Heterosexual couples talking about and "doing" gender

Critical Studies on Men in four parts of the world
Young, Muslim and Woman, Norwegian style
Sexism, Support and Survival in Academia: Finnish Experiences
Psychology as Producer of Gender
A glimpse into Nordic gender research

We are pleased to present you with the first English edition of NIKK magasin. From now on an English version of NIKK magasin will be published at the end of every year featuring a selection of articles from the two Scandinavian editions of that year.

When NIKK magasin started to come out in Scandinavian languages in 2000 we soon received requests from many English speaking readers to publish some of this material in English as well. The Scandinavian version of NIKK magasin focuses in each issue on a theme of current interest within Women’s Studies and Gender Research in the Nordic countries. The analyses come from various academic fields – their common denominator being their critical gender perspectives. Most articles are written by the researchers themselves. The main purpose of the magazine is to introduce new Nordic research taking up gender issues to others in academia, policy makers, the media and to the general public. It is also hoped to fertilise Nordic research cooperation, encourage debates and help circulate knowledge on issues related to gender equality in the Nordic countries.

In this first English edition of NIKK magasin we have selected articles from the four issues published so far in Scandinavian languages, whose themes were: Critical Studies on Men (“Masculine Mysteries” 1-2000), Gender, Power and Media (2-2000), Ethnicity and Gender (“Identity, Belonging and Alienation” 1-2001) and finally a feminist critique of mainstream academic psychology entitled “The Many Faces of Psychology” (2-2001).

In addition, we include several new articles written especially for this issue. The lead article is written by NIKK’s Head of Research, Eva Magnusson, presenting a study from a section of a three-part Nordic research project, co-ordinated by NIKK, on Nordic gender equality practices and rhetoric. Nordic gender equality is often profiled under a unified image, featuring “new” men and women living the ideal, gender equal life. This article gives a glimpse into an ongoing study of practices in nuclear families. Based on interviews with heterosexual couples, it analyses the ways they talk about organizing everyday life in context of the surrounding ideologies. One conclusion from the project so far, is that any hopes (or fears) that government propaganda for equal sharing would make compulsory converts of people whether they wanted it or not, are unjustified!

Another NIKK project we highlight in this issue is the now concluded Living for Tomorrow action research project developed by Jill Lewis, who discusses here some of its experiences and outcomes. Living for Tomorrow’s work was anchored in Tallinn, Estonia from 1998-2000. With a challenging focus on gender the project aimed to combine gender theory and research with action, all to enable young people to become more actively and effectively involved in sexual safety work to help stem the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Living for Tomorrow obtained international acclaim for its ways of developing understanding of the importance of gender in relation to HIV/AIDS among young people when last year it was presented as a Best Practice project by UNAIDS.

We trust that with this special issue of NIKK magasin we are able to provide our English readers with some idea of what is going on within fields of gender research in the Nordic countries.
HETEROSEXUAL COUPLES TALKING ABOUT AND "DOING" GENDER
How do heterosexual couples in the Nordic countries negotiate about gender constructions and gender equality in their daily life? This study based on in-depth interviews in nuclear families is part of a Nordic comparative study of gender equality practices and rhetoric. Eva Magnusson, Co-ordinator of the project and Head of Research at NIKK analyses the couple talk of Cecilia and Carl.

SEXISM, SUPPORT AND SURVIVAL IN ACADEMIA: FINNISH EXPERIENCES
In Finland, women entered higher education earlier and in larger numbers than in other Nordic countries. Despite this, Finnish academia shows the same gendered patterns identified internationally: horizontal and vertical gender segregation prevail. Liisa Husu explores existing forms of discrimination, support systems and survival strategies.

YOUNG, MUSLIM AND WOMAN, NORWEGIAN STYLE
Based on participant observation and interviews with muslim women from the so-called "second generation" of immigrants living in Oslo, Christine M. Jacobsen sketches out some of the different processes that are shaping identity for young Muslim women – in particular their ethnic and religious gender identity.

Critical Studies on Men
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We White, Western, Heterosexual, Middle-class Women
A self-reflexive comment on the white, Western, heterosexual bias prevalent in feminist research. PAGE 16

Living for Tomorrow
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Representation of women in news media
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TV-presenters and gender equality
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Psychology as producer of gender
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Heterosexual couples talking about and "doing" gender

By EVA MAGNUSSON

The Nordic countries consider themselves the most gender equal countries in the world. Nordic governments often promote Nordic gender equality as a unified image, featuring "new" men and women living the ideal gender equal life. This scenario forms the background for a Nordic study of gender equality practices and rhetoric, and its consequences at three societal levels: parliamentary party-politics, regional and local implementation of policies, and practices in nuclear families.
In the study we interrogate the ways people use language, for instance as a resource when arguing; and the ways language and gender equality discourses organize people’s identity narratives and heterosexual couples’ identity projects.

This article presents a glimpse from our ongoing study of practices in nuclear families, where we listen to interview narratives of heterosexual couples with children, and how they talk together about the ways they organize everyday life, in the context of surrounding ideologies. We do detailed analyses of interaction and talk, in order to study gender constructions in action against the “accepting” cultural background.

Basic to our approach is seeing talk as both “data” and “discourse”: “data”, since couples are talking about things to do with daily life; and “discourse”, since they are doing identity in the interviews. They are acting what it means to them to be a man, a woman and a couple in this particular setting (Cameron, 2001). This follows from accepting that selves and identities are socially constructed: there are limits to how different they can be. A person’s identity performances are likely to be drawn from a limited number of culturally available “options.” Thus, the understandings that a person creates of herself and her world comprehend both the complex encounter between different norms/discourses, and the continuous recreating of a self within the force-field of this encounter. Also, while talking about their organizing of daily life and their history as a couple, women and men are simultaneously managing accountabilities, that is, telling as good and credible stories as possible.

**Couple talk**

Cecilia and Carl are in their forties and have been married almost twenty years. She is a high-school teacher, and he is a salesman. They have been pioneers in the sharing of child-care from 1985 onwards. With both children Cecilia stayed home for six months, and then Carl stayed home for another six months. They both wanted this very much, and they both enjoyed it immensely.

The interviewer asked Carl how his colleagues and his boss reacted to his taking six months paternal leave, and he answered: “...reactions weren’t very favorable... / Not many were on my side, oh no.” This sounds like an uphill struggle, having to stay uninfluenced by negative attitudes. Cecilia does not agree: “But you had the world’s best boss – he was on your side anyway.” Carl, however, asserts that he would have acted in the same way without that support.

Carl’s accounts are all along more adversarial than Cecilia’s. Cecilia talks only of positive reactions from others: “...oh, what a wonderful man, how marvellous!” “How did you find a man like that, who wants to stay home...?”

The spouses position themselves in two different discourses: She echoes her friends’ sense of wonder that there exists a man who makes a serious contribution to do with daily life; and “discourse”, since they are doing identity in the interviews. They are acting what it means to them to be a man, a woman and a couple in this particular setting (Cameron, 2001). This follows from accepting that selves and identities are socially constructed: there are limits to how different they can be. A person’s identity performances are likely to be drawn from a limited number of culturally available “options.” Thus, the understandings that a person creates of herself and her world comprehend both the complex encounter between different norms/discourses, and the continuous recreating of a self within the force-field of this encounter. Also, while talking about
female friends: they told her she ought to feel privileged that her husband “freed her of” the mornings with the children. And she did.

**Daily life today**

It is a guiding idea of Nordic gender equality politics that fathers taking parental leave will promote gender equality generally in the family (Nordic Council of Ministers, 1998). Assuming responsibility for childcare and housework supposedly has a carry-over effect into life after the infant period. I will call this the discourse of gender equality as transformation.

Today Cecilia’s and Carl’s children are in their middle teens, and they share driving the children to soccer training as it fits with working hours. This division feels equitable. Their accounts of household chores today were: Cecilia does the major part of shopping for food, cooking, house-cleaning, laundry, watering flower-pots, and “little things” like keeping rooms tidy. She helps the children with their homework. Carl takes care of leaking faucets and other maintenance tasks, changes tyres on the car, and does things at their summer house.

The interviewer asked Carl if there was anything that he did more of. “Being away from home”, was his answer, followed by: “No, I guess I am not really that terribly domesticated…” Thus, his not being domesticated excuses him from doing any great parts of the housework (in contrast to staying home with their two babies, which he was very interested in doing). For this to happen automatically, there needs to exist a gendered default; a discourse of women’s family responsibility.

Later Carl added, “Actually, I guess it’s just a matter of convenience for me.” Saying this, he must have been aware of being politically incorrect according to well-known Swedish gender equality discourses, which strongly advocate equal sharing of housework. In attitude surveys, an overwhelming majority of Swedes support this ideal (Flood & Gräsjöö, 1997). Thus, Carl’s stance deviates from the official discourse of gender equality as equal sharing. To further explore this, I will pursue traces of two discourses that counteract equal sharing ideals while also being closely related to identity issues. The first I call “doing your own thing”, and the second is a discourse of love and marital harmony.

"Doing your own thing"

In the discourse of “doing your own thing”, the catchword is that “everybody should do what they are best suited to do.” Interestingly, doing gender in culturally appropriate ways is usually one important ingredient. Though they had both violated traditional difference-based prescriptions about childcare, today, discourses of difference are strong in Carl’s and Cecilia’s accounts. They appear in efficiency arguments about who is best at house-cleaning, changing tyres, doing laundry etc., confirming their differences in ability as sensible reasons for their work division. Arguments are given extra force by Cecilia’s contrasting their own practices (that she feels are fair) with people who live religiously by the discourse of gender equality as equal sharing. She portrays their attempts at fairness as mechanistic and rather childish. Through disagreeing with these people, Cecilia’s accountability-management effectively discredits the official discourse of equal sharing. Then, “doing your own thing” stands as the only sensible choice. Such fairness arguments are common in gender equality discussions.

**Nordic gender equality between rhetoric and practice**

In this comparative research project we study rhetoric and practice on gender and gender equality in several societal arenas: The national discourse builders – political party rhetoric on gender and gender equality focuses on what kinds of constructions of gender and equality are made and promoted by different parties in different national contexts. Transforming gender equality rhetoric into regional gender equality practices, studies changes in rhetorical and practical meanings of gender equality as policies move from national to regional levels, in gender equality implementation on the regional level. Politics and gender in the family, studies how Nordic heterosexual couples negotiate about gender constructions and gender equality in everyday life. The focus is on comparative studies of how co-habiting women and men relate to societal discourses on gender in their negotiations and presentations of themselves as women, men and couples. The studies are financed by NOS-S, Joint Committee of the Nordic Social Science Research Councils.

**Love and marital harmony**

The second counteracting discourse concerns the couple’s romantic project: Failure to achieve total equality may be read as proof of a love deficit. How do people avoid this conclusion during their usually not-so-idyllic daily lives? For some, the doing your own thing discourse leads to an understanding of imbalances in housework as related to differences in abilities and thus “natural” rather than “political.”

Thus, Cecilia redefines certain issues as irrelevant to equality: Telling the interviewer that she does all the laundry, she does not frame her story in gender equality terms; she does the laundry because he is incompetent. When talking about cooking, she emphasizes harmony by saying “it’s no cause of conflict”, rather than “it doesn’t make me start a conflict”. The reign of harmony proves that her responsibility is not an instance of gender inequality. Such default accounting tends to be used by men more than by women; then, why does Cecilia several times use such a strategy? She was talking to the interviewer and her husband, talking as one partner in a successful marriage, “doing marital harmony” while being interviewed. Does this make her answers less true? No, but it shows the importance of contextualizing any kind of story about important aspects of people’s lives. And it shows the strength of modern discourses of heterosexuality.
Doing gender in the interview

When the interviewer asked if either was dissatisfied with housework routines, Cecilia told of coming home that day and finding piles of mud in the hall, which she “demonstratively” (her words) vacuumed. Carl was at home but had not bothered. This was Cecilia’s first criticism of Carl, who retorted that she always does this kind of thing, instead of relaxing. He had been too busy to bother about the hall, and finished: “If people want to come here, thinking our house is messy, that’s their problem!”

These accounts may be instances of doing gender in the interview situation. Was Carl telling the interviewer that he did not bother tidying the house because she was coming? Cecilia, laughing after Carl’s eruption about mud, was perhaps showing unease about the jar-ring note that he inserted. This would fit with expectations about women’s ways of communicating: that they worry more about the “tone” of conversation than men do.

Thinking further analytically

Some time after the above, Carl, outside the question-answer turntaking, said “I know I really ought to be better at it [house-cleaning].” This was his first explicit admission of “guilt”, coming after his first complaint about mud, was perhaps showing unease about the jar-ring note that he inserted. This would fit with expectations about women’s ways of communicating: that they worry more about the “tone” of conversation than men do.

Sacrifice and compensation

A clue to their present situation might be found in her gratitude for what he sacrificed when the children were young. Men who share responsibility and housework are often seen as sacrificing something, giving something to their wives. The wife is seen as gaining something. When a couple divides responsibility and care evenly, this is often seen as an imbalanced situation. This couple started out with a huge imbalance in “her favour”; she supposedly profited enormously. Did he collect such great amounts of credits that she would conflict with being a loving couple and a person “doing your own thing.” One conclusion we may draw, therefore, is that any hopes (or fears) that propaganda for equal sharing would make ideological converts of people whether they want it or not, are unjustified. Whether this is good or bad is another question…

Conclusion

The discourses that were active in this couple’s interactions are contradictory and could not easily co-exist in a coherent account. But that is not how stories about gender equality are constructed. They are often fragmented, and each segment is talked about separately, without connecting to the larger picture, or to other segments. Stories permit “accountability management”: using those meanings that fit one’s current narrative purposes best.

However, the contradictory practices and understandings that couples negotiate constitute arenas where power and identities are continuously changed and/or recreated. Thus, it is not always obvious whether they are using the available understandings/discourses for some kind of ulterior motives, or whether they are on the contrary being pushed by them into culturally appropriate positions and practices.

In sum, official gender equality ideology, at least for this couple, seems overlayed on discourses supporting traditionally gendered practices. “Equal sharing”, although the ideal, feels external to each partner’s experience of an inner self. Also, practising the ideal would conflict with being a loving couple and a person “doing your own thing.”

EVA MAGNUSSON is Head of Research at NIKK.

REFERENCES:
Imagine a country where women are on average better educated than men, a country which is rated among the most advanced in the world as regards gender equality, is led by a female president, and where the relative investment in R&D (Research and Development) is among the highest in the world. How do academic women fare in this kind of setting?

I explore this question in my doctoral dissertation in sociology, Sexism, Support and Survival in Academia, on the basis of interviews and written accounts from over 100 academic women from eleven Finnish universities.

Finnish society today is characterised by women’s full-time employment, a gender-segregated labour market, women’s very high educational level, and, from an international perspective, generous provisions to facilitate reconciliation of work and family, public commitment to gender equality, and women’s long-established political participation. Despite the relatively high level of gender equality by some measures, the distribution of power still shows clearly gendered patterns throughout society. In 2000, women were clearly underrepresented among the highest civil servants within the Ministries, as managers in business life, as well as among university professors. The proportion of women full professors was 20 % in 2000, which was the highest figure in the European Union countries.

Gender Inequality reproduced
In Finland, women entered higher education earlier and in larger numbers than in other Nordic countries and most other countries. Compared to Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, the proportion of women university teachers has been higher in Finland at all levels of the hierarchy. Despite the high level of gender equality, high investment in R&D, and women’s very high educational level, Finnish academia shows the same gendered patterns identified international-
Forms of discrimination

So, how are persistent gender inequalities reproduced in academia in the Finnish setting? This was a key question in the study, and was approached, first, by studying gender discrimination experiences of academic women and their responses and coping in relation to gender discrimination. "Academic women" refers to women who are or have been teaching or pursuing academic research in universities. I was interested in how academic women perceive the gender discrimination and sexism they encounter in academia and how they respond. In what ways does sexism contribute to gender inequalities in academia, and, if at all, to the exit of qualified women from academia? What forms do gender discrimination and sexism take in academia in a relatively "egalitarian" setting such as Finland?

Support Systems

Second, I explored the support systems of academic women, on the one hand, and their survival strategies in academia, on the other. Are academic women's sources of support more professional or private? Is this support gendered, and if so, in what ways? What kind of survival strategies do academic women employ in order to stay and progress in academia? By studying gender discrimination experiences, support systems and survival strategies, I identified mechanisms, processes and practices, which contribute to producing and reproducing gender inequalities, but also the processes and practices which challenge and resist them. Throughout the study academia and the scientific community are approached as thoroughly gendered organisations.

The underrepresentation of women in academia, especially in the highest positions, is a persistent and global phenomenon, despite the removal of formal obstacles in women's academic careers as women. Overt gender discrimination is sanctioned in Finland (Equality Act 1986) and most other western countries by legislation. During the 1990s, most Finnish universities established gender equality committees and accepted gender equality action plans. This does not mean that gender discrimination has vanished, but rather it has changed form and become more subtle, covert and difficult to perceive. On the other hand, the Equality Ombudsman receives annually several discrimination complaints from university staff on alleged breaking of the Equality Act. Between 1989-1999 the Equality Ombudsman gave a statement on 68 discrimination complaints from university staff.

Men and Women different experiences

Several earlier surveys in Finnish universities have indicated that women's and men's experiences of academia differ considerably: women are clearly more dissatisfied in the way gender equality has been realised, whereas the majority of men see the situation as non-problematic from a gender equality perspective. According to a nationwide equality barometer, highly educated women are the most dissatisfied when it comes to gender equality in working life. Young academic women's labour market situation is very different from their male peers. Over half of academic women under 30 have fixed term contracts, whereas their male peers predominantly have permanent contracts, according to the academic employees' union AKAVA.

Academic women's own interpretations and agency are emphasised throughout the study. Rather than single "cases", gender discrimination is perceived as multi-faceted processes that can develop over a long time span, even over decades. Discrimination experiences influenced working conditions and relations in the workplace and interpretations of situations, but also women's self-esteem, well-being and health, ability to work, career planning and career expectations. Some discrimination processes ended in the informant either leaving academia "voluntarily" or being "thrown out".

The Majority

Forms of gender discrimination explored in the study were, among others, various practices linked to unofficial/informal, official/formal interaction and organisational culture, such as women's relative invisibility to their male colleagues, forms of exclusion and isolation, sex role spillover and sexual harassment. Gender discrimination could take place in recruitment to academic posts and research groups, and in assessing merit. In recruitment, non-transparent and closed appointment procedures, such as using invitation procedure in appointing professors, can put female applicants in a less favourable position than their male peers. In the latter half of the 1990s over half of the professorships filled in Finnish universities were done so by the invitation procedure. Women had clearly better success in open recruitment compared to the closed invitation procedure. Forms of gender discrimination included gender-based informal/formal division of labour in departments or research groups, different treatment in the distribution of office and laboratory space, opportunities to use support workers, and access to information, sexual harassment, and discrimination related to motherhood.

The majority of the interviewees, both those who had advanced far in their career and those who were in early or mid-career, had experiences of sexism and gender discrimination in academia. Those few who had not personally experienced discrimination had often had to intervene in discrimination or sexual harassment cases of their female colleagues or students. Gender discrimination experiences were not restricted in any particular career phase, such as pre- or post-Ph.D., or main disciplinary field.

Perceiving sexism, especially hidden discrimination, and responding to it appeared to be complex phenomena. Sexism and discrimination are often covert phenomena, partly because academic women prefer not to speak about these kind of experiences in public for fear of being labelled a troublemaker or of negative career consequences when...
speaking out. Furthermore, many forms of hidden discrimination appeared to be “non-events”: absences, silences, ignoring, subtle exclusion, invisibility, lack of support. What happens is that “nothing happens” or nothing is said or done. Responding to these kinds of non-events was experienced as emotionally and socially challenging. Writing on one’s discrimination experiences was often postponed, and speaking of these experiences was sometimes described as repulsive, psychologically threatening or dangerous.

Reactions to sexism
The immediate reactions evoked by sexism and gender discrimination were rage and anger, disappointment and feelings of hurt. The feelings of surprise and confusion that many interviewees described suggested that they did not expect being treated like that in Finland/academia/in the 1990s/in their discipline/in this career phase. On a longer time span gender discrimination experiences were linked with depression, anxiety, mental fatigue, insomnia, in the worst cases panic disorders, burnout and even suicide attempts. Gender discrimination experiences also influenced how academic women assessed their situation and future opportunities. Despite negative effects, many interviewees said that these experiences had made them tougher. It was apparent that these experiences were negative influences in terms of well-being and work ability. Processing these events and processes took time and energy that could have been used in research, teaching, career planning or for their family. However, most interviewees told that they had actively tried to intervene in some way when encountering sexism or gender discrimination.

Support factors
What factors had supported academic women in their career? The support from one’s own academic setting was, with a few exceptions, perceived as rather scarce. Very few of the interviewees had progressed in their academic career supported by an academic mentor. Support from academia appeared also to be gendered: female professors and male colleagues were mentioned more frequently as supportive than male professors and female colleagues, and the support from other academic women was characterised as more profound. In particular many senior women saw that their male colleagues were supporting each other by “old boy’s networks”. While the support from academia was characterised as scarce, the support academic women received from parents, partners, family and friends was considered as very important. Indeed in Finland most women academics are also mothers. The majority of academic women living with a partner stressed the support they received from them. In most cases the partner was a male academic, but most of the non-academic partners were also characterised as supportive.

Survival strategies
What keeps academic women in academia? The strategies women use to “survive” in academic careers were, on the one hand, action-related, and, on the other hand, reflective strategies. In action strategies the focus was either at the level of the individual, interaction or organisation. Individual strategies included, for example, effective time use and hard work, consciously moderating one’s dress, look or voice, stressing one’s status as a mother in academic contexts, and tactical timing or sharing of parental leave. Interactional strategies included building unofficial support networks, behaving like “good bloke”, use of humour and aiming to preserve the face of male colleagues in social situations. Organisational strategies included allying with other women in the setting, mentoring younger female colleagues, and trying to find alternative routes to proceed when blocks appear.

In reflective strategies the focus was not observable action as such but reflection on one’s own position and opportunities in academia. Many women in insecure positions explained how they kept open in their mind an alternative career or profession, a “back gate”, outside academia. Discrimination experiences could be put into a new light because of dramatic life events (such as their own or a close person’s serious illness, or death of another). Another reflective strategy was simply perseverance or, as in Finnish, “sisu”: not giving up despite severe obstacles. Academic women did not believe that the position of women in academia keeps improving by itself when women’s educational level increases. Rather they saw that gender equality issues should be kept constantly on the agenda in universities and the scientific community.

Less credibility as a woman?
I leave the last word to one of my informants, a postdoctoral researcher from the human sciences, who summed up some of these key themes as follows: “I think I have received just treatment, in official matters, mostly. So what has been an obstacle has been sort of unofficial. It really was like a revelation to me in adult age, because I am more from an upper class family, always been good in school, among the three best in class, I do not have any visible handicaps, I am quite quick in my speech and have good language skills, so I did not have any kind of social handicaps until adult age. I grew up believing that no one has any reason to presume that I would not be capable of something, because I was rather above the average on all these visible social attributes. But when I came to the university I had a couple of sort of shocks, when I wondered, that what is it --- what was wrong with me, why couldn’t I? And then I realised that oh dear, he [the professor] wants a boy. As if he was waiting until a suitable male student came along. And I realised that my credibility at the university is weakened by the fact that I happen to be a woman, and that was something I had never realised earlier, and I never on the whole realised that something could weaken my credibility socially”.

LIISA HUSU PH.D. is a sociologist and Researcher, Department of Social Psychology, University of Helsinki. This article is based on her doctoral thesis: Sexism, Support and Survival in Academia. Academic Women and Hidden Discrimination (University of Helsinki, Social Psychological Studies 4, 2001).
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Critical Studies on Men in four parts of the world

By JEFF HEARN

Men are gendered, just as gendered as women. Recent years have seen the naming of men as men and the deconstruction of masculinity. Alongside social changes affecting men in society, parallel changes have occurred in academia, with considerable growth in research and publishing on men and masculinities over the recent years.
These debates are now more explicit, more gendered, more varied and sometimes, but certainly not always, more critical. At their base is the assumption that men, like women, are not ‘just bound to be that way’, but the result of historical, political, economic, social and cultural forces. While there are certain dangers in developing focused academic work on men, it is, with some qualifications, very important to study men, critically. Yet, contrary to what has sometimes been suggested, I do not approve of the idea of ‘men’s studies’. The form that political, academic and policy debates around men have taken varies across the world. I would like to comment here on some of these differences of emphasis in studies on men in four parts of the world. Inevitably what can be said here will have to be broad brush, and I apologise in advance for offending and doing injustice to anybody. The differences I am thinking of can be seen in several ways:

• the impacts of the form of feminism and ‘men’s politics’ (pro-feminist or otherwise), and the more general features of the society, mainstream social science and humanities upon the choice of subjects to be studied, the approach to those studies, and indeed the very theorisation of ‘men’.

• the location and organisation of these studies, including their relation-

ship with feminism, women’s studies and gender research; and

• the naming of these studies.

There is a complex relationship between the politics of men and research on men worldwide. Among the many social influences that have brought the focus on men, foremost is the impact of feminism. The form feminism has taken varies greatly in different countries, and different feminist initiatives have focused on different aspects of men and suggested different analyses of men. Other forces for change include gay and queer politics. These have had an uneven impact in different parts of the world, including some diffuse effects through media and changing forms of representation.

The US: the largest and most diverse
The largest national concentration of studies on men has come, as with many academic fields, from the US. There is indeed now a very large US literature on men, as can be seen from several US bibliographies on men. This literature has developed there from a wide variety of influences. Some studies by men there have arisen in association with anti-sexist, pro-feminist politics, most obviously through NOMAS (the National Organization of Men Against Sexism). But there have also been other influential forces, including the mythopoetic men’s movement, men’s therapy, male liberation, and anti-feminist men’s rightists like the Coalition of Free Men. Some of these demand men’s ‘voices’ are heard more fully!

The roots of this work on men lie partly in responses to feminism, but other important historical connections are with the civil rights, gay and black movements.

Feminism in the US is an immense-ly large and complex movement. It takes
many forms, and some have at times been antagonistic to each other. There are also relatively large developments of radical feminism, academic feminist research and publishing, and links of feminism with the politics and research of women of colour. Prominent contributions on men from gay studies and to a growing extent from black studies have also figured strongly in US studies on men. Questions around heterosexuality, whiteness and men are increasingly addressed as scholarly issues.

But US work of this kind also has to be understood in relation to the more general features of academia and of the society. In one sense, much US research on men is working against the mainstream of US social science. On the other, some of the features of that context are reproduced. For example, even at the critical edge in the work of some US scholars on men, there has been the dominance of studies based in positivist research, psychological and social psychological understandings of masculinity, psychoanalysis, (sex/gender) role theory and various forms of culturalist theory. Studies are often good on empirical description, less good on theoretical analysis. There has been some very good historical work, and social constructionism has generally been a growing intellectual approach.

General US ideologies place great faith in the individual and the market, and these features are also to be found within much of the writing on men. There is by contrast less attention to structural analysis, whether economic or political, and less faith in the power and possibility of change through the state and socialist or social democratic programmes more generally. With some notable exceptions, US work on men is not generally framed in relation to Marxism or Critical Theory. Despite the emphasis on diversity, there is an ethnic-centrism in that the US like most ‘central’ powers is not contextualised or problematised, as is necessary in most smaller, ‘more marginal’ countries. The analysis of men and US imperialism is rarely a subject of critical study.

US studies on men are very diverse, theoretically and politically. There have been major developments in sociology, cultural studies, literature and other disciplines. Their relation to women’s studies is also diverse. In some cases there is a close and supportive association; in others there is antagonism. It is also in the US that the term ‘men’s studies’ has been most used, often by those men who are not pro-feminist and are even anti-feminist; sometimes within a pro-feminist frame of reference. Other terms have included ‘masculinity studies’ and ‘male dominance studies’.

The UK: power and structural analysis

British research and publications on men have developed since the 1970s in a rather different context. The political and academic context there includes: its early development in the context of left class politics, and a broadly positive but by no means unproblematic relation to feminism. British feminism, though in some respects closely allied to left politics, has also developed in tension with the state, as embodied in the autonomous women’s shelter movement. Meanwhile the oppression of gays has intertwined with gay politics and gay studies. Other trends that have affected general social science debates, for example, the place of critical European social science and the critique of positivism, have also been immensely important. The established ethnocentrism of British academia is also found in studies on men, though less than formerly, with the rethinking of the UK in a post-imperial age, and the growing diversity of British society and cultures. Power and structural analysis have been central features of analysis of men and masculinities. And within that framework of structural power, in recent years there has been a strong turn to detailed ethnographic and discourse research on particular groups of men.

Australia: theoretical and empirical contributions

Australian work has made particularly important theoretical and empirical contributions. There are some similarities with British context, such as, its early relations to left class politics. However, the qualified freedom from a colonial centre may have brought further advantages in developing a critical edge. The particular mix of the aboriginal struggles, white British and other European ‘heritage’, and growing multiculturalism has proved to be a very potent brew for questioning the relationship of gender and ethnicity. There has been here a relatively greater visibility of gay studies, itself closely related to the buoyant gay scenes of Sydney and some other cities, and very important recent work on men’s health and men in representation.

In both UK and Australia, there is little demand to create a ‘new discipline’ of ‘men’s studies’; most of the women and men involved in developing these studies have done so in a critical relation to existing disciplines, such as sociology or women’s studies. There have also been strong arguments that studies on men are and always have been part of women’s studies. The term ‘men’s studies’ is rarely used, apart from as a term of abuse or by international publishers. It is usually taken to mean US-based studies that are not pro-feminist or are worse. This also illustrates the more general point that it is inaccurate to refer to Anglophone or Anglo-American literature, as if it is one unified thing. Instead it often encompasses quite different and opposing traditions.
ent relation of studies on men to equality politics rather than more directly to feminism (as compared to US, UK or Australia). This can lead to an overstatement of the extent of equality between women and men, and even a demand for more equality of women’s studies and ‘men’s studies’. It can also have contradictory effects in highlighting the specificity, diversity, even unpredictability, of men’s experiences, as well as playing down men’s structural power, say, in violence or in the corporate sector.

Three suggestions
In conclusion, I would like to make the following direct suggestions:

• First, that national studies take a less ethnocentric, less national(istic) and less regional view, and look at men in a more informed global context that also takes seriously the implications of global political economy, structural inequalities, radical multiculturalism and post-colonial debates.

• Second, that these (Critical) Studies on Men are located within the context of Women’s Studies and Gender Research, changing existing disciplines, and not as some putative ‘new discipline’, which they are not (any more than ‘White Studies’ would be a discipline equivalent to Black Studies).

• Third, there is the question of naming. Some of these differences noted are summed up in the naming of the studies. The term ‘Men’s Studies’ is the one that ‘rolls off the tongue’ most easily. But it is also inaccurate and politically dangerous. It feeds the idea that ‘Men’s Studies’ is equivalent or parallel to Women’s Studies. It is also ambiguous – is it studies on men or by men? And it is also not necessarily critical at all. Studying men or studies by men are in themselves of no special interest; these have been done very badly for thousands of years. The term ‘men’s studies’ is used most often in the US, in the Nordic region, and by international publishers. It is also often favoured by those first-language English users who are not interested in developing critical, pro-feminist studies. To refer to ‘Men’s Studies’ can for them be a safe haven, where men can find their ‘voice’ and that of other men again. The use of ‘Men’s Studies’ can mask misogyny. It has not in my experience been used by most first English-language women and men researchers and academics most involved in developing Critical Studies on Men over the last 20 years. This issue has also been debated in the context of the International Association for Studies on Men (established in the early 1990s and co-ordinated from Norway). This is deliberately named as such, and not as the International Association of Men’s Studies. So, third, I suggest that however studies on men are to be named in Nordic languages, this is not translated as ‘Men’s Studies’ in English. ‘Studies on Men’ is better; and if they are critical, then ‘Critical Studies on Men’ is better still.

Implications
Critical Studies on Men can be characterised as: critical; on men; explicitly gendered; and by men and women, separately or collaboratively. Their development has many implications. It implies drastic rewritings of academic disciplines, and their frequent ignoring that their ‘science’ has been dominantly done by men, for men, and even primarily about men. It remains truly amazing how many men social scientists seem to able to ‘forget’ that the objects of their study – economy, state, international relations, national politics, crime, violence, etc. – are very difficult to understand without explicit analysis of men and gender relations generally. In Finland, like many other countries, it is quite possible to be a respected male academic without paying any attention to feminist and critical gender scholarship, including that on men. It is time that most men social scientists stopped producing their pre-scientific imaginations, and moved onto some more accurate analysis of how societies work.

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Nordic research: positive aspects of men
Nordic research on men is set within different contexts again: relative societal ethnic homogeneity (though less so in Sweden), faith in welfare reform, relatively positive relations of citizens and state, small nation nationalism. There is also the different character of feminism and the women’s movement in different Nordic countries, including an often close, though uneven, relation of feminism and the state, the development of state feminism, and less emphasis on an autonomous movement. All these are relevant when considering relative Nordic gender equality (or relatively less gender inequality) when seen on a global scale. Such progressive features can feed into the myth of gender equality and the genderless citizen in some Nordic debates.

This can create a complex setting for studies on men. There has been some active Nordic research and networking on men amongst women and men. While it is clearly difficult to summarise this work, especially strong features include detailed empirical work and some broad surveys, attention to the positive aspects of men and changing men, and the diversity of men’s positions and practices such as on fatherhood. Less prominent have been gay studies, structural analyses of men’s power, and (outside Sweden) studies of men and ethnicity. There is also a different relation of studies on men to equality politics rather than more directly to feminism (as compared to US, UK or Australia). This can lead to an overstatement of the extent of equality between women and men, and even a demand for more equality of women’s studies and ‘men’s studies’. It can also have contradictory effects in highlighting the specificity, diversity, even unpredictability, of men’s experiences, as well as playing down men’s structural power, say, in violence or in the corporate sector.
We White, Western, Heterosexual, Middle-class Women

By HELÈNE THOMSSON

"Hi, my name is Mukandayisenga", she said, when she called me at the university. "I think you should interview me for your research project on immigrant women."

Women who want to take part in the study have contacted me before. But nobody has ever asked to be interviewed as forcefully as Mukandayisenga. On the contrary, the women who wish to take part in the study are usually very humble and almost timid when they approach me. Neither has any interviewee ever attacked me as a feminist researcher as fiercely as Mukandayisenga did.

"We black women differ from you in that we belong to the colonised. You white middle-class women benefit from the actions of the colonisers and from the racial oppression under which other women have suffered and still suffer. This is something you easily forget. When you talk about the oppression of women, you should look back in history and see how your status is based on lies invented by white colonisers. The kind of oppression you white middle-class feminists regard as what you must liberate yourselves from is a relatively small part of the experience we black or other immigrant women in Sweden endure. Your feminism", says Mukandayisenga, "embraces the racist prejudices which are the immigrants’ worst enemy".

Taking part in the debate

The aim of my article is to partake in the debate on ethnocentricity and on the white, western, heterosexual bias prevalent in feminist research. This bias, which has been discussed in many contexts over the years, has given rise to texts on the difficulty of representing others, on the problem of power and, for example, on feminism and race (see e.g. Bhavnani, 1993; Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1981). However, I would claim that the findings of these texts have had far too little impact on the research results presented by us Nordic feminists in our articles, reports and books. On the contrary, ethnocentric and other assumptions of ‘superiority’ are apparent in much of what we write. Thus, we are, alarmingly enough and contrary to what many of us claim we want to be, active participants in a system which aims at strengthening white supremacy and at counteracting the opportunities for women to unite in a common feminist struggle.

My intention is to discuss how I myself became aware of my own privileged position and power as a scholar as a consequence of the interview I did with Mukandayisenga. I will not be able to present an exhaustive analysis of the problem of power, because the space here does not permit it, but I will try to explore a relatively complex problem in feminist research and describe how I have handled this issue in my research.

We dominate without analysing ourselves

Mukandayisenga immediately fixed me with her eyes when we met and said that we white, western, heterosexual, middle-class women totally dominate feminist debate and research. The only time she said she recognised herself and felt welcome was when the ‘ordinary’ feminist debate focused on the special theme of “ethnicity”. She claims that we make non-Swedish or non-Nordic women invisible as women, but also that we forget (intentionally?) that we ourselves are also living an ethnicity.

We, who regard ourselves as “ordinary” feminists, reject male normativity and the so-called objectivity of “mainstream” researchers, but seldom analyse...
practices specific to our own research. We rarely stop to scrutinise our theoretical knowledge from the perspective of power relations and compare what we think we know with theories and experiences of groups of women who live different lives from ourselves. We may think the thought, but we never act on it, Mukandayisenga emphasises. We are simply feminists who set the discourse, without paying much attention to our own biased view of the world.

This kind of statement is hard to hear when one, as myself, is studying the situation of immigrant women in a racist and sexist Swedish class society. In my work, I have focused on how women with an immigrant background, who today are excluded and marginalized because of their gender, class, race and ethnicity, could be served more adequately by society and in working life. I do not want to be told that I hold a prejudiced, biased view of the world.

The Swedish lens
"It’s because you’re Swedish without really thinking about it. You cannot see that your eyes have a lens, which makes everything Swedish normal and everything else deviant", Mukandayisenga says in my interview with her. "As long as this lens is in your eye, you will not be able to influence anything. Because you cannot see what you should influence. You say you think immigrant women are marginalized and excluded because of their gender, class, race and ethnicity. In actual fact, they are completely invisible, partly because of the likes of you."

At several points in the interview she says that we Swedish academic feminists lack awareness of the role that "Swedishness" performs in our work and that this is a serious shortcoming in the knowledge we produce. We simply know too little about the function of our own ascendancy: how it works, what it is based on and what constitutes it. If Swedishness is deconstructed, she says, we can find an implied superiority in terms of race (we belong to "the white" race: "the owners" and "the rulers"), gender (we belong to a majority in the female population, which is thought of as consisting of "better women" with "the right kind of femininity") and class (relatively strong on capital and resources). But we do not want to see ourselves in this way, she says, and this greatly limits feminist research and debate. What to an outsider seems like disagreement and dissension among women of different ethnic origins, is actually only an effect of the fact that we white, heterosexual middle-class women create our selves using the privileges and advantages handed out to us by "the rulers" (white, heterosexual middle-class men). "You do not want to give up those privileges and that is why we cannot fight together with you against the same oppression", Mukandayisenga says.

Race as an analytical concept
We privileged feminists, who rarely personally suffer racial oppression (which in Sweden and similar countries often takes the form of what we call "hostility towards immigrants" or discrimination of immigrants), do not even know whether we dare use the concept of "race". Is it not an obsolete term connected with a prejudiced biologism? we ask with thin voices. No, says Mukandayisenga. Race is as important in the analyses of people’s lives as gender is.
But perhaps we need to find a term for race which could do the same that gender has done for analysis of the sexes. Something, which would make us dare to realise that the concept has to be used analytically, that this is a question of social power structures and the interpretations of the privileged and not of characteristics or biology. Just as easily as so-called “mainstream research” has been able to exclude women because they are so difficult to relate to – since one is not allowed to simply regard gender as a characteristic – we exclude race as well as other social structures from our feminist analyses.

Still, many of us today acknowledge and claim that identities of race and class, oppression and privilege create differences in our lives. In our feminist texts, we even say that differences resulting from racial and class oppression are so great that the evils of gender inequality have a relatively small impact on practical everyday life. I say this in my writings. However, Mukandayisenga says that what I emphatically claim merely represents “the lip service of an ambitious feminist”. It sounds eloquent when she says it, but it hurts me. She says that I must dare (and be allowed to) see how I myself contribute as an oppressor, before I can say anything about creating more differences than the “us and them” way of thinking. We exclude race as well as other social structures from our feminist analyses.

Us, them and privilege
I try to counter, or rather, meet Mukandayisenga’s criticism by describing the fear that I and many others feel about creating more differences than already exist. We do not want to regard those we are studying as different. We do not want to concern ourselves with the “us and them” way of thinking. We refuse to categorise and carry out comparative research. We are all women, all working for the same aims, I say. Mukandayisenga does not agree with me, but argues that she and I have totally different aims.

“Your whole status is based on the fact that you are as similar to the ruling men as it is possible to be. We “immigrant women” have no wish to reach the same level as the Swedish men. We are grateful if we reach the same level as the Swedish women”, she says.

She gives me to understand that what I should analyse are the privileges which I and other white heterosexual middle-class women enjoy. I should think about gender as a concept contaminated by race and class. I should dare see the exercise of power by men and the state as something desirable in the everyday lives of white women. Only then will I be able to understand oppression. Because, says Mukandayisenga, the oppressed are formed to act in a way that does not threaten the prevailing order: thus they are rewarded for their compliance.

“The oppressed do not see what they could gain by no longer being victims. And neither do you Swedish women see what you could gain by them no longer being so”, Mukandayisenga says.

For me, the words of Mukandayisenga meant a trying turn in my research. I read her criticism into other interviews I had made and I could no longer produce a single line on the circumstances of immigrant women in Sweden. Whatever I wrote, I saw “my Swedish lens” and my superior position. I could not use my favourite theories, because I realised that they are dictatorial and ethnocentric. I could no longer discuss my results with my favourite colleagues, because she, too, is ethnocentric. I was sitting in a cage. But suddenly one day, the bubble of self-contempt that I had created burst and my hand started producing texts which are different from those I have written previously. They are no longer about the views of immigrant women on, for example, employment measures. They now discuss how these measures arise in a situation where the Swedish ways of living, raising children and applying for a job are regarded as normal; where the constantly underlined similarity between women hides a real discrimination, a discrimination desirable for us middle-class women in the majority population – and how this is experienced by women with an immigrant background.

Changed focus of research
My texts now explore how we women in the majority population benevolently start projects and activities which enable immigrant women to continue living in their subordinate position. They describe how women (and men) very like myself, work towards creating jobs (at the bottom of the social hierarchy), meeting places (with only women in the same situation) and women’s projects (focused on traditional female tasks and harmony) of the type we think immigrant women need. In my texts, I write that the actual purpose of ventures aimed at helping immigrant women actually serve to maintain the prevailing power relations. I further say that the political strategy not to see women with an immigrant background as a single group, rather “focusing on the individual” within employment measures, is a way of concealing the general oppression of immigrant women. I write that all activities intended for immigrant women must be thoroughly examined in terms of their purposes and the question as to whose interests the existence of the activities actually serves should continually be raised. I observe that I have never before been invited to speak about the results of my work to as many political gatherings as now. But I also note that my constant questioning of whose interests I myself serve, always gives rise to the same irritated reaction.

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Understandings of gender inequality and of cultural beliefs about gender differences were explored as a potential energy-mobilising focus around which sexual health and safety could become more relevant and engaging for young people.

Though recent globalised media imagination has centred on the terrible impact of AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, the 2001 UNAIDS report identified current fastest increase in HIV infections in former Soviet Union / Eastern Europe (over 250,000 new infections in 2001). The project's gender issues intersected with a newly independent country's complexities of transition away from collapsed Soviet systems and infrastructures and into new interactions with the West.

The NIKK Living for Tomorrow project (1998 – 2000) in Estonia combined research with action implementation, approaching sexual safety and HIV prevention issues through critical explorations of how gender systems work and need to be questioned and changed in order to enable safer sexual behaviours.

The NIKK Living for Tomorrow project (1998 – 2000) in Estonia combined research with action implementation, approaching sexual safety and HIV prevention issues through critical explorations of how gender systems work and need to be questioned and changed in order to enable safer sexual behaviours.

The project designed interactive, capacity building workshops where young adults, men and women, collaboratively learned to examine gender norms and expectations in their culture that might lead to damaging and risk sexual relationships between men and women.

Participatory learning processes created a climate of engagement and openness that enabled participants to think more critically about gender while learning about HIV concerns and sexual risk behaviours. A "core group" volunteered to create youth workshops with a group of teenager volunteers – who in turn were invited to implement initiatives based on their own involvement. They produced a booklet for young people about gender and sexual safety. The project designed a questionnaire to trace ways young people perceive gender 'working' in their society, and gathered feedback about commonly held attitudes and beliefs about sexual relationships between men and women.
A bibliography of resources and sources useful for exploring the project’s ideas was assembled.

**Intersecting political issues**

HIV prevention and sexual safety do not exist in an insulated compartment of health and sexual knowledge acquisition. The project’s focus on gender had to engage with other disabling polarisations and blockages to collaborative exchange – here the intense ethnic/national tensions residual from the Soviet era. Aiming to enable changes in gendered, risk sexual behaviour involved looking at notions of difference, beliefs about self and other, the problematic “naturalising” of identity differences and the social, cultural and historical factors shaping them. The project drew on local and regional resources and gender research, but centred active learning methods, drama techniques, participant agency and possibilities for initiatives to be taken over by the participants themselves. Respect, listening, democratic processes in organising, actively embodying ideas (rather than just abstractly arguing about them) – were consciously connected to the gender discussions, locating HIV and sexual safety in wider contexts of process.

**Focusing on gender**

Most participants had never engaged with critical exploration of gender before – so this had to be made inviting, challenging and compelling. The resonance of terms like “gender equality” are not self-evident – since the concept resonates into different cultural and personal histories, and goes against unconsciously acquired beliefs about “intrinsic, natural” gender differences. In Estonia “emancipation of women” or “equality for men and women” were associated with the ideology of a Soviet past (either a “solved problem” or a “imposed solution”), negative stereo-types of Western feminism (hysterical exaggeration or the spoiled – and envied – housewife image). The post-Soviet situation left a vivid desire for “gender roles” that the Soviet system disallowed by making women go to work and censoring media promotion of femininities of frail, sexy, dependent women.

The project did not approach gender, as often still done by international initiatives, as a simplified synonym for ‘with special attention to women’s issues’. Participatory work allowed the participants to explore their own, daily-life assumptions about masculinity and femininity, so that gender understanding became relevant to their own situations, while the research input gave access to data about gender issues both in Estonia and in international sexual health discussions. To frame HIV prevention with gender awareness the project needed to:

- build an understanding that gender systems implicate both men and women, are social and cultural, change and are therefore changeable
- implement an educational practice that engaged participants in explorations of how gender is socially constructed and embodied
- facilitate awareness of different ways gender issues affect the HIV/AIDS epidemic
- enable critical reflection on participants’ own assumptions about how sexual behaviours are gendered, and about possible problematic sexual consequences of “gender norms” for young women and men
- link these gender issues to an understanding of the urgency for young people’s efforts to stem the spread of HIV among young people.

**These “from the West” collaborations**

Though “gender issues” in HIV prevention work are unresolved everywhere and Living for Tomorrow could have been usefully activated in any national context, new Nordic/Baltic collaborations led the NIKK project to be implemented in Estonia. The cross-cultural dimensions of this gender-focused work therefore came into vivid focus, and highlighted the complexities of this kind of collaboration.

There were advantages to a project fertilised by external input - Western resources and frameworks of theory, experiences within democratic norms of engaging with political issues, education and organising. The Nordic Council of Ministers’ backing for the project upped its legitimate, official status in addressing gender – not a main priority in a period of transition, where it is mostly men setting political agendas and grassroots movements are new and fragile. An outsider could be bolder (more forgiven or welcomed) in initiating discussion of problems, disturbing the established borders of norms – like ethnic polarisations and gender beliefs. This was the first youth initiative to work with both Russian and Estonian youth in Estonia – and did so against the odds of resistance that haunted it, even as it progressed.

But there were issues about bridging differences, discrepancies in power. The collaborative terrain had to straddle dilemmas of “importing” and “imposing” ideas (that people might tolerate but not really engage with) – so the listening and transforming or amending of ideas as things progressed became crucial. The idea of building partnerships within which participants could assume their own agency meant confronting issues of money and power, Western privileges, arrogance or blindness: issues of control and letting go. Post-Soviet inexperience of sharing information or working collaboratively, the habits of hierarchical working and ceding authority to those with power (which, coming from the West, one had) needed to be actively addressed. The project wanted to disturb inequalities (gender, ethnic) but risked embodying new images of East-West inequalities. Even its funding possibilities risked dysfunctional inflation – funding things in ways that would be impossible to sustain within real resources available beyond the end of the project.

For Capacity Building recruitment, it was clear that ‘health professionals’ were not always the best people to involve. Evident curiosity about this unfamiliar “gender” focus, keenness to work creatively with young people, a good listening capacity and signs of openness to non-didactic, less hierarchical methods of working had to override on-paper credentials. The project needed people who were excited about creating new approaches rather than people who self-identified as “experts” or eyed another-
er chance of Western links and funding. It had to navigate suspicion and forms of territoriality, typical in situations of limited resources that militate against generosity and inclusiveness and foster individual, competitive imperatives to escape of the pessimism and impossibilities of daily social reality.

The very challenge of how to build effective partnerships was right at the top of the project’s agendas all the time. It was important that international input was framed realistically by the real concerns and issues people faced. It was important that participants in Estonia did not try to please or satisfy the outsider’s agenda, if harbouring ambivalences or tensions. So criticism, argument, disagreement, dialogue and openness, and two-way caring support became crucial within the collaboration. This took time, energy and commitment beyond the frame of any usual academic work and beyond the demands of a working daily life for all involved. Progress needed to be reinforced, ground covered more than once, confidence strengthened, energies nourished, trust built. It was not a simple question of “bringing people on board a NIKK project” – but of creating something new out of the encounter that the project made possible.

Building research with implementation

Given the spread of HIV globally and the absence of cure, research urgently needs to be wedded to implementation of prevention. While exploring gender issues, transferring skills in design, evaluation strategies and educational techniques, Living for Tomorrow wanted to bring research into more active circulation within prevention education. The project gathered data about young people’s attitudes and beliefs regarding gender difference in their society and in sexual behaviours. This questionnaire was revised with sexual health educators and researchers from 8 countries as a cross-culturally adaptable research and educational tool – and has since inspired initiatives in several other lands.

Feedback perceptions and assumptions of Russian and Estonian teenagers is analysed in the Challenging Gender Issues report. The large majority of them had not had a sexual partner, yet were articulate about what men and women “are” in their society, what kinds of different sexual behaviours can be expected from men and from women. The ideas about gender the young people harbour (when performing their ‘gendered’ sexual selves and interpreting their opposite-sex partners) illustrated how they see heterosexual sex through the conventions of gender difference that society offers them – that “naturalise” risk behaviours. The young people’s responses opened a door for exploring and debating why the conscious questioning of gender norms, how society organises and imagines men and women, needs to be an integral part of safer sex and HIV education. The absence of critical discussions of gender leaves young people entering heterosexual sexual relations with a map of gendered behaviours and norms that embody notions of gender inequality and difference they consider “natural” and inevitable - rather than socially shaped and changeable.

Gender issues on the move

Living for Tomorrow demonstrated that an active, critical gender-focus for HIV education can achieve dynamic engagement from young people. The teenagers saw through a process of booklet production that they proudly launched in Tallinn and internationally. The young adults in the project took the work independent of NIKK midstream, founded their own NGO Living for Tomorrow, that continues to thrive, and went on to train new cohorts of enthusiastic teenagers, many of whom volunteer both for the NGO and the Estonian AIDS Centre. The NGO ran audience workshops with touring Russian theatre performances and have mounted their own Capacity Building to establish a new NGO branch.

The NIKK initiative linked the project to national, regional and international initiatives related to gender research, gender democracy concerns and HIV prevention initiatives. The young people and NGO traveled abroad and in Estonia to promote its ideas and give account of its work processes. The final group evaluation day recorded evidence of great personal impact of participants’ involvement.

One project Report makes available processes of the project development, the challenges of the work, detailing methods and strategy, to resource others interested in developing gender issues in sexual safety initiatives. Another Report demonstrates from its research data the urgency of pushing the gender issues deeper in HIV prevention work with young people. The beautiful booklet on gender and sexual safety, simultaneously in English, Estonian and Russian, made by teenagers for teenagers, is in active circulation. (3)

In June 2001, the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS received a UNAIDS commissioned report that profiled Living for Tomorrow as a best practice gender project (4). That UN meeting set a goal to reduce HIV infection among 15–24-year-olds by 25% in the most affected countries by 2005. For this goal to be met, key aspects of Living for Tomorrow, that its Estonian participants themselves listed at the end of the project, could be of use for more effective HIV awareness and prevention education:

- the crucial significance of questioning GENDER at the heart of sexual safety awareness
- the importance of linking theory with practice – developing an informed understanding of what influences real life
- a commitment to working with differences among people, creating possibilities for people growing and changing
- the importance of giving the initiative to Young People so they see they can make a difference if they engage with these issues.

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For reports and publications from the Living for Tomorrow project see page 42 and also the project’s website: http://www.nikk.uio.no/forskningsprosjekt/livingfortomorrow/
YOUNG, MUSLIM and WOMAN, Norwegian style

By CHRISTINE M. JACOBSEN
It is possible to identify three main tendencies in how the identity of young Muslim women in Oslo is shaped in relation to their religion. These are the pulls of ethnicity, the terms of private life and new kinds of practices. These tendencies cannot be placed on a continuum that identifies them as either more or less traditional or (post)modern, but must be understood as different frameworks for approaching the complexity and ambivalences of life. The three tendencies can be linked to different ideals of femininity and different ways of negotiating gender. The intersection between religion and gender is a site of multiple identities where Islam can be expressed in different ways with reference to concepts such as authenticity, modernity and tradition.

Drawing on participant observation I undertook with two Muslim youth and student organisations, as well as interviews with a group of young Muslim women in Oslo, I want to sketch out some of the different processes that are shaping identity for young Muslim women - in particular their ethnic and religious gender identity. My analysis approaches identity as a relational process, or as processes of identification that are basically social and dynamic (Young 1990, Moore 1994, Calhoun 1995, Hall and du Gay 1996). Even if individuals adopt different relationships to these processes, the different tendencies still play an important role and overlap each other; so being a Muslim is defined relationally and contextually. Identity is always something being developed as things change, it is never a finished product. It involves a continual process of coming into being - of becoming Muslim, rather than being Muslim as a fixed and static identity. Religion is, however, only one aspect of a person's composite identity. Other forms of identification can cut across any religious sense of belonging and set in motion other forms of social interaction and alignments, based, for example, on ethnicity, class, gender, religious beliefs or political leanings.

A "taken for granted" part of life"

The first tendency that could be observed among the young Muslim women in Oslo is that Muslim identity is, to a great extent, an aspect of ethnic and cultural identity. Religion is a "taken for granted" part of life that you take with you from childhood through adolescence and into adult life. To be, for example, a "Moroccan" is synonymous with being Muslim. The religious identity is woven into the cultural and religious values upheld by the family – especially holidays and religious festivals – and also into the discursive practices that divide people into groupings of
“us” versus “the others”. For some, religious identity has enormous emotional and practical significance, whereas for others it first and foremost is a form of identification with, or contrast to different groups of “others”.

**An internal affair**
The second tendency sees being religious as a private and individual process. Religion here is seen as an inner concern, an aspect of individual identity, and is most meaningful, more than anything else, as “a private place”. What is crucial here is that religion is understood first and foremost as a personal choice that the individual must make herself, not as a consequence of belonging to a certain family or ethnic group. Religious duty is not the main thing here, but what comes into focus with much greater significance is how ‘I’ understand religion. In this tendency, identification of oneself as Muslim can be mainly symbolic, since it is understood as having little or no impact on everyday life, but is able to provide a basis for personal religious practice.

**"Real” Islam**
A third tendency is what can be called the emergence of a new Norwegian Muslim subject position as the foundation for lifestyle and shared identity. Here individual and personal emphasis is put on religious identity; an inner, personal relationship to God is important.

At the same time, however, this tendency is part of a collective experience and is influenced by a form of identity politics that shape Muslim identity in a Norwegian context. This tendency prevails in Muslim youth and student organisations. To describe it as a form of identity politics that stand alongside other ways identity is politised in this day and age does not undermine its significance for the production of meaning and behaviour. It is producing new practices and relativising the old ones, and has genuine importance for how a section of young Muslims give shape to their everyday life.

The main feature of this tendency is that these young people distance themselves from their parents’ traditions and choose to learn about what they call ‘real Islam’. Even though this tendency is also coloured by each individual’s relationship to religion, it emphasises that religion cannot be reduced to the private sphere, but, on the contrary, Islam represents a life style that colours - and should colour - all aspects of daily life.

**The ideal homeland**
These three distinct tendencies I have described can affect the adoption of gendered positions and the ways gender is negotiated in different ways. In the first tendency, culture and religion are equally important, so that, for example, relatives in Pakistan or Morocco are seen as ideals for Muslim femininity, for “how we should be”. This is how Inaam, for example, talked about helping at home:

“And, like, when we’re in Pakistan that’s when I sort of learn about how we in our culture and religion should behave in our family context and what roles we have. I really learn a lot there […] Because I can watch people who are models for me… my girl cousins and people like that. ‘Cos I can see then how you’re supposed to behave in your family, and see how helpful they are to others and doing housework, like, or in relation to their brothers; like, my brother will be here soon and maybe he’ll want food or something. It’s a sort of automatic reaction. So I learn quite a lot in this way.”

**“Muslim feminism”**
In the second tendency, culture and strictly conservative versions of religion are criticised for restricting women’s emerging possibilities, blocking opportunities for individual choice or freedom for women to do as they want. Fundamentalists and others considered ‘strictly religious’ are a central reference point for this tendency’s critical renegotiations of women’s status and position in society.

This tendency most closely represents what we would recognise as a
Western feminist critique. It generally involves greater criticism of the ways gender roles are institutionalised in the parents’ homeland, and it places more positive emphasis on Norwegian ideals associated with freedom and gender equality. Hamida related the following:

“In our culture it’s said that boys can have more freedom. It’s all to do with religion, with the way you see it. So many issues are involved in this: what is the reason given why boys can have more freedom than girls? Girls have always been like, well, you know - you must stay at home and cook the food; that was how people thought a hundred years ago, so that’s the way people think now, because of the religious leadership that dominates in Pakistan. This is what has ruined so much, so, so much. That kind of fanatic or fundamentalist. They’ve also given Islam a really negative reputation.”

**Islamic authenticity and true freedom**

Within the third tendency gender is negotiated first and foremost from a position that sees a sharp split between cultural traditions – that are seen as contextually particular – and true Islam which is seen as being about universal, everlasting truths. In contrast to the above example, it is not an issue of “too much religion” or of fundamentalist interpretations, but of “wrong interpretations” and the confusion of religion and cultural traditions that come under critical scrutiny.

This critical discourse that grounds its legitimacy in a kind of “Islamic authenticity” is often called fundamentalism. Invoking “Islamic authenticity” as the legitimating basis for positions and practices can be either conservative or transformative, and can be invoked by groups that take very different positions.

The discourse of “Islamic authenticity” also appears as important for young Muslims in Norway, and serves several purposes in constituting identity and other cultural and social relationships. “Islamic authenticity” is especially important for young women in regards to how they negotiate gender issues. The ideal for Muslim femininity is not “women in the homeland” who have maintained their culture and religion, nor western feminists who fight for freedom and equality. It is to live up to true Islamic ideals and values as they themselves are understood to embody freedom and equality between women and men. This position leads to a criticism of how gender is understood and organised both in the “host country” and in the “homeland”, and points towards something that has not yet been achieved: the ideal Muslim society.

**Islam and power**

What at least the two latter tendencies share is an appeal to Islam as a resource for changing gender roles. This can be a more or less conscious strategy from the young women’s point of view. Hamida talked of her knowledge of the Koran in the following way:

“I want to say that it is the only tool that has made me feel stronger in Pakistani society. Because when you can say, this is what the Koran says, no-one can contradict you, can they? […] Because you know it then yourself, you’ve read it yourself. It gives you more power, you know what I mean?”

These women interested in “new practices” see knowledge about what “true Islam” is as their guarantee for ending practices that discriminate against women. It therefore becomes especially important to educate yourself in religion in order to be able to claim your rights. It is, however, not only women who have recourse to the authenticity discourse to support their point of view, and there are relatively clear limits on what can be considered as legitimate interrogation within it. In Muslim organisations there are rules and regulations about the kinds of questions it is valid to put to religion. That human ability to understand things is limited, and that one must therefore accept to live with certain kinds of questions unanswered, is the kind of precept often repeated on occasions when Muslims gather together. Control procedures such as this exclude, limit and regulate Islam as a discursive tradition. This discourse can seem restrictive when it implies one is unwilling to discuss problems linked to cultural traditions and rejects them as of no concern for Islam, as some leading figures do. The distinction that authenticity discourse makes between religion and cultural values can therefore either help to invalidate and block the posing of certain questions, or is equally able to challenge institutionalised practices that discriminate against women.

**Feminism and ethnocentrism**

Feminists in Norway, as in other Western countries, are often blind to the complexities that Muslim women are navigating within their Muslim identity. Oversimplified dichotomies such as modern versus traditional, Norwegian versus immigrant have pervaded understandings of women and difference and interpreted Muslim women through stigmatising stereotypes. The stereotype that currently shapes images of young women in the so-called “second generation” is that they are victims of patriarchal family structures and religious conservatism. From this perspective they can only become independent and equal by rejecting their culture and religion and adopting “our” values and ideals of freedom. In reality, however, Muslim women in Norway have many ways they are negotiating and navigating feminine identity. The three approaches to elaborating their identity described in this article each in their own way represent both adaption to and criticism of the existing practices and forms of identity associated with gender – each carrying with it its own possibilities and limits.

**REFERENCES:**


"The twenty per cent limit" for Women in News Media

By ELISABETH EIDE
Perhaps the media is not as influential as we tend to think. It may be that the dramatic under-representation of women on the radio, in newspapers and on TV does not affect the perceptions that women have of themselves. Our image of ourselves is, in any case, formed from such a wide variety of sources. However, gradually we are coming to realise that we live in a media world, a mediated world, where the television news at times is experienced as if it were a feature film, whilst soap operas seem far more real. In which case, perhaps this under-representation is significant after all.

It seems the news media has a limit or a "pain threshold" of about 20–25 per cent women. This refers not to the women actually working in the media, but to those acting as significant sources of information, expressing opinions. Rather more women are tolerated in the role of "eye-catchers" on the TV screen and in the newspapers, a fact which is partly explained by the trend of sexualisation in the media. One would have thought that twenty-five years of women's liberation and numerous improvements for women in working life, politics and education, would also have manifested itself in increased representation of women in the media. With surprise, however, I have to note that this is not the case.

Norwegian studies of 1979, 1989 and 1999 (table 1) show a stagnation of trends in gender representation. Male representation remains unchanged throughout the last twenty years, while the number of articles by women increases in the first period and remains constant after that. A study initiated by the Norwegian Commission on Human Values appointed by the government (Allern, 1999) confirms the numbers for 1999. Only twenty per cent of the informants used by journalists at the ten selected newspapers were women.

Thus, women are under-represented in the newspapers. This is also the case in public broadcasting. Studies conducted by the Norwegian National Broadcasting Company (NRK) included everybody who speaks on the air, including programme presenters. When these are deducted, the proportion of women represented decreases. It is an interesting phenomenon that while the number of women who speak has increased, even if the number has levelled out over the years, their speaking time has shortened somewhat during the period studied. In other words, more women speak for a shorter time than before.

**The babe effect**

What kinds of women are given most space in the Norwegian news media? My newspaper study of 1989 showed that the largest group consisted of women in leading positions (i.e., in politics and organisations, to a lesser extent in business). The 1999 study of the same newspapers show a new tendency towards female icons (women from the world of entertainment such as film and pop stars: princesses, young TV show hostesses, porn queens etc.) who are now most prevalent. (Gjørven, Grønn and Vaagland, 1999). This might partly be explained by the fact that the "Gro-era" (the years during which Gro Harlem Brundtland was prime minister) is over and Norwegian politics are again dominated by men. Another explanation, however, might be the increasing trivialisation of the media (with its emphasis on entertainment), which in turn is connected to commercialisation. "The babe effect" is an appropriate epithet for this tendency. Women as objects of pleasure for the male gaze now appear in the media even if they do not have much to say (or are not allowed to say very much). Pictures of very young, healthy and naked female bodies are often selected to illustrate articles on both female and male health – even being used as an illustration of heart disease, which this category of people very seldom suffer from.

Several studies also show that women "pass their sell-by date" sooner than men when it comes to being represented in the media (Eie, 1998; Dahl and Klemetsen, 1999). This means, in short, that young women stand a better chance of appearing in the news media than older women, and that the age profile of those represented is not the same for women and men. A Northern European comparative study of TV (Eie, 1998) showed that only 11 per cent of people over 50 who "speak on TV", were women. This tendency is also reflected in the category of programme hosts, where mature, composed men alternate with young, beautiful women (Skretteng, 1996; Pedersen, 1997).

What has brought about this situation? The reasons are complex and manifold. I think there are a number of different (and complementary rather than alternative) reasons for the low (and distorted) representation of women in the mass media.

**Men at the top**

Journalism is traditionally top heavy. The sources used are leaders in trade and industry, and politics. Calm men with resolute views are often preferred over women who perhaps express less definitive opinions. The media does not want ambiguity: not too many "maybes". However, reality is rarely so unambiguous. The problem might also be that the informant (especially in the case of politicians) will avoid giving straight answers where this ought to be possible. An honest but ambiguous "maybe" person (and women are perhaps over-represented in this category?) is seldom the media's favourite. Moreover, many journalists know from experience that women are more likely to avoid exposure.
in the media. Several journalists (Eide, 1991, which includes a questionnaire study of 500 Norwegian journalists) explicitly mention this as a reason for the under-representation of women in the newspapers. This might be connected to the way women are treated in the same media, but it can also be an effect of perfectionism, modesty or a general fear of being exposure. In this case, women themselves need to take responsibility for not conforming to this tendency.

**Sportification**

A study of TV in Northern Europe (Eie, 1998) showed that sport was the area which included the smallest number of women: in Norway, only ten percent of those who "talked" in the sports programmes were women. The situation is not much better in the newspapers. An additional fact is that sport is given particular priority in many newspapers. In four of the ten newspapers in the study conducted by the Commission on Human Values, sport was the most important subject, as measured by the amount of text written. In one newspaper, sport was the second most important subject and in three it held a good third position. Consequently, "sportification" is probably as usable a word as "tabloidification", writes researcher Sigurd Allern.

Sport is a subject which far more men than women read about, and the number of female sports journalists in Norway is very low. Perhaps there is a connection here?

**Eight per cent female editors-in-chief**

In September 2000, eight per cent of the editors-in-chief of the 220 Norwegian newspapers were women. None of them worked at the largest newspapers, but some were to be found on the solid, medium sized daily newspapers. "As long as most editors-in-chief are men, female journalists think like men", as one journalist put it (Eide, 1991:93). Experience shows that the existence of more women is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for a more balanced gender representation in the media. A dissertation in media studies, where the Norwegian female editors-in-chief (daily newspapers) were interviewed, made the following conclusion:

"The most important barrier, as I interpret the journalists, are the traditional news values, which have been developed by a male-dominated journalist profession over a number of generations. These are elitist, and result in coverage of men in the top-layer of society at the expense of other groups. [...] A majority of journalists thinks that these (the news criteria) are based on traditional male values." (Kåset, 1993:37)

Most of these editors emphasise their responsibility in increasing the visibility of women and children and the use of these as informants. Furthermore, they hold a negative view of the media's focusing on violence and sex, and warn against newspapers becoming more like magazines, with a stronger emphasis on entertainment rather than serious issues.

Female employees are in a minority amongst the editorial staff and feel themselves to be under a strong pressure to behave like 'one of the lads'. They are easily socialised into a male journalistic norm. This norm is not explicit, but exists as a silent agreement about what are and what are not important issues; on who are and who are not good sources for journalists; on which pictures of women and men should be used and which can gather dust in the archives.

However, a 'feminisation' of the editorial staff can help to promote change. Several studies show that female journalists produce more female articles/inserts than their male colleagues (Zilliacus-
The inherent conservatism of the news criteria

Over 70 per cent of the female journalists included in my study of ten years back thought that the prevailing news priorities obstructed the use of more ‘balanced’ material in the media. Over forty per cent of their colleagues agreed on this. Are the prevailing news priorities taken for granted? In any case, they do not necessarily conform to ‘what the audience wants’. The traditional news criteria and their emphasis on conflicts, power and sensation and the unusual have the effect of pushing men into the news and pushing women out. The extensive focus on criminality, an area where women are very under-represented, adds to the trend.

“[…] there are few female leaders, politicians, top influential people. The incidents where a woman kills, wins, participates, surprises, suggests, misappropriates funs, explores, presents, curses or drops a bomb are few and far between.”

This is the explanation given by a young male journalist for the prevailing news coverage (Eide, 1991). Apart from the fact that this journalist ignores many female politicians, activists and participants, he has a point. Do women have to rob and explode their way into the news, or is it possible to imagine news with a male journalist (Eide, 1991:92).

Under-researched areas

Both “media and gender” and “journalism and gender” are areas which need more research. In this case, what are the challenges we are facing? Cultures of journalism and their gender dimensions form a field to be explored. What in this profession makes its practice favour men, in spite of the fact that there is a tendency towards gender balance among journalists? The power issues inherent in journalism are crucial. We say that the media has a power of definition, but who holds the internal power of definition among the editorial staff? And why? To what extent do the training programmes of journalism and media (and their curricula) contribute to the confirmation or undermining of the prevailing (male) culture?

What about the audience? Recent Norwegian studies show that men and women in many cases prefer the same programmes, read the same articles. There are, however, also crucial differences (Eide, 2000: 39-53). Women, to a larger extent than men, prefer “relational material”: about health and social care; education and upbringing; personal articles and interviews, while the male audience (newspaper readers) read more material on trade and industry, and sports than women do. The increased emphasis on consumer issues in the media also seems to be an attempt to meet the interests of the female audience.

One of the most important things we researchers can do is to initiate a dialogue with the media “practitioners”. This can contribute both to subdue the ivory-tower-tendencies of the research environments and to moderate the anti-intellectualism and scepticism against researchers prevalent in some of the media. This would certainly stimulate the gendered debate among journalists and editors.

TABLE 1: Percentage of articles in Norwegian major and regional daily newspapers in the spring 1979, 1989 and 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male articles</th>
<th>Female articles</th>
<th>Neutral I (both genders)</th>
<th>Neutral II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table is based on a contents analysis of one week’s issues of the following newspapers: Adresseavisen, Aftenposten, Bergen Tidende, Nordlys, Verdens Gang and Vårt Land. All editorial material is included, except editorials and comments. The articles were analysed according to the criteria source (who is quoted?), pictures and bias (what is the focus of the article?). In Neutral I there is an equal representation of both genders, Neutral II is the category for the non-personified subjects: animals, buildings etc, with no gendered sources.

The studies in 1979 and 1989 were carried out by the author (Eide, 1991), while the study of the 1999 issues was carried out by three last-year students at the Journalism Programme at Oslo University College (Gjørven, Gran and Vaagland 1999).
Despite the fact that public service television is committed to diversity and to abiding by the country’s gender equality laws, women seem to be made invisible and neglected. Commercial television, on the other hand, has made women visible both as eye catchers and as a target group. It has done this, however, in ways that are ambiguous. This is characteristic of the two media systems that were the frame of reference for a Nordic research project. The project confirms the main thesis that commercial market interests may promote gender equality.
In spring 1994 it seemed like women were becoming the majority of presenters on Danish television. Female presenters were often the front figures, especially in new programmes and for new topics. However, this development was not unproblematic from a gender equality perspective. On the one hand we witnessed an increasing number of female presenters in a wider range of roles, while on the other hand we saw a triumphant return of traditional gender roles. At this time a debate about the new role of female presenters was also surfacing in other Nordic countries, so I contacted three colleagues - Ulla Abrahamsson in Sweden, Kathrine Skretting in Norway and Tarja Savolainen in Finland to undertake a comparative study of this phenomenon in the Nordic countries. The purpose of the Nordic perspective was, among other things, to focus on phenomena that are easily down-played in a national context. The organisation of television, however, does also differ remarkably in different Nordic countries and we expected that these differences would affect the construction of gender on television. Finland for instance, has had commercial television from the beginning. The study is published in a report which includes national reports from the four countries (Pedersen red.1999).

The femininity of the intimate sphere

The initial thesis for the project was that the growing proportion of female television presenters was not only related to general improvements in the gender balance in society, but also very connected to certain developments within the media. The deregulation of television has opened the door for advertising and increased competition between different TV-channels. It is possible therefore to talk about a sort of free market gender equality. A form of gender equality that is not initiated by political reforms but is due to market demands.

The above tendencies of the two media systems were analysed partly by drawing on the theory of the public sphere and partly by using Andrea Hysen’s analyses of the dichotomy of gender in modernity, where the female is identified and devalued in mass culture. Furthermore we took into consideration international research on gender and TV-presenters. This led to a picture of the types of television being less dichotomised than first assumed. When public service television uses female presenters it is not necessarily only because of democratic gender equality concerns. Women were not even expelled from television in the classic phase of the public sphere, even though historically men have always dominated. The woman played a certain role in the public sphere, where she was invited in as a guarantee for the humaneness of the male presenter and as an aesthetic object. On the other hand, it was expected that public service television, which defined itself as the safeguard against mass culture and bad taste, would distance itself from femininity. The two media systems are thus both based on what we have called the femininity of the intimate sphere. But there is a slight difference. While commercial television does this in an obvious way, public service TV is more inclined to have an ambiguous attitude; either idealise or distance femininity.

The empirical study was based on a recording of all presenters on the most important national TV channels during one week in 1995. In addition, we made a sample survey of the age of the female presenters, since this issue had been one of the focuses in the public debate. Because the role of the TV presenter is strongly linked to the genre of the programme, we recorded the sex of the presenters in the main genres of television programmes.

The quantitative results

In Denmark and Norway 1/3 of the television presenters were women, while in both Sweden and in Finland they comprised 40%. The results contradicted therefore the general impression of women being on the verge of dominating the field of presenting television programmes. The thesis that there would be more female presenters in commercial television was confirmed. In Denmark and Norway, only 1/4 of the presenters on the traditional public service channels NRK (Norwegian public service channel) and DR (Danish public service channel) were women. On the commercial channels there were 40% women. In Sweden and Finland however, the proportion of women was approximately the same on all channels. One explanation for this could be the tradition of having two public service channels in Sweden and Finland, creating space for greater diversity. In Finland’s case Tarja Savolainen points to another explanation: the competition between the two television systems has resulted in a higher proportion of female presenters on the public service channels. This could also explain why the channel that unexpectedly had the highest proportion of female presenters was the Finnish public service channel, YLE-TV2, that in the week of our survey had the same number of female as male presenters.

Age difference of 9 years

One of the most surprising results of the study was that even though the average age of the female presenters could vary up to 10 years, depending on which channel employed them, – the women were always on average 9 years younger than their male colleagues. The numbers confirm that younger women TV-presenters were preferred. This was not only the case on commercial television, but also on public service TV. The fact that it was easier to find female presenters over the age of 40 on Swedish than on Danish television only meant that the average age is generally older on Swedish television. Finland had a high average age but generally a lower age gap between the two genders, than the other Nordic countries.

There can, however, be other reasons for the television industry to use female presenters, than to have them function as eye catchers. Ulla Abrahamsson suggests that the choice of hiring young women as presenters could be motivated by which target group the programme wants to reach. The female presenters can appeal to the younger audience and pull them away from international music channels and at the same time appeal to the female audience. Kathrine Skretting underlined
that counting on younger presenters did not necessarily mean that the quality of the programmes was compromised. Norwegian TV2 was found to have been very concerned not to lose credibility.

Genre
Looking at the Nordic countries as a whole, no programme genre had only male or female presenters. From a Nordic perspective, there is no area of television where you cannot imagine female presenters. We found the highest proportion of female presenters in the big and important category of "the news". In Denmark and in Norway there was an even higher proportion of female than male presenters in the news programmes, while in Sweden and Finland the proportions were approximately 50/50. This is also an international trend. In all four countries the proportion of female presenters in new programmes was higher on commercial than on public service TV. Denmark was an exception, having most female news anchors on the traditional public service channel, while the news at SVT (Swedish public service channel) and YLE (Finnish public service channel) could still be identified as male dominant areas. There is an important signal value in having a high number of female news anchors.

The Weather Report is traditionally a male arena on established public service channels. In 1995 there were still no women presenting the weather report on either the Norwegian or Danish public service channels. YLE, on the contrary, had a female meteorologist in a key position. On the advertisement financed channels the weather however is nearly only presented by women, and they are typically enough not meteorologists. It seems like the ability to get the message through is more important here.

On Danish Sports programmes female presenters are just as important as male presenters, while sports on Swedish television is highly male dominated. In contrast to the weather report, where it seems like the commercial channels have been a role model, there is a tendency in public television to have introduced female sports reporters – often former sports celebrities.

Entertainment is practically entirely male dominated in all four Nordic countries. But there is a clear relation between commercial television and female presenters in entertainment – the more commercial the channel the more female presenters there are. But here the woman's position is ambiguous. On the one hand, the commercial channels break with the overwhelming male dominance in entertainment programmes. On the other hand, it is often here you see strikingly younger female co-presenters and more or less silent female assistants. Skretting's explanation of this points to the fact that men often are "star-presenters" with their own programmes, personalities and humour, while women are more neutral presenters. This is the same kind of gender division that can be observed in more documentaries. This can explain why women are dominant as news anchors, but seldom have their own current affairs programmes.

Presenter couples
Programmes that have both a male and a female presenter are an important gateway for women to work as TV presenters. In the study it was the number of presenters working in pairs that increased the quota of female presenters.

There were relatively many presenter pairs on all advertisement-financed channels, but also on the Swedish and Finnish public service channels. In addition we have the group of female presenters appearing in short, ritualised programmes such as weather reports and news casting. There are few women who are solo-presenters designing their own programmes, not even on channels where the proportion of female presenters is quite high.

The market's gender equality
This study more or less confirmed the main thesis that commercial market interests can promote gender equality. On commercial channels women presenters appeared in programmes that were partly or entirely male dominated in public service TV, such as the weather report and entertainment programmes. In addition to this, they often appeared in new types of programmes that emerged after the deregulating of television. In these programmes women presenters often became front figures. A new type of entertainment programme without games or competitions - popular culture programmes and talk shows about the issues of everyday life. Even though these types of programmes do not have high cultural value, they represent an interesting development in TV, both concerning the types of subjects, the kinds of guests and in the way the very role of the presenter is performed.

It is not exactly clear that commercial channels intend to trivialise women by using younger women as TV presenters – often involving an age difference of up to 9 years. However, it needs to be pointed out that while age differences in the old public service channels could be explained by the fact that they are lagging behind, the age difference on the commercial channels is a deliberate choice, because all TV presenters have only been engaged for a short period of time.

Abrahamsson contends that women are marginalised on both types of channels, because they constitute a minority in the channels' core areas - news promotion and fact-based programmes on public service channels, and entertainment on commercial channels.

Learn from commercial channels?
Efforts to attain gender equality could be identified on the public service channels: NRK (Norwegian Public Service Channel) gives room for programmes that experiment with the image of women. Danish DR has broken with male presenters' sports monopoly. It was a public service channel – Finland's YLE that (quantitatively) had the highest degree of equality. Judging from the situation in Denmark in the early nineties, it seems that it is not only on the commercial channels we will find an improvement of women's image on TV. But public service channels might learn from the commercial channels and take the female audience more seriously, and at the same time avoid the triviality that often characterises commercial television.

VIBEKE PEDESEN, Ph.d, Associate Professor at the Institute of Philology University of Copenhagen. This article appeared in Danish in NIKK magasin 3-2000.
Research into gender differences, for example in talent and personality traits, has been carried out for a long time, particularly in American psychology. It is quantitatively the largest field of psychology research dealing with gender. Within this field, the most common kinds of theoretical arguments concern assumed differences between women and men in terms of internal characteristics. These differences are often assumed to explain measured mean value differences between a studied group of women/girls and a studied group of men/boys.

Focusing entirely on the differences in characteristics and abilities between groups of women and groups of men hides, above all, the differences among women and the differences among men, which usually are considerably bigger than those between the groups. Thus, this creates a falsely homogenising picture of what it means to be a woman and to be a man. This kind of research usually treats gender as an inner variable, which might have effects that can be studied in statistical analyses – in line with socioeconomic status, age, blood pressure, degree of self-confidence etc., in spite of the fact that the gender of individuals rarely varies. Researchers might, for example, write that they "study the effect of gender on the adjustment to shift work" or that "deficient social skills are explained by the sex of the child." The view of gender as
a variable is one of many examples of epistemological assumptions which create problems in the communication between psychology researchers and researchers in women’s and gender studies (Marecek, 1995).

**Feminists with standard techniques**

In the USA, since the 1970’s there have been a number of few feminist psychologists who have wanted to reform psychology from within, while these have been somewhat fewer in the Nordic countries. Political ambitions are visible in their research work and gender differences are often studied in order to correct what is regarded as misunderstandings in psychological theories and practices concerning the performances, characteristics and living conditions of women and of men. Feminist ambitions are sometimes also seen in discussions on structural factors and power relations outside of psychology and gender.

When it comes to methods, this group remains in the mainstream and is characterized by quantitative methods, standardised questionnaires, scales and other types of measurements. The researchers seldom problematise what it is they are actually studying, when exploring sex/gender and gender differences. In feminist terminology, this group would probably be called feminist empiricists. However, even if they use standard methods of the discipline, they are not necessarily accepted in the mainstream or their research is not necessarily incorporated in the canon. Scholars in this group do not always fit comfortably into the institutional research environment.

Early researchers in this group were eager to contradict assertions in mainstream psychology of women’s lesser abilities in areas such as mathematics and intelligence measures, and of a number of various personality traits. The aim usually was to show that women are as good as, or similar to, men. They have, to a large extent, succeeded: a recurring finding in this type of research seems to be that sex differences in performance have decreased radically during the last fifty years. In the 1980’s, the focus moved to studying and emphasising the positive emotional and moral qualities of women, but also ideas on specific female cognitive styles and learning strategies. During the 1990’s, many have increasingly directed their interest at biological and evolutionary-psychological arguments.

In this group, too, gender usually appears as a collection of personal characteristics in women and men – roles, personality features, self-images, attitudes, values, behaviours, psychological symptoms, etc. Gender seems to be conceptualised as an individual inner force or source of action, which makes people behave in a gender-specific manner (Marecek, 1995).

"The psychology of women"

The gynocentric psychology of women, a reversed, pro-female way of interpreting observed psychological gender differences, would never have seen the light of day without the modern women’s movement, but its relation to this very movement has not been unproblematic.

This concept of ‘‘the psychology of women’’ is based on difference thinking and essentialist assumptions, which may block scientific and political development of the field. Several well-known theories in the psychology of women are characterised by unreflected views of ‘‘women’’ as something basically, and in essential ways, different from ‘‘men’’. They build their basic assumptions on the kinds of conceptions of separate male and female essences common in Western culture, and create circular arguments in which the expected answer (gender differences) is built into the premises (essences).

**Negative consequences**

Observed gender differences in a certain study can seem very plausible and essential if one does not reflect on their origin outside the individual: who stands to gain by their preservation, and what forces outside the individual help in maintaining them in everyday life? It is not very “scientific” to claim to find different female and male essences in individuals in a society where women and men are consistently treated differently, and are valued differently and assigned
debates are going on in journals in the shortcomings has increased greatly and psychology, often made statements on nevertheless, exactly as does mainstream women in the Western world, but has, psychology of women has often been limit-

versalistic tendencies have characterised large parts of psychology, including parts of what is usually called the psychology of women. In the form in which it has been practiced up to the 1990’s, the psychology of women has often been limit-
ed to studying white middle-class women in the Western world, but has, nevertheless, exactly as does mainstream psychology, often made statements on “all” women. The awareness of these shortcomings has increased greatly and debates are going on in journals in the

field. Quite a lot of new groundbreaking research is being produced, mostly under such names as critical feminist psycholo-

GENDER AS A SYSTEM OF MEANING

Another group of psychology re-

searchers do explicitly not study gender differences. They take a qualitative and – positioning’ stance on knowledge and gender. Many of these scholars do not see themselves unproblematically as belonging to the discipline of psycho-

logy; instead, they often are closely related to cross-disciplinary feminist research. Their theoretical inspiration comes from several fields, for example, feminist theory, hermeneutics, phenomenology, critical psychology, social con-

structionism, postmodern thinking and Marxism.

Many of this group see gender (including femininity and masculinity) as something that people “do” in their everyday lives and which they, furthermore, do in various kinds of power rela-
tions. The expression “doing gender” coined by West & Zimmerman (1987) is often used as a name for this everyday production of gender. These researchers do not aim to make statements about people’s inner characteristics, but study, for example, the social meaning of dif-

ferent ways of being a woman or a man, and often explore negotiations and power. This kind of research often finds it difficult to fit within the framework of the discipline of psychology. The scholars often see themselves as being on the margin of their discipline and, in some cases, also as dissidents from their department.

FEMINIST CRITICISM OF SCIENCE

Some of the feminist researchers who study how the assumptions and condi-
tions of psychology define the limits of what can become psychological knowl-

edge, actually no longer regard them-

selves as researchers in psychology. Rather, they see themselves as re-

searchers on psychology, often with a clear focus on criticism of science. They are influenced by the international cross-disciplinary women’s and gender studies, particularly by the most recent critical movements within feminist theory and modern sociology of science. They focus on the basic assumptions and practices of the discipline, on how these interact with the social roles of psychology and the emergence and increased impact of psychology as a pro-

fession (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1990; Richards, 1996; Rose, 1996).

These researchers explore how different definitions of gender in, for example, psychological research and practice, give rise to variations in research topics, research strategies and specialisations in educational programs, and how these make it easier or more difficult to inte-

grate a gender perspective. They scruti-

nize other researcher’s and practitioner’s definitions of gender and study the conse-

quences of these for research and other issues.

The ultimate wish of the feminist critics of psychological science is to transform the psychology discipline in order for its knowledge to better serve disadvantaged groups in today’s society. This critique can therefore in certain respects appear to be destructive: the aim of the researchers is not mainly to improve existing theories of the present discipline, but to create theories and practices which are based on totally new basic conditions.

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During that era, which historians of psychology sometimes call “the cult of the empirical”, quantitative methods achieved a dominant and partly definitive position within the subject. The aim to be sufficiently “scientific” has, in other words, had a great influence on the development of the discipline, not least on how research within psychology is to be carried out. This phenomenon is sometimes called “the methodological imperative”. Certain assumptions about methods and procedures have remained as given, even if many of the original theories which they are based on have been discarded. These givens often seem to result, among other things, in focusing on “gender differences” when sex/gender is studied by psychologists. The negative consequences of a one-eyed focus on gender differences have, over the years, been pointed out by several feminist scholars (Morawski, 1988).

As an integral part of modern society
Modern psychology, both academic and clinical, is the discipline that, above all, has made it possible to measure or in other ways study, and thus influence and control, the individual inside of the citizen. Historically, this is something new and it gives psychology a very special position in society, intimately integrated as it is with modern social structure. Contemporary western societies can, with certain justification, be said to presuppose psychology; they have developed in parallel and in relation to it. The psychological disciplines have developed tools for translating human subjectivity into language and this puts it within the grasp of the rulers. Thus it has become conceivable for governments to achieve desired aims by systematic regulation of the psychological domain (Richards, 1996; Rose, 1996).

As helper and expert
Psychologists and researchers of psychology are a specific group of experts in modern society. Psychologists and other professionals who use psychological knowledge test, evaluate, treat, consult, give therapy, educate, give statements on TV and the radio, write specialist books, write popular psychology advice books and so on. Psychological expertise performs a major role in defining normality today. When “expert” treatment is applied to self-understanding, concepts such as knowledge/expertise, methods and techniques are often brought to the fore, rather than concepts such as ethics, power or politics. However, the expert treatments are not neutral, either in their origin, or in their effects: the descriptions given by the experts of those they study or treat, tend to transform into directives on what people should be like (Rose, 1996).

There is also a strong self-image
From the very beginning, when it was separated from philosophy and physiology, academic psychology struggled to assert its credibility as a scientific discipline. During the first half of the 20th century, therefore, the main strands of the discipline had established research practices which laid an emphasis on conforming strictly to what was perceived as real science: incorporating positivistic, empirical, quantitative, objective approaches.

among practicing psychologists as being helpers, particularly for individual persons. The input of psychology is usually aimed at changing the individual, seldom to make the individual, or group, change social circumstances. This inevitably means that psychology is an important and on many levels an integrated part of the machinery we all must relate to when developing into or presenting ourselves as "normal" or "deviant" citizens (Richards, 1996).

It is interesting to reflect upon how the simultaneous positioning both as helper and as expert/judge influence the way psychologists and psychology researchers understand themselves and their discipline. Knowledge and the creation of knowledge within the discipline of psychology perhaps become unusually intimately interwoven with the society, the upholding of which its practitioners partake in. This, in all likelihood, is very significant for what kinds of understandings of gender comfortably fit in the discipline.

As industry
Psychology in a broad sense can today in a sense be regarded as a kind of industry, particularly if we look at the amount of popular psychology disseminated in the media, in self-help literature etc. It is hardly possible to avoid psychology today, even if one wished to do so. This, of course, influences the self-understanding of psychology and psychologists. Many psychologists think the 'industry' phenomenon is embarrassing and distance themselves from vulgar or popular psychology and adopt a contemptuous attitude to theme seminars and psychology columns as well as books such as Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus, taking the view that the subject of these books is not psychology. Should we see them as an undeserved vulgarisation of a scientific discipline or are they an important means of spreading psychological insights to the masses? In any case, there is reason to worry about the types of gender understandings that are spread in large parts of popular psychology, since these are often based on very traditional views on men and women.

In certain psychological theories and applications, crude and partly stereotypical and belittling conceptions of both women and people who are not middle-class born still prevail. However, a "neutrality" on these issues is more common, since they are not touched upon at all. Above all, sex/gender as a social category is not problematised at all, but seen as a variable among many others (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1990).

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In pursuit of gendered codes

By TRINE LYNNGARD

She is renowned on the Nordic scene for killing the myth of the good mother, once and for all, at the beginning of the 70’s – to the relief of many women. While pregnant herself, she and some other feminist mothers with small children wrote the book "The Myth of the Good Mother". This was the first critique of the image of women in psychology, as it was being expressed in books of advice for expectant mothers. And indeed, childcare and the interplay between men and women in family and everyday life were to come into central focus for Hanne Haavind’s psychology research and her work as a therapist.

- I myself read books like The Psychology of the First Years of Life while I was pregnant – at the same time as I was planning to share childcare of the baby I was expecting with its father! I remember I thought that it didn’t make any scholarly or scientific sense, but at the same time I was affected and worried by it. What must it have been like for those who didn’t have the kind of critical, intellectual distance I had as a psychologist? So I decided to write a scholarly critique arguing that childcare was too important for women to undertake as a task all on their own, and excluding everyone else from experiencing what dependence on others and responsibility for others really means, says Hanne Haavind, Professor of Psychology at University of Oslo. She is renowned in Norway...
and internationally as an important contributor to feminist and gender research in psychology.

- My critique of the myth of the good mother was completed round about the time my son was born in 1972. I remember it vividly, because I dictated the first draft of the manuscript onto a dictaphone with my newborn baby at my side. When the woman transcribing the text played the first section she could hear the baby crying in the background!

Hanne Haavind laughs, as she has-

tens to add that at that time – as today – feminist psychologists did not want to disparage the importance of good childcare. On the contrary, a hallmark of Norwegian feminist research is its close documentation of organisation and frameworks for childcare.

- Children grow up in social interactions, and they can benefit from several people right from the very start of life. What we opposed was the misunderstanding that childcare was exclusively a woman’s task, and that good care needed knowledge and capabilities that were unique to woman’s “nature”. Men can also look after children right from the earliest age, but they need to involve themselves in it and be willing to learn how to do it, underlines Hanne Haavind.

### Man as the implicit norm

- How would you describe the image of women in psychology then, did women exist beyond being mothers?

- There were two main ways you encountered woman in psychology: as someone who existed in order to be something for others, in the role of housewife or mother, and as a group with shortcomings, worse or weaker that the norm. Man was the implicit norm, and measured against that norm women were somewhat lacking, ill or confused. Women were regarded as ill when they were not like men, and ill when they were not “proper” women. In psychology’s way of thinking we could read that women who did not live up to the norms implicit in how men should be, were lacking. But those who deviated from womanly ways and resembled men had something wrong with them too.

Hanne Haavind gives us an example of what she means:

- A Swedish psychologist did a survey about women and menstruation. His premise was that feminine women were little affected by period pains, while masculine women experienced a lot of period discomfort. But his survey showed that it was the other way round: those with so-called ‘masculine’ traits had the least discomfort. So he changed his hypothesis and said that “masculine” women were denying their bodies, thus not recognising the pain their bodies obviously were experiencing.

### Double Standards

- And now, where do women stand now, in today’s psychology?

- They have more or less disappeared from “general” psychology. The subject has moved from emphasizing biased images of women to neutralising anything that concerns gender. The mother has become “one of the parents”, the husband or wife has become “partner”. So psychology is constructing another kind of distortion of women; the fear of saying something wrong about women has led to saying nothing about them at all. The subject manages to neglect women’s experience and personal development. You don’t get even a glimpse of how important gender is for the creation of differences between women. That women’s lives are different in no way means they live like men. In this gender-neutralising approach caring has become an empty “thing” that can simply be “shared equally” between men and women. Double standards are hovering off stage: she is viewed as someone who doesn’t manage to meet the child’s needs, while he comes to be seen as a gift to the child by virtue of his very existence.

In her own research Hanne Haavind has pursued her first book’s theme of mothers’ care of children, but from different angles. The book “The Small and the Big” – which was also her doctoral work – is concerned with how modern mothers organise everyday life for themselves and their children in ways that support the children’s development. The book explores how children navigate their own experience of growing up when they have mothers who are not with them all day long, but who nonetheless continue to be concerned about what the child is exposed to and how the child make sense of his/her transitions from one situation to another.

- I first interviewed mothers about all kinds of details of their daily life. In 

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that way I tried to get a handle on how caring is shaped by people who were whole people, not just someone’s mother. To see the mother as a whole human being was something new in psychological research. I looked at how women themselves both combined and separated their concern for the child and concern for other things that were important for them in everyday life.

The many sides of women’s lives
From the mid 1980’s Hanne Haavind was head of research in the Women’s Research Secretariat set up by the Norwegian Research Council. Here she set in motion a network of fellow researchers who wanted to develop feminist approaches.

- We called the network "Women’s chance to go further" so as to emphasise the two dimensions of changes women confronted and even were pushing forward in their own lives: women are changing through their personal experience, and the terms for living as a woman are changing. I myself learned a lot from supervising a series of projects in clinical psychology and psychiatry and general medicine. These gave me insight into many different aspects of women’s lives, how they are shaped by people who were shaped through women’s encounter with social conditions passed on to them. From this network of researchers eventually surfaced many articles, books and projects. These revealed both the themes woven into the suffering and restrictions that faced many articles, books and projects.

- In this research Hanne Haavind collaborated with other Nordic feminist social psychologists and sociologists. She assembled a group of seven researchers, who have made important contributions to the understanding of gender and gender in personal and socio-cultural contexts, and together they produced the book "Gender and Interpretative method" (2000). It is a book about possible methods for qualitative research, with a special focus on gender.

"Gendered meanings"
- In your book you use the curious phrase "gendered meanings", can you explain what you mean by this?
- The concept "gendered meanings" seems strange and artificial, but then it’s not intended for everyday use. It’s an analytical concept that stresses that you are studying how human beings become and are men and women, both for themselves and for others, and in what ways and to what ends this is played out as relevant in their lives. In the book we wanted to bring to peoples’ attention that gender-related phenomena can be deeply rooted in the interaction between people, and not just consequences of the characteristics of these people. In other words, it is the interaction that creates and confirms personal characteristics and they are always the answer to the implicit question: what kind of women are you, what kind of man are you?

Analyses of difference are not neutral
- The analytical method most frequently used by psychologists to understand gender portrays differences between women and men. In your book why do you critically contest the predominance of this method in research?
- The analysis of difference assumes that gender is about women and men having different characteristics, and reinforces preconceptions of how women and men "are" by comparing the two groups. The results of difference analysis come to be portrayed as objective correlates to subjective perceptions, based on the idea that analysis of difference is a neutral method. It is right that systematic studies of gender differences have contributed to correcting prejudice-laden interpretations of women’s shortcomings and men’s superiority. But it does not follow that any form of comparison between women and men is neutral. It is rather formed by a special set of assumptions. The methodological approach infers that women and men should be described according to the same norm, and that the two teams shall be judged as comparable. Through the operations performed to establish this norm and distinguish the groups, a particular form of interpretation determines how results can turn out. If the researcher asks whether women have as good leadership skills as men, it is easy to overlook how the term ‘leadership skills’ is defined – and that it is a completely different choice of women and men who might be included in groups of "leaders".

Same Satisfaction?
- The project of understanding that lies behind difference analysis is the search
for a dualistic essence that lies behind empirical tendencies. This obvious dualistic polarisation influences the results being linked to a hallmark of women and men, rather than people. Gender becomes what women are in contrast to what men are. The results are generalised in a dualistic division, even though the differences within each gender group usually are a lot bigger than between the women as a group and men as a group, says Hanne Haavind. She takes the question whether women and men have the same satisfaction with their marriages as an example of what is problematic in comparing men and women.

- So - the abstract and gender neutral "something" that is to be investigated is "satisfaction within marriage". But if the group of women and the group of men consistently express the same degree of contentment with their marriages, is it the same thing they are contented with? In fact the method completely loses meaning – women are actually married to men, while men are married to women. There is no abstract "something" in the marriage men and women are confronted with, it is each other!

**Male Dominance**

- So what I have been preoccupied with all these years is marriage as a gender arrangement, the significance of being, respectively, woman and man for each other. I thought that both agreement and conflict in a couple relationship have a close relationship to how gender regulates power and distributes appreciation, Hanne Haavind continues.

- This analytical approach stresses that gender is not just something to do with him or her, but a framework of interpretation for their actions. When she does the same as him, the meaning is not evidently the same. My psychological task gradually widened from recording women's and men's positions and ways of being in couple relationships to understanding the gendered dynamics of their interaction. I learned something about how women handled their subordination in a relationship where it was based on love and where long term commitment was a shared aim.

- *You recommend looking for male dominance and female subordination – wouldn't this approach easily end up in self-confirming and static results?*

- My recommendations are to look for the transformation of power in everyday practices, in negotiations between men and women living together as couples. It is obvious that traditional concepts of power, meaning a lot of resources in the hands of one person or power connected to hierarchical positions is not valid here. Female subordination today does not appear as subordination, male dominance is not presented as power demonstration. The gendered power is transformed, something we can see when we analyse how the two go about to achieve agreements, how the partners refer to differences between them and how conflicts arise. In the analysis of interaction we don't establish male dominance or female subordination, but we examine how power between gender is negotiated, what form it takes and what consequences it has.

**"Relative subordination"**

- Often, for example, the practical argument about who has the higher paying job and therefore who shall stay at home with the children is presented as if it had nothing to do with gender. Many interview objects consistently avoid focusing on gender in any way; the interview is experienced as incompatible with personal reasons or personal choices. Patterns of interaction are similarly gendered. Gender as a cultural code for understanding one's own and others' ways of behaving has wide and very intimate significance, and gender 'shows itself' in different and partly contradictory ways.

After more than twenty years of research on gender and interaction – and despite somewhat large changes in gender relations – Hanne Haavind will nonetheless claim that one of the conclusions from the study Power and Love within Marriage from the 1980s still has relevance for us today:

"Women can do everything, as long as they do it relatively subordinated in relation to the men they associate with."

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**"CAN MEN DO IT?"**

"Can Men do it? Men and gender equality in working life. An exploration of the issues" is the title of the revised English version of the Nordic publication "Kan menn?" (TemaNord 2000:24), by Øystein Gullvåg Holter in cooperation with translator Carol S. Lindquist. The new version is written for international readers, giving an overview of the Nordic situation with a slightly more academic analysis. It retains the main policy points of the Nordic version, but also addresses more complex front-line research questions, like "gendering" as a modern process.

The research references have been updated, and include new evidence of change among top-level leaders. The English version should be of interest to anyone seeking new knowledge and practices of change in an important emerging field.

For further information, see:

http://www.nikk.uio.no/mansforskning/

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**PLAN OF ACTION FOR MEN AND GENDER EQUALITY**

The Nordic Council of Ministers’ Plan of Action for Men and Gender Equality for the period 1997-2002 is now in its final year. The plan comprises fifteen Nordic joint projects. In 2001 three conferences took place: a Nordic seminar on "Men and violence, theory and practice", a conference for researchers in Studies on Men entitled "Tintin’s New Adventures " and a conference on men and work, called: "Men can do it, Working Life and Gender Equality". This year a new project is starting up under the heading "Gender socialisation in the public sphere" and the plans are to produce a book on gender socialisation and youth and organize a conference around this theme. The NIKK-based Nordic Coordinator for Studies on Men collaborates with a Nordic working group in implementing the plan of action.
Gender and violence - the first Nordic conference and future plans

In late November 2001 Nordic researchers and research students met for two days in Køge, Denmark to share results, ideas and information on research on gender and violence in the Nordic countries. The plenaries and the 52 papers presented in the workshops covered a wide scope of topics ranging from victimization and agencies’ responses, sexuality and sexual violence, separations and parenthood to gender and perpetrators, to just mention a few.

In the opening plenary on Victimization, Sylvia Walby discussed causes of violence against women in order to find strategies to stop, or at least reduce, men’s violence. She argued, for example, that a lack of adequate responses from the criminal justice system and the welfare state and society can be considered as some of the causes of violence against women. Eva Lundgren talked about the first national survey on men’s violence against women in gender equal Sweden and discussed, for example, the lack of “free zones” from violence against women and the implications for women’s everyday lives.

In the plenary on Parenthood, Gudrun Nordborg outlined recent developments in criminal and family law. One of her conclusions was that we need to continue to develop measures to protect children. Furthermore, today it is not marriage, but fatherhood that enables men to control women and children. Else Christensen pointed out that we still lack good statistics on the proportion of children experiencing violence in their families, but she stressed that a lot of studies show the negative effects on children of witnessing violence: to witness violence as a child can be regarded as being subjected to child abuse or neglect.

The plenary on Masculinity closed the conference and here Jeff Hearn discussed different perspectives on men’s violences as well as the concept of masculinity. Furthermore, he argued that we need to make links between men’s violence and institutions assumed to be non violent, such as fatherhood for example. Finally, Inger Lövkrona talked about research on gender and violence in cultural and historical studies and she pointed out the need of problematization of biologistic notions of men’s violence.

The conference report is planned to be published spring 2002.

The third and last call in Gender and violence - a Nordic research programme 2000-2004 (administrated by The Nordic Academy for Advanced Study) will be out in the spring 2002. The deadline for applications is September 1, 2002. See www.norfa.no.

NIKK PUBLICATIONS IN ENGLISH

NIKK magasin
At the end of each year an English version of NIKK magasin is published, featuring a selections of articles from the two Scandinavian editions the same year and also new articles specially written for the English edition. NIKK magasin presents studies from various research fields – the common denominator is a critical gender perspective.

News from NIKK
Annual newsletter with reports from NIKK activities and from the national co-ordinators for women’s studies and gender research in the Nordic countries. Published in May/June.

A free subscription to the English edition of NIKK magasin includes an issue of the the newsletter News from NIKK.

NIKK website: http://www.nikk.uio.no
Visit the English website and read about: NIKK’s research projects, NIKK-publications online, Nordic co-ordinator for Studies on Men, Overview and links to Nordic and European gender research and Gender equality institutions; Bibliographic databases; Statistics, Calendar of International and Nordic events.

Reports
The Living for Tomorrow-project:


Booklet
How to Bridge the Gap between Us? Gender and Sexual Safety. NIKK & The Living for Tomorrow NGO, Tallinn 2000.

A booklet written and illustrated by Estonian and Russian teenagers. The text is in English, Russian and Estonian – and the booklet ends with a vocabulary of words to do with gender and sex.
New publications


NORA 2002/2: Challenges to Gender Equality in Nordic Welfare States, ed. Anette Borchorst, University of Aalborg, Denmark

NORA 2002/3: Gender and Body, ed. Bente Meyer and Bente Larsen, The Danish University of Education and University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

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This is NIKK
• Serves as a platform for co-operation for Women’s Studies and Gender Research in the Nordic Countries
• Promotes, initiates and co-ordinates Women’s Studies and Gender Research in the five Nordic countries and internationally
• Strengthens the flow of information about women’s studies and gender research within the Nordic countries and internationally
• Conducts research projects

NIKK is located at the University of Oslo together with the Centre for Feminist Research.

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