

A woman wearing a black hijab and a black suit with a white shirt and black tie is smiling and pointing her right index finger towards the camera. She is wearing a gold ring on her right ring finger. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**Norm criticism
for beginners**

Images that **CHANGE** *the* **WORLD**

A guide to equal communication

By Tomas Gunnarsson,
'The Gender Photographer'



Our cover model Zejnab analysing her photo

THE POINTING: It's dangerous to point! Imagine: I'm a woman in a suit, pointing at you and laughing. In some countries men would see that as a threat to their masculinity.

THE HAND IN THE POCKET: When bosses have said something they're proud of, they put their hand in their pocket. It's like when we sit in a chair. When we feel secure, we lean back.

THE SUIT: If this photo would be shown in my home country, they would laugh and say I'm crazy. If I didn't have the tie, maybe it would be OK. But the tie – that's where the chaos begins.

THE CHARM: Sometimes people say 'Zejnab, you're not like them. Those women with head scarfs are so withdrawn. You're so cool!' Suddenly I'm *we*, not *them*? It's usually when I'm the funny one. Zejnab the clown.

THE HIJAB: I was a tomboy when I was little. I was really good at sports, and guys liked to hang out with me. My sisters were also good at sports. But they got bullied, beaten, scratched, kids put gravel in snowballs and threw at them. What do you think made us different? We were from the same family. I'm foreign, they're foreign. It was because I didn't wear a hijab and they did. So I put on a hijab too, to protect my sisters.

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ABOUT IMAGES THAT CHANGE THE WORLD

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In addition to this manual, an exhibition has been produced that will be touring internationally from 2019. Find out more about the project on: sharingsweden.se/toolkit/images-that-change-the-world

You can't be what you can't see

IN OUR EVERYDAY LIFE, we're faced with thousands of images. They stare at us from billboards, magazine covers, TV commercials, product packaging, movie posters, and celebrities' social media accounts.

Many of these images contain messages that only reach us on an unconscious level.

They can be messages about gender: how we're supposed to be, dress and act in order to be seen as normal, attractive and 'real' men and women.

But also messages about other norms: what a normal family, body or skin colour looks like – or the expected boss, preschool teacher, prime minister or office cleaner, for that matter.

Images show us what's possible. After

all, you can't be what you can't see.

Images can exclude people, by never showing some groups at all, or only portraying them as deviations from the norm.

Images can cement narrow gender roles that limit all of us – girls and boys, men and women, and those who don't identify with any of these categories.

'What does a boss look like?'

BUT IMAGES can also do the opposite. When done right, images can include and mirror all people, not just those who fit into the norm in society.

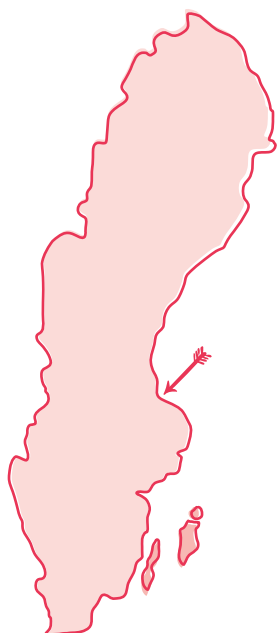
And images can tickle our imagination when it comes to what we can do with our lives, and who we can become.

We are not set in stone.



Apparently Swedish bosses are elderly white men, according to Sweden's largest morning newspaper...

...and they're married.



The city of Gävle

THIS IS WHERE IT ALL STARTED. In 2013, an angry citizen phoned Gävle Municipality to criticise the new posters they had put up in the windows of City Hall. Gävle Municipality had the ability, and courage, to take the criticism to heart – and to change.

This booklet is based on a guide that is used by Gävle Municipality. But through it, anyone can make the same journey Gävle did: from ignorance to insight, and inclusion.

gavle.se

The author/photographer

TOMAS GUNNARSSON, also known as The Gender Photographer, is a journalist and photographer who has raised awareness in Sweden about how differently men and women are portrayed in the media. In his lectures, blog posts and photo exhibitions he explores the themes of gender, identity and norms, and has become a prominent voice in Swedish norm criticism.

Tomas has given many Swedes their first pair of 'gender glasses'. Now it's time for you to get yours!

genderphotographer.com

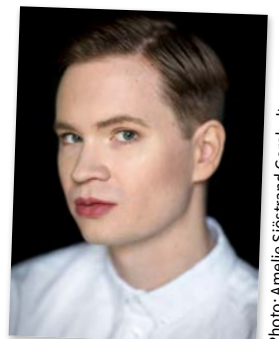


Photo: Amelle Sjöstrand Gereholt

A city where **MEN DO AND WOMEN WATCH**

The phone in the office of Johan Adolfsson, communications director at Gävle Municipality, rings. When he answers, an angry woman starts berating him.

‘HAVE YOU SEEN THE PICTURES?’

What are you people in City Hall doing? Do you understand how your images diminish young girls?’

Johan immediately realises what she’s talking about: the posters filling the big windows of City Hall, facing the street. Photos that, on the surface, appear to portray nothing more than a sunny Gävle filled with happy residents.

But the woman on the phone saw something else. Something that’s very hard to see, because we get daily training not to.

IN THE PHOTOS that Gävle Municipality proudly printed and hung in the windows for passersby to admire, almost all men were active and all women passive.

Boys and men are doing things. Working, running, playing sports, conquering rivers or skateboard ramps.

Girls and women are sitting still, posing or taking care of children.

In one of the photos that the caller found upsetting, a group of boys are throwing themselves into the water of



Johan Adolfsson, communications director at Gävle Municipality, who reacted to criticism by calling the Gender Photographer and ordering more criticism. As well as this booklet. You can read an interview with him on page 34.

Gävle Harbour – while a gang of girls watch them passively.

THIS IS NOT AN ACCURATE depiction of reality. Women and girls also exercise, explore, compete and score goals.

And if you widen the lense and also take other factors than gender into consideration: Which Gävle residents could actually see themselves in the posters the municipality put up?

Looking through the images, there were only two people who look like they’re over 60 years old, only two people that appear to have non-Nordic background, zero people with visible disabilities, and zero same-sex couples.

And there were almost twice as many men than women in the photos.

The impression these images convey is that Gävle is populated by white, physically fit men in their thirties, a few passive girls, a couple of single mothers – and a seagull.

**See all the
pictures on
the next
spread**





**'HAVE YOU SEEN THE PICTURES?
DO YOU UNDERSTAND HOW THEY
DIMINISH YOUNG GIRLS?'**



This is the poster that started it.



What (almost) EVERYONE MISSED



Girls watching...



...brave boys



Boys reading comics



Girls sitting and smiling. Shot from above.



Woman with kids



Supercool boys!



Guy running



Happy boys



Girls looking at boys. Boys looking away.



Boys jamming

To be seen **IS TO EXIST**

WHEN YOU BELONG to those who fit into the norm in society, you can without any difficulty look around and find people that look like you – in movies, talk shows, newspapers and furniture catalogues.

You might not even be aware that for some people, the media is not a mirror.

Images – or the absence of images – affect how we see each other, and ourselves. When some people are invisible in the media, when their voices and stories are never heard, there is a void left to be filled with prejudice and stereotypes.

STEREOTYPES ARE MENTAL IMAGES of what people from certain groups are like: what all women are like, what all gay people are like, what all Swedes are like...

There are both positive and negative stereotypes. And while they might make our reality simpler to grasp, they also, by definition, impair our capacity to see individuals. Instead of seeing the unique person in front of us, we get hung up on their gender, skin colour, religion or the presence of a disability – and we shape our image of what that person is like based on these superficial qualities.

THE ANTIDOTE IS VISIBILITY. To show more images, more role models. To remind the public

that within every minority there's a vast diversity of people with different experiences, abilities and dreams.

To be seen is to exist. If the staff at a hospital have never seen or read about a homosexual 70-year-old, that possibility may not even exist in their mind when they meet new patients. And they may ask a female patient a question like: 'Do you have a husband we can call?'

A question that assumes that the patient is straight – and reinforces the norm that everyone is heterosexual unless they 'come out' as something else. (If being hetero wasn't the norm in society, people would also come out as straight.)

If the staff at the hospital had read more interviews with, or seen more images of older LGBTQ people, perhaps they would choose a different phrasing. One that doesn't take anything for granted, and can make any person feel included in, instead of excluded from, who's considered normal:

'Do you have a partner we can call?'

REGARDLESS OF WHOM YOU LOVE, what colour your skin is, what god you believe in, how your body or brain works, what genitals you have, whether you're old or young – you deserve to be seen, heard and respected.

Looking back

Before this project, the only kind of couple you could find in Gävle Municipality's image vault consisted of a man and a woman. Are there only hetero couples in Gävle? That can't be true, can it?



The
missing
image



Kerstin & Eileen

In this same spot, on the lawn of their house by the sea north of Gävle, Kerstin and Eileen have had two wedding parties. One in 1999, when they entered into a civil partnership. The second one in 2009, when same-sex marriage was legalised in Sweden and they married 'for real'.

‘Mom, I don’t want to *be* a boy, I *am* a boy.’

WHEN JAZZ AND SARA were born, their mother Ullis thought she’d had twin girls. She started to dress ‘the girls’ like two pink little pastries with ribbons that could barely stick in their hair.

But after a few years she noticed that there was something different about Jazz. At age three he begged her to stop buying him ‘girls’ clothes’ and ‘girls’ toys’. When he was five, he announced that he wanted to be called Oliver.

In middle school, Jazz stumbled upon a clip from a TV show about transgender people *. ‘I watched all episodes together with my mom. And that’s when I figured it out’, he says.

JAZZ CAME OUT as transgender to friends and relatives on Facebook the summer after fifth grade, and only got positive reactions. In the fall his mother went with him to a meeting at the middle school in the small village of Kilafors (population: 1,195), and broke the news to the principal, school nurse and teachers. Jazz feels supported by the school, and is comfortable being completely open about his gender identity. He regularly travels to the city of Uppsala to receive an injection of puberty

blockers (hormone-suppressing medication that postpones puberty) and talk to a psychologist. When he’s 18 he will have the opportunity to go through more extensive sex reassignment therapy.

MAKING TRANSGENDER PEOPLE VISIBLE

can be a matter of life and death. According to a study ** from the Public Health Agency of Sweden, close to 60 per cent of transgender youth have seriously considered suicide, and 40 per cent have made at least one suicide attempt. Jazz has been lucky, but transgender people as a group are still frequently met with discrimination, harassment and simply not having their identity respected.

‘The problem is people who don’t accept you for who you are’, Jazz says. ‘Who treat me as if I’m a girl.’

However, Jazz is patient with people who struggle to understand – as long as they’re trying.

Even his family sometimes needs a little help on the way. When Ullis says that Jazz ‘wants to be a boy’, he corrects her:

‘Mom, I don’t want to be a boy, I am a boy.’

Left picture

From left to right: Jazz’s twin sister Sara, his baby sister Bobbo, his stepdad Jay, his mother Ullis, and Jazz.

Middle picture

Jazz and his sister Bobbo, who tells him: ‘You are a boy who’s my big sister!’

Right picture

Jazz and Ullis in the school yard.



* Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity or gender expression doesn’t match the gender that they were assigned at birth.

** ‘Health and health determinants among transgender persons – a report on the health status of transgender persons in Sweden’, The Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2015.



Jazz and the cat Akiro.



Inclusion

DONE RIGHT

SO WE'VE CONCLUDED that visibility is important. But almost equally important is to avoid the pitfalls that come with including and portraying people who are often forgotten by the mainstream media.

One very common pattern is that people from underrepresented groups only get cast as representatives of that group, in stock photos, ads or the news.

For example, people with disabilities often appear exclusively in articles or scenarios highlighting disabilities. Rarely does a person with a (visible) disability get to just represent a random example of an ordinary person, participating in social life, interacting with the world.

IN THE SAME WAY, transgender people tend to appear in the media only when the subject is gender identity, hate crimes or sex reassignment therapy (in the lat-

ter case often with a dramatic focus on before-and-after photos and questions about genitals).

The result is that they get stuck in the role as exceptions to the norm. Heterosexual cisgender (non-transgender) people without any disabilities, on the other hand, get to play every possible part in movies, ads or society at large – they are simply considered 'neutral' human beings.

THE SOLUTION IS to let anyone represent a random individual, in any context.

To let a family with two dads exemplify museum visitors. To let someone in a wheelchair be an underwear model.

To let a norm-breaking piece of clothing, skin colour or disability just be an insignificant detail in a photo. Like they should be in society.

The seven protected grounds for discrimination in Swedish law

... and a good checklist for inclusion

- Sex
- Transgender identity or expression
- Ethnicity
- Religion or other belief
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age

Is there a diversity of people appearing in your images, or the media you analyse, based on this checklist?

ESTHER, a three-year-old little rascal and Gävle resident, enjoying her favourite summer activity: splashing around in the waterpark at Furuviik Zoo south of Gävle.

What colour is 'NEUTRAL'?

IF YOU FIT IN WITH THE NORMS of your society, it's possible to go through life not noticing there's such a thing as norms at all. It's not until you break them that you see and feel their presence.

IKRAM AND MARKUS are a young, quite recently married couple. Ikram is from Kenya, and a Muslim. Markus is half-Finnish and a quarter Swiss, and has converted to Islam.

Since they got together, Markus has become aware of how often Ikram is reminded that she's not considered normal in Swedish society.

For example, when people shop for make-up, pantyhose or adhesive bandages, they typically want them to match their own skin tone. However, these products are often available in only one shade: the one labeled as 'skin-colour'.

This is not a fabric made out of chameleon skin, that organically adapts to the hue of the wearer. Instead, the colour designated as 'neutral' is the light beige-pink that matches white people's skin.

Twenty-one per cent of all Swedes have origins from outside the Nordic region. That means plenty of people can't find a bandage, in an ordinary pharmacy, that doesn't stand out against their skin. A subtle sign that having white skin is the norm, something expected, of a Swede.

Either that, or only white Swedes are clumsy enough to cut themselves.

'When my foundation run out, I can't just go out and buy more.'

BEFORE MARKUS MET IKRAM, he'd never noticed that bandages were trying to imitate his skin tone.

'When you grow up in this society and you go to the pharmacy, you only think: "I gotta have bandages, that's what they look like".'

'I think you've noticed it more in this relationship, how hard it is for me to find things', Ikram tells him. 'If my foundation

would run out now, I can't just go to the city and get some more. I have to order, wait, all that kind of stuff.'

IN A BROADER SENSE, Markus and Ikram are sometimes reminded that they themselves stand out, as a couple. 'She notices it more than I do', Markus says. 'But if we walk and hold hands, sometimes I can see people look at us with a sideways glance, like they're thinking: "Why are they together?"'

'But I think that's more because I have a hijab', Ikram says. 'Because mixed-race couples are not uncommon in Sweden.'

She turns to Markus. 'Oh my god, do you remember the girl? We were walking into a shopping centre in the city, and a small girl saw us holding hands. I've never seen someone so scared in all my life! She almost fell down. She was so shocked that we were holding hands. I feel sorry for her. Because... this is 2018.'



About norms

NORMS: Unspoken rules dictating what behaviours or characteristics are seen as normal in society (being attracted to the opposite sex, being able to hear, men proposing to women instead of women to men, et cetera).

NORM CRITICISM: Making norms visible, exposing their appearance of being 'neutral' and showing how they make society less inclusive. Case in point: light beige bandages, that match white people's skin, being labeled as just 'skin-coloured'.

NORM CREATIVITY: Showing creative ways of expanding norms, like instead of wearing a bandage that matches your own skin, why not wear one that matches the skin of someone you love?



Ikram ♥ Markus

Ikram is wearing a bandage in the only colour available at a regular Swedish pharmacy. Markus is wearing a bandage ordered from the American company Tru-Colour Bandages, that specialises in manufacturing bandages for people with black, brown or olive skin.

Creating gender *with the camera*

They're called gender roles for a reason. We learn early on how to walk, talk, dress and act to be seen as normal, attractive and 'real' men and women.

WE CREATE and perform ideal femininity and masculinity, by mimicking our parents, idols or other role models, by choosing the right clothes and perfume, by displaying the right emotions – and by trying to make it all look natural.

When we succeed particularly well at playing these all-too-familiar parts – when we put on an expensive red dress and stand in front of the mirror, or when we walk around for six months with a broken foot without calling the doctor – we say that we feel like a 'real' woman or a 'real' man. (What were we before?)

WE ALSO CREATE gender with images. When you take a photograph of someone, you make a sequence of conscious or unconscious choices. You choose the angle: from above, below or eye level. You choose how close you are to the person. Which environment you place them in. Whether you ask them to smile or look serious. Whether to adjust the lighting and focus, or to use props. Later on, you also choose between all the photos you've taken. What makes you pick a particular image,

to polish and publish, over all the others at your disposal?

IN EVERY PART of this sequence, gender is a factor. To understand that, you simply have to look at how differently men and women are portrayed in ads, mass media – and selfies, for that matter.

In a study called Duckface/Stoneface by the Swedish Media Council, researchers

asked kids in Year 4 and 7 to describe how you're supposed to look in selfies that you share on social media.

The girls answered that you should hold the camera high, and that you should look pretty, happy and 'natural' (ironically, make-up is mandatory, and using beautifying photo filters is recommended).

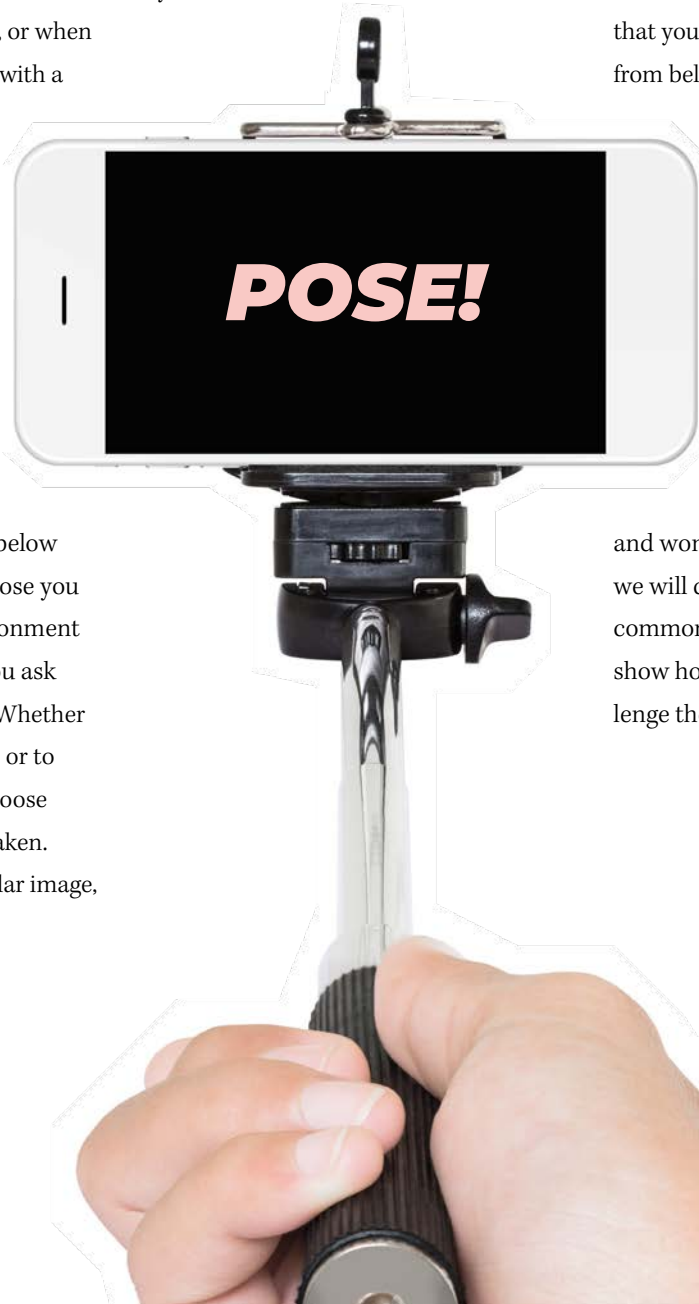
The boys, on the other hand, said that you should photograph yourself from below, so that you seem bigger.

You should look tough and indifferent, like you don't care what anyone thinks of you. (Of course you do care, you're just not supposed to let it show.)

INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, the same patterns described by Swedish kids can also be seen in images of adult men

and women. In the next couple of pages we will delve deeper into 10 of the most common gender clichés in images, and show how you can spot, avoid or challenge them.

Morgan, a 21-year-old art student and pole dancer from Gävle, shows us that anyone can play any gender role. All we need is the right outfit, make-up or soundtrack, and the role almost springs to life by itself. (The quotes are Morgan's own interpretations of the pictures.)

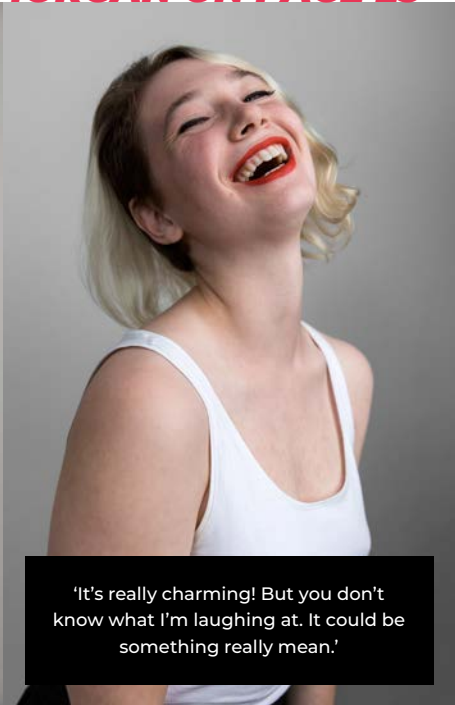




'Very assertive. Like, "I'm exactly as important as I appear to be".'



'Orange Is the New Black: the Non-binary Edition.'



'It's really charming! But you don't know what I'm laughing at. It could be something really mean.'



'It feels a little like "I'm just gonna adjust this skirt, then I'm gonna knock you down".'



'The pose feels cool and greaser-like, but the T-shirt makes it nice.'



'It's an alpha pissing contest, and I'm winning.'



'Very innocent, but it also says "I have my eyes on you".'



'I love the aggressiveness of it. At the same time it's a little soft, like someone hurt my feelings and I'm yelling at them.'



'When you have a pet in the photo, it doesn't matter how you look, because then the animal steals all the attention.'

A man with curly hair, wearing a grey pinstripe suit and a blue and white striped shirt, is lying on his back on a plush red leather sofa. His legs are raised high in the air, bent at the knees, and he is smiling at the camera. He is wearing a beaded bracelet on his left wrist. The background is a blurred interior with a painting on the wall.

How hot is your boss?

What is the easiest way to show how differently we portray men and women? Reverse the gender roles. When men pose in stereotypically feminine poses and vice versa, the result is often striking, funny or even absurd. Which in itself is proof of how differently men and women are portrayed.

Here are **10 of the most common gender clichés** seen in ads, articles, TV reports – and maybe even your own camera roll.

THE 10 CLICHÉS ↓

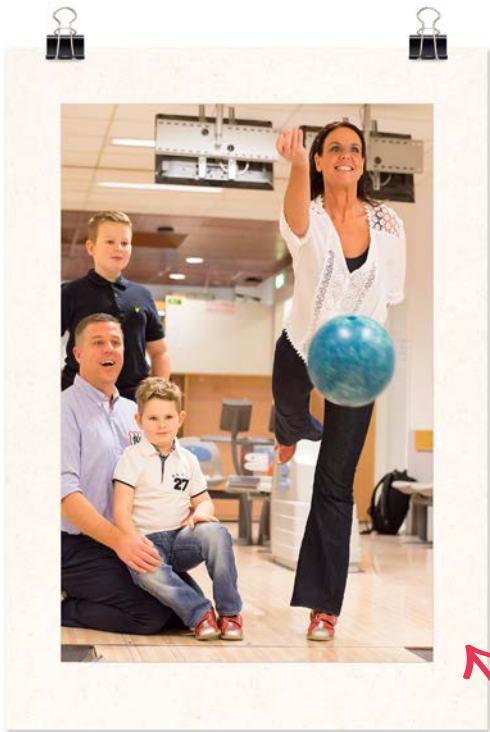
1

Active men and passive women

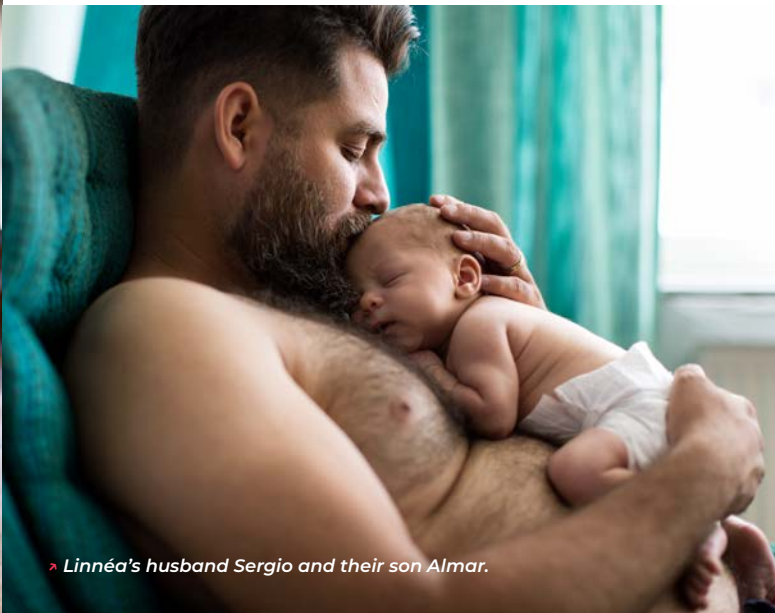
WE'VE ALREADY COVERED THIS PATTERN: men do stuff in images; women sit, pose or check out the men who are busy getting things done. A prime example is this 1950s style photo from Gävle Municipality. A steady-handed dad showing the family how to putt. Mommy on her knees, so impressed she almost explodes over how accurate daddy is.



↓ Linnéa Manzanares, development director of the association Gävle's Youth, pictured in 'The Old Man's Room' at Gävle City Hall.



Gender renovation! By letting daddy Mathias cheer on with the sons Oliver and Totte while mommy Kicki racks up the points, we hit two stereotypes with one bowling ball.



➤ Linnéa's husband Sergio and their son Almar.

To care or to conquer

WOMEN ARE PORTRAYED as relationship-oriented and men as goal-oriented. Women give comfort; men give orders. Women are fulfilled by relationships; men by power. A woman's place is in the home; a man's is out in the world. These are the messages that are being sent when women are portrayed in private surroundings and men in professional or public spaces. And while women are often identified as someone's wife, mother or daughter in the media, men get to be independent individuals, freed from family responsibilities. * When was the last time you heard reporters worry

about whether a powerful man manages to combine his career with raising his kids?

But maybe they should. In a survey, the Swedish kids' magazine Kamratposten asked: 'Who would you rather talk to when you're sad?' Of respondents, 46 per cent answered 'mom', 17 per cent 'no one at all' and only 7 per cent 'dad'. 😊

* According to the Global Media Monitoring Report 2015, women are four times more likely to be identified by their role in the family (as someone's mother, wife or daughter) than men.

MORE CLICHÉS ↓

3

#manspread

MEN SPREADING their legs wide apart, airing their crotch, often on buses or trains, or posing for photos. (This is only a problem when you take up space at the expense of others. If you're alone, spread your legs as wide as you want!)



4

The bad boy

THIS TYPE OF POSE is most common in ads and fashion: men or boys looking like untameable rebels, disgusted by civilization, refusing to pose for anyone or look into the camera (which of course is a pose in itself), and scanning the environment for something to spit on.

5



6

Great men, tiny women

MEN ARE OFTEN PHOTOGRAPHED from below; a camera angle that makes them look bigger, more important, superior (to you, since the viewer 'looks up' at the person). For women, the cliché is the opposite – they are photographed from above; an angle that makes them look smaller, cuter and less threatening.

Here's a suggestion: why not meet everyone on the same level?

The angel

FOR WOMEN, THERE'S A SPECIAL RULE you have to follow whenever you have your picture taken: smile. As a woman, you're supposed to look friendly, accessible and angelic, radiating warmth.

This cements the norm that a woman's role is to please. It also causes women not smiling – who might be focusing on something important, or have a 'resting bitch face' when their face muscles are relaxed – to be interpreted as angry or hostile. Men with the exact same expression, on the other hand, are interpreted as serious and determined.

The solution is simple: just let the context, rather than a person's gender, decide if they look happy or not.

7

The murder gaze

Looking like
an executive
or executor.

Locking eyes with
you, without smiling.
Classic way of showing
dominance.

Grabbing stuff,
not touching
themselves.



THE IDEAL FOR A MAN – as you can tell by watching ads for razors, perfume or boxer shorts, or covers of men’s magazines – is to look like a murderer. An aggressive, emotionless stare straight into the camera, like a wild animal establishing his dominance. What all these ultra-masculine stone faces in media perpetuate is the ideal that a man should be tough, controlled and king of his hill. When being vulnerable and asking for help are seen as signs of weakness, of

not being masculine enough, is it really a surprise that 70 per cent of suicides are committed by men? *

Why not let men be human? No matter what the media tells you, men can be happy, sad, brave, scared, strong, cute, soft – and yes, some of them actually are murderers. But remember: not all men!

* Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, 2018.



Why not let the man be the admirer for a change?

8

The supporter

THIS CLICHÉ WAS ALSO BIG IN THE 1950S: women who look admiringly at men, inflating the latter's importance. As Virginia Woolf puts it in *A Room of One's Own*: 'Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size.'

Hey, men can do this too! Women are worthy of admiration as well, and why shouldn't men be the ones who provide it?

9

The sexual object

'SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION' means that a person is presented as an object whose only function is to rouse someone else's sexual desire, rather than as a thinking, feeling human being with dignity and a life of their own. Women are objectified in ads for everything from cars to food to men's clothes (???), drawing attention to products with their bodies. Women are also objectified in other forms of media, through news articles and profiles getting hung up on their appearance and attractiveness,

regardless of context. Even when women are portrayed as professionals, sensual body language (parted lips, 'bedroom eyes', touching their body or mouth) charge the pictures with sexual energy.

Research shows lots of connections between sexual objectification of women and mental health problems, such as eating disorders and depression. In a 2013 survey from the Swedish Women's Lobby, nine out of ten female respondents said ads had made them feel bad about their looks

9 out of 10 young women state that ads have made them feel bad about their body or looks.

Source: A survey done by the Swedish Women's Lobby in 2013.

or weight, and had made them want to do something about it. (The corresponding number for men was three out of ten.)

To avoid objectification, simply show women as thinking, acting people not existing merely to please others.

'If I would have had the finger on my chin, then it would be "the thinking pose". But touching the lips, that's not something you see male business leaders doing.

'The arm in that angle, I tried that on my wife when I came home after the photo shoot. Like, Friday erotic. So I lifted my arm standing in the door, and she just said "Oh, stop it!"'



10

Make men close again



WOMEN IN ADS AND FASHION CATALOGUES can hug, kiss and sit in each other’s lap. If men pose in the same way, something interesting happens: the image is either seen as comical, or interpreted as portraying sexual partners. But it wasn’t always like this. Western men in the 19th and early 20th century would hold hands, embrace, even sit in each other’s laps in photos, and no one thought much of it. But when these photos were found in the 21st century, historians first believed that they had discovered that homosexuality was much more accepted in the 1800s than previously known. * After further research, however, they found that the lesson was this: how you can pose in images, and how this will be interpreted, is something that changes over time.

Victor and Håkon, pictured above, saw these photos from the 1800s in a lecture by The Gender Photographer and wanted their own old-fashioned buddy picture.

* **Bosom Buddies: A Photo History of Male Affection**



A TREND WE WISH TO SEE: More decorations, guys!

If you have facial hair, stop wasting its potential.



Styling: Nanna Amoruso Kokko

PORTRAIT

MORGAN



MORGAN IS NON-BINARY. That means Morgan doesn’t identify as either woman or man – a concept difficult to grasp for most people.

‘It’s not about biology, it’s about identity. For many people, having a clear gender identity provides a sense of safety. I, on the other hand, feel comfortable being just about anything.

‘When I say I’m non-binary, people often ask: “But what do you have in your pants?” I found a really good answer to that on the internet. You simply dig in your pockets, pulling out keys or lint, and just say “Well...”

‘One time when I was having lunch at school, this guy kept saying: “But you look like a woman.” And I spent a really long time explaining what non-binary means, but still he was like: “But you look like a woman.” Then I got irritated and burst out in the middle of the cafeteria: “OK, I’m sorry I have boobs!” Then he gave up.

‘I feel like our language hasn’t developed enough for us to be able to talk about things like this. How do you know you’re male? My cat doesn’t know it’s a boy. Furthermore, he’s castrated and has very little experience of other cats – he’s just a cat. In the same way, I want to be just a human.’



***‘Oh, you named your son
Alice? How cool!’***

Said to the parents of Alice, to the right



Beyond PINK & BLUE

KIDS LEARN from an early age that it's important to choose the 'right' clothes, toys, behaviours and activities to be perceived as a normal girl or boy (or simply to make sure other kids or grown-ups don't mistake their gender).

Everywhere we turn, there are messages that teach us that girls and boys are different.

Pink dollhouses, baby doll strollers, plastic beauty kits and kitchenware signal that your role as a woman in society is to please others with your cooking, caring or looks.

Blue action figures (remember, they're not dolls!), construction kits and weapons – these are toys that say that life as a man is about inventions, adventure and power.

IN MAINSTREAM MOVIES, male heroes save the world and get a woman as reward. In classic fairy tales, princesses wait to be defrosted and rescued by an unknown prince's non-consensual kiss. Both are stories that tell us that men should be active, and women passive.

All these messages – packed in toy boxes, narratives and images – shape our idea of what it means to be a woman

and a man, and what our different roles should be.

To make matters more personal, we also raise girls and boys to be different.

We talk more to daughters. Play more roughly with sons.

If a girl is too loud, messy, rebellious or violent she's asked to be more ladylike. If a boy acts in the same way, we shrug and say 'boys will be boys'.

A girl who's active, tough and into sports is called a tomboy. For a boy, being called a girl would be a catastrophe. (Which is a sign that femininity has lower status than masculinity in our culture.)

WE COMFORT GIRLS LONGER when they cry, and try to distract boys who cry too much, tell them to get over it. Or worse, that 'boys don't cry'.

If we don't teach boys to express or show feelings, but that violence is an acceptable mode of communication, is it a mystery that some men turn violent towards others or themselves rather than show vulnerability?

And when we encourage girls to make themselves pretty with flowery dresses or cute ribbons – is it a shock that many adult women live with a

constant, stressful feeling that they have to change (their appearance or body) to feel valuable?

GENDER AWARENESS and analysis help us see these patterns, question them and decide which stories and ideals we really want to pass on. It's about showing our kids – and reminding ourselves – that you can be strong *and* caring. You can wear lipstick *and* invent things. You can be a superhero *and* do the dishes.

There are infinite paths to walk in life, not just the pink or the blue one.

ELLA AND ALICE ARE TWINS. Ella likes the colour pink, takes ballet lessons and prefers her hair long. Alice favours clothes in darker colours, likes her hair short and plays football and hockey. One of the girls is constantly assumed to be a boy. (Guess who?) Ella and Alice's parents have gotten used to confused comments like: 'Oh, you named your son Alice? How cool!'



Several examples in this chapter are from OLIKA Publishing's *Ge ditt barn 100 möjligheter istället för 2* ('Give Your Child 100 Possibilities Instead of 2'), an excellent book on gender aware parenting and teaching, by authors Kristina Henkel and Marie Tomicic. It will be available in English for the first time in the summer of 2019.

'Let Kids be Kids'

LUDWIG IS A FIVE-YEAR-OLD who loves to swirl around in dresses, and to fence with pirate swords. In his room Barbie dolls and knights share castles with Batman. And on this particular day, Ludwig is wearing his Superman socks along with his favourite chequered dress.

It's almost as if no one has told Ludwig that some toys and clothes are for girls and some are for boys.

And that's exactly what happened. For Ludwig's parents, Henning and Lisa, it's always been a natural choice not to limit their child.

'I don't want to go in and decide for Ludwig, who's a child, what's right and wrong to play with. He must be allowed to explore whatever he wants,' Henning says. 'Let kids be kids. That's the whole point.'

'Why should you take away a boy's ability to appreciate beautiful things?' Lisa says. 'Should he only be surrounded by grey and brown his whole life? God, how boring.'

WHEN PEOPLE SEE LUDWIG playing with dolls, or wearing a t-shirt featuring the Disney mermaid Ariel, they sometimes turn to Lisa and ask her what Ludwig's father thinks about that. 'And I'm like, "Eh, it was Henning who bought him that t-shirt"'

When it's time for Ludwig to be photographed for this booklet, he asks Lisa to give him 'doll make-up'. Somebody floats the idea that maybe daddy wants some make-up too? Henning doesn't hesitate a second. As a true movie buff, he takes the chance to ask for 'Rita Hayworth make-up'. Ludwig happily assists with the rouge brush.

'Many parents seem worried about whether

they will be able to cope with having a kid that doesn't follow the norm,' Henning says.

'I think it's very important not to pass on your own fears and anxieties to your kids.'



When Lisa puts mascara on Henning she bursts out laughing: 'It's so hard to take you seriously when you have such long, fine eyelashes!'

A moment later, when Ludwig helps Lisa apply rouge to Henning's cheeks, he tells his son: 'Easy now. Daddy doesn't want to look like a slu... clown. A clown.'

HENNING AND LISA

note that people seem particularly concerned about boys who like traditionally 'feminine' things.

A concern they think is completely unnecessary.

'I mean, I could think of a thousand things that would be worse than your son wanting to use make-up or have a pearl necklace,' Hennings says.

'Yeah, if he would cut himself, hurt others or burn houses...then I would be worried,' Lisa says. 'If he wants to have a dress when he's fifteen and is so confident and secure in himself that he can just tell people "Yes, but I feel happy wearing a dress"...' Henning finishes her sentence: '...Then you have actually won as a parent.'

Henning and Ludwig.



***Follow your
~~heart~~ not
your gender***





← **BASEM MUHANNA**
Horse lover.

Pictured with Damelio at Gävle Riders Society.

'In Sweden, most people who ride horses are women. But in Syria, most are men. I don't know why. Maybe guys here think horse riding isn't that manly?'



Basem's idea for a pose: playing peekaboo in the horse's mane ☺

← **FANNY HAMMARBERG**
13-year-old road racer.

Photographed in Gävle Harbour, since her motorcycle is too fast to drive on public roads (legally).

'My mother tried to get me into riding horses. But I think that's so ordinary. I wanted to do something different. The best thing about road racing is when you drive past people.'

WHY DO WE NEED ROLE MODELS?

Because if you've never seen somebody that

looks like you in a certain profession, position, art or sport, the idea to try it yourself might never even occur to you.

UNFORTUNATELY, SOME JOBS, HOBBIES

AND DUTIES in society have been coded as either male or female. This leads people who don't want their femininity or masculinity questioned to choose other, more 'appropriate' interests and career paths. The idea of being in a minority and attracting unwanted attention due to your gender, or having your

skills doubted because others are supposed to be more 'naturally' suited to the job, can also act as deterrents.

Everyone should have the right to explore all available opportunities and reach their full potential, without prejudice and stereotypes blocking the horizon. One way to clear the path for others is by lifting up and highlighting the role models, the trailblazers – those who followed their heart and not their gender.

CHRISTINE WAHLUND →
 Tiler and carpenter at a construction firm in the town of Sandviken, near Gävle.

Regularly volunteers as a mentor for students from the construction programme at her old high school, both boys and girls.

'I thought I would face negative reactions when I entered the workforce. That customers would be like "Can you really handle this?" But on the contrary, people just think it's really fun that I'm a girl.'



Looking back...

This was a very limiting (but sadly typical) choice of images by Gävle Municipality in a catalogue showcasing its education programmes. Two photos that clearly show who's expected to apply to the construction programme and to the child and recreation programme.

With 96 per cent of Swedish preschool teachers being women and 99 per cent of construction workers and carpenters being women, this would have been an excellent opportunity to highlight role models – like Jesper and Christine.



*Images from a brochure by Gävle Municipality that shows who's expected to build houses...
 ...and who's expected to care for children.*


Jesper playing with Lamek in
the playground of Källö preschool
in Gävle.



↑ **JESPER VESTMAN**
Preschool teacher
in Bomhus, Gävle.

Previously a construction worker, Jesper has experienced first-hand the two most gender-segregated lines of work in Sweden.

'It's nice when there's a mix of men and women,' Jesper says. 'If there are more men in a workplace it easily turns macho. It's cosier working in this environment.'

A photograph of a man with dark hair, a beard, and a mustache, shirtless, holding a newborn baby. The man is looking off to the side with a gentle expression. The baby is looking towards the camera with its mouth open. The background is a white wall covered in a black and white pattern of stylized branches, leaves, and beards, resembling a 'beard-tree' wallpaper.

Sergio Manzanares
and his second son,
Almar, in front of their
moustache- and
beard-tree wallpaper.

*‘People don’t expect
dads to have feelings.’*

The secret recipe for equality is

Dads

If you look at the statistics, Sweden is one of the most equal countries in the world. But if you ask Swedish parents, they're still not satisfied.

IN SWEDEN, two-parent households get a whopping 480 days of paid parental leave – during most of which you receive 80 per cent of your salary. An inconceivable luxury to parents in many parts of the world.

But for some reason, Swedish fathers find this offer much less attractive than mothers do. Only 28 per cent of the parental leave days available to Swedish parents are used by men.

'I think it's a vicious circle,' says Linnéa Manzanares, who just had her second child with her husband Sergio. 'The fact that women generally earn less than men makes couples decide that the woman should stay home with the kids, for purely economical reasons. But women earn less partly because they're often the ones that put their careers on hold to stay home with the children in the first place.'

LINNÉA IS CORRECT in that many households decide who will stay at home with the child based on who earns the most. However, statistics from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency show that even when the woman in the household earns more than the man, she *still* uses most of the parental leave days.*

So perhaps money isn't the only reason that men to a large degree pass



THE MANZANARES FAMILY: Emrik; Linnéa, 37 weeks pregnant with Almar; and Sergio. When Emrik was asked if he wanted to be in the photo he said: 'Yes, absolutely. I love showing myself to my fans!'

up on this opportunity. Maybe norms, or societal expectations, have something to do with it?

'Being a man can be very convenient,' Sergio says. 'When things get a little tough, you can always go back to work and no one will find it strange. In my workplace, no one has even asked me if I'm gonna take parental leave.'

ANOTHER QUESTION Sergio hasn't been asked during the pregnancy is: 'How do you feel?'

'People don't expect dads to have feelings. There's this image of men as invulnerable and rational. You're supposed to work and make money. But men can also have doubts, anxiety and depression leading up to a birth. And the fear when the baby arrives and it cries all the time, and you have no clue why. With my first child, every time he cried, or the first times he screamed, I thought maybe he was dying. This time, with Almar, I know...maybe he's a little bit gassy, it will pass. But the first time, how are you supposed to know that? As men, we don't learn how to cope with difficult emotions, so I think sometimes we just leave the responsibility to the mother. Because she's been with the baby longer.'

'"She knows best"', Linnéa adds. 'Or, "I can't do that as well as her".'

'Yes, so I think men take the easy way out and go to work instead. I don't think it's about the money,' Sergio says.

WHEN THEY WERE EXPECTING

Almar, Sergio and Linnéa were informed by their midwife about so-called daddy groups, where men can get together and talk.

'I don't think my dad and his dad hugged or expressed feelings to each other. So it has become more accepted. But we still have a long way to go.'

* Swedish Social Insurance Agency, 2018.

Q&A WITH THE BOSS

Johan Adolfsson, communications director of Gävle Municipality



Hi Johan! Why did you want to create a guide to equal communication with the help of *The Gender Photographer*? Why was this project important for Gävle Municipality?

‘As a government body, our job is to build a good society where everyone has the chance to realise themselves. Stereotypes and prejudices limit people’s potential, and that’s a loss for the individual as well as for society. We not only can, but also must change that.’

Since the release of this guide in Swedish in 2016, how has Gävle Municipality approached this task?

‘We made an exhibition called 100 Citizens of Gävle. Instead of doing the obvious and choosing celebrities, we portrayed ordinary citizens nominated by others, which gave us a broad and inclusive variety of people. In our everyday work, we have a simple checklist: look for those who will be the hardest to find. Start by looking for someone with a disability, someone older, some-

one who’s not white. Men are not in the checklist, because men will appear anyway. They’re always asking “Aren’t you going to interview me? I have something interesting to say!”’

‘We are obliged to make a conscious stand.’

What was most difficult in this change?

‘To reach insight. At first we thought it would be a quick fix. But we soon realised it would take time because we had to question ourselves and our everyday work and decisions. That takes courage. A picture is more than just an image. It is the result of

a process including many different people, and in the process we discovered that all the people were basically the same. They were middle-aged, white, heterosexual men and women with a steady income and zero disabilities. Naturally, this group of individuals reproduced themselves in every decision in the working process, thus ending up with biased pictures excluding many of Gävle’s residents.’

What do you hope to achieve with the international edition of *Images That Change the World*?

‘I hope we can export the questions, not the answers. To expose the structures regardless of what they look like. If you see the structures, you can make a conscious decision about what we want our society to be. We think we can just wander through history without affecting it, but that’s incredibly naive. We are obliged to make a conscious stand, and our work in Gävle can hopefully help others to make that stand.’

Thank you!



Thank you!

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THERE CAN BE NO TRUE DEMOCRACY AS LONG AS DISCRIMINATION STILL EXISTS

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All over the world, people who break norms risk being faced with prejudice, hatred and even violent crimes. Norm criticism, on the other hand, has the power to upend confining structures and help make society more open and accepting.

One of the tasks of the Swedish Institute (SI) is to facilitate democratic, equitable and sustainable global development. One way to do this is to promote norm criticism as a tool to convey power structures. In this project SI has had the pleasure to collaborate with the 'Gender Photographer' Tomas Gunnarsson, who uses his powerful photography to get people to open up to this important issue.

Susanna Le Forestier, Acting Director,
Sweden Communication

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