Teachers and school discipline 1960–1970: Constructions of femininities and masculinities in Teachers’ Journal

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Abstract
A historical perspective may provide important insights for understanding contemporary discussions and the expectations attached to women and men in today’s teaching. The role of gendered meanings in relation to teachers’ work is explored in this article by focusing on discussions on school discipline during the period 1960–1970. Teachers’ Journal, a Swedish weekly union publication, is examined. The findings show that in the 1960s it was still possible for a male teacher to position himself as a ‘real man’ by defending corporal punishment. Further, the stereotype of a bad mother was taken up in the discussions. Discipline problems were connected to pupils not properly cared for by their mothers. Bad mothers were depicted as either lazy, overprotective or working women. In contrast, femininity, motherhood and paid work were linked in the caring female teacher. In the final section, the relevance of the findings for the present is discussed.

Keywords: teachers, school discipline, 1960s, masculinities, femininities, compulsory school

INTRODUCTION
The role of gendered meanings in relation to teachers’ work will be explored in this article by focusing on discussions on school discipline during the period 1960–1970. In recent times, school discipline has emerged as a topic of intensified concern in many countries (Meyenn & Parker 2001; Way 2011; Ball et al. 2011; Shaughnessy 2012; Braun 2012). There is also growing attention to equality, i.e. improving all pupils’ academic achievements (Keddie, Mills, & Pendergast 2011), and the concentration on measurable results has endorsed the focus on order in schools (Maguire, Ball & Braun 2010). Further, the discussion on school discipline draws attention to the role of teachers. According to Clark (1998), a central assumption is that school discipline is about control and obedience, which implies that teachers are expected to retain power by using rewards and punishments.

In Sweden, the Minister of Education and Research, Jan Björklund, has presented himself as a representative of school discipline and advocated the re-introduction
of marks concerning order and conduct in compulsory school. In a debate article in a leading newspaper, he argues for a more traditional role of the teacher. In responding to the article, a former university chancellor comments that the Minister’s wording makes the reader think of the authoritarian male teacher Caligula depicted in the Swedish movie Hets [Torment] from 1944 (Franke 2011). The reference to a male teacher, albeit fictional, is not accidental. According to Skåréus (2011), a tacit masculine gender coding characterises the discussion about tougher demands on pupils, school discipline, and reinstating the teacher’s authority.

However, the notions of masculinity and femininity associated with teachers are rarely explicitly expressed, and teacher education in Sweden as well as in other countries has been criticised for not highlighting and problematising the gendered expectations that affect teachers’ work (Meyenn & Parker 2001; Weiner 2005; Rodriguez et al. 2006, Åberg 2008; Younger, & Warrington 2008; Braun 2011). In this article I will therefore explore how gender norms may influence the teacher’s role. I will do this by turning to discussions about school discipline in the period 1960–1970. A historical perspective can provide important insights for understanding contemporary discussions on school discipline and the expectations attached to women and men in today’s teaching (Fischman, 2000; Martino 2008, Skelton 2012). In addition, as Pace & Hemmings (2007) point out, historical discussions since the 1960s have had a great impact on current views on issues concerning authority, discipline problems and classroom management. Further, the 1960s was a particularly interesting time regarding gender relations.

The Swedish context and theoretical point of departure will be outlined below. The aim and the empirical material will then be presented. Next I will describe how the discipline issue was discussed in three years’ issues of the Swedish Teachers’ Journal, while the final section contains a discussion of the findings.

THE SWEDISH CONTEXT

The 1960s was a time of major changes in Swedish schools. In 1962 the Swedish Parliament decided on a nine-year unified compulsory school system to replace the existing system which gave pupils very different opportunities to continue education beyond elementary school. Depending on their sex, social class and whether they lived in rural or urban areas they were often directed to different types of schools. A trial period had preceded the decision and the new school system was gradually introduced so the implementation lasted throughout the 1960s, although the reform was not fully implemented until 1971 (Kallos & Lundgren 1979; Sjöberg 2003).

The school reform had equality as a central goal. All pupils regardless of socioeconomic status, location of their home and gender were then to receive the same basic education. The aim was an egalitarian society and the new school was seen as an important instrument. The nine-year compulsory school was meant to be
a democratic school (Kallos & Lundgren 1979; Elgvist Saltzman 1991). In view of the horrors of World War II, there was a strong desire to foster independent and free citizens who could resist one-sided propaganda (Richardson 1983).

Nevertheless, pupils are expected to behave in certain ways, for instance not to disturb the activities that are being pursued. This is essentially what classroom discipline is about (Clark 1998). As Pace and Hemmings (2007) point out, for this to work pupils have to accept the legitimacy of teachers as authority figures. Authority and school discipline may therefore be described as social constructions highly shaped by contextual factors and constituted by interaction between teachers and pupils.

In the discussions about the new Swedish school system it was claimed that a widespread authoritarian ideal demanding pupils’ absolute obedience had to give way to an ideal focusing on mutual respect, solidarity and equality (Richardson 1983). At the same time, discipline problems were perceived as schools’ most acute problems (Sjöberg 2003) and during the period 1960–1970 pupils still received marks for order and conduct. Such marks were not removed until the autumn of 1970 (Larsson & Wester 2010).

The 1960s was also an important period of change with regard to gender relations. The ideal of the male breadwinner and female homemaker was seriously challenged in the early 1960s. During the 1950s, problems concerning women’s ‘dual roles’ (housewife and working woman) were discussed. A widespread opinion was that a young woman should acquire some kind of vocational training and then establish herself in the labour market. When she married and had children, she could go for her second ‘role’ and stay home until the children became older. Then she could return to work. Women’s right to training and paid work, the burdens of housework, difficulties with child care, society’s need for female labour, low women’s wages and many other issues were brought together under the umbrella of “the woman question” (Hirdman 2000).

During the 1960s the focus shifted from women to society. There was something in society that did not work. Two publications are first and foremost associated with the new perspective. These publications reached a wide audience and triggered intense debates (Lundquist 1999). First, Eva Moberg published her Kvinnans villkorliga frigivning [Woman’s release on probation] in 1961. In her text, Moberg objected to the view that, unlike men, women were chiefly seen as gendered beings rather than individuals. She also raised objections to talk of women’s dual roles. Both women and men must be primarily regarded as human beings, Moberg argued. Thus, the responsibility for the home and household as well as financial provision for the family must be borne jointly by men and women. Moberg pointed out that the conventional perspective implied that married women were in fact entitled to be gainfully employed only if they could combine their job with their responsibility for
the household. The consequence of this was that women’s freedom and rights were conditional. This had to change, Moberg argued (Florin & Nilsson, 1999; Lundquist 1999). Second, in 1962 a research report, Kvinnors liv och arbete [Women’s lives and work] was published. This publication had a similar message. In the report, Norwegian and Swedish researchers described women’s and men’s roles in family and professional life as “the sex-role issue” which had turned into a major social problem. The authors concluded that efforts to achieve greater equality between women and men were effectively constrained by deep-seated notions, expectations and patterns of behaviour (Florin & Nilsson 1999; Lundqvist & Roman, 2008).

The discussions about men’s and women’s roles led to the male breadwinner ideal being increasingly questioned. In 1971, there was a change in taxation arrangements which had meant that married women’s paid work was poorly compensated. Instead of joint taxation for spouses, individual taxation was introduced. A dual breadwinner model was thereby established (Hirdman 2000; Hill 2007).

**THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE**

In this study, the theoretical point of departure is that gender is fundamental for attributing meaning and organising social relations. This is always done within a historical context. Teaching has historically been a complex mix of masculine and feminine elements. On one hand, teaching was considered a masculine job associated with public service and intellectual work. On the other hand, it was labelled feminine as work with children was related to the maternal role. For women it was respectable work which generated self-esteem and financial security. For men teaching included reasonable prospects of advancement (Oram 1996).

Further, Davies and Harré’s (2003) *positioning* concept will be used as a theoretical tool to analyse how meanings are negotiated. Positioning is the discursive process whereby subjects locate themselves and others. To be positioned in a conversation is to be ascribed a character or a ‘role’ that brings certain expectations with it. These expectations presuppose a shared meaning system with well-known categories, stereotypes and discourses. Likewise, we constantly position ourselves. We are negotiating meanings, taking up positions and using discourses relevant to those positions. When manoeuvring between culturally available discourses, being positioned and taking up positions, men and women might have different possibilities available. For instance, although in Sweden in the 1960s the workforce at the intermediate level of compulsory school was gender-mixed, women and men might have been positioned in different ways. Due to the dominant gender norms and the informal recruiting practice, the head teacher was almost always a man (Skolverket 2000). This means that a male teacher could position himself, and be positioned by others, as a future head teacher in a way that was not possible for a female teacher.
ANALYSIS OF THE SWEDISH TEACHERS’ UNION PUBLICATION

The present study is part of a larger research project, exploratory in nature, on teachers’ work and gender in the period 1960–1985. In the project the Swedish teachers’ union publication Lärartidningen [Teachers’ Journal] has been examined for gender issues. Teachers’ Journal was a weekly journal, a union publication that concerned and was read by the majority of teachers in compulsory school. Being widely disseminated and read, Teachers’ Journal was central for teachers in the 1960s. Both union issues and current affairs of interest to teachers were discussed. The journal was also a voice for teachers in both the articles and the letters to the editor (Sjöberg 2003). A consideration of its past in the present moment can give us important insights into how today’s discussions are echoing or contesting historical school discussions. The publication contains reports, news articles from school contexts, photos, cartoons, press items, letters to the editor, debate articles and so forth. Thus, the journals provide rich material for studying both the zeitgeist and aspects of teachers’ work from a gender perspective.

A sample of years’ issues was selected for the project. The material initially examined was taken from all journals from the years 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1985. A close examination of all of the contents showed that discipline problems were a recurring issue associated with gendered meanings. As Clarke (1998) points out, the perception of which behaviours constitute discipline problems varies depending on the context. In the journal, however, the problems are often not defined or made clear but are instead discussed as something that is taken for granted.

The study presented here aims to highlight the role of gendered meanings in relation to teachers’ work during the period 1960–1970. This will be done by a qualitative analysis of how the matter of school discipline was discussed in Teachers’ Journal in 1960, 1965 and 1970. Fifty-two issues of the journal were published each year, with double issues being published at Easter, summer holidays and Christmas.

First, all of the content of every issue was examined for matters concerning the research questions. In the next step these matters were explored. For each of the three mentioned years recurring themes were identified. These themes, their statements and meanings were then analysed. In the analysis the content in Teachers’ Journal is regarded as texts where meanings are being negotiated. Teachers’ union representatives writing editorials and comments, persons being interviewed, journalists writing articles, teachers writing letters to the editor and so on, actively, but not always consciously, have to relate to well-known discourses. They might take up, resist or alter these discourses. Further, by making use of discourses, stereotypes and gender norms, they position themselves and others.
The research questions regarding the material are:

* How was school discipline discussed and how were notions concerning femininity and masculinity expressed in these discussions?

* Which notions concerning femininity and masculinity were connected to the teacher in the discussions?

The discussions about school discipline in Teachers’ Journal from 1960 will be described below. The focus was on large classes which made it hard for teachers to maintain order. Next, I will give an account of the discussions in 1965. At this time, male and female teachers appeared more clearly in the journal. The section that follows highlights the conflicting opinions about working mothers that characterise the discussions in 1970. All quotations have been translated from Swedish to English.

**LARGE CLASSES CONTRIBUTE TO DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS**

In Teachers’ Journal from 1960 it is clear that a lack of discipline in schools was considered a major problem. The causes discussed were the rapid transformation of society and urbanisation which involved lifestyle changes for a large segment of the population (Ltg [Teachers’ Journal] 1960 (37), [19–24]).

The post-war period was characterised by great optimism and the building of a very large number of homes and roads. The number of cars was increasing and many people were moving from rural to urban areas. The employment rate was high and more people were beginning higher education. The export industry was expanding and due to a consensus between the confederation of employers and the trade unions there were few strikes. The welfare state was taking shape, resulting in women being increasingly in demand in the labour market. In 1960, LO (the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions) and SAF (the Swedish Confederation of Employers) agreed on equal pay for equal work for women and men (Lundqvist 1999; Florin & Nilsson, 1999; Hirdman 2000).

Yet, even if the transformation of society was discussed as a cause of discipline problems, it was mainly the widespread problem of large classes that was frequently addressed in Teachers’ Journal. Both schools and classes were often crowded, making it difficult for teachers to maintain order (Ltg 1960 (13), 23; Ltg 1960 (19), 4; Ltg 1960 (21), 4; Ltg 1960 (46), 3). The crowded classes were due to the baby boom of the 1940s. There were up to 35 pupils in a class (Sjöberg 2003). Several motions in the Parliament demanded that classes must be smaller (Ltg 1960 (5), 13) and the matter was discussed in the daily newspapers (Ltg 1960 (21), 4). However, there was also a shortage of both teachers and school buildings which made the problem of crowded classes hard to resolve (SOU 1961:30).

Although discipline problems were highlighted in the journal as a major concern, there was an element making fun of a teacher being unhappy over the situation.
A cartoon shows a big man standing with a dripping nose and a tissue in his hand. He faces a small man standing at a door with a sign saying “Principal”. The reader understands that the big man is a teacher and the little man is the headmaster. The big teacher is saying: *I’m so unhappy. My pupils in form 4 make fun of me* (Ltg 1960 (20), 31).

The ‘fun’ is probably not a teacher having problems in class, but a male teacher being unable to handle his young pupils. According to masculinity norms, male teachers are associated with authority and class room discipline (cf. Oram 1996; Fischman 2000; Martino 2000; Sevier & Ashcraft 2007). The size of the man stresses these notions. However, he does not live up to the expectations. In addition, he is depicted in relation to characteristics and behaviour classified as feminine. Despite being a big man who is presumed to show strength and not weakness, he shows emotions, cries tears and seeks support from his principal; thus, he is positioned as unmanly, a ridiculous man.

Five years later, the size of classes was no longer so much of a problem. Instead, both male and female teachers appeared more clearly in the discussions. School discipline was also depicted as a matter between males. Further, the discipline problems were associated with mothers who did not take their child-rearing responsibilities seriously enough. These issues will be described in the next sections.

**PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AMONG MALES**

In a letter to the editor, the discipline problems were connected to boys’ bodies. A male teacher wrote that the youngest pupils were rarely any problem. However, after some years the difficulties begin. The boys enter the age of rascals. They become restless and start challenging their teachers and bullying other pupils. The teacher wrote:

> The boys become restless, out of control and this increased vitality keeps them on edge for an outlet. This craving for activity is expressed in what we call mischief and boyish pranks. These so-called class clowns appear to try to compete with their teachers. Stronger boys like to show off. In doing so, they also bully classmates who are physically weaker and more good-natured (Ltg 1965 (16–17), 35).

Stronger boys bullying and dominating weaker boys are described as something quite natural. Accordingly, the masculinity norms expressed include violence and domination. The words used by the teacher in the above description have a relatively positive tone. The teacher talked about increased vitality, activity, mischief and pranks. There was a mild indulgence (cf. Richardson 1983). The teacher positioned himself as an older, experienced man who looked somewhat amused at the boys’ attempt to challenge him and his colleagues. Accordingly, he made it clear that his authority and masculinity were not threatened.
Corporal punishment was banned in Swedish schools in 1958. Clearly, the vast majority of teachers were satisfied with this ban. However, a small proportion of a larger group of teachers who participated in a survey wanted the teacher’s right to exercise corporal punishment to be reinstated (Ltg 1965 (1–2), 19; Ltg 1965 (3), 14). In a letter to the editor, a male teacher suggested a softening up of the prohibition. He argued that if teachers were provoked, then that should be considered extenuating circumstances (Ltg 1965 (22–23), 26). Another man claimed that the correct action in critical situations might be “a slap with no further consequences” (Ltg 1965 (20), 35). Yet another male teacher wrote in the same vein:

Well-deserved corporal punishment is nothing a boy will brood over. (Why, it’s usually concerning boys). Moral lectures, culminating in forgiveness, do not appeal to him. He wants to deal with a man, whom he can look up to and respect. ‘Effeminate’ men are an abomination to him (Ltg 1965 (8), 34).

The above quote illustrates the idea that a boy who received fair and well-deserved physical punishment would appreciate it. The punishment would teach the boy to admire and respect his teacher. According to the description, physical violence was normal and appropriate in a relationship between two male persons. This reasoning clarifies the homosocial relationship (Lipman-Blumen 1976). The quote also shows how the teacher was positioning himself by taking up a discourse in which the man with more power gained respect by mastering other men with physical violence. In line with the masculinity norms being expressed, the other men, i.e. the boys, were expected to accept the violence. Details of the teacher appeared in the letter to the editor column, including his first name, last name and place of residence. He thereby announced to the journal’s readership that he was a real man. He positioned himself as the opposite of the stereotype, the contemptible effeminate man who did not live up to the masculine ideal. In doing this, the hierarchal relation between masculinity and femininity is made visible.

Further, the idea that men and masculinity was connected to classroom discipline was shown in how research results were commented on. The journal reported a study entitled *Discipline problems in compulsory school* in which 1,349 teachers from all levels of compulsory school had taken part in a survey. The results revealed that the greatest discipline problems were constant talking in class, along with truancy, vandalism and refusal to do homework. The problems were greatest in forms 7–9. A surprising result was that female teachers in forms 7–9 had fewer discipline problems than their male colleagues. There were speculations about whether this result was in fact caused by women, more than men, giving responses that made their situation look better than it really was (Ltg 1965 (1–2), 6–7, 19). Hence, it seemed easier to regard female teachers as unreliable informants than to rethink the image of the male teacher as a person who did not have any discipline problems.
WOMEN AND CHILD-REARING RESPONSIBILITIES

The discipline problems were associated with mothers not taking care of their children. With this mother-blaming discourse an extra burden was put on female teachers with children of their own. However, it was not just working mothers who were portrayed as defective. Women who were housewives taking care of their children might also be positioned as egotistical and self-centred, i.e. as bad mothers (cf. Florin 1999).

In a description given space in the journal, a male Norwegian scholar claimed that a lack of responsibility was becoming increasingly common among young parents. His description showed that he was referring to mothers when he was talking about parents. According to Hirdman (2000), men have a norm position that is taken for granted. The supposedly gender neutral ‘person’, for instance, frequently refers to a man. An exception is the gender neutral term ‘parent’ which in reality often refers to a woman (Eichler 1988).

According to the Norwegian scholar mentioned above, mothers who were housewives were lazy and indifferent to their children’s needs. Those who worked did it to get away from the trouble of caring for their children. He said:

They get the children out of the apartment as soon as possible and they give them food through the window (throw sandwiches out). They themselves are comfortably seated reading magazines and/or talking to other mothers. There is no doubt that a large proportion of those who work outside their homes do it as an escape from a task they find too challenging and burdensome (Ltg 1965 (44), 14).

The focus on mothers could also be used to liken the female teacher to a good mother. There was an article about a woman who had followed her class through all forms of compulsory school. From having been a class teacher, she had to give up most school subjects to other teachers when the pupils came up in form 7. She was, however, still the pupils’ form teacher. The atmosphere in class was described as calm and confident. The reader understood that this teacher did not have any discipline problems. She talked of the pupils as her own children, and said that she and the pupils had become like one big family. The teacher positioned herself as an obvious mother figure, and the writer of the article emphasised this position. Visiting the class was described as encountering a family:

What first strikes you when you enter the classroom is the quiet, relaxed atmosphere. No insecure teenage giggles, no forced tough attitudes – just a quiet observance of the sort usually associated with balance and maturity, a spirit of trust and confidence that makes the visitor feel he is meeting a large family rather than a school class (Ltg 1965 (40), 14).

An ideal classroom situation was described in the quote. In contrast, what a visitor might expect in other settings was clearly stated since a more common situation was...
also described. The uncertain teenage giggles with associations with femininity and the forced tough attitudes with associations with masculinity appeared to be frequent but unwanted elements in other classes.

A woman teacher could thus be positioned as a good mother in her work. She was thereby connected to a femininity that held caring for others as a key element (Acker 1995; Oram 1996). However, more negative connotations were linked to the working mother in other contexts. A mother who was gainfully employed was associated with pupils who had a negative attitude to education and who were therefore classified as not very well adapted. The journal reported on a survey directed at pupils, teachers and parents. The survey had shown that pupils with a negative school attitude often had parents who had the same stance. A surprising result was, however, that it seemed to be of no importance for the pupil’s adjustment to school if the mother was gainfully employed (Ltg 1965 (42), 17). This result was reported to be in opposition to the established conviction. The fact that a woman was working was expected to be negative for their children reveals that women’s employment had an uncertain standing at this time (Hirdman 2000; Bersbo 2011).

CONFLICTING OPINIONS ABOUT WORKING MOTHERS

In 1970 teachers were said to be squeezed by fierce storms of opinion. Claims were made in the media that teachers were representatives of the old authoritarian school system (Ltg 1970 (1–2), 9). A major newspaper maintained that in all schools there were one or more teachers of a pronounced sadistic type (Ltg 1970 (1–2), 42–43). In schools, teachers were subjected to rudeness and violence. The zeitgeist with stress and high demands was claimed to be a cause of children’s and pupils’ mental health problems (Ltg 1970 (3), 20). The dissolution of norms was discussed as a reason behind the ills of schools as well (Ltg 1970 (44–45), 10). There were also those who argued that the problem originated in pupils not having any influence in schools (Ltg 1970 (47), 19). Then again, women, housewives as well as working women, were in focus. They were discussed as both the cause of and the solution to discipline problems.

In a letter to the editor a male teacher wrote that schools’ discipline problems always originate in two matters, partly in difficulties with reading and writing, partly in inadequate home conditions. The former problem could be solved by giving significantly increased resources to the junior and intermediate levels. The matter of home conditions was difficult, but schools must provide pupils with the understanding and love that the home cannot provide, the man claimed. As right persons for this task, he suggested child-loving housewives (Ltg 1970 (47), 18).

The notion that raising children was a woman’s task was also taken for granted when three female junior school teachers and a female school nurse were interviewed together about the situation of an increasing number of disturbed children in primary schools. The four women discussed how the children’s problems were
related to their home situations, and the women’s view was that the mothers involved were not good enough. The women might have started talking about the parents but, when the conversation continued, it was obvious that they were referring to the mothers. The school nurse said that many children had complained about physical ailments. In that way you could reach the parents more easily. The children might be offered a summer camp. She said: It may be a relief for the tired and stressed mother to know that her child has the opportunity to go to summer camp for six weeks (Ltg 1970 (3), 22). Another measure being considered was that parents could come to school more often, to help out, maybe to talk about their work. Fathers as well could do this, one of the teachers said, thus showing that fathers were not necessarily included in the word “parents” (Eichler 1988). Another of the teachers commented:

Why is it not as good to stay in the home and care for one’s children as it is to go out to work? I know this is a sensitive issue. But why not give all mothers who want to stay at home and see to their children the financial means to do this? (Ltg 1970 (3), 22).

One of the women said she felt sorry for the children; many children were badly cared for at home. Another maintained that many parents did not accept their children as they were (Ltg 1970 (3), 20). A third woman claimed that she and her colleagues sometimes knew children better than their own parents did (Ltg 1970 (3), 22). According to the image that was presented, female junior school teachers cared more about some children than their own parents, i.e. mothers, did. By discussing other women’s weaknesses and shortcomings, they positioned themselves as good and caring women.

The women interviewed discussed the role of men as well, not as fathers, but as teachers in preschool and junior school. In the discussion, normative gendered expectations about work with the youngest children being women’s work were challenged when men were connected to work with children. Yet, the conversation showed that men were expected to fill a traditional masculine position as the family breadwinner, which entailed that their wives were to be housewives. One of the women maintained that children, especially boys, needed to meet men in preschool and school. Men, however, rejected these jobs because of the low salary, she claimed. She said: Who is able to support a family on a pre-school teacher salary or a junior teacher salary? (Ltg 1970 (3), 24).

The idea that mothers with young children should be housewives taking care of their children was still strong at this time. However, this notion was nevertheless challenged by another idea, the idea that both men and women should be gainfully employed (Hirdman 2000; Bersbo 2011). Women who did not work risked being positioned as lacking self-confidence and being dependent. An article dealing with another current social issue, bullying, showed that women who stayed at home with
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their children risked being seen as lacking confidence and being unable to raise their children into independent adults. Overprotective mothers were discussed as a problem (cf. Florin 1999). At a conference on bullying arranged by Save the Children, it was explained that bullying involves a group exercising violence against a single deviant individual. A medical doctor claimed that children who are bullied often had insecure parents. In this case too, “parents” was a reference to mothers. The doctor said: The victims are often children with no self-esteem; they are overprotected children of anxious mothers (Ltg 1970 (48), 3). One suggestion was therefore, that in order to examine a child’s progress toward independence, psychologists and social workers should be present at the mandatory check-up of a four-year-old child.

DISCUSSION

The study has shown how notions concerning femininity and masculinity were expressed in discussions concerning school discipline in Teachers’ Journal from the years 1960, 1965 and 1970 and how gendered notions were connected to the role of the teacher in these discussions. Below, I discuss the changes and the continuity shown in the study, followed by the relevance of the findings for us today.

In the 1960s it was still possible for a male teacher to position himself as a ‘real man’ by taking up a discourse in which physical violence and masculine homosocial interaction were related. Thus, what emerged was a teacher ideal where masculinity and status were connected in the authoritarian teacher (Oram 1996; Fischman 2000; Martino 2008). However, this ideal was to become quite quickly outmoded and socially impossible to highlight in Teachers’ Journal. So how did this happen?

An overall factor is notably the political awakening of the 1960s in the Western world. The Civil Rights, Women’s Liberation and Gay and Lesbian movements questioned forms of authority and challenged conventional mores (Pace & Hemmings 2007). Students of the ‘1968 generation’ rebelled against hierarchies. These movements had a world-wide impact (Evans 2009). In Sweden, due to the influence of such social movements and the long discussions about ‘sex-roles’ a new masculinity ideal began to take hold in the early 1970s. The equal and care-oriented man was another ideal that people had to relate to (Hill 2007). A gender-neutral parental leave programme was launched in 1974 as part of the Swedish dual-breadwinner model and gender-equality policy. The motive was both to strengthen women’s position in the labour market and to strengthen the emotional bonds between fathers and their children (Duvander & Andersson 2006; Hill 2007). The care-oriented father won increasing sympathy. Further, in Sweden the perception of the right of teachers and other adults to exercise violence was altered. In the early 1970s there were cases of children being abused and beaten by their caretakers which led to a great debate on child maltreatment. In 1979 Sweden became the first country in the world to launch a
law that explicitly made all forms of physical punishment of children illegal (Durrant & Olsen 1997).

Nevertheless, masculinity associated with dominance and physical violence has long historical roots and has taken different shapes over time (Connell 1993). On the other hand, femininity has long been connected to motherhood (Oram 1996; Hirdman 2001; James 2010). The mother stands out as a figure either to cherish or to despise (Bersbo 2011). In Teachers’ Journal, the stereotype of the bad mother was taken up in the discussions. Discipline problems were connected to pupils not being properly cared for by their mothers. Bad mothers were depicted as either lazy, overprotective or working women. At present cultural meanings of motherhood are often produced discursively by media representations of a bad mother. She is attributed as being selfishness, lacking in care for her children and seeking her own pleasure (Oram 1996; Woodward 2003; Gillies 2006; Jensen 2010).

In the 1960s, issues concerning women’s gainful employment became a contentious issue. According to government investigations women were needed in the labour market. The Swedish economy was expected to suffer severely if women were unwilling to participate in production. The continued expansion of the welfare state depended on women as members of the workforce. The matter, however, was both sensitive and controversial. There were many claims that women were needed in the home, especially when children were small. In addition, public childcare was just about non-existent (Hirdman 2000; Bersbo 2011). This meant that women had to navigate between competing discourses (Davies & Harré 2003). The women in Teachers’ Journal who positioned themselves as caring teachers challenged the notion that women should not be gainfully employed. They took up a discourse in which femininity, motherhood and paid work were linked. In addition, by positioning themselves as the opposite of the bad working mother, a positive femininity that included work with children was stressed.

The caring female teacher and the authoritarian male teacher were stereotypes taken up and expressed in Teachers’ Journal (cf. Oram 1996). Nevertheless, these stereotypes make visible the gendered expectations that women and men in teaching had to handle in the period 1960–1970. So what does this mean for us today? According to Braun (2012), the two gendered stereotypes are still active and need to be handled by teachers. However, at present, the notions of masculinity and the harsh male authoritarian teacher depicted in Teachers’ Journal stand out as exaggerated and outdated. Today, it would be more or less socially impossible in most Western countries to publicly argue that corporal punishment in schools should be reinstated. Corporal punishment is considerably less accepted in many countries. Yet, if school discipline is about control and obedience, there are other means available (Clark 1998). Further, today there is a call for male teachers based
on stereotypes and simplistic assumptions. This call for male teachers fits particularly well with the focus on discipline and order since men are still associated with authority, dominance and discipline (Sevier & Ashcraft 2007; Hjalmarsson 2009; Skelton 2012).

In the 1960s, as well as in current times, equality was a major objective in school policy. The term ‘equality’ has been filled with a new meaning though. Equality does not necessarily refer to social justice any longer. Instead of directing attention to power structures and social injustice, in today’s neo-liberal discourse the autonomous subject is the point of departure. Therefore, equality is now often about individual choices and individuals, not improving unequal conditions (Walkerdine 2003). According to Wright (2012), the focus on school discipline is putting pressure on teachers to conform to neo-liberal assumptions that social problems are individuals’ responsibility to solve.

This study has shown both changes and continuity concerning notions of femininity, masculinity, school discipline and teachers. Whereas the image of the male authoritative teacher exercising corporal punishment seems very old-fashioned today, the image of the female caring teacher is still strong (Acker 1995; Fishman 2007; James 2010). James (2010) calls the relationship between raising children and femininity a defining factor in the shaping of female teachers’ professional identities. Yet, this is something that is largely under-theorised. As Gannerud (2001) points out, competence connected with femininity, such as care, is often regarded as part of the natural skills of women and therefore devalued and invisible in organisational plans. Together with the current focus on marketing, competition, customer services, data for performance management and audit, this situation may lead to the exploitation of teachers. The work-burden has intensified, yet teachers fear they are not doing enough (Keddie, Mills & Pendergast 2011; cf. Walkerdine 2003). Due to gender norms, female teachers in particular risk encountering expectations that they should sacrifice their own needs for the sake of their pupils. For women, resisting these expectations means risking being labelled uncaring and selfish (James 2010).

In addition, women themselves may feel obligated to care for their pupils in a way that means neglecting their own emotional and physical health (James 2010). Historically, female teachers have been expected to hold back the assertion of their rights and give way to male teachers as well (Martino 2008; Hedlin 2012). Even in today’s call for male teachers such expectations are suggested (Martino 2008). Further, the focus on men may in fact devalue women teachers and make them doubt that their work is meaningful (Cammack & Kalmbach Phillips 2002).

Moreover, all student teachers in their placement schools have to deal with gendered expectations concerning both care and authority. There is a risk that a
student teacher feeling failure in how they deal with such expectations may decide to drop out of the training (Braun 2012). It is therefore suggested that teacher education support future teachers in developing a critical awareness of naturalised stereotypes and discourse by making visible taken-for-granted assumptions connected to teaching, gender and school discipline and, in doing so, a historical perspective may provide a deeper understanding of contemporary debates.

Maria Hedlin's main interest is gender research on teachers and teacher education. She is also a teacher educator and she has published course literature on Swedish educational gender equality policy. The research study for this article was conducted within a postdoctoral project at the University of Borås, School of Education and Behavioural Sciences, Sweden.
Note

Mother-blaming can be defined as a tendency “to hold mothers entirely accountable for problems with their offsprings’ physical and psychological well-being” (Sommerfeld 1989 p. 15). The concept thus refers to the practice of focusing on the mother and holding her accountable, while ignoring the other parent, the father. Mothers and fathers being judged differently was something Eva Moberg (1962) mentioned in her book *Kvinnor och människor* [Women and people]. In an article in a major newspaper, a proposed school chief physician discussed the causes of mental disorders among school children. The mother’s gainful employment and the father’s alcohol abuse were taken up as causes and appeared to be equally harmful.
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