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The Textbook Masturbator: A Renegotiated Discourse in Official Swedish Sex-Education Guidelines and Textbooks, circa 1945–2000

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Abstract

The educational mission of most western schools today includes the nurturing of children's sexual upbringing, which many scholars see as a way of controlling their sexuality and forming them into "sexual citizens." This article examines how official Swedish school guidelines and textbooks have mediated sexuality norms through education on masturbation. The professional discourse on masturbation started to change during the first half of the twentieth century, when masturbation shifted from being perceived as something harmful to something accepted as natural and harmless. This article focuses on a period following that shift in opinion: circa 1945–2000. The analysis shows that boys' sexuality during this time received more attention than girls', and a strong new norm about sex contributed to masturbation taking on less importance than heterosexual intercourse within a relationship. This article shows how state-controlled curricula have created norms about gender and sexuality, thus contributing to the development of a sexual citizenship.

Keywords: sex education; textbooks; teacher guidelines; masturbation; Sweden

Since the introduction of sexuality education in Western schools in the 20th century, the goal has largely been to solve problems, among which the more relevant are sexually transmitted diseases, abuse, unwanted pregnancies, immoral living, and a general ignorance about the body and health. In state-controlled curricula and learning materials, these problems have been addressed both explicitly and implicitly, through a clear formulation of what a desirable, school-controlled sexuality should look like. By imparting knowledge about how girls and boys should behave, both as young people and in their future adult lives, schools have thus helped mediate norms about gender and sexuality. Thus, the educational mission of the school has also included the nurturing of children's

sexual upbringing, which many scholars have viewed as a way to control their sexuality and develop them into “sexual citizens.”¹

Over time and multiple formulations, masturbation has been one of the most prominent issues related to children’s sexuality. Both medical and psychological research had paid great attention to the supposed harmful aspects of masturbation, such as blindness, fatigue, hysteria and mental illness, until around the 1930s and 1940s, when a discursive change resulted in experts generally no longer considering masturbation harmful. From the middle of the twentieth century on, we are therefore dealing with something that used to be seen as a significant problem regarding children and young people’s sexuality, but now, by professional consensus, is harmless. Apart from being harmless in the view of professionals, masturbation holds a special place as a sexual activity that is by its nature gender-neutral and disconnected from interpersonal relationships that are potentially gendered.

This article analyses discourse on masturbation in official guidelines and textbooks from Sweden to gain a deepened understanding of the formulation of gendered and sexual norms in schools, norms devoid both of the interpersonal perspective and of the otherwise often prevalent perspective of risk. By analyzing how state-controlled schools approached masturbation in official documents aimed at teachers and students during the second half of the twentieth century, I highlight how schools historically have contributed to the shaping of students’ sexual citizenship. Sweden introduced sex education in public schools as early as 1942 and was also the first country in the world to introduce it as a compulsory subject in 1955. All schools in the country were expected to adhere to the same guidelines. In addition, Sweden also had a tradition of state-controlled teaching materials. These conditions thus provide excellent opportunities to examine a specific theme—in this case masturbation—in state schools, and explore how it may have changed over time.

Sex Education

Sex education, which has historically included teaching about masturbation, is and always has been a politically and emotionally charged school subject, in Sweden and elsewhere. Many conflicts have flared up, both regarding the introduction of the subject in schools in any form, and regarding its particular content. School curricula are

¹Jeffrey Weeks, “The Sexual Citizen,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 15, nos. 3–4 (August 1998), 35–52; Jonathan Zimmerman, *Too Hot to Handle: A Global History of Sex Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); Jeffrey P. Moran, *Teaching Sex: The Shaping of Adolescence in the 20th Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Susanne Gannon, “From a Wonderful Story to the No-Nonsense Facts: Affect, Knowledge and Sexual Citizenship in Pedagogical Texts for Young Children and Their Parents,” *Sex Education* 13, no. 4 (July 2013), 371–82; Laura Doan, “Sex Education and the Great War Soldier: A Queer Analysis of the Practice of ‘Hetero’ Sex,” *Journal of British Studies* 51, no. 3 (July 2012), 641–63. For a discussion on contemporary sexual citizenship, see, e.g., Diane Richardson, “Citizenship and Sexuality: What Do We Mean by ‘Citizenship’?,” *Counterpoints* 367 (2012), 219–28. Kerry H. Robinson, “‘Difficult Citizenship’: The Precarious Relationships between Childhood, Sexuality and Access to Knowledge,” *Sexualities*, 15, nos. 3–4 (2012), 257–76; Judit Illes, “Young Sexual Citizens: Reimagining Sex Education as an Essential Form of Civic Engagement,” *Sex Education* 12, no. 5 (November 2012), 613–25; Abigail Newell, “Sexual Citizenship and Sex Education,” in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Sexuality Education* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 1–8.

political and ideological products, and by that also crucial for consolidating a specific discourse, as this article shows. By focusing on masturbation in textbooks, the following discussion shows how the changing sexual discourse during the latter part of the twentieth century took shape within a state-regulated school context and thus helped create a sexual framework to which maturing citizens could relate.

Sex education occupies a special position among school subjects, as the instruction concerns topics that are sensitive or even taboo. Jonathan Zimmerman describes how there have been—and still are—taboos around sex education globally. In most countries, four topics have been avoided: “abortion, contraception, homosexuality, and masturbation.”² But even though masturbation is a taboo subject in many countries, in recent history momentum has gained for its inclusion in sex education. Jeffrey Moran describes how early twentieth-century sex education in the United States distanced itself from masturbation, but not to the same extent as Victorian sex-education literature, in which masturbation was associated with mental illness and death.³ Moran also shows that teaching materials during the more sexually liberal 1960s exhibited an updated perspective on masturbation. One particular sex-education program in Anaheim, California, dispelled the myth that masturbation was harmful, explaining that, “according to the best medical authorities,” any harm suffered by the person who engaged in the act was instead caused by anxiety or guilt triggered by incorrect information about masturbation.⁴

In Sweden, the political debate about children’s need for sex education emerged around the turn of the twentieth century. During this time, however, there was little mention of masturbation. The need to educate pupils about masturbation was rarely seen as an argument in the discussion about sex education in Sweden during the earlier years of debate.⁵

The roots of sex education in Swedish state-controlled teaching go back to before it was made compulsory in 1955, with the Swedish National School Board publishing instructional guidelines for sex education as early as 1945.⁶ Sweden has thus been ahead of the rest and is regarded as a pioneering, sexually liberal country in terms of sex

²Zimmerman, *Too Hot to Handle*, 87.

³Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 57.

⁴Moran, *Teaching Sex*, 176–77.

⁵However, one example is found in John Personne, *Strindbergs-litteraturen och osedligheten bland skolkungdomen: till föräldrar och uppfostrare samt till de styrande* (Stockholm: Carl Deleen & C:I, 1887).

⁶*Handledning i sexualundervisning för lärare i folkskolor: på Kungl. Maj:ts uppdrag utgiven av Kungl. Skolöverstyrelsen* (Stockholm, 1945). On the formation of Swedish sex education during the 1940s, see Anne-Li Lindgren and Sara Backman Prytz, “Staten, skolan och sexuallivet: En sexualpolitik tar form och sexualpolitiken skolifieras” in *Skolans kriser: Historiska perspektiv på utbildningsreformer och skoldebatter*, ed. Joakim Landahl, David Sjögren & Johannes Westberg (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2021), 83–108. On Swedish sex education in general, see, e.g. Anne-Li Lindgren and Sara Backman Prytz, “History of State School Sex Education in Sweden (20th and Early 21st Centuries)” in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Sexuality Education*, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 1–9; Elisabet Björklund, *The Most Delicate Subject: A History of Sex Education Films in Sweden* (Lund: Centre for Language and Literature, Division of Comparative Literature, Lund University, 2012); Lena Lennerhed, *Sex i folkhemmet: RFSUs tidiga historia* (Hedemora: Gidlund, 2002); Åsa Bergenheim, *Barnet, libido och samhället: om den svenska diskursen kring barns sexualitet 1930-1960* (Grängesberg: Höglund, 1994); and Maria Bäckman, *Kön och känsla: samlevnadsundervisning och ungdomars tankar om sexualitet* (Göteborg: Makadam, 2003).

education.⁷ However, the actual instruction was far less extensive than its advocates had hoped.⁸

By examining official guidelines and textbooks, this article contributes to the field of sex-education materials. As Lutz Sauerteig has stated, the lack of research on actual textbooks and other material is surprising in the field of sex education. Sauerteig has made his own contribution, however, with an important analysis of representations of pregnancy in textbooks. In West Germany, during the post-World War II period, many citizens saw a need to restore the country's traditional Christian values in response to what was considered the destruction of those values during the war. Sauerteig also believes that this was a backlash against the rapid modernization of society, by those seeking a return to more conservative family values. This was evident in sex-education teaching materials produced during this period. Sauerteig shows how traditional conservative values emerged in books about pregnancy and childbirth, values in which the home or private realm is seen as the woman's domain, while the public realm is the man's domain. During the 1970s, this narrative changed and the teaching materials developed a greater focus on the medical, rather than the social, aspects of family formation. Sauerteig also shows how the woman's body came into much sharper focus during the 1970s, and how previous taboos around women's bodies and sexuality were broken down.⁹

This is in line with a lot of other research on changed positions regarding women's bodies, gender, and sexuality during the twentieth century. Another example in sex-education material that depicts a changing society is Susanne Gannon's analysis of three sex-education picture books from 1967, 1973, and 2011, the most recent of which, she argues, features more progressive representations of women and families.¹⁰ One researcher studying textbooks in the Nordic context is Kari Hernæs Nordberg.¹¹ In her analysis of Norwegian sex-education guidelines and textbooks from the 1950s, she shows how what she identifies as Christian sexual morals were stressed in the areas of both reproductive health and gendered relations. The male sexual drive was also more prominent in teaching materials during the period. One of Hernæs Nordberg's main assertions is that state sex education was used as a dominant way of controlling youth sexuality: she underlines how, by depicting male sexuality as something stronger than female sexuality, the state also depicted it as harder to control. Hernæs Nordberg also shows how Norwegian school sex education tried to shape youth sexuality toward a stable family life. Since her analysis only consists of material from the 1950s, this study provides an important contribution to our knowledge about similar norms and possible changes over a longer period. Norway and Sweden have a similar history regarding

⁷Zimmerman, *Too Hot to Handle*, 87–89.

⁸Zimmerman, *Too Hot to Handle*, 88–89.

⁹Lutz D. H. Sauerteig, "Representations of Pregnancy and Childbirth in (West) German Sex Education Books, 1900s–1970s," in *Shaping Sexual Knowledge: A Cultural History of Sex Education in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. Lutz D. H. Sauerteig and Roger Davidson (London: Routledge, 2009), 129–60.

¹⁰Gannon, "From a Wonderful Story to the No-Nonsense Facts," 371–82.

¹¹Kari Hernæs Nordberg, "Sex Education in the 1950s: Reproduction, Family and the State," in *Exploring Textbooks and Cultural Change in Nordic Education 1536–2020*, ed. Merethe Roos et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 260–74.

the early introduction of state sex education, although Norway seems to have been more conservative than Sweden in some respects.¹²

The History of Masturbation

The Western history of sexuality has often been characterized by great suspicion toward forms of sexual behavior that are disconnected from reproductive heterosexuality, such as homosexuality or oral sex. Many forms of sexual behavior have been condemned or even considered illegal over a long period of time. During the twentieth century, these perceptions were challenged, and a more progressive view of sexuality emerged, with support from the growing field of scientific study on sexuality.¹³ Masturbation is another example of sexual behavior that has changed from being condemned to being accepted as a normal expression of sexuality in the Western world.

Masturbation was a subject for both medical and psychological research during the twentieth century, with a special focus on its effects on children and young people. Over time, insights into masturbation have thus shifted dramatically. During the nineteenth century and the earlier decades of the twentieth century, a common perception of masturbation was that it posed a significant risk, especially for the young.¹⁴ This was also Freud's opinion, a fact that helped to spread this misconception widely. Freud eventually changed his mind on masturbation, stating that perhaps it was not the cause of mental illness, but rather the other way around: a neurotic person was more prone to masturbating.¹⁵ We can see this as an early shift in the perception of masturbation.

Following new medical and psychological insights, researchers eventually abandoned the idea that masturbation was risky. In the 1940s, most professionals agreed that it did not harm either children or adults. This was supported by the Kinsey Reports, as they were known, which showed how common masturbation actually was.¹⁶ The professional shift on whether masturbation was causing harm came during the 1940s, providing a clear motivation for the starting point of this article. At this time, the medical and psychological literature agreed that masturbation was harmless, but popular belief in its risks remained deeply rooted.

¹²Nordberg, "Sex Education in the 1950s." See also Stine H. Bang Svendsen, "The Cultural Politics of Sex Education in the Nordics," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Sexuality Education*, ed. Louisa Allen and Mary Lou Rasmussen, 137–56 (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017).

¹³See, e.g., Jonathan Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Peter Cryle and Elizabeth Stephens, *Normality: A Critical Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

¹⁴Alan Hunt, "The Great Masturbation Panic and the Discourses of Moral Regulation in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Britain," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8, no. 4 (April 1998), 575–615; Frederick M. Hodges, "The Antimasturbation Crusade in Antebellum American Medicine," *Journal of Sexual Medicine* 2, no. 5 (Sept. 2005), 722–31; Eleanor Cohen, "From Solitary Vice to Split Mind: Psychiatric Discourses of Male Sexuality and Coming of Age, 1918–1938," *Australian Historical Studies* 29, no. 112 (1999), 79–95.

¹⁵Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone Books, 2003), 381–97.

¹⁶Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1948); Alfred C. Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1953).

The view that masturbation was harmful thus changed over time. There was a greater air of taboo around female masturbation, however.¹⁷ The issue of women's orgasm and masturbation was brought up in the Kinsey Reports, which stated that "among all types of sexual activity, masturbation is, however, the one in which the female most frequently reaches orgasm."¹⁸ The report also showed that masturbation was common among women. This, along with other types of medical and psychological research on women's sexuality, was used by the feminist movement during the 1960s and '70s as an argument for girls' right to sex education about women's genitals and their right to sexual pleasure. An example of this is the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, which highlighted the need for girls to be taught how to masturbate.¹⁹

A similar discussion about women's orgasm took place in Sweden during this time. Very little of the discussion in daily newspapers, however, was about the responsibility schools should have in educating girls and boys on how women reach orgasm. We can thus see that, although there was a growing social movement interested in discussing women's sexuality, in valuing and affirming it along with women's right to sexual pleasure, those discussions were not at all about schools' responsibility on this particular issue. The women's movement agreed that sex education could empower women and girls to take control over their own bodies—another example of a changing discourse about sexuality during the period I am investigating. In this article, I analyze the extent to which this was visible in official guidelines and school textbooks, with Sweden generally following the same pattern in the discursive change.²⁰ Sweden can be seen as a kind of progressive example of how teaching materials adopted the new discourse early on. Anne-Li Lindgren, for example, has observed that a 1954 school radio program described masturbation as something common and uncontroversial, and as something that both boys and girls did.²¹

When it comes to female masturbation, one can clearly see how the masturbation-positive discourse spread, mainly during the latter decades of the twentieth century. Books, newspaper articles, and art that portrayed female masturbation in a positive way became widespread.²² The marketing of sex aids for women also contributed to this masturbation-positive discourse.

The masturbation discourse was thus renegotiated in medical, psychological, and sexological contexts during the twentieth century, as well as in public contexts. However, how masturbation has been covered in education—especially for children—has not been addressed to any great extent. The case of masturbation as a sexual activity

¹⁷Mary Vause, "Doing It Ourselves: Female Masturbation Past and Present," *Iris: A Journal about Women*, no. 48 (March 2004), 58–64.

¹⁸Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, 132.

¹⁹Boston Women's Health Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book by and for Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973).

²⁰Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*; R. P. Neuman, "Masturbation, Madness, and the Modern Concepts of Childhood and Adolescence," *Journal of Social History* 8, no. 3 (1975), 1–27. On masturbation in a Swedish context, see Bergenheim, *Barnet, libido och samhället*.

²¹Anne-Li Lindgren, "Vad ska barn veta om sexualitet? Kommentar till texter om sexualundervisning för barn," in *Sexualpolitiska nyckeltexter*, ed. Klara Arnberg et al. (Stockholm: Leopard, 2015), 273–81.

²²Mels van Driel, *With the Hand: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (London: Reaktion, 2012).

is also of particular interest as a distinct example of a discourse that changed over a fairly short period of time.

Previous research has revealed significant differences in how children's, adolescents', and adults' masturbation has been perceived.²³ As a legacy of the earlier decades of the twentieth century and Freud's ideas at that time, the opinion that young children's masturbation was natural and harmless was widespread. Nevertheless, even after masturbation discourse changed, and the practice was no longer viewed as dangerous, adolescents who masturbated were considered at greater risk of falling into harmful habits. Young people were specifically considered being at risk of compulsive sexual behavior. However, by the later twentieth century, as previous research has shown, the risk of adult masturbation shifting from a healthy act to a compulsive one was rarely emphasized in the masturbation discourse.²⁴

It is crucial to analyze masturbation itself as an expression of sexuality. In this article, a guiding premise is that masturbation is a sexual behavior. It is a physical activity aimed at generating sexual pleasure. However, different cultures in different times have perceived it in different ways. In that respect, masturbation is thus socially situated, and representations of masturbation give us a clue about how the larger picture of sexuality has been painted. We know from extensive research that the socially changing aspects of sexuality can give us in-depth insights into our society and how people act and are perceived within it.

We can thus see that the discourse on masturbation changed during the second half of the twentieth century. Masturbation as a sexual activity was de-pathologized, and women's sexuality and orgasm also received more attention. Identifying *if* and *how* this was expressed in Swedish teaching materials is the starting point for my analysis.

Analyzing Guidelines and Textbooks

After medical and psychological research established that masturbation is not associated with any risks, experts began to see it as a sexual activity with a special status. Unlike intercourse, oral sex, or petting, it carries no risk of sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy, or abuse—problems that sex education has aimed to solve and that have been highlighted by previous research on sex ed. And, as I stated above, it is also a sexual activity that is not related to gendered relationships, because it is by definition a solitary activity.

In terms of masturbation, after the discursive change, no longer was risk associated with the activity and there was thus no problem left to solve. Therefore, it is especially interesting to study how official guidelines and teaching materials discussed masturbation in particular. What norms were mediated through the descriptions of this allegedly risk-free sexual activity?

The Swedish school system has a strong tradition of being centrally regulated and well documented, which provides a solid foundation for studying the history of its curricula. Its sex education program is no exception; however, it has not yet been particularly well studied. The Swedish National School Board published guidelines on

²³Neuman, "Masturbation, Madness, and the Modern Concepts of Childhood and Adolescence."

²⁴Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*.

sex education, which included lesson plans, and the Swedish state approval board for textbooks (*Statens läroboksnämnd*) oversaw the sex ed content of textbooks.

This study is based on two types of empirical material. The first is the official sex ed guidelines, the first set of which was published in 1945, with subsequent new guidelines released in 1952, 1956, 1977, and 1995.²⁵ In some of the examples I give here, I have also highlighted revisions to these manuals. We know that these materials influenced sex ed instruction because the teachers actively used the guidelines that the school board made available.

The guidelines were detailed and gave a clear indication of the content that the school authorities wished teachers to convey, which consisted primarily of two aspects of sex education: (1) adult sexual life and reproduction, and (2) issues connected to adolescence and the lives of young schoolchildren. A biological perspective dominated both aspects.

The other material I used to analyze representations of masturbation is textbooks. Among the textbooks I selected, it is difficult to determine the extent to which different books have been used in Swedish schools. Sweden's state approval board for textbooks published lists of approved books, but it is not possible to obtain information about how widespread they actually were in schools. In order to settle on a representative sample, I consulted a catalog of textbooks compiled at the library of the Teachers Training College in Uppsala, Sweden. Uppsala University had one of the largest teacher education programs in Sweden during the twentieth century and has incorporated textbooks from across the entire century into its library. These textbooks were thus used by student teachers during the twentieth century and can serve as representative examples. The collection consists of around 250 textbooks, categorized as "natural science" and published during the period 1945-2000.²⁶ I combed through this collection, looking for textbooks that covered sex education, and specifically masturbation. A total of twenty-eight books met these criteria and were selected for analysis.

I have chosen 1945-2000 as my period of study because that is the time span in which the official guidelines were published, extending to five years after the last published guideline. This is a period that in many ways saw major changes in terms of sexuality—and especially women's. Swedish women gained access to contraception and free abortion, which provided the basis for what has come to be known as the "sexual revolution." In addition, Sweden declassified homosexuality as an illness in 1979. The period thus entailed extensive social changes regarding views on women's sexuality, reproductive health, and, at least on paper, a more tolerant approach to homosexuals.

Despite these advances, Swedish sex education did not change much during the period. Making it compulsory did not involve any major changes in the actual teaching.

²⁵*Handledning i sexualundervisning för lärare i folkskolor: på Kungl. Maj:ts uppdrag utgiven av Kungl. Skolöverstyrelsen* (Stockholm, 1945); *Handledning i sexualundervisning för lärare i folkskolor: på Kungl. Maj:ts uppdrag utgiven av Kungl. Skolöverstyrelsen* (Stockholm, 1952); *Handledning i sexualundervisning, Skolöverstyrelsens Skriftserie* (Stockholm, 1956); Skolöverstyrelsen, *Samlevnadsundervisning* (Stockholm: Liber Läromedel, 1977); Erik Centerwall, "Kärlek känns! Förstår du": samtal om sexualitet och samlevnad i skolan: ett referensmaterial från skolverket (Stockholm: Statens skolverk, 1995).

²⁶Since there are different editions of the same textbook in the collection, and the categorization has changed over time, it is not possible to give an exact number.

The structure of the subject and the teaching remained fairly similar throughout the second half of the twentieth century. The sex-liberal wave in Sweden thus had little impact on sex education, although there have been those who sought to emphasize its more radical aspects. One of the few changes that did take place during the period is that the guidelines began to acknowledge that even teenagers had a sex life: sex was not only for adults in a monogamous heterosexual relationship.

The Masturbator: Age and Gender

To identify the sexual norms set out in the official guidelines and textbooks, I begin my analysis on the basis of the described identity of the masturbator. Is it implied that masturbating is a sexual activity more common among men and boys than women and girls, or is it explicitly stated? Is masturbation described as occurring at specific ages? Is there a pattern, and does it change over time?

In the earliest set of guidelines, published in 1945, masturbation is included in a suggested lesson plan for year six, with a special focus on boys' masturbation.²⁷ However, a passage on bad habits among pupils does emphasize that masturbation is not as unusual among girls as one might think, and a footnote states that girls can also stimulate their genitals for sexual pleasure, either intentionally or unintentionally (*omedvetet*) by, for example, cycling.²⁸ I should emphasize that I have not seen any examples of boys' masturbation being described as unintentional. Unintentional masturbation seems to be something specific to girls—which could also be a sign of how a male norm drives representations of masturbation. Unlike boys, girls in these representations seem to be so disconnected from the act that they are not even aware of what they are doing.

In the 1956 revision of the guidelines, the emphasis on female masturbation is stronger. Here, female masturbation is even highlighted in the lesson plan—where we read that both boys and girls masturbate.²⁹

The 1977 guidelines present a definition of masturbation that makes it seem as though it were specific to sexually mature individuals.³⁰ This stands in contrast to representations elsewhere stating that self-satisfaction occurs at all ages, even in infancy. But these guidelines make a qualification: "It is uncertain whether orgasm can be induced at a very early age."³¹ We can observe this statement in dialogue with the previously mentioned definition, where orgasm is described as part of masturbation. It is interesting that the connection between masturbation and orgasm is emphasized in these guidelines to such an extent that one needs to address the question whether small children can even have an orgasm. Thus, in this version of the guidelines, there seems to be a kind of "orgasm norm" that defines, or at least relates to, masturbation.

In their discussion about *who* masturbates, the 1977 guidelines also state that masturbation is most common during puberty and adolescence, because "the sexual drive

²⁷ *Handledning i sexualundervisning för lärare i folkskolor* (1945), 55–56.

²⁸ *Handledning i sexualundervisning för lärare i folkskolor* (1945), 40–41.

²⁹ *Handledning i sexualundervisning för lärare i folkskolor* (1956), 71.

³⁰ Skolöverstyrelsen, *Samlevnadsundervisning*, 246.

³¹ Skolöverstyrelsen, *Samlevnadsundervisning*, 246.

is strong” during this period. But, the section, continues, “the opportunities in our culture to reach orgasm through intercourse are limited.”³² This sheds light on a new norm linked to the masturbator: celibacy. The absence of an active sex life is directly linked to the need for masturbation. This is an example of how these guidelines have contributed to the socialization of procreative behavior. The masturbator was a person who could not get sexual satisfaction in the most desirable way—through intercourse. I will return to this topic below.

The 1977 guidelines also present specific statistics on young people. As part of extensive research and in preparation for writing the new guidelines, a state commission conducted a survey of young people’s sexual habits, including on masturbation. The guidelines highlight the survey’s finding that masturbation was practiced by 90 percent of teenage boys and 60–70 percent of girls, respectively.³³ There is no further discussion beyond the presentation of these figures.

Although there are no direct references to it, the same study seems to form the statistical basis of young people’s activity in the 1995 guidelines, with figures that are largely the same: 90 percent of boys and 60 percent of girls report having masturbated.³⁴ It is worth noting that the range of 60–70 percent for girls drops to 60 percent in this later version, which we could interpret as the author implying that girls have less extensive masturbation habits than do boys. The accompanying text develops precisely this point. It expresses the belief that girls and women encounter more stigma regarding female sexuality, and that this could be a reason why they masturbate less. However, the guidelines demonstrate a bias against female sexuality, with one particular passage describing how boys’ sexuality is “more disconnected, as an independent skill” than girls.³⁵ The guidelines further state that girls’ views on sex are more closely linked to relationships, and that—according to interviews—women find it meaningless to masturbate because, for them, sexuality is synonymous with a relationship. Here we see the inverse of the previously mentioned logical assumption about masturbation: in the 1977 guidelines, celibacy was a reason to masturbate, whereas according to the 1995 guidelines, for girls, the absence of a relationship is a reason *not* to masturbate.

Moving on to the textbooks, almost every one reviewed in this study not only describes the habit of masturbation but also identifies who the masturbator is, with a special focus on age. This is the case, for example, in one of the earlier textbooks in this study, *Säg som det är, magistern! (Tell It Like It Is, Teacher!)*, from 1954, in which the section on masturbation takes the form of a lesson.³⁶ The teacher does not use the word “masturbation,” but simply discusses boys and girls touching their genitals. (This instance stands as an exception because most other books use the word.) This book was intended for children ages 9–12; thus, it is possible to interpret the text as a way of giving the children a description of masturbation that was not directly linked to their sexual instincts—an approach that was more or less reserved for adolescents, as shown in other textbooks.

³²Skolöverstyrelsen, *Samlevnadsundervisning*, 246.

³³Skolöverstyrelsen, *Samlevnadsundervisning*, 246.

³⁴Centerwall, “*Kärlek känns! Förstår du?*” 57.

³⁵Centerwall, “*Kärlek känns! Förstår du?*” 58.

³⁶Sten Hegeler, *Säg som det är, magistern!* (Stockholm: Kooperativa förbundets förlag, 1954), 30–31.

This disinclination to relate masturbation to sexuality can be found in another textbook targeting younger children, *Du och jag och livet* (*You and me and life*), a textbook for ages 7–9.³⁷ In this book, the author begins by directly addresses children, “When you were little, you learned to recognize many things around you. You also learned to recognize your body.”³⁸ The text continues with a description of how we are allowed to touch our own bodies, and how it sometimes feels good. Masturbation is represented as “playing with your privates” (*leka med stjärten*), de-emphasizing any possible sexual motive.

Another example of a book concerning pre-adolescent children and their habits is *Så kom du till* (*Where You Came From*), published in 1961 by legendary Swedish sex educator Elise Ottesen-Jensen.³⁹ This book also describes masturbation as a non-sexual activity when it is performed by younger children. Ottesen-Jensen’s main focus in the section concerning masturbation is on younger children; it describes how young children are guided by their curiosity in experiencing their bodies.⁴⁰

Two other textbooks cover the masturbation habits of younger children, in this case preschool children. The first of these, *Individ, samhälle och sexualliv* (*Individual, Society and Sexual Life*), from 1956, states that it is especially common for children aged 4–6 to masturbate.⁴¹ The same ages appear in a textbook from 1963, *Biologi: människokroppen* (*Biology: The Human Body*), which states that children aged 4–6 are prone to masturbate.⁴² Furthermore, it stands as an exception to the other texts in that it *does* make the correlation between young children and sexuality, since it describes masturbation as a way of reaching sexual satisfaction, emphasizing that younger children experience “certain feelings of pleasure” when touching themselves.⁴³ Representations of younger, pre-adolescent children as masturbators are otherwise rare, and seem to disappear over time—even though several books from the 1970s onward discuss masturbation as something done by “many” or even “everyone” (and at all ages), although not specifically younger children.⁴⁴

Most textbooks, however, seem to connect the practice of masturbation to adolescent children—that is, their actual readers. This is most evident in the earlier textbooks, although the phenomenon occurs in textbooks throughout the period analyzed.⁴⁵ Most

³⁷ Britt-Marie Sandberg and Maj-Briht Bergström-Walan, *Du och jag och livet: lågstadiets sexualkunskap* (Stockholm: Utbildningsförlaget Liber, 1970), 10–11.

³⁸ Sandberg and Bergström-Walan, *Du och jag och livet*, 10.

³⁹ Elise Ottesen-Jensen and Dagmar Lodén, *Så kom du till* (Stockholm: Liber, 1961).

⁴⁰ Ottesen-Jensen and Lodén, *Så kom du till*, 12.

⁴¹ Torsten Wickbom, *Individ, samhälle och sexualliv: sexualkunskap för skolor* (Stockholm: Svenska bokförlaget, 1956), 17–18.

⁴² Sven Svensson, Astrid Rödén, and Eja Eneklö Branth, *Biologi: Människokroppen* (Gävle: Skolförlaget, 1963).

⁴³ Svensson et al., *Biologi: Människokroppen*, 121.

⁴⁴ Anders Henriksson, *Biologi* (Kristianstad: Gleerups förlag, 1995), 242.

⁴⁵ Lis Asklund and Torsten Wickbom, *Vad är det som händer* (Stockholm: Sveriges Radio, 1969), 42; Folke Ludin and Torsten Wickbom, *Människan* (Stockholm: Liber, 1966), 99; Erik Skye, *Hälsolära* (Stockholm: A. V. Karlssons bokförlag, 1964), 136; Ulf Arenlind and Wilhelm Arenlind, *Biologi. 2. faktabok* (Solna: Pogo Pedagog, 1982), 29; Berth Andreasson et al., *Biologi för grundskolans senare del* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1995), 264.

textbooks do not address their readers directly, but the continually recurring descriptions of adolescents as masturbators indicate that they must have had their readers in mind. A 1965 textbook, *Sexualundervisning för mellanstadiet* (*Sex Education for Middle School*), follows a distinct pattern:

The body is affected by hormones; the girl starts to develop into a woman and the boy into a man. This change is called sexual maturation or puberty. Now the sexual interest is also awakening, the so-called sex drive. It is common for girls and boys of this age to satisfy their sex drive by touching their genitals. It's called masturbating. It's completely natural and entirely harmless.⁴⁶

This quote is particularly representative of textbooks with a focus on the adolescent masturbating. It seems to follow a chain of events that is lacking in textbooks focusing on children, adults, or people of all ages. Puberty starts, the sex drive increases (or appears), and this triggers an interest in exploring one's own body. The same narrative occurs in several textbooks over the period investigated. In the 1974 textbook *Biologi* (*Biology*), the increased sex drive during puberty leads to an increased interest in the genitals, thus leading to young people "trying different ways to relieve their sex drive."⁴⁷ Furthermore, this book states that it is most common to masturbate on one's own, or with "friends of the same sex"—making a special exception to the otherwise prevailing consensus in textbooks from all periods that masturbating is something one does by oneself. As an example of a same-sex sexuality activity appearing in a text that noticeably does not address homosexuality, mutual masturbation is here an exception to behavior that would otherwise be categorized based on one's sexual orientation. My main point regarding this specific quote, however, is that it follows a common pattern in its representation of masturbation and the masturbator. Even in later textbooks, this is the most common pattern, as in *Biologi 2* from 1988, where it is described even more distinctly.⁴⁸ As a result of increasing sexual maturity, the interest in sex and sexuality also increases, which leads to "exploring your own genitals." The text continues: "For almost all boys and for a lot of girls, this exploration develops into masturbation."⁴⁹ In this text, it is clear that exploring one's genitals alone does not constitute masturbation. To constitute masturbation, the exploration must lead to orgasm.⁵⁰

In conclusion, throughout the period, both official guidelines and textbooks emphasize masturbation as an activity for younger boys and girls who are not yet involved in a sexual relationship. This emphasis is of course a nod to the implied readership, since the textbooks were written for schoolchildren. But it is also an expression of the renegotiated masturbation discourse within the society at large. The previous discourse, aiming to control children's sexuality, had emphasized how harmful masturbation was,

⁴⁶ Maj-Briht Bergström-Walan, *Sexualkunskap för mellanstadiet* (Stockholm: Liber Läromedel, 1965), 9.

⁴⁷ Anders Boierth, Lars-Olof Öhman, and Erik Nordling, *Biologi: stadieboken i biologi för högstadiet* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell läromedel, 1974), 135.

⁴⁸ Åke Norlin, Katarina Roth, and Bo Ohlsson, *Biologi: högstadiet. 2* (Stockholm: Esselte studium, 1981).

⁴⁹ Norlin, Roth, and Ohlsson, *Biologi: högstadiet. 2*, 82.

⁵⁰ This can also be seen in e.g. Henrik Hoffmeyer, *Sexualkunskap för ungdom* (Stockholm: Läromedelsförlagen, 1969), 32; Jan Bryng, Bo Kultje, and Allan Engelbrektsson, *Sex och Samlevnad: biologi* (Göteborg: Förenade papper, 1977), 35.

specifically for younger people. When the discourse changed, the need to control the sexual activities of boys and girls persisted. By describing masturbation as an activity primarily for adolescents, the official guidelines and textbooks contributed to the establishment of an approved ideal sexuality.

This becomes more apparent when we juxtapose discussions about the age of the masturbator with those about gender. During the entire period of study, boys are described as more prone to masturbating than girls, in the official guidelines as well as in the textbooks. Although examples where masturbation is mentioned as a sexual activity for “both boys and girls” do recur throughout the period, it is still more associated with male sexuality.⁵¹ Textbooks from the earlier decades of this study commonly stress that “almost all men and a large number of women” masturbate, indicating that this is a sexual activity that is less common among women.⁵² This notion recurs even during the latter years of the period.⁵³

The sexual revolution and the focus on women’s sexuality and orgasm, which was part of the public debate during the late 1960s and ’70s, had little impact on guidelines or textbooks. In both, women and girls were still described as less sexual beings than men and boys. The new discourse asserted that masturbation was an expression of the young male sex drive and that the young female sex drive was—or should be—less prominent. In that respect, the guidelines conveyed the notion that female sexuality had more restrictive rules; hence, the renegotiated discourse sought to control girls to a greater extent than boys.

Reasons to Masturbate

I have already touched upon the question of the motives for masturbation, but should also mention that the earliest guidelines, from 1945, featured little discussion on the topic. Then, masturbation was simply mentioned as a “bad habit” (*ovana*), especially among young people.⁵⁴ By the time of the revised version in 1952, this “bad habit” had become just a “habit” (*vana*).⁵⁵ However, I should also emphasize that these guidelines did portray masturbation as a problem in certain contexts. Under the heading “Advice and instructions regarding the treatment of students with bad habits in the sexual area: Measures by the school after sexual abuse of pupils,”⁵⁶ masturbation receives special mention via the phrase “epidemics of masturbation.”⁵⁷ How these epidemics unfold is not explained; the only thing we are told is that they occur when groups of pupils

⁵¹Lennart Edquist and Berth Andreasson, *Biologi - Människokroppen* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wicksell Tryckeri, 1996), 55; Erik Nordling and Åke Fourén, *Biologi* (Värnamo: Ekelunds förlag, 2000), 161; Nils Linnman and Birger Wennerberg, *Grundskolans biologi* (Stockholm: Magn. Bergvalls förlag, 1966), 151.

⁵²Anders Carlsten, Torsten Pehrson and Björn Petersen, *Människan - arvet - utvecklingen* (Stockholm: Svenska bokförlaget, 1965), 114; Erik Skye, *Hälsolära* (Stockholm: A. V. Karlssons bokförlag, 1964), 136; Lis Askland and Torsten Wickbom, *Vad är det som händer* (Stockholm: Sveriges Radio, 1969), 42; Jan Bryng, Bo Kultje, and Allan Engelbrektsson, *Sex och Samlevnad: biologi* (Göteborg: Förenade papper, 1977), 35.

⁵³Berth Andreasson et al., *Biologi för grundskolans senare del* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1995), 264; Norlin, Roth, and Ohlsson, *Biologi: högstadiet*, 2, 82.

⁵⁴*Handledning i sexualundervisning för lärare i folkskolor* (1945), 21, 23.

⁵⁵*Handledning i sexualundervisning för lärare i folkskolor* (1952), 21.

⁵⁶*Handledning i sexualundervisning för lärare i folkskolor* (1952), 39.

⁵⁷*Handledning i sexualundervisning för lärare i folkskolor* (1952), 40–41.

somehow let masturbation get out of hand. One guess is that the actual problem may have been related to masturbation in groups, since this is described as a problem in other literature during the period.⁵⁸ This epidemic, however, is described as a matter of unwanted behavior that needs to be corrected by adults.

In the 1977 guidelines, as previously mentioned, the absence of sexual partners and the lack of opportunities for adolescent boys to ejaculate as part of intercourse are mentioned as motives for masturbation.⁵⁹ The guidelines elaborate: “Even in adulthood, self-satisfaction is common as a temporary or permanent substitute for intercourse.”⁶⁰ However, “self-satisfaction” is not always positive, according to this guide, which clarifies that masturbation as a substitute for intercourse can feel positive, but, “used as a surrogate for a desired but hindered human contact, it can lead to feelings of emptiness and loneliness.”⁶¹ This is a clear example of a strong intercourse norm: masturbation is problematized in relation to intercourse; *intercourse* is the norm and masturbation is the substitute. The guidelines thus contribute to the socialization of procreative behavior.

The motives for masturbating are described in fairly general terms in the 1995 guidelines, which state that it can be a way to handle one’s own desires.⁶² Deviating from previous guidelines, however, is the assertion that, this time around, group masturbation has an explicit role, with the author motivating and explaining this phenomenon. The guidelines state:

Group masturbation among boys before and during puberty has an exploratory character, comparing bodily functions and development. This is a confirmation of identity and also shows that, although these actions may be secret in relation to others, it is a matter of relatively little shame between the boys, even if the situation itself can be perceived as tense.⁶³

This focus on boys’ sexual exploration introduces a new norm regarding masturbation. An act that was previously described as purely negative (an “epidemic”) and something that needs to be curbed has now been elevated to a way of confirming boys’ identities and a way for them to compare physical development. A similar discussion on girls’ sexuality does not exist in the 1995 guidelines.

We can thus see the mediation of strong gender and age norms in the guidelines over the period of study. Masturbation is primarily described, directly or indirectly, as an act for boys in their teens or older. In the 1977 guidelines, we also see a hierarchical order in terms of sexual activity, with intercourse deemed superior to masturbation. The same hierarchy appears in the 1995 guidelines, but mainly as a justification for girls’ lower sex drive regarding masturbation.

⁵⁸ Wilhelm Sjöstrand, *Ett omdebatterat sexualproblem: onanien i historisk-kritisk belysning* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 1952).

⁵⁹ Skolöverstyrelsen, *Samlevnadsundervisning*, 246.

⁶⁰ Skolöverstyrelsen, *Samlevnadsundervisning*, 246.

⁶¹ Skolöverstyrelsen, *Samlevnadsundervisning*, 247.

⁶² Centerwall, “*Kärlek känns! förstår du*,” 57.

⁶³ Centerwall, “*Kärlek känns! förstår du*,” 57.

Although masturbation went from being described as a “bad habit” to just “habit” in the official guidelines, there were exceptions in the textbooks. One of the textbooks in this study, Folke Borg and C. W. Herlitz’s *Vår Kropp* (*Our Body*), is an interesting example of how intertwined the guidelines and textbooks were. Borg was a headmaster, and Herlitz was chair of the Swedish National School Board’s school hygiene department. Accordingly, he had been involved in producing the first guidelines on sex education. In *Vår Kropp*, we can find the exact same wording as in the earliest guidelines. As late as 1963, in the sixth edition of the book, masturbation was still being described as a “bad habit,”⁶⁴ and it was also described as such in a 1959 textbook by two other authors.⁶⁵

The intercourse norm described above was prominent in the textbooks, and is a key example of how procreative behavior is socialized. In their discussion about reasons to masturbate, authors most commonly highlighted it as a substitute for intercourse, or as a way for young people to get to know their bodies while waiting to start a sexual relationship with another person. As some authors returned to the subject in other books over the decades, we can see the recurrence of a specific phrase: “[Masturbation is] especially common during puberty before the sex drive can be satisfied through more regular intercourse.”⁶⁶ This norm thus existed in teaching materials even before the guidelines in 1977, but can be said to have been further confirmed when it was included in the guidelines. As early as the 1950s, an active sex life between two adults was described as the ideal, and masturbation was the substitute:

In adults, self-satisfaction occurs quite often and can be considered an emergency solution, when there is no other way to [achieve] sexual ejaculation. When two spouses, who are used to regular sexual intercourse, are separated due to illness, travel, or other reasons, masturbation can become a surrogate for intercourse. The same applies to death, divorce, etc.⁶⁷

This textbook continues with an example from the animal world, which describes how masturbation occurs among animals as a substitute for mating. Masturbation is thus defined as a sexual activity that is mainly for those who do not have a partner with whom to have a regular sex life, an assumption that is restated in several textbooks.⁶⁸ This also shows from the outset that masturbation was given a position subordinate to that of sexual intercourse between two adults in a relationship.

⁶⁴Folke Borg and C. W. Herlitz, *Vår kropp*, 6th ed. (Uppsala: Almqvists & Wicksells, 1963), 133.

⁶⁵Olof Hammarsten and Torsten Pehrson, *Människan: vår kropp och dess funktioner* (Stockholm: Svenska Bokförlaget, 1959), 107.

⁶⁶Nils Linnman, Birger Wennerberg, and Gösta Rodhe, *Biologiboken för högstadiet. Faktabok* (Solna: Esselte studium, 1977); Nils Linnman, *Biologiboken: för grundskolans senare årskurser. Faktabok* (Stockholm: Liber utbildning, 1995).

⁶⁷Wickbom, *Individ, samhälle och sexualliv*, 17. [Swedish: Hos vuxna förekommer självtillfredsställelse ganska ofta och kan betraktas som en nödfallsutväg, då ingen annan väg till sexuell utlösning finns. När två makar, som är vana vid regelbundet sexualumgänge, är skilda åt på grund av sjukdom, resa eller dylikt, kan onanin bli ett surrogat för samlag. Detsamma gäller vid dödsfall, skilsmässa osv.]

⁶⁸Svensson et al., *Biologi: Människokroppen*; Bryng, Kultje, and Engelbrektsson, *Sex och samlevnad*; John Takman, *Att vara två: sexualkunskap för högstadiet* (Stockholm: Liber, 1968); Rolf Jonsson et al., *Biologi: för grundskolans högstadium. 2. Faktabok* (Malmö: Liber Läromedel, 1986).

In many of the textbooks, it is also clear that masturbation serves as a step for young people on the way toward the ultimate goal: to become a sexually active adult in a relationship. This is clearly expressed, for example, in a book from 1958: “Self-satisfaction can be said to be a developmental stage on the road to a full-fledged sex life.”⁶⁹ The argument goes even deeper in another book, published in 1960:

As a rule, young people are not emotionally mature enough to start a sexual relationship. Nor should they become parents so early. They cannot yet support a family or take on the responsibility of raising children. It is therefore natural that they satisfy their sexual needs through masturbation.⁷⁰

This quote clearly shows a strong association between masturbation and adolescence, based on the assumption that other ways of satisfying sexual urges are not desirable for young people. The excerpt also assumes that young people have sexual needs and that these should be met. Masturbation thus becomes something that takes place in anticipation of the ideal sex life: the romantic relationship, which in this example is also synonymous with becoming a parent.

When analyzing the official guidelines and textbooks’ descriptions of the motives for masturbating, it becomes clear that, to a very large extent, the renegotiated discourse emphasizes sex in a heterosexual relationship as the ideal—a strong example of the socialization of procreative sexual behavior.

Conclusions

Sex education in Sweden has often been described as progressive. On the basis of this study’s results, however, we can see that mediated norms about gender and sexuality have nevertheless been stable over time, and that they conform to patriarchal social structures. In this respect, the findings of this article can provide an example of the inflexibility of education in comparison to the women’s emancipation movement. Conservative aspects of sex education, identified by previous research as dominant during the mid-twentieth century in Nordic society, appear to have remained consistent across the entire second half of the century.⁷¹ It is also worth noting that the increasing interest in women’s sexuality identified by authors such as Sauerteig is not visible in the present study.⁷²

As previous research has shown, the discourse on masturbation changed dramatically during the twentieth century. It shifted from being perceived as something harmful for both children and adults to being accepted by the medical and psychiatric profession as natural and harmless. This study analyzed official school guidelines and

⁶⁹ Anders Boierth and Lars-Olof Öhman, *Biologi för praktiska realskolornas handelslinjer och maskintekniska linjer*. (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1958), 56–57.

⁷⁰ Svensson et al., *Biologi: Människokroppen*, 121. [Swedish: Ungdomar är i regel inte känslomässigt mogna för att börja ett sexuellt samliv. De bör inte heller bli föräldrar så tidigt. De kan ännu inte försörja en familj eller ta på sig ansvaret att uppfostra barn. Det är därför naturligt, att de genom onani tillgodoser sina sexuella behov.]

⁷¹ Nordberg, “Sex Education in the 1950s.”

⁷² Sauerteig, “Representations of Pregnancy and Childbirth in (West) German Sex Education Books, 1900s-1970s.”

textbooks from Swedish schools that were published during the later period, after masturbation discourse was redefined. My analysis has shown how Swedish schools related to the new discourse through their teaching materials, and how textbook discussions of masturbation served as an aspect of mediated norms about sexuality. We can thus conclude that state-controlled guidelines and textbooks aimed to play a crucial role in young people's socialization into a state-approved sexuality.

A clear finding of the analysis is that boys were portrayed as sexual beings to a greater extent than girls, even though girls' masturbation also had a prominent place in the material. Guidelines and textbooks stated that both girls and boys masturbated, but they also repeatedly stressed that it was more common for boys to do so, often supporting that assertion with statistics. However, it must also be emphasized that the most common description in the textbooks of the masturbator's identity was gender-neutral. While it was more common for boys to be described as sexual, that does not mean that girls were described as asexual. The descriptions thus recognized girls' sexuality, but in those that ranked the prevalence of masturbation by gender, it was always boys' masturbation habits that appeared more frequently in textbook discussions. We can understand this larger focus as a product of the established masturbation discourse.

Furthermore, both guidelines and textbooks contributed to the socialization of procreative behavior, as made especially evident by what the materials presented as motives for masturbation. A distinct intercourse norm recurred throughout the period. In the descriptions, masturbation was often for those who have either not yet started an active heterosexual sex life (i.e. young people without a partner), or adults (i.e. the sexually mature) who could not have an active sex life because of a partner's absence, be it temporary or permanent.

Masturbation, according to the established late-twentieth century norm, was thus the act of a person who had reached sexual maturity and was thus able to have intercourse with a person of the opposite sex; and often, it was a substitute for intercourse. This established a hierarchy in which intercourse was superior to masturbation, and, in some cases, masturbation even served as a way for young people to be socialized into an intercourse norm, by learning about their own sexual needs in order to later use this knowledge in their sexual relationships. We can also understand this perspective as a form of distancing from the masturbation of children and young people, even though the latter was consistently acknowledged: because the intercourse norm was so prominent, by comparison, the child's masturbation was devalued. This is another way the state controlled the child's sexual needs.

It is also worth highlighting that throughout the period there was a kind of dialogue with the previous discourse. There was a recurring priority in both the guidelines and the textbooks to emphasize that earlier generations thought masturbation was dangerous. Pointing out that now one knows better about masturbation and explicitly distancing that perception from previous ones is a clear way of validating the new discourse. By rejecting the views of previous decades on masturbation as harmful, the guidelines and textbooks sought to ensure their own professional legitimacy.

Both teaching materials and guidelines were consistent in establishing the new discourse on masturbation as not harmful throughout the period. However, the sexual-liberal changes highlighted by previous research, in which women's sexuality and masturbation have a greater position during both the sexual revolution of the 1960s

and the late twentieth century, were not visible in the material I analyzed in the present study.

In conclusion, we can see that official Swedish guidelines and teaching materials throughout the period mediated norms about sexuality, with boys' sexuality receiving more attention than girls', and with a strong intercourse norm contributing to a hierarchy in which masturbation was less important than heterosexual intercourse. This is of particular interest since masturbation per se is a sexual activity that is separated from gendered relationships. From a broader perspective, these guidelines and materials have revealed how state-controlled curricula created norms about gender and sexuality, and thereby contributed to the education and development of a sexual citizenship.

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