

Chapter 9 Recent research on gender and on men and masculinity

The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief overview over general topics that have relevance for men from a gender perspective and make more visible the knowledge that we already have on men and masculinities. The chapter shows the state of research with regards to particular aspects of being a man in Norway today, and becomes an important foundation and essential background for the discussions and proposals in the different chapters of the White Paper. The chapter contains a number of research terms and frameworks that may not correspond exactly to the terms in common use. The references here are purely descriptive and introductory, and are not meant to be political evaluations.

The research on men that has appeared in the last two decades has been able to shed some light on male roles and masculinity—over the changes that have happened in this area and the causes for those changes. Research on men, as a part of gender research, can reveal how political decisions can influence the roles of men, but also that political decisions can be made as a result of the descriptions of male roles that research provides. Gender research arose together with and as a part of the women's movement of the 1960's and 1970's. The movement had a purely female focus and worked for equal rights for women. Gender research was basically synonymous with research on women in the first phase of the women's movement. The social project of researching women was essentially a project about visibility; the focus was on bringing forth knowledge about women as historical actors and taking their experiences seriously in a time when the world seemed gender neutral only because the man was the norm and the "normal subject". The idea of a gender perspective still makes many people think immediately of a women's perspective.

We "haven't seen the man for all the men" is an apt and acute statement from recent gender research. Even though the man has historically been the norm, even in research, there has been little actual conscious reflection on man as gender. Men's studies emerged in the 1980's, but during the 1990's it seemed as if this research was just an extension of feminist research. Men's studies is not all research done on men and their actions, but rather research that is consciously aware of the fact that men have gender, that men stand in a gender relationship with other men and with women. A minor rewriting of an important and well known quote by Simone de Beauvoir expresses what many have pointed out about the proper starting point for true research on males: "One isn't born to be a man, one becomes one".

There are cultural expectations and perceptions of what it is to be a man in Norwegian society today. There are traditional and historically based norms that run parallel to the political focus on gender and the work for equality between women and men. This work towards gender equality has led to changes in the traditional attitudes. 30 years of gender and equality on the political agenda has without a doubt had a great significance for men too.

In Norwegian society today we find many different ways in which to be a man. The ministry will therefore focus on *masculinities*, plural. Ideas and ideals of masculinity vary with context. Variables like age, class and ethnic background play their part in the forming of varied expectations and judgments of what is masculine and what is not.

9.1 Changing conceptions of masculinity

The terms masculine and feminine are often used, in daily speech, in media and in research. But the way in which these concepts are understood is in constant flux. If we look at what typified the norms for women and men in the 1950's and 1960's, and compare that to today's norms, it is easy to see how much some things have changed. Traditional femininity tied women to the caregiver role and the private sphere. Traditional masculinity tied men to the provider role and the public sphere. The women's rights movement and women's studies of the 1970's led to a change in the understanding of what a woman is and can be. As a consequence, girls and women now have a wider range of options than the rigid norms about gender of the 1950's and 1960's would have allowed. Girls today have a large territory and range of acceptable choices of activity; they can choose anything from traditional feminine activities like playing with dolls and concerning themselves with "pink things", to activities requiring them to be physically active, aggressive and tough. It is expected that young women will be caring, but it is also natural for them to educate themselves, have a career, and share the provider role in the family.

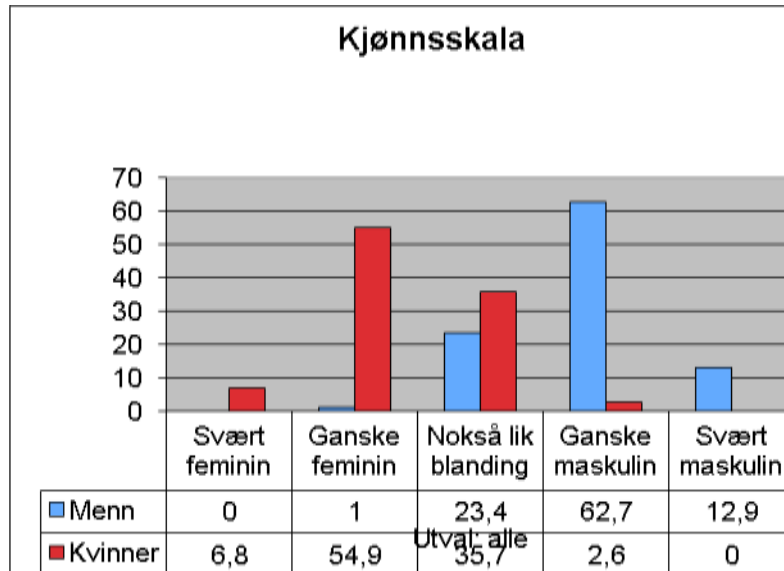
The male role and norms for what is acceptable for a man to be and do have also changed in the last three decades. The "new man" is oriented towards equality. The Gender Equality Survey shows that especially younger men have adapted to a more gender-equal home life and participate more in activities like food preparation and other household chores. In particular, men have become more active in caring for their children. The changes in the role of the father have been sizeable. In the 1950's it would have been considered *unnatural* for a man to be pushing a baby carriage; today it is considered a matter of course for men to participate in childcare, though men themselves would like to do even more. Even though all fathers today may not share the tasks of the home equally with their partners in practice, the ideals of what a good father should be have undergone fundamental changes since the 1950's and 60's. It is now completely legitimate for a father to prioritise spending time with his children. In fact, fathers who state openly that they don't prioritise their children's birthday may set themselves up for public ridicule.

We also see the changes in male roles in other spheres of society. Young men in Norway today have more and closer friendships both with other men and women than might have been seen in previous generations. The limits to how acceptable it is for men to be concerned with their appearance, their clothes, fashion and interior design have clearly been expanded. The Gender Equality Survey also shows that younger men are more tolerant of differences in the ways in which masculinity and male identity may be expressed than the men of previous generations.

The Gender Equality Survey shows that equality between the sexes has come a long way in Norway, and the situation has been significantly improved in the last 20 years. 90% of both men and women say that they think that housework and breadwinning should be divided equally between men and women. More and more couples turn that opinion into practice. In 1988, 95% of men asked said that their wives did all or most of the food preparation. Now, 35% of men say that they share this task equally with their wives, and around 15% say that they do most of the cooking. Men participate more in other household tasks and childcare, partly because they have increased their use of the opportunities for parental leave of absence. Most believe that their children should be brought up to respect the equality of the sexes, and that rape is the man's responsibility. A large majority of both men and women (70% of the

men and 80% of the women) would like the paternal quota to be expanded.

In The Gender Equality Survey, the respondents were asked to place themselves on a “gender scale”, going from extremely feminine to extremely masculine. The diagram below shows the results:



Kjønnsskala: gender scale

Menn: men

Kvinner: women

Svært feminin: Extremely feminine

Ganske feminine: Pretty feminine

Nokså lik blanding: Fairly even mix

Ganske maskulin: Pretty masculine

Svært maskulin: Extremely masculine

Utval: alle: Sample: all

More women than men respond that they think that they are a fairly even blend of masculine and feminine traits. More women than men, though very few of both genders, respond that they have “quite a lot” of the traits of the opposite gender. The numbers suggest that women place themselves somewhat more evenly on the gender scale than men.

“The gender scale” from the survey indicates that the outward structure of gender equality has changed in Norwegian society more than gender identity. There is more acceptance of a gender-equal division of labour and family responsibility, but a broader scope of gender identity is more difficult for people to accept. The researchers of the Gender Quality Survey have written the following in their report:

It is tempting to think about *social stigmatisation and taboo formation* when one looks at this part of the survey. Is being “extremely” like the opposite gender still a real taboo in today’s Norway? How else can we explain why no one, not one man or woman, chose that option on the questionnaire? Even taking into consideration that the question could be misinterpreted, it still seems that someone would have chosen “extremely” if some social stigma had not been involved. The distribution of answers suggests a type of *normative discipline within the area of gender* that is quite unlike the variations seen in many other areas of gender equality. In

this question there seems to be no room for trends, modifications or variation. Here it seems important to march to the same beat.

9.1.1 Attitudes towards equality between genders

Data from the Gender Equality Survey suggests that the content of our concept of equality is under *negotiation*. When men and women are asked to take a stand on various assertions concerning equality, the answers are partly cohesive and partly gender-specific.

Both men and women rally round the "recognisable" political statements of equality such as "men and women should both share the same responsibility in providing for the family financially" and "domestic chores should be equally shared between men and women". Furthermore, the majority of both men and women believe that more men should go into more typically female-dominated occupations, and that women should enter more male-dominated occupations. Moreover, the majority of both men and women agree that men get the most financially lucrative jobs in our society, and that women still have the home and family as their main responsibility. More or less the whole sample of men and women agrees that an important goal in the upbringing of children is that the children themselves shall live in an equal society and believe in the gender equality ideals when they grow up.

At the same time, more men than women in the sample (64% to 41%) believe that gender equality has come far enough, and that equality, generally speaking, has basically already been achieved (67% of the men against 46% of the women). The majority of the men are against quota systems that might even out the gender division in occupations and education where the balance is uneven. They are more positive towards other initiatives, particularly campaigns involved with distribution of information and building of more positive attitudes.

The Gender Equality Survey shows that the Norwegian equality project has "better hit the target" in the middle-class compared to the working-class, where improvements because of increased gender equality are not being as clearly experienced. A full 70% of those asked agreed with the statement that equality is more beneficial for successful people in society. The number rises to a total of 84% among those with low income. Here there are only a few differences in opinion between men and women.

Considering that equality between men and women is not known for giving equally clear advantages to those with a low income, the scepticism in this group towards the public authorities' efforts on behalf of equality is also very high. Among the people of low income the use of other means, for example the "Cash Benefit Act" (Cash benefit scheme for parents with young children) has greater support.

The less a person earns, the more positive he or she is likely to be towards the cash benefit scheme. Since it is mainly women who take receive the cash benefit, the arrangement serves to maintain the uneven division with respect to domestic chores. Of the people asked who have children less than seven years old, only 15% of the men said they received cash benefit, compared with a total of 72% of the women.

The results that emerge in the survey concerning attitudes towards equality have no clear-cut support in other studies. One other study, which measures the attitudes towards equality through four representative selections of the population in the period between 1985 and 2001, shows a tendency towards an increasing polarisation between men and women with regards to the endorsement of gender equality. Here there are two changing tendencies that particularly

stick out when it comes to how men see equality: there is a substantial decrease in the number of young men endorsing initiatives for equality, and this decrease is particularly great among men with higher education.

The Gender Equality Survey does not confirm such a gender polarization in the attitudes concerning equality. Many opinions are fairly equally divided between the genders. 66% of women believe that today's efforts towards equality mostly benefit the successful people of society. The report shows relatively strong correlations between negative attitudes toward quota systems and endorsing the statements "we have enough immigrants and asylum seekers in this country" and "the officials are interfering too much in people's private lives". So, as much as being an expression of gender-based biases, these negative attitudes towards quota systems can also be interpreted as expressions of ideological positions.

9.1.2 Some concepts

The concepts *male role* and *gender role* are to a certain degree, incorporated into Norwegian colloquial language. In this report the concepts refer to the cultural expectations and conceptions that are connected with being a man.

In more recent gender research it is understood that gender is not something one *has* or *is*. Rather what is emphasized is gender as practice, something we *do* ("doing gender"). Gender is not just the result of something inherent in a person, but something that is being created and practised in certain given contexts. This implies that gender must be seen as a continuous process, not something fixed and static.

Gender research emphasizes that norms are things that are continuously being affirmed, challenged or renegotiated through practice. When an individual interacts with others, the norm for what is accepted as male or female shapes the individual; simultaneously, the interactions in turn shape the norms. What is understood as feminine and masculine is a social construction. From this perspective one is concerned with personal and social identities as things that are being created and recreated through interactions between people. Identity is not a finished end product, but a phenomenon in the process of metamorphosis.

The concept of *masculinity* refers to those expectations, norms and rules that society directs towards men. On the basis of biological gender, individuals are socialized into a gender role. In recent times the concept of *gender roles* has been criticized for being too static and fixed, that it assumes too much that socialisation occurs in only one direction, and that gender roles are something society inflicts upon the individuals who blindly assume them. The concept refers to the cultural conceptions and norms that are associated with being a man. Masculinity and femininity are here understood as analytical concepts that embrace more than biological gender. Masculinity and femininity are partly cultural conceptions, and partly analytical concepts of gender.

A masculine perspective in research involves studying males and male behaviour with the emphasis on the man as a gendered individual. That means that one examines what the prevailing conceptions of the male and masculinity mean for men's actual practice. To operate with gender as a variable and to look for the distribution of men and women in different statistics does not necessarily involve a *gender perspective*.

9.1.3 Who defines masculinity?

The modern media plays a definitive role in imparting models of gender roles to boys and men. Boys in particular, to an increasing extent, are finding this out from our television-orientated culture. Male heroes are among the most accessible, most copied and publicly most accepted models for male socialisation.

The general view within media research is that the common cultural understanding of what is perceived as “manly” and “feminine” is being formed and made visible through different expressions in media.

The media acts in many ways as an index of the different gender roles and expressions that boys and girls have to choose from when building their own identity. In a society where traditional sources of identity and world-view such as religion, social class, and family are becoming less important, and where different media are more omnipresent, the media will eventually have a greater impact on the formation of public opinion.

The way media has influenced the understanding of gender and gender identity has been one of the prioritised areas in Norwegian and international media research. As in many other fields of research, the concept of *gender* in media science has, to a large degree, been connected with women and the "female". Research on men, masculinity and media did not really get off the ground until the early 1990s. The lack of a male perspective in media science has contributed to the broad misconception that it is only women and the understanding of “the female” that are formed and communicated through the media. But many factors suggest that the understanding of the male role and masculinity has been cemented through such cultural expressions to just as great a degree. Women have, through feminism, research, deliberation and the like, been supplied with greater “identity capital”, while men still draw their understanding of their identity from the masculine “props” that are available in the culture.

9.1.4 Masculine stereotypes

In many ways one can say that the media has taken over as our common storyteller, and therefore also the creator and distributor of modern mythologies. Modern media mythologies tell us which values to agree on, which we can trust, what battles need to be fought and what needs to be sacrificed in order to attain our goals. The mythologies act as cultural cornerstones, and are often presented as indisputable and "given"; they are things that one cannot question. This myth creation influences our view on gender and gender identity as well.

One can find among the stereotypical conceptions of men: aggression, ambition, domination, strength, endurance, independence, and being driven by competition. In contrast to women, who whisper and gossip, men are unafraid, have integrity and are not afraid of conflicts. Men are furthermore portrayed as technically gifted, task and result orientated, in contrast with women who are typically seen as caring, emotional and relationship orientated.

9.1.5 Understanding the male

Gender research has shown that there are many ways in which one can be a man, and that there are broad variations in what is understood as masculine. Men have in the last decades

gained an expanded scope of action that includes child-care, openness, and close relations. But this scope of action is still narrow, and research shows that there are still clear limits to what a man and a boy are allowed to do.

Homophobia

"Bitch" and "gay" are today insults among young people that are in active use. On the website www.ung.no, there is an interview with a boy who says: "To call someone 'gay' does not necessarily have anything to do with sexuality." "Gay" is a general insult. It is connected with behaviour. If a boy dresses a little different or behaves in a feminine way, he is quickly labelled 'gay'. The study "Observations in classrooms" shows that to openly express negative attitudes towards homosexuals is generally perceived as marginal and outdated behaviour by fellow peers. The study shows that the boys expressing such attitudes as such were already "outsiders" in the classroom, and being 'out' only served to confirm the position of the one with the negative attitude.

Researcher Røthing refers to international research which points out that boys from minority backgrounds express these attitudes to a greater extent than the boys from the ethnic majority. These attitudes are often seen as a sign of rebellion against or to signify a distance from the acceptance of gays that is seen in the majority of the population, and as an attempt to mark their own heterosexual masculinity as a compensation for their ethnic or class-defined marginalised position. The report finds differing attitudes concerning homosexuals in men and women. While four out of ten men say they would find it difficult to have a gay child, only two of ten women have a similar attitude. Scepticism increases with age, and in contrast with other findings, the report shows that the scepticism also increases with higher education and annual income.

A new science report from NOVA shows that to understand oneself as lesbian or gay in the early teens is associated with a considerable increase in the risk of being bullied or assaulted. A key finding in the report is that young lesbian and gay teens, particularly in Oslo, are more subjected to bullying, systematic threats, and violence. Two out of ten lesbians/bisexuals, and four out of ten homo/bisexuals, report to have been subjected to violence that demanded medical attention during the last year. This group is therefore four times as likely to be subjected to violence as heterosexuals.

Hate crime against homosexuals and lesbians is easily portrayed as "random violence", often as an assault on an open street with an unknown perpetrator. Through the NOVA report, however, it is made evident that bisexuals, lesbians and homosexuals usually are subjected to violence by someone they know or a family member. One of the most striking differences, compared with heterosexual teens, is how many young lesbian/homo/bisexual teens report to have been subjected to violence by their own parents. Among heterosexual teens there is very few that report of domestic violence; 3% of the girls and 2% of the boys say they have experienced this during the last year. Among lesbian/homo/bisexual teens, the numbers are much higher: 12% of the girls and 16% of the boys.

Boys and men judge themselves and others of the same gender to a great degree on external standards. When evaluating each other's masculinity, strength and muscles are the dominating criteria. The competition to reign at the top of the physical hierarchy, to be the strongest guy in class, is thus a part of the masculine identity project. Disciplining oneself to the demands of masculinity involves disciplining the emotions. By being silent about physical

and emotional pain, boys avoid the shame that comes with being vulnerable, and thus feminine. Other men's masculinity standards seem to direct conversations and what topics one can allow oneself to talk about. Therefore it is important to reveal and make visible how existing male ideals can suppress men's emotional life and perhaps threaten their health on an individual level. The narrowness of the masculine norms can make boys avoid speaking about things they find troublesome.

9.1.6 The masculine fellowship and friendship between men

As an extension of traditional masculinity as we know it today, there is a high focus on self-control. Boys and men have only to a limited degree developed a language for intimacy and emotions. This also affects friendships between men. To be able to show intimacy, trust, care and emotional attachment are essential elements in friendship relations. These qualities have for a long time been associated with femininity. Marianne Berg shows us in the book *In the Paradise of friendship* how the male ideal and the norms concerning male friendships were considerably different in the early 19th century. At the end of the 19th century big changes were occurring concerning the norms in male friendships, so in our time friendships between men are characterised as instrumental and competition orientated. Close and intimate friendly relationships are seen as something feminine. Under the headline "boys in hordes and girls in pairs", the two researchers Nielsen and Rudberg summarise findings from the 1970s and 1980s that show the differences in friendship alliances between boys and girls. Girls have intimate, confidential friendships that include physical closeness and are strongly characterised by "dyads" (they play in pairs). Relations between boys on the other hand are characterised by the lack of close and confidential friendships. Boys play in bigger groups that are characterised by *doing something* together. Friendship between boys is driven more by collective activities that involve competition rather than confidential talk.

So, masculine fellowship is more governed by activities than by conversation. Compared with the confidential and intimate conversational friendships between girls, friendships between boys are silent. But this "silent fellowship" is important for boys' experience of the joy of life and identity formation. Fishing and hunting trips are examples of fellowships with other men that are essential for the quality of life of many men. A study shows that hunters who make hunting into a lifestyle, will, through hunting, identify themselves with what they see as an ancient local culture, consisting of a masculine cultural practice and a deeply rooted masculine identity. By continuing the customs and values of their fathers and grandfathers, they are themselves bearers of a local workingman's culture. Through the activity they express an awareness of themselves as bearers of a culture with deep roots in the local tradition. Researchers believe that the fellowship and friendships that arise between men, together with the sense of local attachment, are most likely the necessary social foundations of the hunter identity that men act out.

Another important masculine fellowship arises through football. Even though women have made their entry both on the field as well as in the football stands, the greater part of football enthusiasts are still boys and men. The interest in football embraces and unites men across nationality, class, age, education, skin-colour, occupation and a multitude of different individual experiences. In the football stands men are allowed to act in ways they would never do otherwise – here they can shout, cry, dance, sing, gesticulate and embrace unknown men. They can also allow themselves to utter protests that in other contexts would be inappropriate.

For the supporters, football is not first and foremost entertainment and relaxation; quite the

contrary, it represents an attachment and involvement. Football is a field that offers common experiences, common pleasures and common sorrows. For the supporters, football offers friendships, fellowship and a sense of belonging.

Masculine fellowships are essential for men, even when they are “silent fellowships” compared with the confidential, dialog-driven friendships of women. However, it is important not to rely only on “silent fellowships” for a good quality of life, but also to have close relationships where one can be intimate and talk about feelings, especially when life is difficult. In this area we may be seeing some changes among men. This change is particularly noticeable with young men and boys. In step with changing male roles, traditional macho-masculinity is becoming archaic, and boys and young men are changing their ways of expressing friendship.

There are more men now (compared with 15-20 years ago) that report to have contact with close friends and the increase in this type of friendship has been fairly equal for both boys and girls. If one looks at the percentage of boys between 16-24 years old that say they are without close friends, one sees that it has gone down from 20% in 1980 to approximately 10% in 1998. There has also been a substantial decrease concerning the same matter for the age group 25-44 years. In 1980, 30% of this group reported to be without close friends compared with roughly 18% in 1998.

The report also shows that there are far fewer young men compared with older men that report to be without close and confidential friends. Compared with older men, younger men report having close friends - and of both genders as well. It seems that friendships are beginning to strengthen its position as an important relationship, particularly with younger men. If we compare older and younger men, the Gender Equality Survey verifies what SSB had earlier concluded, that young men today have more close friends compared with earlier years. Among men over 35 years old, those without close friends constitute roughly 20%, while among the youngest (17-24 years old) the number drops to 7%.

The content within the friendships among the young seem to have changed as well. Newer research shows that in “new friendships” between men, it is too simple to state that men create “doing” friendships – to an increasing degree men are now also creating “talking” friendships.

On the website www.ung.no two men are interviewed about their friendship. One boy states that two friends should talk about everything. What he feels that he cannot tell his friend, he cannot tell anyone. They have been friends for 5-6 years and their friendship has developed. If there's anything that bothers him he will tell his friend. Furthermore, he explains that they are not afraid to display emotions in front of each other. If he is going through an unhappy love affair or for some other reason is feeling down, he can let his friend know, knowing that the friend won't make fun or talk behind his back about it. These statements stand in harsh contrast with the manner in which friendships between boys were portrayed by researchers in the 1970s and 1980s.

9.2 Different masculine ideals

9.2.1 Introduction

The concept of masculinity covers those conceptions, norms and ideals that are associated with what it is to be a man at any moment in any given society. These ideals and conceptions can change depending on the cultural context. But also in a given society and in a definite era, conceptions and ideals can change. Age, class and ethnicity are variables that influence how expectations and judgements about masculinity can vary. These expectations can also vary according to what type of particular role the focus is on, for example whether the man is a son, father, husband or colleague.

An important purpose of today's gender research is to investigate and emphasize how gender affects and interacts with other social categories such as sexuality, age, class and ethnicity. Then we understand how different relationships mutually affect one another, how they strengthen or weaken each other, or whether they are completing or competing with each other in a dynamic interplay.

In men's studies and research the focus of research has shifted to *masculinities* in plural, and it is emphasized that categories such as gender, ethnicity, class, nationality and position are closely linked together and cannot be seen in an isolated manner. Since the very early beginning of men's research it has been important for the research to emphasise that a man isn't always *one man*, but can be many different things.

9.2.2 Age and social class

What is emphasized as being manly ideal changes in different phases of life. There is a stronger emphasis on the stereotypical hero figure as an ideal in the teenage and young adult years. Young people to large degree see masculinity as linked to being cool, physically strong and able to achieve. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that becoming an adult in modern times tends to be about self-realisation, a focusing on individuality and developing one's own skills. Values, lifestyle and one's outlook on life are not so much inherited, but to a larger degree something one must construct. In such a situation, where there are many options and uncertainties, gender stands out as the only constant element, which therefore can form the basis of socialisation and self-realisation. This makes gender an important factor in identity construction for young people; symbols of masculinity and femininity are, especially in the early teens, emphasized and even exaggerated as a feature of their identity.

Freedom, self-orientation and freedom from responsibilities are features of youth culture as well. For the more mature man, *responsibility* is a key word. In the study "Factory Workers, Father and Provider", the factory workers that worked at the coal factory in Mo i Rana in the 1950s, 1960s and the 1970s were interviewed. The study show how permanent work was imbued with cultural meaning for the interviewed men, and how the concept of *permanent work* came to be used as a characterisation of the adult and responsible man. In the stories told by the men, the permanent job stood out as a decisive factor in what turned a boy into a man, and from an individualist to a responsible provider with duties to the community. "The permanent"; permanent job, permanent pay, permanent working hours, permanent partner and a permanent place of residence were the traits of the responsible, mature male. It was a masculinity that was characterized by orderly conditions and duties towards oneself and others – in the workplace the responsibility was your own and other people's safety, and at home it was as to be the sole financial provider. This financial responsibility was just as much concerned with a responsible and conscientious management of the money, as it was to be the sole income source.

In a study of craftsmen, those interviewed emphasise what an important role age has played in their practise and understanding of themselves as men. With age they say they have gained a “masculine security” together with a “masculine generosity” that was absent in their youth. With age comes experience; they’ve matured, and the security in their own manhood makes them less anxious about seeming unmanly compared to the time when they were teenagers and young men. As younger men they say that they were very scared of ending up in the category of “henpecked men”.

We know little about what masculinity involves and means for men as they grow old. There has been little research from a gender perspective on older men either in Norway or the Nordic countries. It has been pointed out that age can be a source of power, position and status for men, but on the other hand it can also marginalise them as men. If physical strength is an important source of masculine identity, then bodily change and loss of strength dries out this source. One of the few examples of Nordic research concerning old men is a study of old and unmarried Swedish men. The men themselves express a longing for a family. Many use the need to care for their own parents or younger siblings as an explanation for their bachelor status, or that they have prioritized hard labour on their parent’s farm or in industry to provide for relatives. Analysis of these men’s male identity shows that for these men, the body and having a strong physique has had great significance for them. But this fact makes them more vulnerable when age leads to illness and a weakening of the physique.

For men that do not have a strong body as their source of masculine identity, age does not seem as threatening. For these men the source of a masculine identity may be life experience, family ties and status in the workplace. This shows that there are no simple connections between age and masculinity, but that other variables, like social class, play a role.

When it comes to masculinity, class position in society also means a lot for which ideals and practises that govern identity. The concept of *masculinity through hegemony* is linked with the conception of the middle-class man, where academic learning, high education and career are central. For the traditional working-class masculinity, other ideals govern. In a working-class culture, keywords such as solidarity and fellowship have been important for the relationship between the individual and the group. In the novel *Blind*, the father of the novel’s main character says the following about how he views fellowship and community:

You shall not show off. You shall not put yourself above others. Don’t be conspicuous. Be normal. Be grey. Don’t think you’re anything special. The only thing special about you is that you are together with others; that you and your friends are all in the same boat. That is the special element of being human. To be a part of a workingman’s fellowship. To do one’s job. To take whatever comes without whimpering. That is what it means to be human. That is what it means to be a man. That is to be a real worker at the Odda Furnace.

In the sociology classic *The Worker’s Collective*, the attitude towards the collective is discussed as a defence mechanism, whereby the collective represents a solution to the problematic situation of the subordinated and oppressed. At the same time, the “tall poppy syndrome” aspect of the workers’ collective is pointed out as a negative feature: “Don’t assume that you are special.” To be able to develop as a human being one has to, more than anything believes that you are special. To make a career, one has to distinguish oneself and make oneself a force to be reckoned with.

Researcher Skilbrei points out that boys from the middle class see education as the road to success. Boys from the working class are different, he claims. As far as the working class’

understanding of masculinity is concerned, to have a non-manual job is no ideal, rather quite the opposite. Hard labour is what counts in the working class. It is not the negative traits that exclude them from office work, but rather the *positive* abilities that make them able to achieve something that other people might not accomplish. It is necessary to point out that this understanding of masculinity may become outdated as jobs relying on physical labour become scarcer and less in demand.

In the classic *Learning to Labour*, Paul Willis stresses that when boys from the working class choose manual jobs in industry and transport, occupations characterised by heavy lifting and physical exhaustion, it is precisely because they *choose* to. He shows how boys from the working class are being bred for working class jobs, and he emphasizes that these boys are no failures, and that they don't have to content themselves with jobs that the boys from the middleclass don't want. On the contrary, these boys are being socialised into completely different life paths. Boys from the working class not only distance themselves from the good students, but they are in their own mind superior to the good students. They are concerned with the fact that they've made money and enjoyed life while the good students have been sweating over their books.

9.2.3 Men in different positions

For the male identity and the male life, work has been a central and indisputable part. Researchers Holter and Aarseth mention work and public life as the core of a man's "first-ness" – he *is* first and foremost what he *does* in working life. Many researchers stress how central work is for the construction of a masculine identity. To be the *family provider* has traditionally been a dominant criterion for the creation of a male identity. To be the main provider is still seen as one of the main characteristics of the masculine.

The modern man is supposed to be equality orientated, take part in domestic chores and prioritise spending time with his children. The Gender Equality Survey confirms that both these expectations exist, and that many men in Norway are also living up to these. At the same time, the expectations concerning the contribution to the work place are still going strong: A man should work full-time, be loyal, achieve measurable results, be available for overtime when needed, seek challenges and aim towards positions that come with high income and status.

Men as a group have higher participation in the labour market, higher income and far more positions of power than women. But even if men as a group have this secure anchor in the workplace, this is not true of all men. Also here, we can talk about the extreme gender.

According to the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud's report "SaLDO" for 2007, equality between men and women in Norway in the work place concerning leadership positions is far from realised. The ombudsman establishes unequivocally: "If one looks at the possibilities of attaining positions of leadership, men are still first in line. Women are positioned way behind. Behind them again we find people with disabilities and further back people of a non-western background."

9.2.3.1 More men than women are leaders

Two out of three leaders are men. Among the top leaders, men sit in eight out of ten of the positions. But from 2001 till 2007, the male percentage concerning top or medium leading positions has gone slightly down (seven percent). The equality balance shows that men are overrepresented in leading positions both in state, municipal and privately run enterprises. In the State, 63% of the leaders are men. This number has hardly changed during the last years. The elite in Defence, the Church, the justice sector, central management and cultural institutions are all men. Of the municipality's town officials, 84% are men. Women constitute half the population. Still, there are a clear majority of men among the politicians in the Norwegian parliament, among mayors and on municipal boards. The Parliament of the Sami is an exception with 51% women in the current period. The county councils also have more women percentagewise than either the Parliament or municipal councils.

Although men sit in most of the leadership positions, this is still a small fraction of the total number of men. Only 8% of all employed men are leaders.

9.2.4 Men of a non-western immigrant background

Paying attention to the interaction between gender, ethnicity and class can lead to new but not so meaningful simplifications. The conception of diversity in male roles in Norway seems to only apply to the Norwegian ethnic population. "The immigrant male", "the Muslim male" or "the Pakistani male" are, in many contexts used as a clear cut category, where all men of an immigrant background, whether they are Muslims or claim to belong to the Pakistani ethnic group, are ascribed certain characteristics. The depiction of the "immigrant male" in the social debate and in media is at times completely lacking in nuance. Researchers point out that also the ethnic minority groups show a diverse number of ways of being a man, and that the divide between the multitude of males in the majority of the population and the more monolithic "immigrant male" are, at best, a simplification of the image of men of immigrant backgrounds. The term men of "ethnic minority background" is often applied to men who have resided here during the last ten years, but there have been men from ethnic minority background who have lived in Norway for far longer. Male research has not distinctively studied these groups to any degree.

9.2.4.1 Different groups, different integration

The Central Statistics Bureau has determined that the "immigrant population" in Norway is a wide and diverse category that is so complex that there is rarely any point in treating all immigrants as a single group. Today, the immigrant population in Norway consists of 415 000 individuals. This group constitutes 8.9 % of the population. Approximately 54 000 people come from other Nordic countries, 51 000 from the rest of Western Europe and North-America, 80 000 from Eastern-Europe and 230 000 from Turkey and countries in Asia, Africa and South-America.

9.2.4.2 Differences between men also within the groups

When dividing the immigrant population into groups by their country of origin, the multitude between the groups becomes evident. At the same time, making such a division entails a generalisation. There may be great differences in behaviour, attitudes and values among people within a group, for example those from Pakistan, and one may find men from Pakistan living in Norway that have more in common with Norwegians than other Pakistanis.

Gender research in Norway has until now garnered little knowledge about men with immigrant backgrounds and their understanding of masculinity. The Ministry of Children and

Equality has therefore initiated a project concerning family relations and gender equality among immigrants. The aim of the project is to increase knowledge about family behaviour and gender equality, in order to develop a public service that better meets the needs of families with immigrant backgrounds, and to increase knowledge about the way in which men with immigrant backgrounds think about masculinity and gender roles. From this the politics of gender can be determined. The project will map out family structures, size, practices and attitudes regarding questions about family and gender equality through registries and surveys. Men's perceptions of masculinity will be outlined by asking questions about the ways in which men understand and experience their role and tasks within the family. They will be asked to what degree they feel Norwegian conditions make it possible for them to carry out their understanding of masculinity within the family and in their relationships with their children, and how they understand and experience the Norwegian ideal of equality. What strategies men and women use to meet new expectations will be a significant subject. The survey will be carried out by FAFO, and according to the plan, will end in May 2009.

Some existing qualitative surveys have interviewed men from ethnic minorities about their experiences of gender equality in Norway, how they express their own understanding of masculinity and how their male practice takes form in this context. These surveys indicate a great diversity, and suggest that men of ethnic minorities understand and fill their male role in widely varying ways. Many express more traditional gender role attitudes; though more say that new understandings of gender are not necessarily looked upon negatively. Their understanding of masculinity is both challenged and strengthened when met with other gender practices.

Some respondents say that their understanding of themselves and issues such as homosexuality has changed since their arrival in Norway. Their understanding of fatherhood has also changed. A number of men describe their homeland in such a way that it brings back memories from Norway in the fifties: to push a pram and change nappies was not a part of the male repertoire in their countries, and seeing Norwegian men pushing prams down the street was unfamiliar. After spending time in Norway their attitudes have changed, and it becomes a natural thing to participate in practical tasks involving small children. The modern father should participate in his children's lives, be caring, present and support them not only financially but also emotionally. A number of men with immigrant backgrounds talk about their own fathers as unapproachable, strict and distant. In a survey of Muslim men, the young men wanted to be "friends with their children" to a greater extent than their own fathers were.

At the same time, the qualitative surveys show that a more traditional, patriarchal understanding of the male role than what is common in Norway today influences a number of men with non-western backgrounds. A patriarchal family is characterised by a hierarchical structure in which men have more power than women, and the elder members of the family more power than the younger. Some of those interviewed believe that God has created the differences between the sexes, and that this explains why women and men are suited for different chores and activities. Many male immigrants express traditional attitudes to female participation in the labour market and the division of housework. Many women with immigrant backgrounds share this view and want to stay at home with their children. It has been pointed out that measuring the integration level of non-western immigrant women only by the number in paid employment is too narrow a set of criteria. Many ethnic Norwegian families share these views about a more traditional division of labour, while a lot of parents with immigrant backgrounds encourage their daughters to prioritise education and cultivate their own working lives.

The attitudes of more traditional non-western immigrants do not only encompass women's place and position. What appears central when it comes to these men's conceptions of masculinity is *the ideal of the provider and provider dilemma*. Danish research also indicates the same. Responsibility thinking is a central term in understanding the way male immigrants understand masculinity. An important part of being a man is to have a high income. The family economy, the children's education and future are the man's sole responsibility. Being a good provider is associated with the pride and pleasure of being able to be generous. But the actual opportunities an immigrant man has in the Norwegian labour market make it hard to be the only provider of the family. Men experience losing their pride and identity when they are unable to live up to their own expectations of what a man is supposed to be. They feel as if they have failed and that the system makes it impossible for them to make up for this loss. This is connected to the fact that men are both responsible for the income, and also responsible for seeking help if they do not succeed on their own. When consulting public services, where many of the employees are women, one of the problems men experience is a lack of understanding towards their responsibility to provide an income for the family. The men say that they are often met with prejudice because their wives are not permitted to work, while this might have been a decision the couple has made together.

Men who live in patriarchal families, and have also failed as providers, experience marginalisation two-fold. Both their own social environment and the Norwegian public will look at them as unsuccessful. From a traditional point of view, men who are unable to provide for their families have failed. Men from ethnic minorities are already marginalised in the Norwegian public eye and often viewed as oppressors of women.

9.2.5 Men with disabilities

Research on disabilities has only been concerned with gender to a small extent, while gender research has focused little on people with disabilities.

Research collaboration (Gender and Disability) between the Nordic countries has resulted in two publications. A review of these publications shows that a gender perspective in research on disabilities has led to increased knowledge of the point of intersection between gender and disabilities. Drawing from different disciplines, this knowledge casts new light on both gendered relations within groups of disabled and on formal and informal work in the care sector. Without a gender perspective and/or a feminist perspective, the knowledge about identity formation, gender differences between men and women with different disabilities, formal and informal care and support, violence, control and suppression, would remain hidden.

This research gives a voice to these groups, and at the same time, the increased knowledge builds a foundation for a better understanding of one's own and other disabled people's situation. Knowledge about gendered relations in society gives the decision-makers a better foundation to arrange for inclusion and equal opportunities for disabled women and men. The ones working in the field can use this knowledge to develop adequate services for the disabled.

As mentioned above, recent gender research emphasises that gender is not something we are or possess, but rather something that is produced daily, both individually and collectively through participation in different social groups. The experience of one's own scope of action

arises at an individual level. Every man and woman develops their opinions about which ambitions and aspirations are achievable. Scopes of action are produced on an individual level, but influenced by the significance gender is given on a structural and symbolic level.

In the same way, disabilities can be understood in different ways. While disabilities were previously considered as characteristic of an individual, they are now looked upon as something that is produced within the relationships of the person and his or her environment. Disabled people come across barriers and experience differing degrees of disability in different situations because of social conditions.

On a structural level it is about disabled people being under-represented in the fields of work, in organisations, spare time activities and political fields, and about how physical structures limit their social participation. On a symbolic level, it is about what is considered appropriate for women and men who are disabled, and what is expected of them. For instance, when we talk about participation in the work force, how is a disabled person met? What language and terms do we use?

Are disabled people represented as active individuals, or as victims who need assistance to enter the workplace? How we think and talk about social groups affects each person's ability to see and experience their scope of action.

A number of chapters in Nordic anthologies discuss problems related to identity and identity development, both as a woman and as a person with a disability. Under the first topic, we find a chapter on how women who have become disabled as adults experience the process of redefining and maintaining their identities as women. Another author is concerned with the social representations related to women with disabilities. A third author focuses on the construction of identity by those who are overweight. Two others look at the way in which sexuality takes part in the identity development of disabled girls.

Equivalent studies of identity development among men do not exist, but should be initiated.