

## **Module 8: Gender Policy in the Circumpolar North**

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### **Overview**

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This module provides an introduction to gender policy in the circumpolar North. The development of gender rights will be reviewed as well as reason for gender inequality in the North.

### **Learning Objectives**

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Upon completion of this module, you should be able to:

1. Outline the development of political and gender rights in the circumpolar North.
2. Identify reasons for gender inequality in economic and social life and implications for sustainable development in the North.
3. Evaluate educational opportunities and choices and their impact on gender equality.
4. Summarize gender roles and development in Indigenous communities.
5. Explain variations of gender policies and practices in the circumpolar North.

### **Required Readings (including web sites)**

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Women Leaders and Gender Parity. <http://www.weforum.org/women-leaders-and-gender-parity>

Arctic Human Development Report, Chapter 11 on Gender Issues.

<http://www.svs.is/AHDR/AHDR%20chapters/English%20version/Chapters%20PDF.htm>

### **Key Terms and Concepts**

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- Gender Equality
- Gender Gap
- Male – Female Ratio
- Patriarchy
- Intersectionality
- Complementary and opposing gender roles

### **Learning Material**

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#### **Introduction**

Gender equality aims to enable women and men to achieve full and equal participation in economic, social and political life. Common features include efforts to advance women's equality and remove barriers to women's participation in society, with particular

emphasis on increasing women's economic security and eliminating violence against women. Recent approaches to gender equality favour a gender-centred approach where men's and women's gendered experiences are examined. This has, among other issues, led to a focus on ensuring men's rights to take part in reproductive work, and caring for their children and families to the same extent as women.

In circumpolar North regions, policies and measures meant to achieve gender equality may be shaped more by national than by societal features. Even so, national features dictate the level of gender awareness in public planning for societal life and future viability of northern settlements, even when conditions here differ greatly from the southern or central parts of the country or state.

A common northern criticism of gender studies is that it fails to consider traditional Indigenous and settler populations and northern lifestyles, shaped by living conditions, which tend to produce gender roles that are more complementary than opposing. In addition, the patriarchal bias found in mainstream Judeo-Christian industrial society is weaker. There are major differences between men's and women's lives in Arctic regions that are more pronounced than in southern regions. In the circumpolar North there are different ways of viewing gender roles and the power relations inherent in those roles, shaped in part by historical features of the nation-states in question.

This chapter will have a Norwegian and Nordic bias, as that is the author's primary field of work, so please feel free to find the facts and figures that describe your own sphere of interest – it may be a contrast to what is described here, or you may find that it complements the writings in some way.

## 8.1 Development of Political Rights and Gender Equality In The Circumpolar North

### *Why equality?*

Generally, there are three levels of argument used to support universal suffrage, women's rights, indigenous peoples' rights and anti-discrimination work in general.

- One is the fairness argument, that all people “are created equal” and as such have the same rights to participation. Of course, in the US declaration of independence (which voiced a growing school of thought in the “age of enlightenment”), the line is “all **men** are created equal”, but with democratic development has come an understanding that “all” includes women and men of all backgrounds, regardless.
- Secondly, there is the interests argument. People with different backgrounds, men and women alike, will have different interests at heart. With a broader range of citizens represented in councils, parliaments and decision-making positions, you will also get a broader range of topics made a priority, to the benefit of society. Some assume that women on local councils etc will do a better job at promoting attention to schools and health services, but this may reflect job preferences as much as any gendered “natural” inclination.

- Thirdly, the resource argument claims that only by recruiting from all citizens does society fully benefit from the whole range of input and qualifications of all. By not including women, young people and elders, a local council will perhaps not have the people who will best represent the society's interests, but only recruit from perhaps 25% of the population. Again, one should not assume that somebody should be encouraged to enter politics in order to represent a group, but that they will, in terms of their talent, background and interests, bring a needed diversity.

The different arguments are often used interchangeably and in the same debate you will often find one party advocating one view, while their opponent is refuting another entirely, thus confusing the discussion without either party realising why it is that their opponent does not really engage their point of view.

### *Gender matters*

This confusion is typical of gender discourse in the Western majority today, and as such influences any gender debate going on also in other societies. Certain assumptions are made once the “gender” word enters the discussion, and you may find rather strong emotions in favour of or opposed to any discussion of “gender equality” where the issues at hand are more often than not clouded by personal experience, feelings and a prevalence of anecdotal “evidence”.

An element often found in gender equality or gender rights discussions is a level of personalisation not often found without any qualifications in public discourse. When discussing gender equality or aspects thereof, many debaters will feel justified in reducing the discussion to their own, personal experience, or to that of somebody they know. “Everybody is a gender expert, because they have one”, sometimes seems to be the thought.

By virtue of having lived your life as a man or woman<sup>1</sup>, you will have made assumptions about who you are. In terms of your gender, who you identify yourself with (often but not always same gender as yourself) and how you are perceived by others around you, you will probably have made some generalisation about how “society” views your gender and that of others. It is important to make sure you distinguish between what is your personal experience and what is the experience of another group that may share your gender, but not necessarily every other aspect of your life.

Which brings us to a central point of modern gender theory: individuals that share the same biological sex or gender may be more different than two individuals that share class, ethnicity, or other societal markers. Gender is, however, the one distinguishing feature that will most colour the first impression you make on anybody. They may not remember your face, age, clothes or eye colour, but most will have formed at least some impression of whether you are a man or a woman.

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<sup>1</sup>Or whatever gender you identify yourself as, some claim societies have more than two genders and should recognise this.

### *Structural or individual?*

Another aspect of modern gender equality discourse is an increasing division between two perspectives. On one side are those who read gender equality as a structural matter, to be dealt with through law changes, quotas, affirmative action all with diversity as the ultimate goal. This is typically seen as a social democratic school of thought, typical of the welfare state Scandinavian countries where the state is strong and focused on the good of the citizens through state intervention.

On the other side we find those who believe structural change can only matter so much, and that personal choices are the key to achieving greater gender equality. These are typically found in more liberalist, conservative and capitalist schools of thought.

As one example, the pay gap between men and women (in Norway, women workers on average make about eighty-five percent of the pay men in comparable positions do) will be explained differently by the two schools of thought, and their suggested solutions will also be different. Those who see structure as the key, believe that women earn less than men because jobs and sectors are gender divided. Jobs with more women workers than male workers (teaching, health services etc) are systematically paid less. One example used to show this is that when women started outnumbering men as medical doctors, the pay levels started going down.

Many feminists who employ a structural approach advocate gender-specific measures in order to achieve true gender equality, such as affirmative action, women-only classrooms and gender-specific health programs. All of these challenge the traditional liberal assumption that equality requires universal, identical treatment.

#### **Learning Highlight 1:**

Elizabeth Peratrovich (1911-58), Tlingit nation, is credited with convincing the Alaskan territorial legislature to change laws that once banned "Natives" from many public places, including movie theaters, restaurants, and stores.

Alaska's 1945 Anti-Discrimination Act was the first anti-discrimination law in the United States by about 20 years.

We also find similar claims within the gay rights movement, indigenous peoples' rights advocates and interest groups for the disabled. Liberal critics will claim that laws promoting equal rights have been implemented all over, and individuals have the right to make their own choices. Personal preference should trump a notion of societal good. One example of this is in the case of parental leave, where the paternal leave quota (see below) is criticised for taking away the family's right to make their own choices and adapting their child-care arrangements as it suits them.

The structural approach counters liberal critique by pointing out the lack of cultural and historical understanding. An individual is

shaped and influenced by a cultural tradition that in many cases disfavours them. "Individual choice" may not have the same range for all, and in fact seldom does. To continue with the paternity leave discussion, the structural defenders will point to the

Danish example which shows that when the allotted father's quota was taken away and the whole stretch of government-supported parental leave made negotiable between the parents, the fathers' share dropped dramatically.

*When Are We "Equal" – Or "Equal Enough"?*

In the 2009 – 2013 electoral period the Norwegian Sami Parliament ([www.samediggi.no](http://www.samediggi.no)) had nineteen women and twenty men (forty-nine percent and fifty-one percent respectively) and is the most gender equal political elected body of the northern countries, with a just about perfect 50/50 split.

One often-heard claim against gender advocacy is a misunderstood belief that activists would prefer a women-dominated world to a male-dominated world. In fact, the prevalent theory is that anything under twenty percent representation in a group tends to make individuals stand out as different, representing their attributes rather than themselves and their individuality. This text will deal with gender as an example, but the same claims are made for ethnicity, language, physical disabilities and all grounds for discrimination.

One example might be two women serving in a military unit, they will typically be seen as "the women", "the female soldiers", and their actions and example will be used to explain universal "truths" about "women in the military" rather than of two soldiers among soldiers.

At twenty percent representation, research has shown, the under-represented gender will be normalised, and while they will still be seen as different from the norm or majority of the group, there is some leeway and room for being seen as an individual rather than a representative of your group.

Full equality, according to specialists in group psychology, is not reached until you have forty percent representation of either gender. That is when a group's dynamics is not disturbed by gender preconceptions, and individuals are seen on the basis of their merits rather than their sex. This is the background for the Norwegian law demanding a forty percent of either gender on public company boards (see learning highlight), which was initiated by a conservative government. This law's success has been considered a very strong signal of gender equality policy commitment, but has been criticised by others for favouring only a very select group of citizens – most women or men in Norway will never serve on the boards of PLCs. The critics suggest that structural gender equality measures should perhaps focus more on levels where they reach more of the population. This is again countered by suggestions that the importance of role models and visible women on traditionally male arenas extends far beyond the individuals actually on the boards.

**Learning Highlight 2:**  
Norwegian law demands 40% of public company boards must consist of women. In 2003, 7% of public boards consisted of women and in July 2008, that had increased to 39%.

Of course, age, ethnicity, disability and other discriminatory features may still come into play,

which is important to remember. This phenomenon is described in social sciences as **intersectionality**, the study of how various biological, social and cultural categories such as gender, race, class and other aspects of human identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to structural social inequality. Those who operate informed by intersectionality theory hold that the classical conceptualizations of oppression within society, such as sexism, racism, homophobia and religion-based discrimination do not act independently of one another. Rather, patterns of oppression will interrelate, creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination.

### *Access to Decision-Making Positions*

Universal suffrage, the right to vote for all, is an inalienable part of democratic development. Developing rights have usually gone the way of some property requirement or similar, with men being first granted the right to vote, then women.

	Year Women Received the Vote	Women in Parliament % <sup>2</sup>
Canada	1917/1960	22%
Denmark	1915	38%
Finland	1906	42%
Iceland	1915/1920	43%
Norway	1913	36%
Russian Federation	1918	14%
Sweden	1919/1921	47%
United States	1920/1965	17%

As indicated by the table above, on gendered representation in Parliament, access to formal decision-making positions differs widely between circumpolar countries. While there are no longer any formal barriers in place to keep women out of public office or leadership positions, there may be informal structures in place that still function to keep men in the decision-making positions.

Efforts have been made in the past to encourage women in political positions, as in an example from 1925 in Utsira municipality, Norway. A women-only list in the council election caused an unprecedented council composed of one man and eleven women, and the first female mayor in Norway, Åsa Helgesen.

More recent efforts have included “women coups”. In elections where lists are used, list ‘edits’ by voters have moved women up on the list and into positions, but more commonly the voters’ edits are in the opposite direction.

Research and polls show that both men and women will actually, unless explicitly encouraged to do otherwise, favour men on election lists. Nomination committees tend to

**Learning Activity 1:**  
Find the gender ratio of your local council, and compare with national/parliament figures for your country.

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<sup>2</sup>2009 Figures

alternate male and female candidates in many countries, but voters' editing of the lists in many cases subvert this effort and lead to fewer women on the lists.

Politics is one field where men and women tend to perform differently and gender differences are marked, though this often affects lower-level politics more than at national levels.

## 8.2 Gender Inequality in Economic and Social Life with Implications for Sustainable Development in the North.

The *Global Gender Gap Report* provides selected indicators on the differences between women's and men's lives in Arctic countries. Note that the figures are national averages.

	Male to Female Ratio	Healthy Life Expectancy at Birth Male/Female
Canada	0.98	70/74
Denmark	0.98	69/71
Finland	0.96	69/74
Iceland	1.00	72/74
Norway	0.98	70/74
Russian Federation	0.86	53/64
Sweden	0.98	72/75
United States	0.97	67/71

Source: <http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/highlights2009.pdf>

The *2009 Global Gender Gap Report*, drafted for the *World Economic Forum*, measures equality in four areas: economics, politics, education and health (<http://www.weforum.org>). The Global Gender Gap report index assesses countries on how well they divide resources and opportunities between male and female populations.

In previous editions of the Global Gender Gap Index, the four Nordic countries have consistently held the highest positions. In 2009, **Iceland** (1) claimed the top position over Norway (3) which slipped to third behind Finland (2). Iceland has the narrowest gender gap in the world. Iceland's improvement was notably characterized by the percentage of women in parliament, which increased from thirty-three percent to forty-three percent, while income and labour force participation gaps narrowed. **Finland** (2) continues to hold the number one position in health, survival and educational attainment sub-indices, but loses ground to Iceland on political empowerment despite having a female president.

While the percentage of women among professional and technical workers in **Norway** has tilted in favour of women – women now hold 51 percent of all such positions – the percentage of women among legislators, senior officials and manager positions slipped from thirty-four percent to thirty-two percent according to the latest World Economic Forum data. **Sweden** (4) completes the Nordic countries' continued dominance in the top four indices. Sweden held the number one spot in 2006 and 2007, but its gap has since neither narrowed nor widened while the other Nordic countries continued to improve. Last year, Sweden fell behind Norway and Finland to third position and this year lost another rank to Iceland. **Denmark** (7) continues to hold a position among the top ten.

While no country has achieved gender equality, all Nordic countries, except Denmark, have closed the gender gap to over 80 percent and therefore serve as international models and benchmarks for comparison according to the World Economic Forum.

Of the remaining Arctic countries, the **Russian Federation** (51) lost nine places in the rankings compared to 2008 due to decreasing labour force participation of women and a perceived widening of the wage gap. The Russian Federation ranks far below average in terms of political empowerment holding 99th position.

**Learning Activity 2:**  
How did your country rank in the Global Gender Gap Report? Find the newest report and look for changes compared to the 2009 scores.

The **United States** (31) lost four places in the rankings since 2008. Labour force participation of women fell from 70 percent to 69 percent and women among professional and technical workers fell from 57 percent to 56 percent. While the overall score of the United States on political empowerment remained the same as previous years, other countries made progress and, as a result, the United States slipped from 56th to 61<sup>st</sup> position on this sub-index.

**Canada** (25) gained six places on the 2009 index. Canada currently ranks 10th on the economic participation and opportunity sub-index. Women's labour force participation increased from 73 percent to 75 percent and women's estimated annual earned income increased from \$25,448 US to \$26,055 US. Canada also gained on the political empowerment sub-index due a small increase of women in parliament from 21 percent to 22 percent.

The World Economic Forum figures and rankings highlight certain features of gendered lives in the respective countries and may serve as an indicator of overall status. The figures are not available on regional levels, but may give an indicator, especially when compared to national statistics for the individual countries.

### *Working Life*

Traditionally, rural industries depended on household economies for maximum efficiency. The fisherman-farmer household and the reindeer herding extended family unit were equally dependent on men's and women's traditional roles. This is a feature of Indigenous and majority population cultures, but the pattern has changed with the growth of the service economy, which largely employs women.

A gender-disaggregated breakdown of the traditional sectors in the North tends to show a dominance of male workers in the primary and secondary industries, while women primarily work in service industries. Statistics bureaus of the Arctic countries can provide data on the gender ratio in different sectors.

Many regions still have a high male-to-female ratio in younger age groups, which could change as world economic structures change. Over the last 20 years, fisheries restructuring and recruitment changes in North Atlantic countries have left many young men without the traditional job opportunities offered by the sea. The job market in many

North Atlantic fisheries dependent towns has changed as ocean-going trawlers moved fish processing to lower cost countries and fisheries are now also declining.

Increasing economic opportunities means young people are freer to choose careers. In Norway and Sweden career choices are not moving as expected towards less gender-determined sectors. It remains difficult to get women to choose technical specialties and men to choose care professions. Gender tends to influence careers to a larger degree than expected.

One interesting aspect seen in a gender equality perspective is that career choices in the North, but also in Western society in general, seem to be narrower for young men than young women. A woman's decision to enter a technical and "masculine" profession will likely be met with approval as she is seen to be "breaking the mold" and making use of her talent and opportunities. A man's wish to become a nurse, kindergarten teacher or other "female" profession will be more likely met with disapproval. Male roles may be more hard-wired than female roles, which is a definite point of concern for northern societies that are facing a future where all available hands will be needed to keep communities running.

### *Social Sustainability*

Gender and age form the basic framework that must be considered to achieve sustainable development. Birth and death ratios with in- and outmigration affect the demographic development of a society, but the age group and gender of the citizens is of course of prime importance. An aging population will have fewer births, again giving a population decline as the death ratio gives a birth deficit, and a population with fewer women in the child-bearing age group will also have fewer births.

The "female flight" from peripheral areas is a combination of individual and structural push and pull factors, which disproportionally influences young women to choose city or town life over smaller villages. This includes the differential attractiveness of traditional rural gender roles compared to "city alternatives" readily available through communication technology.

Downsizing and new technologies in primary industries have made traditional male roles redundant and created a difficult labour market for males, but it is commonly perceived that the rural North offers better opportunities for young men than young women. This is of course dependent on what line of education they choose, and statistics also show that educational choices are strongly gender-coded in the North as in Western society in general. Rather surprisingly, we find that societies famed for their focus on state-mandated gender equality, such as Norway and Sweden, have even stronger gender-segregation in the labour market than societies perceived as less focused on gender equality. There are also more women working part time (less than 30 h/week).

One explanation commonly offered for this is that the "state feminism" approach has a strong focus on both family and working life, meaning there are more women in the active labour force (up to 80 percent of the population<sup>3</sup>). Knowing they will be balancing

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<sup>3</sup>[http://www.grida.no/graphicslib/detail/percentage-of-women-in-labor-force-total-and-agricultural\\_b213#](http://www.grida.no/graphicslib/detail/percentage-of-women-in-labor-force-total-and-agricultural_b213#)

work and family commitments may lead women to educational and career choices that mean they have a bigger chance of working part-time and thus making the combination easier.

### 8.3 Educational Opportunities and Impacts for Gender Equality

In Nordland country, Norway, of the 25 – 29 age group, women are 62 percent of those with college or university level education compared to men at 38 percent. The difference between men and women is increasing throughout northern regions.

	Tertiary Education Male to Female Ratio
Canada	1.36
Denmark	1.41
Finland	1.23
Iceland	1.86
Norway	1.57
Russian Federation	1.35
Sweden	1.57
United States	1.41

From <http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/highlights2009.pdf>

The gap in educational levels between males and females tends to increase with higher socio-economic levels, especially in younger age groups. The exception is in Russia where educational levels have been fairly equal, which may be a legacy of Soviet times<sup>4</sup>.

Education levels intersect with several other aspects of gendered life in the circumpolar North, such as working life, health and population change (birth rates and migration).

In Norway the difference in educational levels is also larger in northern areas where primary industries (reindeer herding, agriculture, fisheries) tend to attract more male than female workers. This is partly due to traditional thinking but also to an accepted “reality” that school is a female domain. There is also a marked female dominance in skilled administrative-type jobs in the service sector.

Another important aspect of gendered education levels in the North is the high drop-out rate in secondary education. This primarily affects technical schools, but general academic-prep schools also have high drop-out rates. The male students tend to have higher chances of not finishing their education than the female students.

### 8.4 Gender Roles and Development in Indigenous Communities

One researcher recently shared her experience in a reindeer herding family in North Sweden. She had asked several questions about household organisation, labour practices etc, but when she touched on gender roles the informants were quiet. She then overheard

<sup>4</sup>Gender equality and extension of women’s rights in Russia in the context of the UN millennium development goals, p. 21. [http://www.unesco.ru/files/docs/shs/publ/gender\\_mdg\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unesco.ru/files/docs/shs/publ/gender_mdg_eng.pdf).

the husband saying to the wife “what do we say to that?” – their trouble with the question was due to them knowing that “gender equality” has a set meaning, mainly defined by the majority practices and reality, and their household organisation was based on traditional roles, with very gendered lines for division of labour.

In the Arctic Human Development Report (2004), Karla Jessen Williamson writes the Arctic is often perceived as a “male” world and implies women’s influence and values may be ignored. Historically, when the North entered mainstream consciousness, it was male explorers who wrote their accounts of travels in a strongly masculine genre, interacting mainly with indigenous men rather than the women. This, Williamson argues, had the effect of rendering the indigenous women mainly invisible through a strong male bias.

Williamson argues that the traditional female roles in the north were stronger and less subject to male dominance than traditional female roles in the southern cultures. In this, Williamson is voicing a critique often raised from indigenous peoples against mainstream Western feminist and gender theory. This takes post-industrial patriarchy as their starting point, reflecting the development of feminist theory in Western society, but thus ignoring the existence of other societal and cultural patterns where gender roles may not have been as strictly hierarchic. Assuming a similar background takes away from the other’s rights to define their own experiences and challenges.

There are innumerable accounts of and examples of gender roles that break with what are the mainstream, majority expectations of gender roles in the north. Williamson quotes Lekhanova, a Russian northerner who says that “...the women – the mother and particularly the grandmother – had an indisputable authority. It is not by chance that in the folklore of all Arctic peoples, maternity and femininity prevail (...) women and men had equal rights (...) gender balance prevailed” (AHDR 2004: 188).

Many of the examples usually provided to argue for a complementary rather than opposing set of gender roles have some background in a division of labour. Reindeer herding necessitated a whole household family unit for the work to be performed as economically as possible. The fisherman-farmer household common along the coast in North Norway, the Faroe Islands and Iceland in the past based itself on a family unit where the fisher, the male, was away for months at a time, following the fish migration. The farmer, the female, stayed at the smallholding and tended crops and animals.

In more modern economic terms, there are examples that couples adapt their earning patterns in a similar way. One example is in Greenland, where some of the Umiatsiaararsortut (literally “those who fish from small boats”) explained to a researcher that their wives, who typically had administrative-type jobs or worked in the school or health care, were the de facto owners of their boats. The banks would not give credit or loans to a primary sector fisherman, but could only sign loan agreements with somebody who had a set salary. The wives, in their turn, expressed satisfaction that their husbands had such valued jobs, and saw no problem in their economic interests being entangled in this way. The same patterns have been observed among fisher populations all around the Arctic, with migrating fish stocks comes fluctuations in earnings, making the “breadwinner” role a shifting one between a fisherman husband and his wage-earning wife.

However, as mentioned above, the circumpolar north and all societies here have been influenced by majority culture, especially as regards ownership rules and laws that used to favour men and men's roles. Kafarowski (2007) describes how Canadian village councils and hunters and trappers' organisations may have gender-equal representation, reflecting a general focus on elders above gender awareness. However, in the regional councils and organisations, there is a male over-representation, and this increases at the higher levels.

One view of this apparent paradox of women having a formally lower role in society while still being accepted as chiefs and elders without any dissent is that societies do not treat the same individual the same way all through life. As pointed out in the discussion of intersectionality (above), gender interacts with ethnicity, age, ability levels, class etc to form complex patterns of human interaction. In some societies, women are treated as inferior when young or unmarried but revered and enjoy superiority over men when they reach a certain age, become grandmothers or display unusual qualities. Please note that this is not a particular observation of indigenous societies in the circumpolar North, but a phenomenon observed world-wide.

### 8.5 Variations of Gender Policies and Practices in the Circumpolar North

The female deficit described above has been a driver in policy making and planning for the past twenty years. A number of policies and practices that relate to gender equality differ between circumpolar countries.

#### *Migration*

Hoogensen et al. write that a pattern of disproportionate out-migration by young females has been observed in a number of northern regions including Alaska, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, Newfoundland and Russia (AHDR, 2004). This results in a larger ratio of young adult males in the remaining population. However, newer figures from Finnmark county in Norway suggest that the out-migration of younger population is a current phenomenon that includes men as much as women. This has to do with economic structures such as changes in fisheries as well as opportunity and choice.

**Learning Activity 3:**  
Visit relevant statistics bureaus to locate the gendered break down of the population in a community/region from 1950, 1980 and 2010. What changes can be observed?

Also there is an issue of "marriage migration", a gendered migration process that takes the form of marriages between men and women from particular countries or regions that have become such a proportion so as to form a pattern. For example, Russian women marry men from bordering northern countries, Finland, Norway and Sweden. In some inland municipalities in Finnmark county in Norway, Russian women make up a large proportion of the women. As the female deficit has increased in the North, more men have also sought marriage partners in Asian countries and these women now form a substantial population segment in some regions. This has implications for the lives of these men and women, and also for their children who grow up balancing several languages and cultures.

### *Parental Leave*

Maternity leave benefits are often seen as closely coupled to fertility rates and gender equality in a country. Terms vary widely between Arctic countries. Length of paid maternity leave in Canada is 17 to 18 weeks, depending on the province. In Denmark, maternity leave lasts 52 weeks at 100 percent of the wage in maternity benefits provided by the municipality and employer. In Finland, the rate is 70 percent of an individual's wage for 104 working days paid by social security. In Iceland, maternity leave is 3 months at 80 percent of the individual's wage. In Iceland, the partner is also entitled to the same leave with a third 3 months to be negotiated by the parents. This solution has also been discussed in Norway where parental leave is currently either 100 percent of wages and benefits for forty-four weeks or eighty percent benefits for fifty-four weeks. A certain quota is allotted to the father or birth partner, currently ten weeks (2009). In the Russian Federation, the Social Insurance Fund provides 100 percent wages in maternity benefits for 140 calendar days. In Sweden, entitlement is eighty percent of pre-birth wages in maternity benefits for 390 days, then a flat rate for an additional 90 days, totalling 480 calendar days. Each parent is allotted sixty days; the remaining 360 are shared between the couple as desired. In the United States, maternity leave is twelve weeks with no national maternity benefit system, however some states provide cash benefits.

### **Conclusion**

This module has attempted to give an overview of gender equality theory as it applies to the circumpolar North. Men and women will have their lives shaped by their gender and the attitudes society has to their gender, and while these attitudes will differ between societies there are some commonalities of experience nonetheless.

In the North, the particularly interesting variation is between majority culture and indigenous cultural traditions, and how these have influenced each other through time. Does life in the North produce gender-complementary societies? There is no clear answer to this question, but knowing some of the varieties, traditions and examples above should give you some background for studying gendered lives in the North.

### **Discussion Questions**

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1. Discuss the distinction made between complementary and hierarchical gender roles. How are these descriptive of gendered division of labour in your community?
2. Do structural features (i.e. maternity leave arrangements) favour gender equality or traditional gendered practices where you live?
3. Think of persons you know that represent different generations – what changes in gender roles can you observe? Do you think these are individual or societal changes?
4. Using the North as a starting point, try to generalise about men's and women's lives. Are there any particular features you see that relate to the North, or are they the same as in the South?

## Study Questions

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1. Explain the development of political and gender rights in the circumpolar North.
2. What are some reasons for continued gender inequality in economic and political life?
3. Explain how gender roles and development in Indigenous communities differ from the majority population.
4. Evaluate different countries' educational opportunities and their impacts for gender equality.
5. Explain variations of gender policies and practice in the circumpolar North.

## Glossary of Terms

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**Gender Equality:** A social order in which women and men share the same opportunities and the same constraints on full participation in both the economic and the domestic realm.

**Gender Gap:** The differences between women and men, especially as reflected in social, political, intellectual, cultural, or economic attainments or attitudes.

**Gender Mainstreaming:** Mainstreaming is a term used to describe the incorporation of a gender equality perspective into the work of government agencies at all levels. The idea is that gender equality is not a separate, isolated issue but a continual process. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to assess the implications for both men and women, of any planned actions, policies or programmes in all areas and at all levels. This approach recognizes the need to take social and economic differences between men and women into account to ensure that proposed policies and programmes have intended and fair results for women and men, boys and girls.

**Patriarchy:** Social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line. Male dominated--which doesn't mean that all men are powerful or all women are powerless--only that the most powerful roles in most sectors of society are held predominantly by men and the least powerful roles are held predominantly by women. Male identified aspects of society and personal attributes that are highly valued are associated with men, while devalued attributes and social activities are associated with women.

**Intersectionality:** the study of how various biological, social and cultural categories such as gender, race, class and other aspects of human identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to structural social inequality. Intersectionality theory holds that the classical conceptualizations of oppression within society, such as sexism, racism, homophobia and religion-based discrimination do not act independently of one another. Rather, patterns of oppression will interrelate, creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination.

## References

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Arctic Human Development Report, Chapter 11 on Gender Issues.

<http://www.svs.is/AHDR/AHDR%20chapters/English%20version/Chapters%20PDF.htm>

Global Gender Gap report 2011: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-2011/>

Kafarowski, Joanna (2006) in "Women and natural resource management in the rural north", L. Sloan (ed), <http://portal.sdwg.org/media.php?mid=498>

## Supplementary Resources

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Arctic Council. Sustainable development working group (SDWG):

<http://portal.sdwg.org/content.php?sec=4>

United Nations: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/>

UNIFEM: <http://www.unwomen.org/>

CEDAW: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/committee.htm>

Wikigender.org: [http://www.wikigender.org/index.php/New\\_Home](http://www.wikigender.org/index.php/New_Home)

Country resource pages:

Sweden:

<http://www.sweden.se/eng/Home/Quick-facts/Facts/Gender-equality-in-Sweden/>

Norway: [http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/00/02/10/likestilling\\_en/](http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/00/02/10/likestilling_en/)

Iceland: <http://www.jafnretti.is/jafnretti/?D10cID=News&lang=EN>

Finland: [http://www.stm.fi/en/gender\\_equality](http://www.stm.fi/en/gender_equality)

Denmark: <http://www.kvinfo.dk/side/661/>

Russia:

Alaska: <http://www.alaskawomensnetwork.org/index.html>

Canada: [http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/rights-droits/women-femmes/equality-egalite.aspx?lang=eng&menu\\_id=3&menu=R](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/rights-droits/women-femmes/equality-egalite.aspx?lang=eng&menu_id=3&menu=R) and <http://www.cfc-swc.gc.ca/index-eng.html>

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