as communication with the reader. Depending on the comic artists’ educational background and the genre some technique differences are recognizable. Four out of five artists have a formal education in comic, and they use exaggeration in both facial and body language as a common expression technique.

Jean Grey: I love exaggerated emotions! There, [I am] trying to find a balance between being a lot and [give] no doubts that this character is sad but without expressing it too much anyway.

For instance, to present a character that is mad, saliva could be flying from the character’s mouth, the mouth might be larger than normal, visible teeth could be drawn as fangs, eyebrows are angled down, and dark strokes are usually visible under the eyes or on the cheeks. Color could be used to reinforce the emotion further turning a character redder the angrier it gets. Bold text and uppercase letters could be used to symbolize if the angry character is shouting. The text could also be on fire to strengthen the emotion even further. If a character instead is sad, the eyes are flooded with tears, and the body becomes smaller and collapsed. The exaggeration technique is a way for the artists to avoid misunderstandings that will confuse the narrative of the comic book. Depending on the genre, the comic reader could also have a certain background knowledge connected to how emotions are displayed within the particular genre. This shared understanding between comic artist and readers gives the artist some more possibilities to achieve the emotional display.

Mystique: In comics in general but particularly in my genre, there is a set of, because my genre is so focused on emotions, facial expressions that one can use, different faces or codes […]. It is a type of symbolic language […]. For new readers, it could be a bit intimidating if you are not used to reading my genre.
The artist that does not have a formal education in comic also uses exaggeration as an expression technique, but instead of mainly focusing on characters’ body and facial display this artist exaggerates emotions through external attributes.

Storm: But, yes there they are disappointed. They get rings under the eyes, or like the strengthening [of the emotion] is especially in the body language, and there might be knives falling from the sky or yes. It is the external things around which I reinforce what is happening within the character.

Emotions can also be expressed by this artist through, for instance, a text on a t-shirt. A character could display a neutral facial expression but at the same time be wearing a t-shirt that catalyzes a strong emotion. Storm also uses oppositions as an expression tool to reinforce the external attributes further. The sun can be shining intensely but the background is still completely dark, or it can be raining indoors. By combining two opposite emotions Storm has the possibility to express how complex emotions sometimes are for the character.

Portraying the emotional display is also a dance between characters. All of the interviewed comic artists point out that by working with responses in an interaction an emotion can be strengthened, and the narrative will become clearer. Using lack of emotions as a response is, for instance, one strategy to build up to a stronger emotion in one of the characters during a sequence. Rogue uses this idea of interaction dance to build up to one of the character’s breakdowns as the interaction develops through several panels.

Rogue: Here, she and the bench start to dissolve some because she is so very sad. And then, she does not return to a solid state, she melts. The idea was to show that she was not only sad, but this is a person who is almost disappearing. It is a kind of panic attack. She is not in one piece anymore; she is getting destroyed. Then, she loses all shape.

Mystique uses the character that has a facial or bodily display that is portraying lack of emotions as a signal, indicating which of the characters that have the most power within the current interaction situation.

Mystique: Then one sees how the female character Y is quite indifferent and determined and calm. It is a feeling that is a bit difficult to define where the person has control. The control lies in not being extrovert. I use that for the most powerful characters. They usually have that role, that they put on a straight face because they have the control and then they don’t have to be extrovert.

Kemper (2011) points out that individuals’ displayed emotion is a mirror of the outcome related to the power-status relation within an interaction. The person with the highest
structural power can often successfully force others to comply with their interest, even if this interest goes against their desires. The facial or bodily display that is portraying lack of emotions represents one of the psychological power tactics related to, for instance, ignoring (Ibid.). Returning to the previous section regarding techniques of character design, it is typical for the Swedish feminist comic artists to both place their male characters in secondary roles and ascribing them traits such as being soft, helpless or emotional in general. While the female characters instead have more powerful positions, being more independent, powerful and less emotional as a result. The interviewed Swedish feminist comic artists are through this, once more, opposing the higher demand for women’s emotion management suggested by Hochschild (2003). By representing more independent and strong female characters their lack of social status declines, and, as a result, also a lesser demand for emotion management.

To summarize, in this section the interviewed Swedish feminist comic artists creating process intentions and emotional display techniques have been presented. This knowledge is necessary in order to examine how emotions could be depicted and experienced by the comic characters in the second part of the analysis. Next, the visual analysis will be presented as well as illustrations from the analyzed comic books.

4.2 The visual analysis

Four comic books, representing humor, satire, adventure and autobiography as genres including longer novels, short chapters, a few and or, single panels as storytelling techniques, were included in this study. The visual analysis was done on roughly 130 panels visualizing interaction, i.e., adult comic characters, within the same panel, having a dialog with each other, from the four comic books. The focus of analysis was carried out from Goffman’s (1987) categories of relative size, functional ranking, ritualization of subordination and licensed withdrawal examining which gender is the one representing the largest social weight power, authority and executive position and, how emotion management is expressed by the comic characters’ facial and bodily display. Also, the added category of compound emotions examines gender norms of emotion management and feeling rules further by focusing on shame, stress, sadness, anger, and lack of emotions.

There are approximately 170 female and 110 male characters represented within the interaction panels, none of the comic characters could be read as unisex. In the majority of the analyzed panels male and female characters are interacting with each other, around 20 panels
visualize female interacting with other female characters, and in less than five panels male characters are illustrated interacting with another male character. Table 1 summarizes the activity and bodily and emotional display of the comic characters present within the roughly 130 interaction panels. In one panel, several categories can be represented at the same time. For instance, a male character could be lying in bed having his arm around a female character while smiling. In this panel, the male character would, hence, represent lying, resting or sitting on bed/floor, shoulder holding and smiling. Therefore, the male character would be counted once within each category in table 1.

Table 1. Summary of interaction panels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional ranking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ritualization of subordination</strong>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowering physically</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying, resting or sitting on bed/floor (men/woman)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying, resting or sitting on bed/floor (woman/woman)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smiling</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naught/naughty/puckish</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoulder holding (man/woman)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoulder holding (woman/woman)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Licensed withdrawal</strong>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covering face</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remorse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laughter</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compound emotions</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of emotions</td>
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</table>

### 4.2.1 Goffman’s decoding behavior categories

The relative size of the characters varies, occasionally representing female characters larger in one panel compared to the male and vice versa. As a whole, the four comic books are portraying their characters as having the same social weight power and authority position. Figure 1 illustrates an example of this.

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4 Arm holding was initially included in Goffman’s (1987) ritualization of subordination category, it was, however, removed because it was not present in the four comic books.

5 Shyness was initially included in Goffman’s (1987) licensed withdrawal category, it was, however, removed because it was not present in the four comic books.
Figure 1. Relative size.
Translation: Female character: "What the FUCK do you do to actually stop SD [the Swedish Democrats party]?" Male character: "There is really only ONE thing left to do. Introducing their principle program as a whole ASAP!!" Female character: "What the hell are you SAYING?!" Male character: "Well, they write that you should be able to lose your Swedish citizenship if you do not respect the "Swedish laws and rules of society" and given the size of the party that would lose their entitled to vote, they would soon more or less implode!" Female character: "Completely in accordance with the Swedish saying "the one who digs a hole for others often fall in themselves." Awesome" (Lucassi, 2017: 141).

As one can see from table 1, the differences between characters, instead, become visible through functional ranking, ritualization of subordination and licensed withdrawal.

Examining the results of functional ranking, female characters hold the main executive role in the four analyzed comic books. Goffman explains activity as someone instructing another individual or visualization within an occupation (1987: 32-37). In this study, activity is coded as the character that is performing something within the interaction panel. Figure 2 illustrates a male and female character interacting. The female character is the one performing something, while the male character is sitting at the table. Hence, in figure 2 the female character is coded as the active one.

Figure 2. Functional ranking.
Translation: Female character: "By the way, have you decided something yet?" Male character: "Please do not ask!" Female character: "Ok ok" (Olsson, 2013: 73).

Furthermore, as one can see from table 1, the facial and bodily emotional displays that are most frequent for both male and female characters from the ritualization of subordination category are resting or sitting on bed/floor, smiling and naughty/puckish. For the licensed withdrawal category, the most frequently bodily emotional display is fear. The female characters are portrayed as more naughty/puckish and smile more often, while the male more often portrays fear.

Visualizing female character as more often smiling follows results from Goffman’s gender advertising study (1987). For Goffman, the smile is understood as a strategy used by inferior individuals to avoid upsetting those holding a higher social status. The visualization also follows the expected gender emotion management of women displaying niceness as a way of
handling aggression or anger (Hochschild, 2003). However, visualizing emotional male character showing fear goes against men’s expected emotion management to manage fear and vulnerability (Ibid.) and previous research results (Goffman, 1987; Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Umiker-Sebeok, 1996; Kang, 1997; Lindner, 2004). Figure 3, illustrates an interaction situation where the male character is representing this type of deviation from the expected facial and bodily emotional display by displaying fear.

Fear, being part of the licensed withdrawal category, is a strategy including a “psychologically remove from social situations” (Goffman, 1987: 57). As a consequence, fear leaves an individual dependent of other people to protect and guide them. This goes in line with the power-status theory explanation of fear as well. Fear is an emotional outcome linked to a decrease in an individual’s structural power (Kemper, 2011: 34). By visualizing a male character that is showing, for instance, fear the comic book opens up for new ways of representation, while at the same time questions expected male emotion management.

Similar facial and bodily display for both male and female characters in ritualization of subordination and licensed withdrawal are found in lying, resting or sitting on bed/floor, shoulder holding and covering face. These types of visualization are connected to the representation of women and refer to women having a lower status, being subordinated and sexualized. Shoulder holding is typically associated with a male representation and higher status (Goffman, 1987). However, the four Swedish comic books examined do not follow these assumptions and are representing both genders within these situations.

Although the four analyzed comic books indicate clear intentions of challenging and creating new emotion management and, facial and bodily display, there are interaction panels which represent more traditional understanding and expectation of female and male representations. Figure 4, for example, illustrates a female character, lying in a male character’s arms while crying. The male character has his arm around her shoulders, displaying no facial emotions.
Figure 4. Ritualization of subordination. Translation: Female character: "But we could have a great time here! I want to be free too..." Male character: "No, but you do not understand!", "And, I have decided a long time ago to move with a friend to Australia, for at least a year...", "Bros before hoes! If you get what I mean..." (Spåman, 2016). This interaction panel corresponds with previous research (Goffman, 1987; Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Umiker-Sebeok, 1996; Kang, 1997; Lindner, 2004), representing a less emotional expressive male and, a more emotionally expressive, submissive and dependent female character. Still, even in this traditional visualization of male and female emotional display, both characters are lying down on the floor. A low position correlates with a low social status and sometimes also sexualization. A visualization that is more common for females compared to men (Goffman, 1987). Consequently, figure 4 is not completely complying with common gender representation.

4.2.2 Compound emotions

The previous section outlined that based on size of characters’ representation, the four Swedish comic books illustrates an equal social weight power and authority position for both female and male characters. The female characters are holding the main executive position, and additionally, the character’s emotional display in the interaction panels both confirms and challenges previous research results and expected feeling rules connected to gender. The added category compound emotions examines expected gender emotion management further, and as will become visible, the added category captures expected gender emotion management further by focusing on socialized gender scripts.

Table 1 shows that the facial and bodily emotional displays that are most frequent for both male and female characters are stress, sadness, anger and lack of emotions. Female characters more often display anger and stress. They are also the ones having a lack of emotional facial and bodily display more frequent. Furthermore, shame is more often visualized in the female characters compared to the male ones. Even though expected gender emotion management is visualized by, for instance, male characters displaying anger, the comic books, in general,

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6 There are no page numbers in this comic book.
show the same intentions that were identified from the conducted semi-structured interviews. Similar to the interviewed comic artists, the comic books often visualize female and male characters not following the expected emotion management. Figure 5, illustrates an interaction panel where the female characters are displaying emotions that are typically associated with gender scripts of men, such as aggression or anger, and the males are displaying emotions that are typically associated with gender scripts of women, such as being more emotionally expressive (Shields, 2002).

Figure 5. Compound emotions.
Translation: Male characters: “When we got a baby girl we understood everything! We are so damn AWESOME, SMART and MODERN! We are Feminist!!” Female character#1: “COUGH” “We have been that for a very long time…” Female character#2: “Where the fuck is my applause?” (Lucassi, 2017: 144).

Connecting back to the power-status theory, anger, being the emotional outcome of the female characters in figure 5, should indicate a loss in status (Kemper, 2011: 34). Previous feminist research (Hercus, 1999) has, however, shown that anger is a typical female emotional response to the patriarchal structure and its oppression of women. All four Swedish feminist comic books problematize the patriarchal structures negative impact through, for instance, their female characters’ angry facial and bodily display. By doing so, the interactions from the comics’ challenges what fits into the normality (Wettergren, 2013), and at the same time call for new feeling rules and gender emotion management (Flam, 2005).

Another example of how the comic books challenge expected gender emotion management and open up for new ways of representation is shown in figure 6. As already stated, men’s expected emotion management is to manage fear and vulnerability (Hochschild, 2003) and women to be more emotionally expressive (Shields, 2002). In figure 6, the roles are reversed. The male character is portraying shame for his previous actions, and the female character is being indifferent, having a lack of emotional display. Shame, being the emotional outcome, is linked to a sense of not acting in the ways one’s status claim (Kemper, 2011: 34). Hence, not
only is the male character not following the expected emotion management, but he is also not upholding his independent status.

Figure 6. Compound emotions. Translation: Female character: “Ok and then you went home and fucked?” Male character: “Stop!” (Olsson, 2013: 18).

Furthermore, emotional male characters as those visualized in figure 6 and previously visualized in figure 2, 3 and 5 are not an uncommon representation in the four comic books. As one could see in table 1, the male characters are, for instance, less often portraying a lack of emotions, and they also display sadness and stress. Fear and remorse from Goffman’s categories, but also sadness and shame are four emotions that particularly stand out from previous research results (Goffman, 1987; Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Umiker-Sebeok, 1996; Kang, 1997; Lindner, 2004) and expected male emotion management.

4.2.3 Combination of categories

The previous section based on the added category compound emotions outlined that Swedish feminist comic artists both follow, create and challenge expected gender emotion management through their male and female comic characters by visualizing them performing gender deviant emotion management. The analyses have so far been done separately based on either Goffman’s (1987) decoding behavior categories or the added category compound emotions. Another important aspect of analyzing how artists relate to gender emotional regimes and strategies to create, reveal or change implicit norms is to examine the interaction panels through an overall perspective. As will become visible, combining the categories provides a more nuanced analysis of the interaction panels.

Table 1 shows that smiling is the most frequent facial and bodily emotional displays in Goffman’s decoding behavior categories and anger represent the most frequent in compound emotions. We also know that anger is associated with the gender scripts of men (Shields, 2002) and that smiling is understood as a strategy used by women to avoid or handle conflicts (Goffman, 1987; Hochschild, 2003). Meaning that in cross-gender interactions, female comic characters would be using their smile as a subordinating act to not create tension. Examining a
smiling and anger interaction figure 7 represents an example of how a typical cross-gender interaction is visualized within the comic books.

**Figure 7.** Ritualization of subordination and compound emotions. Translation: Female character: “Good! Then I know where to drop you off!” Male character: “YOU SELFISH BASTARD!” (Batista, 2013: 87).

On the one hand, figure 7 does illustrate a traditional understanding of male and female emotional display; the man is portraying anger, and the female character is smiling. On the other hand, the smile is not used as a subordinating act in this interaction. According to the power-status theory (Kemper, 2011: 34), smiling, or happiness, as an emotional outcome, from an interaction is an increase of an individual’s status and, anger is connected to a status loss. In this interaction situation, the female character is the one having her status increased while the male character is losing his.

Furthermore, the female character is also illustrated in a higher position compared to the male. A high position correlates with a high social status (Goffman, 1987).

By combining Goffman’s categories with compound emotions, we see that, although it is common to visualize male and female characters following the expected emotional display in the four analyzed comic books, a societal and cultural accepted emotional display does not necessarily mean that the female character is dependent or weak. The representation is more complex, and this becomes visible by both the added category and the overall analysis.

5. Concluding discussion

In this study, I have examined an identified research gap regarding cultural artifacts, i.e., comic books, feeling rules and emotion management related to gender. I have used triangulation, combining semi-structured interviews as well as visual analysis of selected comic books, to examine how Swedish feminist comic artists portray emotional regimes and feeling rules as displayed by their comic characters. I have examined; (1) how are emotions displayed in the comics? (2) how are they experienced by the characters? (3) how are those emotions related to the gender norms about emotionality? (4) how do the comic artists work
to display emotions in relation to a feminist agenda? The study shows that Swedish feminist comic artists use their comics as a channel to illustrate, question and challenge different social expectations connected to gender by strategically manipulating emotion and emotion management in their work. Some of the findings are consistent with previous research and theories such as following gender scripts by a visualization of aggressive male and more emotionally expressive female characters. However, unlike previous findings, male and female characters are often represented as deviant of the socialized gender scripts, not following feeling rules. With a more nuanced visual analysis, using several tools in combination, this more multi-faceted image of gender emotion management becomes noticeable.

The comic character’s emotional display can be depicted in a variety of ways. In line with what McCloud (2006) presents as successful techniques, the results from the interviews and the visual analysis show that exaggerated body or facial expressions together with bold text and, uppercase letters tend to be frequently used to visualize characters’ emotion management. While the results indicate common shared illustration techniques, I have found some differences. Storm, which lacks an official education in comics, visualizes the emotion management related to the comic characters on two co-existing levels. Through this, she can illustrate the complexity of emotions and how they can collide with each other within a comic character. These outcomes suggest that genre, narrative and, in some cases, educational background influences the expression techniques that can be used to depict a characters’ emotion management.

The findings of emotional display techniques from the semi-structured interviews provided the necessary knowledge, employed later, when examining how emotions are both depicted and experienced by the comic characters in the visual analysis. As with techniques of emotional display, we saw from figure 7 that characters’ experienced emotions also are a complex matter influenced by circumstances and the narrative of the story and, hence, in need to be examined through several instruments. The visual analysis shows that Goffman’s (1987) decoding behavior methodology alone cannot be used as a comprehensive tool to capture the complexity of comic characters’ emotional experiences. The added category compound emotions offer new insights to examine gendered emotion management. By combining Goffman’s categories and compound emotions, the results of the visual analysis show a more nuanced image of gender and emotion management. Adding compound emotions and examining shame, stress, sadness, anger, and lack of emotions relation to gender could, hence,
be a methodological contribution and also provide a deeper theoretical understanding. More research is needed to examine this further.

The findings suggest that the feminist agenda is indeed present in the examined comic books. The visual analysis and the semi-structured interviews demonstrate how the artists raise and discuss existing social phenomena as narratives within the comic books. Comic characters’ emotional displays often also illustrate how an artist relates to the brought up social phenomenon and its influence on expected gender emotion management. As one could see from the visual analysis, the female characters often portray anger or aggression about a social phenomenon. This visualization follows previous research results showing that anger has become a typical response in feminism environments due to a greater awareness of the patriarchate (Hercus, 1999). Findings from the semi-structured interviews also suggest that Swedish feminist comic artists work as a social movement by trying to change what is perceived as ‘normal’ gender emotion management (Wettergren, 2013). By visualizing comic characters with deviant emotional facial and bodily display, the artists illustrate new ways of doing gender emotion management. Through this, the artists can challenge what fits into normality while at the same time call for new feeling rules and emotion management strategies (Flam, 2005).

The findings suggest that there exists a clear feminist agenda that display and challenge expected gender emotion management within the comic books. There also seems to be a tension between reproducing and questioning gender emotion management connected to the artists themselves. The findings, from both the visual analysis and the semi-structured interviews, show that it is common for the examined Swedish feminist artists to take a social responsibility by reacting to how elements from the Swedish life affect individuals. The artists examined, both interviewed and part of the visual analysis, in this study are all women. By taking a social responsibility, they are following Shields (2002) findings expecting women to be caring and value empathy. The possible tension between reproducing and questing expected gender emotion management might be understood as a consequence linked to the co-existence of multiple emotional regimes (Wettergren, 2013) that both operate and affect individuals simultaneously. Further research including more artists is needed to investigate if this, for instance, would change if there were male feminist artists included in the sample.

Emotional gender norms are displayed and related to in the comic books through several different strategies. The most obvious one is related to the ascribed characters’ traits and appearances within the character design process. I have identified four character design
techniques commonly used by the comic artists; mirroring, non-stereotypical representation, removing the male gaze and not emphasizing differences between male and female bodies and appearance. All techniques influence both male and female character’s facial and bodily emotional display and challenge the expected gender emotion management by broadening and illustrating new female and male representation within visual media. For instance, results from the semi-structured interviews link female characters with being powerful, tough, and independent and, findings from the visual analysis adds traits of often displaying anger or lack of emotions to the female characters’ traits. These results follow the identified trend, influenced by the second-wave feminist movement, that emerged after WWII representing active, independent and strong female comic characters (Danziger-Russell, 2012). Still, as we saw from figure 4 a possible reproduction of emotional regimes is still present. The analyzed comic books represent genres, such as satire and humor, which might take advantage of traditional visualization of male and female emotional display to mock expectations. More research is needed to explore further how genres and gender representation correlate.

While the female characters often have active and independent roles, the findings from the semi-structured interviews and visual analysis link the visualization of non-stereotypical male characters to other types of facial and bodily emotional displays. The male characters often have secondary roles, ascribing them traits such as being helpless, soft and, in general, emotional. These findings suggest that it is common for Swedish feminist artists to ascribe typically male emotion management traits to female characters and vice versa. This strategy, therefore, challenges existing societal and cultural gender scripts, the feeling rules and the expected emotion management related to these. This resembles one of the aims of a social movement stated by Flam (2005), to reinterpret and redefine everyday life in order to strive for new feeling rules and emotion management to change social reality. However, this strategy could also be understood as a reproduction of the power dynamics itself. Illustrating the very same gender power asymmetry but with the only obvious difference of opposite gender labels, representing a subversion. Storm is the only comic artist that express a strive to explore new types of female characters by ascribing them traits such as unsympathetic and by illustrating them making bad choices. This strive opposes the higher demand for female expected emotion management (Hochschild, 2003) without reproducing power dynamics.

One finding that stands out from previous research and theories is the possible connection between expected emotion management and the body. There might exist different expectations regarding which emotions an individual can express depending on which body
shape this individual has. Some bodies could be allowed to express certain emotions, while when another body shows the same emotion, it could be interpreted differently. If so, this indicates that differences in expected gender emotion management also can be found between men and men and between women and women depending on body type. This result is, to the best of my knowledge, a possible connection that has not previously been discovered or focused on. The new finding suggests that when examining expected gender emotion management and feeling rules, the body could be an important aspect to consider for future research.

Overall the findings are, in some aspects, different to previously reported results. Especially the four character design techniques and the body’s connection to expected emotion management. The study has limitations, such as not comparing other comic productions with the Swedish feminist artists’ comic books, or including male feminist comic artists in the sample. These limitations hinder the study in gaining a more comprehensive understanding, which might result in either over- or underestimations. Despite this, the presented findings examining Sweden, a leading country in regards to egalitarian principles and with a contemporary so-called feminist comic wave, add to a deeper understanding of how emotion management norms are related to gender and how deviation from these norms might be portrayed. Additionally, the study presents a methodological contribution which may be influential for further research. Taken together, the findings motivate treating comics as a culturally significant art form, that has an important place and connection to society and culture in future research.


Appendix 1: Interview guide

How did you start working with comics?
- Can you tell me about any education related to comic drawing?
- How did you choose this focus?

How would you describe your comics?
- Autobiographical, semi-autobiographical fiction?

Can you tell me about comic x and its characters?

What led you to make this comic?

How do you reflect on drawing and representing emotions in your work?

How do you work with emotions in comic x?
- Image and text?
- Characters?
- Responses from other characters?
- Lack of emotions?

How do you portray emotions such as joy, anger, shame, or other relevant for the comic x?

How do you reflect upon gender and sex while drawing?
- Do the characters have specific sexes?
- How do you present the sexes of the characters?
- Sex-specific attributes?

How do you reflect upon idealization and representation of emotions and gender while drawing?

Can you tell me about your favorite image from comic x?
- Can you tell me why this is your favorite image?
- What does the image represent to you?
- Can you tell me about your thoughts connected to the making of the image?