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# In Search of the New Man. Masculinity in the New Men's Magazines

## Introduction

Making the right choices in life is increasingly important in our present time, which is characterised by reflexive thought. Previously, magazines for men have been mainly focussed on one issue, for example, hobbies, pornography and comics. Many men have primarily read newspapers. Today, there is a relatively large offering of men's magazines - magazines that partly resemble the women's magazines that have been on the market for quite some time - and they contain articles about most aspects of life. Men's magazines started to appear on the Finnish market in the mid-1990's, but they have existed much longer in, for example, the USA, where they originated. These new men's magazines are intended for men of various ages and lifestyles. Contrary to the hobby magazines, these men's magazines contain articles on a wide range of subjects, in order that all readers may find something they are interested in. The magazines deal with relationships, music, film, sex, technology, women, fashion and everything men are assumed to be interested in.

Many media researchers presume that gender behaviour is increasingly moulded by our contact with the images, concepts and values communicated by the mass media. In today's society, mass communication represents the major part of all communication. The concept of masculinity has changed over the last

twenty years. Nowadays, men are also perceived as objects. Masculinity has become both sexualised and feminised by the media. It is now acceptable for men to be soft, passive and body-conscious in advertisements, although they remain strong, in control and dominating (Ekman 1995, 68f).

My aim in this article is to explore today's male roles and ideals by analysing the new men's magazines. I have primarily focussed on two magazines. I have also chosen to interview men in order to gain an understanding of how they perceive the masculine ideals prevalent in today's society as well as what they think of the new magazines. Does the everyday ideal correspond to that presented in the magazines? As my article deals with men's magazines, I find it relevant to explain concepts such as masculinity, gender systems and constructed gender. I agree with the theory that gender is socially constructed, primarily on the basis of the nature of my research problem: I suspect that these men's magazines are attempting to convey a way in which a man can achieve masculinity through the acquisition of certain attributes.

## Problems and theories

I have chosen to divide my introductory sections into firstly a specification of problems and then a presentation of theories. I will start by specifying my area

of research, identifying the main questions and the subsidiary questions. After that, I will discuss theories and explain concepts that will be used in the article. I have opted to give the theories and concepts ample space, since men's studies is a relatively new area of research, and my definitions of the concepts are fundamental to the argument.

### **Problem specification**

The main problem of my study is the masculine ideal in the new men's magazines. I explore what kind of masculine ideal the reader is encouraged to aspire to. I ask whether these magazines for men are entering into a "search for the new man". I will therefore analyse men's magazines and interview readers and non-readers of these magazines. Furthermore, I will ask what masculinity represents in today's society and the culture in which we live. What norms should a man follow in his life? What is masculinity?

Since I use, amongst others, theories on the construction of gender, I will also ask how a man becomes masculine and what the men's magazines present as being masculine. Are the magazines trying to teach their readers to become men? In addition, I wonder whether masculinity is being redefined. Will the currently prevailing masculine ideal disappear? Do the readers experience a feeling of male fellowship? And further, do the magazines communicate a certain beauty ideal for men? Is there a masculine jargon in the magazines? How do the magazines differ from each other, depending on their target group?

### **The gender system**

The concepts of gender and the gender system are frequently used within ethnology. Gender can be defined as the socio-cultural aspects of the division of the human race into two sexes. The concept of

gender can be studied at three different levels; that is, at the individual and the conceptual level, and at the level of social organisation. The gender system is an overall description of these levels in a certain society (Åström 1990, 16f.). The gender system could thus be said to be the mutual social and cultural organisation of the sexes. The gender system permeates all forms of cultural expression in a fundamental way. The interest in problematising gender has increased within ethnology during the last decade. Within this discipline, gender is usually studied with a focus on how it affects the overall cultural reality. In this article, I will study gender at the individual and the conceptual level.

There are two basic principles operating within the gender system. Firstly, the sexes must not be mixed, and secondly, man is the norm. These principles can either both be accepted, or both can be rejected. In addition, one might be accepted while the other is rejected. Various strategies have been used during different stages of the women's struggle. It may be asked, whether men in their struggle to maintain traditional masculinity only use strategies that directly or indirectly aim at preserving male dominance. Could it, however, be in the interest of men to diminish the difference in power between men and women (Cox 2000)? The idea of what is masculine varies considerably between cultures, contexts and historical periods. Within some cultures men are allowed to cry, while this is a taboo in others. Nevertheless, we know that gender is fundamental for our individual existence. This is one of the basic principles of social life, according to M. Kimmel, researcher in men's studies (Ekman 1995, 136).

### **Masculinity, manliness**

In Swedish dictionaries we often find that the word 'masculine' (Swedish: *manlig*) is defined as the opposite of feminine. Then

Slitz, for men  
who are  
allowed to  
kiss beautiful  
girls.



follows a list of characteristics such as brave, noble, strong, courageous, virile and fearless (Svenska Akademiens and Språkdata 2001). In a dictionary published by the Swedish Academy, masculinity stands for bravery, courage and capability (Ekman 1995, 40). Society is still, to a great extent, a male society. Man and his interpretations subconsciously saturate all cultural values. Previously, it has been almost impossible to pose questions about men, and it has been too complex to describe masculinity. Partly this is, of course, due to the fact that men form a heterogeneous group, partly that men have been invisible. Man is invisible because he is the norm. Man has been taken for granted (Ekman 1995, 133f.).

Conceptually, both masculinity and the male role are perceived as static. This does not reflect the fact that they are processes, and that masculinity is constructed. Such concepts do not take into account that men are different from each other. Instead of masculinity, then, such concepts as masculinities and male identity may be

used. These concepts facilitate an understanding of the fact that a man undergoes a process of development. Masculinity is thus something that is formed within the male individual in relation to everything that exists outside him. Primarily, masculinity is to be regarded as a social and cultural construction. The term masculinity simply refers to those stereotypes, ideals and expectations aimed at and associated with men in a given society (Ekman 1995, 101ff.).

Our society is imbued with an enormous quantity of invisible rules. Usually the point of departure referred to in discussions on masculinity is the cultural patterns for men's expected or assumed behaviour. Masculinity is seen as both a mental and a social structure, depending on the prevailing patriarchal circumstances. There is a stereotypical image of man in today's society. We must, however, keep in mind that masculinities irreconcilably differ from each other, depending on the position of the men in the contractual power hierarchy. Besides, the masculinity of an individual man is based on his personal situation in life and his unique experiences (Haddad 1993, 313). During the late 1970's, men considered masculinity to stand accused for several crimes against women, children and other men, primarily homosexuals. Since the 1980's, men's groups have attempted to counter these crimes by, for example, starting men's movements (Haddad 1993, 37ff.). Men have become aware that masculinity is a problematic concept not only for men themselves, but also for women, homosexuals and other men who do not conform to the standard dominant masculine ideal. Men have therefore realised that masculinity must be reconstructed. Masculinity would then instead form a valuable source for men (*Miehyyden tiellä* 1993, 13ff.).

Sports comprise several stereotypical

elements of masculinity: comradeship, competition, hierarchy, legitimate emotions, control over injuries, limitations, codes, anxiety and distinction (Badinter 1994, 106ff.). Team sports are often more important for boys than for girls. Pre-school girls and boys are prone to play with children of their own sex. The tendency towards grouping according to sex is strengthened from the age of 6–7 and up to puberty, when subcultures with both male and female emphasis start to arise. Sports involving competition, aggression and violence are regarded as the best way to foster masculinity, particularly in the USA, but also to varying degrees in other cultures (Ekman 1995, 44).

### **Constructed gender and essentialism**

What are the reasons for man being what he is? The most common view is that a combination of biological and environmental factors influence the way in which a boy is formed into a man (Ekenstam 1998, 11). Generally speaking, there are two ways of regarding the institution of gender. One talks about constructed gender, while the other talks about essentialism. Essentialists seek a genuine and authentic masculinity. The interest in essentialism increased in the early 1990's. According to this view, the human psyche is not formed only according to the individual's own biography, but primarily by the collective unconscious and archetypes embedded in the human spiritual and genetic heritage (Ekenstam 1998, 12).

Constructivist researchers claim that the focus should be on exploring the social construction of various types of masculinity. The construction is influenced by several dimensions (Haddad 1993, 43f.). According to pure constructivism, masculinities are only constructed ideas of what men should be like. Masculinities do not reflect what men are actually like

(Haddad 1993, 37ff.). Researchers have claimed that if men are aware that their masculinity is a social construct, they may then choose to reconstruct their masculinity according to a more ethical line. Men would understand that neither they nor any other person has the right to use violence and power (MacInnes 1998, 83). According to Freud, human sexuality is not a biological product, but primarily a cultural and symbolic product. Thus, sexuality is a product constructed by society, and therefore something learnt (Ekenstam 1998, 12). In addition, there is the view of essentialist constructivism. According to this school, a child is formed during his or her early years (Bengtsson & Frykman 1987, 9). In this article, I will primarily use the theory that gender is socially constructed.

### **The male role and male ideals**

Research on gender roles was a growing field within cultural and social studies at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bengtsson & Frykman 1987, 14). The most fruitful approach seems to be to explore how male identity is formed by cultural and social factors. However, this presupposes that the definitions of roles within a culture are relatively uniform. And, as we know, male roles have varied according to class and age, power positions and in relation to female roles (*Mannen i förändring* 1983, 34ff.).

In order to really understand the male role, we must therefore look at how the role or the various roles have been formed. We can ask what the prevailing norms are for the behaviour of boys. How are the norms developed and conveyed? Expectations and influences from his environment are, of course, crucial for a boy's development into a man. Boys experience demands to be men very early in life. The demands not to be like girls trigger dependence in boys, primarily in relation to their friends. It seems to be part of the upbringing of boys

to learn to be suspicious and guard oneself. There are also strong taboos. Men do not dare appear unguarded in the way women do. Men often have the attitude that everything might be used against them. Therefore they cannot talk about feelings with other men. A pattern in relations between teenagers is to appear "the least interested". Researchers claim that in this way youngsters engage in games with each other. The point is to gain power in the relation by caring the least. Revealing emotions also means revealing that one cares about the relation and thus losing power. It means appearing to be weak in front of others (Bengtsson & Frykman 1987, 18).

The male liberation during the 1970's tended to describe the male role as defective. Deep down, men, like women, were good at heart but culture and society had bound them in the straitjacket of the role. It was assumed that the traditional male role made men do nasty things. Men became aware of this, primarily through the women's movement, and those showing most insight wanted to come to terms with the role. The most sensible thing to do was to let men take care of female chores at home. Some researchers think that if today's men had grown up with their fathers taking care of them at home, they would be better equipped emotionally. Thus, the new man lives in a clear contrast to an old reprehensible masculine ideal. The physical, challenging macho man, who had not realised the value of softness, differentiation and the will to talk about his problems, was seen as the stereotypical image of working-class men (Ortman 1970, 14).

Despite the cultural change that is taking place, and which has been taking place over the last century, it is still a common assumption that boys should be active, tough and sporty. An effeminate boy is not as appreciated as a masculine boy (Ekman 1995, 123). In my opinion, the view within

Nordic culture today is still that boys should be manly. It is true that a greater tolerance of femininity has slowly grown, but the male norm does still not allow men to carry out certain more feminine jobs, such as childminding and cleaning.

The attitude towards masculine characteristics can vary depending on age. According to, for example, men's studies researcher Daniel Ekman, important masculine characteristics at a young age, around 24 years, are the ability to function in a family, responsibility and foresight (Badinter 1994, 152). I also asked my informants what kind of male ideal they have perceived, and I will present their answers further on in this article. I think the attitude to masculine characteristics to a large extent depends on a person's situation in life. For example, 24-year-olds exist in a wide variety of situations and have different lifestyles.

Apart from the characteristics mentioned above, the general view is that men should experience strength, control, potency and success according to the norm for the ideal male role. By contributing to the upholding of this unattainable image of masculinity, one heightens the painful feeling of inadequacy among today's men (Badinter 1994, 208). At the moment, it seems as if young men can feel comfortable neither in the soft nor the hard masculinity. They are first generation heirs of a transformed masculinity. Young men appear to find it difficult to identify with their fathers, since young men today are sons of masculine mothers and feminine fathers (*Mannen i förändring* 1983, 24ff.). At the same time, society is dominated by men and the opinions, values and perceptions of men are prevalent. The present assignment of roles is thus problematic for both men and women.

However, all men do not hold power in society. The powerless are situated in a hierarchical structure which is the actual

condition for the power and dominance of men in the crucial higher positions in society. Most men have been brought up not to break free from these hierarchical structures (Cox 2000). Besides, men today manifest their masculinity primarily through success in working life. Today's economy is global. Companies invest in specialised production and move factories between countries (*Mannen i förändring* 1983, 24ff.). This can result in it being both more difficult and more attractive to manifest one's masculinity. Masculinity is something that men can lean back on even if they have to move from country to country in order to find work. In this way, they strengthen their position in society and the hierarchical structure.

A modern man must split his personality as he moves from one place, group or activity to another. His various sub-selves need have no connection with each other. The labour market is based on principles of profitability and efficiency. The increasingly bureaucratic system demands impersonality and emotional control. The male role thus requires that men possess self-control. This is a prerequisite for being able to act rationally, compete and achieve results. This pertains to all men, but takes on various expressions depending on social position. The privileged man is focussed on self-realization and success. Most other men are focussed on fulfilling their duties, for example as breadwinners for their families (Conell 1999, 9).

### **The image of man: men in the popular press**

During the 1930's the strong man was the ideal. However, much has happened since then, from furriness and reflectiveness, to the 1980's pinstripe suit fashion and aggressive stubble. The man of the 1990's is portrayed in advertisements as at least as vain as his female counterparts. Even if the image of men in the media differs

immensely from the everyday life of most men, there is always a connection between fiction and reality.

Masculinity has become a popular subject during the last few years in all industrialized countries. Some of those who have worked with the subject for a long time have shown some dismay concerning what catches the media's interest in men. According to many men's studies researchers, the most popular books on men are full of vague thoughts (MacInnes 1998, 1f.). But why is writing on masculinity so popular among men? One theory is that modernity has systematically weakened the patriarchal society. Men have seen a great deal of diminishing of their power over women. Gender is, in a way, an ideology that is used by people in modern societies in order to perceive differences between men and women based on their sex. The perceptions help individuals understand that they live in a society which is unequal even if it is formally equal (Ortman 1970, 130f).

### **Death of the old male image**

Lately great technical changes have happened very quickly. More information reaches us at a rising speed. Mass media increases our knowledge and we get an insight into a growing number of incidents. The world is shrinking. All this has impelled us to change our attitudes. For example, we realise that conventional and traditional behaviour and prevalent ways of thinking are not always the best. Since many old values have lost their significance and been replaced by new, many people have become insecure and confused. Some strive for freedom to begin with, while others want to live even more freely than they already do. We become unsure of our gender roles. For example, a small boy still encounters the old masculine image in his childhood. He is thus unprepared for his future family role. Demands on masculinity arise everywhere (Salonen 1995, 187ff.). In

addition, men live in two worlds. One world is inherited from their fathers, and is a world which no longer functions coherently. The other world, on the other hand, advocates a masculinity which is not yet developed enough to function. The new man should defend, but not attack. Man is vulnerable and needs care, but he should also protect others. He should be both strong and weak. Men should be perfect, but no individual can ever be perfect (Ekenstam 1998, 242f.). Cultural liberation, self-reflection and individualization are signs of modernity. This does not, however, pertain to all in the same way and to the same extent. Social and cultural gender are factors influencing this (Badinter 1994, 149). Thus today's male image can not totally die, only gradually change.

### **Superman and the four imperatives**

The definition of the male role formulated by two American university teachers is, to a large extent, prevalent in Western culture. Robert Brannon and Deborah S. Davies claim that a man who obeys four imperatives is superman. An example of this superman whom the masses have dreamt of for a long time is the so-called Marlboro Man. Most cultures have adopted this masculine ideal and created their own versions of it. The four imperatives are the following: "*no sissy stuff*", "*the big wheel*", "*the sturdy oak*" and "*give 'em hell*". By "*no sissy stuff*" Brannon and Davies refer to the expectation that men should not do anything feminine or effeminate. Even if it is known today that men have the same emotional needs as women, the stereotypical male role forces men to sacrifice a part of their humanity (Cox 2000). Women are aware of the significance of their gender identity, while men continue to live according to the first commandment of masculinity: "*no sissy stuff*".

Similarly, today's young men should

learn to feel safe, secure and self-confident in their masculinity - and not follow the stereotypical male ideal. Those who are not securely rooted in their masculine identity continuously feel their masculinity being challenged and are forced to always prove to themselves and others that they are real men and no sissies (Badinter 1994, 129f.). "The big wheel" means that man is a very important person. He must be better than others. The scale for masculinity is thus success, power and corresponding admiration. "The sturdy oak" refers to the fact that men should be independent and only trust themselves. "Give 'em hell" is an expression for men having to be stronger than everybody else - even by using violence if necessary (Cox 2000). These masculinity rules are passed on from generation to generation. There is one man who, still today, is a symbol for these ideals. He has been the most admired masculine hero in the USA for many decades: John Wayne. Clint Eastwood could also be called a superman of our times.

### **Methods, source material and choice of method**

I will present my material and methods in two phases. First, I will explain my choice of working method. After that follows a presentation of both informants and the men's magazines I have analysed.

I have chosen to focus my analysis on two men's magazines, *Slitz* and *MG*. Both of these are relatively new on the market. I have read all the issues published in 2000 in order to get a clear view of the contents of the magazines and their attitude towards man. I will primarily analyse recurring subjects of the magazines' articles.

In addition, I have interviewed four 23-25 year-old men, who are all students. The very limited age group of my informants needs to be explained. I have chosen this age group because the magazines I have analysed are primarily intended for this

group. Two of these men read men's magazines, while the two other are non-readers. I have interviewed non-readers in order to find out what their opinion of the magazines is, and whether their male image differs from that of the readers. I used slightly different sets of questions for interviewing the two groups. I also quickly realised that it is easiest to find men who do not read men's magazines or at least do not admit to doing so. It seems that reading magazines is something shameful. I assume this might be explained by the countless women's magazines that have existed for a long time. Men are possibly afraid of being labelled feminine. I get the impression that reading pornographic magazines is better tolerated among men than reading men's magazines, probably because this is regarded as masculine. It was, however, interesting that one informant who reads men's magazines said that:

*I don't know, it's the same as for girls and women. It is like the same kind of magazine but for the other sex, more like that. It's not like, it's not so to say any kind of porno magazine in that sense... there is a clear limit there.*

In addition to the two men's magazines that I have analysed, I have also read a few issues of other men's magazines. I would have liked to analyse these, too, but I chose to only get a quick overview of other men's magazines, primarily in order to confirm that the two magazines I had chosen were also representative of the rest of what is available. Most men's magazines do have their individual profiles which differ somewhat from each other, depending on what group of men and also what age group they are intended for. Since all my informants are about 24 years old, I have assumed that men of this age might be in slightly different life situations; some might study while others are in working life, some

might have a family of their own while others are single. I think the lifestyle and life situation of the men influence their choice of magazine.

### **Presentation of the informants and the source material**

As has been mentioned above, my informants are men between 23 and 25 years of age. All of them are students. Two read men's magazines, while two do not read them. One of the readers has been exchange student in the USA and the other reader has done a work placement in the USA. This is interesting, since men's magazines originated in the USA. Both non-readers have only spent shorter periods abroad as tourists. One of the informants studies at Sydväst Polytechnic, while all others study at Åbo Akademi University. I discern no differences between the hobbies of the readers and non-readers; these include music, TV, books, shares, socialising with friends and weight training. Geographically the readers come from Ostrobothnia and the non-readers from Nyland. All informants currently live in Åbo.

The magazine *Slitz* is intended for younger men, while *MG*'s target group is the mature man. This is obvious from the headlines, covers and contents of the magazines.

My first object of analysis is the Swedish magazine *Slitz*. A Finnish-language edition of *Slitz* is published in Finland, which primarily contains translated articles from the Swedish magazine. I have chosen to only analyse the Swedish *Slitz*, since there is virtually no difference between the Swedish and the Finnish editions. Besides, all my informants are Swedish-speaking, which makes me assume that they also read the Swedish edition of the magazine. All the editors at *Slitz* are men. At the top of the cover, there is always a sentence starting with the words: "For men who...", for



example, "For men who get to kiss beautiful girls." or "For men who only live twice." The target group of the magazine are men aged 18 to 35. The magazine contains articles on sports, film, computers, politics, music, women, gadgets, clothes, sex, living together, food, training, drinks and entertainment.

Apart from the above themes *Slitz* also contains articles on everyday life, usually something associated with the military. In addition, the magazine has a column for readers' questions, where a woman answers men's questions, and interviews with well-known men, as well as a section called "Manual", that is, "the ultimate style guide for men". "Manual" uses sub-headings such as "Style news", "Pure style", "Object", "Expert", "Training", "Motor", "Technics" and "Materia". As these headings suggest, "Manual" contains tips for men on clothes, fashion items and gadgets. In "Pure style" men are taught manners and the art of being a gentleman. In "Expert" experts on religion & spirituality, food & training, skin & body care, sex & and co-habiting and economy answer readers' questions on virtually anything. "Training" consists of, for example, tips on how to train a certain body part, and sometimes also introduces new training equipment. The cover of *Slitz* always features a scantily dressed, famous woman.

*MG* is a Finnish magazine. Most of the editors are men. The target group is somewhat older than that of *Slitz*, that is 25–45 years. The magazine always contains a section called "Men's world" with articles on film, media, music, books, events, gadgets, style icons, bistro, gastro, health, "your place or mine", and "what you must get yourself". The book reviews usually present so-called male books. By this I mean that the books are mostly written by men or deal with fatherhood and related matters. The gadgets are small things, funny presents and the like. "What you must get",

on the other hand, presents, for example, new, expensive telephones, cameras and dressing-cases. Style icons are older successful men, who present some of their more valuable possessions. Bistro deals with drinks and gastro with food. "Your place or mine" consists of pictures of a scantily dressed young woman. In addition to these recurring subjects, the magazine contains columns, articles on famous men, fashion, cars, extreme sports, and similar subjects. Every issue also has a column on the subject of men. This is always written by a well-known woman. The pictures in the magazine often show men of the ages of 25–35 years. The message of *MG* seems to be that even at a young age men can become "dynamic, successful salesmen, that is, heroes of our times" (*MG* 12/2000). The cover usually features a middle-aged well-known Finnish politician, businessman or sportsman. Sometimes the cover model is a Finnish musician, actor or a famous woman.

### **Analysis of the men's magazines**

I have divided this chapter into sections on *images of masculinity, male fellowship, male roles and male ideals* in the magazines, and *male jargon*. Under all these headings I take into account both my informants' answers and the contents of the magazines, as well as theories of masculinity. I have chosen here not to refer to my theoretical sources, primarily as I have presented them in detail above. Neither do I use references to particular issues or articles when I discuss the men's magazines. My analysis of the magazines is of a more general character, since I have used so many issues of the two magazines.

### **Images of masculinity**

In advertisements, the man of the 1990's is depicted as at least as vain as his female counterpart. Many mass media researchers assume that gender behaviour is

increasingly formed by our exposure to the images, concepts and values communicated by the mass media. Men in advertisements are nowadays allowed to be soft, passive and body-conscious (Ekman 1995, 93f.). This is also obvious in the pictures in advertisements and articles in *Slitz* and *MG*. The masculinity of a specific man is also based on his personal life situation and unique experiences (Ekman 1995, 102). The pictures in the new men's magazines do not seem to take into account that men can have different experiences and a private life situation. Rather, the men's magazines keep to stereotypical images of men. The stereotypical man must own certain items in order to be a man according to the magazines. Masculinity is constructed through clothes, cars, telephones and the like. *Slitz* says that the reader must turn to its "Manual" if he wants to dress like a man. Thus *Slitz* claims that clothes make a man. Both *MG* and *Slitz* contain a lot on sports. The area of sport, including competition, aggression and violence are, according to Western culture, the best way to achieve masculinity (Badinter 1994, 106ff). This attitude appears clearly when reading and analysing the magazines. Men's magazines were originally created in the USA, where many masculine sports are given priority, such as American football and ice-hockey. The Nordic men's magazines that I have analyzed also primarily present traditionally male sports.

One of the informants who read men's magazine answered as follows to my question on whether the norms for a man are changing:

*Yes, they are changing. As I said earlier, paternity leave has come about and such things. But men on the whole have perhaps become more fixated on their bodies and therefore there are many men who undergo plastic surgery. And that has*



**MG, for traditional and luxury men.**

*hardly existed before. So in that way the image has changed.*

I also asked the informants what they think masculinity is. I did not get any explicit answers; instead, most informants said that they could not define the concept. I was somewhat surprised by this, while I also realised that a change in the image of man is actually happening. I was expecting answers that would have emphasized *strength* and *control*. One of the informants said that being polite to women is masculine. Such an answer suggests a traditional image of man.

*Well, I don't know if there is anything particular that I think is masculine in that sense. Of course, society has certain ideals for what a man should be like. The man should provide for his family, the man should work and the woman stay at home, but I don't know if this is so intrinsic any more. It does still exist to some extent in society. But that too is changing, as paternity leave is introduced, for example,*

*so then the man can stay at home with the kids and the woman can go to work.* (Reader, b. 1976)

I also asked the informants how a man becomes masculine. According to what I have read and seen in the men's magazines, men become masculine through clothes and other attributes. However, none of the informants mentioned this. Most of them said that men become men while doing their military service. They explained that men mature there. One informant said that there is nothing special one can do to become masculine:

*If he is a normal man, then I suppose he is masculine. There is nothing special one can do, one should not be... gay at least.* (Non-reader, b. 1975).

### **Male fellowship**

*I think that, I think one needs it at the same time, for example this socialising, nice socialising with other men. Let's say because well, I think one should, that one has the right to it. There's nothing wrong with it. So one does really feel that one is part of a fellowship.* (Reader, b. 1977)

There are general perceptions of what men are like together with women and children. A world less known and less explored is men's relations to other men, that is, male fellowship. It is, however, possible to describe what one sees in the team of builders, military service platoon, football team, or in a gang of friends (Ekman 1995, 175). All informants mentioned one of these groups as teams within which they had experienced male fellowship. One informant gave the following answer to the question on where he experiences male fellowship:

*Perhaps sometimes at a sauna evening, or actually even if one is with a group of women or girls it can be just as fun, or at*

*least one can be just as involved in these things, I don't know if it must necessarily be a group of the same sex.* (Non-reader, b. 1975)

This can also suggest that the statement that men seldom have a close male friend is true. Exposing his soul to another man would reveal a man's underlying insecurity and thus all men would be potential enemies and rivals (Ekman 1995, 181). But the answer can also be interpreted in a way which implies that men are not constant rivals. It is also possible that the informant answered in this way because he misunderstood the question, or did not want to hurt me as a woman by directly saying that he always has a better time in male company. I also asked my informants who read men's magazines whether they felt a fellowship when reading the magazines. One informant said he felt no fellowship in that situation, while the other answered:

*Well perhaps sometimes. It depends on what one is reading. Well yes, for example these different stories that people tell in there about something or another, then maybe I feel a fellowship. Yes really, that's what it's like, sort of.*

The magazine *Slitz* conveys the notion that sports are a male territory, that is, a place for male fellowship. Sports are holy and this is a male area where women are usually not invited. Women are not portrayed as active within sports, but as fans, or they are there for decoration. In *Slitz*, women and sex are virtually always mentioned in the same article. When women are presented, they are usually portrayed in the role of sexual beings. I therefore asked myself whether the fact that women are portrayed as sexual beings creates fellowship among the men. However, there is one exception: the questions column where men ask a woman

about relationships, sex, body matters and so on. In this column, on the other hand, the woman is presented as an oracle since she is assumed to have the answer to everything. Nevertheless, one can ask whether this actually is an exception, because on the same page as the questions column there is a picture of a very attractive and scantily dressed woman, who possibly is supposed to depict the oracle.

In the magazine *MG* women are also presented as sexual beings, but not exclusively so. Women also appear in articles on, for example, motherhood. So, the male fellowship in contrast to women is not as strong in *MG* as it is in *Slitz*. Women are also given an equal position as creative subjects. In *MG*, I nevertheless discern a male fellowship or a male territory when it comes to the book reviews. All books presented in the magazine, except one in issue 12/2000, are written by and about men. The one book written by and about a woman is a detective story. Three of the other 11 books deal with male politicians, one presents the best sportsmen of the century, one is about the new financial gurus (all men), one is about a Finnish rock group consisting of four men, and the remaining four are fiction with a male main character. In fact, *MG*'s recurring section "Men's world" is a totally male territory.

### **Male roles and male ideals in the magazines**

A modern man must split his personality in order to move from one place, group or activity to another. I asked myself what male roles are presented in the two men's magazines that I have analysed. I primarily used pictures, articles and the list of contents of the magazines in order to find male images or male roles. I further asked the informants what they thought about the male roles communicated in the magazines and also if they thought that a certain type

of man read the magazines.

*Slitz* conveys an image of boyishness. In this way the magazine appeals to a certain type of man, or it might suggest that *Slitz* is a haven for all men, a free zone where women have no access. In my opinion, *Slitz* can be seen as a reaction to changed gender roles at a time when it is uncertain what a man actually is. Many probably read *Slitz* for entertainment and do not take its contents that seriously. However, I think that men are indirectly influenced by the image of both men and women communicated by the magazine. I assume that those who read *Slitz* as a Bible and take the magazine seriously form a marginal group. Both informants who read men's magazines said that they do so mainly as a pastime. One informant thought that mostly socially active men read men's magazines, that is, men who either study or work, since the magazines are relatively expensive. One informant who does not himself read men's magazines thought that it is primarily men who are unsure of themselves who read these magazines.

*Slitz* gives the reader a relatively stereotypical image of man and also a stereotypical image of the reader. According to this magazine, men should be interested in sport, alcohol, women, technology and they should think it important to dress in the right way. These aspects of masculinity recur throughout the magazine and *Slitz* thus becomes a producer of a stereotypical image of men. The texts are often instructive and provide the reader with tips and pronouncements on what is right and what is wrong. A man must learn to behave like a gentleman, to satisfy his woman and cook delicious food. Delicious food according to *Slitz* consists of very exclusive and culinary dishes. A man should not stand by the stove every day, but only cook about once a month. *Slitz*'s idea of men and cooking is comparable to the 1950's notion of man and the barbecue.

In addition, men should buy the right clothes and fashion items. Men are increasingly interested in clothes and looks, which is also noted by *Slitz*. Just like women, men also have to change and adapt their appearance in order to be a real man, and *Slitz* provides the ways and attributes needed to do this. It may be argued whether men have become interested in clothes and looks because of these new men's magazines and other ideal images set up of men, or because of other phenomena in our culture.

The magazine *MG* is primarily characterised by a male image which can be seen as traditional. Men should be successful, the head of the family and wealthy. When comparing *Slitz* and *MG*, I notice that *MG* seems to take the male role more seriously. The articles exclusively deal with successful and career-oriented men. *Slitz* can be said to speak for the younger macho man, while *MG* advocates the older businessman. *MG* 12/2000 contains a fashion article which includes the following statement:

*Freedom and individuality are in, but there are limits. Your work place defines your dress code - intentionally or unintentionally.*

The *MG* man has discretion and style, and he follows strict rules on what a real *MG* man should be like. *MG* usually also contains an article presenting a man doing an extreme sport, but in daily life this man is a businessman, director or the like. The non-readers also have an idea of this male model:

*You're supposed to have one of those muscular bodies and do many different sports and work, have one of those 'suit jobs'. And then you're supposed to help with the household chores and then you're supposed to do all sorts of other things as*

*well. You're supposed to be a real superman.* (Non-reader, b. 1975)

The informant here describes the superman. The four imperatives *no sissy stuff, the big wheel, the sturdy oak* and *give 'em hell* to a large extent fit the informant's description of today's male ideal. Admitting weakness, frailty or infirmity makes one seem like a sissy and unmanly.

This is obvious also in *Slitz*. Men should not, for example, do feminine sports. The only exception is if the men are at the top. By feminine sports I mean ballet and other non-aggressive physical activities. Even if men are usually not allowed to do feminine sports, they may make good and finer food, and are encouraged to do this by the magazines. The informants, too, mention the feminine household chores as something that men should help with at home, which is something the traditional man would not do. It can thus be seen that the norms for a man are perhaps changing. The second basic rule or imperative, *the big wheel*, is also reflected in *Slitz* and *MG*. In the former, the rule appears in the section "Power & Freedom". Here, powerful men get to show what characteristics are desirable and thus function as examples for the readers. It could be said that powerful men as role models characterises the entire contents of *MG*.

Body fixation has increased since the beginning of the 1980's and I think that the body has gained a more central role. This can be seen not least on the cover of *Slitz* where the producers use half-naked beautiful bodies in their attempts to sell the magazine in true commercial spirit. The media has gained increasing power in setting the norms for what is desirable and beautiful. The pin-up girls of both *Slitz* and *MG* have very similar forms, which is an example of the media's normative tendency. Also the men featured in the

pictures in the magazines have perfect bodies, stylish hair and fashionable beards. The fact that beauty is not something objective is forgotten, and the more pictures of “perfect” bodies we see, the more we perhaps think that they really are beautiful.

The interest of many men today in their appearance and their spending quite a lot of time in trying to change their bodies in a desirable direction do not necessarily reflect actual changes in gender identities. I would rather talk about certain shifts in what is regarded as feminine and as masculine. The narcissistic man is not necessarily a new man, but perhaps rather a traditional man in a new packaging. This argument has clear relevance with regard to *Slitz* and *MG*. The fact that a man is interested in the contents of, for example, the clothes section, does not need to bear any deeper significance. When the whole society is body fixated, it is no wonder that men, too, show an interest in these areas. Even if outer factors might change, the internal can remain more or less the same. One informant said:

*It depends more on personality and behaviour and not necessarily on what he looks like in the magazine.*

There is a beauty ideal in the men’s magazine, but it is possible that men do not perceive this ideal or follow it. Perhaps beauty is not everything that matters, after all, at least according to my informants.

### **Male jargon**

The form of a message is very important as to what kind of concept of reality it conveys and how the readers receive the message. Actually, the focus should not only be on what is said, but also on how it is said. *Slitz* has created its own jargon which is used in all sections of the magazine with only a few exceptions. The jargon used by the editors is so clear and strong that it even dominates the style of the letters from readers. *Slitz*

uses unusual words, such as ‘esoteric’, ‘infamous’, ‘gamine’ and ‘magisterial’, mixed with slang and swearwords. English expressions are ‘Swedofied’, translated or used as they are. The whole magazine is characterised by ironic, sexual and easy-going language. This is most noticeable in headlines, introductions and captions, where the angle of the media is most apparent.

People who hold a high and secure position in their group or class can easily take on a certain nonchalant attitude towards the cultural rules. Those who know best and are clearly aware of the rules can afford to be a bit careless and bohemian (Ehn and Löfgren 1986, 94). *Slitz* is dripping with irony, which, apart from its function to amuse, can also serve as a shield against criticism. *Slitz* is always right and can make the critics feel inferior by pointing out that what they attacked was ironic and intended to be a joke.

On the other hand, male language stands for rationality, order and objectivity (Dyer 1989, 68). This statement is largely true of the magazine *MG* and its language. Both pictures and texts radiate rationality, order and objectivity. The jargon is very matter-of-fact, as is the rest of the magazine. It might be asked whether *MG* is more mature and more masculine than *Slitz*, or more mature and less masculine. However, I would rather define the magazines as conveying different kinds of masculinities, and therefore their languages also differ from each other. Both magazines try to teach their readers to become men, but different kinds of men.

The language also separates the two magazines in another way. As I said above, *Slitz* in a way holds a high position in its group and can therefore be nonchalant. This is true also of *MG*, but in a contrary fashion. *MG* also holds a secure position among its readers and thus they can afford *not* to appear nonchalant. By this I mean that *MG*

by its objective, matter-of-fact and rational language signals that the magazine is so esteemed among its readers that they can let the reader join it at the same level. After all, the readers admire the magazine. By its language the magazine even seems to *want* the reader to be on the same level. This of course is due to the fact that *MG* is intended for successful men, or men who are on their way towards success.

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