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A Gender Perspective on Teachers as Crisis Managers

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ABSTRACT
Stressful conditions affect communities at different levels and may involve occupational groups not normally associated with issues of crisis and security. Teachers in the compulsory school system are members of such a group. The purpose of this study is to examine teachers’ view of their own role as crisis management actors in a female-dominated occupation. A Grounded Theory approach applying a gender perspective was used as an analytical tool for data processing. In total, 16 informants from four different schools in two different municipalities in Sweden were interviewed. The analysis of these interviews shows that teachers’ perceptions of risk, crisis, and security are influenced and characterized by social and emotional regulation aimed at (a) reducing vulnerability, (b) increasing the sense of security, and (c) regaining or restoring a sense of order and control. These strategies have been discussed from a gender perspective as teachers do not regard themselves as legitimate crisis management actors.

Introduction
Crises and threats such as acts of terrorism, school shootings, floods, and fires are examples of events that affect communities at local, regional, and national levels and therefore require different types of inputs and resources (Alvinius, 2013). The international database on the occurrence of accidents and crises (EM-DAT, 2018) testifies to an increase in the number of stressful events. At the same time, the risk of climate-related, multiple natural events is increasing: for example storms, floods, building collapses, landslides, and forest fires may occur simultaneously or as a result of each other. Parallel with this increase in social stress, higher levels of demand are imposed on traditional occupational crisis management actors such as the fire and rescue services and police in order to manage unexpected events (Alvinius, 2013; Nilsson, 2011). These requirements are also extended to include occupational groups that are not associated with issues of crisis and security at all (Swedish Government, 2017). Such a profession is the compulsory school teacher. Compulsory school teachers’ regular tasks include daily contact with students, teaching, educational development, social, emotional, and moral support (Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotink, 1990; Johnson, 1998) as well as organizational, structural, and leadership-related challenges associated with school activities (Waite & Swisher, 2017). When it comes to crisis management, the teachers (as female-dominated occupational group) are, in fact, not recognized as legitimate crisis management actors. Another reason for female-dominated occupational groups not being regarded as active crisis management actors is that they are passivated, gender-branded, and subordinated into the term protection objects, and are thus perceived to be worthy of protection and defence rather than active agents. Masculine-coded crisis management actors such as rescue services and police retain their legitimacy (Ericson, 2017), and teachers do not.
The teacher group is highly gender-segregated and female-dominated. As such, teachers are rarely prioritized as concerns resources in terms of crisis management and crisis preparedness (Oscarsson & Danielsson, 2018). Regular male-dominated crisis management actors such as police and firefighters, on the other hand, are trained to handle crises according to military organizational methods. This includes the view that crises constitute civilian chaos so civilians are considered irrational, helpless, and in need of protection. This discourse is a legacy of the military attitude, i.e. “the last bastion of masculinity” (Hale, 2012), which characterizes professional crisis management actors’ views of civilians in general (Oscarsson & Danielsson, 2018) and of women’s ability in particular (compare Sasson-Levy, 2003). A number of studies show the opposite. Civilians are neither irrational, helpless, nor paralysed and are very involved as crisis management actors if the situation requires it (Wester, 2011). Studies have also shown that, for example, social workers (another female-dominated profession) can be most helpful in an accident event. As volunteers taking the initiative, civilians seem to be able to offer first aid long before the professional crisis management actors arrive at the scene of accidents (Kvarnlöf, 2015).

This study therefore takes its starting point in civilian crisis management, crisis preparedness, and security in a female-dominated context, namely in the world of schools where the majority of teachers are women. Since crisis management is considered a male-coded task (Ericson, 2017; Ericson & Mellström, 2016), it is particularly interesting to examine how the profession of teacher, which is female-coded, regards crisis management, security, and preparedness.

**Gender segregation and gender blindness**

The teaching profession is gender-segregated vertically as well as horizontally. This is a situation easily recognized in most industrialized countries (Wolfram, Mohr, & Borchert, 2009). Consequently, preschool and grades 1–3 compulsory school teachers consist of 99% women. This proportion decreases the higher up the education organization progresses (Jakobsen & Karlsson, 1993). Gender segregation among teachers was first noted by researchers in the 1990s (e.g. Kanter, 1993), later by the Swedish government (see, for example, Government Bill, 1999/2000, p. 24). The latest figures from Statistics Sweden (2016) show that gender segregation still remains.

Research shows that men consciously avoid female-dominated occupations for several reasons, including poorer pay levels, lower status, and risk of gender-related stigmatization (Torre, 2018). In addition, the proportion of men in female-dominated professions is still low despite political initiatives seeking to bring about change (Charles, 2003; Skelton, 2003; Torre, 2018). One barrier to men working as teachers is the prevailing discourse that men are not capable of caring for children to the same extent as women (Kennedy, 1991). At the same time, another prevailing discourse is that women do not have the ability to handle crises. This view seems to be the reason that the proportion of women in the blue light organizations, for example the rescue services, remains low (Beatson & McLennan, 2005). The conclusion is that physically demanding crisis management has attracted men while women have been excluded. The physical strength of women has been stated as a reason for exclusion, and, for the few women who have managed to enter, the macho-culture has constituted an obstacle to both career and well-being (Hom, Stanley, Spencer-Thomas, & Joiner, 2017).

However, in addition to gender segregation, gender blindness on various issues concerning accident and crisis management appears to be common (Dasgupta, Siriner, & Partha, 2010; Drennan, McConnell, & Stark, 2014; Enarson & Chakraborti, 2010). The definition of gender blindness refers to not making a distinction between genders. It refers also to the lack of awareness of how women and men are differently affected by a situation because of their different sexes. This gender blindness may generate major consequences in crisis management because information, communication, and decision-making affect people’s behaviour (Jansson & Linghag, 2015). Societal institutions appear to contribute to this gender blindness in various ways. Some examples follow.
Making the female perspective invisible
Existing research into crisis management emphasizes in particular that female and male-coded social roles are strengthened in an emergency situation and crisis management tends to be regarded mostly from a male perspective. There is no knowledge of female perspectives and needs in damage limitation operations (Caprioli & Boyer, 2001).

Making female domains invisible as concerns allocation of resources
Later studies (Amundsdotter, Ericson, Jansson, & Linghag, 2015) show, for example, that proactive work in crisis preparedness tends to prioritize resource-related, traditional, male-dominated municipal activities.

Making the female perspective invisible through mass media
Researchers who have problematized crisis management from a gender perspective also find that mass media reproduce stereotypical gender roles and representations of heroic masculinity and caring femininity in extraordinarily stressful situations (Olofsson, Öhman, & Giritli Nygren, 2014).

The motive for this study is as follows: if women and men work in different sectors, these sectors also appear to be valued differently and awarded different levels of resources.

These inequalities may reasonably therefore also affect society’s ability to provide preparedness to deal with social disorder, not least in the form of different professions that influence what is considered to be risks and what is considered to be resources in order to strengthen society’s ability to cope with such disorder. (Ericson, 2018, p. 6)

With this prevailing inequality and with government demands that more occupational groups be included in crisis management issues, the purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of teachers’ view of their own role as crisis management actors in female-dominated operations.

Method
Study context
In order to understand the teaching profession’s challenges in the crisis management sector, a historical overview needs to be introduced describing the profession’s structural transformation. In the early 1990s two reforms were carried out in Sweden, which caused schools to be decentralized and power over them shifted. In 1991, responsibility for schools was transferred from the state to the municipalities, which in turn meant that the municipalities replaced the state as employers of teachers. In 1993, the state subsidy system changed so that municipalities were given the opportunity to decide how state grants were to be divided between different municipal areas of responsibility. The consequences of municipalization have been more inequality, falling grades, ambiguity in governance, more work-related stress, and, ultimately, less material and personnel resources for teaching (Ringarp, 2012). Although the intention of municipalization was to move power and influence closer to the pupils (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018), this process caused increased inequality between schools in consequence, and forms a challenge for the future.

The methodological point of departure of the study
The current study is qualitative and inductive, using Classical Grounded Theory as an analytical tool for data processing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It should be emphasized, however, that the study has a gender perspective which, according to Charmaz (2008), is in line with the constructivist, more elusive form of Grounded Theory which contradicts what Glaser claims to be a “proper” Grounded Theory (1978). A gender perspective in this case was a necessity and implies that a particular focus is placed on female-dominated professions that are tasked with dealing with typical masculine-coded tasks such as crisis and security management.
Constructivist Grounded Theory and Feminist Research have met theoretically and empirically since the 1990s (Allen, 2011; Plummer & Young, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Feminist Research combined with Grounded Theory differs from traditional positivistic Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) because it focuses on women’s views, experiences, and interests, and acts for social justice (Olesen, 2000). The study highlights two different gender institutions (Lorber, 1994) or, as Risman (2004) would call, it two gender structures: the teaching profession and crisis management. In order to be termed a gender structure, a number of characteristics must be demonstrated. For example, gender structure includes specific group characteristics, the structure is reproduced over time, it includes gender-based practitioners, norms, expectations, and is internalized as identities and selves (Lorber, 1994; Risman, 2004). Consequently, the teacher group (both men and women) meet and relate to crisis management (typical male task). Female and also male voices embody and reproduce the gender structure within the schools where higher expectations for care are imposed rather than for crisis management. This applies to both women and men as teachers, and is why both genders are included in the study.

The data are analysed inductively using Classical Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as it is a female-coded profession under study and there is a lack of previous research in this field. However, the discussion takes place with a clearer gender perspective focusing on the challenges of the profession.

**Selection of informants**

According to Grounded Theory guidelines (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the selection of informants was carried out with the aim of gathering the greatest possible variety of experience of teaching and, if possible, involvement in crisis management. Initially, child and youth local authorities were contacted in several municipalities of different sizes. An information letter about the research project was sent with a request for voluntary participation from municipal schools. A total of 16 responded, all of whom were qualified teachers and five also worked as principals. Eleven women and five men participated in the study. They belonged to different age groups, but all of them possessed considerable experience in the profession. The interviews were conducted in four schools, two of which were classified as years 1–3 and years 4–6 and two as years 7–9. In order to obtain more broadly based interview material, two medium-sized municipalities were selected. Such a selection may be described as a convenience sample inasmuch as it is not random and instead utilizes chosen contacts to enable the selection of informants (Morse, 2010).

**Data collection**

As mentioned earlier, the methodological approach was inductive according to the Grounded Theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The interviews conducted for this study followed an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions, followed up with individually tailored questions such as “Tell me more” or “In what way?”. The themes chosen were as follows:

1. Questions on background
2. Perspectives on risk, crisis management, and security in schools
3. Experience of crisis situations
4. Organizational and professional challenges (such as training in crisis management and collaboration with other crisis management actors)
5. Other aspects you would like to add

The interviews were conducted in the period between March and May 2018 in different municipalities. Most of the interviews took place at the informants’ workplaces face-to-face, two were conducted by telephone, and one took place at the Swedish Defence University. The two telephone interviews were due to geographical distance and hectic work situation just before the
holidays. The interviews lasted 45–90 minutes and were recorded and transcribed in full. Later in the research process they were analysed in accordance with Grounded Theory application (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Data collection and analysis were characterized by an iterative process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After each interview, theoretical memorabilia (memos) were discussed with colleagues in the research project aimed at comparing, condensing, and generating new concepts as well as formulating new interview questions that would be used for the next interview. This procedure contributed to saturation when no new aspects of the teachers’ perception of their role as crisis actors could be crystallized as the answers were repeated as more interviews were collected. Memory notes have subsequently been sorted and compiled as the theoretical model emerged. Consequently, theories and a theoretical model on social and emotional regulation were formulated towards the end of the research and as a result of the analysis.

Data analysis and presentation

The first step in this analysis consisted of open coding which involves identifying meaning units in each individual interview. These could, for example, include special lines of thought, feelings, or actions related to the research questions. One example of a quote is given below:

Nobody unauthorized who doesn’t belong here, friends, mates of students here. In that case they have to request to be allowed to visit a special individual. Visiting must be formalized.

This quote was coded as “Delimiting school area as concerns the general public”. Step two in the analysis consisted of evaluating and categorizing the codes according to similar content. From the above example, the code “Delimiting school area as concerns the general public” was then sorted into the category “Geographical distancing”, which in the third step was sorted into the overarching category “Distancing and inclusion”. The fourth and final step involved a comparison between overarching categories, categories, and codes, generating a core variable “Social and emotional regulation”, which is presented in the Results section below, followed by all the overarching categories, categories, codes, and illustrative interview excerpts. The main concerns produced by the data analysis indicate that social and emotional regulation is aimed at reducing vulnerability, increasing security, and regaining or restoring a feeling of control as concerns risk, crises, and security in the context of the school.

Results

The teachers interviewed possessed broad experience of extraordinary events. Most reported a number of incidents they had been involved in: for example, minor events such as power cuts or water shortages to more antagonistic events such as assault, death, gas attack in the school area, fire, and the like that required crisis management efforts from both teachers and rescue services. Most of them have, however, reflected on difficult events such as the school attack that occurred in 2015, where several people, students and teachers, lost their lives (Crouch, 2015). This event received tremendous national media coverage and, in the Swedish context, is a rare case of violence compared with the number of school shootings in the United States (Rocque, 2012). The interviews were analysed against the background of their overall experience of minor or more serious incidents.

Analysis of the interviews shows that the view on risk, crisis, and security in the female-dominated teaching profession is influenced and characterized by social and emotional regulation. Teachers regulate behaviours and emotions in themselves and in others, taking into account risk, crisis, and security issues. The type of regulation that the teachers experience is aimed at: (a) reducing vulnerability in risky situations and emerging crises,
(b) increasing the sense of security using different strategies, and (c) regaining or restoring a sense of control if an incident occurs. Social and emotional regulation is, in turn, influenced by favourable and/or unfavourable organizational preconditions that determine whether regulation is perceived positively or negatively by the teachers. The main concerns regarding the above are separated into two main categories: (1) Distancing and inclusion; and (2) Emotion management strategies. The distancing and inclusion category refers to strategies that spatially define the school area with a focus on security. Emotion management strategies aim to calm the situation down and smooth down high emotions and grief. In the end, it is about reducing vulnerability, increasing security, and regaining control over the situation. In the following Table 1 and in the text, the main categories “Distancing and inclusion” and “Emotion management strategies” are presented along with their subcategories, codes, and quotes.

Table 1. Social and emotional regulation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distancing and inclusion</th>
<th>Emotion management strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geographical distancing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Calming and cushioning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Delimitation of the school area as concerns the general public</td>
<td>• Cushioning strategies, convey calm, create security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Detention and evacuation</td>
<td>• Altruistic values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Including strategies</strong></td>
<td>• Managing threatening situations, parents etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mental map of school’s geographical area, including the children’s homes</td>
<td><strong>Gender-related showdowns</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Availability by phone</td>
<td>• Male principal meets threats</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Women exert a disarming effect into Female principals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Organisational preconditions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favourable organisational resources</th>
<th>Unfavourable organisational barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Delegation</td>
<td>• Two organisers, managing different loyalties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student health team</td>
<td>• Scarce resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plans of action</td>
<td>• Stress and other labour environment-related problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Information management</td>
<td>• Lack of formal information and training on risk, crisis and security issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Security coordination who trains others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supportive management</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Distancing and inclusion**

Distancing and inclusion consists of two subcategories: (a) geographical distance, and (b) inclusive strategies. Geographical distancing consists of the following codes: (1) delimitation of the school area as concerns the general public, and (2) detention and evacuation. Delimiting the school area is accomplished by means of signage, guards, and challenges; the aim is to signal that the school area should be, on the one hand, an open space, but, on the other hand, that it is not a public space where outsiders who do not have business at a school may enter. The following quote from a teacher illustrates the distancing strategy: that uninvited guests are not welcome in the school area.

The school is not a public place /…/ if uninvited guests arrive. We are increasingly using name badges and this was an effect of us having to be more alert and find out who is coming into the school.

Two principals indicated the delimitation of the school area in daytime and the message that this is not a public place in two selected quotes below:

And that’s what’s so hard in a schoolyard, for a schoolhouse … To a degree, it’s not there. There is no public space. This is what I have to really emphasize … with information to the staff so that they understand that it is our school yard, it’s our schoolhouse. We have every right in the world to question anyone here who we do not recognize.

The school is not a public place, and the school yard is not a public place. I’ve worked with … our gates and signs, in such a simple way, which is not respected but is vandalized over and over again, because they do not want to respect it. But it’s an important signal, I think it’s not about shutting out and it’s not about closing in, but it’s about marking, the type of operations and who has priority.

Focusing on safety and prevention in case of fire, detention within as well as evacuation from schools is practised. The geographical aspect of where the students are in relation to an event or during an exercise is an important distancing strategy. A principal and a teacher at a school expresses this as follows:

If we hold an evacuation, then maybe we need something called detention as well. Something’s going on here … if there’s an idiot here with a big sword or something like that, what are we going to do? And then we’ll have a shelter instead. We have talked about that.

The sub-category “Inclusive strategies” consists of two codes: (a) mental map of the school’s geographical area, including the students’ homes, and (b) availability by phone. A mental map of the wider school area raises awareness of the geographical distance between students’ homes and school. The teachers’ attitude is to include and make available this distance in the school’s area of responsibility. This is a kind of mental map of the school’s actual area of coverage.

As concerns flooding in the municipality, if you evacuate, what happens if the school is safe but you need to evacuate housing where our students live, for example, what happens and how does it affect our operations? Such factors, I think, such as a fire in the area or something that does not concern the school directly, does affect us indirectly, in that it is the children … that we need to meet the children at the school if things are happening around us.

Another inclusion strategy is to make yourself available and to provide support and counselling 24/7 if a stressful situation occurs. Providing support outside working hours shows the care orientation of the teaching profession and is described by both male and female respondents. One male principal describes this in the following quote:

But if something happens, for example, on the weekend or something like that, so … the staff always call to discuss it. Do they do that? Yes, if there is something, yes. Yes, but it’s … they can call around the clock. It’s a 24/7 job you know. It is the same for the kids as well. Sometimes there have been kids I have given my phone number to. “If something happens call me whenever”.

In summary, it can be seen that distancing and inclusion as strategies aim at reducing vulnerability for students at school during the day by sending clear signals that the school is not a public
place, attempting to increase security through exercises that can facilitate crisis preparation work but also restore control, by showing support, ringing to hear how students feel, and keeping track of the students’ home environment. Distancing and inclusion are active crisis management and crisis preparedness measures reported by informants.

**Emotion management strategies**

The Emotion management strategies category consists of two sub-categories: (a) calming and cushioning emotional strategies, and (b) gender-related challenges. Calming and cushioning emotion strategies consist of the following codes: (1) calming strategies, providing peace, creating security, (2) altruistic values, and (3) managing threatening situations, parents, etc. Gender-related challenges consists of: (1) male principals meet threats, and (2) female principals exert a disarming effect.

Emotion-calming strategies aim at reducing high levels of emotions and tense atmospheres among parents, avoiding risky situations, and transmitting a calm influence outwards. That is, unlike Hochschild’s Theory of Emotional Labor (1979, 1983/2003) on emotional control, prompted by the employer, the teaching profession differs depending on whether it is within daily activities or during a stressful event. During their regular operations, teachers’ work can be understood from emotional labour theory, but under stressful conditions calming, cushioning, and mastery strategies are the most common. The following quotes testify to the importance of low-impact responses:

You kind of try … when these things happen, to always talk to the staff about trying to remain calm. Because calmness is always … a low-impact response is always, always good irrespective of the situation.

Another teacher states that calming strategies, avoiding threats, and managing angry parents also appear to be fairly common occurrences. The principal of a school in a middle-sized town reports:

We may have parents who turn up just like that in the morning and are steaming angry and can stand there and shout at the staff. This has happened. And then I say to the staff “refer them to me”. When I see it happening I go in and break it up. “You go in and teach and I will take care of this moaning minnie” [laughing].

One teacher emphasizes altruistic values and feels that protecting her students is part of her responsibility. She refers to them as “her children” and sees it as her job to protect them:

You have to protect your children to 100%. I do that because it is my ... I work here, it’s my responsibility to take care of them. /.../ But you ... you say it is self-evident that you protect your children to 100%. Is it part of the teacher’s role or is it just you? I have never heard that it is part of the role of the teacher, but to me it is. I am in charge of my students when they are here at school. That’s what it feels like to me.

Activities such as creating a safe place, calming students, and providing emotional support through being a caring human being are important to all informants. One of them expresses it as follows:

You have to be a caring human being and drop everything else. Just focus on getting everyone out of the building, that it is empty, checking that really carefully. I usually always have a class register with me, wherever I go. And then to try to calm them down. And be aware of when new information comes to allow us back into the building.

Gender-related challenges also concern emotion management strategies but differ between genders. One notion is that male teachers and principals can, merely because of their gender, either control a threat by showing strength and that female teachers/principals exert a disarming effect. Below is a quote that describes the above-mentioned notion that a man is better able to ward off a threat:

But on the other hand, I had been affected, I remember the first time I was a school manager and then it was ... there were a lot of upper secondary school students who came to settle the hash of some elementary school students at another school I worked at and there were two male teachers who thought that there must be a male principal or deputy principal because if the louts come to the school to fight then you can’t send in a little woman. Bit old-fashioned as a way of thinking ... I would think. But anyway, I know when they came to fetch me because this gang had arrived that they were testing me to see if I could manage this situation, which provoked me and made me so mad that I talked a lot to them about it afterwards. But this mindset is a bit out
of date today, so I do not think that muscles in this case or that a manly ... that you have to be man to cope
with such a situation, but the same is required of you whether you are male or female.

A teacher who was also school principal felt that women may have a more disarming effect when
it comes to violent situations involving students:

I am talking about my time both as a teacher and a principal. I never was a physical threat to a student or a
parent as I am not that big. However, I can be an authority and I have to use other methods which do give
me an advantage. But I have never been in a situation where I was expected to stop a fight using physical
strength for example. I can go between combatants to break up a fight. But I promise you that if I, as a
woman, stand between two 15-year-olds who are fighting, they will stop quicker than if a man was to do it.

The second theme of the study, emotion management strategies, also has the task of reducing the sense
of vulnerability through human proximity and low-impact response, as well as increasing the sense of
security and control if safety is threatened. In the latter, the principals have shown increased awareness
of relieving their own staff and acting themselves if necessary. The theme has also highlighted a
gender-related aspect where gender determines whether a situation can be managed and calmed down
or if there is to be a “challenge” between male teachers and threatening students.

Emotional and social regulation is governed by organizational conditions that can, on the one
hand, be (a) favourable resources, or (b) unfavourable aspects and obstacles.

Favourable resources relate to human and structural resources that create greater freedom of action
and a clear framework for teachers to act as crisis management actors. The following codes have been
sorted under favourable resources: delegation, student health, action plans, information management,
security coordinators who train others, and supportive leadership. In summary, it is about organiza-
tional support that enables teachers to work actively as crisis management actors through action plans
and good-quality information and support from their superiors when something happens. An
informant in a senior position claims that, on the one hand, there is a student health team who can
deal with personal crises but, on the other hand, also security coordinators who train managers in
security and crisis management from a broader perspective:

We have a student health team who support both staff and students where we can examine how we manage
this type of situation when we meet it. How do we keep calm, how to work low impact with our children and
how to work with meeting people around us? We work very intensively with this because it is something we
meet all the time. So we have supervisory discussions and debriefing in these forums, we talk there all the time.

The same informant continues:

Then we also have the security coordinator who works centrally, who trains us. And just now I am working
a lot with road traffic safety issues.

Unfavourable organizational aspects tend to prevent optimal crisis management and security
thinking. The following codes have been sorted under organizational barriers: two organizers and
management causing divided loyalties, scarce resources, stress and other work environment-related
problems, as well as lack of formal information and training on risk, crisis, and security issues.

One informant pointed out that unclear structures, leadership relationships, and different
organizers (state and municipality) prevent them from thinking proactively about crisis manage-
ment and security issues. Lack of resources also affects regular activities, with increased workload
and stress as a consequence. He summarizes these dilemmas as follows:

Well the thing is, they have two organizers: on the one hand the state determines the rules, or two bosses, the state
and the municipality. The state makes the rules and the municipality provides the money, even if the municipality
gets money from the state too. Things swing from one side to the other a lot and between these two monsters you
find the teachers. This may be one of the major reasons for the high sick leave rates and negative stress.

One informant reflects on whether security and crisis management issues are discussed at all at
the teacher’s level and states that it has not been discussed in the past to any greater extent. Other
informants testify about the exact same deficiency:
If you consider teacher education, do they address these issues (risk crisis and security)? There was no talk about it at all. I am absolutely sure of that.

Favourable organizational conditions affect social and emotional regulation by enabling crisis management strategies on an individual level. Responding to people, protecting students, comforting, and showing support is made possible if the organization is prepared to preserve its security operations (Ericson, 2017). Unfavourable organizational conditions seem to move the role of teacher towards a non-legitimate crisis management actor according to Ericson’s definition of male-coded crisis management community groups (Ericson, 2017). The teacher as a crisis manager remains organizationally invisible. The discussion below will be based on a gender-theoretical perspective.

**Discussion**

The purpose of the study has been to gain a deeper understanding of the teachers’ view of their role as crisis management actors in this female-dominated sector. The background to this is the criticism of social science scholars towards: (a) the definition of crisis management based on obsolete military and masculine ideals (Kvarnlöf, 2015); and (b) the male-coded professional crisis management actors’ ability to crisis manage. Non-professional crisis managers, such as teachers, are considered unable and are unrecognized in the crisis management system (Oscarsson & Danielsson, 2018). From a gender perspective, this asymmetry between those who know crisis management and what is to be defined as crisis management is highlighted and redefined.

The results show that the main concern for teachers is social and emotional regulation in order to reduce vulnerability, increase security, and restore a sense of control when an extraordinary event has occurred. Increasing security and reducing vulnerability is not unique in itself. Similar results are also found among professional crisis managers (Alvinius, Elfgren Boström, & Larsson, 2015). In addition, it is found that both teachers in this study and ordinary crisis management actors follow guidelines for emotion regulation in which particular calming and cushioning strategies are specifically in focus. See, for example, research on police and rescue services (Ericson, 2014; Tracey & Scott, 2006), on prison officers (Tewksbury & Higgins, 2006; Tracy, 2004), on health care workers (Halpern, 2007), and on military personnel (Alvinius, 2013; Nilsson, 2011). Emotion regulation is also governed by social rules in the public sphere (Abstract, 1989), which appear to be maintained by both legitimate and non-legitimate crisis management actors. Social rules set standards for what is considered professionally acceptable and desirable for task solution. Not allowing feelings to take control is thus considered an emotional regime in the crisis management context (Alvinius et al., 2015). Female-dominated occupational groups deal with crises in a similar manner to male-dominated groups, which reinforces the norm of how a crisis should be managed, namely, low-impact (Alvinius et al., 2015; Nilsson, 2011). Even with regard to emotion management strategies, gender coding tends to cope with possible crises or threats in performance. Results show that threat repelling tends to be run by male teachers and principals while female teachers and principals use low-impact and soft power measures. This suggests that gender structures and stereotypical perceptions as to who are considered to be legitimate crisis management actors are not only reproduced by professional crisis management actors but also by the teachers themselves, both women and men (see Risman, 2004).

The primary contribution of the study is to focus on occupational groups that are not usually regarded as legitimate crisis managers and who are female-dominated and who, in the future, can contribute to an increase in society’s ability to crisis manage in a broader perspective. Recognition for teachers as active crisis management actors should be given. Another contribution made by this study is the aspect of distancing and inclusion. In
principle, most teachers and students sometimes suffer from a crisis that may be personal and traumatic (Cullberg, 2003) or exert consequences on a broader level. Andersson and Ingemarsson (1994) argue that a crisis situation prevents teachers and students from participating in education in an acceptable manner, and consequently distancing and inclusion are important strategies for managing these types of crisis. The distance from the school’s geographical area to the general public has a proactive, risk-minimizing purpose. Inclusion is about broadening the local area to include the students’ homes, which is important in traumatic crises. This is unique for the teachers in comparison to other crisis management actors. Inclusion and accessibility for support after an event has occurred is consistent with the crisis chain that Ericson and Mellström (2016) defined, based on gender perspective. The male-dominated crisis management actors handle stressful events initially at the urgent stage, while care strategies take place at the end of a crisis and are conducted by female-dominated professions. In other words, teachers may, for example, take action in an accident event initially before the rescue services or police arrive, as volunteers, while rescue work is ongoing but also at the edges of the crisis, as emotional support after the incident. By including this in the view of what crisis management is, the definition can be broadened from a gender perspective, and important practices that women-dominated professions can do may contribute to the definition. It is therefore important to recognize the legitimacy of the entire chain, despite its gender segregation, so that society can be strengthened in a crisis. Gender-coding of tasks as they appear in a crisis is not a problem in itself. All parts need to be paid attention to as concerns resource allocation, politically and socially, and must be acknowledged on equal terms.

**Conclusions**

The study’s findings show that teachers perform some form of crisis management in female-dominated occupations that are not usually recognized as crisis managers. Looking at previous gender theoretical research, there is a prevailing power relationship in which crisis management can be active and legitimate but which has been made passive and has converted teachers into protection objects (Ericson, 2018). Teachers are not primarily trained to respond to extremely stressful situations where the risk of physical and mental pressure is high. Teachers are also not considered to have a heroic status as do firefighters for example (for more information about firefighters’ professions, see Bacharach & Bamberger, 2007; Halbesleben, 2009; Tracy & Scott, 2006), but they are secondary crisis managers, informal and without dedicated resources.

Teachers’ experience of stressful conditions is multifaceted. First, stresses are found in organizational structures with reduced resources, demanding psychosocial work environment bringing stress and pressure as a consequence (Krekula, Engström, & Alvinius, 2017), shifting job satisfaction, but also antagonistic aspects such as bullying and abuse. Second, the working environment for teachers seems to be one of the most stressful of all occupational groups (Kjellström, Almquist, & Modin, 2016), which is the result of the 1990s school reforms (SOU, 2014:5) and resource reductions in Sweden. Third, the teachers’ experiences are from more extraordinary events requiring police or emergency services. Examples include events such as the Västmanland Fire in 2014, Sweden’s largest forest fire; the school attack in Trollhättan, where a 21-year-old, armed with a sword and a knife, attacked staff and students in 2015; as well as more extended events such as the refugee crisis (see Oscarsson & Danielsson, 2018).

Even internationally, teachers are victims or witnesses to school shootings (Muschert, 2009) and events all over the world. Teachers’ crisis management skills have lately been enhanced by equipping them with weapons, which is the case in the USA (Keegan, 2018). For this reason there is a need for future research to describe further the challenges that may seem relevant to teachers’ crisis management skills and allow for the teacher’s discourse to be recognized in the research context.
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