

# Male Norms and Female Forms

## *The Visual Representation of Men and Women in Press Images in 1925, 1955 and 1987*

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The mass media's production of the obvious – their construction of common sense – can be said to largely characterise the institution of journalism. By naturalising a special way of thinking in their descriptions of the world, society and its people, this common sense seems to be the only and most natural one (Ekecrantz & Olsson, 1994). Gender is a fundamental part of this production of the obvious. The categories man and woman are “filled” with different meanings which vary depending on context, time and societal conditions.

Daily papers and weekly magazines can be viewed as elements of a specific cultural and historical time, in which they both represent a certain “spirit of the times” or mentality – what people talk about and how – and, at the same time, contribute to the construction of this reality – to the very images of the world and the sexes they convey.

The purpose of this investigation is to examine the gender ideology of journalistic products as it has been expressed in the visual representation of men and women during 1925, 1955 and 1987 in a number of Swedish daily papers and weekly magazines.<sup>1</sup> Which codes are used to create meaning? How is the image of men different from that of women? What are the functions of men and women in the interplay between text and image?

By studying these years, some insight into the various periods of the 1900's can be gained, thereby constituting a wide platform on which to base a perspective on different historical changes. The content of the images is analysed in relation to the journalistic event construction which has dominated during these years.<sup>2</sup> Event construction refers to the following:

(..), the various journalistic artefacts (text, pictures, sounds, articles, papers, programmes). These artefacts are not mere representations of the outer world, but (re-)constructions of social, political and cultural realities. (Ekecrantz & Olsson, 1997:5)

Today, the representation of men and women in the mass media is one of the primary elements in the construction of femininity and masculinity. Norms concerning what, during a certain time period, constitutes or should constitute “manly” and “womanly” are created by highlighting and emphasising certain behaviours and features as being typical gender ideals. Here, representation is not viewed as a reflection of reality, but rather as an active process of selection and presentation which creates meaning. Thus, the focus of this investigation is not on *what* the media show us, but rather on *how* meaning is produced and constructed.

That which denotes the masculine versus the feminine is based on various codes in the visual image. These codes are culturally familiar and, thus, recognisable. It can be said that a society's dominant ideology is seen in just these familiar meanings. According to Gramsci, this ideology appears as something we already know, something we have seen before. Thus, the ideological concept imbedded in the photograph or text does not produce new knowledge about the surrounding world or ourselves, but instead *recognition* of the world as we have learnt to perceive it (Hall, 1973).

The construction of femininity and masculinity can be seen as a *process of naturalisation*. Pictures are a crucial part of this process, as they show us

“how it is” and frame the template within which the daily and weekly press conduct their gender discourses.

## Methods and Materials

The papers examined are the largest Swedish morning paper, *Dagens Nyheter* (Dn), and one of the largest evening papers, *Aftonbladet* (Af), as well as a selection of weekly magazines (approx. 4-5 per year and week). All of the weeklies were either family or women’s magazines. The weeklies serve primarily as comparison material to the images of the daily press, allowing us to ascertain the role genre and target public might play in shaping pictorial conventions through the years: What is the interplay between the contemporary journalistic pictorial concept and the various paper genres? What are the commonalities and differences in the gender ideology depicted in the pictures?

For both the daily and weekly press, a product perspective was employed in which the papers were examined as a whole and in their original context. Thus, the picture analysis is not limited to only photographic representations, but also includes illustrations and advertisements, which constitute an increasingly important feature of the picture milieu during the 1900’s. This increased use of images in a purely commercial context also affects representations and valuations of other images in society. Thus, I think it is futile to maintain distinctions between the various media genres, although such efforts are common in analyses of picture contents.

Because the picture material is extensive, I have focused on recurrent and continuous *patterns* of how men and women are presented at a certain point in time. This type of research, in which so-called “pattern-perception” is central, allows a mapping of how meaning and ideas are shaped within various areas – in this case the journalistic image.

## Representation and Construction of Gender

### *Realism as Visual Style – Journalistic Narrative*

One concept that has been discussed within the context of image theories and in relation to the importance of press pictures for journalistic text is “realism”. The view that realistic images are inherently truthful and objective has a long and firmly

rooted tradition. This is largely the result of the institution of journalism’s legitimation of itself as just a mirror of reality. However, realism is a conventional form of representation which depicts cultural and political ideologies and values, especially through its power of visual “objectivity”:

The fact that a photograph seems to speak for itself, as do realistic forms of representation in general, ought to call our attention to the way in which ideology always naturalises the cultural (Solomon-Godeau, 1993:151).

This view of the realistic photograph’s status as ‘objective’ – as a reflection of a surrounding reality without subjective values – is receiving more and more criticism. Several researchers have illustrated the ideological use of the image and the importance of its social role in various contexts (Tagg, 1988; Sekula, 1992).

Realistic visual media such as news photographs are crucial tools for legitimation and representation of the political and ideological social climate. News images have the capacity to make social identities visual, to privilege some and deny the existence of others (Kozol, 1994). In this way, vision becomes a way to frame differences and form boundaries in order to define the societal norm. Realism, therefore, should be seen as a historically variable form of representation.

One convention in the creation of the realistic image is the metonymy technique, in which so-called “regular people” are used in order to represent wider social conditions and circumstances. Through portraits of regular people, complex or abstract problems, questions and events are explained. Even if they are strangers as opposed to known personalities, these people serve an important purpose in the news. As representatives, they are made familiar by their social roles.

With the addition of ‘commercial realism’, the concept of reality is widened to include even those situations in which the spectator is consciously involved in a fabricated world as if it were real (Goffman, 1979). Those images referred to by Goffman are advertisement and commercial pictures. Even if they cannot be said to represent real behaviour, what is important is that the images are perceived as natural and that we can quickly localise ourselves in what is happening or expected to happen. In contrast to the (commercial) image in which the event (depicted or expected) is in focus, we have the portrait image in which the subject is in focus. According to Goffman, portrait images require *recognition of the subject* for ritual use, while

commercial images require that *the event* in the picture is understandable. This distinction can, however, be questioned. The meaning of the image of an anonymous person can be derived from the context in which the person is placed in the picture's narrative. Thus, recognition of that which the person represents in the picture (not recognition of the person as a subject) is crucial to the observer's understanding.

Of course, the genre can play an important role in how the image is "read", but a basic understanding requires that we perceive the image as "natural". The ability to understand what we see and how we see is formed and determined by the contemporary, cultural pictorial conventions. The language of image and form is largely characterised and influenced by the intertextual relationships between a number of different cultural forms of expression, such as advertisements, tv, film, documentary photographs, etc. As Barthes (1977) points out, our understanding of a text (in a wider sense) always depends on our earlier knowledge about and use of other texts. Thus, image conventions should be understood as the constructed way in which people and environments are viewed which, at a certain historical point in time, appears to be the most 'natural' and general. Based on this line of reasoning, it is difficult to differentiate weekly from daily press images, as well as advertisement from article pictures, as regards analysis of the visual representation of gender.

In the traditional division of construction and representation, the two notions constitute different perspectives on the function of the mass media. Representation is seen as a more factual, real *rendering* of the world (and individuals), while the idea of construction stands for a wider approach in which the media's role as the producers of reality is emphasised. However, within the area of constructivist, feminist media research, these two notions are not differentiated. Representation is seen as a form of *description* – how the media choose to describe men and women.

How groups are presented in various cultural forms of expression – whether or not an individual is identified as a group member – is determined by the representation, the form of which is limited by codes and conventions. The relationships between 'differences' (meaning in difference) are constructions belonging to a social order which consists of power hierarchies. In order to clarify these hierarchies, the question of the masculine must also be addressed:

(..) exempting the masculine from the visual representation, helps to preserve a cultural fiction that masculinity is not socially constructed. (Kibby, 1997:1)

Studies of the masculine lead, without exception, back to questions about femininity, race, class and national identity – to the construction of individual subjectivity. Like femininity, masculinity should also be understood in terms of the relational creation of meaning and within the context of gender relations in general.

Gender does not primarily represent individuals, but instead a social relationship. Thus, definitions of gender are based on the *representation of a relationship* – of what it means to belong to a group, a class or a category. Because gender is not considered to comprise essential categories, we can not differentiate a representation (description) of gender from the constructions (complex of ideas) on which it rests: *The construction of gender is both the product and the process of its representation.* (de Lauretis, 1987:5)

Therefore, what is central here is the connection between representation and construction. We must change our perspective from analyses of the representation of "actual" gender differences to analyses of gender differences as (re)presentations.

Representation can be found at two levels. At the first level, representation is equated with *speaking for* someone or for a certain group. Emphasised at the second level is, instead, the rhetorical and ideological transformation, in which representation consists of *the forming of the subject* (Ganguly, 1992). If we continue to develop this division of representation, we can see that the first level contains more aspects of presentation. Events, happenings are presented, using as actors individuals involved in the events. Thus, this context is more individual-related – the person in the picture is directly and personally relevant to the text and his/her statements, actions and behaviours give rise to the reporting. In contrast, the second level contains more aspects of symbolisation. The person in the picture primarily symbolises/represents something outside him/herself – a condition, an event, or in the form of a metaphor, an image-of something. In this case, it is not the individual who is important but rather his/her role as a representative of something or someone. Thus, representation is more a question of formation of the subject of interest.

Because representation necessarily implies a form of construction, these two levels are not al-

ways isolated. However, this division has proved to be relevant when examining how the sexes are visualised in the picture material. During the years, men, more often than women, are shown as individuals with direct relevance to the text – often in the form of (political) decision makers. The tendency for women is that they are more often used as symbols for various conditions and events. Throughout history, women have signified different symbolic values and have been the bearers of ideas/meaning outside themselves:

Men often appear as themselves, as individuals,  
but women attest the identity and value of some-  
one or something else (Warner, 1985:331).

One way to understand this difference in levels is to use a power perspective based on the dichotomy public versus private. In which of these spheres do we find men and women? What are their functions in the pictures and texts? According to Yvonne Hirdman (1988), the two basic logical assumptions of the gender system are the separation of the sexes and the establishment of masculinity as normative. Taken together, this separation and the balance of power between men and women legitimate the male norm. Are these “gender logics” seen in the representations of men and women in press images? If so, how are they conveyed?

### **1925 – Talking Men and Woman as Image**

Within the project *Journalism's roles* (JMK), it has been shown that, in 1925, the type of event most dominant in Swedish journalism was the spoken address. Representatives from various institutions delivered their messages or made speeches. Thus, the papers were a forum for many individual (male) voices. The statement or address itself constituted the main event, most often in the form of an account without commentary. The dominant event type can, thus, be characterised as *the speech event* (Ekecrantz & Olsson, 1994).

In the papers, men dominate both the text and pictures. They make statements, deliver monologues and the text is flanked by portraits – the so-called talking heads form. The pictures show serious men wearing clothes which signal the connotation of importance and (public) power. In the picture legends, title, profession and first and last name are consistently included. It is the statements and actions of these men which represent events and the world in 1925. /Picture series 1/

In this year, the portrait picture is given an important ideological meaning in that it represents, and is largely exclusively tied to, the image of masculinity.<sup>3</sup> In such a composition, where body and surroundings are not included, the function of the image is to utilise the men's faces in order to highlight Male aspects (Hall, 1973). However, it would seem that the portraits are better characterised by non-expressiveness. The serious, unmoveable face becomes an image of formal power and public life, where political and social events are construed and visualised using the subject – the formal man.

### **Visual Femininity – Actresses and Ad Girls**

In 1925, women were visually represented as actresses and in the illustrated advertisement material. Here, the New woman – young, unmarried, beauty and fashion conscious – dominates. /Picture series 2/

This decade was a period of changing systems. The First World War had thrown aside old notions of morals, and ingrained ideas and talk about the New were characteristic features – the New woman, the New sexual morality, etc. For the post-war woman, new models were also created, in which the hetaera was mass produced:

...young girls (...) began training in arts other than the domestic, the art of make-up, attraction and seduction; that which is womanly was, in all traditionally indicated areas, “professionalised” (Hirdman, 1992:173).

There are clear parallels between the two areas in which the New woman was represented: ads in the daily press (beauty consumption) and acting (the cultural public). Women's function in both spheres was primarily to symbolise *the image* of the feminine. The actresses task on the scene was to publicly display and symbolise the external, visible femininity (Ericsson, 1994). In reviews of the actresses' performances, it was often the “female” aspects of the actress that were stressed and not the character portrayal itself.

The new consumption aspects of the beauty culture, in which appearance became an increasingly important symbol for female identity, were also introduced early and by using actresses. They were the first group of women to be used for advertising beauty products. The visibility of cosmetics became

legitimate in a context in which women consciously *represented themselves for others*. That is to say, contexts in which they carried out a role or acted as “spectacles” in advertisements. Thus, actresses played a crucial role in legitimising and constructing female publicity based on the new beauty and consumption ideology. Actresses and film stars from this new era were also important for the image of femininity that was introduced in films, books and in daily and weekly publications.

Earlier signifying the publicly “fallen woman”, rouge and powder became more and more accepted in public milieus in which women appeared: parties, various events and, later on, the workplace (Peiss, 1996). In the new public space for women, their function was to represent a pure, ideal femininity, which to a great extent was dependent on and tied to the visual presentation.

No considerable difference was found between the picture material from the two papers (Dn and Af). However, the evening paper (Af) did stress the entertainment world (film and theatre) in its coverage, and as a result a greater proportion of pictures of women was observed, although the content of the pictures was similar.

### *Idols of Consumption*

Sometime around the turn of the century and afterward, the Swedish weekly press changed its gallery of personalities. This shift in image motif went from predominantly mature men from the public sphere, *the idols of production*, to young female film stars and actresses, *the idols of consumption* (Larsson, 1990). The breakthrough of Hollywood films greatly affected the choice of images in the other media, primarily where visual representations of women were concerned. The way in which central love scenes were arranged at that time, as well as camera techniques including close-ups of women’s faces, induced a radical and abrupt change in the look of the weekly magazines. This change was not only due to the fact that images from films were reproduced and used as eye-catchers on the covers of the weeklies, but also because these pictures were eventually used in a broad range of contexts – from articles about films to beauty care, exercise and food reports, etc. The conventions of film aesthetics spread and left their mark on almost all visual material within the weekly press and on a large part of the daily press. Actresses and film stars became the idols of the new era, and fixation on appearance, cosmetics and

fashion became increasingly tied to the image of what it meant to be a woman. The visual image itself became the definition of femininity – women-as-image. /Picture series 3/

### *Talking Heads and Silent Bodies*

If, during this year, the spoken address was the dominant event type, shaped and portrayed by powerful men expressing themselves, then the image of femininity was represented, or perhaps primarily established, as the visible woman-as-image. This visual image also emphasises the professionalisation of femininity, in which care for appearances became a more and more essential part of the definition of “woman”.

The talking head form constitutes a representation of the masculine which is based on an authoritative, formal male role as interpreter of and actor in the public life of the community. This image of men as serious and formal provides a sharp contrast to the image of women. As opposed to the portraits of men, the ad girls and actresses were shown as whole body figures.

To come to the point, we could say that in the representation of the masculine and the feminine in 1925, we see the construction of *the talking heads* versus *the silent bodies*. In advertisements, it is often the *girlish body* which symbolises the visual image of the New woman – a woman who is depicted as coquettish and narcissistically self-absorbed. Self-contemplation is a common picture form in the beauty ads of this time. Such an image establishes the myth of the narcissistic, self-involved woman, whose only interest is inward – this in contrast to the outward looking and socially active man. Additionally, the role of the actresses in the public culture is characterised by lack of earnestness and lack of involvement in serious activities.

In 1925, the women depicted in the press images were not there because they as individuals had done or said something newsworthy, but instead they were there to serve as representatives for the areas they dominated – the public culture and the new ideology of consumption. The feminine public was a cultural public, in contrast to the social and scientific contexts in which men were found. It is also apparent that, for the most part, this public culture links the feminine to entertainment and leisure time, value features which characterise the culture of consumption.

## 1955 – The Swedish Welfare State and Household Democracy

In 1955, Swedish journalism, in its description of reality and of society, was characterised by consensus. A social order was construed and depicted in which consensus reigned – or at least the image of consensus. Both in text and pictures, the papers focus on communication and discussion, and symbolic events in the form of large-scale, forward looking projects dominate the material – bridges are opened, roads are built, etc. (Ekecrantz & Olsson, 1994).

In terms of pictures of individuals, the talking (hu)man from 1925 has been replaced with the conversing (male) elite group, which is seen as being synonymous with society. The images create and fortify the prevailing production of consensus on several planes. The relationships between the pictured people are often relatively physically intimate; their arms are around each other, they are shaking hands, etc. /Picture series 4/ Now, with this arranged picture form, even the photographer plays an active role – the groups, clearly conscious of the camera, positions themselves for the picture, sometimes objects are held up. This picture convention (the posed photograph), and the cooperation between subject and photographer on which it is based, clearly reveals the photograph as a representation for and of consensus (Becker, 1996). More often than in any other of the observed years, men and women in 1955 are seen together in article pictures as well as advertisements. In the picture material, women are primarily represented in their family role as wife and mother, but they are also seen as models in the context of beauty/fashion.

### *The Family Image and Consensus Between the Sexes*

The family played a crucial role in the growing welfare state, not only as a metaphor for society as a whole, but also as the foundation for the project of consensus implied by the welfare state. The family symbolised the welfare state on the private plane, but also in a public form, as private social order represented and legitimated public order. The Swedish welfare model was an ideological project in which the respective functions and roles of the sexes were clearly crystallised and given a socio-functional perspective which can clearly be read in the press images. Notions about the little and the big world can be observed in building plans (with “hers” and “his” rooms) as well as in public discus-

sions (Hirdman, 1992). In 1955, private and public are distinct spheres, but at the same time, and perhaps more so than in any other year, these two spheres are co-dependent; the private public (the family) reflects the public public (the welfare ideology) and vice versa.

The notion of the nuclear family as a basic social unit is firmly anchored in the picture representations of 1955. In the pictures, various behaviours and arrangements are used as physical expressions in order to show the family as a unit and, simultaneously, to establish the balance of power between the man and the woman. The man/father is often found in the periphery of the physical circle, thus depicting a relationship in which protectiveness is bound and requires distance. The so-called “shoulder-hold”, which dominates pictures from this year, necessitates an asymmetric pose in which one person is taller or is placed in a higher position than another person who is accepting of the situation (Goffman, 1979). The placement of the sexes in the family picture in 1955 serves as a gestalt for the form of consensus production which dominated the papers – a male authority in the family as well as the community and, not least, a woman’s (visible) cooperation in this arrangement. /Picture series 5/

By making connotations about values such as stability and responsibility – important characteristics associated with the right to govern – the home was construed as a metaphor of the nation, thereby revealing an obvious correspondence between men’s power position in the family and their appropriateness for political/social leadership. Thus, the pictures give masculine primacy an aura of legitimacy by visualising gender as a ‘logical’ extension of ‘natural’ family positions – the father/husband/man as provider for and protector of the family (Kozol, 1994).

The self-evident authority shown by the male decision makers involved in discussions in male group pictures – an authority on a par with the society, the public – is also secured and construed by images of the “obvious” family roles.

### *Parents and Children*

In 1955, the constellation women-children was a relatively common motif. In this case, physical closeness is stressed, and this intimacy depicts them as a unit. The women are always observing their children (their main interest) and/or are in a child-adjusted physical position: bending down, crouching, touching the children. These arrange-

ments naturalise the connection woman-mother. In other words, the women are depicted as the children's equals; they are not taller, positioned higher or at a distance. Non-equal positions, however, are characteristic of the relationship between the woman and the man in the family picture. /Picture series 6/

In general, pictures of parents and children are a common motif in both the daily and weekly press, however always in sex-bound forms – fathers and sons, mothers and daughters. Thus, the connection is not only based on the bond parent-child, but instead the pictures strengthen and construct a gender affinity. This shows the importance attached to the traditional, sex-bound transfer from adult to child of what were then considered typically masculine versus feminine activities/characteristics. This division into father/son, mother/daughter symbolises a mythicisation of the idea that different bonds exist between them. Women tend to be shown as having more familial likeness to their daughters – and to themselves when younger – than men have to their sons (Goffman, 1979). The physical closeness depicted between mothers and daughters is conspicuously absent between fathers and sons.

### *Getting and Keeping a Man*

Getting and keeping a man is clearly the dominant theme in the women's magazines after the Second World War. During 1925, the content of the weekly press was more likely to focus on film and stage actors. However, thirty years later, the focus had shifted to tips and suggestions on how women should manage their homes, bodies and men – this theme was observed in most of the material. The topic of personal care was, in 1925, found mostly in advertisements, but by 1955, it had spread to the rest of the material. Thus, the role of the weekly press in establishing norms about and definitions of femininity was more secure than earlier.

Picture techniques derived from film continued to develop. In the fashion illustrations, women pose like actresses in a film report. The comics look like film "strips", and, just as in the film images, the illustrations accompanying fictional stories are dominated by large female faces and kissing pairs in profile. /Picture series 7/ The young, beautiful woman and her face is seen in ads, short story illustrations and in reports about how She lives. Tips and beauty columns, in their turn, give advice about how to achieve the same "smooth and silky skin" and clear eyes, etc., as She has.

In the dominating discourse on marriage, the woman's role is presented as the altruistic "pleaser", whose job it is to ensure that everything is functioning properly on the home front. This is stressed in the pictures through close-ups of smiling women looking straight into the camera. From this picture form, femininity can be read as unproblematic, pleasant and easily accessible (Ferguson, 1978). The family portraits found in the weekly press follow the contemporary, prevalent picture conventions observed in the morning and evening press.

On the beauty pages, the most common values expressed are self-control, responsibility and duty. Duty is two-fold, thus directed towards oneself and others: you should make yourself beautiful and pleasant, but for the sake of others. In contrast to today, when beauty and self-care are presented as self-rewarding, the beauty message of 1955 was altruistic. Care for one's own appearance filled a function for others. Beauty became a valued trait in discourses about coexistence – discourses in which possible marital problems were laid on women's shoulders.

### *Men and Women of the Ads*

In comparing the different paper genres, no remarkable difference in the appearance of the advertisement material was found. In 1955, the major focus was on the woman as homemaker – a vital and always enthusiastically busy woman. The rhetoric accompanying the ad pictures contained terms such as "easy", "a breeze" and "fun". Continuous reference is made to the notion of difficult house work, a notion which is later negated (Larsson, 1990). The woman's domestic undertakings were defined as a science or profession – thus giving them a new ideological status. After her efforts during the war and employment, the middle class woman should return to the home, back to her domestic career. If the ad girl of the 20's represented the new modernity defined in terms of the ideal of consumption (beauty, fashion, leisure and entertainment), then modernity in the 50's was represented by the woman as homemaker in a well-equipped kitchen. /Picture series 8/

The occurrence of the mother-daughter theme is considerable in the advertisement material from all of the publications. In these ads, household activities constitute their 'natural' bond – the female 'logic'. This bond is depicted as they, together, wash clothes, iron or pause while baking. /Picture series 9/

One type of ad picture that was not found in 1925 was pictures of a man-woman pair. However in 1955, the relationship depicted between men and women was consistently that of the established pair, either preparing to be married or as part of a family, where he is father and she is wife and mother. Also in this year, men appear with women in the beauty ads for women – they are either present in the picture itself (perhaps only a hand or neck, etc.) or mentioned explicitly in the text as those to whom women should appeal. /Picture series 10/

In 1955, the girlish body that dominated the ads in 1925 has largely been replaced by the body of the mother, as the prevailing definition of femininity in and outside the home. We see her as mother and wife, either taking care of the children – feeding, dressing them – or doing the house work. The other type of woman in advertisements is more lightly dressed, often in underwear and selling laundry soap, dish washing detergent or underwear. A new concept also appears in which women are used in ads for products unrelated to the women themselves, that is, in which the woman's only function is obviously to attract and catch the reader's eye.

When men appear in the ads, they are mostly depicted with cars, car parts and watches. The rhetoric stresses the products' function as a part of the male logic – success – how using these products can get you there quicker or help you in your career advancement. Overall, the advertisement rhetoric is tied to the image of masculinity which, to a large extent, dominated journalism – an image including public appearances, conduct and work. /Picture series 11/

The products can be said to largely symbolise the Swedish welfare state's vision of a new rational, technological society and to also reveal the prevailing segregation of the sexes: The man and the car, the woman and the kitchen (as well as beauty products).

### *Male Homosociality and Female Altruism*

In the gender discourse which dominates the images from 1955, the connection between masculinity and power is construed and secured in two forms. In the group pictures of decision making men, male homosociality is shown by visualising understanding and consensus between men. In the family picture, the physical arrangement confirms the man's role as protector, provider and (political) leader, as well as the woman's approval of his role.

Thus, the images depict two forms of consensus which are related to and dependent on one another: private consensus (the family pictures) and public consensus (the male group pictures). On the other hand, the image of femininity in 1955 is dominated by the altruistic "pleaser" – the smiling wife, mother or the "put together" woman on her way to catch a man. This in contrast to the more "dangerous" image of the sexual, single woman found during the 20's.

The activities and statements of men are the journalistic events, his welfare is her responsibility and duty, and the woman's function and role (as wife and mother) are defined in relation to the man. We also find Him in the beauty ads, as the reason for her personal care. The dominant gender discourse seen in the content of the picture is striking. The fact that men dominate the images which represent society – images of the discussing, decision making group – reveals the "natural" connection made between the masculine and the public (power). Consensus production is framed, construed and secured through the visual image's message of relational agreement, in which the pictures naturalise the ties between woman-family-home and man-husband-public representative.

### **1987 – The Representative and Symbolic Image**

In 1987, the overriding message is that the political and social systems are out of order and that, as a result, people are *vulnerable and affected* in various ways. Now, the social idyll, discussion and communication are gone, and with them the image of society as a community. Societal systems cause trouble and conflicts which in one way or another affect the "common man". Thus, the journalistic event construction dominating in 1987 can be characterised as involving *system events* (Ekecrantz & Olsson, 1994).

This is clearly depicted in the visual images in which society appears largely in the form of metaphors. Pictures of single individuals have increased, at the cost of the group – the collective. If society in 1955 can be defined by the public group picture of posed, decision making men, caught up in their mutual welfare project, in 1987 it is the portrayal of representatives of the system (*politicians and decision makers*) versus the so-called common (vulnerable/affected) man which largely determines the image forms. Characteristic of the first category is the realistic, *metonymy technique*, in which 'regular people' are used to represent and

explain social conditions, circumstances and events. Politicians, both men and women, are commonly pictured in both the morning and evening press, and, in this case, close-ups are often utilised – the camera comes closer and closer.

### *Representatives of the System* – *Politicians, Leaders of Industry*

In 1987, a common constellation is the close-up of a group of male politicians, conveying their mutual commitment and drive. Common to these pictures are also captions in citation form, which increase the visualisation of the “here and now” in which the picture was taken, and simultaneously give the people depicted greater authoritative weight. The pictures express intimacy, but on another plane than in the arranged photographs from 1955. The profile motif is common, as well as one in which one of the subjects looks at another – no gazes are turned to the camera. /Picture series 12/ This shows how the male homosociality dominating the image of masculinity in 1955 has taken on a more informal and ‘spontaneous’ form. When the pictures show men “making things happen”, masculinity is firmly tied to action, community and activity – to the very *visualisation of decisions and power*.

Pictures of individual male politicians or decision makers often contain elements of movement in the form of an open (speaking) mouth and/or hand gestures. Hand arrangements are characterised by two forms: gesturing from the body, which expresses commitment, control, power and movement, and the hand held against the face, often on the mouth or chin, a gesture expressing concentration and seriousness.

In general, this ‘near’ bodily rhetoric is of great importance for what the picture is “saying”. Now, as the camera comes closer to the subject, mouth and hand movements become an essential part of the visual rhetoric. The open mouth shows the ongoing speech, which itself construes the image’s sense of “here and now”. Since moving mouths are not found in depictions of the common (quiet, voiceless) individual, this can be seen as a (symbolic) highlighting of the powerful voice of the system’s representatives. /Picture series 13/

Female politicians are regularly the subject of press pictures, however, they do not give the same impression of power as do the male leaders – nor are they found together in group pictures. Pictures of single, female decision makers also often contain moving hand gestures, although not poses with the hand positioned on the mouth or chin. /Picture

series 14/ Another observable pattern is that female politicians are shown when smiling more often than their male colleagues. One explanation for this might be the common visual tradition of depicting women as more approachable and unproblematic. The similarity between images of the male and female elite is primarily the feature of the talking, moving mouth-portrait.

### *The ‘Common’ and Affected* – *The Individual and the Group*

In 1987, the image of the private (affected) individual does not reveal significant gender variation. Instead, it is vulnerability which is visualised and which guides the picture convention. Now, men are also often found in the role of the “common man”, who is affected by (suffers as the result of) bad decisions and societal or legal injustices. In the series of articles *Fighting for the Children*, cases are discussed of fathers whose children have been taken from them by authorities or maternal grandmothers on the grounds that men are considered unfit to raise children. In the picture motif from 1955, the man as father was included, but in the context of the family. Now, in 1987, we find an image of the man and the child against society – an image which stresses the father-son relationship in the absence of a woman. In this series, the pictures of the pair reveal an intimacy not previously seen. In 1955, the man depicted was often showing something to his son – a ship in a bottle, etc.; their relationship conveyed a type of ongoing instruction, and, thus, a more distanced form of transference of the masculine. In 1987, we see instead father-son pictures in which physical touch and closeness form the ties that bind them. /Picture series 15/

The observed difference between *Dagens Nyheter* and *Aftonbladet* is that men depicted in the latter paper are more likely to appear in the role of “regular people” and in the context of more ‘feminised’ accounts – alone, and as representatives of a condition or event, or together with children. Mothers and children are not a common picture motif in 1987, nevertheless, it is only in these motifs women are not alone – besides when they are part of the “affected” group. More common, however, are pictures of women and children in more public contexts – women in their professional careers as school and day-care teachers. Conflicts between people and the system are more individualised in *Aftonbladet* than in *Dagens Nyheter*, probably due to evening paper journalism’s tendency to work from a more privatised perspective.

In 1987, when men and women are pictured together in *Aftonbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter* it is no longer in the context of the family, but rather the context of the vulnerable/affected group. These pictures are often taken from above, with the subjects standing, looking earnest and into the camera. The subjects are not physically arranged with respect to each other, but arranged in relation to and in a position more or less under the camera. /Picture series 16/ As was the case with the picture conventions regarding representatives of the system, there were no major differences between the morning and evening press in terms of how they portrayed the “common man”.

### *Realistic Fiction and the Fellowship of the Weeklies*

Since the post World War Two era, Swedish ‘personal’ journalism – characterised by descriptions of people from a private, intimate perspective – has developed as an ideal template within the special media form of the weekly press. In the women’s magazines, the traditional material of the weeklies – personal reports on “regular” people and personalities – has been reduced, and room made for a new main character – the Reader. With this shift, a new sub-genre has been created – realistic fiction – in which the reader, as opposed to personalities, royalty or short story characters, is in focus. It is You that matters and You to whom advice, tips and suggestions are given – advice concerning everything from how you should “take care of” your own body to how to act in various situations with your family, boyfriend, husband, lover, friend, work-mates, etc. The dominating images are of young, beautiful women depicted in theme issues in which different body parts are in focus – you and your tummy, you and your breasts, etc. (Hirdman, 1996).

Instead of the private individual, it is the common group (friends, spouses, loving couples) which constitutes the focus of the more family oriented weekly magazines. The main theme is the realistic everyday drama in which people’s problems, and threats to their common happiness, are always solved. The narrative is built upon past problems and tragedies that have now come to a happy ending. If it is the vulnerable individual and the destructive system which characterise the event construction and steer the picture conventions of the morning and evening press, then it is the victory over threats to human community and happiness which dominates the text and pictures of the family magazines. The pictures show people together and

in different constellations (adults-children, couples-families) and, like *Aftonbladet*’s family pictures, no physical differentiation of positions can be found. While text and headings relate the various tragic events (which later turn out well), the pictures consistently depict the happy ending. An exception to this pattern is when the black and white picture is used to visualise a tragedy for which there was no happy ending, e.g., actual criminal events.

### *Men and Women of the Ads*

In the morning and evening press of 1987, car advertisements dominate, and when people are present they are men, alone with their cars. The man and the car (technology) rule over nature. At the same time, the pictures express freedom, an eye towards the future, speed and mobility. The masculine ad rhetoric from the 50’s which tied men to work has been replaced by a rhetoric of leisure and freedom.

Advertisements containing women, to the extent they exist, are mostly beauty ads, and the rhetoric is based on the notion of personal pleasure. Gone is the message of the 50’s that personal care belongs in the context of family and society. In 1987, the ads are directed toward the female ego. A common motif is one in which the products, which are the focus of the pictures, have labels on which women’s faces are used as decoration. The female face has been moved and placed directly on the product in question, coupling the product more strongly to femininity and depicting a reification in which the human (here female) personality itself is invaded by the “raw material” (Williams, 1983). /Picture series 17/

### *Masculine Power and Feminised Men*

Now, in 1987, the pattern of the picture form in the morning and evening press is largely determined by the image of the system’s representatives versus the “common man”. This can be seen in the light of the increased individualisation which took place during the 80’s, in which the private individual, in various ways and in the form of the vulnerable/affected individual, serves as a gestalt for different events. This focus on the person is even found in portrayals of representatives of the system (there are still, of course, group pictures of male decision makers, but these are less prevalent than in 1955). The close-up technique is common and can be seen as an expression of the “logic” of the mass media –

a logic in which we see a constant increase in the illusion of “closeness”. This process of intimating is closely associated with picture conventions and vision.

In the morning and evening press, the “common man” is the vulnerable/affected individual who represents the dualism existing between the system and the individual, and who guides the journalistic construction of events. The use of the so-called metonymy technique is common, and no direct gender variation can be observed in this picture form.

In contrast to the years 1925 and 1955, there is now, in 1987, a clear division of different forms for the masculine. As representatives for the “common man”, men are depicted according to more traditionally feminine patterns and conventions: they are portrayed alone, as being vulnerable (affected) and defenceless, they represent a condition or an event which is not primarily individual in nature, and they are even shown often with children.

The individual is also in focus in the weekly press, but in a completely different form and with a different function. In this case, the person does not represent the symbolism surrounding the individual versus the system. The topics here are about the private and relationships which instead bring people together. The reader, in the shape of the “common man”, and his/her life story constitute another form of “You”, in which the notion of human fellowship is central. Conspicuous in its absence is the public, and those problems which are presented are individual, both in their origin, explanation and revealed solution. When the reader is the main character, the concept of You is more abstract, and the material consists of advice and tips about beauty, body and appearance – advice aimed at increasing personal happiness. The absence of men in the beauty material (in contrast to year 1955) reveals two things: That female beauty (narcissism) is being integrated as a part of women’s self-concept, and that men are the Goal and not the means. Another interpretation is that this absent man implicitly represents the opposite of the private world – the public world (Hirdman, 1996).

## Final Discussion – The Visual Representation of Men and Women

As mentioned in the introduction, representation is always a form of construction – a depiction guided by convention, culture and ideology. I see two patterns in the visual representation of the sexes which are indicated in the title: *Male norms and female forms*. Women, to a much greater extent than

men, are portrayed as representatives *for* something outside themselves and in contexts not directly related to the individual. Form has several meanings here: partly as the form of/for something, where the representation is symbolic in nature, and partly femininity per se as form – the woman as image. According to Goffman, certain “scenes” or characters become so stereotypically linked to a specific activity, engaged in by a large part of the public, that they are quickly recognised and become useful as symbols. The visual representation of women in commercial contexts itself conforms to a so well-established pattern of connotations, that the very form has a symbolic (and mythical) value which is independent of the particular woman depicted. The image’s ideological meaning is derived from the recognition of the picture’s subject and the subject’s “performance” as Woman. Given this, we can broaden Goffman’s concept of “scene” as the representation of a course of events – of narrative action – to even include the iconised portrayal of the subject (the woman) as a “scene”, thus, both as an image in itself and an image of something.

This representational status has different meanings and has been expressed variously through the years: During the 20’s, we see the growth of the ideology of consumption and the cultural public, with women as *silent bodies*. During the 50’s, a decade characterised by a domestic ideology, we see an *altruistic pleaser* in the private public (the family), and women’s importance/function is defined in terms of their relationships to others (men, children). The 80’s are not as uniform. We see women as representatives of the system (decision makers, politicians), although pictures of elite female groups are lacking. Also, compared to their male colleagues, female politicians are more often shown smiling – a form of portrayal in line with femininity’s traditional status of accessibility.

However, throughout the years, men are chiefly found in more individually based representations as actors, where the image of the masculine is used to (re)present power and decision making. Nevertheless, the visual conventions take on different forms of expression over the years, and thus reveal the time-bound nature of the meaning and rhetoric of imagery: In 1925, the private individual (the formal man) is depicted (the talking heads), and it is he who construes and visualises the political and societal event – the spoken address. In 1955, the group in the arranged photograph constitutes the symbolic event, visualised by decision making men and male community/homosociality. In 1987, men are even found in non-elitist pictures as the vulner-

able/affected individual. At the same time, in pictures of the system's male representatives "in action", masculinity is tied to the very visualisation of resolution and power.

Goffman's scene-concept can even be carried over to the image of masculinity and public power which dominates the press pictures during all of the years studied. During the different periods, the images constructed using various conventions tie the image of power to certain types of time-bound, masculine codes. It is important to note that it is a certain type of masculinity which constitutes the norm – hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is a variant of masculinity which implies the subordination of women and other groups (homosexuals, blacks) (Hawke, 1992). Given this, the scene-concept refers to the special view or model of masculinity operating in the areas of 'common sense', which defines what it is to be a man and which ensures the dominance of power within the gender system. Hegemonic masculinity is defined relationally, not only with regard to femininity, but also to other subordinate forms of masculinity. This is clear during 1987, when the non-masculine man (the "common" man) is portrayed using feminised patterns – alone and as representative for a condition, an event and/or together with children.

The relational condition between men and women which is based on the separation of the genders and the construction of a normative masculine hegemony is what creates the so-called 'meaning in difference'. Gender is a fundamental category which structures and organises people into sexes, and which is even co-determined by class, ethnicity and sexuality. At the same time, gender is a dynamic category which is always changing. The representation of gender can be seen as an indicator of a mental and political state and as a part of the process of historical change. Despite this potential for change, there are certain basic features which seem to be recurrent. These features are based on the dichotomically built-up meanings of gender – private/public, etc. – and they confer on the sexes their respective positions.

With respect to the interplay between journalistic discourse and the various paper genres, the visual imagery is not appreciably different between the morning, evening and weekly press. Various social arrangements in the pictures, such as gestures,

poses, looks, etc., characterise the sexes' social positions at a certain point in time. During the years studied, a clear concordance is also found between the different image types – advertisement, news and entertainment – which shows that the pictures' composition and meaning were not only determined by the genre. That which determines the visual gender discourse – which is, of course, a part of the textual discourse – is instead the journalistic institution's contemporary pictorial conventions.<sup>4</sup>

Pictorial conventions characterise a given period and are, therefore, culturally and historically specific. At the same time, however, certain basic elements can be observed in the representation of gender over the years – woman as a representation for/of something and men in representations more related to the individual. The establishment of masculinity as norm and the emphasis on the feminine as a form symbolising various values can, thus, be considered to be one of the "logics" which has guided, and which still controls, the gender ideology of press images.

Although the focus of this study has been on the Swedish press, the present results can also shed light on more general questions of how meaning is created in images at a certain period. This is especially relevant in terms of the maintenance of the distinction between the news media and the popular culture media, a recurrent distinction made by the media themselves and common in a large part of media research. The weekly press picture, which has been developed from the photography forms of the tabloid press, has become the criterion for 'popular press', and is, thus, not the subject of discussions about the serious press or the 'serious' image (Becker, 1992).

The fact that the different genres reveal such a time-bound similarity in their visual representation of the sexes provides a sharp contrast to the self-image of the 'serious' press. It also shows the problems related to maintaining this distinction between the various types of media and between different types of images when the focus is on the journalistic institution's (visual) gender ideology. Instead, what is important is the investigation of how, during different time periods and under different societal and economic conditions, recurrent pictorial conventions intertextually create and construct 'gender logics' in the media.

## Notes

1. This study is part of the project *Journalism's Images*, led by Karin Becker at the Department of Journalism, Media and Communication (JMK), Stockholm University, and is funded by HSFR (Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences). This project is conducted in collaboration with another project, *Journalism's Roles*, led by Jan Ekecrantz and Tom Olsson, JMK.
2. I follow, or rather relate to, those results already obtained in the project. Ekecrantz/Olsson/Pollack/Sahlstrand (eds.) (1994) *Three Time Tables. Journalism as Communication in 1925, 1955 and 1987*.
3. Portrait pictures are studio photographs which offer the subject more control over the image of him/herself that is conveyed (Becker, 1996). In most cases, the face is turned toward the camera, i.e., full frontal portraits were seldom used. This portrait form was one way in which the middle class established its social standing, and it arose from the 18th century portraits in oil which were both a description of an individual and of a social identity. Portraits of this kind differ from frontal poses, which Tagg (1988) denotes as the "burden of frontality" – a pose used, e.g., in criminal records and in order to define the Others.
4. This concordance concerns *the pictures' content*, and not the number of pictures of men versus women, which tends to vary as a function of target readership. Because the purpose of the study was to investigate the journalistic ideology of gender, is it precisely the aspect of content that is crucial.

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*Picture series 1*

*Picture series 2*

*Picture series 3*

*Picture series 4*

*Picture series 5*

*Picture series 6*

*Picture series 7*

*Picture series 8*

*Picture series 9*

*Picture series 10*

*Picture series II*

*Picture series 12*

*Picture series 13*

*Picture series 14*

*Picture series 15*

*Picture series 16*

*Picture series 17*