

# Nye kjønn, andre krav? Likestillingens barn i skole og familie

## New World – Old Gender? Growing up in a Gender Equality Era

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### 1. Background

Gender equality has been an important political and educational goal in the Norwegian society for more than three decades. During this period new generations of children and young people have grown up with exposure to different mixtures of new and old gender regimes in their families, daycares, schools, peer groups, leisure activities, in popular culture and as consumers. The impact of this historically new Nordic – and in global understanding rather unique - situation is barely described and understood.

It is obvious, however, that within the last years both in Norway and internationally, the focus has changed from girls to boys, with a special concern for boys' educational and professional opportunities. The Nordic gender segregation in regard to choice of education and career is still strong, but girls on average are attaining higher marks than boys in all subjects, except physical education; in addition girls are approaching 60% of university student population.<sup>1</sup> Reports indicate that boys experience more problems in school, drop out of school to a higher degree than girls, exhibit more behavioural problems, engage in more violent behaviour, are more involved in accidents, and make up the majority of the explosive increase in the ADHD-diagnosis the last few years.<sup>2</sup> Also regarding different aspects of civic and moral competence in school, boys are reported to be less able than girls, and young men are more materialistic, express more racist attitudes, and are less engaged in social justice than young women.<sup>3</sup>

It is not easy to interpret this picture: There are very few studies of children's upbringing in a gender perspective, and Norwegian classroom research on gender is already 20-30 years old and mainly directed towards the girls' situation. Studies of boys in school are practically absent, and the few international studies of boys are difficult to transfer to the Nordic context of gender equality. It is also difficult to judge to what extent the situation is new. In the Nordic countries girls have earned better marks, at least since the 1960s<sup>4</sup>; boys have always made up a large majority in special education. The alarming figures of ADHD may be a result of the new extensive use of this diagnosis rather than of a change in the boys' behaviour. Even though there has been a remarkable gender change in higher education, research indicates that men still advance higher and more quickly in the labour market with less formal education than women.<sup>5</sup> Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is unclear to what extent a possible change in the relative advantages of boys and girls stems from gender equality politics in education, or from other changes in society like de-industrialisation, new demands on qualifications and requirements of citizenship, and more emphasis on democratic values, negotiation and co-operation within the family and school.

The situation calls for a broad analysis of gender conceptions and gender practices among children and young people as culturally and socially changing entities, how they are intertwined with other dimensions like ethnicity, social class, geographical space and contextual framings, and how this interacts with other changes in society. The discourse of "failing boys" has had a considerable influence in the Nordic

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<sup>1</sup> <http://dbh.nsd.uib.no>, <http://www2.udir.no/stati/karakstat>, Arnot et al. 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Nordahl 1998, Fylling 2000, Bredesen 2004, Hegna 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Öhm 2000a, 2002, Christensen 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Ørum 1973, Brock-Utne & Haukaa 1980. In spite of lower grades, however, boys are best in TIMSS test which measure skills in math and science, Kjærnsli & Lie 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Brock-Utne 1997, Gordon et al. 2000, Lahelma 2005.

egalitarian societies and may indicate important challenges in the interface of gender, the educational system and the work-market in contemporary society, including the persistence of gender segregation in certain areas. However, without a foundation in more accurate knowledge, the discourse may become yet another myth of gender, which may not only impede gender equality processes, but also let down those boys who may actually be in trouble.

## 2. Research goal and key research themes

The goal of the project is to provide new and updated knowledge about gender norms and gender practices among children and young people<sup>6</sup> growing up in present-day Norway, and to understand some of the consequences this may have for processes of inclusion or marginalisation. How can we understand the relation between changes in gender and changes in the requirements of skills and competence of citizenship in the Norwegian society today? How are such requirements transmitted by grown-ups to children in terms of norms and expectations in the areas of school, family and leisure?

Norms and expectations refer to the explicit and implicit demands children meet in their learning environments, whether they are intended, unintended, reflected or unreflected by the grown-ups. It may be skills and competence that are expected from children in certain contexts, or norms for behaving, or ways of doing and talking about things. It is the manner in which school, family and organised leisure activities appear as "institutional agents" in children's lives – in contrast to seeing these areas as "settings" for peer-culture.<sup>7</sup> However, children will always interpret, negotiate and eventually challenge such norms and expectations, both from their individual perspectives and their peer-group culture.<sup>8</sup> Which contributions from the children are seen as inappropriate by the adults, and how are such contributions received? The target of the project is to analyse these norms, expectations and negotiations from the perspective of gender.

The concept of gender will be used in this project both as an analytic perspective and an empirical focus.<sup>9</sup> Gender norms and gender practices refer to gender as multilayered phenomena, including both gender structures (who does/has what), gender symbolism (how are dimensions of masculinities and femininities projected onto the world), gender discourses (what gender positions are made available in language), relational gender (how are masculinities/femininities created, negotiated and "done" in interactions), and personal and bodily gender (what does gender mean to me and how is it related to my body and my biography). Gender will be the main analytic dimension in the project, but complexity, ambivalence and multiplicity of masculinities and femininities, among and within individuals, will be emphasised, as well as the intersecting character of different social categories.<sup>10</sup>

A key question will be whether children and adults in specific settings operate with the same implicit gender conceptions, and whether they attach different symbolic gender to different tasks, expectations and norms. Is it the point that school and family are "feminized" – or is it that qualifying for modern citizenship entails new types of knowledge and competence that are easier for (some) girls to grasp than for (some) boys? And if so, why? How is this related to social class and ethnicity? It is not evident which changes in gender relations and gender symbolism are relevant to understanding the development process/growing up, and several tensions can be identified. Children are growing up to an increasing extent in families where the gender division of work is less common and where upbringing, both in the family and at school, has become considerably less stereotypical with regard to gender. This may influence the formation of children's identities. Does it also mean that children's age-related gender-coding of reality will become less prevalent – or on the contrary, will it be intensified? Another question is what consequences the tensions between modern equal rights and old gender discourses in society may have for children. Different signals are found in both the family and school and place children in situations where they have to learn to balance gender expression in far more complicated ways than previously. Little is known of how teachers practice old and new gender discourses in the classroom.<sup>11</sup> Does the widespread notion of the Nordic societies as modern and gender-equal paradoxically make adults less concerned about traditional gender expressions? Is it a "new

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<sup>6</sup> For reasons of simplicity "children" in the remaining text will signify both children and young people. "School" will include daycare and further education.

<sup>7</sup> Bernstein 2000, Connell 2000, Gordon et al. 2000, Nordahl 2000, Arnesen 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Berentzen 1993, Gulbrandsen 1998, Lidén 2005, Haavind 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Scott 1986.

<sup>10</sup> Walkerdine 1990, Reay 1991, Connell 2000, McCall 2005.

<sup>11</sup> See, however, Imsen 1996, Gannerud 1999 and Arnesen 2002.

world” and ”old gender” – or maybe ”old world” and ”new gender” – that is communicated to the children? Or is it rather both in different situations?

The project combines a cluster of 10 related subprojects for studying boys and girls at different age levels and in the contexts of school, family and leisure activities. The subprojects have been selected and designed in order to support and illuminate each other and to make comparisons along different dimensions possible. In order to identify the specific Norwegian and Nordic situations, collaboration and comparison with other projects in Norway, Sweden and England will be initiated.

### 3. Previous research

Research on gender and childhood was established during the 1970s and 1980s and has had school and peer-group culture as its main focus, whereas little has been conducted on gender and childhood in relation to family life.<sup>12</sup> Until the 1970s the few studies that focused on gender influences in classroom interaction criticized the treatment of boys in primary school and suggested that female teachers were unable to meet the boys’ learning needs effectively.<sup>13</sup> Classroom research during the 1970s and 1980s found that the assumed advantages enjoyed by girls at the primary level were not sustained. Teachers paid less attention and gave less space to girls than to boys. Even though girls were often praised as good pupils in the primary school, performed better, and were reported to be more satisfied with school, several studies indicated a serious decrease in self-esteem among girls in secondary school. Whereas studies in the 1970s were informed by theories of structures, power, and socialisation, and to some extent, quantitative research methods, the 1980s saw a paradigmatic shift towards the active role children themselves play in constructing gendered worlds and taking up gendered discourse.<sup>14</sup> The methods then applied were small-scale samples of ethnographies, qualitative interviews and discourse analyses. Less focus was given to the institutional impact on children’s lives in favour of seeing childhood in its own right. During the 1980s and 1990s studies of gender identities, gender cultures of peer-groups, ongoing ”border-work” between girls and boys, as well as subtle processes of gender-construction and subjectification through negotiations, conformity and resistance resulted in a more nuanced picture of variation related to social class, sexuality, ethnicity and educational context.<sup>15</sup>

Some studies (including some of the new school ethnographies) have found discourse patterns not radically different from the ones seen in the 1970s, as well as relative stability in boys’ and girls’ gender stereotypes and peer relations.<sup>16</sup> Nordic research from the 1990s, however, gives some indication of a new situation in secondary and high schools: self-confident, middle-class girls with a strong stance towards boys and teachers in the classroom.<sup>17</sup> Gender-associated behaviours may be combined in a more relaxed and flexible way in the single individual today, and there is an indication of a growing variation and polarisation *within* each gender group: the group of girls who are doing well and are content with themselves is increasing, but so is the group of girls who are not content with themselves. The group of boys with behavioural problems has become smaller, but the type of behavioural disorders these boys exhibit has become more serious.<sup>18</sup> It is not easy, however, to say whether this variation is due to a change in ways gender may be expressed in schools today, or to a greater awareness on the part of the researchers relying on the critique of the binary gender model in the 1990s. Generally, the unfolding of different research perspectives throughout the last decades makes it difficult to say what changes in gendered classroom talk have taken place during that period. Different groups of students have been viewed from different perspectives in different studies and at different times, and the school itself has changed its organisation and educational methods.<sup>19</sup>

Another difficulty is that the main body of research has concentrated on one gender at a time. As a consequence the missing gender has been delegated to playing the role of a stereotypical background for

<sup>12</sup> For Norway see, however, Haavind 1987, and Andenaes 1996. Internationally, Valerie Walkerdine and Helen Lucey in England, and Barrie Thorne in the USA are among those who have made important contributions to this field.

<sup>13</sup> For an overview of Nordic and international research on gender and schooling from 1970s and onwards, see Nielsen and Davies 1997 and Nielsen 1998.

<sup>14</sup> James & Prout 1990, Thorne 1993.

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, Davies 1989, Thorne 1993, Mac an Ghail 1994, Ambjörnsson 2004, Knudsen 2004, Lyng 2004, Staunæs 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Andersen & Kampmann 1996, Imsen 1996, Gordon et al., 2000, Einarsson 2003, McLeod and Yates 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Nielsen 1998, Öhrn 2000b, Nielsen & Rudberg 2006

<sup>18</sup> Hegna 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Öhrn 2002, Klette 2004

the studied gender. Boys to a larger extent have been analysed in terms of class, ethnicity, sexuality and public life, while girls have been understood in terms of gender and intimate relationships.<sup>20</sup> While girls in the early research were seen as victims, and boys as motivated by desire for power and control, the approach today is rather to see the “new” girls in term of agency, and the “failing boys” in terms of an assumed feminised school context. The current studies of boys adopt a range of research perspectives: some studies continue with the approach in which female teachers are blamed for boys’ failure and unhappiness. The “multiple masculinities” agenda focuses on the varieties of masculinity and blames the dominant boys for not accepting differences. From a psychological perspective the boys’ fight for control has been questioned and reinterpreted as a “fear of falling” when engaging in “unmanly” behaviour. The more post-structurally oriented studies question the automatic assumption of masculinities of one kind or another as inextricably linked to the male-sexed body.<sup>21</sup>

Yet a complexity is that even if schools today to some degree may be characterised by new ways of constructing gender identities among girls and boys, we do not know what changes may have taken place in the teachers’ interpretation of the pupils. Some studies indicate that oppositional girls are seen as a bigger nuisance than oppositional boys and are disciplined for less disturbing behaviour than are boys.<sup>22</sup> It is also notable that the discourse of failing boys in the 1990s has aroused much more immediate attention than the discourse of silent and insecure girls in the 1970s and 80s.<sup>23</sup>

#### 4. Theoretical and methodological key issues

In this project some of the shortcomings in the research area will be met and challenged: we want to study *boys and girls together*, we want to study *different gender-producing arenas in relation to each other*, and we want to study each of them *both as institutional agents and as settings* for peer-cultures, including how these two interact. Perhaps most importantly, we want to place emphasis on *the concept of time*, which exceeds the micro-processes of specific social encounters. A growing interest in comparative, longitudinal, and generational studies today may indicate an urge to overcome the somewhat fragmented picture in the research and also to locate classroom discourse in a wider perspective.<sup>24</sup> Four theoretical and methodological key issues will be given priority in the project:

- The turn toward seeing children as agents has resulted in important insight in how gender is processed and produced in different peer-group settings. However, the consequences for participation, inclusion or marginalisation in wider arenas have been neglected. What do schools do with gender compared to what, for instance, families do? The theoretical distinction between “socialisation” and “agency” has dismissed the fact that they empirically will often be intertwined.<sup>25</sup> The interaction between peer-culture and educational career should be reconsidered in the light of new theoretical insights on how gender works. It requires a time-perspective to see how different doings of masculinities or femininities over time contribute to position girls and boys as losers or winners in school and society. Thus one ambition of the project is *to reconnect agency and its structural and symbolic consequences over time*.

- The poststructuralist focus on deconstruction, as well as on the multiple and fragmented character of selves, has been important in order to rethink and reframe ideas of experience and identity as mediated through discourse and inscribed in relations of power. What is neglected, however, is the emotional and formative dimension of doing gender. What consequences do different gender positions have over time for the individual? How and by what means do children grow from young to older? Why are some of the available gender discourses taken up – and others not? Increasing attention towards the psycho-social dimensions of the self is seen in present feminist theory, and the UK-based project “Timescapes” that we will collaborate with includes researchers who are central in this new work.<sup>26</sup> Thus a second theoretical ambition of the project is *to connect discourse analyses and the psycho-social dimensions of the self*.

<sup>20</sup> Phoenix 1997, Öhrn 2000a, Connell 2000, Frosh et al. 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Mac an Ghail 1994, Nordahl 1996, Nordahl 1998, Ekenstam 1998, Connell 2000, Frosh et al. 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Gordon et al., 2000, Nielsen 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Epstein 1998, Gannerud 1999.

<sup>24</sup> Chamberlayne et al. 2000, Gordon et al., 2000, Haavind 2003, McLeod and Yates, 2006; Nielsen & Rudberg 2006

<sup>25</sup> The connection of agency and structure is one of the key issues in contemporary sociology (Giddens, Bourdieu etc.) In this project we will contribute to the general discussion from the perspective of gender and children, and add a time-perspective.

<sup>26</sup> See also Henriques et al. 1984/1998, McNay 2000, Frosh et al. 2002, Hollway et al. 2006.

- The question of how gender can change over time is a contested area in feminist theory. Does it happen by "queering" given representations of masculinities and femininities through imitation and performativity – or rather should gender categories themselves be seen as unstable with varying content and significance? The first view which comes from Judith Butler's work emphasises that gender works on a symbolic level, while the second relies more on empirical variation in gender practices.<sup>27</sup> The collaboration with the Swedish project "Att göras till 'riktig pojke'" with its focus on how young masculinities are constructed and negotiated in school, family and leisure activities will be a resource here. Thus, a third theoretical ambition of the project will be to study *how these two models of change may interact, and which best describes the contemporary situation of change among children.*

- The theoretical ambitions will have consequences for design and methodological procedures of the project. A time-dimension will be included between, as well as within, each project: the subprojects will focus on a *specific age span*, for instance, by studying the entrance and the exit of this age-span, and will include interaction *between and within generations*. New *ethnographic methods* that emphasise practices in everyday life in school in the context of wider social and historical relations<sup>28</sup> will be combined with *analysis of textual documents* and with the *free-association narrative interview*, developed by Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson.<sup>29</sup> The point of the latter is that abstract, taken-for-granted, pre-coded or threatening matters – like gender - are difficult to grasp by using standard structured or semi-structured qualitative interviews. Thus, a more open and story-based approach which allows for the informant's free associations is recommended in order to get hold of significant personal meanings. We will try out and investigate the efficiency of this method in relation to gender conceptions of children and young people.

## 5. Design of the project

The project combines 10 separate subprojects. They are connected by the common research focus described in paragraphs 1 and 2, and the theoretical and methodological concerns discussed in paragraph 4. They are designed to cover different transitional phases within the age-span from 2-30 years, different institutional contexts, and different generations.

They will all have gender as their main analytical category, but within perspectives of intersectionality, especially in regard to social class and ethnic majority/minority children.

### Subprojects:

- Project 1: **Daycare**, age 1-6 (Ph.D. project – to be announced)
- Project 2: **Compulsory school**, grade 1 & 6 (Ph.D. project – to be announced)
- Project 3: **Compulsory school**, grade 7 & 10 (Ph.D. project – to be announced)
- Project 4: **High school**, grades 11 & 13 (Ph.D. project – to be announced)
- Project 5: **Longitudinal study**: from age 7 to 18 (research project – Nielsen)
- Project 6: **Longitudinal study**: from age 18 to 30 (research project – Rudberg/Nielsen)
- Project 7: **Growing up in the modern family** (Postdoctoral project – to be announced)
- Project 8: **Sports in and out of school**, grades 6 & 10 (research project - Eng)
- Project 9 : **Boys and ADHD** (Ph.D. project – Oswald)
- Project 10: **Teacher education** (research project - Røthing)

In order to counterbalance the problem with small samples, the field sites and samples will as much as possible be the same. Two areas with different social and geographical profiles will be selected. As education is the single most important dimension in regard to attitudes toward gender equality, a sample of two compulsory schools, two high schools, and two daycares located in areas of Oslo with predominantly 1) middle class/upper middle class, and 2) lower middle class/working-class families will give access to

<sup>27</sup> Butler 1993, Halberstam 1998, McNay 2000, McCall 2005, Haldar 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Gordon et al. 2000.

<sup>29</sup> Hollway & Jefferson 2000.

relevant dimensions of both class and ethnicity. The social class dimension and the birth cohorts which will be included in the different subprojects will match those of our co-operating projects in Sweden and England and thus allow inter-Nordic and inter-European comparisons.

Distribution of age-groups, contexts, relations, socio-economic areas and ethnic groups:

	<b>Contexts:</b> school, family, leisure	<b>Relations:</b> (children/adults, child/child, adults)	<b>Socio-economic areas:</b> mostly middle class or mostly lower middle class/working class	<b>Ethnic groups:</b> majority and minority Norwegians
1-6 years	School (P1)	Child/adult (P1) Child/child (P1)	Both (P1)	Both (P1)
6-13 years	School (P5, P11) School/leisure (P2, P8) Family (P7, P9)	Child/adult (P2, P5, P7, P8, P9) Child/child (P2, P5, P8) Adults (P8, P10)	Both (P2, P7, P8, P10) MC (P5)	Both (P2, P5, P7, P8)
13-16 years	School (P5, P10) School/leisure (P3, P8) Family/leisure (P8) Family (P7)	Child/adult (P3, P5, P7, P8) Child/child (P3, P5, P8) Adults (P7, P10)	Both (P3, P7, P8, P10) MC (P5)	Both (P2, P5, P7, P8)
16-19 years	School (P6) School/leisure (P4) School/family/future (P5, P6) Family (P7)	Child/adult (P4, P6, P7) Child/child (P4, P5, P6) Adults (P7)	Both (P4, P6, P7) MC (P5)	Both (P4, P5, P7) Majority group (P6)
19-30 years	School/family/future (P6)	Young adults (P6)	Both (P6)	Majority group (P6)

## 6. Description of the subprojects

The project is based on a model of shared funding between two units at the University of Oslo: the Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research (SKK) and the Educational Department (PFI) - a total of four projects (subprojects 2, 4, 5, 6). One project will be funded by Helse Øst (subproject 9), and one by Diakonhjemmet's høgskole (subproject 8). One project has been applied for at the Ministry of Education (KD) (subproject 1). The remaining three projects are funded by the Norwegian Research Council (subprojects 3, 7 and 10).

### 6.1-4 From daycare to high school

These four Ph.D. projects, located at PFI and SKK, will be publicly announced.

The four projects that cover daycare, compulsory school and high school will be given the same general design. It is strongly preferred that at least two of the doctoral students appointed are men.

Each project will follow two age groups/classes in two daycares/schools located in two different socio-economic areas in Oslo. The data will comprise ethnographies in lessons and breaks, and a small number of pupils will be followed in their life outside school (SFO, leisure activities, and, if possible, with their families). A larger number of pupils will be interviewed with the free-association narrative interview. For subprojects 1-3, permission from parents is required.

### 6.5 The longitudinal study age 7 to 18 (Nielsen)

A school class was followed through nine years of compulsory education (1992-2000) by means of annual observations and interviews in the fourth and eighth grades. The principal problem issue were the changes in the ways in which girls and boys position themselves, while the situation of the immigrant children in the class also became increasingly focused upon. The pupils were interviewed again in 2004 when they graduated from high school about their school careers, their choices of further education, and their conceptions of gender and gender equality. The material has only been sporadically analyzed. The aim of the project is to write a monograph, especially directed to teachers, but the data will also function as a basis for comparison with subprojects 1-4.

### **6.6 The longitudinal study age 18-30 (Nielsen/Rudberg)**

These data are part of a three-generational study where the youngest generation, born in 1971/72 was interviewed when they graduated from high school in 1991, and again 10 years later as they approached 30. Observations during the last year of high school were also included. The issue included changes in gender among young people in a generational perspective. The interviews with the girls/young women have been analyzed and recently published<sup>30</sup>, but nothing has been done with the interviews with the 25 boys/young men. It will provide an important comparative basis for subprojects 4 and 5 for our partner projects at IKOS and in England, and for the published study of young women.

### **6.7 Growing up in the modern family**

This project will be openly announced as a Postdoc project. The focus must be on the contemporary family as a qualifying arena. The aim is to explore new configurations of norms, positionings, motivation and competence in the interface between the gender order in the family and new demands and requirements in school and society.

### **6.8 Gender in physical education in school, and in physical activity/sport for children and youth in leisure time (Eng)**

Two different gender-producing arenas will be studied in relation to each other in this project: physical education (PE) classes in schools and local sports clubs/contexts outside school where the children/youth participate. Sport is the leisure-time activity which structures the activity of most children/youth in Norway, and the sport arena in most gender theory is supposed to play an important role in the reproduction of traditional masculinity and femininity.<sup>31</sup> Research also shows that girls participate less in PE, and that they are less physically active in leisure time in general compared to boys.<sup>32</sup> How are girls positioned in these two contexts and why do they drop out of both sport/PE? The study will involve pupils in grade 6 and grade 10 (the same schools as projects 6.1-4), their teachers/coaches in PE and leisure sports activity, and their parents. A key question will be how gender is processed and produced in these two alternative arenas; do leisure sports contexts produce more “old gender” compared to (possible) equality discourses of PE in school? What do PE teachers do with gender, compared to what coaches and the peer groups in leisure time sports do? And how do gender processes of marginalization and inclusion/exclusion work *across* and *within* groups of children/youth? What happens with boys who are not winners in a context of sport/PE?

### **6.9 Children’s experiences with the diagnosis ADHD and use of ADHD-medicine.**

### **6.10 Gender as a field of competence in teacher education (Røthing)**

This project focuses on the teachers and their competence with regard to gender. The aim is to learn more about how gender-related challenges are handled in Norwegian schools and to suggest how gender and equality can better be integrated as a field of competence in teacher education. Curriculum and study plans from 5-6 teacher education institutions will be studied in order to investigate if and how they deal with gender. Subsequently a number of interviews will be conducted with young teachers aged 25-30 years. The interviews will focus on what the teachers learned about gender through their education, what they find challenging in their daily work situations, and what they now, after working as teachers for a while, wish they had learned about gender during their studies. The teachers will also be asked to describe their own classrooms – how they themselves and their pupils do/exhibit/perform and talk about gender. In order to investigate the relation between how the teachers talk about gender in the interviews and how they do gender in practice, observations in the classroom will also be included. Some (or, if possible, all) of the teachers will be recruited from the same schools as involved in project 6.1-4.

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<sup>30</sup> Nielsen & Rudberg 2006

<sup>31</sup> Messner 2002.

<sup>32</sup> Belander et al. 2004.

## 7. Organisation of the project

### Contribution from the research milieu

The Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research (SKK) at the University of Oslo is the largest research milieu on gender studies in Norway, and has had a marked profile on research on gender and modernity, and on gender and child/youth studies. Today, the Center also includes a research group on men and masculinities. Research on boys has so far not been focussed on in this group, but there will be continuity in perspectives and theories about masculinities from the group's work to the new focus on boys and schooling. Thus, the Centre represents a solid scientific platform on which to build a research project on girls and boys. Two other main research areas of the centre are multiculturalism and Queer theory, and both will add substantial theoretical and methodological knowledge to the project.

SKK has a long tradition and a well-developed administration for arranging open seminars and research conferences, with participation of students, researchers and professionals. As an important part of the project SKK will arrange and co-organize three or four thematic seminars/research conferences with the partners in alignment with the four main theoretical and methodological key issues: new methodology, reconnecting agency and socialisation, connecting the discursive and the psycho-social self, and connecting different conceptions of gender in transition.

*New world – old gender?* will co-operate with two other departments at the University of Oslo: The Department of Education (PFI) and The Department of Psychology (PSI). At PSI there is ongoing research on two stages of children's lives: the life situation of small children in between family and daycare (links to P 1 and 7) and the transition phase between 12 and 14 (links to P 3, 5 and 8), led by Professor Hanne Haavind and Ass.professor Agnes Andenæs. At PFI there will be links to the ongoing project *TransAction: learning, knowing and identity in the information society*, led by Professor Ola Erstad, and P 4 will be integrated here. Professor Monica Rudberg, who is also a member of this group, will participate in P 6. See attached declarations from partners. The Institute for Social Research (ISF) will also be part of the co-operation as Åse Røthing (subproject 10) will be appointed a research fellow from August 2007 and thus be located partly there with her subproject.

SKK will establish a research seminar for the project and this will also be open for partners at PSI, PFI and ISF and other interested researchers in the field.

### International cooperation

Cooperation will be established with some key international researchers on youth, gender and schooling. So far there is an established partnership with one Swedish and one English project/research milieu. Both will open up possibilities for theoretical and methodological comparisons as well as cross-cultural comparisons of empirical findings. The Karlstad-based project *Att göras till riktig pojke*, led by researcher Marie Nordberg, is a study of boys in daycare, school and family with a clearly defined critical masculinities perspective. This project is relevant to several of the subprojects in *New world-old gender?* Together we will try to establish a Nordic network on gender and schooling.

In February 2007 the five-year longitudinal life-course study *Timescapes, Changing lives and times: Relationships and Identities through the life course* will be started as a co-operation between five universities in the UK. Leeds University, London South Bank University, and Open University will be in charge of the parts of the study that cover young people. The study is directed by Bren Neale (Leeds) and Janet Holland (London). There will be a close co-operation with this project, with exchange of Ph.D. students and researchers as well as exchange of results for comparative analyses. Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen is member of the international advisory board for this project.

These two partners will be especially involved in the four thematic seminars/research conferences. However, the Centre has extensive contacts with distinguished researchers within the area of gender/childhood/youth/schooling all over the world (during the last 10 years many of them have been lecturing or been guest researchers at the Centre) and they will also be included in conferences.

### Project management

The project is administered from SKK and will be directed by Professor Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen. Åse Røthing will be engaged as assistant director (6 months engagement over three years). SKK has qualified experience in administering larger research projects. Professor Bjerrum Nielsen has been the head of the



Center since 1993. She has been central in research on gender and childhood/adolescence since the 1970s and has recently finished a larger project on young girls in three generations (with Monica Rudberg, PFI). See attached CV.

SKK is used to housing Ph.D. candidates and will offer them very good conditions, both academically and practically. SKK is a part of the Nordic Research School in Interdisciplinary Gender Studies who continuously organize Nordic Ph.D. courses, and SKK itself also frequently offers Ph.D. courses.

### Budget and project timetable

The project will stretch across three and half years with starting date of August 1, 2007 and ending 31.12.2010. Total cost of the project is 16,5 million NOK, and total funding from the Norwegian Research Council is 6,4 million. See eSøknad for more detailed information about the budget and timetable.

### 8. Publication and popular dissemination activities

See eSøknad for information about publication and popular dissemination activities.

### 9. References

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