TRACING THE WOMEN-FRIENDLY WELFARE STATE

GENDERED POLITICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN SWEDEN

EDITED BY ÅSA GUNNARSSON

MAKADAM
CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 9
   — ÅSA GUNNARSSON

2. CITIZENSHIP AND THE WELFARE STATE
   1. TAXPAYING, POOR RELIEF AND CITIZENSHIP 17
      DEMOCRATIZATION FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE
      — ÅSA KARLSSON SJÖGREN

3. TAX LAW DIRECTIONS FOR ERASING THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE DIVIDE IN EVERYDAY LIFE ECONOMY 38
   — ÅSA GUNNARSSON

4. NEOLIBERAL TRENDS IN THE WOMEN-FRIENDLY SWEDISH WELFARE STATE 57
   — LENA WENNBerg

5. EVERYDAY LIFE EXPERIENCES 80
   A NECESSARY REQUIREMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE TRANSPORT LAW OF THE WELFARE STATE
   — ANDREAS PETTERSSON
6. CITIZENSHIP AS ‘LIVED EXPERIENCE’ IN THE CITY 99
   CONNECTING THE MATERIAL AND THE EMOTIONAL
   ASPECTS OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE RIGHT TO THE CITY
   — CHRISTINE HUDSON —

II. WOMEN’S PROFESSIONS AND THEIR PROFESSIONALISM

7. [D]ELUSIVE EQUALITY 125
   GENDERED STRUCTURES IN THE SOCIAL WORK
   PROFESSION
   — KERSTIN HAMREBY

8. “SCHOOLTEACHERS CANNOT BECOME
   MÄDCHEN FÜR ALLES IN OUR SOCIETY” 147
   SOCIAL JUSTICE AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE
   SWEDISH CLASS TEACHERS UNION POST-1945
   — BRITT-MARIE BERGE

9. FREEDOM OF CHOICE IN SWEDISH PUBLIC CARE
   OF THE ELDERLY 170
   A CARE-WORKER PERSPECTIVE ON THE CHALLENGES OF
   CARE AND CARE WORK
   — KATARINA ANDERSSON

III. THE LABOUR MARKET VIEW ON GENDER EQUALITY

10. INTEGRATION TO SEGREGATION 193
    ACTIVATING WOMEN WORKERS IN 1960’S SWEDISH LABOUR
    MARKET PROGRAMMES, FROM CENTRE TO PERIPHERY
    — JOHANNA OVERUD

11. A BOOMING MARKET OF PRECARIOUS WORK 214
    SELLING DOMESTIC SERVICES IN WOMEN-FRIENDLY
    SWEDEN
    — ELIN KVIST

12. MAKING UP (NEW) WOMEN 234
    CONCEPTIONS OF WOMEN IN THE HISTORY OF THE
    SWEDISH WELFARE STATE
    — EVA MAGNUSSON

13. TRANSGRESSING GENDERED SPHERES
    THROUGH BUSINESS 255
    FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS IN A SWEDISH TOWN
    AROUND 1880
    — LOTTA VIKSTRÖM

THE AUTHORS 275
In contemporary Sweden it is natural for women to have a paid job and a family with children in the same period of life. This in fact seems so natural that other life patterns require an explanation. Thus, one dominant conception of women in contemporary Swedish society is that they are, self-evidently, both workers and mothers. Not so long ago, such a dual identity was seen as very unnatural for women in Sweden. A woman was expected to – naturally – devote herself wholly to her family and children. Clearly, since then something has changed in what is seen as natural for a Swedish woman; women are conceived of in new ways. Culturally entrenched notions of what is natural for certain people (in this case, “women”) are powerful; so powerful, indeed, that one might argue, with the philosopher Ian Hacking (2007), that new notions have the force to “make up” new kinds of people. Hacking uses this expression to refer to “the ways in which a new scientific classification may bring into being a new kind of person, conceived and experienced as a way to be a person” (2007, p. 286). His examples come from the power of psychiatric diagnoses to shape new identities for those so diagnosed. In the case of “new” women in the Swedish welfare society, the class (women) in itself is of course not new, but it may be that the identities and meanings attached to the class have changed sufficiently to actually “make up” women as something new.

Do Swedish people mean something different today when they use the word “woman” than they did, for instance, eighty years ago (the period when the blueprints for the Swedish welfare society were drawn up)? Some indications of whether this is the case might be gleaned by looking back to the middle of the 1930s, when Sweden began mapping out its path towards a welfare state. This is what I have attempted in this chapter. The chapter reports the results of a detailed reading and discursive analysis of authoritative public reports, so-called government investigations, written by the political elite during the 1930s. These reports inspired and partly regulated the early steps in the creation and development of the Swedish welfare state.

My aim has been to locate, in these documents, statements and arguments that would enable me to draw conclusions about the various meanings of “woman” or “women” that were in use in public political discourse in the 1930s, and how they were pitted against each other. Inspired by Hacking, I call what I have looked for “conceptions of women”: the traits, abilities, and other characteristics that were seen as natural, normal and preferred in women in this period. It is likely that the kind of person that a “proper woman” is expected to be will influence the political decisions made about women.

This chapter is written against the background of a number of historical studies on the aims, vicissitudes, and consequences of what has been called the “women-friendly” Swedish welfare state (cf. Andersson, 2011; Hatje, 1974; Hirdman, 1989; Lundqvist, 2007; 2011; see also Wennberg in this book). These studies have developed a comprehensive understanding of the origins and ideology of the Swedish welfare system focusing on its relations to “the woman question” (Hirdman, 1993). Against this background, I take here a narrow view and scrutinize authoritative public expressions of conceptions of women during the period of preparation of the Swedish welfare systems. Such a scrutiny may indicate possible spaces for new meanings connected to “women.” New meaning spaces, to refer to Ian Hacking (1990) again, usually open up as the result of the convergence of “countless trickles” of new meanings from many sources. The trickles jointly create a space where it becomes possible to imagine the phenomenon in new ways. Hacking studied the phenomenon of probability and argued that the end of the nineteenth century provided a meaning space for the emergence of what we take for granted today when we say “probability.” This would have been inconceivable before then. In this chapter I will look...
at a pivotal moment in the history of welfare politics in Sweden with a parallel aim. I have sought to discern the results of confluences of ideas about “women” that may have created new meaning spaces which enabled new possibilities for the political imagining of women and women’s lives to emerge.

The appropriate data sources for this study are authoritative public documents where conceptions about women were used, and sometimes, debated (Lundqvist 2007). I have, therefore, studied government investigations (Statens offentliga utredningar, SOU). In the Swedish political system there is a long tradition of setting up parliamentary investigation committees to investigate a particular issue and lay the groundwork for legislative changes. The committees are, as a rule, recruited from the political and scholarly elite and represent authoritative voices of knowledge and political opinion at a particular time (Johansson 1992). The committees usually call a group of experts to their aid. The committee reports are often rich sources of current knowledge and opinions about the issue at hand, as well as about ongoing debates.

In 1930s Sweden, reform work, that is planning and beginning to build a welfare state, was a prime objective for politicians, policy makers, and their advisers, who were often medical scientists and social science scholars. This was a period when many progressive welfare ideologies and visions were honed and tried out (Lundqvist 2011). Historical studies of these processes have focused, for instance, on the ideology and practices of social engineering, and on changes in the gendered “contracts” between the state and its citizens (Hirdman 1989, 1993). Informed by these studies I have chosen as particularly interesting arenas in which to look for authoritative conceptions of women, the debates and policies relating to family size and birth control, and the debates and policies relating to the right of married women to be employed outside their homes. Both these issues were subject to intense debate in Sweden in the 1930s, and both were brought to some kind of consensus among policy-makers in this period.

**ANALYTICAL FOCUS AND TOOLS**

The expression “conceptions of women” here designates clusters of opinions, practices, and (often) taken-for-granted notions about what women are and can be – and, especially, should be. Studying conceptions of women keeps the analytical gaze trained on the agents who expressed ideas and thoughts about women (and therefore away from speculating about the characteristics of actual women). First, what were these agents thinking and arguing about concerning “women”, and second, how did their authoritatively expressed thoughts contribute to notions about the kinds of people women were expected to be or become in the new welfare state?

When analyzing the committee reports I first looked for indications of interpretative repertoires related to the two topics, birth control and women’s right to work (Gilbert & Mulkay 1984). An interpretative repertoire is a set of well-known and accepted understandings relating to an issue or a phenomenon that people in a cultural setting may draw on to characterize and evaluate their own and other people’s actions. A well-entrenched and dominant repertoire about a certain phenomenon can be said to define the common sense of a group or culture (Potter & Wetherell 1987). Often, however, and especially in periods of social change such as the 1930s, several repertoires may compete. For the analysis I read through the reports and selected all pieces of text I encountered that related to the two issues. I then read through these two compilations of texts with a view to identifying the active repertoires that informed each. This is a process that often needs to be repeated several times in order to ensure adequate consistency. After identifying repertoires, and for the presentations in this chapter I selected a small number of text extracts that function as “convenient and exemplary anchors” (Hacking 1990: 8), for each repertoire. The extracts provide a representative picture of the types of argument that constitute the “common-sense” of each repertoire, but the choice of extracts does not aim to replicate the frequency of occurrence of each type of argument in the reports.

In the next phase I will read the full compilation of extracts for each repertoire with an eye to the conception of women that informed them. While source documents were occasionally explicit about what was deemed a valid way to be a woman, the conceptions (or discourses) were often
implicit and built into the premises, or “rules”, underlying the arguments. Therefore, in this phase I adopted a discourse analytic stance aimed at revealing the conceptions about women that needed to be presumed as informing the text in order for a certain argument or policy to make sense and seem natural (Parker 1994). This part of the analysis thus looks for the conceptions about women that contribute to the necessary preconditions for a particular argument. This can be said to reflect the notions or ideas that the writers brought with them to their writing of the documents. I will present the analyses of the two selected questions in turn below and discuss them together at the end of the chapter.

**MARRIED WOMEN’S RIGHT TO PURSUE PAID WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME**

In the first half of the 1930s, the right of married women to do paid work was intensely debated in Swedish parliamentary and other political circles. There were at this time a number of jobs and professions from which married women were barred by law. Several MPs had presented bills arguing for further limitations, while others argued against any limitations at all. In the middle of the 1930s, two parliamentary investigation committees were set up to address these issues. One (Kvinnoarbetskommittén, The committee for Women’s Work) was given the task of investigating the conditions of women, especially married women, on the labour market. The other committee formed a part of the Committee for Population Issues (of which more later) and was given the task of suggesting legislation to protect women from being discharged when they married or bore children. The investigation reports from these committees form the material that I have analyzed for this section. Both reports comment on there being a distinct turn, after 1935, towards more favourable attitudes to married women’s paid work. However, there was still disagreement in parliament and between employers’ organizations and labour unions. This was mirrored in the committee reports: there was no consensus about what to suggest in the way of reform and legislation, or about the basic grounds for any such suggestions (SOU 1938:13; SOU 1938:47). I was able to identify one interpretative repertoire favouring married women’s paid work across the board, the permissive repertoire, and another, the conditional repertoire, favouring paid work under certain conditions for certain married women, but not others.

**THE PERMISSIVE REPertoire: ALL MARRIED WOMEN SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME**

The permissive repertoire was made up of four types of arguments, which coalesced politically in this particular historical period. The first argument was based in general human rights, and the second in ideas about the similarities between men and women. The third and fourth arguments, instead, were based in the needs of Swedish society that the committees identified at the time of writing the reports. Against the background of the political worries about reduced birth rates (see below), these arguments worked together to strengthen a permissive repertoire and favour married women’s paid work. Below, I have quoted pieces from the investigation reports that illustrate these four types of arguments. I discuss them at the end of the section, after the excerpts for the second repertoire.

*Married women have the right to do paid work because they are citizens:*
A prohibition [against married women’s paid work] would be in direct opposition to the *right to individual freedom*, which is a fundamental principle of our cultural life. The right to seek paid employment and the right to live in a marriage should not be unauthorisedly encroached upon (*The Committee for Women’s Work, SOU 1938:47, p. 334, italics in the original*).

A prohibition would further be contrary to that general legislation which in our country regulates the legal relations of spouses and which prescribes that husband as well as wife, each after their ability, shall contribute to the maintenance of the family (*The Committee for Women’s Work, SOU 1938:47, p. 334, italics in the original*).

*Men and women are similar and should therefore have equal access to paid work:*
Men and women are neither physically nor mentally different in any way that gives total superiority to either sex. For certain partial functions, on the other hand, there are general differences in the sexes’ ability to
perform. However, none of these more specialized average differences between the sexes are large enough to justify conclusions about the capability of one sex and the incompetence of the other; for all observed characteristics it is a fact that the differences between individuals within each sex are many times larger than the average differences between the sexes (The Committee for Women’s Work, SOU 1938:47, pp. 45–46).

Another common argument, with which some want to justify discharging a female employee upon marriage is [...] that her performance as a worker would, because of her marriage, deteriorate due to divided interests between her home and her workplace. This opinion has not, however, been confirmed by experience in those areas of work in which married women are employed (The Population Committee’s Report on Working Women’s Judicial Position on Marriage and Childbirth, SOU 1938:13, pp. 20–21).

Women’s paid work is an historical (or other) necessity:
A prohibition against married women’s paid work would be in conflict with the foreseeable economical development. Industrialisation is an undeniable reality for our country. The interventions and reforms one wishes to bring about will have to adjust to this fact. By reason of these facts, demands will have to be made of different people and also to some extent of married women, that they conform to a larger setting of production than has been the norm in recent history (The Committee for Women’s Work, SOU 1938:47, p. 334, italics in the original).

[The group of married working women] is to a large extent in need of their working wages for their subsistence. In many cases they have, for this exact reason, kept their paid work after marrying; for instance, if their husband is ill or unemployed. The debated group of working women who add a salary to that of a man’s already sufficient salary and thus achieve affluence is, as is generally known, very small (The Population Committee’s Report on Working Women’s Judicial Position on Marriage and Childbirth, SOU 1938:13, p. 24).

Forbidding married women’s work would reduce the birth rate:
A politics that holds that one is right to keep women in the home by forbidding them to keep their work positions after marrying is not only divorced from reality but also anti-social, because it will prevent many marriages but increase the number of casual liaisons and illegal abortions. In terms of population politics this system will counteract childbearing because some marriages will never take place, while others will be postponed until the man has reached such a salary level that he is able to support a family on his own, which will often not occur until such a time when the woman’s fertility has already decreased to such a low level that no children may be born (The Population Committee’s Report on Working Women’s Judicial Position on Marriage and Childbirth, SOU 1938:13, p. 20).

The Population Commission has emphasized in many contexts that bearing children is a societal concern, not simply a private matter. Society has an interest in both the numbers of children born, and their state of health. Against this background it is natural and self-evident that a working woman should to some extent be given both a right to a period of leave from work because of childbirth and a right to compensation for loss of earnings during the leave (The Population Committee’s Report on Working Women’s Judicial Position on Marriage and Childbirth, SOU 1938:13, p. 22).

A prohibition would [...] directly counteract the societal demand that people should, to the utmost possible extent, conform in their sexual relations to the form of societally legalized marriage. [...] Therefore a prohibition would be [...] a sanction of sorts for casual sexual relations (The Committee for Women’s Work, SOU 1938:47, p. 335, italics in the original).

THE CONDITIONAL REPERTOIRE: AS A RULE, MARRIED WOMEN SHOULD NOT WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME, BUT THEY MAY DO SO UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS

The two arguments that in a somewhat oblique manner made up this repertoire were informed by the committees’ image of the married Swedish woman as the only, and the natural, person in the family with the skills and responsibilities to take care of housework and childcare. This image was heavily infused with notions of “differences” between men and women. The reports contained no signs of ideas that the man/father was expected to have housework or childcare skills or might take on such responsibilities.
And while the committees argued that married women's work outside the home would create heavy burdens and problems for the women, and sometimes for their children, no mention was made of consequences for their husbands, or any suggestions of sharing the burdens. As a result, while the committees did suggest that obstacles to married women's work should be removed, arguments within the conditional repertoire were in favour of seeing this as a reform that concerned only married women in very special circumstances.

*Housework and childcare are the natural and inevitable tasks for married women*

The tasks connected with the bearing, caring for, and bringing up of children will, however, for the foreseeable future considerably increase the burden for married women. Though the committee experts cannot admit a prohibition of married women's paid work to be justified, they thereby by no means argue that one should welcome a development leading to married women in general devoting themselves to paid work outside the home. On the contrary, it has to be seen as highly fortunate that, as is true in most cases today, women who have a talent and interest for it, can be unconcerned about paid work and be allowed to devote themselves to the care of their own children in their own home (The Committee for Women's Work, SOU 1983: 47, p. 336).

*Paid work is an anomaly in the lives of married women*

On the other hand it must be emphasized that when married women's paid work is seen from the family's perspective, conditions are by no means harmonious; on the contrary, society is in a transitional period. Traditions, customs, and practical arrangements are far from being adjusted to the wife's paid work as a normal phenomenon. Therefore a far heavier work-load will be laid on the married working woman than on her male, or unmarried female, colleagues. Not seldom will this work-load be so great that there is a risk of overexertion. Sometimes also the children's interests will be neglected, if no-one in the home has enough time or ability to devote themselves to them (The Committee for Women's Work, SOU 1983: 47, p. 336).

To the same degree that women's life-span has increased and the number of children in the family has decreased, the motherhood years have come to constitute a special problem in women's lives. Even if it is necessary to protect these tasks in the best possible ways, it would be unacceptable to take only them into account in planning and organizing women's whole lives. The very discontinuity of women's life tasks creates one of the most difficult problems of the present age (The Committee for Women's Work, SOU 1983: 47, p. 337).

**CONCLUSION: MARRIED WOMEN’S RIGHT TO WORK AND THE CONCEPTIONS OF WOMEN**

Overall, the two committees leaned toward removing legal obstacles to married women's work outside the home, and such a change was legislated for in 1938. However, as can be seen in the extracts above, the repertoires of arguments in the reports were fairly diverse. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the permissive repertoire contained the most sex-neutral arguments, that is, arguments based in a conception of women as humans and citizens. We could perhaps call this conception the *citizen mode*. These arguments focused on common duties and on similarities between women and men, and did not use notions of differences between women and men as their bases. Notions of sex differences were, on the other hand, frequently resorted to in arguments within the conditional repertoire. Here, a conception of women in *species mode* appeared. I have borrowed the expression “*species mode*” from Ian Hacking. He uses it to designate how the human sciences depersonalize individuals when “doing science” about humans:

[…] when we turn to the kinds of people investigated by the human sciences we are rather ready to go into the species mode, the “X person” as in “the autistic child”. There are book titles, *The autistic child*, and *The obese child*. […] Grammatically speaking, this is the construction we use when speaking of species, the whale is a mammal. […] To speak in the species mode about people is to depersonalize them, to turn them into objects for scientific inquiry (2007: 313).

In a similar way, when the committee reports argue for a limited permission for married women to work outside the home, they lean toward speaking of “woman” in *species mode*, that is, as a representative of the species, rather than as a responsible and equal citizen (as was the case in the first
argument in the permissive repertoire). Thinking in the species mode invites far-reaching generalizations or even universalizing reasoning about the category in question.

While there was competition between the citizen mode and the species mode in the writings about married women’s work, the species mode achieved complete prominence when the committees wrote about birth control, as the next section will show.

**BIRTH CONTROL AND FAMILY SIZE IN THE LIGHT OF THE “POPULATION CRISIS”**

Birth-control, self-evident in Sweden today and commonly framed in technical and politically neutral terms, was debated in the 1930s against a background of statistics showing decades of decreasing birth rates, and dire predictions of a population crisis. These debates were to a large extent driven by political radicals in alliance with scientists and social scientists (Myrdal & Myrdal 1934). In 1935, in the midst of these debates, a parliamentary committee, Befolkningskommissionen (the Committee for Population Issues) was set up. Its tasks covered most areas of Swedish welfare politics, with a special emphasis on taking into account the perceived population crisis. Birth control was a prominent topic in the reports from this committee; thus, those reports form the material for this part of my study. In these reports I identified two distinct interpretative repertoires concerning birth control and family size. I have named them the alarmist repertoire, and the compromise repertoire. These repertoires constitute two kinds of “common sense” that were culturally available to be drawn on in this period (Billig 1992).

**THE ALARMIST REPERTOIRE: BIRTH CONTROL IS HARMFUL AND PERNICIOUS**

The Population Committee painted a scenario with two future dangers if Swedes did not increase their birth rate: Sweden would risk being “overtaken” by nations that were better at reproducing; and the “quality” of the Swedish population would decline. Within the framework of this scenario, the committee wrote prolifically about the pernicious nature of birth control in contemporary Sweden. Their writings were informed by several rather different arguments which were imported into a repertoire that delegitimized birth control across the board. I have named this the alarmist repertoire because there was a sense of urgency and perhaps impending disaster to many of the arguments. However, there was also a series of arguments based in difference, stemming from a species mode conception of women similar to that mentioned in the previous section. Here, the species mode was also sometimes applied to men. Below, I have quoted extracts which illustrate the different kinds of arguments that make up the repertoire. I discuss them after the final extract.

*People who used birth control did not fulfill their duty to the nation:*

[…] in view of the current very low birth rate the commission considers the postulation proven, that at present the number of children in most families is kept lower, and in a very large number of cases significantly lower, than corresponds to the interests of both the individual families and of society (Report on the Sexuality Question, The Committee for Population Issues, SOU 1936:59, p. 55).

*People who used birth control espoused the wrong kind of norms, and should be corrected:*

The fact that the extreme birth control also – and for a long time mainly – appears to be widespread in certain economically relatively wealthy segments of society, does in the views of this commission point to a need for education directed towards achieving a more positive attitude to the family […] specifically directed educational reforms should be considered (Report on the Sexuality Question, The Committee for Population Issues, SOU 1936:59, pp. 63-64).

*People who used birth control were egotistical and reprehensibly materialist:*

[…] there are large numbers of parents who value their own material conditions far too highly, and value the happiness that children bestow far too low, […] [This bespeaks] an ethically reprehensible materialism (Final Report, The Committee for Population Issues, SOU 1938:57, p. 47).

There are far too many who undoubtedly possess the material preconditions to marry and have a family, but who still prefer the more independent and less responsible life of the unmarried person (Final report, The Committee for Population Issues, SOU 1938:57, p. 50).
Reproduction depends on natural forces that should not be tampered with:

[... the immense peril inherent in the fact that the propagation of families and of the population, which originally and through countless generations has chiefly been regulated by obscure but infallible natural drives, will now fall under the jurisdiction of the easily misled human reason. [...] this huge and hazardous undertaking might fail (Report on the sexuality question, The Committee for Population Issues, SOU 1936:59, p. 33).

There may be grounds for doubting whether a reproduction regulated by human reason, even after the education and social reforms that the Commission suggests, will be strong enough to secure the continued existence of the people through future generations[...] (Report on the sexuality question, The Committee for Population Issues, SOU 1936:59, p. 12).

Women are primarily childbearers and mothers and should be allowed to reproduce:

[In large families] the older children are taught to take care of the younger. It is of special importance for the girls' future calling as mothers that at an early age they are made to share the responsibility for the upbringing of the younger siblings with their mother (Report on Social Ethics Issues, The Committee for Population Issues, SOU 1938:19, p. 42).

The above extracts were all written within a framework that unquestioningly accepted that an increase in birthrates was necessary and that anything which worked against this was pernicious. The report sections informed by this birth control repertoire exude a sense of frustration and dismay with, and estrangement from, the Swedish people, who are described as acting in ways contrary to the wishes of these scholars and policy-makers. When these reports were produced, advertising and teaching about contraception was still illegal in Sweden. Therefore a refusal to bear many children required effort and conscious deliberation, since neither knowledge nor contraceptives were easily accessible. And yet, to the strongly expressed indignation and consternation of the committee, large segments of the Swedish people seemed both to want to reduce their birth rate, and to be able to do so. The alarmist worry about a decline in population size was at least partly suffused by eugenic and evolutionary ideologies: debaters worried explicitly that too few children were being born to the “better” levels of Swedish society, and too many to the “lower” segments. In their dismay about “the people” these reports project a sense of condescension, and of assuming that people did not know what was good for them and their country. There are indications that “the people” are not seen as entitled to an opinion about what is good for them, or for society.

THE COMPROMISE REPertoire: BIRTH CONTROL IS A NECESSARY EVil

The second repertoire relating to birth control was made up of arguments for adopting a moderately positive attitude towards birth control. There were far fewer statements of this nature in the committee reports than those belonging to the first repertoire. As will be seen in the extracts, the arguments within this repertoire refer to a wider field of social issues than those in the first repertoire. Here we find arguments about poverty and ill-health in families that progressive politicians saw as key social problems in need of reform.

Birth control will relieve the poorest levels of society, and will counteract a reduction in the quality of the population

[...] by bringing the number of children down to within reasonable limits, reduce the adverse effects of overcrowding and poverty on the children's physical and mental health (Final Report, The Committee for Population Issues, SOU 1938:57, pp. 109-110).

[...] the Commission has, in spite of the malignant nature of the Swedish population crisis, found there to be valid cause for recommending a developed so-called birth control among the poorest levels in society and also in all cases where reduction in the number of children is socially or eugenically motivated (Final report, The Committee for Population Issues, SOU 1938:57, p. 52).
Birth control will protect the mother’s health

[...] the task here is to solve the serious societal problem of “the worn-out mothers” (Final Report, The Committee for Population Issues, SOU 1938:37, p. 109).

[...] when a pregnancy, because of the wife’s illness would be hazardous to her life [...] when the wife’s strength because of repeated childbearing, or through other causes, is reduced (Report on the Sexuality Question, The Committee for Population Issues, SOU 1936:59, p. 39).

Birth control will increase marital happiness

[...] the bearing of several children has often led to restrictions on the wife’s chances of being active in society and, even more important, of her whole human horizon of interests. This in turn may not only diminish her own happiness in life but may also reduce the completeness of the spouses’ joint interests and make the overall spiritual content of their relation poorer and thereby the marriage itself less happy (Report on the Sexuality Question, The Committee for Population Issues, SOU 1936:59, p. 52).

With birth control, reproduction will no longer be subject to random instincts

[...] a responsibly applied scheme of birth control is of incontrovertibly positive value, because the children in a family will not be brought into the world as a result only of a randomly operating instinct but with consideration given to the wife’s and the children’s, and thereby the family’s, physical and spiritual well-being (Report on the Sexuality Question, The Committee for Population Issues, SOU 1936:59, p. 50).

Birth control will enable impecunious young couples to form lasting love relations

[...] birth control imbued by a sense of responsibility may have a considerable positive value, because it will enable young people who have developed such a deep and serious mutual love that the personal preconditions for marriage are fully at hand, and who are likewise bodily and spiritually fully mature and have reached an age where they are aware of the seriousness of their actions, to enter into marriage without bearing children, until a future date when this is possible without great economic risk (Report on the Sexuality Question, The Committee for Population Issues, SOU 1936:59, p. 71).

Although I have labelled this repertoire as moderately in favour of birth control, this “favour” was distinctly modified by the contributing arguments illustrated in the extracts above. To this should be added that, in many places where birth control was presented in a positive light, the authors simultaneously pointed out that birth control was not to be seen as a means to actually reduce the number of children to be born in Sweden. Its value should be seen as preventing the occurrence of too closely spaced childbirths. Families were to be encouraged to practice birth control only in situations where the mother’s health would be endangered by bearing another child, where the family economy was too weak to support more children, where there had been a very recent childbirth, or where there were biological/eugenic motives for avoiding bearing children. In all other situations, families should not be encouraged to practise birth control. Thus, the Committee was not prepared to allow a woman’s conflict between her own needs for personal development and the duty to give birth to several children, to be a valid excuse for practicing birth control.

It therefore seems proper to name this a “compromise” repertoire rather than a repertoire favouring birth control. One could perhaps even argue that this repertoire can in fact be seen as contained within the previous repertoire, that of birth control as harmful and pernicious; it is just that the compromise repertoire points out the exceptional situations and settings where the pressure of the first repertoire should be relaxed. However, there is one line of argument within this second repertoire that was distinctly positive to birth control, and in some cases even moved towards making birth control mandatory, and that is the line that addresses the “quality of the Swedish people.” There were numerous instances of argumentations that the “better” strata of society ought to be encouraged (or “taught”) to bear many children, whereas the “lower” levels should be given the means for efficient birth control and in some cases be forcibly made to use them, or in extreme cases, be sterilized (Runcis 1998).
DISCUSSION: BIRTH CONTROL AND THE SPECIES MODE

In the report texts relating to birth control there was little evidence of a view of women in the citizen mode, that is, as deliberating, socially located citizens. What evidence there was, appeared in connection with the compromise repertoire, where a few writers discussed the deliberations of young people who wanted to marry but did not yet have the economic wherewithal to support children. Apart from these instances, the texts projected images of women in the species mode in the Hacking (2007) sense of that term. Thus, there was a great deal of naturalizing rhetoric about “the mother”, “the wife”, “the housewife” etc., sometimes reinforced by arguments about instincts. The conceptions of women that can be read from the reports (as mother, wife, housewife) were constructed throughout in direct relation to women’s role in reproduction, or aspects of family life directly related to reproduction. Women were portrayed as either bearing children, raising children, nursing children, or as about to bear children, or as not yet bearing children, or not bearing enough children, or having borne too many children. Because the images of men in the reports were far less directly related to reproduction, it seems fair to conclude that in this connection, and in these reports, there was a conception of women as different from men in the sense of their being seen in more of a species mode than men.

Individuals and individual needs did not feature noticeably; with a few exceptions the heterosexual couple was the smallest unit mentioned. The words “women” and “men” were used far less often than “families” or “parents” (the word “parents” was often also used to denote couples who did not have children). There was no acknowledgement in the reports of the possibility that women and men within couples could have contradictory interests where birth control was concerned. That is, gender equality issues within couples did not surface in these texts, though they did so frequently in other contemporary texts and debates. Therefore the absence of gender equality arguments in this context is worth noting, perhaps as signifying an unquestioned species mode understanding.

There was also, especially in texts where the writers complained about people’s refusal to bear enough children, a distinctly condescending stance toward “the masses of the Swedish people” (a verbatim quote from one report). Sometimes this stance took on an aggressive tone directed against “irresponsible people.” The impact of the political context of the “population crisis” is probably significant here. The harsh rhetoric, and the conceptions of women especially in “species mode”, form a striking contrast to other parts of the committee reports (not quoted here) where love, love relationships and sexuality were written about in a flowery and appreciative language, and where the writers held forth signs of a promising “new morality” among young Swedish people.

CONCLUSION: CONCEPTIONS OF WOMEN AS SWEDEN ENTERED THE WELFARE STATE ERA

In this chapter I have mapped the authoritative conceptions of women that were current in the middle of the 1930s in Sweden. My starting point was the question whether it could be a fact that Swedes today when thinking of women have in mind a different kind of people than Swedes did back then (Hacking 2007). With this purpose, I looked in detail at the arguments underpinning the opinions about two hotly debated questions in the 1930s: married women’s right to do paid work, and birth control and family size. Both questions were debated against the background of worries about possible population decline. I studied these questions as they were expressed in the most authoritative settings available: parliamentary committee reports. After analyzing these reports, my conclusion is that when politicians, scientists and social scientists in this early reform period wrote about women, their conceptions of them differed distinctly from those one would find in parliamentary committee reports today. A conception of women in the species mode dominated the reports on birth control and was also present in the reports on married women’s right to work. A conception of women in the citizen mode was present in the reports on married women’s right to work but conspicuously absent in the reports on birth control. On balance, it certainly seems that the species mode was more prominent in these texts than the citizen mode.

The species mode, here, served to “naturalize” what a woman is or can be, so that “she” was continually conceived of in direct relation to her reproductive functions, rather than in relation to her individuality or her
roles as a citizen. In this mode, “woman” becomes a de-individualizing conception. Thus, the rhetorical work that the text related to birth-control, in particular, performed in connection with conceptions of women, was to inscribe the views and conclusions presented within a discursive frame of “woman” as primarily a bearer of children, and of “the family” as primarily meant to provide the nation with enough children (Billig 1992). This conclusion is supported by the fact that the reports did not argue in favour of allowing people to make up their own minds about whether they wanted children or not, or about how many children to have. Instead, people – here especially women – were enjoined, first, to follow their natural instincts, which according to these writers would mean bearing many children, and second, to do so for the sake of their country, to prevent Sweden’s population from shrinking. What happened with these committees’ ambitions for the women of Sweden?

The decades following the reports I have studied were characterized by numerous welfare-oriented reforms. Many of the reforms were aimed at enabling Swedish women to have a paid job and a family with children in the same period of life – the observation with which I began this chapter. These reforms were, especially at the outset, implemented against a background of an often strongly expressed species mode conception of women. This may seem paradoxical. Could it be, as the sociologist Åsa Lundqvist (2007) argues, that the parliamentary commissions though not in themselves very radical, were moved, pragmatically, as it were, in a radical direction by their interest in increasing birth rates? Because of the Swedish people’s obvious refusal to be forced by prohibitions to refrain from birth control, the committee had had to draw the conclusion that repressive means to make people bear more children were fruitless. Instead, politicians now had to consider other means, Lundqvist argues; in this case, to become progressive or “women-friendly”, as the only option that might increase the chance of achieving the coveted goal of population increase.

REFERENCES
INTRODUCTION
This study explores one group of women long concealed in the shadows of history, i.e. ‘female entrepreneurs’. Having become a frequent sight in today’s society, female entrepreneurs have attracted increased interest within different scholarship. One reason for their lack of historical recognition is that women carried out their entrepreneurial activities in fields, which were beyond the control of those authorities responsible for the supervision and recording of ventures in the public marketplace, where men and their businesses were more evident. As a result, it is primarily men who were registered as entrepreneurs and whose businesses were regarded as of economic importance to the family and society (Anderson 1992; Deacon 1986; Nyberg 1994; Vikström 2010). Even today, the word ‘entrepreneur’ evokes masculinity, as do the characteristics needed to succeed in business, such as ‘competitiveness’ or ‘aspiration’ (Hoffert 2008). Such traits little resembled the features expected to be associated with nineteenth-century women. However, making use of diverse sources this study uncovers a surprisingly large number of women, who ran their small businesses in the Swedish town of Sundsvall around 1880. It will become evident that they came to both confirm and reject their gendered expectations. Obtaining rare results regarding women’s entrepreneurial activities and their demographic characteristics and backgrounds, helps this chapter to discuss the incentives for women to involve themselves in the business landscape. One conclusion is that they might have exercised a trade matching their femi-