“Jämställdhet”: Analyzing the Analysts and Mastering the Swedish Gender Discourse
by
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Thesis Introduction

In a famous Indian parable, six blind men feel different parts of an elephant’s body. Upon comparing notes, they discover that their idea of the elephant’s appearance differs drastically. Depending on the part that they touched, the elephant is variably described as a “wall,” “spear,” “snake,” “fan,” “rope” or a “tree.” Limited by their partial exposure to the animal, the six men disagree on the elephant’s physical appearance. As one interpretation of the tale pontificates, “How can anyone describe the whole until he has learned all the parts?” (Kuo, 1976: 85)

In this thesis, the “elephant” is Sweden, or more specifically, the nature of gender equality in Sweden. Sweden has long been a subject of avid academic scrutiny by mainstream as well as feminist social scientists. These analysts come from an assortment of academic and social science disciplines, ranging from sociology to economics to history to political science, all approaching the topic of Swedish gender equality from different perspectives. This varied discourse has presented divergent, sometimes even conflicting views on Sweden and its gender performance. Thus, Sweden appears as a disjointed “elephant,” with varying interpretations of its form emerging from the different disciplines and key thinkers.

The goal of this thesis is to map out the full shape of the Swedish welfare-gender discourse by “analyzing the analysts” writing from their various academic disciplines’ viewpoints and placing these thinkers in “conversation” with each other. It shows where their responses have diverged or converged from an academic perspective, and by doing so, charts out the development of the discourse by comparing diverse academic approaches to different but related issues. The first
objective of this thesis, in this regard, is fairly straightforward—it is to present a comprehensive explication and reading of each author and analyze them individually. Subsequently, the second objective of the thesis builds on top of the first: To demonstrate how these thinkers, and more broadly speaking, their academic disciplines, have approached the same issue from differing angles. If the first objective is to sketch out the individual parts, the second objective then connects these parts together. While much has been written about Sweden and its gender equality, the original contribution of this thesis is to stitch the different components of the discourse together and create a comprehensive picture of Swedish gender equality that cuts across the different academic disciplines, a “full elephant,” so to speak.

Before proceeding, several limitations need to be articulated to ensure the cohesiveness of this project. First, it would be beyond the scope of this thesis to blanket the entire discourse and all the authors writing in it. Rather, this thesis is confined to considering the authors who best represent their disciplines and positions, with the tacit assumption that they serve as the foremost ambassadors of the discourse. The authors are selected based on their depth and breadth in covering their individual subject matters, and while patches in covering the discourse are inevitable, the aim is to present as comprehensive a discussion of Swedish gender literature as possible.

Second, in researching this thesis, it became clear that the sociological discipline has written the most extensively on the Swedish welfare state, and it is correspondingly given the most attention here. In fact, this thesis takes two disciplines as its core comparison: sociology and political science, with Gosta Esping-Andersen
and Diane Sainsbury respectively as their disciplines’ main representatives. The reasons for this are twofold. First, Esping-Andersen’s influence across the entire discourse is undeniable and much of the feminist literature was written in response to his work. Second, the political scientists, next after the sociologists, have written copiously on Sweden, and Sainsbury emerges as one of the most strident voices. As a result, the Esping-Andersen and Sainsbury sociology-political science “clash” defines much of the thesis’s framework, and the economic and historical dimensions of the discourse come in later and lighter in this analytical project.

Finally, this thesis contains several embedded assumptions. The fundamental one is a deep trust in the value of the project: a belief that we cannot obtain a complete understanding of Sweden’s gender equality without examining disparate types of writing and placing them together. While all the thinkers have made great contributions to the discourse, they do so in specific and individualistic ways. Reading any one of them on their own confines us to uni-dimensional interpretations of Sweden. This leads us to another assumption: namely the belief that we can gain an adequate picture of Swedish gender equality from academic writing. This thesis is wholly academic in nature, relying on the idea that many of the assertions within these books are profoundly relevant to the three-dimensional world.

In order to establish the theoretical foundation to adequately “analyze” these thinkers, Chapter One “unpacks” the term “gender equality” and examines its various definitions and implications in depth. The chapter also surveys gender literature to detail various policy suggestions. Though multiple theorists are brought into this chapter to give it weight, they are not the main selected thinkers of the thesis, and no
single framework is given more normative approval over another—this chapter merely establishes the groundwork for the subsequent chapters without imprinting value judgments onto the issue.

Chapter Two provides the Swedish context, detailing Sweden’s historical and political development by highlighting certain facts that are relevant to issues of gender equality. The underlying intention of the chapter is to provide a comprehensive anthology of a common set of facts that the authors are aware of and draw upon. Chapter Two serves as the factual foundation for the thesis, providing important background information to the reader while detailing issues that will be analyzed further in later chapters.

Chapter Three marks the first “analytical” chapter of the thesis, one that takes a broad perspective on the literature by examining the paradigms that have emerged within the welfare-gender discourse. This chapter details a sociology-political science clash in the ways that the mainstream and feminist thinkers have responded to the issue and the differing “meta-frameworks” that they use to frame the discussion of Sweden and its welfare state policies. A time-based dimension is incorporated into this chapter as it tracks how the different authors have responded to each other.

Chapter Four follows up on Chapter Three in detailing the clash between sociology and political science by narrowing in on the specific facts that the selected thinkers use and examining how they overlap or differ. This chapter argues that in terms of factual analyses, the feminist thinkers demonstrate greater similarities and that these feminist positions tend to supersede disciplinary differences.
Chapter Five extracts a single issue from within the discourse and explores the multidisciplinary responses to it. The issue of care is one that factors strongly in all the thinkers, especially in terms of Sweden’s prominent work-family reconciliation policies for women. Furthermore, the issue of care is also one that has great implications for the Swedish welfare state and women in general. The discipline of economics appears for the first time in this chapter.

Chapter Six diverges somewhat from the previous three chapters. While Chapters Three to Five compare how the sociologists and political scientists have approached the welfare-gender issue, Chapter Six acknowledges a separate line of literature: the gender-politics dimension, where the political scientists evaluate the performance of women within the political sphere. This tends to be the main form of literature that has emerged from the political scientists and can be seen as their main contribution to the discourse. It also furthers our understanding of Swedish gender equality from an alternative perspective, one that is more politicized in its outlook.

Chapter Seven serves as a meta-critique of the disciplines and thinkers in general, one that takes both a historical and futuristic perspective on Sweden. This chapter argues that while the contributions of these analysts are comprehensive and noteworthy, the thinkers are inherently limited by the nature of academic writing. This chapter criticizes the analysts’ exclusion of Swedish history as an important element of consideration, but also fleshes out the trajectory of the Swedish welfare state by articulating various contemporary social and political factors that have not been fully regarded by the thinkers. Doing so caps our understanding of the Swedish welfare state by filling in the gaps that have been missed by these analysts.
1. Unpacking The Term “Gender Equality”

“I believe that the rights of women and girls is the unfinished business of the 21st century.”
- Hillary Clinton, US Secretary of State, (Newsweek, 2011)

Introduction

Over the past several decades, there has been a growing international consensus that gender equality is an important subject deserving of rigorous theoretical and policy attention. The analysts in this thesis acknowledge gender equality as an important end-goal for Sweden. Nonetheless, there is no consensus across the board on what “gender equality” means. Neither is there an established agreement on how countries should strive to reach high levels of “gender equality.”

While there is no definitive answer to these questions, this chapter attempts to engage with these issues by considering the philosophical frameworks and paradigms that underlie the concepts of “gender” and “equality.” It examines the possible policy implications of these frameworks and considers the realistic problems that arise when confronting gender inequality. By doing so, this chapter illustrates the multifaceted complexities of the gender question and forms analytical framework that the later analysts are considered within.

1.1. Two Competing Definitions of the Word “Gender”

In much of the public discourse, the intended definition driving the terminology of “gender” is often left unstated, serving as an assumption instead of an explicitly acknowledged position. Nonetheless, the abstract use of the word “gender” can be seen through the lens of “gender-neutral” and “gender-special.” The third,
“gender-free,” is a less common conception of gender and is only used by one selected analyst in the thesis, thus warranting less attention in this chapter.

A) Gender-neutral

The gender-neutral perspective argues that achieving gender equality falls under recognizing the fundamental human rights that belong to everybody. A violation of women’s rights is a violation of the fundamental human dignity that come from having such human rights, and consequently, these women are held back from living “fully human” lives. The gender-neutral perspective minimizes gender differences and sees gender equality as an issue that concerns all individuals, rather than one that involves men and women separately. As Martha Nussbaum argues, “The idea of human dignity is usually taken to involve an idea of equal worth: rich and poor, rural and urban, female and male, all are equally deserving of respect, just by virtue of being human” (Nussbaum, 1999:5).

This gender-neutral perspective is present in the language of many international charters and organizations, where the rhetoric of maintaining human rights and dignity is often used as the underlying justification for “gender equality” measures. Even the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which focuses on women’s rights specifically, explicitly states, “The discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity” (CEDAW, 1979).

As universalist ideals form the basis for gender neutrality, gender-neutral policies tend to be directed at both men and women without special distinctions between them. Authors writing from this position appear to define gender equality as
being gender-blind, arguing that states and welfare policies should view and interact with both sexes equally. They fundamentally dismiss natural or biological differences between the sexes as being a lesser consideration and view men and women from the same lens, asserting that both genders should take on equal and comparable roles both in the public and private sphere.

B) Gender-special

In contrast to the gender-neutral perspective, the gender-special position takes a more “female-focused” or “male-focused” approach. Fundamentally, this position sees men and women as being different, and it advocates treating them as separate entities. From the “woman-focused” perspective, this position might acknowledge that women have distinct biological differences from men, or a heavy history to discrimination to contend with, thus warranting them special consideration. An example of this “woman-focused” and gender-special position can be found in many developing countries, where governments or nonprofit organizations focus on encouraging birth control measures, prenatal care or improving women’s health. This position also takes the stance that the historical, legal, political, and social discrimination against women over the past few centuries create entrenched difficulties that continue reverberate and affect women’s lives, and that governmental policy should focus on women specifically in order to effectively tackle these longstanding problems. Policies like microfinance lending to women, or building girls’ schools are examples of gender-specific policies that seek to reverse such historical disadvantages by singling women out to receive assistance.
From the “men-focused” perspective, the gender-special position might focus on the male behavior, or the male position in society. It characterizes gender equality as something of a middle ground, arguing that achieving it requires changes from the men. Accordingly, such policies try to influence the male behavior in both the private as well as the public sphere. Authors writing from the gender-special position often advocate more active policies, such as pressuring men to play a bigger role in childcare and domestic duties. As such, “gender equality” based on the gender-special position is one that sees men and women from different angles.

We should note that this gender neutral-special dichotomy does not exhaust the range of considering gender. Alternatively, there is the “gender-free/genderless” argument, put forward by feminist philosopher Susan Moller Okin. According to Moller Okin, a gender-structured society has “heavily influenced” discriminatory beliefs about sexual difference and sex roles (Moller Okin, 1989:171). She argues that we should aim for a future where the social construct of “gender” becomes irrelevant, creating a “genderless” or “gender-free” society where a person’s sex become immaterial and it should no longer matter if a child spends more time with one parent over the other (176). As she posits, “a just future would be one without gender…No assumptions would be made about “male” and “female” roles” (171).

To sum up these three positions: the gender-neutral position minimizes gender differences; the gender-special one emphasizes it; the gender-free one advocates abolishing gender as a societal construct entirely. The term “gender,” is clearly complex, and does not have a singular definition or meaning.
1.2. Conceptualizing the Different Forms of Equality.

Though there has been extensive public rhetoric about achieving gender equality, few stop to define fully what this “equality” means, or what form it should take. In reality, many gender measures demonstrate an underlying assumption about the “type” of equality that the policymakers (and our authors) are advocating for. In general, there are two broad ways of thinking about gender equality: equality for the individual, which can be seen from either an equal opportunities or equal outcomes framework, or equality within the family, where we consider the role of marriage and the societal position of men.

1.2.1. Equality for the Individual

A) Gender Equality Based On Equal Opportunities

Gender equality based on an equal opportunity framework creates a “level playing field” between the genders. Based on a framework of fair competition and fair allocation, equal opportunity is based on the idea that “social goods and benefits are distributed fairly among competing parties” (Shrage, 1998: 559). Such goods can refer to high quality education opportunities or well-paying jobs that are kept open to both men and women. The framework of equal opportunities might not necessarily mean that benefits are enjoyed equally by the different genders, but that each sex is not hindered or refrained from pursuing any particular good (559).

Philosophically, the equal opportunity framework can be broken down into multiple concepts. On the one hand, equal opportunities can refer to an ideal of “formal” equality, which is concerned with reversing discriminatory practices against
women and requires that positions or posts that confer superior advantages be open to all applicants. On the other hand, “substantive” equality of opportunity acknowledges that other realistic inequalities may exist, either natural or structural, which constrain the disadvantaged gender from competing fairly for the desired social goods in the first place. Substantive equality of opportunity requires that both genders have similar opportunities to become qualified for such “competition,” or that both genders begin at “equal starting points.”

Legal scholar Lesley A. Jacobs reiterates the dimensions of equal opportunity in terms of fairness. He articulates formal equality as “procedural fairness,” where equal opportunities are based on establishing the basic rules of procedure that guide both the competition for social goods, as well as how the winners are determined (Jacobs, 2004:4). Achieving substantive equality then requires creating “background fairness,” which necessitates equalizing the positions of both genders even before they enter this “competition” for goods and resources (4).

B) Gender Equality Based on Equal Outcomes

Equality of outcomes, also known as equality of results or equality of conditions, is based on equalizing material conditions among individuals or households in society. Unlike equality of opportunity, which gives individuals the potential to achieve equal outcomes and accepts the possibility that they might not, outcome equality requires that the end-enjoyment of such social goods are equal, i.e. that everybody gets “equivalent benefits from our life efforts,” even if this outcome might require an unfair distribution of resources to support traditionally disadvantaged groups over others (Phillips, 2004: 1). According to gender theorist
Anne Phillips, equality of outcome seeks to “equalize where people end up rather than where or how they begin” (1). For equal outcome results, greater state intervention might be necessary to redistribute these social goods.

Yet the framework of outcome equality is also multifaceted: the term “outcomes” could conceivably include abstract measurements such as happiness, income, welfare, resources, power, or other forms of societal calculations. Within a gender framework, outcome equality could take many forms. On the national sphere, it could mean equal political representation between the sexes, or equal male-female education performances. In the work sector, it could mean equal showings in employment indicators or comparable wage structures. In the private sphere, it could imply an equal division of domestic labor between couples.

One possible way of conceptualizing how an equal-outcome society would look is to use a “veil of ignorance,” a heuristic device proposed by philosopher John Rawls. In his expansive book, *A Theory Of Justice*, Rawls establishes a thought experiment: members of a society are placed behind a “veil of ignorance” and attempt to come to a consensus on the basic societal structure of an “original position,” a hypothetical society constructed on the values that these members agree on (Rawls, 1971: 135). In order to get to the original position in a fair and equitable manner, the thought experiment assumes that these parties are fully ignorant of their social position and individual characteristics in this society (136). Though Rawls explicitly defends an equality of opportunity framework, stating, “In all parts of society there are to be roughly the same prospects of culture and achievement for those similarly motivated and endowed,” his veil of ignorance thought experiment appears to get to
an equality of outcome result between the sexes (63). Given that one does not know if he/she is to be reborn as a man or a woman on the other side of the veil, representatives debating the original position would conceivably seek to equalize outcomes between both genders as much as possible. Moller Okin argues this position by asserting that the Rawlsian original position makes us “adopt the positions of others—especially positions that we ourselves could never be in” (Moller Okin, 1989:108). Having men imagine themselves “reborn” as women forces a greater consideration of the “woman question” and an acknowledgment of the “unequal assignment of responsibilities and privileges to the two sexes,” thus leading to the conclusion that gender should become irrelevant in considering individuals’ wage levels, personality or life standards in the original position (103).

1.2.2. Equality Within the Family

A) Marriage and the Household

Marriage has long been an established institution that regulates male-female relations across various human societies. Yet, there has been a tradition of progressive thinkers arguing against marriage and Victorian family structures, asserting that they fundamentally disadvantage women. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, socialist theorist Friedrich Engels asserts that marriage is an intrinsically patriarchal structure that perpetuates sexual and economic inequality between the sexes: women are “tools of men’s lust and mere machines for the generation of children,” polygamy or infidelity remains “men’s privileges,” and women are left vulnerable and financially dependent on their husbands, who see their
“domestic labor” is relatively insignificant (Engels, 1902: 70). To ensure their economic survival, women are then forced to enter “marriages of conveniences.”

Engels is fundamentally advocating for women’s economic emancipation. For Engels, the only way to overthrow this patriarchal social structure is through a socialist revolution that ends private property and transfers the women from the household to the labor market and the factory. Subsequently, marriages based on “sex-love” can emerge (Engels, 1902: 79). As he argues:

> With the passage of the means of production into common property, the individual family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children becomes a public matter. (Engels, 1902: 92)

When the household ceases to become the woman’s main labor site, and society partakes equally in the burden of childrearing, women are subsequently able to enter equal relationships with men. Here, he advocates for collective childcare as an important development that furthers gender equality by freeing women to work.

Moller Okin also highlights an unfair division of labor within marriages that negatively affects gender power dynamics. According to her, female labor is confined to “unpaid work,” and it is traditionally the women who shoulder the majority of the domestic child rearing, mothering and household chores (Moller Okin, 1989: 4). An unfair division of labor in a woman’s private life has spillover effects on her work life, creating a “double burden” on women as they struggle to balance both employment and family. This double burden then affects their job performances or time commitments, causing wives’ wages to lag behind their husbands. Workplace and home inequality reinforce each other, as women come to perceive themselves as benefiting from giving priority to their husbands’ careers (146).
Furthermore, women often suffer an “asymmetrical vulnerability” in the event of a divorce or separation (Moller Okin, 1989: 173). More often than men, women undergo serious “social and economic dislocation” after a divorce as they face heavy financial responsibilities for themselves and their children. As a result, divorced women often suffer a drop in their standard of living, while divorced men enjoy the opposite (160).

Finally, Martha Nussbaum contends marriage and family can be a “major site of the oppression of women.” Limited avenues for recourse means that gender inequality within the household can manifest itself in the form “domestic violence, marital rape, child sexual abuse, under nutrition of girls, unequal health care, unequal educational opportunities, and countless more intangible violations of dignity and equal personhood” (Nussbaum, 2000: 243).

The purpose of this section is not to claim that marriage is an intrinsically negative or disempowering institution. The utility that a woman gets from marriage is deeply subjective and impossible to quantify. Even Martha Nussbaum acknowledges the “love and care” that comes from enjoying a family and emphasizes the important moral values that a family can develop, such as “altruistic concern” and “responsiveness to the needs of others” (Nussbaum, 2000: 242). Nonetheless, all three thinkers demonstrate that the social structure of marriage as it currently stands can perpetuate gender inequality.

B) Changing Male Roles and “Separate Spheres” Ideology

Peripheral to the issue of gender equality within the family is also the notion of the changing male position. Political theorist Terrell Carver argues that the issue of
gender equality is a two-way construct, as “women’s oppression is inexplicable without men” (Carver, 1996:38). Publicly and privately, a shift in the gendered status quo necessitates behavioral changes in men in abstract or practical ways. Such changes possibly include overturning traditional mindsets to accept their wives working, increasing their domestic labor in the household, or adjusting their childrearing roles. These changes are potentially dislocating, requiring a shift in cultural norms or acclimatization to new values.

Underlying much of the debate over shifting gender roles is the shifting notion of masculinity versus femininity. Many traditional societies are governed by the ideology of “separate spheres,” where the women are expected to stay at home with the children while the men “venture out” into the “competitive worlds of work, politics and war” (Coltrane, 1996:27). Many men resist household work for example, for fear of being seen as excessively “feminine.” Scott Coltrane suggests that these general notions of femininity and masculinity are based on subjective, external gender constructions. As he states, “There is nothing intrinsic to cleaning house or tending children that makes it UNmasculine. It is just that we have labeled and accepted these activities as appropriate for women and inappropriate for men. As more men do them, the meaning of gender will begin to change” (234). In contrast, Allan Bloom argues that men have inherent natures that have to be sacrificed to obtain gender equality: “The souls of men—their ambitious, warlike, protective, possessive character—must be dismantled in order to liberate women” (Bloom, 1987: 129).
1.3. Potential Policy Approaches

This section suggests potential policy approaches that are in line with the different philosophical foundations. Though this section structurally reflects the organization of the “equality” section, the dual gender definitions are also factored in.

1.3.1. Policies For Individual Equality

A) In Response to the Equal Opportunity framework

The equal opportunity framework could be based on either a gender-neutral or gender-special perspective, depending on the policy taken. If a country visualized gender equality in the form of equal opportunities between the sexes, then the goal of its policies should be to create that “level playing field” between the sexes, either in procedural fairness or background fairness. One possible form of procedural fairness is a meritocratic education system, where entry into a school is based entirely on academic performance. This would be gender-neutral, as gender does not factor into the consideration of results. Another possible policy comes in the form of anti-discrimination legislation, where companies or schools are not allowed to discriminate against women based on their gender. Both of these measures, however, do not engage with the issue of “background fairness.” This means that even if they are given the opportunities to do so, women might not have the skills or qualifications to compete fairly with the men for entry into these superior positions. Developed countries are actually starting to experience the opposite problem, with girls outperforming boys in schools.
The “capabilities” approach articulated by thinkers like Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum is one possible way of equalizing background fairness. For Sen and Nussbaum, public policies should aim at improving human capabilities—i.e. what people are able “to do” and “to be.” In countries where men and women are facing unequal conditions, governments and international organizations should implement constitutional guarantees that ensure a woman’s “central human functioning capabilities.” These central capabilities include areas such as ensuring women’s bodily integrity, or ensuring a development of senses and imagination through education, literacy and artistic freedom (Nussbaum, 2000: 78). Other important capabilities include the ability to emotionally develop without fear or anxiety, having control over one’s environment either through political or material agency, and finally, Sen’s famous capability—the ability to live life without shame (78). As Nussbaum argues, “given sufficient nutrition, education and other support,” women can become capable of these human functions (110). A capabilities approach intrinsically requires a gender-special philosophy, as it requires the acknowledgement that women’s lower capabilities has been “at least to some extent caused by their being women” and their history of discrimination (110).

B) In Response to the Equality of Outcome framework

If a country’s standard of gender equality were equal outcomes, this would require more active intervention on the part of the state to ensure that women are “pulled up” to perform comparably across the different political, economic and social indicators. Several active measures can facilitate this. An obvious, overt one is a quota system. The Rwandan quota system, for example, has allowed women to enjoy
one of the highest levels of political representation in the world, as the country’s constitution guarantees that women fill 30% of Senate seats and nearly 50% of the lower house in parliament (Powley, 2006: 156). Gender quotas in the political system can be implemented across national and local levels to ensure parity in gender representation throughout the country’s political divisions. Beyond the political sphere, gender quotas in schools or workplaces positions may also encourage a greater gender balance in education and employment performances.

An alternative equal outcomes approach is the principle of comparable worth, otherwise known as pay equity. This policy ensures “equal pay for work of equal value.” Pay equity legislation seeks to identify female-dominated occupations in both the private and public sphere and ensure that the wages in these sectors are on par with those in the male-dominated occupations (Jacobs, 2004: 208). It requires a large state presence and interventionist forms of legislation in order to coordinate such levels of pay equity.

Equal outcome policies necessarily require gender-special consideration, as the thrust of encouraging equal outcomes is to identify inequalities between the genders and correct them through positive, proactive measures. Policies based on an equal outcome philosophy usually lead to a strong “us” versus “them” dichotomy, as the male position in society is the standard that policymakers use to judge how much the women need to be “pulled up.”
1.3.2. Policies for a Work-Family Balance

If we assume that the presence of a “double burden” is a cause of gender inequality, several policies can facilitate women’s work-family balance. Central to this policy is the assumption that women should work, and that the separate spheres ideology is illegitimate. Another important assumption is the idea that women need not be the primary caregivers in a household. Work-family policies include providing daycare centers or instituting mandatory maternity or paternity leave. If facilitating female employment is a country’s priority, states could even go as far as to implement policies that tacitly decrease the incentive to get married or have children, either by increasing taxes for married couples or creating cash or tax benefits for having fewer children. States could also increase incentives for men to take on larger shares of domestic labor.

If, as Nussbaum and Moller Okin point out, the power imbalances between spouses create the potential for violence in households, then implementing measures that encourage female employment ameliorates this internal power discrepancy by giving women more avenues to leave their marriages. It would also mitigate the asymmetrical vulnerability that occurs in the event of a divorce by ensuring that the women have stable sources of income. In fact, Moller Okin goes as far as to say that the state should take an “interventionist approach” and implement an “equal splitting of wages” to recognize the fact that unpaid domestic labor in households is as important as paid labor (Moller Okin, 1989: 181).
1.4. Instrumentality

Thus far, we have assumed that improving women’s quality of life has been characterized as a value in and of itself. In reality however, improving gender equality could be a means to attain a bigger “end,” serving as the springboard to obtain broader social concerns. Such concerns could include improving economic development, reducing poverty, or even reducing the need for immigrant workers. Under an instrumental framework, improving the lives of women becomes the effective medium or an important “first step” to accomplishing these goals. The United Nations, for example, seems to take this stance. As former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan explicitly states, “Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance” (Venneman, 2006). The UN also merges gender equality with other goals, such as democratic governance or crisis prevention, believing the issues to be inter-connected and concomitant. A growing trend has been to favor improving women’s human capital and education resources as a long-term social measure against radical terrorism. Greg Mortenson takes this perspective in *Three Cups of Tea* when he argues that educating women means that they can then educate their sons to make clearer and smarter life decisions, moving them away from radicalism (Mortensen, 2006).

Highlighting the presence of instrumentality is not to imply that it is inherently malicious—it merely illustrates the fact that the “woman question” might not be treated as a stand-alone issue. Many of the selected authors that appear in later
chapters often combine gender issues with other societal concerns in a bid to take a broad perspective on Swedish society as a whole.

### 1.5. Problems and Tensions To Keep In Mind

There appears to an element of naivety surrounding all the gender equality paradigms. First, the gender-neutral perspective ignores the imperfect reality that men and women already have different positions in society. Gender-neutral positions may even encourage gender inequality if they tacitly encourage the perpetuation of current behavior or already-present forms of inequality embedded in the status quo. In contrast, taking a gender-specific position seems to ignore the moral conundrum of whether we can still call something “equality” if it advantages one gender over another, or advocates that both genders should be treated differently.

It also seems guileless to believe that creating equal opportunities for men and women would necessarily translate into gender equality. Years of discrimination and disadvantages might place many women in a position where it is difficult, perhaps even impossible, for them to “catch up” even if countries invested heavily in trying to equalize background fairness. Intangible obstacles like cultural mindsets or family/societal pressures might also mean that opportunities are not actually utilized by the people that they are intended for. Examples include families stopping girls from going to school, or women feeling socially excluded in predominantly male sectors. Equal outcome policies, more so than equal opportunity ones, often come with greater controversy and public debate. The rigorous public response to affirmative action in the US demonstrates how active measures might very easily
become privy to heated rhetoric or politiking. Finally, even if work-family measures were to be implemented, they might not succeed. In Sweden, women are still doing a majority of the housework and childrearing despite vigorous measures by the government to equalize domestic responsibilities.

Furthermore, striving for gender equality might consequently lead to trade-offs in other societal goals. In surveying the literature on gender equality in Sweden, two main trade-offs arise. The first is a demographic trade-off that occurs when the instrumental goals driving gender equality become counterproductive. In the case of Sweden, the underlying goal of increasing gender equality was related to the country’s declining population and concerns over employment. Increasing the labor supply was an instrumental reason behind many of its gender-equal policies and Sweden approached gender equality by encouraging women to work. Yet this conflicts with the population issue, as workingwomen tend to have fewer children—an unanticipated problem on the part of the Swedish government.

A second trade-off, predominantly articulated by thinker Gosta Esping-Andersen, concerns the effects of rising female employment on society’s income distribution and class stratification. As more women become educated and enter the workforce, assortative mating arises as higher-income, well-educated couples pair off, or when women only marry within or above their income brackets. These couples’ higher dual incomes create reverberating consequences on the general income distribution and societal structure of the country, as such couples supersede lower income couples in terms of earning power, as well as their general investments in child-raising. Such couples also tend to have fewer children.
Conclusion

These tensions and trade-offs all demonstrate the difficulty of conceptualizing and implementing a successful plan for gender equality, especially when gender equality intersects with other societal issues. As a whole, gender equality is a complex and multifaceted issue and can take on different forms, positions, and plans. All the analysts approach it differently, arguing their perspectives from various frameworks. As a result of the complexities surrounding this subject, there are strengths and weaknesses in all their positions, and this chapter established the groundwork for us to further analyze the authors in the context of these “gender equality” paradigms.
2. Laying It Bare: Facts About Gender Equality in Sweden

“The Swedish social ethos which has informed its society and culture did not spring fully formed from the head of Zeus, but was molded by the struggles, sacrifices, compromises and hard-bitten stamina of Swedes” (Kent, 2008: ix).

Introduction

While the analysts in this thesis discuss the various legislations and policies in Sweden, many also scrutinize Sweden’s performance vis-à-vis other European or First World countries. The goal of this chapter is ensure that Sweden is given due consideration. To do so, this chapter has two main parts. Part A highlights the development of the Swedish welfare state and its pioneering gender policies to provide relevant background information on the country. For a timeline of these policies, refer to Appendix A. Part B subsequently forms the factual foundation for the rest of the thesis by establishing the country’s quantitative performance in relevant gender areas. This section focuses on presenting a snapshot of Sweden in its current time, providing the contemporary context for the different public and private sector areas that the authors later focus on. While there will be some quantitative acknowledgment of Sweden’s development to this point, it will not be the main goal of the section.

Part A: Important Political Developments in Sweden

2.1. General Swedish History

2.1.1. Rise of the Current Political System

A coup d’état in Sweden in 1809 produced a new constitution transferring the Swedish monarchy’s power over to the Four Estates, comprising of the nobles, the
clergy, the burghers and the landowning farmers (bönder).\textsuperscript{1} By 1866, the Riksdag (Parliament) reform was implemented under great public pressure, changing the Estates system into a bi-cameral Parliament, split into the First and Second Chamber. In 1866, peacefully and almost overnight, Sweden’s aristocratic structure transformed into a democratic one (Scott, 1977: 393). The “old order yielded sulkily but without threats or violence” as the nobility abandoned its prestigious position and the clergy practically vanished (393). The Riksdag functioned in its two-tier form until 1970, when it became a uni-cameral Parliament. By the end of the nineteenth century, two political groups had distinguished themselves: the Liberal Coalition (coalesced in 1900) and the Social Democrats (formed in 1889). Under the leadership of Liberal Coalition leader Karl Staaff, the Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance introduced certain social welfare measures by the end of the nineteenth century, such as the establishment of the social welfare board and a system of old age pensions financed by a new public enterprise (427).

Nonetheless, the manner in which socialism took hold in Sweden was very much defined by the peaceful mentality of the political leaders. Between the 1920s-early 1930s, no single party dominated the Riksdag and “governments changed on average every four years (Kent, 2008: 220). This meant that the Social Democrats did not have the political capital to push forward a sweeping socialization agenda. Furthermore, Social Democrat leader Hjalmar Branting recognized that “they could accomplish their objectives by working within the system” and that social revolution

\textsuperscript{1}Unlike the French Revolution, which witnessed the abolishment of the monarchy entirely, the Swedish monarch remained as the head of state and this official title was never stripped from Bernadotte dynasty. This explains why Sweden is still a constitutional monarchy today, with Carl XVI Gustav as the current King of Sweden.
could be a “gradual transformation” rather than an overnight revolution (Scott, 1977: 431). From the onset, the tone adopted by the Social Democrats was one based on cooperation and coalition-building rather than immediate change.

2.1.2. World War I (1914-1918) and the Great Depression

World War I (WWI) cultivated growing acceptance of welfare ideology among Swedish political leaders and citizens. Prior to WWI, Sweden’s Industrial Revolution in the late half of the nineteenth century saw increased productivity in the country’s agriculture, transportation sectors, and manufacturing industries (Scott, 1977:445-449). This growing affluence created a sense of “deep national pride” throughout society, and the subsequent economic effects of WWI was a traumatic experience for the population. Though the country maintained a strict stance of neutrality during WWI, its economy suffered both during and after the war, as Swedes had to “ration bread, milk, potatoes, and even textiles: coffee was also rationed, which was a serious thing for the heavy coffee-drinking Swedes” (475). In the immediate aftermath of WWI, the country suffered severe unemployment, with almost 25% of the population without work (Kent, 2008: 221). According to historian Franklin D. Scott, “the war had been a shattering experience, psychologically if not physically” (Scott, 1977: 477). Left-wing social democrats demanded the complete abolition of the monarchy; Stockholm witnessed worker demonstrations demanding a socialist republic; and “un-Swedish” food riots and store looting occurred in the aftermath of the war (477).
**A) The Women’s Suffrage Movement**

In response to the growing political discontent of the post-WWI era, the Riksdag, under the leadership of Branting, implemented sweeping suffrage reform in 1918 to expand the male voting base while giving women the right to vote in municipal elections. Prior to that, voting was limited to male citizens, and voting restrictions meant that less than 7% of the population was able to vote (Scott, 1977: 402). Full women’s suffrage was later granted in 1921. Compared to its Scandinavian neighbors, the success of Sweden’s suffrage movement came relatively late (Finland gave women the right to vote in 1906 and Norway did so in 1913). Yet when considering the fact that universal male suffrage was only expanded three years before, and that the organized struggle for women’s emancipation was obtained less than twenty years after it first started in 1903, Ulla Manns argues that “in an international perspective, the Swedish struggle for women’s emancipation was considered successful” (Manns, 2004: 152).

**B) Rise of The “People’s Home”**

In 1929, The Great Depression created another difficult economic situation for the Swedes. According to historian Neil Kent, “Sweden’s economy virtually collapsed” (Kent, 2008: 221). Unemployment surged and unhappiness increased greatly among factory workers and miners, with serious strikes breaking out across the country (222). By 1932, almost 30% of the population was unemployed and only 15.7% of the country’s Gross National Product (GNP) was exported, compared to the country’s 17.7% GNP imports (223). Over the course of the country’s financial crisis, the Social Democrats strengthened their main agenda: the creation of the “people’s
home” (*folkhem*), or the Swedish welfare state. The *folkhem* ideal is a society where “all members of the community should live in harmony, where consensus should reign with no antipathy among social classes” (Scott, 1977: 584). This formed the underlying philosophy for many social democratic ventures in the twentieth century.

### 2.1.3. WWII (1939-1945) and the Establishment of the Swedish Welfare State

It took the problems of the post-WWII era to propel the Social Democrats to power and allow the entrenchment of socialist ideology. When WWII was declared in 1939, Sweden once again declared its neutrality. According to Scott, WWII had a great psychological and social impact on the Swedish collective mindset, establishing an environment that was conducive to the widespread acceptance of social democracy. As he argues:

> In the emergency situation bankers and railroad workers, professors and farmers worked shoulder to shoulder and came to know each other as human beings, not as mere cogs in a social and economic structure. New bases were established for understanding and cooperation and solidarity. The arrogance of class could never be the same after sharing in the same mess line or standing guard together through the long night watch. The severe taxes to which everyone yielded accustomed people to new levels of public expenditure and made it easier to accept heightened postwar charges for social services. (Scott, 1977: 509)

By 1939, the Social Democrats had formed an alliance with the Agrarian Party, forming the partnership that would politically dominate Sweden for almost two generations. Under the leadership of Tage Erlander, the Social Democrats sought to establish a “strong society” that would provide a “vast infrastructure of social services” (Kent, 2008: 241). As a result of the post-WWII mentality, many Swedes supported such ventures.
After the postwar period, “a new purpose and a new design emerged” where “the old society [was] replaced by a new ‘welfare state’” (Scott, 1977: 526). Policies included increasing pensions, making pensions independent from contributions, instituting national health insurance and implementing child allowance grants (525). Between the 1960s and the 1970s, there was a strong public call for jämlikhet, or “equality” with undertones of “social solidarity” (527). There was a growing understanding that the “practical needs of society were paramount” and that the Swedish government was now responsible for the “welfare of the country as a whole” (528). The post-WWII Sweden saw the country start to take shape into its current big-government, welfare state form.

2.2. Sweden’s Population Crisis and the 1930s Wave of Gender Policy

Concurrent to the political developments leading up to the creation of the Swedish welfare state was a demographic crisis, one that greatly concerned the country’s leaders and led to an initial wave of gender reform in the 1930s. These measures had an important influence on the subsequent trajectory of Swedish gender equality.

By 1930, Sweden had started to face a drastically declining birth rate and a shrinking population. By 1937, the birth rate was 11.8 per 1000, while the death rate was 15.6, leading to a natural decrease at the rate of 3.8 per 1000 (Myrdal, 1941: 78). The warning bell of the population problem was first raised with the book *Crisis in the Population Question*, written by Alva and Gunnar Myrdal in 1934, stressing,
“Such a decline was destined to take the form of an incessant and self-perpetuating liquidation of the [Swedish] people” (Myrdal, 1941: 27).

In her book *Nation and Family*, Alva Myrdal outlines several reasons for this declining birth rate: she argues that growing “rationalism” among the Swedish population led to the growing awareness of the physical, social and economic costs of having children. According to Myrdal, “The chief cause of poverty in modern society is children” and that “often, the social conscience refuses to face the realization that there exists a real choice between children and approved standards of life” (Myrdal, 1941: 66 and 76).

### 2.2.1. The Population Commission, 1935

When the Swedish Riksdag opened in 1935, the population question was at the forefront of their political concerns. The Riksdag subsequently appointed the Population Commission, comprising of nine members (including several women) to examine the demographic challenges confronting Sweden and consider ways to increase the country’s fertility rate. The Population Commission’s mandate touched on many aspects of women’s lives and expanded welfare policies for couples and families. According to their goals:

Measures will have to be instituted to encourage marriage, particularly in the younger age groups, and the bearing of children...the need of a large amount

---

2 Most authors writing about the Swedish welfare state agree that the Myrdals’ book was the catalyst that inspired many of Sweden’s family policies. The objective of their book was to increase Sweden’s fertility rate and improve the conditions of the working class. Their argument has been described as “More children of better quality” (Gustafsson, 1994: 49).

3 The Population Commission was comprised of representatives from different political leanings and social classes, including a factory worker, a female doctor, a statistics professor and so on. Part of the reason behind the Commission’s effectiveness in convincing the Riksdag to adopt its suggestions was the high level of consensus among this varied group, all agreeing that the population problem was a national concern that transcended party struggles. (Myrdal, 1941: 166)
of socio-political intervention in order to create economic security and to improve the material welfare of our people must be frankly faced…These measures, must therefore, provide for decreasing the individual family expenses for rearing, educating, and supporting children. (S.O.U, 1938: 13)

Underlying the mandate of the Population Commission was the overt desire to maintain and perpetuate “Swedishness.” In their final report to the Riksdag, the Commission touched on the inherent value of a “citizen’s natural feeling that he is a member of a people which, unlike himself, lives through generations” (S.O.U. 1938: 57). Furthermore, the problem of increasing immigration into Sweden was also explicitly raised:

Looking to ourselves, it becomes just as evident that a country with a declining population will not in the long run be able to erect bars against other national groups seeking a new home or resist the pressure from more crowded countries...The smaller our own part in the new generation becomes, the less will our culture be the dominant one. (S.O.U. 1938: 57)

By 1936, the Population Commission had published several reports that expanded welfare services for women and created a comprehensive support system for children. Reforms included free delivery care for all women, a maternity bonus to all women who gave birth to a child, a special maternity aid to destitute women, and considerable tax exemptions for families with children (S.O.U., 1936). In 1938, the Riksdag also passed policies like increasing legal protections for married or pregnant women, and increasing subsidies for nursery education (S.O.U., 1938).

The Commission’s work also marked an ideological realignment in the public sphere. With the Report on the Sexual Question (1936), the Commission proposed a comprehensive revision of antiquated legislation on sexual issues and called for a considerable liberalization on contraception, sterilization, abortion laws, and sex
education in schools and the public sphere (S.O.U., 1936). The reasoning driving the Commission’s report was their belief that certain facts about sex, marriage and parenthood had to be publicly clarified and that sex information had to be taught “truthfully, unsentimentally and in a matter-of-fact way” (Myrdal, 1941: 175). The Commission also called for a refutation of old taboos surrounding the morality of birth control, arguing that its use should be defended on health grounds for both the mother and child, to ensure that “children are not born into a family as a result of accident or blind sexual urges without due consideration…for the physical and spiritual welfare of the family” (S.O.U, 1936: 59). Here, the Commission demonstrated tremendous progressive foresight. Though they acknowledge the negative effects of contraception on fertility rates, they continued to prioritize the mother and child’s quality of life, stating:

In considering the economically depressed conditions under which the poorer social classes live, the Commission cannot conceal the fact that even extreme limitation is morally justified by many couples who are thus motivated by a sense of duty and responsibility to the offspring…But the Committee must insist that such extreme family limitation cannot be considered justified under normal conditions in well-to-do families where economic reasons are not pressing. (S.O.U., 1936: 59).

2.2.2. Committee on Women’s Work, 1938

For many decades, Sweden (as in other countries) faced the divisive ideological fight over married women’s right to work. Women’s organizations, such as the Fredrika Bremer Association (FDF), argued that the married woman’s right to work was a human right. On the other end, most of the members of the Conservative Party, as well as substantial portions of other political parties, argued that the family institution should be preserved, and that women should cede their jobs to unemployed
family supporters (Myrdal, 1941: 402). In the face of the population crisis, this public discussion became increasingly heated as antifeminists argued that working married women meant fewer children (403).

Ironically, Sweden’s population crisis gave women’s organizations a new strategic position. They argued that it was economically irrational to not use women as productive resources, especially in light of the declining population (Myrdal, 1941: 403). They also stated that remunerative work for wives would stabilize early marriages and should be thought of as a “precondition for marriage in many cases, particularly among young people” (403). Population policies, should strive for “greater security for working women against dismissal because of marriage or childbirth and in addition organizational devices which would make it easier for them to bear and rear children” (403).

This position was aided by the findings and recommendations of the Committee on Women’s Work, formed in 1938. The Committee found that married women were not “intruding groups” on the labor market, and asserted that “the Committee decidedly opposes any and every effort to prevent married women by law from keeping or seeking gainful employment outside the home” (S.O.U., 1938: 47). Rather, the Committee suggested that the social setting of employment should “establish harmony between the desire for motherhood and the desire for work,” and articulated proposals such as increasing opportunities for part-time and temporary work for married women, expanding the opportunities for married couples to obtain similar positions in the same locality, and implementing social measures to alleviate mother’s care of small children (S.O.U 1938: 47).
2.2.3. The Family Policy Committee and the Family Expert Commission, the 1970s Wave of Gender Policy

Despite the great strides made in women’s social rights in the 1930s after the recommendations of the Population Commission, the country remained largely ambivalent towards the status of women, and traditional gender norms persisted. It was only in the late 1960s and 1970s that many currently recognizable forms of Swedish women’s rights emerged. These policies were based on the recommendations of over seventy-four “family and gender” commissions established in the 1970s, the most influential of which being the Family Expert Commission (Familjesakkunniga) (Ahlberg, Roman and Duncan, 2008: 82). These commissions were established as a result of the growing discussions over “jämställdhet” happening in the public space, brought on by changing economic circumstances, shifting labor demands, the “influence of second wave feminism,” and the governing philosophy of the Social Democrats and their political partners (82).

Great strides in women’s rights, especially mothers’ social rights, were made during this period. The Commission worked on the principle of women’s “autonomy” and sought to encourage their “financial independence” (Ahlberg, Roman and Duncan, 2008: 83). They introduced separate taxation for couples and made divorce easier (83). Working on the principle that partnership should be a “voluntary coexistence between independent individuals,” cohabitation was legally recognized as being equivalent to marriage (83). The Family Policy Committee also transformed maternity leave to longer, “gender-neutral” parental leave in 1974, and implemented the right to six-hour workdays for parents with small children (83). In 1995, the parental leave structure underwent another change as the non-transferable
“daddy month” was introduced, implying that fathers had to take two months out of the given thirteen months, or they would be lost.

In the 1970s, there was also a strong push to increase the level of parental access to affordable, high-quality public daycare. Three legislations are significant in this development, all based on reports from the Family Policy Commission. A law passed in 1976 required municipalities to draw up childcare expansion plans, a 1985 law gave all children from 18 months-7 years a place in public daycare and a 1995 law made it compulsory for all municipalities to provide daycare (83).

Finally, a government “action plan” for gender equality was published in 2002-2003, stressing that “Sweden is still characterized by a gender system in which women are subordinated to men” (90). This plan established five concrete aims to further “jämställdhet”: an even distribution of power and influence; giving both genders the same opportunities for financial independence; creating equal conditions for enterprise, work, and career development; encouraging shared responsibility for the home and childcare; and finally, freedom from sexual violence (85).

The progress of gender equality in Sweden occurred concurrently with the political developments leading up to the expansion of the welfare state, and the two waves of reform in the 1930s and the 1970s were particularly significant for Swedish women. Several specific characteristics of present-day Swedish legislations can be traced back to the populist sentiments articulated during the 1930s and these years were significant for gender equality because “it was at this point that the revolution in attitude occurred that put Sweden in the lead as far as experiments in peaceful social change are concerned” (Scott, 1982: 12). The 1970s saw a crucial reframing in the
ideology of state provisions, stressing both financial and legal autonomy for women. Family life became normatively seen as one of individual independence with “mutual responsibility,” leading to many of the social rights that Swedish women, especially Swedish mothers, currently enjoy (83).

Part B: Current Facts about Swedish Gender Equality

Underlying much of Sweden’s progress in gender equality is the welfare state’s commitment to facilitating a strong work-family balance for mothers. Sweden also demonstrates strong figures across different social and political indicators. This section details a complete overview of all the facts that the authors subsequently use in different ways.

2.3. Focusing on “Work” of the Work-Family Balance: Sweden’s Employment Performance by Gender

Sweden demonstrates a strong performance in the number of women and mothers in the workforce. Though many of the ideological discussions can be traced back to the 1930s, it was only in the 1960s and 1970s that Swedish economic policies started being constructed around actively “stimulating the labor supply of married women” (Gustafsson, 1994: 51). The country has since successfully created a culture of high female employment, to the point where it is culturally expected for mothers to return to work after a certain amount of maternity leave. This section details Sweden’s general performance across employment indicators, showing how Sweden performs well in certain gender areas, but also demonstrates several forms of employment inequality.
2.3.1. Gender Breakdown in Employment and Working Hours

As seen in Table 2.1 below, Sweden demonstrates a high level of employment rates among women. The female/male percentage of employment rates is comparatively favorable at 94.6%, placing it on an equal level as its Scandinavian counterparts and very much ahead of the USA and the UK.

Table 2.1. Employment Rates by Gender (%), 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Female/Male Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>94.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>97.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>95.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>86.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>86.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Author calculations, data from Eurostat 2011)

In fact, earlier than many of their European counterparts, Sweden started demonstrating high female-male employment ratios from the 1980s onwards. Between 1980-1990, the female/male percentage was 91% (Siaroff, 1994: 86). Compared to Denmark, Finland and Norway, which had percentages of 83%, 89% and 78% respectively, Sweden was very much “ahead of the curve” (86).

Though many of the selected authors stress Sweden’s success in encouraging mothers to work, the data actually shows that employment rates of mothers lag behind that of fathers. As shown in Table 2.2 below, among parents with one infant child (1-
2 years old), 40% of mothers work full-time, versus 91% of fathers. With two infant children, it is 55% versus 93%. There are also large differences in the percentages of parents working part-time work, with disproportionately more mothers doing so. To put these numbers in context, in the USA, 71% of mothers are employed, and 56.2% of mothers with infant children are employed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008).

Table 2.2. Employed Parents (age 20-64) by Working Time, Number of Children (1-2 years old), (% of all employed), 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 child</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 children</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or more</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Data from Labor Force Surveys, Statistics Sweden 2010)

Nonetheless, Sweden can be seen as a pioneer in encouraging mothers to work. In the 1990s, 26.5% of mothers with 1-year old children, 19.5% of mothers with 2-3 years old children and 13.3% with children of ages 4-5 were employed (Gustafsson and Stafford, 1994). This contrasts with the USA, which had percentages of 10.6%, 5.8% and 9.7% respectively (Gustafsson and Stafford, 1994). The proportion of mothers who were full-time homemakers was only 20-25% in Sweden, versus the USA’s 40-45% (Gustafsson, 1994: 47).

In terms of working hours, Sweden is well known for its high incidences of part-time work among women. In 2009, women comprise over 80% of temporary employees working in “temporary positions” and 60% of temporary employees who are “called when needed” (Statistics Sweden, 2010). Table 2.3 shows the breakdown
of both genders working different lengths of time. Many more men work full-length workweeks of 40-44 hours compared to women. This is different in the USA, with 60% of women working full-length workweeks, as compared to 65% of men.

**Table 2.3. Usual Working Hours Per Week By Gender, 2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of hours</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>40-44</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and over</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Data from OECD Family Database 2007)

This high propensity towards part-time work among women began from the onset as women started joining the workforce. By 1980, around 45% of women were in part-time employment, and 57% of married women were in part-time employment (Statistik årsbok, 1991). Taking advantage of Sweden’s work-family legislation for women and mothers, many Swedish mothers juggled employment and child rearing, working 20-34 hours per week with long part-time arrangements rather than not working at all or working full time (Gustafsson, 1994: 47). From as early as 1988, the Swedish female/male difference in working hours was -7.8 (OECD, 1990: 26). The
high incidence of female part-timework has therefore been embedded in the trajectory of Swedish female employment.

2.3.2. Occupational Segregation

There are high levels of both horizontal and vertical gender occupational segregation in Sweden. Women tend to remain highly represented in traditionally “female” occupations and traditionally underrepresented in the “male” occupations. Table 2.4 shows how women still converge in occupations that are comprised of 40-60% women, while men do the exact opposite.

Table 2.4. Occupational Sex Segregation, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations with</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100% women; 0-10% men</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-90% women; 10-40% men</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-60% women, 40-60% men</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-40% women; 60-90% men</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-10% women; 90-100% men</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Data from Occupational Register, Statistics Sweden, 2010)

Only four occupations have equal sex distribution in Sweden, defined as 40-60% of each sex. They are administrators (public sector); chefs and cooks; doctors; and university/higher education teachers (Statistics Sweden, 2010). This high level of occupational segregation does not seem to have improved much over time. For example, in 1965, the percentage of women workers in typically female jobs like clerical work or nursing was 50% (Statistics Sweden, 1984). In 1987, this figure
actually increased to 55% (Statistics Sweden, 1984). In contrast, the proportion of women workers in typically male jobs was 3.9% in 1965 and 8.9% in 1984 (Statistics Sweden, 1984).

Such occupational segregation is not confined to horizontal distinctions; women are finding it difficult to break into management positions as well, leading to vertical gender segregation within industries or companies. As Table 2.5 shows, the only industry with equal gender distribution in leadership is public administration. Women exceed men in managerial positions in education and health and social work. In every other industry however, managerial positions are skewed towards the men.

**Table 2.5. Gender Distribution in Managerial Positions (%), 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Production or Operation</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Hunting, Forestry and Fishing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail/Wholesale Trade, Hotels, Restaurants, Transport and Communications</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Services Enterprises</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Social Work</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not elsewhere classified</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Data from Occupational Statistics, 2008, Statistics Sweden, 2010)
By 2008, the gender proportion of women in management positions had only risen 6 percentage points in seven years (Statistics Sweden, 2010). Following such a trajectory, Sweden would only enjoy an equal number of men and women in management positions in the year 2033 (Statistics Sweden, 2010).

2.3.3. Wages Differences by Gender

Perhaps as a result of the aforementioned occupational segregation, or because women tend to work less hours then men, Swedish women also show the general trend of earning less money than their male counterparts. Table 2.6 below shows the gender pay gap from 2006-2009, placed in comparison to other First World nations.

Table 2.6. Gender Pay Gap (%), 2006-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom (UK)</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Labor Force Survey, Eurostat 2011)

The nature of employment has considerable influence on wages. According to Helina Melkas, pay differentials are smallest in the “female-dominated” industries and largest in the male-dominated industries (Melkas, 1998:18). In general, Swedish women tend to earn comparable wages with men in the traditionally “female” occupations, such as nursing and healthcare, as well as in the public sector. In 1996, women’s hourly wages as a percentage of men’s in the private sector alone was
93.7% (Statistics Sweden, 2010). In contrast, the private sector has traditionally demonstrated high levels of income disparity. On average, male “business professionals” tend to earn a monthly salary of 43,000SEK/US$6300 while their female counterparts earn 34,000SEK/US$5900 (Statistics Sweden, 2010). In other words, businesswomen only earn 79% of what their male colleagues are making.


Part of Sweden’s success in facilitating high rates of female, especially mothers’, employment is the welfare state’s large role in enabling this result through state provisions and family-friendly legislation. Their social policies stretch across different cleavages, including gender, household type, and age group.

2.4.1. Parental Leave

Sweden is famous for its generous parental leave. In Sweden, fathers and mothers share 480 days of parental leave, 60 of which are reserved for each parent and nontransferable (“daddy” versus “mummy” months) (Statistics Sweden, 2010). Financially, parents also receive a parental benefit of up to 80% of their wages, which is financed through tax money and dispensed through social insurance offices (Jacobsen, 2007: 330). In 2008, a “gender equality” bonus was introduced, with the maximum bonus to be given out if the parental leave days are shared equally between both parents (Statistics Sweden, 2010). Table 2.7 shows the breakdown of parental leave taken by gender by percentage. Women still take most of the long-term and temporary parental allowance, 78% and 65% respectively in 2009.
Table 2.7. Days for which Parental Allowance Paid: Number of Days in 1000s and Sex Distribution (%), 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Allowance</th>
<th>Temporary Allowance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of days</td>
<td>Sex Distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>35,661</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>42,659</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>47,839</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Swedish Social Insurance Agency, Statistics Sweden 2010)

2.4.2. Childcare Provisions

Sweden’s public daycare system was expanded in the 1960s and 1970s. There are various options available for Swedish parents, such as municipal childcare centers (daghem) or family day care centers (familjedaghem), which are run by full-time homemakers employed by the municipality. Public provisions, rather than private daycare centers, are the more popular option in Sweden. By 2009, 67% of preschool children from the ages 1-5 were enrolled in municipal daycare centers and only 15% in private centers (Statistics Sweden, 2010). This was a steady increase that started from 1972, where the percentage of children enrolled in public daycare increased from 12% to 36% [1980] to 57% [1990] to 65% [2000] (Statistics Sweden, 2010). Part of the popularity of public daycare can be explained by the large amount of subsidies that parents enjoy. Control over public daycare centers is decentralized to local governments, with municipal governments having a monopoly over state subsidies (Gustafsson, 1994: 51). Though access to daycare is not means-tested,
parental fees are usually progressive with family income (51). Parents usually pay around 10% of the cost, with the municipality and state subsidizing the rest (Gustafsson and Stafford, 1992). To obtain a place at the municipal childcare center, both parents (or the single parent), must be working or studying for at least 20 hours a week (Gustafsson, 1994: 51).

2.4.3. Elderly Care

The elderly form an important segment of Swedish society; accounting for nearly 20% of the population distribution of men and women (Statistics Sweden, 2010). This demographic distribution is expected to shift in the future, with a higher percentage of elderly forecast in the year 2025 (Statistics Sweden, 2010). Sweden is often labeled an aging population, with a current fertility rate of 1.9 (OECD, 2010). The Swedish welfare state is distinct in its pension system and economic assistance schemes. By 1939, nearly 65% of the Swedish population above 65 years old was receiving social security pensions [as compared to the USA’s 5% or France’s 0%] (SSIB data files). In 2008, 100% of both men and women above 65 years old were receiving some form of pension (Statistics Sweden, 2010).

Comparatively, the poverty rates of Swedish citizens who are above 65 years old have been historically lower than other countries. As of the twenty-first century, this rate stands at less than 5%, a lower figure than Norway’s 10-14% and the USA’s 20% (Luxembourg Income Study, 2001). The absolute difference between males and females in the at-risk-of-poverty rate for single-person households above 65 years old also stands at -18.8% as of 2009 (Eurostat, 2011)
Sweden has a range of elderly care options, including retirement homes, external help from municipalities, or care from their household members. Though Swedish municipalities provide external care options to the elderly (such as sending caretakers to their homes), more of the elderly, especially the female elderly, still prefer care from their family members. The percentage of women who receive external help from the municipality has decreased since 1980; dropping from 21% to 8%, while the proportion of women who receive help from a household member has increased from 19% to 23% (Statistics Sweden, 2010).

2.4.4. Lone Parents with Children

As of 2008, 4% of households in Sweden are described as “single woman with children” and 2% as “single man with children” (Statistics Sweden, 2010). 18% of family units describe themselves as “cohabiting with children” (Statistics Sweden, 2010). In 2009, 28.9% of single parents with dependent children were at-risk of persistent poverty (Eurostat, 2011). After social transfers from the state, this figure decreases from 14.5% for females and 12% for the males (Eurostat, 2011). Table 2.8 demonstrates the number and proportion of households with children receiving state assistance, with single-women households demonstrating the highest proportion.
Table 2.8. Households Receiving Economic Assistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of household</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Proportion of all in group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabitng with children</td>
<td>41 600</td>
<td>25 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single women with children</td>
<td>48 700</td>
<td>32 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single men with children</td>
<td>4500</td>
<td>5400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2.5. Sweden’s Political Performance

Finally, an alternative dimension of Swedish gender equality is Sweden’s impressive gender performance in the political sphere. Women currently make up 47% of Parliament seats, a figure that has been increasingly steadily since 1920 (Statistics Sweden, 2010). Out of all the political parties in Sweden, the Liberal Party and the Social Democrats appear the most gender-equal in their election processes, electing exactly 50% of both men and women to parliament (as per 2006 figures) (Statistics Sweden, 2010). The Left Party and the Green Party elect disproportionately in favor of women, with 64% and 53% respectively, while the Centre party and the Christian Democrats swing in the opposite direction, with 38% of their female party members elected to parliament (Statistics Sweden, 2010). Currently, 45% of the country’s ministers are women, decreasing slightly from 1998’s figure of 50%, but generally much higher than a few decades ago (Statistics Sweden, 2010).
Conclusion

This chapter established basic facts about the Swedish welfare state and illustrated Sweden’s gender performance across various sectors and areas of society. Several core lessons can be extracted from this chapter. First, the current form of Swedish gender legislation can be traced back to many of the ideals and sentiments embedded in Sweden’s history, as well as the development of the welfare state in general. In fact, many strides in state provisions for women occurred as a subset of the country’s general expansion of welfare coverage. Second, Sweden’s gender performance has varied across the different indicators, a fact that is illuminated differently by the various thinkers. Finally, Sweden itself is a broad topic, as illustrated by the breadth of facts that appear in this chapter. The different analysts narrow in on these facts in their own ways, in a manner that then forms an important basis of comparison between them.

“I am no sociological Michelangelo and will not try my hand at a sociological version of the Sistine Chapel” (Esping-Andersen, 2009:3).

**Introduction**

When his landmark book *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* was published in 1990, sociologist Gosta Esping-Andersen redefined the field of welfare literature by establishing a new typology to classify welfare states. After the publication of Esping-Andersen’s work, a related field developed, one that analyzed the welfare state through a feminist lens. What we will label the “welfare-gender” field had two main goals. First, it sought to examine the impact of the welfare state on women’s roles in society and the state’s influence on male-female relations in both the public and private sphere. Second, and more strikingly, this wave of welfare-gender literature placed Esping-Andersen’s framework under the spotlight, critiquing its shortcomings from a gendered perspective by overtly criticizing his framework, changing it or rejecting it outright.

In the quest to understand Swedish gender equality through an analytical lens, this chapter juxtaposes the foremost authors of the Swedish welfare-gender literature and evaluates their contributions to the discourse. Much of the feminist critique on Esping-Andersen’s dimensional structure comes from two academic disciplines: sociology and political science. By comparing and contrasting the theoretical paradigms that have emerged from these disciplines, this chapter highlights two broad

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4This is not to claim that Esping-Andersen was the first person to write about the welfare state. Rather, the welfare discourse was saturated with thinkers like Barrington Moore and Richard Titmuss. However, most of these pre-Esping-Andersen authors ignored the feminist dimension. And subsequently welfare-gender thinkers tend to respond to Esping-Andersen’s typologies over others, leading to my decision to start with his framework as the base study.
levels of inter-author dissent: an intra-sociological conflict and a sociological-political conflict. Feminist authors from these two disciplines converge more than one would expect, demonstrating how a focus on women’s rights serves as the stronger common ground between the thinkers, rather than the academic disciplines that they write from.

3.1. Gosta Esping-Andersen’s “Three Worlds”: A Theoretical Foundation to Examine the Swedish Welfare State

A) Typologies

One of Esping-Andersen’s integral contributions to the welfare discourse comes in the form of his welfare state typologies. He separates welfare regimes into three main clusters: liberal, corporatist and social democratic—his “three worlds of welfare capitalism.” Sweden, together with its Scandinavian neighbors, falls under the social democratic cluster, and its regime is characterized by universalistic social programs where “all benefit; all are dependent; and all will presumably feel obliged to pay” (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 28). He emphasizes certain salient features of the Swedish welfare regime, such as its principle to “preemptively socialize the costs of familyhood” rather than only entering after the family support structure is exhausted (28). America, Canada and Australia are “liberal” welfare regimes, characterized by strong means-tested assistance that caters mainly to lower-income groups. In such regimes, welfare aid often comes with social stigmas attached. “Corporatist” regimes include countries like Germany and France, and Italy, where the state only interferes if the family fails as a main source of support. These regimes tend to preserve
B) Decommodification

Decommodification is an abstract concept that Esping-Andersen uses to quantify the relationship between individual workers and the market economy. It “refers to the degree to which individuals, or families, can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living independently of market participation” (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 37). To calculate each country’s level of decommodification, Esping-Andersen examines three dimensions: access to benefits through eligibility restrictions; income replacement; and range of entitlements. By examining each country’s old age pensions, sickness, and unemployment benefits, he constructs a “decommodification index” by considering variables like the conditions for eligibility; the maximum duration of entitlements; and the degree that these state benefits approximate expected earnings. These variables are given scores from 1 to 3, with 1 for low decommodification and 3 for high. Taking a comparative perspective, Sweden demonstrates a high decommodification score among its peers, with an especially strong showing in its pensions schemes, as seen in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1. Degree of Decommodification, 1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Pensions</th>
<th>Sickness</th>
<th>Unemployment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>0. (non-existent)</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Extracted from Esping-Andersen, 1990: 50, Table 2.1)

By combining the three scores together, he then proceeds to “cluster” the different countries according to how high or how low their scores are, with higher scores implying higher decommodification. Sweden is highly decommodifying, with a combined score of 39.1 as seen in Table 3.2 below. The countries that come closest to Sweden in decommodification rank-order are its Scandinavian neighbors (and fellow social democratic welfare states), and he clusters these countries together. Countries like the USA and Germany fall behind in combined score and are placed in the lower-scoring cluster.
Table 3.2. Rank-order of Welfare States in Terms of Combined Decommodification, 1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decommodification Score</th>
<th>“Low” Decommodification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Medium” Decommodification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“High” Decommodification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Extracted from Gosta Esping-Andersen, 1990: Table 2.2, p. 52)

C) Stratification

Gosta Esping-Andersen criticizes the welfare literature that came before his work, questioning their assumption that welfare states necessarily lead to more egalitarian societies. Rather, he argues that the welfare state itself is a system of social stratification and that conservative, liberal or socialist social policies all create different forms of such stratification. According to him, “the historical legacies of conservative, liberal and socialist principles in their early construction became institutionalized and perpetuated” (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 69). In Sweden, the principle of universalism took hold with the “Peoples’ Home” rhetoric. Highlighting Sweden’s low levels of means-tested poor relief as well as high levels of universalism
in sickness, unemployment and pension benefits, Esping-Andersen demonstrates the high level of egalitarianism present in Sweden’s social policies. In Table 3.3 below, corporatism measures the degree of social segregation, based on the number of occupationally distinct pension schemes in operation in the 1980s. Etatism refers to the level conservative-Catholic ideology embedded within the country’s entitlement schemes, which he measures using the country’s level of expenditure on government-employee pensions. Sweden scores fairly low on both, while scoring well on the universalism and benefit equality indicators.

Table 3.3. Degree of Social Stratification, 1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Corporatism</th>
<th>Etatism</th>
<th>Meantested poor relief</th>
<th>Average Universalism</th>
<th>Average Benefit Equality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Esping-Andersen, 1990: 70, Table 3.1)

D) Full Commitment to Employment

Using this three-way dimension of typologies, decommodification and stratification to distinguish the different “clusters” of welfare states, Esping-Andersen establishes the fences for thinking about the Swedish welfare state in its social
democratic, highly decommodified and largely egalitarian form. Deeply relevant to the case of Sweden is the Esping-Andersen’s articulation of the “full-employment” commitment that underlies social democratic welfare regimes. According to Esping-Andersen, social democratic regimes like Sweden are “genuinely committed” to full employment, but also “entirely dependent on its attainment” (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 28). For Esping-Andersen, the need for full employment is built into the system of social democratic welfare characteristics. He states:

The enormous costs of maintaining a solidaristic, universalistic, and decommodifying welfare system means that it must minimize social problems and maximize revenue income. This is obviously best done with most people working, and the fewest possible living off of social transfers. (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 28)

While Esping-Andersen has contributed a comprehensive framework to examine the Swedish welfare state, his paradigms do not actually separate women as a different class of consideration. Though he briefly mentions a gendered perspective early on, stating that “In the conservative tradition, women are discouraged from working; in the liberal ideal, concerns of gender matter less than the sanctity of the market,” this is not rigorously incorporated into his typologies or welfare dimensions (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 28). Without creating a robust space for the “woman question” within his broad typologies and frameworks, Esping-Andersen opened the door for a wave of criticism from gender theorists who created a field of literature that sought to add this gender dimension to his analysis.
3.2. Reframing Esping-Andersen’s Typologies: The Response from Gender Sociologists

A) Building on Esping-Andersen’s Dimensions

Feminist sociologists responded vigorously. For fellow sociologist Ann Orloff, the entire welfare-gender discourse lacked an important middle ground, because “little of the mainstream comparative research on the welfare state has considered gender relations,” but “most feminist research on the welfare state has not been comparative” (Orloff, 1993: 304). Orloff’s welfare-gender framework merges conceptual welfare frameworks and gender empirical findings to acknowledge mainstream research while incorporating comparative country variations. Rather than directly changing Esping-Andersen’s framework, she approaches his shortcomings by amending it, an approach that she labels “gendering the dimensions.”

Fundamental to Orloff’s entire dimensional framework is her critique that Esping-Andersen ignores the impact of unpaid labor on women’s employment status. She cites the figure that housewives in Sweden still do 72% of housework. (Orloff, 1993: 313). For Orloff, the issue of unpaid labor should be a consideration melded on top of Esping-Andersen’s framework, and she approaches this task with a five-dimensional paradigm. First, she expands the decommodification dimension to include another layer of analysis that considers “the extent to which states guarantee women access to paid employment and services that enable them to balance home and work responsibilities, and the mechanisms and institutions that implement these guarantees” (317).

Second, with regards to Sweden, Orloff undermines the high-egalitarian conclusion of Esping-Andersen’s stratification dimension, arguing that Sweden’s
universalistic benefit schemes betray a “gender bias” where earnings-related pensions supercede flat-rate pensions. She argues that Sweden policies demonstrate an underlying assumption that “universal welfare state services and transfers must not exceed those earned in the labor market” (Orloff, 1993: 316). Given that women have a different relationship to paid employment than men do, and that much of women’s “work” comprises of unpaid labor, Orloff’s framework integrates gender relations into the stratification dimension to show how Esping-Andersen’s view is fundamentally myopic. Besides her criticisms however, Orloff does not present an alternative dimension or demonstrate how the stratification dimension should be changed or expanded to include gender analysis.

Orloff then adds on two additional dimensions to frame the welfare-gender issue, arguing the need to consider women’s access to paid work and their capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household. The first, “access to paid work,” refers to a woman’s “right to be commodified” (Orloff, 1993: 318). This dimension examines “the extent to which states promote or discourage women’s paid employment” (318). The second “the capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household” assumes that since state resources can alter the “balance of power within relations and within the polity,” a new dimension should consider “individuals’ freedom from compulsion to enter into potentially oppressive relationships in a number of spheres” (320). Sweden’s focus on female autonomy and financial independence can be seen as the three-dimensional manifestation of this position.

Orloff also launches a weak critique of Esping-Andersen’s typologies: arguing that his liberal, corporatist and social-democratic regime types do not “fully
predict women’s employment patterns,” and do not consider the possibility of sex-segregation in occupations and levels of part-time work versus full-time work. She singles Sweden out as a case of weakness in Esping-Andersen’s typologies, arguing that based on his framework, “progressive Sweden [would not be] expected to have high levels of sex segregation of occupations, part-time employment and women doing the bulk of unpaid domestic work” (Orloff, 1993: 313).

Yet doing so highlights Orloff’s own mishandling of Esping-Andersen’s framework. His typologies do not argue for a certain form of social policies. Rather, he clusters them according to the *ex-post facto* data that he analyzes. While Esping-Andersen is guilty of excluding a gender framework to his typologies, he does acknowledges the problem of Sweden’s high occupational sex segregation, demonstrating the country’s poor performance by examining their over- and under-representation in “traditional” occupations, imbalance in typical “male” and “female” jobs and a skewed ratio of “good/bad” occupations for men and women. As he states towards the end of *Three Worlds*, “Sweden emerges as the most gender-segregated among the three countries [Germany, USA and Sweden]. More than half of the women are locked in typical female jobs, while very few women have penetrated the sanctuaries of male dominance” (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 212). As shown, there are certain analytical misconceptions even within the sociological gender critique.

**B) A Divergent Ideology**

Mary Daly and Katherine Rake’s co-authored book *Gender and the Welfare State*, published later in 2003, provides further perspective on how the welfare-gender discourse has progressed within sociology. Unlike Orloff, who criticizes Esping-
Andersen’s framework but seeks to expand it, Daly and Rake reject Esping-Andersen’s framework for its flaws and limitations as a methodological device. According to them, Esping-Andersen’s typologies fail to distinguish between ideal types of welfare states and existing welfare state structures, i.e., normative versus positive welfare states. His typologies and methodological tables also construct “partial and static” empirical picture of welfare states that becomes outdated as welfare policies change (Daly and Rake, 2003: 27).

Rather, Daly and Rake take a diametrically different perspective, arguing that the welfare state has a deeper ideological meaning than the treatment that Esping-Andersen’s typologies give it, and that these ideologies can affect gender relations. For them, the welfare state “play[s] an important role in creating or reinforcing specific sets of social values, including the values and expectations attached to social roles such as worker, spouse and carer” (Daly and Rake, 2003: 36). From a gendered perspective, welfare states have an impact on regulating or influencing gender norms or male-female relationships. They argue:

Welfare states are ideological; the normative content of social programmes is powerful in creating and reinforcing appropriate behaviors for women and men. Such effects are to be seen in the valorization and affirmation of social roles and the organization of life into a series of phases or stages that center especially for women around the relationship between roles and behavior relating to family and work. (Daly and Rake, 2003: 40)

Unlike Esping-Andersen, Daly and Rake do not focus on illustrating “clusters” among welfare regimes. Rather, they are more interested in the various intangible connections that create socio-political interplay between individuals, families, institutions and the welfare state itself. They examine these interconnections through three lenses: care, work and welfare, to be covered further in subsequent
chapters. The first, “care,” refers to the fulfillment of personal needs. “Work” refers to productive activities that affect one’s relationship to economic resources and finally, “welfare” refers to relative access to the resources of time, money and opportunities. Fundamentally, their intention is not to focus on “what the welfare state is,” but “what [the welfare state] does” (Daly and Rake, 2003: 46).

Even within a single discipline, the responses and approaches to framing the welfare-gender discourse has been varied and sometimes opposing, with the feminist sociologists responding to Esping-Andersen’s framework in a multitude of ways. Yet, underlying their responses has been the determination to give women their own dimension of consideration, a mantle that is also taken up by the political scientists.

3.3. The Response from the Political Science Discipline: The “Political Models” Framework

A) Feminist Sociologists-Political Scientists Interplay

Within the welfare-gender discourse, feminist authors from both disciplines respond to each other’s work in an academic interplay. Political scientist Jane Lewis takes a critical stance towards the wave of gender sociological literature, suggesting that aspects of differentiation within various methodologies will “inevitably reflect what is considered [by the thinker] to be the most important issue at stake” (Lewis, 1997: 166). She criticizes the underlying assumption behind Orloff’s paradigms, arguing that it overly emphasizes women’s “access to income,” but that “paid work is unlikely to prove an adequate means of achieving financial autonomy for women” if a gendered division of unpaid labor continues to exist (166).
This criticism seems more relevant to Orloff’s active dimensions rather than her passive intentions. Though Orloff does encourage women to enter paid labor, she also stresses the importance of considering their unpaid labor by arguing that Esping-Andersen’s state-market-family relations dimension “should be reconstructed based on the recognition of the importance of families and women’s unpaid work to the provision of social welfare” (Orloff, 1993: 312). Nonetheless, Lewis’ academic response to Orloff demonstrates how the different feminist thinkers built on each other’s work to develop their own welfare-gender paradigms.

B) The Male Breadwinner Model

The main response from the feminist political scientists has been inherently structural, with feminist thinkers coming up with new “models” to serve as alternatives to Esping-Andersen’s typologies or his decommodification-stratification dimensions. The “male breadwinner” model has emerged as a prominent contribution from the political scientists in the welfare-gender discourse, one that responds to certain weaknesses in Esping-Andersen’s decommodification principle. Lewis argues that Esping-Andersen is taking the male worker as his base unit when thinking about decommodification, and that policies encouraging decommodification might even “exacerbate gender inequalities” if women have to take a disproportionate share of parental leave or unpaid care-giving work after being “decommodified” by state benefits (Lewis, 1997: 162).

In contrast, the male breadwinner model examines the extent that women’s access to welfare state entitlements is dependent on their marital or personal relationship to the “state-covered” male breadwinner of the family. Here, the male
breadwinner model expands the decommodification model beyond an entirely economic framework and considers the issue of female emancipation from the structures of marriage or relationships itself. To an extent, Lewis is working off Orloff’s concern about women’s relationship to the welfare state as mothers or as wives rather than as individuals, demonstrating a level of convergence between them.

Together with Illona Ostner, Lewis takes this framework further, creating a new typology that examines “when, how, and to what extent countries have moved away from the male breadwinner model” (Lewis, 1997: 168). Countries are divided into “strong,” “moderate” and “weak” male breadwinner states, depending on the extent that women can enjoy benefits independent of their husbands. Countries like Britain, Germany and Netherlands are “strong” male breadwinner states because they tend to treat adult women as dependent wives in their social entitlements. In contrast, Sweden has moved the furthest away from the male breadwinner model (a “weak” male breadwinner state) through the country’s success in pulling women into paid employment and its universalistic entitlement policies. For Lewis, this success can be traced back to Sweden’s introduction of separate taxation for spouses, parental leave policies and ubiquitous childcare provision, “to the point where the dual breadwinner family is the norm [in Sweden]” (169).

The male breadwinner model has thus emerged as one of the feminist discourse’s main responses to Esping-Andersen’s typologies framework. Yet fellow feminist thinkers have described as “a model in making rather than a finished product” (Daly and Rake, 2003: 112). Subsequently, various improvements have been made to expand its scope.
C) The Breadwinner-Individual Model

The most prominent mutation of the male breadwinner model comes from fellow political scientist Diane Sainsbury, who attempts to push this model further by contrasting it with the “individual model.” Unlike Lewis and Ostner, Sainsbury compares countries with a two-way dimensional framework of “breadwinner versus individual,” and this dual-fence paradigm is one that recurs throughout Sainsbury’s literature, appearing in her 1994’s *Women’s and Men’s Social Rights: Gendering Dimensions of Welfare States* and 1996’s *Gender, Equality and Welfare States*. In this breadwinner-individual framework, also labeled the *individual earner-carer* model, Sainsbury establishes more specific dimensions to examine each welfare regime against. She adds another layer labeled “separate gender roles” in her 1999 *Gender and Welfare State Regimes*, to create three separate “policy regimes.” Table 3.4 below is an amalgam of all three of her tables and variations.

Since Sainsbury’s concern is for a welfare regime to augment women’s “social rights,” her ideal welfare-gender regime comes in the form of the individual model, which prizes individualism and discourages traditional gender roles throughout the various dimensions. In this case, the term “breadwinner” appears to refer to Lewis’s “strong male breadwinner” definition, while “individual” would be the other end of the spectrum—low or no male breadwinner policies that do not use marriage as a basis of entitlements.
Table 3.4. Dimensions of Variation of the Male Breadwinner and Individual Models of Social Policy/Three Gender Policy Regimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Breadwinner Model</th>
<th>Individual Model</th>
<th>Separate Gender Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familial Ideology</td>
<td>Celebration of Marriage Strict Division of Labor Husband=earner Wife=carer</td>
<td>No preferred family form Shared Roles Husband and wife= earner/carer</td>
<td>Strict division of labor Husband=earner Wife=carer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entitlement</td>
<td>Differentiated among spouses</td>
<td>Uniform</td>
<td>Differentiated by gender role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basis of entitlement</td>
<td>Breadwinner</td>
<td>Citizenship/Residence</td>
<td>Family responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipient of Benefits</td>
<td>Head of Household Supplements for dependants</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Men=family providers Women=caregivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit of Benefit</td>
<td>Household/Family</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit of Contributions</td>
<td>Household</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxation</td>
<td>Joint Taxation</td>
<td>Separate Taxation Equal Tax Relief</td>
<td>Joint Taxation Deductions for dependants for both spouses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment and wage policies</td>
<td>Priority to men</td>
<td>Aimed at both sexes</td>
<td>Priority to men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sphere of care</td>
<td>Primarily private</td>
<td>Strong state involvement</td>
<td>Primarily private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring work</td>
<td>Unpaid</td>
<td>Paid component to caregivers in and outside the home</td>
<td>Paid component to caregivers in the home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Recreated from Sainsbury, 1994: Table 10.1, p. 153 and Sainsbury, 1996: Table 2.1, p. 42 and Sainsbury, 1999: Table 3.1, p. 78)
Using these dimensions of variation, Sainsbury successfully “re-clusters” Esping-Andersen’s regime clusters. For example, in *Three Worlds*, Esping-Andersen clusters Sweden and the Netherlands as scoring highly on decommodification scale. On this scale however, Sweden is closer to the individual model while Netherlands is approximated closer to the breadwinner model. Sainsbury’s typology has emerged as one of the political science discipline’s more robust responses to Esping-Andersen’s work, incorporating a gendered perspective that reshapes his regime clusters.

**D) Methodology**

Sainsbury has clearly aligned herself with several feminist critiques of Esping-Andersen’s work, which form the basis for her literature or suggested typologies. In her anthological series *Gendering Welfare States* (1994) and *Gender and Welfare State Regimes* (1999), she compiles and edits a range of works from both general and Scandinavian authors, drawing these critiques from sociologists and fellow political/policy thinkers. Certain underlying critiques that she accepts include the notion that decommodification focuses exclusively on workers, thus ignoring women at home; or the idea that Esping-Andersen does not distinguish between socially acceptable standards of living of individuals versus that of families.

The political science discipline response to the welfare-gender discourse has been largely structural, comprised of creating alternative political models that include gender considerations. While the feminist sociologists have not responded with similar models, they converge with the political scientists in questioning Esping-Andersen’s fundamental conflation of the worker with the woman, and inherently
argue that many of his structural dimensions need to change to adequately reflect women’s actual rights and positions in society.

3.4. Clashing Ideologies, Differing Intentions

Fundamentally, Esping-Andersen did not set out to write *Three Worlds* from a gender perspective—neither is he a gender theorist. Rather, Esping-Andersen views and analyzes welfare states through a prism of class concerns. This class analysis then forms the basis for his decommodification-stratification dimensions. Decommodification and egalitarianism are assumed to be positive attributes, and he analyzes welfare regimes against this dual standard, “clustering” them according to whether they fare positively against this ideal or not. Without articulating it explicitly, Esping-Andersen appears to favor socialist ideology, and this inclines him towards social democratic welfare states that are based on the “policy of emancipation” (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 28). For him, the welfare state should be a normative apparatus that steps in when capitalism leads to social dislocation for workers, and to do so in a way that is universally fair and class-blind. Though he argues that “[the welfare state’s] role in society…is certainly not to spend or tax; nor is it necessarily that of creating equality,” his language betrays his bias when he calls universalistic social policies the “wonderfully egalitarian spirit of universalism” (32, 25). Since his focus is not on gender, he does not rigorously incorporate women into his analysis.

In contrast, the other authors are working from an inherently feminist perspective, and are primarily concerned with women’s social rights and placement within the welfare state structure. Rather than equalizing class-worker differences as
Esping-Andersen asserts, Daly and Rake see the welfare state as an active agent in society that redistributes money, time and opportunities. As a result, the state can have major active impacts on women’s lives by nature of their welfare policies. This state-society relationship is two-way: individuals, especially women in the welfare-gender interplay, are also imbued with agency, and “are active in contesting or complying with prevailing norms” (Daly and Rake, 2003: 41).

Orloff, Lewis and Sainsbury all begin from an alternative position: the belief that the male breadwinner state is a negative model for women’s social rights, and one that preserves and maintains the traditional division of labor between men and women. While Esping-Andersen sees decommodification as a positive attribute, all the feminist thinkers recognize that women’s societal and labor positions differ from men and that “decommodification” does not accurately capture this difference when it lumps both genders together. As a result, they attempt to create a space for women within the discourse.

3.5. Converging Disciplines: Similarities Between the Feminist Thinkers

Across both sociology and political science, there are clear methodological similarities among all the female thinkers where feminism plays a prominent role in their analysis. All the selected feminist thinkers acknowledge the presence and usefulness of mainstream welfare analysis, and similarly, all of them take the position of “gendering” the various dimensions that frame the welfare-gender discourse. Orloff approaches it by adding gender onto Esping-Andersen’s decommodification-stratification frameworks. Daly and Rake create three gendered lenses of care, work
and welfare to view the interplay between welfare states and women. The political scientists react by reframing his typologies, coming up with new feminist models that challenge Esping-Andersen’s conclusions.

In fact, sociologists like Orloff, Daly and Rake come closer to the feminist intentions that underlie political scientists’ Lewis and Sainsbury’s work, and stand ideologically further away from their own sociology colleague, Esping-Andersen. All of them are concerned with the interactions between the welfare state and its female citizens, as well as the extent that state policies augment women’s standard of living. Though they do so in fundamentally different ways, this pro-woman stance forms the underlying basis driving their work. Contextual overlap does not come from a discipline, but rather from the position that one is writing from.


In response to the barrage of feminist criticism that followed the publication of *Three Worlds*, Esping-Andersen published two books to deal directly with the welfare-gender issue. His response is grudging; he does not directly engage with the structural or dimensional criticisms from his feminist critics, but gives many unmistakable nods to their perspectives and concerns. He creates his own approach to the gender question, first in the welfare compilation *Why We Need A New Welfare State* (2002) in *The Incomplete Revolution: Adapting To Women’s New Roles* (2009).

Both books present a defensive Esping-Andersen, one who attempts to justify his previous “woman-less” consideration in *Three Worlds* by stating that it was an adequate theory at the time because “full employment as it was conceived in the past
was employment for men” (Esping-Andersen, 2002: ix). However, he is willing to acknowledge changing times, conceding, “The social challenge today is employment for men and women” (ix). For him, society was working on the “logic of industrialism” as the main source that “propelled our lives as workers, our place within the social hierarchies, and the kind of life course we could expect to follow” (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 1). Now that the developed world’s economic sectors have become predominantly service-based, this model is now “outmoded” and he turns his eye to a different issue: the “Woman question” (1). Nonetheless, he continues to inject class-based analysis into the gender issue, arguing, “gender equality cannot be separated from social class difference” (Esping-Andersen, 2002: 87).

Another striking aspect of both books is Esping-Andersen’s movement away from typologies that guide his examination of welfare regimes. *Three Worlds* demonstrates a “top-down” approach where Esping-Andersen creates his own normative typologies and frameworks before “clustering” regimes according to how they fare against these standards. In other words, the framework that he establishes at the beginning forms the fences around his empirical findings. In contrast, *New Welfare State* and *Incomplete Revolution* are arguably more quintessentially “sociological” in nature, focusing on what Esping-Andersen sees to be inevitable trends in changing gender behavior and suggesting normative policies to deal with them. This “bottom-up” academic approach means that he formulates potential policy responses in response to the social changes rather than judging countries against theoretical paradigms.
His fundamental argument is that welfare states have to respond to the changing demands of women. According to him, we are in the middle of an “incomplete revolution,” which has seen huge changes in women’s roles. The increasing numbers of women joining the workforce, a breakdown of traditional gender roles, the growing unpopularity of the nuclear family and marriage, as well as increasing numbers of highly educated women—all form justifications for his assertion. Yet this revolution is not fully complete: societies are in the process of moving from one “equilibrium” (of gender inequality) to another (of full gender equality). Many countries are currently in the “middle”—an “unstable equilibrium” that will lead to social dislocation, such as more income inequality and more polarization between families. In his eyes, the welfare state has an important ideological and active position: the completion of this female revolution will depend on how successful welfare states are in “adapting” to these new female roles and responding to female “claims on men” (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 14). The welfare state also has to step in and mitigate the societal consequences that reverberate because of these changing gender roles.

In *New Welfare State*, he labels this phenomenon of increasing female economic emancipation as a “masculinization” of female life courses, where women are starting to converge with men in terms of lifetime participation curves and lifetime employment. For the female revolution to become complete, there needs to be an equivalent “feminization” of male life courses, where men should meet women “halfway” in their domestic and childcare responsibilities.
Here, Esping-Andersen tacitly acknowledges the wave of feminist literature that vociferously responded to his landmark work. He also considers empirical facts about women’s changing roles in society and its reverberating effect on the welfare state as a whole. Finally, he stridently recommends solutions in response to the issues that he illustrates. This movement from a typological framework to one that is more empirically driven signals an important methodological shift on Esping-Andersen’s part over time.

3.7. Analyzing the Paradigms and Authors

A) Three Worlds and the Feminist Response

Esping-Andersen is fundamentally taking a gender-neutral stance in *Three Worlds*. He subsumes both men and women under his general analysis of the “worker,” without acknowledging that women are not “workers” in the same way as the men are, largely because of their “double burden” of household work alongside their paid employment. By doing so, he fails to consider the additional public policy attention that women might require to ameliorate this dual responsibility.

This issue of a “double burden” is therefore one that features very prominently in the feminist response, with the feminist thinkers attempting to solve and approach it in different ways. For Orloff, women should enter the public employment sphere and her two additional dimensions of “access to paid work” and “autonomous household” aim for “explicit” economic independence for women. Though she acknowledges, “The goal [of many labor movements] usually is to allow married women to combine paid work with family responsibilities,” her desire is for women
to become fully economically independent (Orloff, 1993: 319). This relates back to the ideas of female economic emancipation illustrated by thinkers like Moller Okin and Engels, which subsequently influences women’s personal circumstances in a positive way. The political science frameworks of the male breadwinner model and Sainsbury’s individual earner-carer model go even further: in their criticisms of the male breadwinner model and the notions of women accessing state entitlements through their husbands, they are subtly embedding a critique of marriage into their analysis. Through their desire for welfare states to interact with the women as independents, they argue for marriage to become less of an economic necessity for women, who should not need it to access state entitlements. This converges with Engels’ disdain of marriage as being intrinsically patriarchal in nature, and calls for women to be treated as individuals, not wives.

The fact that many of the feminist frameworks are responding to Esping-Andersen’s gender neutrality and extract women as a separate consideration also means that the gender-special position is structurally imprinted into their methodologies and frameworks. By fundamentally criticizing Esping-Andersen for excluding women as an important dimension of their own, these feminist thinkers articulate their obvious view that women are in fact different from men in a manner that is worthy of its own evaluation. Similarly, these feminist thinkers appear to work on the underlying assumption that women necessitate a different set of welfare considerations, thus illustrating their gender-special stance even further.

In *Three Worlds*, Esping-Andersen’s focus on Sweden’s commitment to full employment hints at an inherent level of “instrumentality” built into the structure of
the Swedish social-democratic welfare state. If the continuation of the state’s structure is dependent on full employment, then pushing women into the workforce serves a greater, practical national goal beyond idealistic notions of gender equality.

Hilda Scott’s report on Sweden’s women’s employment (1960-1970) “genders” Esping-Andersen’s thesis on state-enforced full-employment. According to Scott, the post-WWII situation in Sweden saw the country face a diminishing labor force, creating a situation where “many employers preferred to hire ‘guest workers’ from abroad, both because many of the jobs opening up were ‘male’ and because immigrant men could be expected to be more mobile than Swedish women” (Scott, 1982: 21). Trade unions, wary of declining wage rates, persuaded the government to enforce stricter entry requirements for immigrant workers. The government also started implementing experimental programs to encourage women to join the industrial workforce, paying for their travel expenses and providing day care facilities. Subsequently, the number of women in the workforce rose by a quarter of a million within a decade while the male workforce declined by 72,000 (22). Without such measures, it appears doubtful that such increasing female employment figures would have occurred organically. As Siv Gustafsson states: “the paternalistic attitude still dominated in Sweden in the 1960s,” and many managers were unwilling to offer jobs to women without pressure from the Swedish Labor Market Board (Gustafsson, 1979: 12). Scott’s work appears to support Esping-Andersen’s subtle articulation of the presence of instrumentality driving the Swedish welfare state’s measures to encourage female employment.


**B) Esping-Andersen’s Separate Spheres Ideology**

Within the contributions to the welfare-gender literature, Esping-Andersen is the only one who uses a masculinization-feminization dichotomy. Doing so, he assumes from the onset that public spheres are “masculine” in nature and private ones are “feminine.” The former would be the employment/work sphere: women are becoming “male-like” and converging with their male counterparts when they join the workforce in increasing numbers. In contrast, males are taking on “female duties” when they bear more caring burdens. Esping-Andersen appears to adopt the language of separate spheres; only that he argues for both genders to move out of their usual spheres and into the other. In contrast, feminists agitating for change in Sweden historically took a different perspective, a breakdown of both spheres in general and a rejection of the separate spheres language. As Eva Moberg argued, “we ought to stop harping on the concept of ‘women’s two roles’…both men and women have one principal role, that of being people” (Leijon, 1968: 149). Referencing Coltrane’s notion of subjective feminine-masculine gender constructions from Chapter One, Esping-Andersen appears to take an opposing stance by intrinsically incorporating the masculine-feminine gender dichotomy into his framework. He argues that men and women should converge in these roles, yet he still appears to buy into and adopt the language of these separate spheres.
Conclusion

This chapter established the competing frameworks within the welfare-gender discourse. It articulated a sociology-political clash through a time-based perspective that fences in the specific positions that these authors take on various issues. The structure of this chapter established Gosta Esping-Andersen as the main representative of mainstream welfare literature, before evaluating the feminist responses to his work. This chapter then articulated certain assumptions driving the two lines of literature: Esping-Andersen writes from a class-based perspective, while the feminist authors strive to give weight to the woman question, and this forms a stronger underlying similarity between them as compared to their academic disciplinary differences.
4. Political Science and Sociology: Charting the Thinkers’ Varied Positions

“In short, welfare is political and reaches deep into society” (Daly and Rake, 2003: 31)

Introduction

While the previous chapter examined the various welfare-gender frameworks from the sociology and political science disciplines, this chapter narrows in on specific facts and author positions within the discourse. Similar to Chapter Three, this chapter argues that there is greater alignment between the feminist thinkers that transcends a strict sociology-political science dichotomy.

The authors examined in this chapter differ slightly from the previous one. To allow for greater factual analysis, Ann Orloff and Jane Lewis will not be considered in this chapter. Instead, Diane Sainsbury represents the political science discipline while Daly/Rake and Esping-Andersen will be the examined sociologists.

One common trait between the different thinkers is their method of drawing comparisons between various countries. However, they differ in their approach. Sainsbury narrows in on four specific case studies: Sweden, Netherlands, the UK and the USA. If Esping-Andersen’s later work can be characterized as “bottom-up,” Sainsbury maintains a “top-down” approach by establishing her own normative framework first, before examining each country’s performance against it. She is predominantly concerned with examining policy mechanisms that have enabled Sweden’s gender equality. Daly and Rake systematically examine the largest number of countries, creating a broad empirical sweep of each country’s performance before drawing comparisons between them. Esping-Andersen chooses his countries more selectively, often using Denmark as his basis of comparison. Being Danish, he calls
the country the “international vanguard in terms of gender equalization,” presenting it as the best model for the different values that he himself holds as ideal (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 43). While he also analyzes facts about different countries, he melds this with a strong ideological perspective in favor of increasing fertility rates and improving childcare. Methodologically, Sainsbury examines how and why, Daly and Rake examine what and Esping-Andersen considers what comes next.

4.1. Feminist Political Science Response: Diane Sainsbury

Sainsbury’s 1996’s Gender, Equality, And Welfare State book is one of the main feminist responses to Esping-Andersen’s Three Worlds. She takes a strong analytical perspective on Sweden’s historical legislations and current public policy measures, especially with regards to how these policy tools interact with women’s social rights. For Sainsbury, the relationship between women and the welfare state should be examined through women’s level of access to state entitlements, and the subsequent outcomes of such benefit entitlements.

A) Employment Entitlements

While Sainsbury also covers many of the empirical facts that Daly and Rake blanket, such as increment in aggregate participation force, part-time work and wage differentials, she is more concerned with the level of benefits that women workers enjoy. She argues that Sweden’s high level of female employment participation has led to a larger proportion of women who are eligible for social benefits, while “relatively few working women” are excluded from any additional qualifying conditions (Sainsbury, 1996: 124). She characterizes Sweden’s worker and earnings
related pension schemes as a “double decker,” where workers tend to be covered by both state as well as employer pension schemes (i.e both public and private schemes), thus “mitigating against exclusion” (124). By 1980, around 95% of all employees were insured in some form of an employer-sponsored pension scheme and though part-time workers need to work at least sixteen hours a week to qualify, less than 10% of women were excluded from this scheme (124). By 1980, around 35% of all women workers had a supplementary pension while nearly 60% had ATP pensions [the Swedish occupational pension scheme] (123). Subsidized day care, as well as availability for work tests, are factors that “require” women to take on jobs that are not “short” part-time ones, thus limiting the number of women who are severely marginalized on the labor market, and facilitating a greater proportion of women that enjoy work benefits (124).

Furthermore, in comparing Sweden to the Netherlands, the UK and the USA, she finds that labor market status plays a bigger role in determining women’s benefit entitlements in the latter three countries than in Sweden. The circumstances in these three countries are paradoxical because “in the countries where labor market status has been central to the entitlement of social insurance benefits, women were less likely to be in the labor market” (Sainsbury, 1996: 125). If anything, Sweden has been more successful in creating a larger proportion of women who are eligible for employment-based benefits through more inclusive work conditions (125). Compared to the other three, there is also “fuller integration of Swedish women workers into the labor force” (125).
B) The Principle of Care and Its Benefits for Mothers

For Sainsbury, Sweden stands out from the other three countries because entitlements are based on citizenship and the “principle of care.” Unlike the other three countries, which base entitlements on the women’s labor status as a breadwinner or an “earner,” Sweden’s entitlement structure is closer to the “carer” or “individual” end of the spectrum. Labor market status might be an important factor in the structure of entitlement benefits, but it is “not a requirement in Sweden; instead the underlying basis of entitlement is motherhood, or more precisely parenthood.” (Sainsbury, 1996: 95). As such, Sweden has “the most comprehensive recognition of the principle of care, and benefits have been directed to all mothers” (95). These entitlements include an “earnings-related benefit to replace parent’s loss of income,” comprising of 90% and up to a ceiling of the parent’s income or a “flat rate benefit for a parent without earnings” (94). This flat rate even exceeds many of the maternity benefits that employed mothers in the other countries enjoy (94).

For Sainsbury, this is significant from a feminist perspective because it is still mothers that disproportionately take advantage of such parental benefits. She cites figures of 95% of all mothers who claimed parental allowances in 1980, as well as approximately 85% of mothers who receive such earnings related allowances, with others getting flat rate allowances (Sainsbury, 1996: 94). Sweden’s generous policies therefore serve as an important form of financial protection for such mothers, something that Sainsbury clearly approves of.

Sweden’s strong principle of care is also embedded in the country’s unique childcare policy model, which she also characterizes as a “paradox” (Sainsbury,
Sweden’s childcare model is based on a strong public responsibility over childcare, but ironically, it has enabled more mothers to care for their children until their first birthday (98). This contradicts the usual assumptions of collective childcare, which is “often portrayed by its critics as detrimental to the traditional family” (100). In fact, Sainsbury finds that in the 1990s, 95% of Swedish mothers were caring for their infants in their homes, compared to the USA’s 55% (100). This result is directly possible because of the policy of parental insurance and the parental leave system. Compared to Sweden, the US, UK and the Netherlands “reveal an enormous contradiction” where private responsibility over childcare has actually made it more difficult to reconcile parenthood with employment (100).

C) Solo Mothers and the Male Breadwinner Model

Sainsbury is concerned with the issue of solo mothers. However, she approaches this issue by placing the dimension of solo mothers in tension with the male breadwinner model. According to her, solo mothers stand diametrically against the male breadwinner model because “as single parents, they must often fulfill dual roles as earners and caregivers” (Sainsbury, 1996: 74). The manner in which either the male breadwinner model or the female carer model is “encoded” in legislation also affects solo mothers’ social rights (75).

Sainsbury articulates two sets of criteria to examine variations in solo mothers’ social entitlements: decommodification and “defamilialization,” two concepts that first appear in Esping-Andersen’s work. Sainsbury is fundamentally trying to gauge “the degree that social policies enable solo mothers and their children to enjoy a socially acceptable standard of living independent of the market and of family

Sainsbury finds that “Swedish policies have sought to facilitate solo mothers’ dual roles as earner and caregiver,” achieving this by making solo mothers a priority group when expanding daycare, and implementing an “ability to pay” structure for daycare services that has greatly benefited solo mothers (Sainsbury, 1996: 85). Furthermore, Sainsbury argues that solo mothers are less prone to poverty compared to their counterparts in other countries, and that “their disposable income [is] closer to that of the average family” (86). She goes further to illustrate that this outcome has been obtained through Sweden’s system of “earnings supplemented by benefits” (84). In Sweden, more so than in the other three countries, most solo mothers earn their own wages as a main source of income. State assistance adds to, rather than replaces, their earned income (84). Furthermore, the amount and duration of state assistance that solo mothers require is also lower than in the other countries.

In relation to Esping-Andersen’s decommodification model, Sainsbury directly states that the variations among solo mother entitlements in her four countries undermine Esping-Andersen’s decommodification position. She argues that Esping-Andersen’s notion of “decommodifying” policies is confined to income maintenance policies, but that social rights are not necessarily confined to such policies. Though his concept of decommodification can be extended and “fruitfully applied to medical services, housing, and education,” the term’s assumption of a “prior commodification of one’s labor” is inherently contradictory with the Swedish state’s commitment to
full employment, making a consideration of the decommodification-right-to-work relationship “problematic” (Sainsbury, 1996: 88).

More importantly however, Sainsbury takes the view that “solo mothers’ entitlements…represent a challenge to the celebration of marriage,” depending on the extent that these entitlements meet the criteria of “defamilialization,” which is characterized as autonomy in family relationships (Sainsbury, 1996: 86). She argues that Swedish policies have “stronger defamilializing effects” because “marital status” has not been a criteria in the affecting the entitlements of solo mothers” (86). In fact, Swedish policies have discouraged both the separate spheres ideology and the traditional institution of marriage through the erosion of means testing, as well as the fact that maintenance allowances tend to be geared towards children, not wives.

D) Stratification

Sainsbury also questions Esping-Andersen’s stratification dimension and his general class-based approach. According to her, “Esping-Andersen deals exclusively with class and social status without considering stratification with respect to women and men and the gendered division of labor in the family and society” (Sainsbury, 1996: 130). In response, Sainsbury “genders” his stratification dimension in two ways; first, she examines women’s access to different income maintenance benefits. Second, she looks at the different outcomes and levels of stratification in each welfare state. What she finds is yet another paradox: Sweden demonstrates a gender benefit gap, but has the strongest redistributive outcome among the four countries (168).

In terms of old age insurance benefits, women have equal access to Sweden’s basic old age pension (folkpension) but not necessarily the national occupational
supplementary pension (ATP), which sees women’s access fall behind the men’s. For her, the most “clear cut” case of gender stratification lies in men and women’s recipient rates of ATP old age benefits, with 60% of women receiving benefits compared to 95% of the men (Sainsbury, 1996: 157). However, in terms of sickness and disability benefits, as well as unemployment insurance benefits, Sweden demonstrates fairly equal gender access. In fact, women’s utilization of sickness benefits tends to be higher than men’s (157). By highlighting Sweden as a case study, Sainsbury demonstrates how the “dual welfare thesis”—which states that welfare state segregates women and men into different types of social provision, does not hold when it comes to Sweden, as women receive insurance benefits as individuals, and men are slightly more prone to assistance. For her, this positive performance can be credited to what she calls “bases of entitlement”. Social provisions that are based on residency or citizenship promote “equal access” to benefits and undermine the influence of marital or family status.

In terms of redistributive outcomes, Sainsbury also finds that Sweden ranks the highest in terms of equalization through income transfers and taxes (Sainsbury, 1996: 165). Similarly, in terms of disposable income, Sweden also demonstrates the lowest level of inequality in terms of final income distribution (165). Women are less likely to be poor than the men, and she acknowledges the low to no levels of poverty among pensioners (169). According to her, “the capacity of Swedish policies to reduce income inequalities and poverty stands out no matter what indicator we use” (164).

What this can be boiled down to, according to Sainsbury, is Sweden’s “redistributive paradox,” characterized by “unequal benefits but ‘equal outcomes”
Sweden stands apart by taxing benefits as part of their welfare state policies, and this has led to an “impressive reduction” in male-female inequalities in disposable income (165). Sweden undermines assumptions about the benefit-redistribution relationship by showing that earnings related schemes can reduce income inequality and “bring about vertical redistribution” (169).

E) Sainsbury’s Treatment of Taxation

In her 1999 compilation *Gender and Welfare State Regimes*, Sainsbury articulates Sweden’s four frontal approaches in moving women’s social rights forward. They are labor-market policy, parental insurance, increased public responsibility for daycare, and taxation. The first three were extensively covered in her 1996 work, but she gives the issue of taxation comprehensive treatment in her chapter “Taxation, Family Responsibilities and Employment,” arguing that the tax system can be a policy tool that the state uses to wield power and influence human relationships. It can also reflect the state’s position on marriage in general. According to her, “taxation can prioritize or marginalize the earning opportunities of family members” (Sainsbury, 1999: 192). For example, if a country wishes to bestow “favorable treatment [on] the married couple,” joint taxation can be an “attractive option” for many two-earner couples (193). In systems of separate taxation, tax relief for dependent spouses also create an employment penalty on the married woman (193).

Charting the different countries’ generosity of marital tax relief against whether they provide for joint or individual taxation, Sweden is strikingly at the zero axis, denoting a fully separate tax system with no marital tax relief, and hence no employment penalties for married women tax-wise (Sainsbury, 1999, 195). Sweden’s
tax system encourages married women to work, but does not necessarily encourage marriage itself.

\textit{F) Reflecting on Sainsbury’s Contributions}

Sainsbury’s main contribution to the discourse has been her analysis of public policy and women’s rights of access to state benefits. As a political scientist, she stresses certain political factors and dimensions that the other authors are less concerned with. While she draws from the common set of facts by talking about parental leave structures and solo mothers, she frames it in terms of state policies. For her, there are certain political strategies that “work” for gender equality: universalism, entitlements based on citizenship or residence, helping women achieve financial independence by encouraging employment, as well as a decline in means-tested assistance. She prizes high level of access to benefit entitlements, and clearly sees women-favored access as an intrinsically positive attribute. Out of her four countries, she views Sweden the most favorably—an example of a country that has gotten its policies “right.” Much of her work can be seen as a response to Esping-Andersen’s \textit{Three Worlds}, as she confronts many of the same issues that he does, such as decommodification and stratification, but from a perspective that analyzes legislation.

\textbf{4.2. Empirically-Driven Sociological Perspective: Mary Daly and Katherine Rake}

While Sainsbury focuses on women’s access to benefits and entitlements, the sociologists approach Swedish gender equality differently. Daly and Rake examine each country’s performance across a range of indicators in the areas of work, welfare and care (to be covered in the next chapter). While Sainsbury is concerned with
analyzing policy, Daly and Rake focus on examining how countries fare across different gender indicators in the public and private spheres.

\textit{A) Work: Employment Performance}

Daly and Rake’s work dimension show the gender trade-offs embedded within Sweden’s employment sector. By breaking down Sweden’s employment performance into the different dimensions of aggregate employment performance; intensity of participation; occupational segregation (or what they call “stratification,” not to be confused with Esping-Andersen’s use of the term); and wage inequality, Daly and Rake present a more comprehensive picture of Sweden’s gender performance as compared to Sainsbury and Esping-Andersen.

As seen below in Table 4.1, Daly and Rake demonstrate Sweden’s positive performance in aggregate employment. While their figures are less recent than the ones shown in Chapter Two, they are able to place Sweden’s performance in broad context by examining it against a range of countries, making Sweden’s positive performances in certain areas particularly impressive. 2000’s female employment rate is only 3.8 percentage points below the male employment rate, boasting the smallest differential among all of Daly and Rake’s considered countries. The male unemployment rate even exceeds the female unemployment rate. Out of all the countries, Swedish women are the most likely to be at work or seeking employment, demonstrating the lowest economic inactivity rate among all the countries.
Table 4.1. Women’s Employment, Unemployment and Economic Inactivity Rates, 2000 (with male rates in brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Employment Rate</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>Economic Inactivity Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>71 (74.8)</td>
<td>5.8 (6.0)</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>55.3 (69.3)</td>
<td>11.5 (7.8)</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>57.9 (72.8)</td>
<td>8.3 (7.6)</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>54.0 (76.1)</td>
<td>4.2 (4.3)</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>39.6 (67.5)</td>
<td>14.4 (8.0)</td>
<td>53.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>63.7 (82.4)</td>
<td>3.7 (2.0)</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>64.6 (77.8)</td>
<td>4.9 (6.0)</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>67.9 (80.6)</td>
<td>4.2 (3.9)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Daly and Rake, 2003: 75, Table 41. Data obtained from European Commission 2001b)

This broad context is particularly effective when examining the dimension of part-time work. While many authors often comment about the high proportion of women working part-time in Sweden, Daly and Rake show that in reality, women working part-time in Sweden work for the equivalent of a full working day as compared to their German, Irish, Dutch or British part-time counterparts (Daly and Rake, 2003: 79). Swedish part-time women works work an average of twenty-five hours as compared to 18.4 hours (Germany) or 17.7 hours (UK). Nonetheless, there is clearly a “strong association” between part-time jobs and female employment, and countries that have high rates of part-time jobs among women also tend to enjoy a higher aggregate female employment performance.
In terms of occupational segregation, Daly and Rake demonstrate how Swedish women are highly concentrated in the public sector, but once again, are able to recognize that this is a common trend across all the considered countries, rather than a uniquely “Swedish” issue. In fact, as seen in Table 4.2, they find that Sweden’s percentage of women’s employment in the public sector, at 45.9%, is lower than all other countries except Netherlands.

Table 4.2. Share of Female Employment in Public Sector and the Proportion of Female Public Service Workers in Senior Management Positions, 2000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% of women’s employment that is in the public sector</th>
<th>% of women in senior management in the public sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Daly and Rake, 2003: 82, Table 4.4. Data obtained from OECD 2001b)

While they acknowledge that the welfare state is a significant employer, with public employment driving up women’s labor force participation rates, they take a more positive perspective to the public-private sector gender divide when they place it in context to the rest of Europe and the USA.

Here, Daly and Rake demonstrate a possible influence from Esping-Andersen. The issue of high female employment in the public sector appeared as one of Esping-
Andersen’s few gender focuses in *Three Worlds*. Unlike Daly and Rake’s positive endorsement however, he couches this negatively in terms of a “feminization of the welfare state,” arguing that women account for 87% of the total health-education-welfare (HEW) employment growth in Sweden (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 158). For him, the feminization of the welfare state is part of Sweden’s instrumental plan to maximize labor participation. As he argues:

The logic of the Swedish welfare state is such that it will produce a female-biased social service explosion. On the supply side, it provides services, like day care, which women need in order to work and which, coincidentally, provide women’s jobs…Moreover, the welfare state’s transfers and taxes provide irresistible incentives for women to work. Even a part-time job suffices to qualify for earnings-related pensions. (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 223)

However, this high female labor participation has led to trade-offs in terms of high female rates of absenteeism, which Esping-Andersen claims are particularly pronounced in the public sector. According to him, more than 30% of public sector employees are absent “on any given day” (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 156).

In *Three Worlds*, he examines figures between from 1965 and 1985, examining the general incremental role that the government has played in employment. Solely extracting figures from Sweden from his general comparative table (which includes facts from Germany and the US), Table 4.3 shows the increasing role of the Swedish government in providing female employment over the course of two decades. There is clear difference in approach here: while Daly and Rake present a snapshot; Esping-Andersen shows a trend.
Table 4.3. The Impact of Government on Employment Growth in Sweden (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1965</th>
<th>1985</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government’s employment as % of total</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government share of employed women</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s share of public employment</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1965-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government’s share of the net total female-job growth</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government’s share of net total service-job growth</td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Esping-Andersen, 1990: 202, Table 8.3 Data from WEEP data files; and IAB; Beitrag AB 2.1)

Here, Esping-Andersen exhibits a level of cynicism with regards to Sweden’s high female aggregate employment, arguing that it comes as a result of the state’s instrumentality and comes with its own set of negative consequences in the form of high female absenteeism. Daly and Rake undermine this position by showing that it is not necessarily a uniquely Swedish problem. Furthermore, they show how there is greater gender wage parity in the public sector across all the different countries. As shown in Table 4.4, Swedish women’s public sector salaries are 93.7% that of men’s, which is higher than the country average of 87%. Sweden also demonstrates higher wage equality across the board compared to other countries.
Table 4.4. Women’s Gross Hourly Earnings as % of Men’s 1995-1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Women’s hourly earnings as % of men’s (1995)</th>
<th>Women’s hourly earnings as % of men’s in public sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>89.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>88.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>81.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>86.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Daly and Rake, 2003: 84, Table 4.5. Data from Eurostat 1999c, Government Offices Sweden, 2000: 19)

However, this does not represent a sanction of occupational segregation and Daly and Rake refuse to take a strong aggregate employment score at face value. They argue that while Sweden provides women with good access to paid work, Swedish women are still “cut off” from certain jobs and work experience (Daly and Rake, 2003: 90). This has negative consequences for gender equality, since differences with respect to women’s relationship to the labor market can be disempowering for women, especially when they suffer a lower quality of employment. As for what deems a job “lower quality” or inferior, Daly and Rake establish several characteristics: the level of the job, the financial return from working, future career prospects and financial wellbeing (83). According to these benchmarks, “the data suggest that there are different compromises and trade-offs
involved for women if they wish to be involved in the labor market” (92). Daly and Rake might emphasize positive trends in Sweden’s female employment performance, but they remain critical of it as well.

B) Welfare Part I: Household Resources

The second dimension that Daly and Rake examine is the issue of “welfare,” both household welfare as well as individual welfare. Unlike Esping-Andersen, they refuse to conflate individual and household standards of living. For household welfare, Daly and Rake examine the concept of income redistribution, stressing the ideological and active role of the welfare state itself. According to them, “by supporting particular, often gendered, social roles with a varying degree of generosity, the welfare state acts to affect the conditions under which women and men live and the choices available to them at different life stages” (Daly and Rake, 2003: 95). They believe that each gender’s ability to access resources is at the “core” of gender relations, and as such, the welfare state can “control and condition” male-female behavior through its ability to redistribute resources (95).

Daly and Rake take a comprehensive approach to household resources, focusing on female and male-headed households, lone mother households, and household poverty rates. According to them, Sweden’s performance in these areas is multifaceted but generally positive. The income of female-headed households is 86% that of male-headed household incomes, of which 56% comes from market income, while 29% comes from welfare taxes and transfers, supporting Sainsbury’s articulation of a dual wage-assistance income structure (Daly and Rake, 2003: 106).
Contrasted with Sainsbury however, Daly and Rake emphasize the role of the welfare state more. According to them, welfare state intervention has led to a reverse-gender poverty risk, with male-headed single households more at risk of poverty. In 1997, 20% of female-headed households were in poverty, compared to 26% of men’s, leading to a female-to-male gender poverty ratio of 0.8 (Daly and Rake, 2003: 99). According to Daly and Rake, the role of the Swedish welfare state in alleviating social and financial pressures is undeniable. They state:

If families received only market income, Sweden would have the highest poverty rates of all countries and a gender poverty of all countries [that they consider] and a gender poverty ratio in line with its European neighbors. Swedish taxes and transfers, however, reduce women’s poverty by more than three-quarters. (Daly and Rake, 2003: 102)

Like Sainsbury, Daly and Rake are also concerned with lone motherhood, but focus more on lone motherhood poverty. According to their findings, state intervention reduces the financial disadvantage or “penalty” of lone motherhood, providing 56% of the income of lone mothers, with only 13% as means-tested entitlements (106). In all Swedish households with children, state transfers form an average of 33% of net household incomes (106). According to Daly and Rake, “the Swedish welfare state emerges as the most significant redistributors of resources to households with children, providing them with a third of their income” (106). In the case of lone motherhood protection, Sweden is an “outlier,” offering considerable protection that greatly outperforms that from the other countries, with low to no levels of stigmatization attached in the form of low means-testing. Like Sainsbury, they stress that Swedish lone mothers enjoy a “double virtue” of market access coupled with significant state transfers, but go further to emphasize the necessity of these state
transfers in maintaining a standard of living for lone mothers. They appear to converge with Sainsbury’s view that Sweden has gotten its policies “right.”

From a life course perspective, Swedish women also enjoy relatively higher standards of living as they grow older compared to their other European counterparts. Sole older women enjoy relatively high incomes, with a narrow gender gap, and sole older women’s income is 94% of sole older men’s (Daly and Rake, 2003: 109). Nonetheless, they argue that Sweden falls closer to the “mainstream” when it comes to poverty rates among older women, with a gender poverty ratio of 1.3, placing it closer to lesser-performing countries like the UK and France (112).

As they state, “the transfer of income is an expression of the power of the welfare state. Garnering and redistributing income is a political act in so far as it embodies the power of political actors to decide between contesting claims on resources” (Daly and Rake, 2003: 113). Unlike Sainsbury therefore, they argue that Sweden’s performance in income distribution has been met with “mixed success,” “where low levels of poverty overall coexist with gender poverty ratios that are low and sometimes even negative” (115). Part of this critique comes from Daly and Rake’s particularly multifaceted notion of gender equality, where they expect positive performances in many different areas.

C) Welfare Part II: Individual Resources

By examining individual resources, Daly and Rake once again emphasize the welfare state’s impact on the private sphere. Looking at women and men who receive no income in their own right, they find that even Sweden (as their most positive scoring country), still has 8.9% of women who record zero personal income (Daly
and Rake, 2003: 123). The importance of the state is emphasized when they show how state transfers reduce the proportion of women without incomes by around three-quarters, bringing the percentage down to 2.1% (123). Nonetheless, state transfers actually play a greater role in reducing the proportion of men without income that those of women, leading to a situation where “the gender ratio of those without individual income is worse when the full range of state transfers has been taken into account than when personal income alone is considered” (124). This information is reflected in Table 4.5, where the gender ratio is 10.5. They therefore appear to disagree with Sainsbury’s conclusions about equal redistributive outcomes, criticizing the state for favoring men in this regard.

Table 4.5. Sweden’s Women and Men Recording Zero Personal Income (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Gender Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Income</strong></td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Income with state benefits</strong></td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Extracted from Daly and Rake, 2003: 123, Table 6.1. Data from Luxembourg Income Study)

Going even deeper to examine resource balance within households, Daly and Rake consider couples’ income distribution. On average, Swedish women have the highest share of total income at 41.4%, as shown in Table 4.6. Furthermore, though mothers have a smaller share of time in the labor market, with a reduced share of annual wages, they suffer no major equivalent loss in income (43.1%), once again demonstrating the generosity of the welfare state.
Table 4.6. Resource Balance Within Couples: All women, 1995 (Mothers in brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s share of:</th>
<th>Total Income</th>
<th>Total Annual Wages</th>
<th>Total hours in labor market</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden (1995)</td>
<td>41.4 (43.1)</td>
<td>38.9 (34.0)</td>
<td>44.4 (40.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France (1994)</td>
<td>34.7 (38.1)</td>
<td>32.2 (32.3)</td>
<td>35.9 (25.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (1994)</td>
<td>29.1 (25.6)</td>
<td>29.6 (22.8)</td>
<td>32.1 (23.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy (1995)</td>
<td>25.2 (22.4)</td>
<td>23.7 (21.7)</td>
<td>25.5 (21.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands (1994)</td>
<td>33.5 (29.7)</td>
<td>27.2 (19.2)</td>
<td>30.1 (30.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK (1995)</td>
<td>34.4 (31.8)</td>
<td>33.2 (25.9)</td>
<td>36.9 (34.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA (1997)</td>
<td>34.7 (31.1)</td>
<td>34.7 (28.0)</td>
<td>37.8 (34.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Extracted from Daly and Rake, 2003: 127, Table 6.2. Data from Luxembourg Income Study)

Daly and Rake also take the position that individual men and women are “agents of, or subject to, familial redistribution” (Daly and Rake, 2003: 129). They consider the degree that women depend on their families to meet their needs by assuming zero resource sharing between couples. By doing so, they reveal that the percentage of income beyond women’s direct control is almost two-thirds in Sweden with 62.2% but that only 3.7% of women in Sweden have less than 10% of the total family resources in their own name (130). This is much better than other countries. For example, nearly 51% of women in Italy have less than 10% of total family resources in their own name (130). Nonetheless, Daly and Rake argue that:

The average woman has direct control over less than a third of household income—in other words, her welfare is heavily dependent on the family as a site of redistribution. There is striking convergence across nations on this measure, suggesting that “gender resource balance remains an issue in all countries we consider here. (Daly and Rake, 2003: 130).
Finally, Daly and Rake consider patterns of time use in the form of paid work, unpaid work and leisure. Here, they show a marked gender imbalance. Even in Sweden, which boasts the highest female employment participation rates, women’s average hours of paid work are only 70% of the men’s, as seen in Table 4.7. For Daly and Rake, “female employment status has only a marginal impact on men’s contribution to unpaid work, and because the time spent on unpaid work does not decrease in line with increased hours in paid work. Thus, employment typically increases women’s total working day” (Daly and Rake, 2003: 132). Furthermore, Table 4.7 also shows Swedish women spend 1.7 times more hours doing unpaid work than the men and spend less time than the men on leisure. Nonetheless, compared to other countries, Sweden demonstrates the most equity of economic and temporal resources within couples.

Table 4.7. Gender Differentials in Time Use: Ratio of Women’s Time to Men’s Time Spent In:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Paid Work</th>
<th>Unpaid Work</th>
<th>Total Paid and Unpaid Work</th>
<th>Leisure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Daly and Rake, 2003: 131, Table 6.5. Data from Gershuny 2000)
D) Reflecting on Daly and Rake’s Contributions

Examining Daly and Rake, certain features rise up. For one, they take a positive, approving stance towards Sweden, arguing that Sweden has “relatively low levels of gender inequality” (Daly and Rake, 2003: 151). Nonetheless, this stance of approval is constructed within the framework of a “comparison”—based on Sweden’s relatively better performance across their different empirical indicators. Furthermore, they appear to have a particularly comprehensive and precise definition of what warrants “gender equality,” which is a definition that requires positive performances in a large number of factors within both the public and private spheres.

To their credit, their picture of Swedish gender equality is also nuanced. They argue that Sweden has done well in expanding labor market access to women, but mothers work shorter hours. The labor market also appears to contain high levels of gender segregation, with women excluded from the highest level of resources. Roles in the private sphere appear “fluid,” and women are able to access state resources on equal footing as the men. Despite their attempt to present balanced picture, Daly and Rake tilt more in favor of positive approval towards Sweden’s performance.

4.3. Sociological Ideological Perspective: Gosta Esping-Andersen

Esping-Andersen approaches the gender issue differently by relating it to bigger societal considerations. He focuses on what happens to a country as a result of changing female circumstances and how the state should respond to it. Synthesizing his publications, several major themes appear in Esping-Andersen’s work. First, there is an implicit argument that the welfare state should play a normatively active role,
using its policies as mechanisms to push forward certain ideologies, namely high fertility and collective childcare. Second, though gender issues form his general framework, a thread of class concerns still underlies his analysis. As such, Esping-Andersen’s work is not solely woman-centered, and he often uses the gender issue as a springboard to examine other societal issues.

A) Fertility and Employment

Esping-Andersen does not approach the female employment issue as a dimension on its own. Rather, he approaches it through a three-tier paradigm that combines female employment, fertility rates and education levels. For him, all three are interlinked and mutually influential. As he states, “Swedish fertility is curvilinear: significantly lower among the least and most educated, and highest among women with a semi-professional education, almost invariably working in the public sector” (Esping-Andersen, 2002: 75). Unlike Daly and Rake, or even Sainsbury, Esping-Andersen does not feel the need to question female employment, or the specific tenets of it. Rather, increasing female participation in the labor force is merely something that he assumes. As he states, “It is not difficult to see that rising female employment is triggered by the service economy, and that this, in turn, reverberates through family life, politics, and the economy” (68).

In his later works on gender, Esping-Andersen demonstrates an ideological shift regarding his views on the feminization of the welfare state. Part of this shift lies in his overarching assertion that countries need to increase fertility. In this regard, the public sector plays an important role in affecting fertility rates, as it allows women to manage their dual roles of worker and mother. As he argues, “the vast majority of
contemporary women opt for the dual-role mode, but unwilling to sacrifice motherhood…they are likely to concentrate in part-time jobs and ‘soft economy jobs,’ like public sector services” (Esping-Andersen, 2002, 72). As a result of his overt interest in public sector jobs, his comparative perspective on employment focuses on what he calls “mother-friendly” or “women friendly” economic sectors, his synonym for service industries. For him, underdeveloped service economies are a “severe handicap” to women because this limits their access to “protected jobs” (76). Taking Denmark as his base, he examines each country’s percentage point deviations from the country in terms of employment rate gap. As seen in Table 4.8, Sweden outperforms Denmark in every indicator.

### Table 4.8. Comparative Employment Rate Gap in Mother-Friendly Sectors (% point deviations from Denmark, 1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Health, social work</th>
<th>Community and personal services</th>
<th>All services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>+0.2</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
<td>+0.2</td>
<td>+1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>-8.0</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>-9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
<td>-6.8</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>-11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>-7.1</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
<td>-12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>-7.1</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
<td>-12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
<td>-10.1</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>-20.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Extracted from Esping-Andersen, 2002: 77, Table 3.2. Data from OECD 2001c)

The motif of part-time work also emerges within his framework of the public sector. While Daly and Rake view Sweden’s part-time work performance positively because Swedish women working part-time still work more hours than their European
counterparts, Esping-Andersen approves of part-time work because it is an effective method of work-family reconciliation that will encourage greater fertility. As he states, “the public sector is also far more likely to offer quality part-time options” (Esping-Andersen, 2002: 77). Given his new concerns over fertility rates and childcare, he also drops his contention about high female absenteeism.

However, Esping-Andersen appears to give the wage issue light treatment, merely stating that “the Nordic countries represent a positive sum scenario in which public support for working mothers coincides with an ample ‘mother-friendly’ labor market and a wage structure that encourages near universal female employment” (Esping-Andersen, 2002: 80). Rather, he links the wage dimension to the education dimension, stating that “to a great extent these [wage] differences simply reflect concentrations of educational qualifications” (79).

B) Education, Employment and Class

Esping-Andersen places a great emphasis on the importance of education as both a gender and class dimension. This dimension plays into his analysis for both employment and motherhood. As he states, “all available evidence suggests that marriage and birth decisions are increasingly woven into a simultaneous pursuit of education and gaining a foothold in the labor market” (Esping-Andersen, 2002: 81).

As mentioned, Esping-Andersen links female wages to their educational levels. Similar to Daly and Rake, he also compares women’s earnings as a percentage of men’s. However, he contributes a new perspective by focusing solely on low-educated women. Doing so embeds class analysis into gender-employment dimension, where he narrows in on specific societal groups of women. Even so, as
seen in Table 4.9, Sweden still demonstrates a relatively strong performance in both, substantially exceeding Denmark in the activity rates of low-educated women.

Table 4.9. Relative Earning Levels for Women (aged 30-44) and Participation Rates (ages 25-64) for Women with Low Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Earnings of low educated women (% of males)</th>
<th>Activity rate of low-educated women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Esping-Andersen, 2002: 81, Table 3.4. Data from OECD, 2000d)

C) Homogamy and Women’s Bargaining Power

This education-class concept is extended in The Incomplete Revolution, when Esping-Andersen incorporates the idea of “homogamy” to examine gender equality both within and between couples. Homogamy is a sociological term that refers to a marriage between individuals who are similar to each other in some sense, be it socio-economic, cultural and so on. It is deemed a form of “ assortative mating.” The role that homogamy plays in Esping-Andersen’s analysis is fairly complicated: he cross-references this concept with women’s bargaining power within the household, looking at issues of housework, childcare and household income. Though Esping-
Andersen neglects to give his readers a specific definition of the form of homogamy that he is referring to, homogamy in his sense appears to refer more to education or class similarities. Fundamentally, Esping-Andersen argues that higher-educated, higher wage couples demonstrate higher levels of gender equality. In contrast, traditional gender norms remain more entrenched among lower-educated, lower-income couples. In other words, “education is positively related to more gender equality” (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 45).

One reason for this correlation is that increased female education increases women’s bargaining power in the household, which Esping-Andersen argues is a fundamental tenet of gender equality. He appears to conflate “bargaining power” as both economic and social—including both earning power as well as education levels. He finds that university-level homogamous couples are 30% more likely to jointly perform housework (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 46). Similarly, he finds that if wives’ wages were to double, it would induce a 60% increase in men’s housework time and a corresponding 28% decrease in women’s (46). In contrast, the impact of homogamy on gender equality is negative when it comes in the form of lower-educated and lower-income families, who continue demonstrating conventional gender norms. In other words, “high educated homogamous couples embrace more egalitarianism while the low educated remain loyal to conventional gender norms” (47). While there is definitely a gender revolution occurring, it is confined to the top strata of society.

D) Social Consequences

For Esping-Andersen, this “incomplete” female revolution has led to a polarization between the “work-rich” and “work-poor” households. For him, “a
paradox of our epoch is that the quest for gender equality may very well produce greater societal inequalities if the quest is strongest among high-status women” (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 55). Changes in women’s economic power can affect income distribution and “indirectly” impact parents’ abilities to invest in their own children. His analysis in this area moves away from a solely women’s rights perspective to consider class stratification. He first states that women’s earnings produce more household earnings inequality in all his considered countries except Denmark (he does not consider Sweden) but also that wives’ labor supply (measured in weekly employment hours) is very much less intensive in the bottom quintile households than the top. Less educated women also tend to be particularly vulnerable to economic slowdowns. More importantly, household income inequality affects intergenerational upward and downward mobility. Though *The Incomplete Revolution* is supposedly his response to the “gender question,” his examination of intergenerational mobility is conducted from a male perspective, examining the probability that sons will end up in their father’s income quintile, seen in Table 4.10 below. Though Sweden does comparatively well, the probability of staying in the same income bracket as one’s father is still highest in the top and bottom quintiles.

**Table 4.10. Probability that Sons End Up in their Father’s Income Quintile (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father’s quintile</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bottom</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Esping-Andersen, 2009: 73, Table 2.5. Data obtained from Jantti et al (2006))
E) Esping-Andersen’s Policy Suggestions

Esping-Andersen argues for welfare states to encourage changing male behavior. According to him, this “incomplete female revolution” has a “masculinization” of female life biographies in terms of women’s educational attainments as well as employment decisions. In contrast, “if we want more gender equality our policies may have to concentrate on men’s behavior” (Esping-Andersen, 2002: 70). Not just for the sake of gender equality, but also because men have to join the revolution if they desire children. For him, this is a practical step to ensure completion of this “revolution” because “even if women are as skilled, clever or as talented as men, competitively placed employers will rationally prefer make to female workers if they expect that women, and not men, will experience a productivity decline due to births” (89). He calls for what he labels the “specialization thesis,” which is for a country to boost incentives for men to take on greater childcare responsibilities and unpaid domestic work. A “substantial alteration of the male incentive structure” is required in the pursuit of gender equality so as to prevent offset employers’ propensities for gender pay inequalities (93).

Unlike the feminist thinkers who lament the continuing gender inequality in domestic labor and childcare, Esping-Andersen views Sweden positively, illustrating how male paternity leaves are twice as frequent as other Nordic neighbors, and that Swedish husbands’ contribution to unpaid, domestic work at 21 hours/week is an “international record” (Esping-Andersen, 2002: 92). He highlights two Swedish characteristics that encourage this: low gender pay differentials and non-transferable “daddy months” (92). Here, he focuses on the male side of the coin rather than the
female, working on the assumption that any change on the male end is better than none. Once again, the female education dimension arises, as he illustrates how most of the males who take parental leave are concentrated among those married to highly educated women or those working in the public sector (92).

This leads us to Esping-Andersen’s main concern: the issue of fertility. Similar to the bell raised by the Myrdals in the 1930s, Esping-Andersen argues that “demographic ageing means that there is a growing premium on maximizing fertility” and that the state needs to step in to help individuals (especially women) reconcile parenthood with their career goals (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 78). For him, “the quest for children must accordingly be pursued co-jointly with women’s new role” (83). To encourage women to have children, the state should focus on minimizing the “children penalty” through childcare provisions, as “child care raises fertility” (87). This is a more effective policy than maternal leave or income transfers to families, which he claims have ambiguous impacts on fertility (87). In fact, Esping-Andersen argues that mothers who benefit from subsidized daycare actually repay it over their lifetime with their higher lifetime earnings and tax payments (95).

More than that, Esping-Andersen is not just calling for a greater “quantity of children,” but also children of greater “quality.” For him, the state should “equalize life chances” for children as they are a “positive collective good” (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 115). He considers the issues of lone motherhood and female employment within this framework of equalizing children’s life chances. While Daly and Rake consider the issue of lone motherhood as a dimension on its own, Esping-Andersen considers it within the context of children’s development. He finds that “children of
lone mothers score comparatively better if the lone mother is employed” and calls for welfare state redistribution to diminish child poverty and “improve education outcomes”(124).

Fundamentally, Esping-Andersen is advocating for greater female education. Though he does not assert so explicitly, his underlying argument is that by increasing female’s education, women also augment their earning power. Both factors lead to reverberating effects within the household and the public sphere. Women become confident enough to make demands on their husbands, leading to a greater sharing in household and caring responsibilities. Similarly, the state needs to step in and ameliorate this “double burden” through public daycare centers and so on. The effect of this is then cyclical—once women feel greater societal and male support, they are then more inclined to have children. Subsequently, the state should step in to “equalize” life chances among children from different backgrounds.

F) Reflecting on Esping-Andersen’s Contributions

If anything, Esping-Andersen can be characterized as a “non-gender” gender theorist because even though he touches on the “woman question,” women’s rights are not his main goals and he takes a broad societal perspective to gender equality. While gender equality in the form of high female education and high income allows homogamous couples to enjoy high standards of living and transmit important life skills to their children, it also leads to greater class stratification between households. Though he considers women’s emancipation an important social change, he takes for granted that it is inevitable, or is already in the process of happening, and is unconcerned with its progress. Rather, he focuses on the areas that the “women’s
revolution” affects: income distribution and the growing gap in children’s life chances when assortative mating increases. His foremost concern remains class equality rather than gender equality, and the welfare state is characterized as a tool that should actively mitigate such negative consequences.

4.4. Convergences and Divergences: Juxtaposing the Thinkers

Feminism plays an ideological role in separating Esping-Andersen from Daly/Rake and Sainsbury. Daly and Rake can be characterized as “feminist-sociologists,” with women’s rights as their main concern. They are entirely focused on the status of women within the public and private spheres. This is the same for Sainsbury, who is concerned with women’s ability to make demands on the state, and the state’s ability and willingness to accommodate these demands through their provision of benefits. Both parties are fundamentally considering questions of economic and social empowerment, whether women can sustain themselves in society, and how far the state has gone to aid them. Feminism then forms the underlying similarity that reaches across both disciplinary aisles: Daly/Rake and Sainsbury are concerned with women, and improving their life conditions is their final (and only) driving purpose.

Esping-Andersen is the opposite. The “woman question” is a launch board for his broader sociological concerns: namely income distribution, differences in educational standards, childcare policies, and fertility rates. He is fundamentally still a class analyst, and this creates a gap between him and Daly/Rake.
Nonetheless, all three thinkers appear to agree that achieving gender equality requires men’s behavior to change and concur that this has not been fully accomplished in Sweden. Though all state that Swedish males are more likely to take parental leave and shoulder domestic chores than their counterparts in other countries, all three also agree that they still lag behind the women in terms of bearing the workfamily “double burden,” though the feminist thinkers admittedly take a harsher stance than Esping-Andersen. For Sainsbury, “gender reconstruction reforms have been more successfully in altering women’s entitlements and less effective in producing changes in men’s” (Sainsbury, 1996: 196). Daly and Rake lament the fact that women enjoy less leisure time, and take on a disproportionate amount of unpaid work. Esping-Andersen subsequently calls for greater “feminization” of male life courses.

4.5. Analyzing the Analysts

A) Sainsbury

Once again, Sainsbury appears to undermine marriage as an institution. This can be seen from her approving stance towards separate taxation and high state benefits for solo mothers. For her, female independence or “autonomy” from the family is ideal, as seen from her approval of low means testing as well as her argument for states to use citizenship or residence as the “basis” of state entitlement rather than adopting the male breadwinner model. Her idea of what “gender equality means” appears to refer to both “gender-specialness” as well as egalitarian equal outcomes. She takes a firm stance against policies that are gender-neutral in nature, arguing that “gender-neutral reforms have often been cosmetic; the sole change has
been to extend formal entitlement to both sexes. The principal flaw of this type of reform is that it does not address the root cause of the gender differentiation in women’s and men’s entitlements: how the gendered division of labor interacts with social provision” (Sainsbury, 1996: 195). This gender-neutral perspective, especially with regards to Esping-Andersen’s gender-neutral conception of decommodification, is deeply problematic because labor is not gender-neutral, and a gendered paid-unpaid division of labor often distinguishes male-female relationships.

Furthermore, she also appears to favor equal outcomes over equal opportunities. She acknowledges that the enjoyment of benefits is gender-skewed in Sweden, but praises their success in equal redistributive outcomes. Part of this lies in favoritism towards women: she approves of the fact that Swedish women are less likely to be poor than the men are, and credits the state’s role in “pulling them up.” Her idea of redistributive outcomes is a little more straightforward than Daly and Rake’s, as she merely considers the level of benefit distribution between women and men, and among individuals, rather than between households.

B) Daly and Rake

In contrast, while Daly and Rake also advocate for equal outcomes, their “ideal outcome” is a lot more multifaceted: equality between and within households, among individuals, and in both the public and private sphere. This is a form of equality that has multiple layers to it, and they appear to desire positive performances in all of them. Daly and Rake go even further in favor of “gender-specialness.” They are clearly trying to investigate if states have been successful in transferring resources to pull women upwards to the same economic and social levels as men, both as
individuals and within households. This explains their distinct unhappiness regarding the gender resource imbalance between couples. As such, they could also be seen as non-marriage proponents, arguing for female resource independence. They appear to support an ideology of striving that women should enjoy the “best of all worlds,” standing against the double burden and the separate spheres ideology.

C) Esping-Andersen

In contrast, Esping-Andersen takes on an overt position of equal opportunity, which he states explicitly when he talks about equalizing life chances. For him, “equal opportunities are important for efficiency, at least to the extent that they are pursued in the spirit of investing in a nation’s human capital” (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 112). Without articulating it, he is fundamentally taking a gender-neutral stance, since he believes in equalizing life chances for everybody, including both men and women. He is primarily concerned with the issue of “background fairness,” but more so between different income classes rather than between genders. Policy-wise, this means equalizing education opportunities to counterbalance class differences. In fact, one could interpret Esping-Andersen’s analysis as a desire to improve capabilities (the Sen-Nussbaum capabilities approach) through more comprehensive education policies. First, for the women—to allow them greater employment potential and greater bargaining power in the household, but also for all children, girls included. His vision of gender equality could be framed as a midpoint—where men and women meet each other halfway in terms of their capabilities as well as their labor responsibilities. He demonstrates his disapproval of the female “double burden” and calls for paid and unpaid lifestyles to converge between the genders.
Conclusion

This chapter explicated and analyzed the different approaches that all the authors take with a common set of facts and issues. Several similarities emerge: by focusing on the “woman” and “male question,” all three thinkers are inherently taking a gender-special perspective and placing both genders under it. For them, abstract barriers between the genders should come down, leading to equal sharing in both the public and private spheres. Nonetheless, the ways in which they approach this topic differs. Sainsbury examines this through access to state entitlements and policy; Daly and Rake look at the issue through resources; and Esping-Andersen considers it through an instrumental lens that analyzes the gender issue vis-à-vis other societal considerations. Though there are clear convergences and divergences between them, there is nonetheless a starker distinction between Esping-Andersen and the feminist thinkers, as he continues to work on the basis of class (despite his “new” concern with the “female revolution”), whereas Sainsbury and Daly/Rake are solely concerned with women’s rights.
5. A Multidisciplinary Approach to Care and Caring Labor

“Care as a concept and activity covers a number of different relations, actors and institutional settings, and crosses conventional boundaries. Care is a public and a private responsibility; it is done for pay as well as unpaid, and is formally and informally provided; it is performed in non-profit as well as for-profit arrangements” (Leira and Saraceno, 2002: 56).

Introduction

From as early as 1988, political scientist Carol Pateman highlighted the “Wollstonecraft’s Dilemma,” an articulation of women’s dual social citizenship as citizen-worker and citizen-carer. In the welfare-gender discourse, this issue of a woman’s “double burden” recurs consistently. All the considered thinkers acknowledge Sweden’s success in helping mothers accomplish a work-life balance, highlighting various welfare state policies that facilitate an effective reconciliation. The focus on working parents, as well as parenthood, has been a significant theme that recurs in the Swedish welfare-gender literature, demonstrating the fact that many of these thinkers view parenthood policies as an important dimension in Sweden’s push for gender equality.

Care is a multidisciplinary topic, one that captures themes like the public-private divide, unpaid care as “work” and the idea of care as a social right and a social responsibility. Though much of the response to care as a topic has come from the sociologists, it is an academic area where “the influence of other disciplines [is] more strongly felt” (Leira and Saraceno, 2002: 56). This chapter focuses explicitly on the thinkers who bring the dimension of care to the forefront. It first examines the manner in which the issue of care has factored into Sainsbury and Esping-Andersen’s works.

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5 For an in-depth discussion on the thematic dimensions of care, read Arnlaug Leira and Chiara Saraceno’s “Care: actors, relationships and contexts” in Contested Concepts in Gender and Social Politics (2002).
Subsequently, this chapter surveys the sociological discipline by bringing in the main thinkers who have responded to the issues of care and parenthood, namely Daly and Rake, Phyllis Moen and Arnlaug Leira. The sociological approach is then contrasted with the economics discipline, focusing on feminist economist Nancy Folbre’s contributions. The intentions behind including the feminist economics discipline are multifold: first, the feminist economists have largely led the charge with regards to “caring labor” and their contributions to the discourse are undeniable. Consideration of the economic discipline also contributes to a more holistic picture of gender equality, providing an additional dimension of analysis outside the sociology-political science paradigms examined thus far. This chapter concludes by analyzing the fundamental assumptions underlying these disciplines and authors.

5.1. The Sainsbury-Esping-Andersen Dichotomy: The Importance of “Care”

In the Sainsbury-Esping-Andersen dichotomy, the issue of care is a prevalent theme in both their works. As mentioned in Chapter Four, for Sainsbury, care appears in the form of an abstract ideology, namely a “principle of care” that underlies the policies of the Swedish welfare state. Policies based on a principle of care enable women to enforce their demands on the state vis-à-vis their roles as mothers and carers. In response, state-provided entitlement benefits for women are created or bestowed in recognition of these roles, forming the underlying philosophical ideology for these entitlements. For her, the principle of care challenges the “principle of maintenance,” which is based on the male breadwinner ideology that gives fathers the prerogative to these social entitlements instead (Sainsbury, 1996: 101). According to
Sainsbury, creating state benefits based on a principle of care has important symbolic value because it embodies a normative judgment on the part of the state as “they alter notions of deservingness by acknowledging the significance of care to society” (195).

In Sweden however, Sainsbury acknowledges that benefits based on the principle of care tend to lag behind benefits obtained through one’s labor status, and Swedish entitlement benefits based on motherhood are “not as generous as work related benefits” (Sainsbury, 1996: 195). Furthermore, benefits based on the principle of care, while advantageous from an individual-carer perspective, “can [also] easily lock women into the role of the carer, impeding their entry and full integration into the labor market with its rewards of earnings and higher benefits” (196).

Yet, embedded within Sainsbury’s analysis is a positive attitude of approval towards this principle of care, which is fundamentally an extension of her sanction of individual-carer welfare regimes. For Sainsbury, caring responsibilities are an important dimension of women’s lives, and equally worthy to serve as the foundation of women’s entitlements as their labor market status. Entitlements based on an ideological principle of care are emancipatory in nature; they allow women to live as individuals based the caring roles that they play in society, separate from their work or marriage status. Sainsbury’s principle of care can also be interpreted as an extension of the decommodification concept, given that entitlements based on this principle of care promote and support women’s non-labor, private roles as mothers, which are completely separate from their employment status.

Esping-Andersen also implicitly recognizes the importance of care, and this plays into his analysis of childcare, as well as his statements on “ageing and equity.”
For childcare, he emphasizes the important influences of family income, education and maternal care. Circling back to his theme of assortative mating, he argues: “The trend towards increased educational homogamy at the top and bottom may widen the ‘quality gap’ of nurturing [children]” (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 126). Highly educated fathers tend to spend more developmental time with children, suggesting “highly educated parents are discounting the value of income or leisure in order to maximize investments in their children” (126). This has a powerful, positive influence on the development of the child’s cognitive and non-cognitive stimulation, creating yet another social gap between the different classes (126). For him, it is ideal for mothers to be with their children for the first year because “there is considerable evidence that external care during the child’s first year can be harmful,” and the state should help to facilitate this maternal care through paid maternity leave (137). If not, “the income gain from mothers’ employment may be offset by potentially adverse consequences for ‘nurturing” (137).

If anything, the issue of care is the fundamental driving force behind all of Esping-Andersen’s welfare state proposals. He proposes egalitarian, redistributive income policies to reduce child poverty, arguing that there is a cogent connection between low income and reduced life chances. He also proposes “homogenizing the learning milieu,” working on the recognition that income and educational levels influence the transmittance of “cultural” capital that then affects children’s education performance (Esping-Andersen, 2009:132). This cultural capital could refer to language or presentation skills, or parents’ appreciate for education. Here, he continues to embed class analysis into his argumentation, arguing that lower-income
and lower-educated parents are less equipped to transmit such skills to their children (143). He proposes an expansion of high-quality pre-school institutions to “compensate for unequal cultural capital” (136). His proposals all refer back to his fundamental goal of achieving equal opportunities for children, as well as his desire for countries to strive for both “high quantity” as well as “high quality” children.

The issue of children’s care is an extremely predominant issue in Esping-Andersen’s worldview, where the effective upbringing of children is a societal concern. The state should intervene to facilitate the general development of such “high quality” children through income redistributive policies or daycare provisions. His approach to these policies is inherently instrumental in nature—they are not implemented for the sake of egalitarian ideals or other values in themselves, but for the sake of raising children well. His concern for care also appears to supersede his concern for gender issues, and his overt concern for the care dimension obstructs his ability to consider other relevant gender issues. For example, what about the social rights of single, childless women etc? Fundamentally, Esping-Andersen continues to attach a class-based dimension to childcare by examining the issue through the lens of differing parenting methods between upper and lower class couples.

His care dimension also incorporates care for the elderly, which is a distinction that Sainsbury does not make explicitly as she subsumes both childcare and elderly care under the general notion of “caring” as a whole. For Esping-Andersen, Sweden’s aging population would lead to greater strains on the welfare system. He frames the issue of caring for the elderly as a division between state care and what he calls familial care (familialisation). Familial care for the elderly has
consequences for gender rights because “when familial caring needs are intensive, some member—usually the daughter—will typically be forced to abandon employment” (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 151). An overemphasis on familial care “will translate into lower female employment and hence, a narrower tax base” (153).

Yet, Esping-Andersen does not consider the issue of elderly care from a gendered or feminist lens. Instead, he is more concerned with the inter-generational problems of aging population, a line of analysis that is inherently gender-neutral in nature. For him, countries should aim to achieve “equitable and sustainable burden sharing” by adjusting taxes according to the “Musgrave rule” of fixed proportional shares to “allocate the additional burden equitably between generations” (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 155). Once again, the issue of care for children recurs in his analysis of elderly care, as he asserts that “retirement reform must begin with babies” (162). His reasons are largely time-based in nature, and by doing so, he frames care as a complex and interconnected topic: it is the young who will grow up to care for the elderly, as well as become elderly themselves, and as a result, childcare and elderly care cannot be entirely separated. As he states:

> The distribution of welfare among tomorrow’s retirees will above all hinge on the inequalities in life chances among today’s children. If policy makers are seriously concerned about equitable retirement in the future, the obvious first step would be to ensure more equality now of cognitive stimulation and educational attainment in childhood… The requisites for a good working life are rising, in particular in terms of education, skills and abilities. And since these are sown very early in childhood, there is absolutely nothing frivolous about claiming that good retirement policy begins with babies. (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 163, 166)

While Esping-Andersen has an extremely strident, even noble, desire to maximize children’s human capital and futures, he also has a fairly narrow
conception of the care-gender relationship. Esping-Andersen’s ideal outcome is for society to equalize opportunities for children and increase fertility rates, a vision that is reminiscent of the one put forth by Sweden’s 1930s Population Commission. Yet this position only considers the impact of parental care on children without considering the relationship from the other end, namely the impact of parenthood on individuals, especially women. Neither does he consider the influence of the state on individuals’ caring capacities. He has a very specific societal outcome in mind, one that brings care for children to the forefront, but at the expense of considering the complexity of the welfare state’s relationship to parenthood.

More than that however, there is a problem of demographic trade-offs that intersects with both fertility as well as income. Esping-Andersen talks about the idea of “new inequalities,” which is when increasing marital homogamy means that well-educated, well-off couples are better posed to retire in “relative affluence” and that “the well-educated, childless couples will be best positioned of all” (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 161). Here, Esping-Andersen brings up an interesting dilemma: with an aging population, the burdening costs of retirement, and the increasing costs of childcare, couples might choose to have less children, or even no children, thus leading to a greater demographic convergence on the older end of the spectrum. Ironically, as more women enter the workforce, fertility rates might decline even further, the consequence that Esping-Andersen is most concerned with mitigating.
5.2. The Sociological Response to Care

As Daly and Rake point out, the issue of care has become an “established field of study” in sociology (Daly and Rake, 2003: 49). The sociology discipline has responded to the Swedish care issue in divergent ways. One of the earliest writing on this comes from Phyllis Moen’s 1989 *Working Parents: Transformations in Gender Roles and Public policies in Sweden*. Moen’s position is deeply psychological and emotional in nature, which immediately sets her apart from the other thinkers. Moen, unlike the other thinkers, focuses on welfare policies’ effects on parenthood, and examines their inter-relationship using two dimensions: psychological strain and daily fatigue. Here, she fills in the gap that Esping-Andersen leaves empty by examining parenthood’s effect on parents themselves. In contrast, Daly and Rake examine parenthood through its intersection with employment status. Finally, Arnlaug Leira frames her approach to the issue of work-family reconciliation within the dichotomies of decommodification-commodification, familialisation- defamilisation and sameness-difference, examining Sweden’s performance through the dimensions of parental leave and cash benefits.

A) Phyllis Moen

Moen’s ability to examine and report on the sociological underpinnings of parenthood before the other welfare-gender theorists is something that she credits to Sweden’s position as a pioneer in facilitating a work-family balance. According to her, “Sweden has been in the forefront of social change in adopting policies to provide for the needs of working parents,” highlighting their parental leave policies from as early as 1937 (Moen, 1989: 10). For her, parental wellbeing depends on both
personal and work situations. She argues that wellbeing has to be considered through a class and gender perspective, ideologically combining the fundamental underlying philosophies of Sainsbury and Esping-Andersen. Like the other thinkers, she also reports that mothers bear a disproportionate amount of the childcare burden but goes further to report that between the years 1968-1981, Swedish mothers were likely to report lower levels of wellbeing, and that mothers of young children were more prone to suffering from fatigue and psychological distress as compared to fathers (136). Furthermore, while other thinkers also consider the prevalence of lone mothers in Sweden, Moen actually finds that “single-parent (noncohabiting) mothers in Sweden are particularly stressed” in spite of the extensive economic and social support that they receive from the welfare state (137). By doing so, she demonstrates the large influence of personal status on wellbeing, and gives the emotional consequences of lone motherhood more attention than the other authors do (137).

In terms of working conditions, Moen finds that “women are more apt than men to report their work as monotonous and to describe themselves as feeling mentally exhausted at the end of the working day,” demonstrating a gendered difference even in terms of employment contentment (Moen, 1989: 79). As she states, “mothers and fathers not only experience different workplace conditions but they also react differently to similar conditions” (102). Here, she presents an alternative argument in favor of female part-time work—it benefits women’s mental health by reducing fatigue and stress (98). In contrast, fathers working part-time often report high levels of fatigue and distress, possibly because their reduction in work hours might be involuntary (98). Moen appears to highlight the continuing entrenchment of
masculine and feminine roles in Swedish society, where fathers feel the need to continue working, while mothers are emotionally better off when they can spend more time on nurturing.

From a class-based perspective, Moen finds that working-class mothers are more prone to psychological distress, largely because shift-based work creates more fatigue and psychological strain. Interestingly, working-class fathers who have wives working part-time jobs tend to have lower levels of psychological distress (Moen, 1989: 120). Moen’s position appears to further the issues of social class and marital homogamy that also appear in Esping-Andersen’s work by demonstrating a continuation of traditional gender norms among lower-income couples from the psychological dimension as well. Surprisingly, she finds that fathers working in professional positions were the most prone to psychological distress, largely because of the stress and rigor of their jobs, thus illustrating the important gender-class distinctions that affect wellbeing (139).

By presenting these gendered and class differences from an emotional and deeply empathetic perspective, Moen makes several assertions that remain deeply relevant in present-day. These views have also been subtly picked up and reiterated by the thinkers that enter the discourse later. She asserts that there is a gap between ideology and reality in Sweden: this is less because of the “work” aspect of the work-family balance, and more on the “family” side of the coin because mothers still shoulder most of the parental responsibilities. She presents several examples that have also been highlighted by many of the thinkers, such as mothers taking most of the parental leave in Sweden and mothers who reduce their work schedules to work part-
time and take care of their children (Moen, 1987: 147). Nonetheless, thinkers like Daly/Rake and Sainsbury do not consider the effect of these issues from a mental and psychological perspective, and Moen contributes a human dimension to the discourse. Moen also makes the argument that gender equality requires behavioral changes on the part of the men. As she argues:

From the Swedish viewpoint, women cannot merely be assimilated into the traditional male world of work. Rather, this world must be recast in ways that permit fathers as well as mothers to participate equitably in the ‘production’ of human beings and mothers no less than fathers to participate equitably in the production of goods and services. (Moen, 1989: 147)

Whether conscious or not, a restatement of this idea is embedded within Esping-Andersen’s theory of the “feminization” of the male life course, and Moen appears to converge with the other thinkers in arguing that gender equality requires the men to play a greater role in shouldering domestic responsibilities. We should note however, that Moen confines the issue of care to one of individual parenthood, rather than making normative judgments on state care, or care for the elderly. Her position adds weight to the chorus of voices calling for the men to shoulder greater domestic responsibilities, and she approaches this by demonstrating the continuing negative mental consequences on mothers when the unpaid division of labor remains unchanged. As she states:

Regardless of the measure used, Swedish mothers consistently reported lower levels of wellbeing than did fathers from 1968-1981. Specifically, mothers of young children were more likely than were fathers to report fatigue and psychological distress...Women continue disproportionately to bear both the burden of childcare and the strains seemingly endemic to the early years of adulthood. (Moen, 1989: 136)
She demonstrates the undesirable circumstances that continue despite the wealth of welfare policies that try to mitigate the “double burden,” and illustrates the hidden presence of Swedish gender inequality from the mental and emotional perspective.

B) Daly and Rake

In contrast, Daly and Rake take a comparative perspective on Sweden’s care performance, examining it through welfare state provisions and their intersections of parenthood and employment. They explicitly single out Sweden, labeling it “the epithet of a ‘caring state’” that sees the state guaranteeing both monetary security as well as the “promise of professional care” for both child as well as elderly care (Daly and Rake, 2003: 53). Splitting the issue of care into its various dimensions, such as maternal and paternal leave, or institutional care, Sweden ranks highly in terms of care for children as well as the elderly, as seen in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2.
**Table 5.1. Provision for Children, early to mid-1990s**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Consecutive weeks of maternal and paternal leave</th>
<th>Equivalent of leave, weeks paid in full</th>
<th>% of cohort attending/places available in publicly funded services for children</th>
<th>% of cohort attending/places available in publicly funded services for children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>High (42.6)</td>
<td>High (33)</td>
<td>Medium (72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>Medium (13.5)</td>
<td>Medium (23)</td>
<td>High (99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>High (31.7)</td>
<td>Medium (22)</td>
<td>Medium (85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Low (9.8)</td>
<td>Low (2)</td>
<td>Low (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Medium (25.1)</td>
<td>Low (6)</td>
<td>High (91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Medium (16.0)</td>
<td>Low (8)</td>
<td>Medium (71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Low (8.6)</td>
<td>High (33)</td>
<td>Medium (72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Recreated from Daly and Rake, 2003: 52, Table 3.1)
Table 5.2. Provision for the elderly (65+), early to mid-1990s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Whether a payment for care exists</th>
<th>% of the elderly in institutional care</th>
<th>% of elderly receiving home care services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Medium (5)</td>
<td>High (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) France</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low (2)</td>
<td>Medium (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Medium (3)</td>
<td>Low (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Medium (5)</td>
<td>Low (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low (2)</td>
<td>Low (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>High (10)</td>
<td>High (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Medium (5)</td>
<td>High (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Daly and Rake, 2003: 53, Table 3.2)

While Moen emphasizes the experience of individual parenthood, Daly and Rake take a more macroscopic view, examining care through the lens of state care. They define personal care as “informal care,” which is different from “paid care.” In examining informal care, Daly and Rake examine it in relation to its impact on employment and labor status, i.e. the substitution effect when time devoted to informal care detracts from labor market participation. According to them, Sweden’s performance has been “exceptional” (Daly and Rake, 2003: 66). They find that Sweden demonstrates a low substitution effect, with only 5% of inactive women citing personal or family responsibilities as the reason for their inactivity (59). This is extremely positive compared to some of the other countries, where Netherlands has a percentage of 40% and the USA at 68.8% (59). Furthermore, they find that in terms of informal care’s impact on income, Swedish women with children are paid “about
the same” as childless women, a feat unrepeated in any of the other countries (Germany comes the closest) and that “the number of children exerts a powerful influence on women’s wages everywhere except Sweden” (63). In fact, they find that in terms of poverty rates, Swedish mothers are not only less likely to be poor than Swedish fathers, but that Swedish mothers and fathers have a poverty rate “that is only half that of non-parents of the same sex.” something that is not replicated anywhere else (65). In fact, Swedish mothers have a lower prevalence of poverty than their childless counterparts, rounding up the various ways that the Swedish welfare state has been “exceptional” or unusual in its support for parents, especially mothers. Daly and Rake credit this performance to state policies, stating that “it is clear that social policies can and do affect the resource flows around care” (66).

Their notion of what defines “effective” caring for both children and the elderly also appear to differ. They appear to stress a combination of informal and state caring for children by focusing on parental leave and public daycare, but lean more towards state care for the elderly, highlighting the various forms of paid care. Implicitly however, Daly and Rake appear to sanction the notion of a “big state” within society’s caring dimension.

C) Arnlaug Leira

Feminist sociologist Arnlaug Leira illustrates a deeply ideological and abstract inter-relationship between parenthood and the welfare state. She examines the welfare state “from a motherhood perspective,” looking at the ways state policies in the public sphere have replaced or leaked into the private sphere of the family, or have served as the “initiator or instrument of family and motherhood change” (Leira, 1992: 4). Leira
takes the position that welfare state intervention has “produced significant changes in everyday mothering and family life” and that this is important simply by nature of the fact that most women become mothers and even if they do not, “hardly any woman in present-day welfare states in unaffected by its potentiality [of becoming a mother]” (3). There is academic interplay with Leira’s chosen framework, as she examines the welfare-mother issue using the individual earner-carer model that has also been espoused by the other feminist thinkers. Within this earner-carer model is a dual work-family process that Leira examines, namely the “modernization of motherhood” and “collectivization of childcare” (42).

However, unlike Daly and Rake, Leira confines her examination of working mothers to parental leaves of absence, finding that “Sweden in particular is advanced compared to other countries of Western Europe,” a position that is also stressed by Daly and Rake as well as Sainsbury (Leira, 1992: 45). The effects of confining her analysis to Sweden’s parental leave structure alone implies that Leira takes a more narrow perspective on the Swedish employment issue, where she sees parental leave structures as the main way to “mediate between work and family obligations” (45). Part of this lies in the fact that her intentions differ from the other sociologists. Since her goal is to evaluate relationship structures between motherhood and the state, she is more concerned with issues like early childhood education, and care, as these “represent far more comprehensive intervention in the private sphere of the family” (45). Thus, on its own, the female employment issue is less crucial to Leira.

As a result, Leira directs her attention towards Sweden’s model of “collective childcare” as the most telling indicator of a state’s reach into the family structure
She argues that the introduction of collective childcare in Sweden, alongside mothers’ increasing labor activity, has led to a “deprivation of family life” and a “redefinition” of the state-family relationship, where the populace has come to accept, even expect, that their children should be “minded outside the home” (48). Part of this conceptual realignment has been a consequence of the government’s supply of high-quality childcare programs and schemes, leading to an acceptance of norms where “professional daycare is commonly perceived [by the citizens] as socially and educationally advantageous for young children” (48). Unlike all the other thinkers however, Leira traces this sentiment of collective childcare back to the “strong egalitarian traditions of the Nordic welfare states” as the philosophy that underlies Sweden’s public daycare provision (48).

As a result of her primary interest in state overreach into the private sphere, Leira is also the only thinker who actually considers the financial and governmental structure of the national daycare system. As shown in Table 5.3, she demonstrates that while the national aims of daycare provision are decided by the central government, much of the authority has been decentralized to the local governments to decide costs and funding. Compared to Norway and Denmark, “private initiatives” have played a “comparatively smaller role” in the Swedish daycare system, where the role of voluntary organizations or private bodies have been limited and where the national policy has been to discourage “leaving day care to parents alone or to a ‘free market’” (Leira, 1992: 50). In her examination of what she labels the “public-private mix” of daycare, she finds that Swedish parents contribute the least to the costs of
daycare, while the Swedish state shoulders the highest financial burden out of her three considered countries.

**Table 5.3. The Division of Daycare Running Costs in Denmark, Norway and Sweden in 1987 (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributors</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Leira, 1992: 51, Table 3.1)

In fact, one could argue that Leira extends Esping-Andersen’s class argument and melds it with the care dimension more empirically than he does. She demonstrates the importance of socio-economic status in the public daycare system, with Swedish daycare centers boasting an overrepresentation of middle-class children (Leira, 1992: 52). She credits this trend to the fact that employed mothers working full time are given priority to access to daycare positions, as well as the fact that educated, middle-class parents potentially appreciate the benefits of state-sponsored daycare systems more than their working class counterparts (52).

As such, Leira approaches the welfare-care relationship from an alternative direction. While Daly/Rake and Sainsbury, judge Sweden’s gender-care performance according to mothers’ level of access to daycare, thus grading it highly for the system’s easy access to employed, as well as lone, mothers, Leira takes it a step further to show how the characteristics of daycare admissions might have
counterproductive class effects, thus aligning her closer to Esping-Andersen’s fundamental ideological fears.

This class concern is furthered by Leira’s worry that daycare services might not necessarily “equalize” economic differences among families, which contradicts Esping-Andersen’s position that daycare centers are important tools that equalize life chances. The fact that daycare centers encourage mothers to work and implicitly encourages the dual-earner family model might actually “increase the inequity between families with single and dual incomes” (Leira, 1992: 53). Leira appears to credit the problem of class bias to the system of local autonomy over the daycare system, which appears to favor well-off families. If anything, she claims that “a state-supervised or centrally organized assignment system might achieve more equitable access for children from different socio-economic backgrounds” but that the traditional Swedish inclination towards local authority means that this option is not being considered very seriously (54). For Leira, one aspect that she highlights is the role of family daycare (familjedaghem), which refers to childcare services provided by private homes or private minders, who are in turn approved or subsidized by local public authorities. She characterizes this as an important avenue that has allowed the Swedish state to “authorize, subsidize and control a larger share of the childminding markets,” imposing greater levels of national control over the daycare supply markets.

Here, Leira’s analysis embeds a common critique against the Swedish welfare state. Though she characterizes the national attitude of care in Sweden as almost one of an “alliance” between working mothers and the state, it has failed to substantially
change “gender barriers” in the labor market, or shift gender roles in the household (Leira, 1992: 58, 59). Women still bear the burden of childcare and “primary socialization” (58). Furthermore, she laments the fact that:

In none of the three countries [Denmark, Norway and Sweden] did reproduction policies seriously infringe upon the traditional role of the father [and that] ‘political motherhood,’ that is, mothers’ responsibility for care of offspring, has prevailed as an important structural element in childcare. (Leira, 1992: 59).

In other words, Leira takes the position that daycare centers are supposed to encourage changing gender roles, but has failed to do so. Though Leira approaches the issue of the welfare state from another angle, namely that of motherhood, this dimension once again leads to the common sentiment: that the Swedish state has been limited in its ability to influence or affect fatherhood behavior. In fact, she argues that the work-family balance has led to multiple class-based and gender-based trade-offs.

In her later book, Working Parents and the Welfare State (2002), Leira changes her position. While she had previously narrowed her attention to the welfare-motherhood model, she now expands her consideration of the work-life reconciliation to explicitly include fathers. As a nod to the societal changes in gender power balances since her 1992 writing, as well as the efforts by Nordic countries to encourage fathers to play a greater role in childcare, Leira pays particular attention to the issue of the “father’s quota” or “daddy leave/month.”

Her 2002 work frames the dimensions of parental leave and cash benefits for mothers within the general dual dichotomies of decommodification-commodification, familisation-defamilisation and sameness-difference, which are philosophical frameworks from both mainstream as well as feminist welfare literature.
“Commodification” in her work refers to the exchange of labor for wages, “decommodification” as labor that is free from work, “with income compensation from the welfare state” (Leira, 2002: 42). “Familisation” refers to policies measures that encourage or support care within the home, while “defamilisation” refers to “public support” for external care. Table 5.4 shows the different parental state policies and the frameworks that they fall under.

Table 5.4. The Breakdown of Childcare Frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Childcare</th>
<th>Parents’ labor</th>
<th>Commodified</th>
<th>Decommodified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Paid parental leave; cash benefit for parental childcare</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cash benefit for private, extra-parental childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defamilised/private</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>State-sponsored childcare services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Leira, 2002: 42, Figure 2.1)

For Leira, Sweden’s system is characterized by the decommodification of labor as well as the familising of childcare, given the country’s choice of “prolonged parental leave services” and limited daycare services for the youngest children (0-2) (Leira, 2002: 127). In evaluating what she labels “fathercare,” she stresses that Sweden’s ‘gender-neutral parental leave” is problematic in that it “takes for granted” the inherent assumption that fathers are not the principal carers for children (146). Rather, “gender-specific” parental leave measures, such as paternity leave quotas, serve as “gentle forces” that redefine cultural mindsets (94). For her, “daddy month” has particular symbolic effects because “state support of fathercare in particular implies a reconceptualisation of the social spheres in which gender equality policies
legitimately apply, in that it includes the domestic arena, the private sphere of the family and intra-family time use” (138). Beyond inter-family dynamics, fathercare also affects the public sector of employment by “updat[ing] the gender arrangement at work” and redefining the framework of gender equality to become one that “include[s] not only paid work but also unpaid work and care” (76).

Nonetheless, Leira takes a unique stance towards Sweden’s parental leave characteristics. She argues that Sweden has been the outlier with high “take-up rates” among men for parental leave despite its initially gender-neutral parental leave structures, outperforming the other Nordic countries, as seen in Table 5.5 below. As such, Sweden’s “daddy month” was limited in its effectiveness because it merely meant “an intervention in family arrangements to redistribute the leave available, with one month of the existing scheme being reserved for each parent. Before the ‘daddy month’ was instituted (in 1995), Swedish fathers were [already] in the forefront with respect to use of parental leave on a voluntary basis, and reserving one month of the leave for the fathers did not make much of a difference” (Leira, 2002: 98).

Table 5.5. The use of paid parental leave by fathers in Nordic countries (% of all paid leave in connection with pregnancy, birth and adoptions per year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
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<td>1997</td>
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(Leira, 2002: 91, Table 4.3)
This puts her against Esping-Andersen, as well as the feminist thinkers from before, who lament the insufficient lack of initiative on the part of Swedish fathers.

Fundamentally, Leira finds that care-related services and benefits affect the work-family balance in nuanced and different ways, each propagating certain underlying ideologies. State support for childcare services encourage and facilitate the dual-earner family model, as do generous parental leave schemes, which also encourages the “care-sharing family model” (Leira, 2002: 101). In contrast, leave without pay, alongside cash benefits; encourage gender specialization of roles (134).

Embedded within her analysis is a sense of disapproval that states tacitly accept childcare to predominantly be the woman’s responsibility, taking for granted the “right of fathers not to be the principal carers” (Leira, 2002: 146). This view demonstrates inherent state acceptance that men can take the shorter end of the childcare stick, (for example, two months of fathercare out of all the parental leave), and assumes that the women should shoulder the rest of responsibility. For Leira, childcare related rights have entrenched implications of gendered sameness versus difference. As she argues, cash benefits actually “presuppose a difference between the parents in their division of labor, taking one as the main carer, the other as the main breadwinner” (144). Within this context then, Leira’s deeply approves of gender-specific “fathercare,” and stridently believes that it should be encouraged. As she argues, an “underlying premise” of fathercare is the idea of “sameness” or an acknowledgment of “the equal value of father’s care and mother’s care” (145). For the gender balance between men and women to equalize, the caring dimension has to equalize between the genders as well. As she argues, the current status quo of welfare
states has not resolved this issue, or incorporated the caring dimension into the institutional infrastructure of the state itself. If it continues in this trajectory, “efforts at promoting gender equality in society at large might come to a stop if the responsibility for prolonged childcare and family care is not more equally shared between women and men” (148).

5.3. The Economic Response to Care: Caring Labor

Care has been described with the metaphor “labor of love,” with “emotional, relational and caring dimensions” to it (Leira and Saraceno, 2002: 60). These are not usually terms associated with the economics discipline, which has the reputation of being overly driven by rationality and logic. Recently however, a new wave of feminist economics has attempted to incorporate humanistic and emotional elements to the economic consideration of care, with feminist economist Nancy Folbre as the leading voice in this discussion.

In her 2001 book The Invisible Heart, Folbre appears to pick up the concept of a female revolution. Women have been freely providing care for centuries now, she argues, and the separate spheres ideology has been used as the underlying excuse to justify self-interested male behavior. Her position is deeply feminist in nature: men have been allowed to enjoy a steady supply of care from the women by disingenuously stressing women’s “altruistic” natural self (Folbre, 2001: 21). Right from the onset, Folbre takes an explicit stance in favor of gender neutrality. As she argues, “there is nothing natural or inevitable about the way we associate femininity with altruism” and this double standard of men and women in terms of caring should
be ended because “if we can reinforce caring behavior in women, we can also reinforce it in men” (18, 20). Growing numbers of women joining the workforce implies that caring has become a public concern, a responsibility that is increasingly vested in the hands of society and public institutions as a whole. However, a consequence of the increasingly public nature of care is a troubling degradation in the quality of care provision, as institutions are confronted with increasing costs that can compromise the emotional quality of care. As she argues, “in the tug of war between costs and care, it is care that seems to be losing” (58). Financial consequences like a growing carer-patient ratio and decreasing salaries have compromised carers’ abilities to adequately care, which is a wholly negative development as “emotions have significant effects on physical health,” serving as important healing “therapeutic force[s]” (57). As such, Folbre argues the need for “caring labor,” where the actual process of caring has to be melded with a strong emotional connection.

In fact, what Folbre is actually suggesting is a rethinking of the economic approach to care. The fact that children or fellow humanistic concerns have a unique place in economic calculations is not a new argument in economics. Economist Stanley Lebergott for example, raised the alarm over emotionless economic calculations in *Pursuing Happiness*, highlighting that the mechanisms of GDP per capita calculations means that a loss of a baby would actually translate into a rise in a per capita, a distasteful conclusion for anybody (Lebergott, 1996: 14). Economists recognize that the moral obligation implanted within the parent-child relationship. As Folbre argues in her recent book *Valuing Children*, “Children are not merely commodities to be bought and sold or demographic outcomes to be subsidized or
penalized. Parental efforts should be rewarded in way that both honor and reinforce the profound moral commitments they represent” (Folbre, 2008: 183). What Folbre is inherently trying to do is to create a theoretical framework that melds the analytical dimension of care to its emotional, intangible dimension, presenting an intellectual-personal framework to consider the care issue.

The struggle to meld human, heartfelt considerations to fully rational thinking is an issue that finds intersection within the care dimension. Conventional economic theory, like the notion of Adam’s Smith “invisible hand,” has been slow to respond to this emotional and personal dimension of care. Folbre attempts to bridge both dimensions. As she argues:

The invisible hand represents the forces of supply and demand in competitive markets. The invisible heart represents family values of love, obligation, and reciprocity. The invisible hand is about achievement. The invisible heart is about care for others. The hand and heart are interdependent, but they are also in conflict. (Folbre, 2001)

There is also a “prisoner of love” dimension to care, because “fathers and mothers both know that they are likely to become prisoners of love to their own children,” as well as feel the irrereplaceable bonds to their own parents who then become their elderly dependents (Folbre, 2001: 38). Even after care becomes commodified and carers carry out care for pay, this is not a profession that is entirely devoid of feeling, neither should it be. Nonetheless, “people who provide care for pay are also prisoners of love,” limiting their ability to negotiate for higher pay or go on strike, as their patient’s welfare is also at stake (40).

To protect the integrity of the care dimension, as well as defend the availability of caring labor, Folbre therefore launches an economic defense of the
welfare state and its social welfare policies. She outlines her own resistance to conservative criticisms of the “large state-small family,” arguing that if anything, the welfare state “emerged as an expression of family values” (Folbre, 2001: 84). For her, the welfare state is a necessary intermediary; one that regulates resource flows to ensure an egalitarian distribution of caring labor. Welfare state policies are not paternalistic attempts to govern people’s lives, but essential mechanisms that fundamentally protect families. As she says:

Most of us agree that more care for others would be better. But if we can’t agree on a good way of organizing it and a fair way of paying for it, we’re all tempted to skip out. We need to use our government to help solve this coordination problem. Solving it will cost money and it will require substantial redistribution of resources from men to women, non-parents to parents, and rich to poor. Call it a nanny state is you want. It sounds more like a family state to me. (Folbre, 2001: 108)

Sweden has enabled families with children to be “far less vulnerable to poverty” than similar families in the US, and this ideal of child-protection is one that countries should be striving for (Folbre, 2008: 190). Yet unlike Leira, Folbre favors strategies like cash and tax benefits, or family allowances, as effective redistribution policies. While Leira sees its structurally negative consequences of encouraging gender specialization within the household, Folbre takes a more blunt attitude towards it—“they increase disposable income,” and this can only be a positive endeavor in her eyes (158). As a result, she laments Sweden’s low family allowance, believing its public spending on children can be increased even further.

Outside of the care dimension however, the economics discipline also contributes to the welfare-case discourse through its alternative methodology. Anna Amilon, writing in the journal Feminist Economics, examines the differing parental
leave trends among Swedish lone mothers and partnered mothers. Her examination reveals hidden lone mother vulnerabilities that are missed by the sociologists and political scientists. Controlling for various factors, such as the number of children, age of youngest child, working times, and temporary leave taken by fathers, she finds that lone mothers take more temporary parental leave than their partnered counterparts, and that lone mothers of higher socioeconomic status take less temporary parental leave than the ones with lower socioeconomic status, a trend that is not repeated among their partnered counterparts (Amilon, 2010: 33). She also finds that lone mothers are more likely than their partnered counterparts to use their parental insurance “illegally” (43). Here, feminist economist Amilon highlights the influence of several societal cleavages, both class and household type, on the social use of parental leave.

Amilon hypothesizes several possible explanations for these trends, namely that lone mothers are less likely to get help from their childrens’ fathers and have to bear most of the caring burden for their sick children by themselves; as well as the fact that their financial circumstances are more “constrained” than their partnered counterparts, necessitating them to take more advantage of structural weaknesses in the system through illegal means (43). Fundamentally, she finds that highly educated, private sector, and high-earning lone mothers tend to take less temporary parental leave, implying that “those who have the most to lose from taking leave are also the least likely to take it” (248).

Policy-wise, this has important implications for issues like increasing the parental leave ceiling and childcare for sick children. Amilon proposes greater access
to childcare for sick children within the household to avoid adverse effects on mothers’ labor market outcomes (Amilon, 2010: 49). Current temporary parental leave structures do not adequately address this issue.

Both Amilon and Folbre are fundamentally advocating the general framework of the work-family reconciliation model. Their concern is more on the specific tenets of this work-family balance, with an overt focus on the “care” and “family” segment of the issue. Their contribution to the discourse has been to add an alternative dimension of analysis onto the issue. Folbre does it by taking the fundamentally logical issue of “labor” and adding three-dimensional consideration of emotions to it. In contrast, Amilon extracts a single issue of concern to all the theorists, and approaches it from a quantitative perspective.

5.4. Esping-Andersen’s Influence, Juxtaposing Thinkers

Throughout the discourse on the welfare-gender issue, as well as the welfare-care dimension, Esping-Andersen’s presence is undeniable, either in the structure, themes or content of the literature. This serves as a major element of convergence between the various disciplines. As mentioned, Sainsbury’s work can be seen as a direct response to Esping-Andersen’s work, as she brings in his work as “mainstream variations” that she responds to with her consideration of entitlement bases, stratification and redistribution outcomes. Esping-Andersen has been influential in Leira’s work as well, where she brings in his concepts of decommodification and familisation to frame her analysis of the welfare-care relationship. As Knijn and Ostner acknowledge, while the concepts of commodification and decommodification
have existed in Marxist literature prior to Esping-Andersen, it was after the publication of Three Worlds that this became “one of the key concepts of comparative welfare state research” (Knijn and Ostner, 2002: 146). Though Folbre does not appear to react to Esping-Andersen’s work explicitly, she demonstrates a surprising convergence with him in terms of her main concerns—the emotional needs of children and elderly dependents. Both of them are fundamentally striving to improve the quality of care and attention that families and the state lavish on children and the elderly. While Esping-Andersen focuses on issues of education and cultural capital and Folbre focuses on the dimension of facilitating greater amounts “caring labor” and state provisions, their primary end goals are the same.

Furthermore, the introduction of typologies and welfare state regimes that Esping-Andersen illustrates in *Three Worlds* has established the methodology of placing Sweden in the context of other countries. Out of all the selected academic thinkers, Moen is the only one who solely focuses on Sweden, and all the other authors follow Esping-Andersen in taking a comparative perspective. Part of that lies in the feminist approach of “gendering” the mainstream welfare discourse, especially in response to Esping-Andersen’s work, leading to authors comparing countries to show how the clusters shift when the dimensions of consideration are “gendered.” The large shadow that Esping-Andersen has cast over the discourse transcends disciplinary boundaries as well as the mainstream-feminist divide.

All of the selected thinkers approve strengthening the presence of the “caring state” to facilitate greater work-family balance for parents, especially for women. Normatively, they appear to espouse the idea of care as a public good and a social
right, and this refers both to providing as well as receiving care. With the exception of Leira, who presents some misgivings, all the authors appear to encourage the increasing responsibility of the public for both childcare as well as elderly care, referencing the socialist ideal of collective care and the idea of the “people’s home,” which sees everyone sharing responsibility over dependents. Such socialist leanings have defined a lot of Swedish history, and can also be related back to Engels’ progressive writings.

Furthermore, all of the thinkers have contributed to the discourse on “rethinking ‘care’ as a moral and social responsibility” (Leira and Saraceno, 2002: 77). Previously, care was thought of as an integral part of the feminine identity. The traditionally accepted argument, put forth by theorists like Finch and Bimbi, is that “caring is bound up with the construction of women’s social identities in a way that is simply not true for men” (76). All the theorists mentioned in this chapter have questioned that assumption of taking care as a purely “feminine dilemma,” and argue for a gender-neutral approach to care that emphasizes equal sharing of responsibilities among the sexes.

Juxtaposing the thinkers together illustrates how the disciplines and authors fulfill different roles and functions in our cumulative understanding of care and caring labor. Though all of them talk about care, they do so in distinctly different ways. Sainsbury espouses acceptance of the care principle as an underlying ideology for welfare state policies. Esping-Andersen stresses care for children as a key societal responsibility that requires active state intervention to in order to provide adequate care. His economic counterpart Folbre, also stresses the importance of the state in
facilitating fair resource flows and encouraging caring labor. Leira and Daly/Rake are more alike in their sociological approach—both study empirical aspects of the care dimension, though Leira takes a stronger stance in her views regarding fatherhood. Moen tries to take a more empathetic, individualistic approach to the care issue, examining how it affects parents’, especially mothers’, mental states. The welfare-care issue ties all of these authors together, serving as a multidisciplinary topic that can be understood in various ways.

5.5. Analyzing the Analysts and the Work-Family Reconciliation Approach

In analyzing the newly-included thinkers (who appear in this chapter but not in previous ones), there are several inherent positions and assumptions that add an additional analytical layer of consideration to the care discourse. Moen, without stating so explicitly, is clearly taking a gender-special position. She examines mothers and fathers as separate beings who react differently to the stresses of both parenthood and work, implanting both a gender and class dimension to her empirical studies. Inherent to this argument is the idea that men and women are in fact two different, separate groups with their own biological and psychological characteristics. Furthermore, while she seems to be a proponent of equal outcomes, her definition of this differs from a social goods perspective, and she focuses more on individuals’ state of mind. Her desired outcome appears to be equal levels of mental and emotional wellness between mothers and fathers, with the state stepping in to alleviate factors that can create stress and psychological unhappiness, so as to accomplish this level of emotional parity between the genders.
While her focus on motherhood, and subsequently fatherhood could be interpreted as a gender-special stance, Leira actually argues from a gender-free perspective when she espouses Susan Moller Okin’s position that gender should cease to exist as a societal construct in raising children. She critiques the “gender-neutral” perspective that characterizes many of the Nordic parental leave structures, articulating two levels of argumentation. First, approaching the childcare issue through a gender-neutral perspective inherently protects the men by failing to recognize the disjointed levels of care within the current status quo. This then perpetuates existing gender role segregation. For her, equal outcomes in society should take the shape of an equal division of labor in the household and of childcare responsibilities. Doing so would lead to reverberating effects on the employment sector, where women would suffer less employment interferences. Gender-specific “gentle force” on the part of the state through their policies might be necessary to enforce certain responsibilities on fathers so as to achieve this equalized domestic outcome.

Folbre’s focus is both narrower, as well as more ambitious than both of the aforementioned thinkers, as she argues that we should be rethinking our entire societal and academic approach to care in general. Folbre is predominantly a gender-neutral thinker; she firmly resists the notion of biological or natural differences between men and women. For her, care should not be based on the ideology of separate spheres. Rather, she emphasizes that care contributions should come from men and women, as well as the state in general. She considers issues of care as it moves from being unpaid to being paid, and seems to approve of the idea of caring
labor as commodity but only insofar as to combine strong emotional dimension with this commodified exchange. She also appears to be in favor of equal outcomes, but from a resource balance and social goods perspective. She is stridently in favor of egalitarian ideology, believing that resource redistribution by a “big state” is necessary to protect the standard of living and level of care among families with children.

**Conclusion**

This chapter examined the academic discourse on the care dimension of the welfare state, based on the assumption that care emerges as a fundamental aspect of the welfare-gender discourse. The care dimension can be extracted from the dense welfare-gender discourse to demonstrate divergent and convergent views from multiple disciplines. Part of the intention of this chapter is to place the sociological perspective, which has been the predominant field to write on this topic, in conversation with the economic idea of “caring labor” to demonstrate two distinct methodologies to the same issue. The entire care dimension however, takes an ideological position in support of accomplishing a work-family balance for parents and mothers.
6. The Political Science Discipline: A Divergent But Important Contribution to the Swedish Gender Discourse

“In an international context, the advances of women in securing elected office in Sweden during the past two decades stand out” (Sainsbury, 1993: 263).

Introduction

The aforementioned literature all focus on the welfare-gender relationship in terms of women’s social rights. However, it is important to note that the academic discourse on Swedish gender equality has not been confined to this one area. In fact, Sainsbury herself, alongside various other feminist thinkers, have contributed extensively to an alternative field of the discourse, one that we shall label the “gender-politics” discourse. This divergent field of literature considers the issue of Swedish gender equality from a specific, politicized dimension, one that examines the role of feminist movements, the performance of women within the political sphere, as well as important political agencies that focus on augmenting gender equality. In fact, much of this literature “fills in the gaps” in the discourse where the welfare-gender thinkers, most notably the sociologists, have missed out on or neglected to consider.

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the foremost contributions from the political scientists and establish an alternative way of thinking about Swedish gender equality that goes beyond the welfare-gender relationship. This chapter works from the position that examining the welfare-gender discourse alone is insufficient to paint a full picture of Swedish gender equality, and that it is necessary to look to the gender politics field to supplement the areas that have been overlooked. The best representation of such gender-political writing comes from Research Network on Gender Politics And The State (RNGS) project, a research project that publishes
different books on various women’s rights issues. This chapter first examines Christina’s Bergqvist’s “The Debate about Care Allowance in Light of Welfare State Reconfiguration” (2007), a work that focuses on the political debates leading up to the adoption of Sweden’s childcare allowance. This literature demonstrates a differing methodology, where Bergqvist considers the lead-up to a policy’s adoption within the political sphere, rather than the policy’s effects on women post-implementation, as the welfare-gender thinkers do. Second, this chapter examines the writing that discusses Swedish women as political agents, and the country’s success in incorporating them into the political sphere. Third, this chapter examines several social issues that have been neglected in the prior welfare-gender discourse but are important aspects of Swedish gender equality.

6.1. A Different Methodology: Sweden’s Childcare Allowance as a Case Study

Christina Bergqvist’s work appears to converge slightly with the welfare-gender discourse as she considers a policy issue that also appears in the welfare-gender discourse. However, she does so in an entirely different way from the sociologists, who focus on the childcare allowance’s impact on women. Rather, Bergqvist focuses on the historical development of the childcare allowance and narrows her attention to the political debates within Parliament leading up to its implementation. Bergqvist contributes two major lines of analysis. First, she shows how the feminist actors themselves were split over this policy, and how the debate itself was “gendered.” The feminists on the Left saw it as a “trap” that would lock women in the home, while the female proponents saw it as a “possibility” for parents
to choose their most favored form of child care (Bergqvist, 2007: 254). Second, she shows the important role that feminist movements played in getting the child care allowance passed. As she states, “contrary to the picture of Sweden as a country with feminist policies without feminists the analysis of the debates has shown women and movement actors to be very active and forceful participants,” with feminists both inside and outside of Parliament agitating for the passing of the allowance, “gendering” the debate in a way that influenced its outcome (256). In charting the debates and movement of this issue in Parliament, she labels the Christian Democrats, the Moderates, the Liberals and the Center Party as “bourgeois” parties. This “bourgeois” coalition was the driving force advocating strongly for the childcare allowance, going up against the Social Democrats and the Left Party that were against it. The Social Democrats were resisted the allowance because of their concerns about the budget, and Social Democrat Mona Sahlin promised to take away the care allowance once the party returned to Parliament leadership [in the recent 2010 elections, the Social Democrats regained power from the Moderates with Mona Sahlin as their party leader] (254).

Subsequently, Bergqvist demonstrates how this allowance was accepted in Parliament (July 1994), after both sides reached a consensus to frame it as a “child care check” rather than a “mother’s wage” (Bergqvist, 2007: 256). Essentially, she charts out the progress of this allowance, from its conception to its implementation, from an entirely political perspective. As such, her writing can be seen as an example of an alternative methodology that contributes to our understanding of how women’s social rights within the welfare state come into existence. This line of literature
considers the political dimension of such social rights—including, but not confined to: how such rights were passed in Parliament and the women play in passing them through. Given that the welfare-gender thinkers only consider the consequences of such social policies ex post facto their implementation, they do not provide the mechanisms to consider how women are political harbingers of their own social rights, or how the different policies that affect women are passed in the first place.

6.2. Women in Politics

Another important contribution to the gender equality discourse is the examination of women as political agents in Sweden, including the extent that women have been inserted into the political sphere and the country’s success in incorporating women’s issues into its political processes. Sainsbury’s “The Politics of Increased Women’s Representation: The Swedish Case” (1993) demonstrates the varied, but generally positive increments in women’s political participation in Sweden. She shows how Swedish women have grown increasingly interested and active in politics since the 1960s, with their electoral participation inching ahead of the men’s in the 1970s and how they demonstrate higher voter participation numbers, especially among the younger voters (Sainsbury, 1993: 269). According to her, “women [have] also out-participated the men in demonstrations and protests during the 1980s” (269). More than that, women have increased their proportions in political parties, with a rising percentage of women in parliament and elected offices (272). The effect of increasing female participation in politics has led to an ideological shift in the
political sphere, where “women’s issues” have been “successfully redefined” to become “party issues” (280). According to Sainsbury:

This process of making women’s issues into party issues in the name of equality had two significant consequences...It strengthened women’s demands for political entry...Yet once women’s equality was a stated goal of the party, it could be pressed into service in efforts to improve women’s representation. (Sainsbury, 1993: 280)

She goes further to make several observations about Sweden’s female political performance. First, new parties have been less important than Sweden’s established parties (the Conservatives, Liberals, Centre party, Social Democrats and the Communists) in promoting women’s electability (Sainsbury, 1993: 287). She also argues that the “type” of party, regardless of its ideological position, has had a limited significance on the number of women in Parliament (288). Rather, she credits the improving political performance of Swedish women to the “hegemonic positions of the Social Democrat party...[that] led to adaptations by the other parties and efforts to outbid the Social Democrats as the champions of equality,” where the parties “could not afford to offend any major segment of the electorate,” namely the women (288). Finally, she notes that Sweden has been able to demonstrate high female political performance without formal quotas, successfully getting political parties to recognize or accept that each sex should have party representation of at least 40% (285). Many parties have since gone above this figure.

In such writing, Sainsbury diverges from her welfare-gender focus to analyze the political spectrum. She considers the reasons behind, as well as the consequences of, increased female political participation. By doing so, she imbues women with a new form of agency—they are not just passive recipients of state policies, as they are
confined to in the welfare-gender discourse. They are now characterized as active agents within the country’s decision-making apparatus and their influence over the formation of their own benefits and entitlements is given due credit.

This approach of examining the politicization of women has been furthered in the book *The Politics of State Feminism*, where political scientists have contributed two key structural typologies to frame Sweden’s gender-politics. The first is a “State Response Typology” labeled *Dual Response* that studies the extent that Sweden’s policies have successfully incorporated women’s movement demands into the policy process (McBride and Mazur, 2010: 18). In terms of considering women’s political agencies, another typology concerns *Insider agencies*, which are agencies that “effectively gender debates with women’s movement demands” (18). According to McBride and Mazur, Sweden has achieved an “impressive record” of achieving *Dual Responses* and *Insider Agencies*, as seen from debates around the establishment of the first women’s policy agency (1967-1972), to the prostitution debates (87). In other words, “women’s movement actors have always had one or the other [the two feminist agencies in Sweden: the Minister for Gender Equality and the Equality Ombudsman] to take up their case in a debate,” and left-wing parties and unions have tended to converge closely with women’s movement actors who come from various standalone organizations, parties, unions, and within Parliament (88). Given that Sweden has performed extremely well in terms of these political typologies, it is ranked as a country with “high [feminist] movement success” alongside countries like the USA, Canada, Austria and Italy. This contrasts with the countries with “moderate
movement success” [Belgium, Ireland, Finland and the UK], or “low movement success” [Germany, France, the Netherlands and Spain].

As shown, the political scientists have created their own typologies and frameworks for thinking about gender equality that are diametrically different frameworks from the typologies created by Esping-Andersen. They present an alternative dimension within the Swedish gender discourse that is outside of the feminist welfare-gender typologies articulated in Chapter Three. These political typologies are concerned with an entirely different factual set, one that focuses centrally on women’s roles in politics, and women’s issues in the political sphere.

As a case study for these typologies, McBride and Mazur look to the prostitution debates in Swedish parliament. They show how the bill that “criminalized” the “john” in 1999 (while leaving the prostitutes untouched—it is legal to be a prostitute in Sweden, but illegal to solicit one) could pass by a large majority because women’s movement actors such as female MPs, as well as the Minister of Gender Equality (Ulrica Messing) were within the parliamentary subsystem from the beginning (McBride and Mazur, 2010: 133). Furthermore, these actors were in close ideological agreement with the Left majority of Parliament at the time, creating a positive situation where “the issue was a top movement priority, and the actors had 100 percent agreement on their feminist position” (134). McBride and Mazur also argue that the prostitution issue in Sweden was almost “path dependent,” as it had been on the agenda since the 1980s, creating a “matching” of “issue frames” between the women’s movement actors and the policymakers (212). As shown, the political scientists focus more on conventional political theory as the foundation for
framing social issues and they approach the gender question by espousing structural and paradigmatic ways for thinking about women as political agents.

We should also note that this thesis does not exhaust coverage on the issue of female politicians in Sweden. Rather, there has been a wealth of cogent ideas from political scientists regarding Swedish gender political equality. For example, in her 2009 publication *The Motherless State*, political scientist Eileen McDonagh puts forth an interesting theory that connects the role of the Swedish monarchy to the country’s favorable performance of women in politics. McDonagh presents a two-fold argument that can explain this positive causation between female monarchs and female politicians. First, a hereditary monarchy necessitates the inclusion of women within the political process, as a monarchical system fuses the state and family into the archetype of a dynastic family (McDonagh, 2009: 27). These monarchs perpetuate the dynastic system by birthing heirs (what McDonagh labels “biological maternalism”) and play unique private-political roles (27). Second, a hereditary system means that female queens/consorts are highly visible political agents who are symbolically included in the political process. Over time, this directly impacts public attitudes by creating positive impressions regarding the political abilities of women and augmenting favorable attitudes towards female politicians (66).

It would be beyond the scope of the thesis to explicate every argument within the gender-politics discourse. However, explicating the RNGS coverage of the issue is sufficient in illustrating the paucity of the approach taken by the welfare-gender theorists, who have confined themselves to a single, myopic notion of gender equality that centers around women’s social rights vis-à-vis state benefits.
6.3. Women’s Social Issues and the Equality Ombudsman

The political scientists have highlighted several social issues that have been neglected by the welfare-gender theorists. These social issues also form an important aspect of gender equality. For example, the issue of prostitution embodies the general themes of women’s empowerment, exploitation, and abuse. The global debate over the legalization and criminalization of prostitution is often heated and differs country-to-country. In this case, the political scientists have been the ones to consider Sweden’s experience with this heated social issue, and the manner in which the current status quo (of criminalizing “johns” and legalizing prostitutes) evolved politically. From both the social and political angle, this topic has been completed overlooked by the welfare-gender theorists.

Political scientist Amy Elman highlights yet another issue, namely Sweden’s poor performance in limiting sexual harassment in the workplace. As she states, the Equality Ombudsman has noted a “persistent pattern of sexual harassment at work,” to the point where “the United States is 10 years ahead of Sweden when it comes to measures against sexual harassment” (Elman, 1995: 246). Yet the Ombudsman’s ability to intervene in women’s interests in the workplace is severely limited; restricted to drawing the government’s attention to the issue or bringing sexual harassment cases in front of the Labor Court, where it lost approximately two-thirds out of thirty-six cases from 1980-1990 (248). Elman criticizes the government’s response for being tepid and ineffectual, characterized by “cautious restraint” (247).

Elman’s case study of sexual harassment, while slightly dated, illustrates a deeply problematic gender conundrum in Sweden that has been overlooked by the
welfare-gender theorists, namely that Swedish women continue to face several serious social inequalities. For example, a 2010 summary report published by Amnesty International highlights the tragic, growing problem of rape in Sweden, a mounting issue that is poorly handled by law enforcement and government officials. According to the report, Sweden has the highest per capita of rape in Europe, and the number of reported rapes has quadrupled over the past twenty years (Amnesty, 2010: 8). Amnesty International criticizes the legal enforcement of rape cases for its various police investigation flaws, including problems like delayed interrogations, investigations closing without interrogations at all, inadequate challenges to suspect’s version of events, and poor use of available technology (20).

In general, the welfare-gender theorists have tended to ignore the presence of social inequalities in Sweden. For example, they conventionally overlook violence against women as an important consideration within the gender discourse, and Sweden’s poor record often goes unmasked in academia. This is not the first time that Amnesty International has chided the country for its poor record in limiting domestic violence, stating “the prevalence of gender-based violence shatters many people’s image of Sweden as being the most gender equal country in the world” (Alvarez, 2005). Amnesty International has also stated that “while [there is] an impressive level of gender equality in the so-called public spheres of work, education and political participation, these achievements seem to have halted at the doorsteps of private homes” (Amnesty, 2010: 7).

Unlike the sociologists, Elman presents several theories that could potentially explain the state’s limited social gender equality. For one, she takes a negative view
of the original framing of Swedish gender equality, which aimed at alleviating the female “double burden.” The welfare-gender theorists, even Sainsbury, praise this historical position as one that eventually facilitated women’s dual roles of earner-carer. In contrast, Elman argues that this meant women’s rights were conceived as workers’ rights right from the onset, and reversing gender inequality was confined to employment policies. It also meant that discrimination in other non-workplace areas went neglected. According to Elman, “in claiming to combat inequalities associated with work, the state has been able to avoid taking action against sexual inequality elsewhere” (Elman, 1995: 251). Unlike Bergqvist, Elman laments the fact that “no extensive autonomous feminist movement has emerged,” and that feminism has been confined to individual actors (250). As a result, there was no comprehensive feminist movement aimed at reversing patriarchy and the central form that gender equality took was for political parties, trade unions and reforms groups to create “mechanisms of the double burden” (250).

Another issue that Elman highlights is the almost “anti-feminist” form of feminism in Sweden, where there has traditionally been a widespread fear of radical feminism. What this implies is that the feminist movements themselves, such as the Fredrika Bremer association, have opted for conciliatory cooperation with the Swedish establishment rather than “demonstrations, clashes and [or] defiance” (Elman, 1995: 240). It also means that much of Swedish gender equality policies have been obtained through collective bargaining with unions, based on the notion that “women’s problems stem from their being workers and not from being women” (244). This has led to a limited scope of legislation that is largely confined to the
public employment sphere. The comparatively pessimistic picture of gender equality that Elman presents appears to converge with many of Hilda Scott’s observations about the role of trade unions in Sweden’s movement towards gender equality. According to Scott:

The trade unions in Sweden have literally preempted feminist demands…the unions [are] free to pursue the questions of equality at the workplace and in their own decision-making bodies very much at their own pace and on their own terms. There has been very little pressure from below; no confrontation with angry or impatient feminists. Indeed, LO made clear from the beginning that work for equality was to be conducted through the trade unions, the sole representatives of workers on the job. This attitude has been described as one-part male apprehension, one-part Sweden concern for union prerogatives, and one part traditional Social Democratic ideology, which has always subordinated women’s rights to class questions. (Scott, 1982: 53)

In fact, several problematic elements have been embedded in the historical progress of Swedish gender equality right from the onset. In terms of collective bargaining, the trade unions had great influence in obtaining many of the woman worker’s social rights. As Scott argues, “It is a fact that without their [the trade unions’] active support, few of the programs adopted in Sweden since 1968 that point in the direction of equality would have been possible” (Scott, 1982: 48). Yet many of these trade unions were male-oriented, and many subsequent surges in gender equality within the workplace were actually preemptive measures by the male leaders to avoid radical feminism. Gender equality in Sweden was actually shaped in the “male image.”

The fact that many of the welfare gender theorists focus on the double burden framework and praise Sweden’s success in creating work-family reconciliations for women illustrates an inherent assumption that underlies the welfare-gender discourse:

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6The LO stands for the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, the biggest labor union in Sweden.
their one-dimensional conflation of gender equality with a successful work-family balance. These welfare-gender thinkers have imposed blinders on themselves that prevents them from seeing the other gender problems that are outside the purview of this work-family dimension, such as the political and social gender relations articulated in this chapter.

6.4. Taking a Step back: Analyzing the Sociological and Political Science Disciplines

Juxtaposing the welfare-gender discourse with the gender-politics discourse illustrates the narrow lens of the former. All the thinkers writing within the welfare-gender discourse work on a singular definition of gender equality that prizes social rights and women’s access to welfare policies and entitlement benefits. They equate gender equality to women’s high standards of living, and inherently accept the notion of gender equality as one of a work-family reconciliation.

In contrast, the gender-politics dimension of the political science discipline examines alternative facets of gender equality: such as the role that women play in politics, and the way that politics and political battles have been gendered in Sweden. Nonetheless, while this line of literature gives us an alternative insight into the Swedish gender equality issue/discourse, and expands the definition of gender equality to include social empowerment, it is not a self-sufficient framework in itself. In fact, this gender-politics discourse is also guilty of an overly narrow definition of gender equality, namely the equality of process or procedure. It equates gender equality with the success of women within the political sphere, but fails to consider anything beyond, such as women’s alternative roles as social individuals, mothers,
and integral parts of a household/family. This framework of process equality fundamentally assumes that the best outcome for women is to be successful political actors, or agents in their own political and social destinies. As very few women have a political-agent-only identity, it is not prudent to approach the broad issue of gender equality in Sweden through the literature’s confining political-outcome assumption, which unnecessarily limits the scope of the gender issue.

**Conclusion**

Fundamentally, these two disparate fields can be merged to present a more comprehensive definition, and picture of, Swedish gender equality. They mutually reinforce each other so as to present a more multifaceted picture of the gender issue through the lens of both social rights and politics. Reading a singular line of Swedish gender literature prevents the full understanding of the various political, social, and economic tenets that characterize full gender equality.
7. Taking a Bird’s Eye View: A Holistic Interpretation of the Discourse

“The man who finds Swedish history dull had better not read history at all”
(Andersson, 1956: xxvi)

Introduction

The selected thinkers were included in this thesis for several reasons. Writing from their different academic disciplines, they have all contributed to our cumulative understanding of the Swedish welfare state and Swedish gender equality in varied and unique ways. Yet these thinkers have also been confined by the nature of academic writing. The limitations of their book lengths and subject matters force them to choose specific topics, select particular sets of facts, and limit their analyses within unavoidable time and space constraints. As a result, all the thinkers demonstrate two main flaws. First, as shown in previous chapters, they write as though they are in a vacuum, their vision confined to their selected subject matter and academic disciplines. Second, all the thinkers limit themselves to a specific point in the time “continuum.” This second flaw is what this chapter examines in depth.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: first, to “look backwards” and demonstrate how the element of history has been given neglected or overlooked by the different disciplines and thinkers. This neglect has created conceptual oversights, as the thinkers ignore important historical or cultural trends that directly influenced the development of Swedish gender equality. Second, we “look forward” to consider several contemporary issues that affect Sweden’s welfare state and gender equality in general. These issues are still enfolding at the time of writing this thesis, and their consequences will continue to reverberate over the next few decades. While we

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7Refer to Appendix A for a timeline of these historical facts
should not expect the thinkers to be savants and incorporate accurate predictions into their analysis, we can critique these authors for not pushing themselves to make these logical leaps. The goal of this chapter is establish a temporal framework that places these analysts in context, and by doing so, illustrate an inherent problem across all the different academic disciplines: many of these thinkers are shuttered in by their narrow lenses, and overly constrained by the methodologies of their disciplines.

7.1. Looking Backwards: Considering the Thinkers through the Lens of History

In their evaluations of the Swedish welfare state, all the thinkers appear to underestimate the importance of history, or exclude the discursive contributions of the historians. The role of history appears in the analysts’ works in two limited ways: through the acknowledgment of underlying historical ideologies; and through their factual inclusions. Neither of these methods however, goes far back into the content of Swedish history enough.

7.1.1. Ways That the Analysts Use History

A) Underlying Historical Ideologies

Both Esping-Andersen and Sainsbury refer to this idea of examining past ideologies as a way to frame their analysis of the welfare state. Esping-Andersen traces back the development of the different regimes of social democratic, liberal and corporatist to “the principles for which the historical actors have willingly united and struggled” (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 32). For the Swedish welfare state, the welfare state developed as a “middle-class” state that had to benefit both the traditional
working-class as well as an emerging “white-collar strata” (32). As he argues, “the Scandinavian model relied almost entirely on social democracy’s capacity to incorporate [the new middle classes] into a new kind of welfare state: one that provided benefits tailored to the tastes and expectations of the middle classes, but nonetheless retained universalism of rights” (31). As such, Esping-Andersen argues that there were several principles or goals “embedded” within the welfare state structure right from the onset, subsequently affecting the development of Swedish welfare state policies.

However, this historical view, written in *Three Worlds*, does not include a feminist perspective. Neither does he take up either an alternative historical angle, or a feminist historical perspective, anywhere in his subsequent books. In other words, Esping-Andersen may argue that historical actors influence the regime form that the welfare state takes, but he fails to present an adequate “herstory” of the development of the Swedish welfare state, one that would allow us to examine the definitive roles that women played in affecting the historical trajectory of the country.

In contrast, Sainsbury’s work does incorporate a feminist dimension in considering Swedish history. She argues that we should examine the ideology and impact of women’s mobilization movements and policy “legacies” to explain welfare state variations. For her, the fact the Swedish women’s rights movements focused their line of emancipation on obtaining access to paid work for women, while striving to divide unpaid work between men and women, subsequently influenced the Swedish direction of gender equality in terms of “rethinking [of] men’s position in the family and society,” and administering policies aimed at both men and women
Sainsbury, 1999: 96). This underlying gender ideology meant that Sweden took a different path from its Nordic neighbors, one that is uniquely “Swedish” in its policy direction. For example, Norway’s emancipatory strategy aimed at influencing wages, social security allowances and tax benefits to allow for women’s “personal independence” (96). In contrast, Sweden’s feminist movements aimed at augmenting “larger public responsibility vis-à-vis the family,” and sharing the financial burden of children among society as a whole (97). As such, several characteristics of the “Swedish” form of gender equality, such as an encouraging married women to work, or encouraging public daycare facilities, can be referenced back to the demands made by the Swedish feminists. For Sainsbury, history plays a role in creating legacies or footprints that underlie the development of specific welfare-gender characteristics.

B) Factual Inclusion

Another way that history has factored into the analysis of the Swedish welfare-gender relationship has been through specific factual inclusions. Out of all the disciplines, the political scientists incorporate historical facts or important past legislation into their frameworks the most. This can be credited to their methodology as a whole, as they are primarily concerned with the mechanisms of government, and structurally include past legislations in their analysis. To gain perspective on how early these reforms were, refer to Appendix A for “Legislative Advances.”

Sainsbury articulates Sweden’s 1913 insurance legislation as an important historical policy that allowed women to equal access to insurance coverage, a pioneering piece of legislation. She is also willing to take a fairly broad historical perspective, arguing “Swedish policies have transcended the poor law framework,
broadening, and redefining the scope of public responsibility” (Sainsbury, 1996: 101). Sainsbury also harkens back to the 1930s Population Commission in her analysis. She analyzes the fact that the “first wave” of 1930s reforms were already comprehensive in their scope, incorporating issues of reproductive health, liberalizing abortion restrictions, and “safeguarding the employment rights of working women who became engaged, pregnant or married” (Sainsbury, 1999: 97). Such reforms, she acknowledges, have reverberating impacts and “legacies” on present-day gender considerations. For example, Sweden’s unusually large scope of parental benefits can be traced back to the 1930s maternity grants, which were then carried over to current forms of maternity insurance and parental insurance. She also highlights Sweden’s 1940s policies of “collective goods,” which included state provisions of school lunches, school medical services, day nurseries and other social services for families. According to her, “by the end of the 1930s the state had assumed a larger responsibility for the well-being of mothers and their infants, and in the 1940s state responsibility as reflected in policies was extended to the well-being of families” (Sainsbury, 1996: 103).

Within the politics-gender discourse, the political scientists who consider Sweden’s equality of process and gender ombudsman also incorporate important historical legislation into their analysis. Elman for example, considers the thematic issue of “sexual inequality” entering the public consciousness in the 1960s and the historical councils that confronted this issue before the Equality Ombudsman. She examines the work of the Advisory Council (1972-1976), the Equality Affairs Division, as well as the different historical legislations that were passed, such as the
Equal Opportunities Act (Elman, 1995: 244). History factors into her analysis in a singular manner, as she tracks the various legislations and political bodies leading up to the successes and missteps of the Equality Ombudsman.

McBride and Mazur go even further in their historical factual inclusion, suggesting the presence of “path dependency” in the development of Sweden’s prostitution bill. They argue that the initial debates on the issue, which started from as early as 1981, “defined prostitution as a problem of patriarchal exploitation,” enabling the legislation to pass parliament in its current form, which criminalize the solicitor, but not the prostitute (McBride and Mazur, 2010: 212).

Depending on their priority of focus, the political scientists incorporate historical facts in varied ways. However, the breadth of their historical consideration is bounded in and limited. All the historical facts that they use appear compressed within the 1900s, largely around the 1970s, with the 1913 insurance legislation as the earliest example. Inherently, all the political scientists appear to believe that many of the Swedish welfare state’s current characteristics, as well as many of the contemporary social rights that women enjoy, can be traced back to the 1970s era of sweeping welfare legislations. While not erroneous, this view also underestimates the importance of embedded cultural and historical trends.

In contrast, the sociologists have excluded the historical dimension completely. The nature of their methodology and focus means that both Daly and Rake, as well as Moen, focus on presenting an empirical snapshot of certain facts about Sweden, and their analyses are largely confined to contemporary results rather than any historical considerations. Leira adopts the same approach—she does not incorporate historical
childcare legislation into her analysis, choosing to focus on contemporary snapshots of motherhood and care instead.

7.1.2 Issues That They Exclude

Ignoring the historians means that these analysts exclude several important historical facts about Sweden. By ignoring these factors, they fail to present a holistic picture of Sweden, or the way that gender equality developed to its current form.

A) Historically Open Sexual Attitudes

All the analysts fail to acknowledge or even consider the general historical tradition of Swedes’ openness towards sex and the general attitude of acceptance towards children born out of wedlock. These liberal attitudes can be traced back to historically tight-knit village structures, where parents and neighbors served as important support systems for daughters in enforcing marriage or helping to financially support their grandchildren. Puritanical religion had also failed to take root in Sweden. As Meyer argues, “no “society” bore in against individuals, no church, no state, no “values,” no system” (Meyer, 1987: 44). Other articulated reasons include: the “darks nights of winter and the light nights of summer,” “separate sleeping quarters in summer for maturing daughters,” “the long distances which prevented the preacher from arriving when wanted,” or the fact that village youths often slept in barns or storehouses (Scott, 1977: 364). Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, a common courting practice in Sweden was a pattern of “night courting,” (fieri) where “organized groups of young men went out together “calling” the girl
who was in bed in the separate “girl house,” then sitting around her, joking and singing and leaving one as her bedfellow” (Myrdal, 1941: 42).

As such, Swedes have traditionally demonstrated accepting and liberal attitude towards open sexual behavior. The prevailing mindset in the rural areas was that “The Swedish peasant was both emotional and pragmatic; his attitude was that sex was natural and that what was natural was right” (Scott, 1977: 364). Many Swedish children were born out of wedlock, with marriage coming after a child was conceived. In the 1840s, over 45 percent of babies were born before matrimony in the city of Stockholm (364). A child born to engaged couples was considered “legitimate,” reinforcing the widely accepting attitudes towards open sexual relations (365). Unwed mothers and illegitimate children were considered “normal members of society,” and women had more freedom of behavior without undergoing the emotional shame or suffering the societal backlash that their Victorian counterparts in England had to contend with (365).8

Symbolically however, it also means that women had as good a claim to sexual freedom as their male counterparts did and that one form of social oppression did not exist for them from as early as the 1880s. This is certainly not the case in certain cultures or countries even today, where traditional mindsets regarding sexual relations and a women’s sexual behavior still prevail. In this respect, it appeared that the Swedes were “ahead of the curve” in terms of progressive values.

8 According to Scott, “the pattern of sex practices in Sweden is indeed different from the Victorian standards long preached in England and the United States, and it is a pattern of freedom. It is not, however, an aberration of the twentieth century, but is historically rooted in accepted practice and in large part legally recognized” (Scott, 1977: 363).
The traditional acceptance towards open sexual relations might explain the country’s current increasing trend of cohabitation and the decreasing popularity of marriage. About 28% of all Swedish couples are cohabitating (Dafoe Whitehead and Pompenoe, 2005). 56% of children are born outside of marriage (Dafoe Whitehead and Pomponoe, 2005). Only around 60% of Swedish women marry, and figures place Sweden’s divorce rate at around 55% (Tarnowski, 2007).

Certain characteristics of Sweden’s current form of gender equality can also be traced back to such historical sentiments. These include the general public responsibility for children, the state and social acceptance towards cohabitation and children born outside of marriage, attitudes and levels of respect towards women both socially as well as within the employment sector, and so on. By excluding this historical dimension, these analysts neglect important factors that might explain the development of Swedish female empowerment and gender equality consciousness.

B) Historical Equality in the Household

Furthermore, despite the thinkers’ centralized attention on Sweden’s work policies as an important cause of equality, none of them consider the fact that women played historically important roles in the traditional Swedish home and economy. In ancient villages, women either worked in the fields, or in traditional household subsistence (Meyer, 1987: 44). Some even spent summers completely alone, taking care of their livestock in the mountains (44). Many women enjoyed autonomy in the household and villages, holding much of the decision-making power as their husbands spent long periods of time away from home, working in the iron and timber fields (44). As Meyer says, the historical state of “villagers’ economic lives, rather
than subsisting in those almost vegetal routines that nurtured myths of nature, instead prompted consciousness, especially between the sexes” (44). The seeds were already sown in Swedish history to allow Swedish women to overturn entrenched chauvinist attitudes regarding their labor capabilities.

C) Education

Beyond their exclusion of important tenets of Swedish medieval society, these thinkers also fail to consider several other important socio-historical factors. Historically, Sweden also demonstrated an educated populace. By the 1930s, only 0.11 per cent of all persons between the age of fifteen and seventy and 0.31 per cent of all persons above seventy were unable to read and write (Myrdal, 1941: 367).

Furthermore, women were given many educational opportunities from an early time. The Wallin School for Girls (Wallinska Skolan) was established in 1831 as the pioneer institution for female education (Ulrica Olivecrona, 1884: 205). This school graduated female scholars such as Rosalie Ulrica Olivecrona (née Rosalie Roos), who later became one of three great pioneers of the women’s organized movement in Sweden, alongside Fredrika Bremer and Sophie Adlersparre. In 1842, a law providing for compulsory schooling was enacted; this law included the schooling of girls and was unconditionally enforced (Myrdal, 1941: 60). Over the course of the nineteenth century, women enjoyed an increasing number of educational opportunities. In 1861, the Royal Seminary for the Training of Female Teachers (Kongl Seminariet för bildande af lärarinor) was founded to teach a broad range of subjects, like religion, natural sciences, mathematics, history, literature, geography, natural philosophy and so on (Ulrica Olivecrona, 1884: 201). Many other technical
institutions were established and opened to women in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, such as nursing school in the Uppsala, Gothenburg and Stockholm [1867, 1877 and 1882 respectively], access to the Stockholm Royal Academy of Music [1854], the opening of The Industrial School [1854] as well as other dairy and farm schools (Ulrica Olivecrona, 1884: 206-208).9

Sweden’s success in reducing illiteracy and improving education standards not only facilitated the ability of the Swedish population to comprehend key gender issues, it also enabled the Swedish women to develop high levels of human capital and take charge of their own feminist progress. In other words, Swedish women had many of the right capabilities that enabled them to strive for Swedish “exceptionalism” in women’s rights, an important fact that is entirely unconsidered by any of the thinkers.

D) “Swedishness”

Furthermore, none of the authors consider the fact that Sweden has traditionally demonstrated fairly progressive attitudes in many other areas, an inherent “Swedishness” so to speak, which could potentially explain the country’s willingness to embrace gender equality. Sweden has been a pioneer in safeguarding children’s rights, has kept its borders open to refugees and asylum seekers, and has demonstrated extremely liberal attitudes with regards to homosexual rights—allowing gays to openly serve in the army and get married in a Church. In general, the country has demonstrated a stance of fairness and integrity in both domestic and international

9 In these agricultural institutes, women were taught the management of farms and dairies and the care of cattle. According to Ulrica Olivecrona, “it [was] not an uncommon thing in Sweden for women to take charge of the dairy cattle on a farm as well as to do the indoor work of the dairy.” (Ulrica Olivecrona,1884: 208)
human rights. From a historical perspective, the country criticized the Soviet invasion of Hungary, reacted stridently against the Vietnam War, and deeply opposed the Iraq War, yet welcomed Iraqi refugees with open arms—in 2006, the country took in over 9000 Iraqi asylum seekers, compared to the USA’s dismal 202 (Wright, 2007).  

The intangible presence of “Swedishness” might be impossible to confirm for certain, yet many aspects could possibly explain its existence. Alva Myrdal claims, “The Scandinavian countries, and in particular Sweden, have by historical accident been given a most advantageous set of prerequisites for a bold experiment in social democracy” (Myrdal, 1941: 10). These prerequisites do not just explain the success of the Swedish welfare state structure, but the country’s general inclination towards tolerance and peace. First, the Swedish population has been traditionally “small and rather homogenous,” and the country not faced the internal divisions along minority lines or regional differences (Scott, 1977: vii and Myrdal, 1941: 12). A common “Swedish” mentality that has developed over time is the sense that “they are all in it together,” with Swedes demonstrating a strong sense of collective cooperation and internal cohesion, perhaps historically cultivated in the face of the country’s harsh geographical landscape and severe weather conditions (Scott, 1977: vii).  

The Swedes have a term “lagom,” which has no English translation, but means “in

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10 Sweden has also demonstrated its willingness to expand this number drastically even as Denmark and other European neighbors have closed their borders and tightened their refugee intake.

11 Sweden is located in the far north of Europe, with a geographic size of around 173,732 square miles. Its coastlines have traditionally been vulnerable to attack, and is a fairly flat country with no natural land defenses. 15% of the country lies within the Arctic Circle and the growing season tended to be short while winters tended to be long and difficult, with arable land making up only 7% of the whole country. Swedish rivers can be frozen for up to six months, making sea transportation difficult. (Kent, 2008: x-xi.)
moderation” or “just right.” Anyone who has spent time in Sweden would quickly recognize that “lagom” forms the foundation of the Swedish national psyche, one that prizes cooperation, consensus and equality.

Historically, such embedded features might explain why Sweden passed many progressive women’s rights legislation earlier than most other countries. By 1845, sons and daughters had equality of inheritance and wives were given the same rights as their husbands to common property (Ulrica Olivecrona, 1884: 211). In 1846, women could practice industrial professions and conduct businesses in their own names (211). Such populist and legislative openness towards women’s rights could also explain why Sweden has historically produced many famous and accomplished women.13

The exclusion of the historical dimensions means that the welfare-gender discourse is structurally confined to a static point on the time continuum. They do not look before the twentieth century to acknowledge many Swedish historical characteristics that are not replicated in many other countries, which also makes the Swedish case study particularly unique. Such liberalized sexual attitudes are not found in more conservative societies and the issue of girls’ education is still a raging problem in many developing nations. Tacitly embedded trends that can explain the development of welfare characteristics and current attitudes towards women can be traced back further than Sweden’s 1970s era of welfare state expansion. While many

12 “Lagom” comes from the Viking epistemology of “laget om,” which means “the group around.”
“Legend has it that that Vikings met in assemblies and concluded each meeting by sharing a bowl of mead, an alcoholic honey wine. The drinking vessel was passed from man to man, with the understanding that no one should drink too much: in other words, one should be sure to leave enough for everybody as the bowl went “laget om.” (Johansson Robinowitz and Werner Carr, 2001: 72).
13 In 1906, Selma Lagerlof won the Nobel Prize for the children’s book The Wonderful Adventures of Nil (Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige.)
of these analysts, especially Sainsbury seem to recognize this fact intuitively by talking about past legislations, they do not appear to have explicitly recognized these historical influences and causations.

7.2. Looking Forward: Issues Facing the Swedish welfare state

Beyond their oversights regarding the historical dimension of Swedish gender equality, many of the authors also fail to “look forward” and consider several issues confronting the Swedish welfare state. Taking the temporal dimension to “bookend” the analysis of these thinkers, our perspective as external readers allows us to see the gaps that discourse fails to blanket or anticipate with regards to future issues of the Swedish welfare state.

A) Analysts Who Do Look Forward

Out of all the analysts, Sainsbury and Esping-Andersen are the two that highlight issues or problems confronting the welfare state. Sainsbury considers the problem of welfare state “retrenchment,” a wave of costs and program cutbacks that started in Sweden in the 1980s as a consequence of global economic recession (Sainsbury, 1996: 217). The Social Democrats’ Third Way reforms prioritized reducing the budget deficit, leading to a second wave of “retrenchment” reforms in the 1990s that “hit women very hard,” especially lower-income groups and families with children (Sainsbury, 1996: 219). The issue of economic recessions and subsequent financial strains on the welfare state is deeply relevant, especially in light of the 2010 economic recession, which saw Sweden’s unemployment rate hover around 8% (Statistics Sweden, 2010). Women also tend to be more unemployed, or
underemployed than men during times of recessions, and more women than men are underemployed for over a year (Statistics Sweden, 2010). If welfare state policies are constrained by financial pressures, there are often reverberating social consequences, especially for the most vulnerable societal groups, such as lone mothers.

Esping-Andersen focuses on a different issue, namely demographic strains on the welfare state. Nonetheless, his framework might actually present more problems. Sweden is currently facing an aging population—leading to the feared welfare “pyramid” where larger proportions of the populations will have to be increasingly supported by smaller groups of working adults. Ironically, this might be a consequence of the state’s push to increase female employment, as fertility rates often decline as more women enter the workforce. Furthermore, “caring” adequately for children, which appears to be the desired end goal for Esping-Andersen and other care theorists, might actually mean that parents choose to have less children so as to invest adequate time, attention and money on them. As the older generations age, this could lead to an increasing strain on one demographic end of the country. Esping-Andersen attempts to argue ways that the Swedish welfare state can accomplish “intergenerational” fairness, but his push for countries to invest in children’s education and encourage “high quality children,” while admirable and desired, might actually lead to counterproductive effects instead. As more Swedes age and require state care, Sweden might face a retrenchment in childcare policies. Given the finite nature of welfare state funds, this issue of demographic imbalances often intersects with economic issues of recession and retrenchment in a manner that bodes negatively for the future of welfare state entitlements.
B) Immigration Issues

One way of mitigating the demographic issue is often through immigration. Working immigrants can counterbalance a large aging population by contributing their skills and human capital to the country’s workforce. Between the 1950s to the 1960s, the bulk of Sweden’s immigrants came from their Nordic neighboring countries (especially Finland), and Southern Europe, starting the calls for increased female employment in the first place (Westin, 2006). Since the 1970s however, Sweden’s immigration policies have centered on refugee migration and family reunification policies, with many displaced refugees streaming in from the Middle East (Westin, 2006). At the time of this thesis, a fifth of the Swedish population are foreign-born—1.6 million out of 9.3 million Swedes (Demsteader, 2010).

Sweden has been traditionally ethically homogenous, and Swedes have long demonstrated a strong sense of loyalty to the abstract idea of what being a “Swede” entails. Their female employment policies and concerns over fertility arose as a direct response to these nationalistic concerns, where the national goal was to protect the perpetuation of the “Swedish” population. As a result, this “immigration issue” has become an increasing source of cultural tensions and internal dissent, with its own consequences for gender rights.

In the 2010 elections, the anti-immigrant group, the Sweden Democrats, won 6% of the vote, a result that stunned the other parties and forced many leaders to concede that more needed to be done to integrate immigrants into the general Swedish population (Daley, 2010). The voting of the Sweden Democrats into the Riksdag demonstrates the growing national concerns over the increasing presence of
Muslim immigrants, as well as the growing anger over the country’s open immigration policies. The leader of the Sweden Democrats, Jimmie Akesson has stated that the country’s growing Muslim population is the country’s “biggest threat” since WWII, and that immigration should be cut by 90% (New York Times, 2010).

Not only does this immigration issue affect the internal cohesion of the welfare state, it has also led to some heated cultural clashes over gender. The current Minister for Integration and Gender Equality in Sweden, Nyamko Sabuni, has hit out at the country’s Muslim population for failing to integrate or adopt Swedish values, highlighting various incidences of genital mutilation, honor killings and domestic violence against women. In 1998, the Riksdag was obliged to pass the Act on Prohibition against Female Genital Mutilation. There is a growing sense of anger in Sweden that Muslim immigrants “do not respect the Swedish people” or their attitudes towards women (Daley, 2010). In 2006, Sweden’s largest Muslim organization demanded separate laws for Muslims, an act that angered many Swedes, and in several notorious cases, Muslim parents have refused to allow their daughters to participate in compulsory swimming lessons (The Local, 2006).

These issues demonstrate growing internal tensions within Sweden, which have many reverberating, intangible consequences. Part of Sweden’s welfare success can be explained by the country’s collective cultural attitudes, comprised of a general belief that they are all in this “together,” a consensus on the importance of hard work, and a broad trust in big government. With increasing unhappiness over the immigration issue, and a sense that the immigrants are “not Swedish enough,” the internal solidarity of the country is compromised, and a misalignment of cultural
values potentially undermines the internal fabric of the welfare state a whole. The immigrant issue also adds an additional dimension to the Swedish gender question, given that different immigrant cultures do not necessarily accept the general Swedish assumption that women should work, which is in itself a source of cultural conflict.

It is legitimate to criticize these authors for failing to exert themselves beyond their academic boundaries to consider or acknowledge this immigration issue. After all, this issue of immigration has cropped up before, as concerns over the declining native Swedish population and increasing number of immigrants drove the Myrdals to write *Crisis in the Population Question* that then sparked off many of the welfare measures in the 1930s. Authors such as Sainsbury and Esping-Andersen have acknowledged the Myrdals’ influence on Sweden, demonstrating their awareness of the immigration motif in Sweden’s history. Similarly, it only requires a single logical step forward from the demographic issue of an aging population to reach the immigration issue, given that aging populations often consider mitigating their demographic burdens by increasing the influx of foreign workers. This critique is particularly leveled at Sainsbury and Esping-Andersen, who focus the most on Swedish policy and the demographic issue respectively. By fencing themselves within a certain time period on the continuum, these authors have compromised their ability to foresee future problems confronting the Swedish welfare state and its trajectory for gender equality. These analysts are not just fenced in backwards; they also fail to be forward-looking.
7.3. Looking Outwards: Concluding Lessons From These Thinkers

Taking a step away from the discourse as a whole, it is important to recognize that the selected literature represented in this thesis is an extremely limited selection that does not capture the breadth of gender literature on Sweden or other countries. Temporal gaps frame in these authors by both ends, but this characterizes a lot of academic writing, and it is up to us to fill the spaces both historically, as well as futuristically. New political, economic, and social issues crop up frequently and it would be beyond the scope of this thesis, as well as any other academic work, to constantly give them due justice.

Many of the lessons that gleaned from these authors cannot be transposed easily onto a global form of gender equality. As a pioneer in progressive thought and socially liberal attitudes, Sweden is a unique case study. Many of these thinkers write about Sweden’s welfare state policies with the inherent assumption that Sweden has already accomplished a basic level of gender rights and female standards of living. Their focus is inherently “First World” in nature, and they are primarily concerned with the “next step” of gender equality, i.e., what comes after a country has reached a certain standard of living for its citizens. In many developing countries, the concerns are drastically different—many girls and women lack basic access to human rights, and the basic necessities of life. Even in developed countries, many of the governments are unwilling, even unable to play the large, overarching role that the Swedish welfare state has played in changing mindsets and attitudes. As such, the Swedish case study and the position of the selected authors have to be viewed in relative context.
Conclusion

Analyzing the discourse on Swedish gender equality demonstrates a relevant fact across all the different thinkers and disciplines: there is no one author who can provide a broad and inter-disciplinary perspective on Sweden and the nature of gender equality in the country. This chapter demonstrated the lack of historical and futuristic perspective within the welfare-gender discourse. Former chapters have shown how various authors continuously demonstrate gaps in their discussions of Sweden that have to be filled by looking at other academic disciplines. In order to obtain a firm theoretical understanding of the issue, a broad comprehension of the discourse is necessary.
Thesis Conclusion

The beginning of this thesis started out with a parable: six blind men who each fail to see a complete elephant, all mistakenly taking a single part of the elephant’s body as representative of its whole. The men in the story fall victim to hubris and lack of foresight: by refusing to cooperate and combine their impressions, the full image of the elephant—the desired knowledge of the story—is withheld from them.

The ambitious goal of this thesis has been to transcend the mistake of the men and attain knowledge in its broadest form. This thesis started out with the view that academics can be like blind men, too shuttered in by their myopic focus to see the full picture. It sought to chart out the way that Swedish gender literature has progressed across the different disciplines by extracting pre-existing arguments and placing these key authors under an analytical lens. This was to be the main contribution of this thesis: an “analysis of the analysts.”

Over the course of writing this thesis however, it became clear that the original parable might not have been entirely accurate in characterizing the authors’ limitations. If anything, the reverse-parable appears to be the better analogy: all the authors see the full elephant, they know what it looks like, but they differ on how to interpret it. These differing interpretations affect the research questions that drive their academic work and establish the directional divergences between them. I characterized this thesis as trying to connect the dots to draw a picture, but as it turns out, the picture has been drawn; everyone just sees something different.
From the onset, the feminist thinkers, regardless of the academic discipline that they write from, are concerned with gender and the woman’s place in society. They want to know if the elephant is a female one, and if yes, how is it being treated? In contrast, Esping-Andersen is more concerned about the segment of society that the elephant belongs to, and his entire framework often circles back to this issue of class. The care theorists question the elephant in its parental role: what happens to it when its children and elderly come into the picture and how does the state help? The political scientists are more interested to know if the elephant has right of process, and how it performs from a political perspective. Finally, all the thinkers across the different disciplines fail to question how the elephant got there in the first place.

These thinkers are asking different questions, and this naturally leads to different conclusions about a generally similar set of facts on Sweden. Perhaps this is one way to characterize academic literature on a single area: *so similar, yet so different*. Even with the extensive coverage provided within this thesis, this project still missed out on many different authors and ideas. At the same time however, this might be partly the reason why a similar anthological-analytical work on Swedish gender equality literature has not been attempted before: the academic discourse is extremely extensive, not to mention constantly growing. An analytical comparison of the key analysts writing in the discourse requires an understanding of multiple disciplines, and any attempt at the project is both exhausting as well as exclusionary, where segments of the literature are inevitably left out.

An ideal ending for our parable: the six blind men sit down, they discuss their views on the elephant and they create conversation. They learn from each other, and
they help each other achieve full knowledge. Similarly, a complete and robust comprehension of Swedish gender equality can only be obtained when we look at the issue from multiple different angles, and place these angles alongside each other. This thesis creates that knowledge base, and aims to set the elephant free.
Appendix A

**Relevant Timeline:**

1831: *Wallinska skolan* (Wallins School for girls) established
1842: Schooling for girls made compulsory
1852: The Industrial School is opened to women
1854: Stockholm Royal Academy of Music is opened to women
1860s-early 1900s: Mass emigration to the US. Fears of shrinking population start to develop.
1861: The Royal Seminary for the Training of Female Teachers (*Kongl Seminariet för bildande af lärarinnor*) is founded
1866: Sweden political structure becomes a constitutional monarchy
1889: Founding of the Swedish Social Democratic Party
1900: Liberal Coalition formed
1914-1918: World War I
1918: Male suffrage base expanded
1930s: The Great Depression
1918: Swedish Social Democrats come to power
1934: *Crisis in the Population Question* published
1939-1945: World War Two
1970: The Swedish Riksdag becomes unicameral
1990s: Swedish Financial Crisis
1989: Nordic Plan of Action to promote equal opportunities
1991: Swedish Social Democrats suffer a bad showing and lose their majority in parliament
1992: Sweden faces severe economic crisis
1995: Sweden joins the European Union
2006: European Council decides on European pact for gender equality

**Legislative Advances—Historical Timeline**

1845: Sons and daughters have equal rights of inheritance. Wives have equal rights to common property.
1864: Husbands lose legal right to hit their wives
1913: National insurance policy that included women
1919: Women gain suffrage at municipal level
1920: Marriage Act passed allowing both husband and wife equal share in joint property
1921: Women gain national suffrage and the right to hold office at national level
1930s: Maternity grants introduced
1935: The Population Commission was established to examine population question and propose measures to increase the birthrate
1938: Committee on Women’s Work established
1938: Contraception in legalized
1940s: Collective goods provided by state, including school lunches, school medical services, day nurseries and other social services
1947: First woman Cabinet Minister: Karin Kock
1950s: National Health Insurance plan introduced
1965: Family Policy Committee established
1965: Sweden passes a law against rape in marriage
1968: Sweden becomes the first country to pass UN procurement adopting “sex role equality”
1969: Family Expert Commission established
1970s: Gender Equality moves onto public agenda
1971: Separate tax assessments for spouses
1972: Advisory Council on Equality Between Men and Women is established
1974: Family Law introduced to simplify divorce procedures and strengthening paternal claim to child custody
1979: Equal Opportunities Ombudsman created. Riksdag passes Swedish Act on Equality Between Women and Men at Work (Equal Opportunities Act, EAO)
1979: Corporal punishment in the home against children is banned
1980: Act on the Equality Between Men and Women at Work is passed
1982: Domestic violence becomes a matter of criminal law and corporal punishment is a mandatory criminal offence
1983: Creation of study commission named “Working Party for the Role of the Male”
1984: The State Sector Equal Opportunities Ordinance is passed
1986: Swedish Marriage Act is passed
1987: The Cohabitation Act passed
1992: The Equal Opportunity Act is passed to supersede 1980 legislation
1993: Commission on Violence Against Women established
1994: Sweden passes Revised Equal Opportunities Act
1998: Act on Violence Against Women is passed: amendment of the Penal Code
1998: Act on Prohibition against Female Genital Mutilation is passed
1999: A new law forbids the purchase of sexual services (the “prostitution bill”)
2000: National Council for Women’s Peace founded
2002: Government “action plan” for gender equality introduced
2009: Equal Opportunities Ombudsman ceases. Office of the Ombudsman against Discrimination is formed.
2009: Gender-neutral marriage law is passed

**Work-Family Policy Timeline**
1874: Married women gain right to control their own incomes
1901: Women gain right to four weeks of unpaid maternity leave
1931: Maternity Insurance Benefits Introduced
1937-1938: Universal Maternity Allowance and financial assistance to mothers established.
- Child support assistance established
1939: Gainfully employed women may not be dismissed on basis of pregnancy, childbirth or marriage.
1947: Universal child allowances introduced
1955: Women get three months of paid maternity leave on birth of child
1969-1970: Schools adopt new curriculum stressing equal opportunities
1974: Parental insurance is introduced. Parents entitled to share parental allowances and parental leave upon childbirth
1975: First legislation passed for preschool programs, calling for expanded daycare facilities
1976: Law passed requiring municipalities to draw up daycare center expansion plans
1978: Paid parental leave extended to 270 days
1979: Parents of small children entitled to six-hour workdays
1980: Paid parental leave extended to 360 days, leave to care for sick children increased to 60 days
1985: All children between 18 months to 7 years are guaranteed a place in public daycare
1986: Temporary parental allowance is introduced, and number of parental allowance days is increased to 360.
1990: Temporary parental allowance is extended to 120 days per child/year
1994: Paid parental leave extended to 450 days, leave to care for sick children increased to 120 days
1995: Each parent must use at least one month of parental leave—“Father’s month”
1995: Compulsory for all municipalities to provide daycare to those who want it
1998: Compensation for parental allowance, temporary parental allowance and pregnancy benefit is increased to 80% of income.
1999: Law prohibiting the purchase (though not sale) of sexual services
2002: Paid parental leave extended 480 days, 60 days reserved for each parent and non-transferable (“daddy month” increased to two months)
2006: Income ceiling for sickness benefits is increased
2008: “Gender equality bonus” introduced when using parental allowance. Applied to parental allowance days at all sickness benefit levels. Maximum bonuses if days are shared equally between both parents.
2010: Possible for a non-parent to get temporary parents allowance to care for a child, in the case that a single parent gets ill and cannot care for his or her child.
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