ABSTRACT
Title: Gender perspective on teachers' work: On the lives and work of women primary school teachers.
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The present investigation focuses on the lives and work of female class teachers. A gender perspective has been central for both the organisation and content of the study. The purpose of the investigation is to describe how female class teachers experience their daily life and work, and to illustrate the gender regime of the school and what the social order of gender means, both for the teachers as individuals and for views of the teacher and teaching as work in wider society.

Twenty experienced female class teachers were interviewed three times under a period of one year. After each interview, and prior to the next interview, the participants were given the possibility of reading a transcription of their own interview. The content of the first interview departed primarily from previous research in the field. The subsequent agendas built onto the preceding interview and therefore varied from participant to participant.

The results from the investigation are presented in six themes. The first one concerns the participants' experiences of some of the consequences of their sex for their life and career. At a general level, the teachers understand both the school as an institution and their own professional role as gender neutral, but at the same time they express the importance of their sex for how they are understood by people they meet in their daily work. The second result chapter looks at experiences of motherhood and of teaching as work, and the meaning of the concept of professional attitude. The next chapter deals with the theme of the limits and organisation of work, and describes the efforts of the women teachers to find a balance between the demands of private and working life. For women teachers, this conflict is exacerbated in that both those spheres are characterised by the rationality of responsibility and an ethics of care. The next two chapters focus on the participants' views of the teacher and the teacher's work, as more abstract categories. Classroom activities are seen by the teachers as composing a holistic gestalt developed around a balanced combination of care- and technical rationalities. Socio-emotional work, which is connected to women in the gender order of society, is experienced by all the teachers as energy sapping and time-consuming, but also as very important for the teacher, if she is to experience work satisfaction and happiness. Chapter 9 deals with collegial co-operation and the importance of informal collegial interaction as a source of emotional support and professional knowledge, and necessary for the creation of a common frame of reference and a professional identity. The final chapter is about power, authority and status. In those issues the participants themselves point toward their sex as of significance. They experience low status views of the teacher and of teaching as work in society, which is explained by the teachers in terms of the characteristic of "women's at work", which can be related again to the social order of gender. In an individual perspective, the female teacher is in a contradictory situation with regard to positional authority. On the other hand, their emotional relations create conditions for a relational authority.

To the teachers themselves gender seems not to be a very important issue in everyday life. Teachers are perhaps in a position where it is especially difficult to see the
consequences of gender and the gender order. The teachers’ role clearly transcends stereotyped gender patterns, as it includes both aspects of caring and aspects of power and authority. Teachers work in an institution which is proclaimed to be gender neutral, and which actually has contributed to change the conditions of women’s lives by providing both educational and occupational possibilities. On the other hand, gender differentiation in school follows the same patterns as in society. Both the organisation of school work, views of knowledge and curriculum content provide an androcentrically biased view of the world, presented as gender neutral. Perhaps these factors put the women teachers in a position where they contribute to reproduce, rather than change, the traditional gender patterns and the subordination of women.