Family Policy in Sweden

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ABSTRACT: Sweden has a well-developed family policy, organized around the goals of family economic security and physical well-being, voluntary parenthood, gender equality, and children's rights. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of family policy in Sweden, beginning with a brief history of the development of family policy goals and a consideration of the reasons for the consensus on family policy goals that has arisen. Details are provided on programs designed to reach goals, and the success of these programs is evaluated. The impact of recent economic and political developments on the future of family policy making in Sweden is also discussed.

KEY WORDS: children's rights, family policy, gender equality, Sweden, voluntary parenthood.

Introduction

Family policy can be defined as government activities that are designed intentionally to support families, enhance family members' well-being, and strengthen family relationships. These activities include the policy makers' *goals* for families' well-being as well as the specific *measures* governments take to achieve these goals (Aldous & Dumon, 1991). Not only does Sweden have a well-developed family policy, but Swedish policy makers are continually "in pursuit of the vision of a better, more humane, more socially cohesive Sweden"

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(Heclo & Madsen, 1987, p. 6). Swedish family policy is organized around the goals of enhancing family economic security and ensuring family members' physical well-being, which are goals of social policy in several European nations. Sweden is unique, however, in its strong adherence to the additional goals of voluntary parenthood, gender equality, and children's rights. Sweden is a small, advanced industrial nation about the physical size and shape of California with only 8.8 million people, but a study of its family policy can be enlightening for scholars and policy makers in other countries interested in understanding or promoting change in government policy toward families.

The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of family policy in Sweden. The article begins with a brief history of the development of Swedish family policy goals and a consideration of the reasons for the consensus on family policy that has arisen. Next, many of the programs that have been designed to reach these goals are described. The success of these programs is evaluated, and the future of family policy in Sweden is discussed in light of recent economic and political developments.

The Development of Family Policy Goals in Sweden

Family policy in Sweden had its origins in the 1880s. Liberal urban intellectuals in Parliament, who admired the move toward social democracy in Germany, recommended that the Swedish government provide economic security for all citizens, not just the poor (Olsson, 1993). In general, however, family policy goals can be said to date from the 1930s, coincident with the birth of the Swedish welfare state (Eduards, 1991; Korpi, 1990). Influential social scientists Alva and Gunnar Myrdal drew attention to the low Swedish fertility rate and proposed reforms designed to enhance the quality of family life. Other European countries were also struggling with a low birth rate, a consequence of industrialization and the worldwide depression. A low birth rate spelled national suicide in the minds of many Europeans, and many governments tried to legislate a return to more traditional family patterns, believing that reducing married women's right to work and prohibiting contraception would solve the fertility problem (Carlsson, 1990). The Myrdals suggested that Swedish policy makers follow a different course. In their book, *Kris i befolkningsfrågan* (Crisis in the population question), the Myrdals proposed that the government strive harder to provide families with a secure economic

base and offer financial incentives to couples to have children. But the Myrdals, in a radical move for the time, did not want the government to promote fertility at the expense of women's rights. Siding with feminists, they maintained that women should have the right to develop themselves as individuals by participating in the labor market if they chose to do so. Consequently, they recommended that the government support married women's right to work. The Myrdals also advocated voluntary parenthood so women would not be forced to be mothers and all children would be wanted. They proposed that the government sponsor sex education, make contraceptives available, and liberalize abortion rights (Myrdal & Myrdal, 1934).

The Myrdals' ideas were widely discussed in Sweden and left a major imprint on social policy. By 1932, the Social Democratic party had gained ascendance, and the Myrdals' recommendations were in line with the party's commitment to social equality, full employment, and enhanced material welfare (Korpi, 1990). By 1940, laws were enacted which offered loans to couples at marriage, gave financial support to low-income mothers, granted housing subsidies to large families, and helped families pay for prenatal care, childbirth, and postnatal care. Legislation prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of pregnancy or marital status. Although attempts to liberalize abortion rights failed, contraceptives and distribution of family planning information were legalized. Soon after, universal health care, free education, and child allowances were added (Haas, 1992).

In the 1960s, changes in the economy prompted Swedish policy makers to develop new family policy initiatives. As industrialization took hold, the private sector experienced a serious labor shortage, which was only partly alleviated by importation of foreign workers. Meanwhile, rising standards for education and health care and the growth of government bureaucracy resulted in a need for more workers in public jobs. Prompted by economists' projections about the need for more workers and activists' lobbying for women's liberation, policy makers decided to encourage women's entrance into the labor force in large numbers. The Social Democratic party's goal of full employment, which heretofore had applied only to men, was finally extended to women (Baude, 1979; Gustafsson, 1991). Incentives to encourage women to work included job training, removal of tax disincentives for dual-earner families, and improved pay levels. The need for child care became acute, and the government set goals for the realization of full coverage. In the 1960s a debate ensued about the justice of women's assuming responsibility for two roles at home and at work. In an at-

tempt to move toward a more egalitarian sharing of domestic work, the government extended to men many of the support programs designed to help women combine employment with parenthood. Interest in children's rights also has its roots in the 1970s. Although several voluntary organizations formed to protect children had been active in Sweden for many decades, it was not until the 1970s that the government established a commission to study the rights of children and propose new legislation on their behalf.

Details on the family programs begun in the 1960s and 1970s are provided below because they form the heart of family policy today. At least by 1980, however, the major goals of Swedish family policy—family economic security, family members' physical well-being, voluntary parenthood, gender equality, and children's rights—were well established and enjoyed wide acceptance among the general population. This consensus seems to be the product of dominant social values and particular features of political culture in Sweden.

Family policy goals in Sweden reflect many important national values. For example, a "passion for equality" has been part of Swedish culture for a long time (Siim, 1991). By the nineteenth century, Sweden was already a fairly egalitarian society, partly because Swedes had escaped from subjugation under a feudal social system (Olsson, 1993). Many family programs are designed to promote social equality (e.g., extra child allowances for larger families reduce income differences between small and large families). The goal of gender equality is an important part of the quest to minimize social and economic differences throughout society (Liljeström, 1978). Children's rights advocates also rely on a concern for social equality in gaining support for their programs.

The prime advocates of social equality have been the Social Democrats, who, alone or in a coalition, have been the ruling party in government for most of the time since 1932. This stability has helped policy to develop toward specific goals (Heclo & Madsen, 1987). All political parties now generally embrace these goals of family policy, although there is sometimes disagreement on how best to meet these goals. The Social Democrats and more conservative parties have been in a close race for votes, especially in the last two decades. When they can get along with each other, the three more conservative parties can beat the Social Democrats at election time and form a coalition government, although this has happened only two times so far (1976–1982 and 1991–1994). This competition for voters tends to encourage political parties to propose new programs designed to improve family life.

Changes in government have not dramatically altered the course of family policy in Sweden because pragmatism is an important Swedish value (Eduards, 1991; Siim, 1991). According to Heclo and Madsen (1987, p. 8) : "Across the spectrum of political partisanship, in politics and administration, in public and private sectors, Swedes typically adopt a problem-focused approach that is grounded in empirical detail and that seeks specific solutions to concrete problems." Political solutions to problems are usually "put above party politics" (Pettersson, 1993, p. 18).

Swedes also support family programs because they are seen as benefiting everyone, not just a particular group. Social policy efforts began in the 1880s with the promise that these efforts would not benefit just the poor, and today Swedish family policy is still strongly characterized by this "universalism." It takes three forms. First, many family programs are offered to the entire population (e.g., child allowances). Second, all Swedish families are guaranteed certain rights (e.g., adequate housing). While it is acknowledged that some families (e.g., single-parent families) need special help in obtaining these rights, the rights extend to all and therefore the policies seem universalistic. Third, although some programs are targeted to those with lower incomes (e.g., housing allowances), they are used by so many people during at least one stage of their lives (e.g., during old age) that they appear to benefit everyone.

Another important Swedish value is productivity (Eduards, 1991; Pettersson, 1993). Family policies receive support because a work incentive is built into most programs. Receipt of benefits is often tied to having been employed, and the amount of benefit is based on earnings level. In fact, it has been said that those best off in the labor market earn the highest benefits in the Swedish welfare system (Svallfors, 1993). Swedish family policy, however, provides generous allowances to those who cannot be expected to accrue long work records (e.g., disabled individuals). This is in harmony with the Swedish values of "solidarity" and social responsibility.

The government has long been regarded as a benevolent force in social life in Sweden, and this helps to make Swedes supporters of government policy toward families. In preindustrial Sweden, kings and the peasantry formed alliances against the aristocracy to curb nobles' influence on society, and the central government ensured individuals' rights when the wealthy tried to dominate land use (Eduards, 1988). Since the 1930s, Swedes have accepted the idea that there should be a partnership between the state and family in meeting the goal of family well-being (Olofsson, 1988; Siim, 1991). Swedes,

however, increasingly prefer to have the social policies that are legislated at the national level be administered at the local (usually county or city) level.

Swedish acceptance of government involvement in private life extends to the marketplace. Most government involvement in the labor market on behalf of families has aimed at improving and not undermining market forces, for example, through an active labor market policy that fosters full employment (Hort, 1993). But policy makers have not hesitated to put pressure on companies to change organizational policies and practices (e.g., to allow men to take parental leave). Thus the government can tax individuals and especially employers at a high rate to pay for family programs. Since the 1989 tax reform, individuals pay an average income tax rate of 31% to local government (after personal exemptions and special deductions) and an additional 20% to the national government if their taxable income is over about $30,000. Employers pay about 31% of their total wage and salary costs to the government for social welfare programs, compared to about 12% paid by U.S. employers. The percentage of the gross domestic product that was tax revenues was 57% in Sweden in 1990, perhaps the highest among industrial nations. In the United States, it was 30% (Swedish Institute, 1993d; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993).

There is less resentment of the intrusion of government into the private sphere because social policies in Sweden are seldom imposed from the top. For centuries, the Swedish Parliament has been organized "as an institution [which] affirms or denies policies that have been initiated elsewhere" (Heclo & Madsen, 1987, p. 11). Historically, ideas for social programs have come from the many well-established voluntary interest organizations that have played an important role in Swedish social life—labor unions, consumer cooperatives, adult education groups, organizations promoting family planning, and groups supporting the rights of women, disabled persons, tenants, pensioners, and children (Olsson, 1993; Pettersson, 1993). Investigative commissions representing diverse areas of expertise and special interests are appointed to study various plans of action and make recommendations for legislation. Then the government invites feedback from individuals and groups on the proposed legislation. By the time the proposal comes up for a vote in Parliament, modifications have been made and the proposed legislation enjoys widespread support.

One interest group that has played a key role in shaping family policy has been women. Women have long been active members of

political parties in Sweden, organized within women's sections that press male policy makers to see interests usually identified as "women's special interests" to be of general concern (Hernes, 1987). Sweden's political system helps women rise in power within the parties. The system is based on proportional representation; parties acquire seats in Parliament based on the extent of their popular support and decide themselves who should take those seats. Women's share of parliamentary seats is high compared to other countries. As early as the 1970s, they made up 21% of Parliament; in 1995, the proportion was 41%. Women have also gained ground as members of county councils and local authorities, which are largely responsible for the quality and nature of social service delivery. Between 1991 and 1994, women's share of local offices went from 34% to 40% (Froman, 1994). Autonomous women's organizations (e.g., Fredrika Bremer Society and Group 8) have also played a major role in the public debate affecting women and families (Siim, 1991).

Swedish family policy goals, then, have their roots in unique features of Swedish political culture. It is difficult to imagine that this same constellation of factors would exist in many other societies so we would not expect that many other governments would adopt the same set of goals for family well-being. In the next section, some specific measures that have been undertaken in pursuit of Swedish family policy objectives are described.

Specific Family Programs

Families' Economic Security

Swedish social policy has established a safety net for families, designed to prevent them from suffering economic deprivation. The most important government policy directed toward the goal of families' economic well-being is actually the most important target of labor market policy—full employment. Full employment of men and women is regarded as the best way for families to be economically self-sufficient. Every adult is expected to contribute to family welfare by participation in the labor force (Leira, 1993). Promoting and financing free education and vocational training have been the main approaches to achieving full employment (Korpi, 1990). Individuals undergoing full-time training or education at the postsecondary level are eligible for assistance with living expenses through allowances

and long-term loans. The government has also encouraged full employment through job development. Employers have received financial incentives to hire workers who might have difficulty obtaining employment (e.g., the disabled and young), to open up workplaces in areas of high unemployment, and to provide jobs to workers who are underrepresented in an occupation (e.g., women in technology). In addition, the government has established public works jobs and sheltered employment opportunities (Swedish Institute, 1994e).

When efforts to provide full employment fail or when individuals are unable to work, families receive direct financial help. When individuals are laid off, the employer must continue to pay full wages and benefits, with partial compensation from the government. Unemployment compensation is provided through arrangements with unions, at an average of about $82 a day, for up to 400 days (in 1991) (Swedish Institute, 1991). (Eighty-five percent of Swedish workers belong to unions.) Nonunionized unemployed persons receive "cash labor market assistance," payable at about $35 a day in 1991. When workers are sick, they receive about 80% of their wages after a day's waiting period. If chronic illness, disability, or handicap prevents an individual from working, he or she receives a disability pension. Parents who want to care for their handicapped children in the home are entitled to about $8,000 a year in lost wages (Swedish Institute, 1992). When all else fails, individuals are entitled to receive social welfare allowances that provide them with a minimum standard of living. In Gothenburg in 1992, this allowance was set at about $1,450 a month for a family of four ("Olika Normer," 1992). Swedes tend to receive such assistance for a short period of time if at all. More than one-half receiving social assistance did so for less than three months and only 6% depended on the government for a year or more (Zetzell, Begler, & Hillborg, 1993).

The Swedish system of public retirement pensions has been in place for most of this century; the goal is to give elderly people economic security. All individuals receive a basic pension when they reach age 65, regardless of previous employment history. About one-half of retiring men and one-third of women are eligible for an additional pension through their jobs; the amount depends on length of employment and earnings level. To receive a full pension individuals must have been employed for at least 30 years, although time spent staying home with children receives credit toward retirement (Sundström, 1991). Individuals who are ineligible for employment-based pensions receive a supplement to the basic pension, now about 56% of the basic pension. In 1993, the regular pension and special supple-

ment amounted to about $5,200 a year for a single person (Hedin, 1993). Individuals eligible for employment-based pensions receive much more.

Families with children receive additional forms of economic assistance to put them on a more equal economic footing with childless families. Since 1948, families have received tax-exempt child allowances for each child under age 16 (20 if still in school). This allowance amounted to about $1,500 per child in 1991. To equalize the economic status of small and large families, families with more than two children receive supplementary child allowances, with the largest families receiving the largest subsidies. In 1991, for example, a family with four children under 16 received about $8,000 from the government tax-free (Sundström, 1991).

One in five Swedish households is headed by a single parent, usually a woman. In line with the Swedish emphasis on the work ethic, government efforts have focused on helping single mothers support themselves and their children through paid employment. Accordingly, they receive preferential access to vocational training and subsidized child care, which they frequently get at a reduced rate. Noncustodial parents are also obligated to provide economic support for their children, even if the custodial parents have remarried or are cohabiting with someone else. If a noncustodial parent is late with a payment, the government provides the custodial parent with an "advance," which in 1990 averaged $160 a month per child, tax-free (Sundström, 1991). Single-parent families' economic status is further improved by housing allowances (described below), child allowances, and social welfare allowances.

Policy toward the full employment of individuals with disabilities stresses occupational rehabilitation and vocational training, generally provided free. In addition, disabled individuals are eligible for allowances to purchase needed technical aids or personal assistance that would enable them to work. Financial subsidies are made to employers who recruit workers with functional impairments, and employers are also eligible to receive subsidies to revamp the physical structure of the workplace to make it more accessible to individuals with disabilities (Swedish Institute, 1993c; Swedish Institute, 1995).

Family Members' Physical Well-Being

The programs just mentioned aim to secure for Swedish families a basic income that can be used to acquire the necessities of life. Additional programs have been developed to protect family members'

physical well-being; these involve health care, housing, and special services for the elderly and disabled.

Since 1955, each Swedish resident has been entitled to adequate health care, regardless of ability to pay. In contrast, 13.6% of Americans were not covered by private or government health insurance in 1992 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993.) The system places a strong emphasis on prevention of illness. Accordingly, children's health and dental care is free, starting with prenatal care and childbirth. At birth, children are assigned to neighborhood well-baby clinics which regularly monitor their health without charge until they reach school age, when school health professionals take over this responsibility, referring children to outside specialists for free care when necessary. Adults pay small user fees for medical and mental health treatment and prescriptions, ranging from about $5 to $15, depending on the type of service, with a ceiling of $200 per year (after which treatment is free). Travel expenses associated with securing health care are reimbursed for low-income people (Eliason, 1993; Swedish Institute, 1993f).

Since 1946, Swedish housing policy has been based on the premise that everyone should have the opportunity to "live in a sufficiently large and comfortable home in a good environment" (Swedish Institute, 1981). It has been motivated by a desire to eliminate a housing shortage created by rapid urbanization after World War II and by an interest in promoting social equality (Heclo & Madsen, 1987; Korpi, 1990). A family is not expected to spend more than 20% of its earned income on housing, and allowances are not granted for housing of low quality. No housing is specifically designed for low-income families, but programs exist to help families who have difficulty paying for good accommodations. One program provides a housing allowance or rent subsidy; the amount is related to family size, household income, and cost of the dwelling desired. Most of those receiving housing allowances are large families, single-parent families, or elderly couples. A typical single-parent family has 40% of its housing costs covered by the government (Sundström, 1991).

Another government housing initiative encourages nonprofit companies (either tenant associations or local governments) to build, own, and maintain apartments at low rental rates to make housing available to more people and to put pressure on for-profit companies to keep rents low. Most of the Swedish housing market is managed by these nonprofit companies. Since the 1960s, the government has also provided loans to families so they can build or buy their own homes.

The government is actively involved in housing planning to prevent overcrowding, preserve the environment, reduce social segregation, and develop parks around occupied areas (Goldfield, 1982).

The goal of family policy for the elderly is to enable them to live in their own apartments and houses as long as possible so they can maintain social networks. Sweden has a large population of elderly persons; 18% of the population was over 65 in 1990 (vs. 12% in the United States). The elderly are encouraged to live on their own by housing allowances and by government-subsidized services of municipally employed "home helpers" who will perform domestic tasks and run errands for them (17% use this service). The elderly can obtain free or low-cost emergency alarm systems, assistance with snow removal, hot meals at home, special public transportation, and help adapting their homes and apartments to their special needs. When they can no longer live independently, they can move to one of a variety of homes for elderly people and pay no more than 70% of their retirement pension for living expenses. The emphasis has been placed on public responsibility for the elderly. In recent years, however, the informal aspects of elder caregiving have also become recognized. Since 1992, a friend or relative can take off from work for 30 days per year with pay to care for an elderly person (Fernow, 1992; Hedin, 1993; Jacobsson & Alfredsson, 1993; Statens Offentliga Utredningar [SOU], 1993; Swedish Institute, 1991, 1993e).

About 1.9 million persons have handicaps in Sweden; the largest group have limited mobility. Swedish policy toward the handicapped is guided by the philosophy that "disabled people should be part of the community and live like others. They should have the same opportunities to earn a living, have a good home, move about, and have meaningful jobs and leisure activities" (Swedish Institute, 1993c, p. 1). A handicap is not considered a characteristic of a person but a consequence of the relationship between the person and the environment, and the community is responsible for altering the environment. Families with disabled members can receive a special adaptation allowance that allows them to modify an apartment or house to deal with the particular handicap of the family member (including mobility problems, visual and hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, and allergies). They are eligible for home helpers, grants to allow them to modify cars and buy technical aids, a government-subsidized escort service, and special public transportation. Parents of a child with disabilities are eligible for an allowance to pay for special care (Swedish Institute, 1993c). In 1994, an Office of the Disability

Ombudsman was established as a part of the national government to monitor issues related to the rights and interests of people with disabilities (Swedish Institute, 1995).

Voluntary Parenthood

Although Sweden has long been worried about the birth rate and many policies described above are aimed at creating economic conditions that would encourage people to bear children, compulsory parenthood has been an unpopular idea since the debate on the population question started by the Myrdals in the 1930s. Today, the government's position on parenthood is that individuals have the right to decide fully on the number and spacing of children (Swedish Institute, 1993b) and that every child should be wanted.

Swedes like to see the goal of voluntary parenthood reached through preventive measures. The first is sex education, which was introduced in Swedish schools in 1942 and made mandatory, starting with first grade, in 1956. The content of Swedish sex education is government-mandated and appears to be quite different than sex education in other cultural settings. Students are supposed to be taught that sex need not take place in a marital relationship, specific information on contraception is to be provided at an early age, and the topics of abortion and homosexuality should receive thorough treatment. Students are to be told that interpersonal relationships should be "characterized by responsibility, consideration and concern for a fellow human being" (Boëthius, 1984, p. 1). Consequently, forced sex, casual sex, and sexual promiscuity are to be taught as wrong, as are different standards for sexuality for males and females. Recent curriculum changes recommend more attention to males' responsibility for family planning and disease prevention (Adams & Winston, 1980; Swedish Institute, 1993b).

The second type of preventive measure is government support for family planning services. Since the 1950s, county maternity clinics have offered free family planning counseling and contraceptives. Services to teens are provided at these clinics as well as at special youth centers. Condoms are available free in secondary schools. Male counselors work with men to encourage them to take responsibility for family planning. Since 1976, anyone aged 25 or over has the right to be sterilized without charge (Adams & Winston, 1980; Swedish Institute, 1993b).

When prevention methods fail, abortion is available up to the eighteenth week of pregnancy (and up to the twenty-second week with

government approval) (Swedish Institute, 1993b). Researchers engaged in a cross-national survey of abortion legislation rated Sweden's abortion law as the most "women-centered" because it gives women the complete choice of whether to bear a child: there is no age limit, waiting period, or requirement of spousal consent, and abortion is available free at all medical facilities (Ketting & Prang, 1986; Yishai, 1993). Before 1975, abortion was available only on medical grounds; consequently, the number of illegal abortions and women going abroad for abortions was high. A lively national debate resulted in changes in the abortion law in 1975.

Gender Equality

The goal of voluntary parenthood was proposed by the Myrdals in the 1930s. The Myrdals were also very interested in improving the status of women. They assumed, however, that women would be wage earners only when their children did not require full-time care and that women would retain primary responsibility for domestic work. This view was challenged in the 1960s in an intensive public debate about gender roles begun by journalist Eva Moberg. Her essay, "The Conditional Emancipation of Women," argued that women would never be equal in the labor force as long as they were held primarily responsible for housework and child care (Moberg, 1962). She questioned the belief that women were biologically more suited than men to do domestic work and called for an equal sharing of breadwinning and child care by men and women. Her beliefs were supported by new research that emphasized how gender was socially, rather than biologically, constructed (e.g., Dahlström, 1971).

This new view of gender roles caught on quickly, and gender equality became one of the core values of political culture (Hort, 1993; Siim, 1993). As early as 1970, the Swedish prime minister, Olof Palme, stated:

> The demand for equality . . . involves changes not only in the conditions of women but also in the conditions of men. One purpose of such changes is to give women an increased opportunity for gainful employment and to give men an increased responsibility for care of the children. (Palme, 1970, p. 1)

The Swedish government was the first to recognize that improvements in women's position in the labor market required changes in men's roles.

The formalization of Swedish gender equality policy started in 1972, with the establishment of an Equal Opportunities Advisory Committee, which advised Prime Minister Palme (Eduards, 1989). Gender equality now has foundations in the Swedish constitution, which declares that men and women have equal responsibilities and rights within marriage and cohabiting relationships. It also states that "the public sector must assure men and women of equal rights" and "no citizen may be disfavored on account of his or her sex, unless the rule forms part of efforts to achieve equality between men and women" (Eduards, 1989, p. 6). There is now a cabinet-level minister of equality affairs, who works with the equal affairs division of the ministry of health and social affairs and an advisory council for equality issues, representing women's organizations, political parties, trade unions, and the employers' federation. In 1988, Parliament passed a five-year plan for equality and allocated money for specific equality projects. This plan called for elimination of gender differences in education and employment opportunities, equal pay for jobs of comparable worth, reorganization of work life so that women and men can combine parenthood and employment, and an increase in women's power in work life and government (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 1992).

Specific programs directed toward the goal of gender equality have followed the two main lines emphasized in Palme's remarks above: strengthening women's position in the labor market and facilitating men's involvement in child care (Eduards, 1989). One important obstacle to women's entrance into paid employment in the 1960s was the income tax system, which before 1969 required couples to file jointly. The steep progressive nature of the tax system made women's entrance into paid employment unlucrative from the standpoint of the family's economy. A 1969 tax reform allowed married individuals to file separately, and by 1971 this was made mandatory. This tax reform is widely cited as having a strong impact on married women's motivation to enter the labor market and represents policy makers' view that women should consider themselves economically independent of men. The government has also encouraged women's employment through free vocational training. In 1992, almost half of trainees were women. Government subsidies have also motivated employers to hire women (Swedish Institute, 1993a, 1994e).

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Social Democratic government hesitated to become actively involved in efforts to improve women's labor market position, partly because it considered working conditions to be the province of the unions. Unions, however, were not ac-

tive during this time period in promoting gender equality, perhaps because women did not hold many leadership positions (Asplund, 1991). During this era, however, the unions bargained effectively for raises for lower paid workers, and this wage solidarity policy had a positive impact on women workers' wages because they formed a large part of the low-paid labor force.

When the nonsocialist coalition took power in the late 1970s, it resolved to guarantee women's employment opportunity through legislation (a route the Social Democrats had resisted). In 1980, an employment act took effect which called for equal employment rights for men and women. In 1992, this law was amended to require employers to take more active measures and develop annual plans to promote equality in the workplace, including establishing hiring goals for nontraditional workers, promoting more women into management, and making it easier for men and women workers to combine employment with parenting. The bans against sex discrimination in hiring and promotions and sexual harassment were strengthened, and discriminating employers were made more liable for financial damages if found guilty by the labor court (Swedish Institute, 1993c). Concerned about the persistent pay gap between men and women, lawmakers passed new measures regarding equal pay for work of equal value (Jacobsson & Alfredsson, 1993). A government-funded independent agency, the office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Ombudsman, is in charge of enforcing equal opportunity legislation, and an Equal Opportunities Commission can force employers to take more active measures to promote gender equality in the workplace.

Meanwhile, the government has funded special pilot programs to promote equality at the workplace. For example, the Swedish Work Environment Fund has funded 200 projects which introduce careers in science, engineering, and technology to girls and women. The government has also set aside funds to finance action-oriented workplace projects to prevent sexual harassment (Jacobsson & Alfredsson, 1993).

Another initiative designed to strengthen women's position in and attachment to the labor market concerns family leave benefits. Since the 1930s, Swedish women have not feared losing their jobs when they became pregnant or had children, and paid maternity leave was made available to them after World War II. In the 1970s, an interest in encouraging men to become more responsible for child care resulted in maternity leave benefits being extended to men. Today, mothers and fathers can share up to 12 months of parental leave with

total job security and the right to receive at least 80% of their lost income if they were employed at least nine months before childbirth. This requirement encourages women as well as men to remain attached to the labor force during their childbearing years. (A parent can still receive substantial compensation if he or she has been home taking care of another child, as long as not more than two and a half years have elapsed since the first birth.)

Other family leave benefits are available to mothers and fathers. During the first month after childbirth, men are entitled to take 10 days off work with 90% of their regular pay to spend time with their partners and children. Parents are entitled to 120 days of leave from work with 80% pay to stay home with sick children under the age of 13 or to stay home with children when their regular caregivers are sick. Since 1987, parents of preschool aged children are entitled to reduce their work hours by 25% (without compensation) (Riksförsäkringsverket, 1993; Swedish Institute, 1994a). Sweden offers the most comprehensive leaves of absence from work in connection with parenthood in the world (Leira, 1993).

The government encourages men to become more involved in child care, partly to help women remain attached to the labor force, partly for the benefit of the child, and partly to change men's roles and orientations toward family life. In 1983, the government appointed a working group to study the role of men, which held seminars, published books, and sponsored research on men's changing roles in the family. Since 1985, the national budget has included money for the purpose of encouraging men to take a more active family role, and in 1992 the government established a special working group on men, children, and work life to suggest ways to increase men's use of family leave (Mundebo, 1993; Socialdepartementet, 1993). Rules have changed over the years to make it easier for men to take family leave. For example, in May 1994, the Parliament voted to set aside one month of parental leave each for fathers and mothers, which could not be signed over to the other parent, as an incentive for fathers to take leave. (This leave is paid at 90% of the usual salary.) Information campaigns have been launched to persuade men that they should take leave, social insurance offices have been recently instructed to spend at least 45 minutes with each set of prospective parents to help them find a way to share parental leave, and special sessions during prenatal parent education classes are devoted to this topic (Haas, 1992). The employment law that took effect in 1992 requires employers to establish a plan for making it easier for fathers in the workplace to take advantage of these benefits, as well as to partici-

pate more in child care on a regular basis. The government also finances a few programs for fathers in open preschools (play centers which parents and children attend together), which offer men a chance to talk with other men and child care professionals about child rearing.

To make it possible for women and men to combine employment and parenting roles, the Swedish government has assumed major responsibility for the buildup and financing of substitute child care. As early as 1943, the Swedish government established state subsidies to day care centers and preschools, but children in these settings came mostly from single-parent families (Gunnarsson, 1993; Hwang & Broberg, 1992). By 1967, rapid increases in women's labor force participation led a commission on day care to declare that there was a severe shortage of child care places for children of working parents and to call for more public day care centers to be established (Hwang & Broberg, 1992). A series of targets concerning coverage were set in 1975, 1985, and 1993; the latest one promises full coverage for children one through six years old by 1995 (Burek, Gustafsson, Kjulin, & Kärrby, 1992; Swedish Institute, 1994a). Some centers are open at night or offer extended hours, and all accept children with mental or physical disabilities (Swedish Institute, 1992).

The government pays most (89%) of the costs of day care center places for preschool-aged children and 85% of the costs for places in family day care homes. For a child in a day care center, this subsidy amounts to about $4,500 per year; for a child in a family day care home, the subsidy amounts to about $2,500 per year. The remaining costs for day care are paid by parents, whose contribution is determined by income level. Since 1991, parent cooperatives and church-run day care centers have also been eligible for state subsidies (Swedish Institute, 1992).

Day care is costly because the government has established high standards, especially regarding staffing. There have been low child-caretaker ratios (e.g., an average of 4 to 5 to 1 in groups of children ages 3 to 5). Substantial training is required for day care workers; support staff must complete a two-year program in the Swedish secondary school, regular teachers must complete a two-and-a-half-year program at the college level, and family day care providers must undergo 100 hours of special training (Gunnarsson, 1993). Day care workers receive relatively high pay (40% higher than in the United States) (Gustaffson & Kjulin, 1991). Day care facilities must also be of high quality, as must educational materials, toys, and food.

Working parents are also entitled to subsidized after-school care for

their children ages 7 through 9. (Some municipalities offer services up to age 12.) These facilities provide a combination of educational activities, practical care, and recreational opportunities and are also open during school holidays. Parents pay a fee for this service, based on income (Swedish Institute, 1994a).

Although most initiatives for gender equality fall under supporting women's employment and men's participation in child care, two additional areas have received considerable attention—education and domestic violence. Since 1969, government regulations have required that schools work toward gender equality. They must give boys and girls the same educational opportunities (e.g., requiring that home economics, child care, and technology courses be taken by both), broaden girls' and boys' educational and occupational horizons to consider nontraditional fields, and teach students that males and females should have the same rights and obligations in the family, labor market, and social life (Elgqvist-Saltzman, 1992; Swedish Institute, 1993a). Many programs have been launched to achieve these objectives, including review of educational materials, teacher workshops, and mentor systems for girls in nontraditional subjects (Jacobsson & Alfredsson, 1993).

Violence against women has recently emerged as an important area of family policy in Sweden. Although wife battery has been against the law since 1864 and marital rape was made illegal in 1965, it was not until the 1970s that domestic violence became regarded as an important social problem. The first shelters and hotlines were established by women's organizations in the 1970s; more than 125 municipal governments now fund such services (Jacobsson & Alfredsson, 1993). In 1982, police were empowered to arrest a man on suspicion of battery even if his victim did not file a complaint. In 1985, a network of men's crisis centers and hotlines was established to offer therapy and counseling to men who abuse women; these services now receive municipal subsidies (Gauffin, 1993). In 1988, women were allowed to file restraining orders against men they thought might hurt them, and they were entitled to free legal assistance during the preliminary investigation and trial (Elman & Eduards, 1991; Jacobsson & Alfredsson, 1993). In the 1990s, the government began to offer free counseling during pretrial and criminal investigations and free personal and home security alarm systems and mobile telephones, even bodyguards, to domestic violence victims. Penalties for men found guilty of domestic violence have been stiffened, and more government support has been given to providing education on preventing domestic

violence in schools and through public information campaigns. Special training programs were started for personnel likely to come into contact with domestic violence victims, including those in health care and the criminal justice system. In 1993, the government appointed a commission to recommend further measures to counteract violence against women (Swedish Institute, 1994b).

Children's Rights

One important aim of Swedish family policy is the protection of children and their rights. Children are regarded as Sweden's most precious natural resource, and the conditions under which they grow must be as favorable as possible (Grönvall, 1985). Sweden's interest in promoting children's rights began as early as 1915, when the doctrine of "the best interest of the child" was established as the basis for deciding custody after divorce (Therborn, 1993). Several private nonprofit organizations have looked after children's rights in Sweden for decades, including one called Save the Children (Rädda Barnen) and another called the Swedish Society for the Protection of Children's Rights in the Community (Barnens rätt i samhället). In 1993, the government set up an ombudsman's office to safeguard children's rights (Swedish Institute, 1994a).

Official concern about children's rights has centered on a number of issues. One is children's right to a decent standard of living, which is addressed by the various government programs mentioned earlier that support families' economic security, especially child and housing allowances. Children's economic well-being is also seen as tied to parents' abilities to combine parenthood with gainful employment (Jacobsson & Alfredsson, 1993). Another children's right is adequate health care and special assistance if disabled.

Children, as other Swedes, have the right to comfortable housing, but Swedish law also requires that the planning and construction of housing take into special account children's well-being, security, and development. The goal is to allow children to be children full-time in a carefree environment (Grönvall, 1985). To receive official approval, housing needs to provide children with a stimulating and safe outdoor environment (Wittorp & Lund, 1976). A government council on children's play has organized conferences to bring together housing contractors and experts on childhood. The government offers grants to stimulate local governments, builders, and neighborhood groups to improve the play environment for children in cities (Salzer, 1976).

Since 1981, building regulations have required apartment houses to have space in the sun for small children and adults to relax and play, as well as sandboxes, climbing equipment, and room for games. A park with swings, slides, and a ball field must be in walking distance of children's homes (Grönvall, 1985). Play areas must be removed from traffic because of the possibility of accidents and toxic car exhaust fumes. Strict regulations about the use of car seats, safety belts, and bicycle helmets have been in force since the 1970s. Throughout the 1980s, an information campaign with the slogan "Children are soft—cars are hard" drew attention to ways traffic patterns could be reconstructed to protect children (Hügard, 1983). Since 1974, Swedish law has regulated the design of stoves, electric outlets, and windows for children's protection indoors.

Children have the right to be looked after properly while their parents are at work, which policy makers seek to do by the subsidization of day care and the application of high standards for day care. Day care regulations, however, go much further than stipulating adequate supervision of children; national guidelines have emphasized the importance of a secure and stimulating environment for children which will enhance their personal and social development. The emphasis is on play, not structured learning; Swedes believe play helps children develop skills and knowledge and helps them learn to interact with the environment (Gunnarsson, 1993). Day care workers are encouraged to develop close emotional relationships with children because children have the right to have many loving relationships with adults (Wittorp & Lund, 1976). Children of immigrant parents are entitled to assistance in becoming proficient in their parents' native language and in developing a secure cultural identity (Ekdahl, 1984).

Swedish children have the right to receive good care from parents. In pursuit of this goal, several programs educate people about parenting. Parent education is compulsory in schools and is also available at well-baby clinics, day care centers, and open preschools (Ärlemalm, 1976). Since 1980, prospective parents have been encouraged to attend parent education classes and are given time off from work with pay for this purpose (Ekdahl, 1984). Good care requires that parents have adequate time to spend with children. Several laws and policies make this possible, including paid parental leave after childbirth, the right to reduce work hours by 25% while children are young, two paid days off per year to have contact with a child's day care or school, and generous vacation benefit policies (now at least five weeks per year).

Swedes assume that children need good, close contact with *both*

parents. Since the 1970s, Swedish law has prohibited distinguishing between children born inside wedlock from those born outside, placing emphasis on quickly identifying fathers through a centralized and sophisticated blood-testing system so that they can take their place in children's lives regardless of whether the father and mother are married (Therborn, 1993). Family benefits dating from the 1970s allow fathers as well as mothers to assume major responsibility for children's well-being during their first years of life by staying home from work during infancy, working part-time, and caring for children when they are sick. Campaigns to encourage fathers to take parental leave focus on the importance of father-child bonding in infancy. A 1977 law calls for automatic joint custody of children in the case of separation or divorce regardless of whether the parents are married so that parents will share in decision making about the children and keep in close contact (Wittorp, 1977). Since the mid-1980s, children have been granted right of access to both parents after separation or divorce (as well as to other relatives such as grandparents). Children are entitled to free legal assistance in court when custody and visitation rights are determined (Ekdahl, 1984). Single fathers, especially those without residential custody, receive assistance in maintaining relationships with their children through government-sponsored programs designed to bring single dads and children together in recreational settings.

Since 1979, Swedish parents have been prohibited from spanking children. The text of the legislation, which is part of the code relating to parenthood and guardianship, reads: "Children must be treated with respect as persons and as individuals in their own right, and as such may not be subjected to physical punishment or other injurious or humiliating treatment" (Nilsson, 1991). Although the emphasis has been placed on educating parents about more constructive techniques of child discipline, parents who spank their children can be ordered to pay fines or receive counseling. The spanking law was introduced partly to establish new norms about discipline and partly to draw attention to the problem of child abuse. Child abuse has been against the law since the 1970s, with criminal penalties. The problem of incest has been much discussed in recent years, brought to the attention of policy makers by the women's movement and child advocacy organizations, and harsher penalites have been instituted for sexual offenses involving children. Guidelines have also been established to make investigation of charges of incest and abuse less harmful to children (Deley, 1988; Eklund, 1993).

Other efforts have been made to restrict children's exposure to violence. Restrictions exist concerning the sale of violent toys and advertisements featuring violent themes. The two main television channels, which are owned by the government, strictly limit violence on programs and warn viewers when programs may not be appropriate for children. It is a punishable offense to sell or rent video films portraying violence to people under the age of 15. Age restrictions also exist and are strictly enforced for seeing movies with violent images (Nilsson, 1991).

Evaluation of Swedish Family Policy

The sheer magnitude of this list of family programs establishes Sweden as having the most well-developed and ambitious family policy in the world. Sweden is clearly ahead of other countries in being interested in promoting the rights of all citizens, regardless of sex, age, physical ability, and social class. But good intentions are not everything. We need to investigate whether these programs have been successful in helping Sweden attain the lofty goals it has set for itself in family policy. Unfortunately, there is not a great deal of research on the success of particular Swedish family policies (except for day care). This prevents a detailed presentation of the particular merits and demerits of each of the programs; if a goal has been met or partially met, the specific measures enacted may be assumed to have played a role in this success.

Families' Economic Security

Several studies suggest that Swedish families enjoy a standard of living which is higher than that of families in most other countries, including those with welfare states. In 1987, only 4.3% of Swedes could be considered "poor"—defined as living in a household with an income after taxes and transfers that was 40% or below the country's median household income. (In the United States this percentage was 13.3.) Swedish families' disposable income (after taxes and transfers) has been found to be higher than that of families in other European nations and the United States. Sweden also has one of the lowest degrees of income inequality of any capitalist nation, and the gap between the incomes of the highest and lowest paid workers is steadily

decreasing (Hort, 1993; Korpi, 1990; O'Higgins, Schmaus, & Stephenson, 1990; Olsson, 1993).

The Swedish government considers achieving economic security for its citizens an accomplishment. At least one American sociologist, David Popenoe, however, believes that Sweden's methods of securing a high standard of living actually hurt families in the long run. According to Popenoe (1988), the family's main function has been economic; government provision of economic benefits inevitably seriously weakens families by undermining their main function. He is especially critical of the Swedish government's policy of offering housing allowances to young adults because this helps them become independent of parental control at an early age. He also notes that Swedish "children suffer relatively little economically when their parents separate" (p. 221) because of generous policies for single-parent families and concludes that such policies undermine family life by encouraging separation and divorce. Most social scientists would dispute Popenoe's claims, however. Although government guarantees of economic well-being might cause some families to split apart, sociological research suggests that poverty causes more harm to families than does affluence.

Family Members' Physical Well-Being

Judged by commonly used health indicators, Sweden's family policy has been very effective in reaching the goal of adequate health care for all. A study of ten industrialized nations (including the United States) rated Swedish citizens as having the highest health status of all countries studied (Starfield, 1991). Infant mortality is low, at 5.8 deaths per 1,000 children ages 0–1, down from 18 per 1,000 in 1960. The U.S. rate was 9.2 in 1990. Life expectancy has also continued to rise, with men in 1992 living an average of 74.8 years and women 80.4 years, about ten years longer than in 1970. In the United States, the average for men in 1991 was 72.2 and for women 79.1. Age-specific mortality rates are also lower than in other countries.

Sweden's success in ensuring good health for its population is not merely a result of the amount of money spent for health care. Sweden spends less for health care than does the United States—8.5% of the gross domestic product compared to 13.2% for the United States. Advances in health are related to an emphasis on prevention and efficient health services delivery, as well as to government regulation of pollution and social policies that guarantee adequate housing and en-

hance families' ability to afford good food (Eliason, 1993; Olsson, 1993; Swedish Institute, 1993f; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993).

Some inequalities in health persist in Sweden, and less educated individuals and women report somewhat more problems with long-term illness. But class and gender differences in health are less than those found in other countries, including other Scandinavian welfare states (Lahelme, Manderbacka, Rahkonen, & Karisto, 1994).

Social programs have been effective in eliminating slums and in providing families with adequate accommodations. Substandard housing (e.g., housing without running water or modern toilet facilities) is almost unknown, as is homelessness. The number of Swedes living in overcrowded conditions (defined as more than two persons per room excluding kitchen and living room) fell from 40% in 1966 to 2% in 1990 (Swedish Institute, 1994d). The Swedish government maintains that Sweden has the world's "highest housing standard in terms of floor-space and equipment per household" (Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1992). Prices for housing have also remained modest, and the percentage of Swedes in need of rent subsidies has decreased. The availability of housing allowances, however, has not prevented the residential segregation of lower-income families in housing owned and managed by local governments because many private landlords resist renting to people who need subsidies. Mortgage subsidies have also helped many middle-class families build and own their own houses in the suburbs, while many working-class families pay rent for apartments, especially in the city (Olsson, 1993).

Although the number of people over retirement age has grown, the percentage of the elderly population who have been able to live on their own has also increased. In 1980, 22% of people over age 80 were institutionalized; by 1990 the percentage had dropped to 10% (Fernow, 1992). About 92% of Swedes 65 or older still live in their homes and apartments (Swedish Institute, 1992). Old age also no longer brings economic insecurity. Using the same definition of poverty as above, less than 1% of the Swedish elderly are poor, in comparison to 11% in the United States (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993). Studies indicate that only about 5% of the elderly are socially isolated, defined as living alone with no regular contact with anyone (Sundström, 1987).

Swedes tend to view independence of the elderly as an accomplishment; American sociologist David Popenoe (1988) does not. He believes elder caregiving is a major function of the family so he is critical of Sweden's use of paid home helpers and economic supports that

make it possible for most older Swedes to maintain independent living arrangements. He admits that Swedes are satisfied with this arrangement, however, and that he has no evidence to support the idea that government programs for elders weakens relationships between older Swedes and their younger relatives.

Voluntary Parenthood

All evidence points to the conclusion that parenthood is voluntary in Sweden. The Population Crisis Committee in Washington, D.C., ranked 65 developed countries according to the strength of their family planning programs in 1993. Sweden tied for second with the Netherlands (and after first-place Denmark). Ranking was based on the range of contraceptive methods available, encouragement to use contraceptives, strength of programs for adolescents, government support of family planning services, and success in family planning. The United States ranked fourteenth (*Women's International Network News*, 1993).

Swedish teens are sexually active and at earlier ages than teens elsewhere in the industrial world; however, teen pregnancy is rare; only 1.4% of teens ages 15–19 became pregnant in 1990 (Andersson, Kihlblom, & Sandqvist, 1993; Boëthius, 1984; Gress-Wright, 1993; Swedish Institute, 1993b). In the United States, in 1988, the corresponding figure was 11% (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993). The number of teens giving birth is even lower because of abortion, but the number of teens using this as a method of family planning has decreased over the last few years, a testimony to the success of preventive measures. In 1993, the overall abortion rate was 19.8 per 1,000 women (aged 15–44), a low rate compared to other countries (Swedish Institute, 1994c). The U.S. rate in 1992 was 25.9 (*World Almanac*, 1994). One in four pregnancies ends in a voluntary abortion, compared to about the same number (28%) in the United States (Swedish Institute, 1994c; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993).

Swedes increasingly choose to become parents, however. Almost all women want to become mothers, and 87% are successful in doing so. The birth rate began rising in the mid-1980s (having been as low as 1.6 in 1980), and in 1991 it finally climbed above population replacement level to 2.1. This is the highest rate in Europe, except for Iceland and Ireland. Family policies seem responsible for this increase, especially support programs for working parents (such as parental leave and subsidized child care). Research shows no group differences

in fertility between social classes or any effects of women's employment history on family size, which suggests that all women can choose to become mothers (Andersson et al., 1993; B. Hoem, 1993; J. Hoem, 1993; Sundström, 1991).

Gender Equality

For Swedes, the most important indicator of gender equality has been women's position in the paid labor force. Sweden has been successful in encouraging women to work for pay outside the home almost as much as men. In 1992, 91% of Swedish women ages 25–54 were in the labor force, compared to 95% of Swedish men and 74% of American women (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993). Swedish women's position in the labor market, however, is still not equal to men's when it comes to pay, hours, type of job, and power, although they seem better off in these areas than women in most other parts of the world and progress in each area is under way.

Swedish women tend to earn less than Swedish men, but the male-female wage gap is smaller than in any other industrial country (Palme & Wright, 1992). In 1991, Swedish women workers in private industry made 90% of men's wages if they were blue-collar workers and 75% if they were white-collar. This is an improvement from 1973, when the figures were 84% and 63%. Among government employees, women's wages varied between 75% and 90%, depending on the level of government, up from 74%–81% in 1973 (Jacobsson & Alfredsson, 1993). There is evidence that the pay gap in Sweden is slowly diminishing, after a halt in the 1980s, and most (92%–99%) of the pay differences that remain appear related to differences in the status of jobs men and women tend to hold and to differences in the average age and education of women and men workers, rather than to sex discrimination, which was true in the past (Mundebo, 1993; Palme & Wright, 1992). In 1994, the government appointed a commmission to investigate how economic policy affects women's income (Swedish Institute, 1994b).

Because of lower pay levels, Swedish women with a thirty-year work history receive pensions that amount to only about 78% of what men with similar work experience receive. This is higher than in the United States (where women get 68%) but lower than in ten other democratic countries in a recent twenty-country study (Hill & Tigges, 1995). Nevertheless, Hill and Tigges concluded that Sweden ranked third out of the twenty countries studied in terms of how *adequate*

women's retirement income is in securing them a decent standard of living. (Italy and Austria ranked higher.) This was because Swedish women's retirement income was relatively high compared to the average worker's wage, being equal to 55% of the average worker's wage. (In the United States, in contrast, retired women draw pensions averaging 32% of an average worker's wage.)

Swedish women are much more likely than men to work part-time (< 35 hours per week), with 41% doing so in 1992 (compared to 8% of men) (D'Agostino & Persson, 1993). The percentage of women who work part-time in Sweden is decreasing, however, from a high of 47% in 1986 (Mundebo, 1993; Sundström, 1993). Mothers of young children are particularly likely to work part-time; about 60% do so (Persson, 1990). This tendency to work part-time lowers women's income significantly (Hobson, 1990), but working part-time is less disadvantageous to Swedish women than it is to women in other societies. Part-time working women in Sweden tend to work at least 30 hours a week so their incomes are only somewhat reduced, they are entitled to pro-rated benefits, and their jobs tend to be permanent (Boje & Nielsen, 1993). Swedish women voluntarily choose part-time work so they can more easily combine work and family life, whereas women in other countries are often forced to drop out of the labor force (Sundström, 1991).

Gender segregation has remained high in the Swedish labor market. One social scientist claims that it may be the most gender segregated of all advanced industrial economies (Esping-Andersen, 1992). In 1992, over one-half (58%) of Swedish women worked in the public sector, while only about one-fifth (21%) of men did (D'Agostino & Persson, 1993). Of the 52 occupations listed in the annual labor force survey in 1990, only 5 had an equal balance of men and women (Swedish Institute, 1993a). Women are more likely to work in semi-skilled jobs connected to social and personal services, while men are more likely to work at a wider range of jobs (Boje & Nielsen, 1993). A slightly better gender balance has been achieved since 1981, but progress is very slow (Nermo, 1994; Swedish Institute, 1993a).

Gender segregation in the labor market is the direct result of the choices Swedish youth make for their educational majors in secondary and postsecondary school. In the voluntary secondary school system (which begins at age 16) there are as many girls as boys. In universities and other institutions of higher education women students outnumber men by a good margin, and more Swedish women hold higher education degrees than men. In the United States, more men

still hold higher education degrees. But Swedish females and males major in different subjects in secondary school, and dropout rates are higher for students studying nontraditional subjects. Although the number of women completing majors in engineering doubled between 1980 and 1990, gender segregation increased in all other subjects in the 1980s. For example, the proportion of men in teacher training programs dropped from 27% to 20%. Students also see gender segregation in action at school. Women predominate in teaching younger children, but only 6% of full professors are women. Administrators are usually men, although that has changed somewhat in recent years (Jacobsson & Alfredsson, 1993).

Perhaps the biggest gap between rhetoric and reality concerns Swedish women's level of power at work. They make up about 75% of the workers in the public sector, yet only 30% of top-level public administrators are women. Women are only 37% of the labor force in the private sector, but they are even more underrepresented at the levels of top management, where only 10% of managers are women, only slightly more than in the United States (Höök, 1994; Jacobsson & Alfredsson, 1993; Socialdepartementet, 1993). Women have also lacked influence in unions, which are powerful in Sweden, although in the past two years women have attained some top positions in the blue-collar federation, the municipal workers' union, and the white-collar employee federation (Froman, 1994). In their attempts to realize gender equality, Swedish policy makers have historically sidestepped the issue of ending male domination in the economy in favor of focusing on other, less controversial ways of improving women's status (Acker, 1992; Hirdman, 1990). In 1993, however, the government set up a commission to analyze the reasons for the low number of women in top management in private industry. This led to a plan for the government to provide financial support for an academy that will actively work to increase the number of women managers (Swedish Institute, 1994b).

Another measure of lack of power is experience with sexual harassment, defined in Sweden as any form of unwelcome sex-related discussion or sexual advance. A 1987 survey by the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman showed that 17% of women workers had been sexually harassed; percentages were higher at male-dominated workplaces (Jacobsson & Alfredsson, 1993). American surveys, however, reveal a higher incidence of harassment, with between one-fifth and four-fifths of working women reporting problems in this area (Renzetti & Curran, 1992).

Swedish family policy has been successful in dramatically reducing women's economic dependence on men and women's chances of living in poverty, especially in female-headed families (Meyer, 1993; Nermo, 1994; Tornes, 1993). In turn, women have become much more dependent on the government for jobs in the public sector and for welfare benefits (Hernes, 1987; Leira, 1993; Meyer, 1993; Siim, 1993). Swedish feminists disagree about whether women's dependence on the welfare state constitutes progress toward the goal of gender equality. Most welcome women's ability to survive without being involved in a marriage contract and celebrate the power employment gives to women. Since the government has taken more responsibility for the "care work" traditionally assigned to women, this work has gained in status, to the advantage of women in their roles as workers, mothers, and advocates of social welfare. Others complain that women depend too heavily for employment on a public sector that can be hard hit by economic and political changes and that women are still disadvantaged by being more responsible for caregiving even if now they are paid for it. They point out that the Swedish practice of relating welfare benefits to income systematically hurts women who work fewer hours and are paid less, and they are concerned that Sweden has merely moved from being a "private patriarchy" to a "public patriarchy" because men remain in control of the most important positions in Swedish society (Acker, 1992; Hernes, 1987; Leira, 1993; Meyer, 1993; Siim, 1993).

Although policy makers have not challenged to any considerable degree men's dominance in the public sphere, programs to increase men's involvement in the private sphere of the family do seem to have the desired effect. As early as 1981, a national poll showed that 70% of men agreed that men's and women's roles should become more alike (Trost, 1983). About half of men in 1992 said they preferred to live in a family where they shared equal responsibility for breadwinning and child care with their partners (Möller & Uhlén, 1994); younger men are even more likely to endorse egalitarian roles (Vogel, 1994).

In the past three decades, men have increased their participation in household tasks (Sandqvist, 1994). Time-budget studies show that men put in only 7% of all time spent at housework in 1974; in 1991 this had increased to 18% (Nermo, 1994). Research suggests that almost all Swedish fathers are active in all aspects of child care, including physical caretaking of infants and small children (Andersson et al., 1993). Many men act on their commitment to family life by taking

time off work to care for children. Almost all Swedish fathers take two paid weeks off from work at childbirth or adoption, 51% take paid parental leave by the time their children are two and a half years old, and about 40% stay home to take care of a sick child (Haas, 1993; Riksförsäkringsverket, 1994). Fathers of young children work significantly fewer hours than do men with no or older children, according to time diary data, and 9% of preschool-aged children have a father who works part-time to help with child care (Carlin & Flood, 1994; Östberg, 1994).

Despite these advances, Swedish mothers remain more responsible and active in domestic life than men. Although a high percentage of mothers of preschool-aged children are employed, Swedish women are two to three times more likely than men to be absent from work for family purposes (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Besides working part-time while their children are small, women on the average take about 90% of all paid parental leave days and report themselves to be more responsible for child care than their partners (Haas, 1993). Men are more likely to participate in emotional caregiving of children (e.g., playing, reading) than in physical caretaking (e.g., feeding, diapering). Swedish men have made less effort to share housework than child care, which remains women's responsibility (Andersson et al., 1993; Haas, 1993). Time-budget studies have found that three-fifths of the time spent on housework and child care in households with preschoolers was done by mothers (Gustaffson & Kjulin, 1992). Women's and men's total work hours, however, are equal because women tend to work for pay fewer hours than men; both put in an average of 61 hours of work per week (Mundebo, 1993). Moreover, men's share of domestic work appears to be higher in Sweden than in other countries, and their absolute time spent in domestic work is increasing (Juster & Stafford, 1991; Nermo, 1994).

There is no doubt that Swedish policy making in regard to gender equality has dramatically redrawn the boundaries between the private sphere of the family and the public sphere of the workplace. The high employment rate for mothers of preschool-aged children (86%, vs. 60% in the United States) provides some evidence for this, as does the fact that the government guarantees workers the right to pursue family-related activities (Persson, 1990; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1993). Full recognition of the family responsibilities of male and female employees still lags considerably behind policy-making rhetoric, however, especially in the private sector. A recent study of the largest private corporations found that few have undertaken the

wide-scale changes in corporate policy and practice that would make the workplace highly supportive of active fatherhood, and men's use of family leave benefits in these companies is considerably below the national average (Haas & Hwang, 1995). The obstacles for more Swedish women entering management also have their roots in deep-seated assumptions about sex-specific social roles for men and women (Wahl, 1994).

Although most policy-making efforts have been aimed at reconstructing the familial division of labor and women's status in relation to men's in the labor market, some efforts have also addressed violence against women. Reports of violence against women have increased every year since 1981, but this is usually attributed to the 1982 law requiring professionals to report such incidents (SOU, 1994). In 1992, there were about 15,527 reported cases of physical assaults against women by intimates (SOU, 1994). This rate appears to be about three per thousand women ages 15 and over. In contrast, in the United States, there were 572,032 reported cases of assaults on women by intimates, a rate of about six per thousand (Bachman, 1994). Not all violence is reported so surveys are used to ascertain more realistic estimates of domestic violence. A Swedish government survey estimated that about 26,000 women are battered by people they know, a rate of about seven per thousand women (Leander, 1989). A recent American survey estimated that about 1.67 million women are beaten by people they know, which is a much higher rate of about 163 cases per thousand women (Bachman, 1994). Swedish rates for domestic violence thus appear lower than American rates, and domestic violence seems more likely to be reported when it occurs.

Children's Rights

Almost half (47%) of Swedish children are born out of wedlock (vs. 28% in the United States). Sociologist David Popenoe (1988) maintains that such a high out-of-wedlock birth rate indicates a serious decline in family values. But two-thirds of Swedish couples marry after a child is born, and almost all fathers (92%) acknowledge paternity immediately; for another 4% paternity is established in the courts. Because of this and because Sweden has a lower divorce rate than the United States, most Swedish children (80% in 1992) under age 18 live with both biological parents, which is a higher rate than in the United States (where the percentage is 57%) (Bennett, 1993;

Zetzell et al., 1994). When divorce occurs, parents usually have joint custody of children. Three-quarters of children live mainly with mothers and one-fourth live with fathers or both parents the same amount of time (Lind, 1993). Swedish fathers are very active in child care, both in taking advantage of formal family leave from work and in being involved in physical caretaking and emotional caregiving of offspring.

Virtually no Swedish child lives in absolute economic deprivation. Only 1.5% live in "poor" households (see definition above), compared to 22% of American children (Bennett, 1993). Swedish children's health has improved steadily over the past 50 years, and in comparison with other European lands, Swedish children enjoy better physical health. Some class differences in children's mental health persist; children whose parents have low education, unstable employment, and low income exhibit lower psychological well-being than children in more affluent environments (Björnberg, 1992).

Research suggests that relationships between parents and children are good in Sweden. Critics like Popenoe have predicted that government-subsidized day care will undermine family life, but research shows that the amount of time parents spend directly interacting with their children is not lessened by Swedish children's time spent in day care (Gustafsson & Kjulin, 1991), and studies comparing children of working mothers to other Swedish children have found no differences in development or in relationships with parents (Andersson et al., 1993). Sweden ranked highest in an eleven-country study that examined the quality of parent-child relationships (Braungart & Braungart, 1986).

Levels of sexual and physical abuse of children appear to be low in Sweden. For example, 440 cases of sexual crimes against children were reported in 1991 in which the perpetrators were family members, which is a rate of about 2 per 10,000 children (Eklund, 1993). In the United States in 1989, there were 155,900 reported cases, a much higher rate of 25 per thousand (Reiss & Roth, 1993). Statistics on the physical abuse of children in Sweden could not be located (the U.S. rate in 1990 was 42 cases per 1,000 children; Bennett, 1993). A study asking college students about their parents' disciplinary practices suggests that the rate of physical abuse is low. About two-thirds (64%) of Swedish males and over half (56%) of Swedish females have never been spanked by their parents, compared to only 11% of American males and 15% of American females (Deley, 1988). A 1994 study found that only 11% of Swedes believe that corporal punishment is

necessary in child rearing, compared to 84% of Americans who believe that to be true (Durrant, 1995).

The issue of providing substitute child care while parents work has achieved high social visibility in Sweden (Meyer, 1993). The government has been very active in increasing the number of places available, and money for this purpose far exceeds funds devoted to any other aspect of family policy (Swedish Institute, 1992). Over half (56%) of all children ages 15 months to three years had a place in government-subsidized child care in 1992, up from 40% in the early 1980s. Only 7% of children in this age group remained on waiting lists in January 1993; the rest were cared for by private centers, parents, or relatives. The older the child, the more likely he or she is to be in day care; 65% of 4–6-year-olds are in subsidized public care (Burek et al., 1992; Gunnarsson, 1993; Gustafsson & Kjulin, 1991; Möller & Uhlén, 1994; Swedish Institute, 1994a). The goal of complete coverage set for 1993 was not reached, despite an unprecedented buildup of day care places in 1992, partly because of the unexpected rise in the birth rate. In some areas of the country, the government has conceded that it cannot provide places for children under age 18 months or even two years of age, because such places are more expensive to subsidize than places for older children. After-school care for children age 10 and over is also in short supply. This means that parents are obligated to find substitute care or, more frequently, reduce work hours or even stay home until a place opens up. Despite gaps in coverage, Sweden appears to have a higher percentage of children in public day care than other countries (Siim, 1993). Moreover, children regarded as at the most risk, those from single-parent, lower-income, and immigrant families, are given preferential access to day care so the shortages that exist disproportionately disadvantage middle-class familes (Gunnarsson, 1993).

Most parents report that they are very satisfied with their child care arrangements (Andersson et al., 1993). Parents are somewhat less satisfied with care received in government-subsidized family day care homes, and over time the percentage of children receiving care in these homes has declined. The government reports that only half of all home day care providers have received all 100 hours of required training, although they are closely supervised by local day care centers (Burek et al., 1992). Another problem with day care in the late 1980s and early 1990s was lack of qualified personnel to staff the new centers that opened up. In some areas, there is a shortage of places for children of single parents who work odd hours (Gunnarsson,

1993). There has been pressure to reduce government subsidies for day care since the budget crisis began in 1991, and this has resulted in an increase in staff-child ratios, in some areas rising somewhat above the one staff person to four to five children that was the previous standard (Swedish Institute, 1994a). (A recent national survey of American day care centers found the ratio to be one caretaker per 8.6 children; Hofferth, Brayfield, Deich, & Holcomb, 1990.)

Recent Developments

Sweden has been modestly successful in reaching the goals of families' economic security and physical well-being, voluntary parenthood, gender equality, and children's rights. But economic and political developments are transforming family policy in Sweden. These developments include an enduring economic recession that began in 1990, political instability, and Sweden's entrance into the European Community. The government has scaled back some of the benefits and programs directed toward families, but commitment to the various goals of family policy appears to remain strong, partly because of the growing influence of popular movements interested in family policy goals.

Until the late 1980s, Sweden enjoyed a high level of economic prosperity, with generally low public deficits and full employment. The benefits provided to Swedish families were expensive, but rising wages and high productivity ensured a strong tax base to finance programs. In spring 1989, the Swedish economy began a plunge into what by its own standards turned out to be a severe recession, characterized by negative growth, high inflation, decreased capital investments, a growing deficit, a rapid increase in unemployment to the highest levels since World War II, and a decline in disposable household income (SOU, 1994; Swedish Institute, 1994e). The reasons for this downturn are often disputed, but it appears likely that the following factors in some combination played a significant role: worldwide economic recession, increased international competition, company migration out of Sweden, high wage demands from unions, decreasing worker productivity, and growing public sector expenditures (Hort, 1993; Pettersson, 1993; Swedish Institute, 1993e; Taylor, 1991).

Public sector expenditures grew partly because policy makers had dedicated themselves to full coverage for day care, raised benefit

levels to families with children (e.g., lengthened paid parental leave), and approved the use of sophisticated but expensive technology in health care. Social welfare costs also increased because of changing demographic patterns. As the population aged, more people were eligible for pensions and other forms of financial assistance. A rising birth rate led to greater demand for health care, parental leave, and day care. To some extent, family policy may have depressed worker productivity and thus reduced the tax base. Generous family leave benefits, fully paid sick leave, and early retirement and disability pensions were used with increasing frequency so fewer people were at work. Rising unemployment during the recession put a further strain on government finances as a record number of people became eligible for social benefits.

Concerns about cost containment in the public sector were preceded in the 1980s by popular dissatisfaction with the delivery of some family programs. Some families felt they had too little choice and that national bureaucrats were too far away to consider how local conditions should affect service delivery.

The Social Democratic party responded to both of these concerns by decentralizing programs once administered at the national level. A dramatic reduction in the marginal tax rate on individuals was enacted in 1989 to provide an incentive to greater worker productivity. The party pressured unions not to negotiate for wage gains and approved of a more decentralized form of wage bargaining that promised to reduce inflation. It even postponed expansion of some promised benefits (e.g., parental leave), which was unprecedented (Hort, 1993; Huber & Stephens, 1993).

Nevertheless, in 1991, the Social Democrats lost the election for only the second time since 1932, as the recession worsened and the population lost confidence in their leadership. Four nonsocialist parties formed a shaky ruling coalition, sometimes in a reluctant partnership with a new ultraconservative party called New Democracy. The ruling coalition and the Social Democrats negotiated a "crisis agreement" in the fall of 1992, which called for significant cuts in welfare state entitlements (a total of $5 billion, amounting to about 9% nationwide), accompanied by an increase in taxes and government support for public works jobs and worker retraining (about $1.2 billion worth) (Huber & Stephens, 1993). Budget cuts led to the consolidation of some day care centers and schools, reduction in the number of administrators and staff, and increases in group sizes in some municipalities. Raises in child allowances were postponed, and govern-

ment subsidies for day care, housing, and home help services were reduced. The two political groups also agreed to changes in the pension system (e.g., raising retirement age to 66 and requiring individuals to make more contributions) and changes in sickness pay (e.g., creating a waiting period before benefits begin and placing responsibility for financing this system on employers and employees).

At no point was there any question that the government should continue to be ultimately responsible for family welfare, a testimony to how embedded family policy goals are in Swedish political culture. For example, at the height of the crisis in December 1992, health and social affairs minister Bengt Westerberg declared: "Day care is good for children. All children should have the right to a day care place from one year of age" (Petterson-Blom, 1993).

The two political blocs disagreed, however, on *how* government should support families. The ruling coalition wanted to privatize more social service delivery, which the Social Democrats resisted. The parties in power offered private day care providers the same government subsidy as government providers and gave parents vouchers they could use to send children to private schools. But few companies have found it worthwhile to develop centers, and few parents have chosen private schools (Huber & Stephens, 1993).

There was also disagreement regarding the extent to which responsibility for dependent care should be shifted to families. Considerable political debate centered on the proposal of the Christian Democrats to institute a "caretakers' allowance" that would grant families about $250 a month to be used to support a stay-at-home parent. Even their coalition partners were against this idea because they thought it would hurt progress toward eliminating the gender-based division of labor for child care (Huber & Stephens, 1993). To keep the Christian Democrats in the coalition, the coalition partners agreed to enact this allowance in May 1994, with the provision that it would be paid to all families and could also be used to pay for day care. The measure never took effect, however, because the Social Democrats rescinded it when they came back into office after the September 1994 election.

The Social Democratic party's strong showing in the 1994 election seems to reflect Swedes' concern that the conservatives wanted to cut back too much on benefits provided by the welfare state as well as a realization that the conservatives had not been able to turn around Sweden's dismal financial situation. According to one observer, "Many voters perceived the Social Democrats, with their long experience of government, as the best guarantors of both employment and the social welfare safety net" (Svensson, 1994).

The Social Democrats, however, have learned some important lessons about the dangers of providing generous benefits in the face of uncertain economic circumstances. Even before the election results were in, they decided to accept most of the reduction in government spending initiated by the conservative coalition (which they initially had strongly resisted), recommending a further $4 billion in cutbacks. The new cutbacks included reducing compensation paid for taking care of sick children and for staying home on parental leave. They also lowered taxes on corporations to provide an incentive for investment but rescinded tax cuts on higher-income individuals proposed by the former conservative government in favor of a 5% tax increase on individuals earning more than $30,000 a year (Svensson, 1994). The profits of the largest Swedish corporations quadrupled during the first quarter of 1994, compared to the previous year, a gain larger than that observed even in the years of prosperity in the 1980s (Foxby, 1994). Companies with international markets are making a faster recovery than ones with only domestic markets. It is too early to predict with any certainty if the upturn in the economy will continue.

The impact of budget cuts and changes in family programs is not yet evident. These cuts and changes may be short-lived if the economy turns around and the budget deficit is eliminated. In the midst of many changes, however, fears have been expressed about the possibility that services will be of worse quality, especially in the area of day care. Concerns about large increases in income inequality have also been raised because individuals are forced to spend more money out of their own pocket for some services (e.g., day care, home help, old-age care). Feminists worry that cuts in services to dependent family members may result in more domestic work being loaded on women's shoulders and that jobs cut from the public sector will result in high unemployment for women (Siim, 1993; Tornes, 1993).

On a more optimistic note, the economic crisis may have given Sweden an opportunity to "fine tune," reorganize, and revitalize family policy (Hort, 1993, p. 86; Olsson, 1993). Citizens now have more choice among services, superfluous administrative layers may have been eliminated, inefficient methods of service delivery may have been phased out, and overuse of some programs, even fraud, may have been reduced. Competition with the private sector may motivate the public sector to become more efficient. Some innovative solutions to the economic crisis might actually help promote the goals of family policy. For example, a six-hour day has been proposed to increase the number of jobs. This has long been a proposal of Social Democratic

women interested in promoting equality of responsibility for domestic life, and it now has gained new respectability as a proposal for changing labor market policy (Tornes, 1993). Two Swedish studies suggest that worker productivity improves with a six-hour day, although two other studies found no effects (SOU, 1995).

Sweden's role as an innovator in the area of family policy might be challenged by its new membership in the European Union (EU). In November 1994 52% of Swedes voted to join EU in a binding referendum (Svensson, 1994). In the midst of the recession (1990), the Swedish Parliament approved Sweden's entrance into the European Community (EC), a free trade and employment bloc designed to compete with Japan and the United States in world markets. Joining this community has been regarded by some as a threat to realization of family policy goals. The EC requires that Sweden have a stable economy, and its currency is permanently adjusted to EC standards. Sweden has needed to devalue its currency several times, and each time devaluation has been a significant factor in economic recovery. If devaluation cannot be used in the future to stabilize the economy, deficits might increase, unemployment might rise, and public expenditures would have to be reduced. There have also been concerns that the removal of barriers to trade will result in lowering Swedish workers' relatively high wages and an influx of foreign workers, putting pressure on the welfare state (Huber & Stephens, 1993). Feminists are concerned that Sweden's higher level of gender equality and welfare benefits may be jeopardized if policy making is centralized in Brussels, and Swedish companies find it difficult to compete with companies from countries that have made less progress in these areas. EC countries now tie welfare benefits directly to employment so some Swedes are worried that those without employment potential may fall through the safety net (Hallgren, 1993; Hoffman, 1993; Huber & Stephens, 1993). In response to some concerns, the Social Democrats have announced that Sweden will be an advocate in the European Union in the area of gender equality and family policy.

Despite these events, family policy in Sweden remains well-developed. A Social Democratic official recently stated that he believed the Swedish model has not been threatened by economic and political instability. He claims that "the Swedish model . . . has always been in a process of evolution and has been influenced by many ideas and will continue to be so. . . . Sweden's basic structure and character will remain unchanged" (Rexed, 1993).

One interesting political development is increasing signs that

Swedish citizens are not content to let policy makers decide the direction family policy should take. The unstable political and economic situation revitalized many of the decades-old popular movements organized to promote the rights of specific groups in Swedish society (e.g., children, the disabled); it also gave birth to new organizations that are putting pressure on the government to carry through on its commitment to family policy goals. These new organizations include the Children's Lobby, established in 1992 to fight budget cuts that affect children, and Tjejligan, an organization of blue-collar trade union women, organized in 1991, now with over 10,000 members (Acker, 1992). Another example of these new groups is Strödstrumporna ("the support stockings"). This group was formed by women across party lines to oppose changes in family policy that might retard progress toward gender equality and to increase the number of women in policy-making positions. They threatened to form a separate women's political party if politicians did not work harder to get women into political office, and one-third of Swedish women declared in opinion polls that they might vote for such a party. Subsequently, most political parties endorsed the goal of "every other seat for a woman," promising to alternate women's and men's names on the lists of those who would take office in the 1994 election. A sizable increase in women's share of parliamentary seats resulted, and women now occupy 41% of all seats in the national Parliament (up from 31% before 1994). This development should strengthen government's commitment to realizing family policy goals. Increased feminist activism also promises to add even more of a "gender dimension" to Swedish policy making as women are organizing with increasing fervor to "attack the unequal distribution of time, money, work and power in all spheres" (Siim, 1993, p. 190).

Implications

A study of Sweden provides several lessons about family policy making. First, it suggests that a particular type of political culture may be a prerequisite for well-developed family policy. This culture stresses the values of equality, pragmatism, productivity, universalism, and social responsibility. Effective policy making occurs in an atmosphere of relative political stability and belief in the benevolence of government. But a study of Sweden suggests that government action on behalf of families is probably not sufficient to realize dramatic

improvements in family life. Interest and commitment to policy goals must exist on the grass-roots level, on the part of lively voluntary organizations and concerned individuals who are given an opportunity to influence social policy-making efforts.

A second lesson is that successful family policy requires reasonably good economic circumstances (high employment and a low government deficit) and a willingness to extract high taxes, especially from employers and high-income individuals. In the long run, however, family policy has the potential to pay for itself. A study of Sweden suggests that specific programs can have sizable long-term economic payoffs in eliminating poverty, ill health, and the number of unwanted children, which would reduce expenditures associated with various social problems. The advancement of gender equality and children's rights can also increase future productivity of individuals who are expected to help pay for family policy programs.

A third lesson suggested from a study of Sweden is that everyone needs to benefit from welfare policies and programs if family policy is to enjoy widespread political support. When programs are viewed as "handouts" to a small group of disadvantaged individuals, as they are in the United States, family policy remains undeveloped. Swedish family policy contains few programs that require applications or proof of need; even programs that involve an income test are considered to be universalistic in character because they tend to be used by a large number of individuals at certain family life cycle stages or are perceived as programs designed to help all citizens realize their rights. The generosity of the benefit levels and the tendency to allow individuals to use benefits in the free market (e.g., for housing) prevent recipients from being easily stigmatized by others (e.g., in housing projects). The Swedish program is strongly based on the notion that individuals should be employed and that employment secures benefits; however, when this assumption cannot be met, a sense of compassion and solidarity leads to the dispensation of benefits without grumbling.

The fourth lesson is that social programs *can* be effective in realizing ambitious family policy goals. (For example, Sweden has nearly eliminated poverty, homelessness, and teen pregnancy.) Some social patterns (e.g., class disadvantage and gender inequality), however, are deeply embedded in the social structure and are slow to change. A study of Sweden suggests that policy makers must be prepared to monitor progress and make needed adjustments if goals are to be realized.

In Sweden, support for social research is considerable and government commissions are frequently established to sift through research findings before making recommendations for new legislation. The last lesson to be drawn from a study of the Swedish case is that respect for social science research and its applications seems likely to be a necessary prerequisite for effective family policy making.

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