



**RESEARCH AND TRAINING NETWORK**

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**The Swedish Model and the Role of Gender**

The abundant literature on the welfare state during the last two decades has been primarily concerned with the welfare state in crisis and the welfare state in transition (Pierson, 1996; Rhodes, 1996, Esping-Andersen, 1996, Svallfors & Taylor-Gooby, 1999, Castles & Mitchell, 1993). This literature coincides with the debate of the demise of the nation state in the face of globalization (Luttwak, 1999; Hall & Soskice, 2001). The attempt to situate the nation state in current processes of globalization shows the necessity of re-emphasizing the work which has produced typologies of welfare states. However, the regime model as a method for thinking about welfare states, although well used in synthesizing different empirical studies has also been the subject of critique (Sainsbury, 1994). Despite the debates about the crisis of the welfare state and the demise of the nation state, the Scandinavian model of the welfare state has maintained a strong and consistent picture as a robust nation state capable of remodeling itself as a camilion when threaten by external events. This model which was seen as based on principles of full employment and universal services has also been further developed in terms of theoretical understandings of the role of political dominance of left parties and the relationship of control of the state apparatus in relationship to the economy and market. (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1999; Esping-Andersen & Korpi, 1987; Korpi & Palme 1998; Pierson, 1996; Stephens, 1996).

A major concern with welfare state literature and the Scandinavian model was the empirical work on the effects of the redistribution of income and the effects of social policy in mitigating the consequences of class society (Gustafsson & Uusitalo, 1990; Björklund & Fritzell, 1992). The inevitable discussions of state intervention and market policy expanded to include the role of the family as focus turned from economic redistribution to leveling of life chances through services provided by the welfare state. (Hobson, 1990; Lister, 1994; Daly, 2000) Discussions for maintaining a public sector and universal services prompted debate about the role of the state in the production of welfare services. Within Sweden the development of the welfare state had an additional element of

concern and that was as an employer of women as well as a provider of care and home services (Hirdman, 1994).

This paper deals with the Swedish model of the welfare state and examines if the model allows for greater gender<sup>1</sup> equality. The argument is developed by first presenting a brief overview of the growth of the Swedish welfare state. I then look at the consequence for gender equality by examining both the segregated labor market and the segregated university. In the analysis of the paper I discuss the changes in relationship to gender that have occurred in the Swedish society within these two spheres. The paper concludes by suggesting that changes within the Swedish model while indicating a movement towards greater acceptance of the male model of worker and citizen have not been successful in combating an organized exclusion of women from full participation in the Swedish society.

### **Growth of the Swedish Welfare State**

A traditional way to define the expansion of a welfare state is to describe state growth in terms of percentage of state costs to a country's total gross national product. If we do this in Sweden we see that the public sector increased its growth from 10% of the GNP in 1900 to more than 70% in 1990. (Ohlsson 1997) A deeper analysis of what contributes costs to the State shows that the increase during the 20th Century were changes from general payments, the same for all, to a more direct type payment for groups in special categories.<sup>2</sup>

In the Swedish government investigation of women's and men's economic power and economic resources<sup>3</sup> (SOU 1998:6 p.138) the growth of the Swedish welfare state in relationship to expenditure was characterized through the use of R. Ohlsson's categories. Ohlsson used comparisons of cost distribution over four different categories or stages to capture the growth and changes of the Swedish

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<sup>1</sup> Gender is defined as the structural, relational and symbolic differentiations between women and men. (Acker, 1989:238)

<sup>2</sup> 1. This might seem somewhat paradoxical given that the definition of the Swedish model of the welfare state is based on universal provisions established by social rights instead of need assessed state contributions. However, universal provisions were developed in terms of different categories. For example child support payments went to all households with children and were not need-dependent. Thus families without minor children did not receive this benefit.

<sup>3</sup> 2. The Swedish committee on the distribution of economic power and economic resources between women and men published its report in SOU 1998:6 *Ty makten är din... Myten om det rationella arbetslivet och det jämställda Sverige*. The report is abbreviated in this text by the acronym EPER, representing "economic power and economic resources."

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welfare state. These categories were the night watchman state, life-cycle redistribution, risk insurance and support for the disadvantaged. The changes in public expenditures according to Ohlsson's categories can be seen in Table 1, The public expenditures in Sweden 1920, 1950 and 1990 (%).

Table 1. *Public expenditures in Sweden 1920, 1950, and 1990 (%)*

|                               | 1920 | 1950 | 1990 |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Night Watchman's State        | 51   | 41   | 16   |
| Life-cycle Transfers          | 30   | 38   | 45   |
| Risk Insurance                | 13   | 14   | 30   |
| Support for the disadvantaged | 6    | 9    | 9    |
| Total                         | 100  | 100  | 100  |

Source: Ohlsson (1997), SOU 1998:3

Ohlsson defines the night watchman state as including general civil service jobs, defense, societal protection and the legal system. In the life-cycle transfers are included costs for parental insurance, child support, day care, education, support for studies in higher education, old-age pensions and old-age care. Costs assigned to risk insurance include sick leave insurance, workers compensation, early disability pensions and unemployment insurance as well as labor markets political measures and health care. The last category, support for the disadvantaged, includes support for high illness costs, handicap reimbursement, help to families with disabled children, housing supplements and social assistance as well as auxiliary pensions addition, foreign aid and refugee help.

As costs for the Swedish welfare state increased, total costs for the core services of the nation state decreased as a percentage of total costs. Instead costs increased for what can be seen as redistribution costs over an individual's life cycle. Risk insurance costs were also an increased part of the public collective financing. These two areas, life-cycle transfers and increased risk insurance, can be seen as defining the characteristics of the Swedish welfare state and are of central importance for recasting the role of gender in the welfare state.

Ohlsson also took the three categories, life-cycle transfers, risk insurance and support to the disadvantage, and analyzed which ages during the different time

periods received benefits. He found that the development of the Swedish welfare state showed that more resources went from younger to older. That is, more resources were spent on pensions, care for the elderly and health care than on school, child support and day care. But even individuals in their working prime were increasing their share of the public spending.

Moreover, although men were responsible for 35% more of public spending in 1920 this decreased to only 10% more in 1990. Most of this could be accounted for by the amount of public spending used for old-age pensions. Women lived longer than man and consequently the amount of money spend on general pensions were higher for women than men.

The increased growth of the public sector and the consequent shift in the emphasis of the function of the state increased both the popularity for the Swedish welfare state and the dependency upon the welfare state. As spending increased shifts from majority spending on young families with children to older citizens and to employed individuals made the welfare state an integrated part of every individuals life. Most of the specially designated programs, as well as life-cycle transfers were carried out through developments of the concept of social rights and the enhancement of the concept of citizenship.

A. Nyberg (1997) described this growth of the Swedish welfare state in terms of the different consequences it had on men and women. Nyberg states that men were changed to factory workers and women became housewives.. Hirdman (1994) discusses the changes to a welfare state by describing a shift from a housewife's contract 1 in the 1920s, with possibility of limited integration primarily for unmarried women, to a housewife's contract 2 during the 1940s and 50s. During this period in the development of the welfare state a number of women at a political level were reformulating the gender conflict as a matter of family policy. Even though the Swedish welfare model is commonly looked at by outside researchers as the model that has been most successful in promoting the social and economic rights and equality of women (Daly 2000; Duncan 1996; Lewis 1993; Sainsbury 1994, 1996) Swedish feminist researchers have pointed-out that the Swedish welfare state is a two-edged sword (Hirdman, 1990, 1994).

Scandinavian feminists have pointed out that the Scandinavian woman has gone from a dependency on an individual man to a dependency on the welfare state. (Hernes, 1987, Waerness, 1990). Yvonne Hirdman means that women left a contract as housewife in the 1930s to enter an equality contract with the state in the 1970s. But she point out that this "equality contract" maintained gender hierarchy and established new forms of segregation. The Swedish Committee on

the distribution of economic power and economic resources between women and men (EPER) points out that Scandinavian researchers also have described women as "junior partners" in the Swedish welfare state. Women are integrated into the welfare state only if they behave as men (Borschorst & Siim, 1987, cited in SOU 1998:6).

We can summarize the position of women in the growth of the Swedish welfare state by depicting women as forming a type of alliance with the State. The welfare state has strengthened a women's position by creating the circumstances necessary for her to achieve economic independence from an individual man. The development of social and economic rights as well as changed tax status opened up a possibility and promise of gender equality. At the same time as Sweden developed a labor market for women through expansion of the public sector (education, health, day-care) it put a premium on typical male behavior patterns and male use of time. Both risk insurance categories and life-cycle transfers were based on paid work and thus could be thought to contribute to an unstated understanding of priority of paid labour, in the eyes of the Swedish state, as more important than unpaid labor. This was emphasized additionally by the nature of transfers system, which were based on paid full-time employment. Since both paid work and full-time work was the standard for the male worker, women with a large proportion of unpaid care work within the family and with part-time employment within the labor market were thought not to fair as well as their male counterparts (Orloff 1993; Sainsbury 1996).

This popular conception is challenged in an interesting article by Anita Nyberg (2001). Using data comparing disposable income and wage income for 1975 and 1994 for individuals in different types of families, Nyberg was able to separate wage income from transfer systems and analyze differences of distribution of individual income between women and men. Nyberg was also interested in how much the Swedish welfare state was able to decrease differences. Nyberg shows that even though women's wage income is lower than men in all categories of different households<sup>4</sup> it has become more equal in 1994 than 1975. Furthermore, Nyberg means that the Swedish model for transferring income, together with the tax system, decreases income differences between men and women, increase women's economical independence from men, and increases a woman's possibilities to create and maintain an independent household.

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<sup>4</sup> Different households examined were single adults without children, Single adults with children, Couples with children, and Couples without children.

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### **The Segregated labor Market.**

One of the defining characteristics of the Swedish welfare state is its base in full employment. The 1970s saw dramatic changes in the consensus agreement between workers and owners in the Swedish model. The consensus brought about in 1939 (Saltsjöbadsavtalet) whereby workers and capital interests arranged a compromise solution in favor of increased economic growth had come to an end. Workers felt that the natural step towards economic democracy could not be obtained through consensus and once again strikes and lockouts began to appear in labor relationships. The government intervened by agreeing to legislative measures to enhance the position of the worker in relationship to capital. During this time a series of labor friendly reforms were instituted including laws regulating co-determination, workers compensation, working environment, handicapped workers rights, leaves of absence for political and union participation.

In the beginning of the 1970s tax laws concerning taxing families and the tax independence of women was changed as was the rights of women to early pensions. Women became independent taxable subjects. The labor market for women increased with the increase in the development of social services provided by the State. The expansion of day care for children and care of the elderly provided a new labor market for many women. Even though women were accorded a place in the working world, their place was not similar to men.

As the EPER studied showed the labor market is segregated both in terms of hours worked (full or part-time employment) and also in terms of the contract of employment (permanent or temporary). Men are more often employed 35 hours or more per week and more often are contracted as a permanently employed worker. (See Table 2 below)

Table 2. *Percent of women and men according to working time and employment contract as well as unemployed and under-employed in percent 1996*

|                         | <b>Women</b> | <b>Men</b> |
|-------------------------|--------------|------------|
| <b>40 hours or more</b> |              |            |
| Permanently employed    | 35.1         | 64.9       |
| Temporary employed      | 44.3         | 55.7       |
| <b>35 - 40 hours</b>    |              |            |
| Permanently employed    | 42.2         | 57.8       |
| Temporary employed      | 48.7         | 51.3       |
| <b>20 - 34 hours</b>    |              |            |
| Permanently employed    | 65.7         | 34.3       |
| Temporary employed      | 67.7         | 32.3       |
| <b>1 - 19 hours</b>     |              |            |
| Permanently employed    | 66.5         | 33.5       |
| Temporary employed      | 67.5         | 32.5       |
| Unemployed              | 44.7         | 55.3       |
| Underemployed           | 70.2         | 29.8       |

Source: Calculated from Statistic central bureau and AKU (Work participation Statistics).

quoted in SOU 1998:6, p.86

Time and type of employment are not the only difference between men and women within the Swedish labor market. Many of the women in the Swedish labor market are employed in women-dominated professions. The EPER study concluded however that in the 1980s gender segregation in the labor market started to change. But it changed so that women's position in the labor market became more like men. More women became employed work time increased and women strengthened their position within academic professions and even in professions that did not demand higher education.

Thus even if one could argue that since the 1970s equality between men and women has increased in the Swedish labor market, inequality between different groups of men and women has increased as a consequence of the changing labor



market following the recession in the beginning of the 1990s and the consequences for the public sector. Women and men without higher education, single parents and large portions of immigrant groups have had difficulty in entering the labor market and once employed to maintain their position. At the same time well-educated women with good career possibilities have benefited from programs of equality within the Swedish society. (SOU 1998:6 p.95)

Table 3 shows the changes in the percentage of older men and women in the work force from 1970 to 1998.

Table 3. *Per cent of the Swedish population with employment. Ages 55-64.*

|      | <b>Men</b> |        | <b>Women</b> |         |
|------|------------|--------|--------------|---------|
|      | 55 – 59    | 60 -64 | 55 – 59      | 60 - 64 |
| 1970 | 91.0%      | 80.2%  | 50.7%        | 37.1%   |
| 1980 | 87.7%      | 69.0%  | 68.8%        | 41.0%   |
| 1990 | 87,8%      | 63.2%  | 79,2%        | 53.9%   |
| 1998 | 83.6%      | 54.3%  | 78,4%        | 45,2%   |

Source: Riksförsäkringsverket

We see that even older women increased their participation in the labor market and by 1990 had gained in parity with men but the decrease in the number of employed people in Sweden which occurred with a shrinking work force had the effect of leveling even more the position of women in comparison to men in the work force for those women aged 55-59. The change in the percentage of the oldest workers, 60-64, still in the work force was decimated both for the ranks of older men and older women between 1990 and 1998. However, the later part of 1990s saw a dramatic increase in the number of long-term sickness primarily among women. In 2000, 63 per cent of all long-term sicknesses were reported as women. Women are younger than men who are long-term ill, they more often have psychiatric diagnoses, and less frequently are they able to return to work than their male colleagues.

Women have lower wages than men. Vertical gender segregation of the labor market is one reason for wage discrimination. The EPER study presents vertical segregation within the labor market by showing that women's chances to reach higher positions in a work organization are worse than men's, and women are

more often in dead end jobs, that is jobs without development or advancement possibilities.

There are usually two reasons given for vertical segregation. The first group of reasons usually put the blame on individual factors such as incompatibility of raising a family and establishing a career, m, and lack of competent and qualified women.

However, research has shown that institutional factors and not individual factors are more likely to be behind the vertical segregation in the Swedish labor market. Meyerson and Petersen (1997) have shown that women at the highest level of management in Swedish business community have a higher education than men in similar positions. Furthermore if one compares women and men with the same education, women's possibility for advancement to top managerial positions is much less than men. Meyerson and Petersen summarize their findings by stating that at every educational level, women are placed at a lower job position than a man

When women do obtain a higher position in the job market their wages are less than men. A high proportion of women in a profession increases the risk for low wages. And in a women dominated work place, a man has a better possibility of being boss than he would have had at a male dominated work place. These empirical facts have been interpreted by the EPER study that it is not unreasonable to think that women as well as employers prefer ambitious, energetic, healthy men when recruiting for top positions in an organization or company.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the empirical facts discovered behind the segregated Swedish labor market clearly show that gender discrimination is normative. That is, it exists within the culture and the expectations of society. Normative models can and do change, but change is gradual and discrimination is concealed even from the consciousness of those that are part of a discriminatory culture.

Jonung (1997) has studied the gradual changes in the Swedish segregated labor market and has posed the question if gender segregation of the labor force has decreased. Jonung discovered that between 45 and 65% of women (or men) would have to change occupations in 1990 for women to obtain the same occupational distribution as men. But gender segregation has changed since 1960 even if it is difficult to say if this change is significant. Jonung points out that if we accept that there is bound to be a difference between male occupations and female, it would still take between 100 and 150 years at the present rate to obtain an acceptable integrated Swedish labor market.

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<sup>5</sup> SOU 1998:6, p.116

Changes in segregation within the labor market are the result of women moving into male dominated occupations during the 1960s and the 1970s. During the 1980s Sweden increased the percentage of the employed population and women moved into traditional male occupations. However, in the 1990s the number of employed males decreased. The decrease was most prevalent in traditional male occupations but at the same time more men remained in traditional women occupations such as teachers.

After years of women moving into male dominated occupations, the change in the labor force has indicated that more integration within the job market is being accomplished by men moving into traditional female occupations. Men also have better career chances if they establish themselves within traditionally women dominated occupations.

### **The Segregated University.**

#### **The 1977 and 1993 University Reforms: Increased Equality?**

From 1965 to 1979, the number of young people studying for a higher degree of education in Sweden decreased, from 13% of those born 1948 (by the age of 21) to 10% of those born 1958 (by the age of 21, 1979).

In Sweden one of the most important reforms in higher education took place effective 1 July 1977, the New Higher Education reform. One of the reasons behind this reform was to increase equality in relationship to access to higher education: equality based on gender, social and economic background and other factors which might function discriminatory would no longer have the same importance in judging acceptance to the University.

Studies available, which assessed the immediate results of the reform, were influenced by the decrease in the number of students that continued on to higher education. When these individuals were compared in terms of their class and gender background with students from earlier cohorts it was found that class differences were greater among men than women. This was because more men from the higher social classes continued on to university than women. In all three cohort groups studied (1948, 1953 and 1958) the difference was 10% more men in the highest social class group that studied than women in this group. In the three lower social class categories<sup>6</sup> the difference between men and women in social class varied but was never higher than 3%. (Svensson, 1981)

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<sup>6</sup> Social class was defined through the students fathers occupation and education and were categorized as and academic profession and persons in higher managerial positions; managers, businessmen and civil servants with theoretical education in lower white-collar

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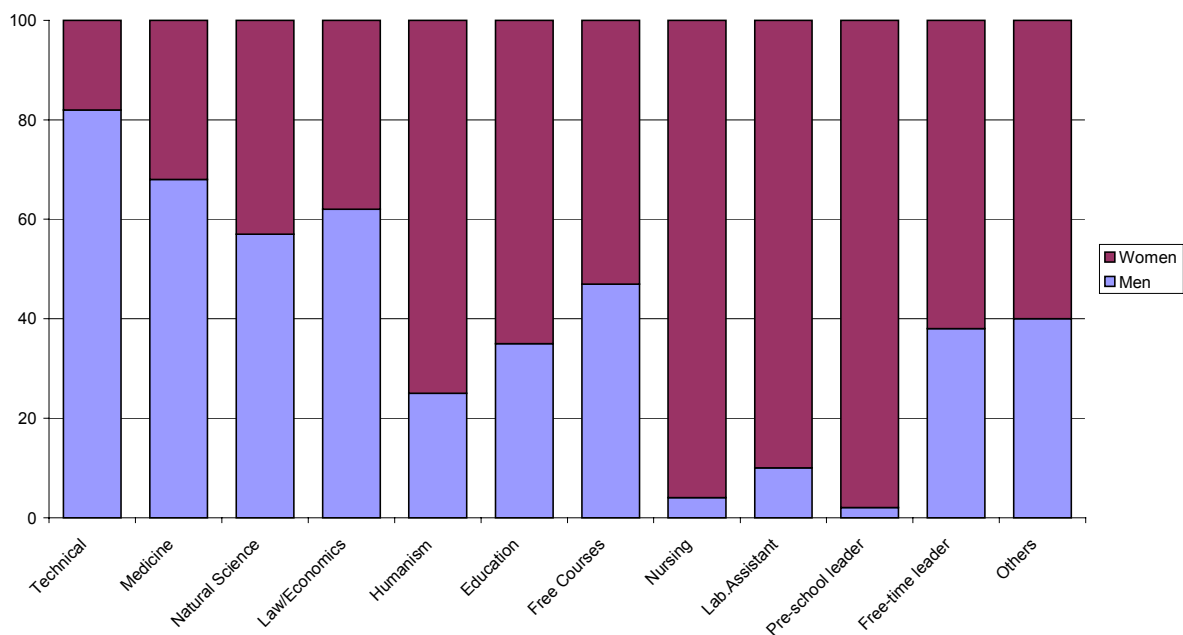
Even if percentage of students starting higher education decreased most for individuals from the upper class (students from the working class continuing on to higher university education, during the time of analysis, was never more than 7%), the decrease in the number of individuals that continued on to higher education was more prevalent among women.

In relationship to social class and gender and the university during the period from 1968 to 1979, after the equality reform of 1977 it was not only social class differences that increased but also the gap between men and women.

The 1977 higher education reform increased the number of educational programs that could be classified as higher education. Higher education was classified into 12 educational programs: 1) Technical, 2) medicine, 3) Natural Science, 4) Law and Economics, 5) Humanism, 6) Education, 7) Free Courses, 8) Nursing, 9) Laboratory assistant, 10) Pre-school teacher, 11) Recreation pedagogue, 12) Others. The first seven named groups were part of higher education before the 1977 reform.

The newer higher educational programs (8-12 above) were dominated by educational programs for nursing and pre-school teachers.

**Diagram 1. Educational Programs - 1977 and Relationship Men/Women**



positions; managers, businessmen and civil servants without theoretical education in lower white-collar positions; farmers; blue-collar workers

Diagram 1 shows the relationship between men and women within the different educational programs for the cohort group born 1958.

Table 4 shows the relationship between traditional university programs and courses and the new educational programs in terms of programs followed by men and women with high or lower social class background.

Table 4. *Distribution between traditional and new educational programs at institutes of higher education among different categories of students. (%)*

| <b>Programs of Study</b>    | <b>Men (Class)</b> |                | <b>Women (Class)</b> |              |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------|
|                             | Upper              | Middle/Working | Upper                | Middle/Work. |
| Traditional Fields of Study |                    |                |                      |              |
| Educational Programs        | 70                 | 50             | 36                   | 23           |
| Individual Courses          | 24                 | 34             | 29                   | 19           |
| New Educational Programs    | 6                  | 16             | 36                   | 57           |
| Total                       | 100                | 100            | 100                  | 100          |

If we just look at the students who continued along the classical educational tradition of the University we find that besides social and class differences there are even difference between genders. Men from higher social class groups almost without exception are, after the 1977 reform, still enrolling in the traditional university educational programs and courses. The newer educational programs designed to increase equality were being filled by women and primarily women from the middle and working classes. The new educational reform did make some leeway in recruiting from the middle and working class but at the expense of further segregating differences in education between women and men.

The next period of radical reform in the Swedish Universities occurred in 1993. The assimilation of previous educational programs not considered within the university with the 1977 reform had by the end of the 1980s the effect of increasing the percentage of a cohort group continuing on to higher education after gymnasium to 20% (from a low of 10% of the cohort group born 1958).

After the 1993 reform, the number of students continuing on to higher education continued to rise and reached 36 per cent in the academic year 1997/98. (U99)

The 1993 university reform was designed to de-centralized financing and organization for higher educational institutions. However, the government policy of enlarging the system of higher educational was still an element of governmental steering. Not only was the system of higher education subjected to enlargement and to the birth of many small local colleges, but also government policy was that 70 per cent of the new places in higher education were to be in subjects related to natural sciences. After the reform of 1993, a series of minor reforms took place designed to increase the number of colleges holding a university status and also designed to increase the number of women faculty at higher levels, such as professor.

The result of the changes in higher education can be seen by the increase in the number of universities in Sweden. Presently, 2002, there are 11 universities in Sweden and two specialized institutions of higher education and research. Besides universities the number of university colleges in Sweden are now 23, and some of these are permitted to offer post graduate degrees.

As was mentioned above, the 1977 reform by incorporating educational programs previously not designated as universities studies into programs of higher education, the number of women in higher education increased. This was called a *terminological discovery* by the critics of the 1977 reform. That is, a broad recruiting base was constructed by including shorter and more applied educational programs into the concept of "higher education." (Svensson, 1981) Previously, the term higher education in Sweden referred to a University education.

The reforms of 1993, primarily increasing the number of places of higher education, continued this trend. Although women in the new system of higher education were already in 1979 almost half of the student body, it might be more appropriate to look at the number of examinations (completion of programs) to understand the change in higher education in Sweden and what looks like a feminization of higher education. Table 5 shows the number of men and women awarded a university exam 1910-1998.

Table 5. *Number of men and women obtaining a basic degree in Swedish higher education 1910-1998*

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Total number</b> | <b>% women</b> |
|-------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 1910        | 800                 | 8%             |
| 1920        | 1000                | 10%            |
| 1930        | 1400                | 14%            |
| 1940        | 1900                | 26%            |
| 1950        | 2600                | 27%            |
| 1960        | 4700                | 34%            |
| 1970        | 16000               | 38%            |
| 1993/94     | 33972               | 63%            |
| 1994/95     | 34191               | 59%            |
| 1995/96     | 32195               | 58%            |
| 1996/97     | 35235               | 60%            |
| 1997/98     | 34648               | 60%            |

Source: Statistics Sweden 1999, *Utbildningsstatistisk årsbok 1999*

In 1997/98 women in Sweden accounted for over 60% of degrees in the Humanities and Theology (67%), Teacher training (78%), Natural science (61%), and Health-related science (88%). In only two areas were awarded degrees obtained by women under 40% of total awarded degrees: Technology (20%) and Agriculture and forestry (39%).<sup>7</sup>

It was not only that women continued in higher education by mostly taking exams in highly segregated subjects and educational programs. Also the increase in students within higher education took place at new colleges without research resources. The number of women students at local colleges is much higher than at the traditional Swedish universities. Anett Schenk (2002) estimates that the number of students at the new colleges in Sweden is about 68% as opposed to about 51% at the older universities. Even the number of women faculty, including women professors is higher at the new colleges. Schenk (2002) argues that these new institutions do not have the same level of prestige and do not offer the same entry into the labor market as the older institutions. A comparison of salaries for faculty shows that they are higher at older institutions. Furthermore, gender divisions show that men prefer older research oriented

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Sweden 1999, *Utbildningsstatistisk årsbok 1999*.

institutions and maintain their preferences for traditional educational programs. The results of gender division following the 1993 Educational Reform together with the increase in the number of new colleges has been called by some researchers the “*hidden binary system*” of Swedish higher education.<sup>8</sup> The binary structure has consequences for both students’ contact with research during their education and for a future academic career at these two types of higher education institutions.

### **The labor market and the university**

Sweden experienced a severe recession between 1991 and 1993 with more than 600,000 jobs disappearing (or one of every 8 jobs in Sweden). The economic recovery, which occurred between 1993 and 1999, resulted in the creation of 200,000 jobs. However, the number of people employed in Sweden is still lower than in 1990. The number of individuals between the ages of 20-64 in the working force went from 86% in 1990 to 75% in 1999. Unlike other countries the recession did not take its toll from the older working population, instead young people in Sweden delayed their entry into the working force.

According to Gunnar Hedin (2001) the weak labor market in Sweden is one of the reasons which delayed the entry of young people into the working force. Almost all students continued their education on to gymnasium after the basic 9 years of education and a larger proportion continued on to higher academic education after gymnasium. In 1990 70% of Swedish youth were established within the labor force at the age of 20. By 1999 the corresponding level was not reached until the age of 27. If we look more closely at statistics of establishment age for men and women and control for those with at least one parent born in Sweden, we see that 80% of the male cohort is established in the labor market at 27 but for women this level of establishment is not reached until they are 33 years old.<sup>9</sup>

Women established themselves later within the working population than men. One explanation, according to Hedin is that women are in higher education longer than men. That is, the feminization of the university can be seen as a place of containment for women with a weak job market.

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<sup>8</sup> Schenk, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> the age of establishment is much higher for Swedish youngsters born in Sweden with both parents born outside of Sweden. Men reach a cohort establishment level of 80% at 34 years of age, while women do not reach this level until at 39 years of age.

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When women are established in the working force, their wages are lower than men's. EPER stated the situation as follows:

Women have a lower return on their education than men with the same educational level. Especial low returns can be found in those professions which are dominated by women; 2.2% per educational year for women and 2,8% for men. This can be compared with 4% return for men in men dominated professions. Women with the same education as men have lesser possibility to a successful career, and women in higher managements positions have a better education than men.<sup>10</sup>

Examples of the relationship of men's to women's wages can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. *Men's wages as a percent of women's in Sweden, for different branches*

|                                 |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Computers,<br>Telecommunication | 105.4 |
| Forestry                        | 104.8 |
| Commerce                        | 104.2 |
| Industry                        | 104.0 |
| Government                      | 103.6 |

(Source: Löneanalys AB, quoted in Dagens Industri 17/01-02)

The increase in Sweden in higher education during the 1990's resulted in more than 100 000 additional students in higher education. The total number of students had increased by 80% during the 1990s. And 60% of these students are women. But exams show once again the pattern that was seen in the 1977 reform: within the health sciences, nearly 90% of the newly examined 2000/01 were women while the percentage of women of exams in teaching was 80% and nearly 70% in humanities and theology. Change in categories.

### **What has happened? New patterns of segregation**

When we present the changes both in the labor market and the university as a designed policy of the Swedish welfare state to increase gender equality, we are faced with the same paradox that politically active women in Sweden faced in

<sup>10</sup> SOU 1998:6 Betänkande från Kvinnomaktutredningen, p.119.

the 1920s. Although Swedish women obtained suffrage in 1920s as well as legal rights of majority and authority in marriage, eligibility for a number of public offices and access to a number of educational institutions and schools<sup>11</sup>, they experienced themselves as excluded as ever. Elin Wägner described it as a "Negro state within the state."<sup>12</sup> Yvonne Hirdman describes this as a matter of *organized exclusion*.<sup>13</sup> That is, women became separated into women's organizations, and thus issues they were involved with became labeled as women's issues. The reaction to this isolation was the eternal hope of education. Hirdman mentions this as well articulated in the radical free-thinking women's magazine *Tidevarvet*, although future feminist analysis defined it as a period of tension between problems arising from idea of equality among the sexes and those theories related to differences between the sexes.<sup>14</sup>

Much of the early feministic movement in Sweden, sustained by Social Democratic feminist of the time, resolved this feeling of organized exclusion by defining a special womanly sphere of activity. This sphere became a field of equality similar to a male sphere. A womanly sphere had a right to a special political role dealing primarily with mothers, children and the home. Yvonne Hirdman talks about a genus contract at this time and places the continual segregation of women into a structural systematic theoretical framework. But this genus contract understanding of the political position of women in the development of the welfare state effectively negated the question of rights of equality between the sexes. Equality was sidetracked by the position taken in the debate between sameness and difference between the sexes.

Although relevant for absorbing differences between rights and equality during the 1940s and 1950s the special women sphere of existence changed in Sweden during the 60s and 70s. The housewife contract, the idea of uniting sexual differences within a similar unit, the family, changed to what Hirdman calls an Equality contract during 1960-1975 and then, following Hirdman's contract evolutionary perspective, to an Equal Status contract in contemporary society. The welfare state and its development with a strong security net grounded in the rights of the working class was a locomotive for changes in national policy between the sexes. No longer was the family connected to paid labor through a breadwinner model accepted as an internal division of labor in the "little life." The Social Democratic Labor Party stated in 1969 that there were strong reasons for making the two-income family the standard in the planning of long-term

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<sup>11</sup> See Y. Hirdman, 1994, *Women – From Possibility to Problem?* Research Report, No. 3, 1994. Arbetslivscentrum: Stockholm.

<sup>12</sup> *Tidevarvet*, no. 3, 8-12, 1923.

<sup>13</sup> *op.cit.* s.14

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.* p..14

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changes in social insurance.<sup>15</sup> For Hirdman, the analysis of changes in gender during different periods of the growth of the Swedish welfare model meant that "women's status as citizens improved when their lives became more like men's."<sup>16</sup>

However, the review of both the labor market and changes in higher education suggest that, in fact, women never became more like men. Movements towards equality in the job market and in education show clearly that the effects of legal reforms were minimal and changes gradual. Although women increased their number both in paid employment and within higher education, they were strongly segregated in both fields.

The strong emphasis on different spheres for women did not evaporate with a change to a two-income family and defining gender neutral systems in life-cycle transfers with social insurance. It is true that women were admitted into spheres of life traditionally occupied by men but they were admitted through terminological inventions, such as incorporation into higher education of already existing applied educational programs, or through organized exclusion as in the binary system of education at newer colleges without research resources or within a segregated work market.

The feminization of the Swedish university and the delayed entry of women into the work force also suggest that we can question the ambivalent role of the Swedish welfare system which critical researchers had already presented as a dilemma in the middle of the 1980s. For example, Borchorst & Siim (1984) meant that there seemed to be a double relationship between women and the Scandinavian welfare states: "On the one hand, in different ways the state has helped produce and reproduce the sexual division of labor and male domination. But on the other hand the state has also in certain areas helped to change the sexual division of labor and male dominance and has attempted to create a greater equality between men and women, especially on the labor market and within the educational system."<sup>17</sup> In view of the effects of both the segregated labor market and institutional educational reforms almost twenty years since this statement, we can say that what was designed to create equality according to Borchorst and Siim, the labor market and the educational system, continued to reproduce patterns of male domination.

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<sup>15</sup> Cited in Hirdman, s.26. *Jämlikhet. Första rapporten från SAP-LO:s arbetsgrupp för jämlikhetsfrågor*. Prisma. Borås, 1969, p.102.

<sup>16</sup> Hirdman (1994) p.32

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Birte Siim, "The Scandinavian Welfare States – Towards Sexual Equality or a New Kind of Male Domination?" in *Acta Sociologica* 1987 (30), 3/4: 255-270. p.256.

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The Swedish welfare state in terms of life-cycle transfers has decreased the differences in individual women and individual men's disposable income in different household categories between 1975 and 1990. It is hard to agree with Nyberg's assessment that this means that women have become stronger in their economic independence from men. Nyberg also points out that even if a woman that lives together with a man is less economically dependent on him today than in 1970 because of her own income through paid work, if she separates from him her possibility to support herself and her children through paid work decreases rapidly. Thus, paradoxically a working woman today is more tied to her situation because her fall-back position or exit-possibility of living alone with her children is worse. Transfers have increased for the single parent and the possibility to maintain an independent household solely through employment has decreased. It was easier for the single parent to support themselves through paid employment in the 1970s than in the 1990s.<sup>18</sup> Thus we can see after changes in the labor market during the 1990s recession and restructuring, that the segregated labor market available to women in Sweden keeps women in their partner relationships by closing ranks on single parents and increasing their dependence for disposal income on state transfers.

The Swedish welfare model was praised for putting so many of its women into the labor market. This led to an interpretation among critical researchers that the Swedish welfare state approached gender neutrality by making women look more like men. It promoted the ideas of social rights based on wage incomes as gender neutral. Today we can see that women are delaying their entrance into the job market and also that women in the labor force are leaving the labor market through long-term sickness absence. The most interesting outcomes of changes in the Swedish welfare model are the effects of the changes designed to create in the labor market when coupled to the reforms in the Swedish system of higher education. These changes were not sufficient to recast the role of gender in the Swedish welfare state. On the contrary, they produced a vocabulary of equal status while perpetuating organized exclusion.

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<sup>18</sup> Nyberg op.cit

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