

**Social Policy Convergence in Norway and Sweden:
Does EU Membership Matter?**

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Abstract

This paper analyzes social policy development in Norway and Sweden, focusing on “women-friendly” (Hernes, 1987) public policies such as parental leave and child care. In the past decade, Norway has rapidly been catching up with Sweden (and other Nordic Countries) in these two policy areas. An investigation into Norway’s past ‘exceptionalism,’ and what made Norway turn around in the 1980s, as well as an examination of factors that account for Sweden’s faster development in these policy areas, will shed light on forces for change in welfare state patterns at the end of the twentieth century. The paper also briefly addresses the issue of European Union membership and what effect it may have on future social policy development.

While drawing on the mainstream and feminist welfare state literature, as well as country case studies, the study focuses on the influence of women’s agency, or lack thereof, in policy development by examining social mobilization, political agenda setting and legislative outcomes in the two countries. The paper mainly covers the period after the Second World War, although the pre-war period is also briefly examined as this was a crucial time for social policy development. The study concludes that women’s agency, or lack thereof, help explain the earlier divergence and subsequent convergence of the two countries in public child care provisions and parental leave policies. Although it is too early to know what the effects will be of European Union membership on ‘women-friendly’ policies, the likelihood of negative consequences is very possible.

Introduction

This paper analyzes social policy development in Norway and Sweden, focusing on “women-friendly” (Hernes, 1987) public policies. The term refers to policies that enable women (and men) to combine labor force participation with parenting, such as generous parental leave and public child care provisions. Since the beginning of the social policy making process in the earlier part of this century, Sweden has been on the forefront of developing public policies aimed at altering gender relations. This country is often depicted in the mainstream social policy literature as the ideal type of the Social Democratic welfare state regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Due to their similar scoring on three dimensions of the welfare state (the quality of social rights as measured by de-commodification; patterns of stratification resulting from social policies; and the nature of state-market relation), Denmark, Finland, and Norway are also grouped under this regime type.¹ A cluster analysis of other welfare state characteristics, such as parental leave and public child care policies, has resulted in a different clustering of these countries. Feminist researchers, who argue that an inclusion of these two kinds of public policies challenges Esping-Andersen’s regime types, have illustrated this.² In fact, they show that Norway is a deviant case within the Social Democratic welfare state regime (Leira, 1992; Skrede, 1993; Sainsbury, 1996; Gornick et al., 1996; Ellingsaeter & Hedlund, 1998), due to its slow development of ‘women-friendly’ policies. However, in the past decade, Norway has rapidly been catching up with Sweden (and other Nordic countries) in this policy area. An investigation into Norway’s past ‘exceptionalism,’ and what made Norway turn around in the 1980s, as well as an examination of factors that account for Sweden’s faster development in this policy area, will shed light on forces for change in welfare state patterns at the end of the twentieth century.³

Much of the recent feminist literature on the welfare state employs a provider model framework, in which social policies are considered in terms of their support for the male breadwinner model versus dual-earner model (also referred to as the individual model) (Sainsbury, 1994; see also Sainsbury, 1996, for the development of a third model: the separate gender model). These models are premised on the idea that gender roles are embedded in public policy legislation, and analyses focus on examining the different effects and influences that various social policies may have on the formation and the maintenance of the division of labor between the sexes.⁴ Although I do not structure my case studies around Sainsbury’s (1994, 1996) ideal-type framework, I do refer to the provider models as a conceptual framework.⁵ Such a framework

is useful for understanding the 'gendered' nature of the welfare state, although the models are not necessarily reflective of the actual outcomes. For instance, in Sweden, most working-class women have always found it necessary to contribute to the family income (Bergqvist, 1998), even during the presumed height of the male breadwinner model era. Thus, a strict adherence to the husband-earner/wife-carer model (the male breadwinner model) has not necessarily been the case.⁶ However, the *familial ideology* central to the male breadwinner model did take hold in the Norwegian society, partly rooted in the 'family wage' demand by the unions. This 'traditional' family norm, with its strict division of labor by gender can be dated back to 1927⁷ (Skrede, 1984). In earlier times, the breadwinner model mostly applied to the upper classes (Skrede, 1984). In the section on the pre-war period, I discuss women's struggle for defending the right to paid work as access to employment is an important dimension of citizenship.

In this paper, I attempt to answer the following questions: How do we explain the earlier divergent outcomes and subsequent convergence of Sweden and Norway in public child care provisions and parental leave policies? Which political actors have been important in influencing the social policy making process, formulating policies, and pushing for legislation for parental leave and public childcare provisions? Which ideas, reforms, and agencies have influenced policy formulation in the two countries? What effect may European Union membership, or non-membership, have on the social policies examined in this study?

Drawing mainly on secondary analyses of social policy provisions and gender relations, I analyze the policy development by examining social mobilization, political agenda setting and legislative outcomes. Legislation in the two countries from 1945-1995 is listed in Appendix A. I focus on the political struggles leading to and surrounding these policies in order to get a greater understanding for which political actors were important in influencing the policy-making process and policy outcomes, as well as which ideas, reforms and agencies were present to affect the same. The period covered is mainly the post-war period, although I will also briefly examine the pre-war period as this was a crucial time for social policy development. Many policy measures were implemented as early as the late nineteenth century (Olson, 1986).⁸ However, the emphasis in this study will be on developments in the 1960s and 1970s since it is during this time that the two countries departed paths. The developments in the 1980s and early 1990s are also examined as social policies gradually converge in the countries. The main aim of this paper is attempting to explain the divergence, and the subsequent convergence, between Norway and Sweden

within the stated policy areas, which took place in the 1960s and late 1980s, respectively.⁹ I also briefly address the question of how European Union membership, or non-membership, may affect the two social policies under study.

I begin with a brief look at the two policy areas in Norway and Sweden from the nineteenth century to the 1960s. It will become apparent that the two countries do not differ much in terms of social policy development during this period. As some of the earlier struggles for policy implementation and reforms laid the foundation during this period for later policy development, we will turn to the 1930s as this was a crucial period for welfare state building.

I draw on three primary literatures: mainstream comparative research on social policy,¹⁰ the feminist critique of this literature, and country case studies.¹¹ The paper is organized as follows: First, I look at 'family policy'¹² development in Norway and Sweden in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Second, I examine social policy development in the two countries during the 1960s and the 1970s, a period of policy divergence. Third, I turn to the 1980s and the 1990s, during which a trend towards policy convergence took place. Fourth, I address the European Union question and its implications for the social policies in this study. Lastly, follows a discussion and conclusion.

We now turn to a brief history of public child care and maternity leave provisions, discussing each country separately. The purpose with this synopsis is to get an idea of the policies in existence in the two countries before the policy divergence took place in the 1960s. Next, we turn to several case studies on the pre-war period.

Similar Paths -- Sweden and Norway up to the 1960s

Sweden

Child care in Sweden was not instituted for mass use until in the 1960s (Gunnarsson, 1993). However, it dates back to 1854 when the first infant crèche was opened. The crèches were mainly for poor children of working mothers, and foundations or private organizations ran these institutions mostly based on charity. Parallel to this development, although starting in 1836, and later turning into crèches, were the opening of infant schools. Just like kindergartens that opened in 1890, these schools focused on pedagogy (education

and socialization). While mostly for the middle and upper classes, a few kindergartens, during the first three decades of this century, recruited children from the poor, with the intention to "dampen the growing class conflicts following the rapid process of industrialization and urbanization" (Gunnarsson, 1993:501).

Only limited public support was introduced in 1944, when the National Board of Health and Welfare assumed supervising authority over crèches. They were then re-named 'day care centers.' However, as we will see, later in the 1960s there was a shift towards greater government involvement.

Maternity leave policies introduced in 1932 made it possible for mothers to take up to three months unpaid leave (Haas, 1991). In 1937, Sweden introduced maternity insurance for nearly all women and maternity relief for needy mothers (Wennemo, 1994). In 1955, paid maternity leave was extended to 44 days and the eligibility requirement was 9 months employment (Kolberg, 1992).

Norway

Just like Sweden, child care institutions in Norway date back to the nineteenth century, although, even in Norway, greater government involvement did not occur until the post-war era. The earlier institutions were also based on different pedagogical traditions and catered to different classes. 'Child asylums' were established 1837, and while focusing on the preparation for school and adult life, served the poor. The Frobelian kindergarten established in the 1890s, on the other hand, emphasized pedagogy through children's play, and recruited children from the middle and upper classes. During the post-war years, there was a mix of these two traditions, which became integrated in what later came to be known as 'barnehage' (Bø, 1993). The integration of education and care into one day-care system was a planned alternative to the class-divided childcare experienced in the pre-war years (Leira, 1992).

While voluntary and charitable organization took the lead in establishing child care institutions even in Norway, some local governments contributed financial resources to the 'child asylums.' (Leira, 1992). In 1947, the Norwegian government assumed some supervision, guidance, regulation and economic support to existing day care facilities. Although the Labor party, while in office 1945-1965 (except for one month of non-socialist coalition government), supported the idea of day care centers and made it part of its party platform in 1949, no national child care legislation was passed until 1975.

A maternity leave policy was introduced in 1956, which entitled mothers (unmarried, divorced, deserted wives and widows) to an allowance for six weeks preceding and three months after delivery. The eligibility requirement was employment for 10 months before the leave. Separate taxation of married couples was introduced in 1959 (Skrede, 1993).

The Two Countries

In both countries, family support in terms of family cash benefits and tax reduction was introduced in the 1940s (Wennemo, 1994). In Norway in 1946, a family cash benefit was introduced. To be eligible, families had to have two or more children (this changed in 1969 to one child). In Sweden, this family cash benefit was introduced in 1948, and to be eligible, only one child was required. In both countries, the family cash benefit went directly to the mother. Furthermore, tax reductions (tax allowances) were introduced in the two countries in 1947 (as well as tax credits in Norway in 1955). However, Sweden abolished the tax allowance when the family cash benefit was introduced in 1948. Norway kept the tax allowance, and later added tax credits in combination with the allowance until 1970. Tax credits were reintroduced again in Norway in 1977 (Wennemo, 1994).

As stated above, there were no great differences during this period between the two countries in policy outcomes within the stated policy areas. However, women's position within the labor market and their mobilization in the two countries were undergoing changes. Following Hobson & Lindholm,¹³ we will turn to the 1930s to examine the "formation of political identities, repertoires for social action, and forms of power articulation and claim making" (Hobson & Lindholm, 1997:510) as these dimensions also may hold importance for subsequent policy development. During this period, women's right to paid work was being challenged in the two countries. Public debate on the issue had already started in the early 1920s. Access to paid work is a crucial dimension of citizenship. Since many social rights are linked to work status, "discrimination against women's access to jobs, and their right to keep them, has impact on their citizenship rights" (Ellingsaeter, 1995:204). In the following discussion on the pre-war period, I will look at the struggles for defending the right to paid work. Because social policies interconnected with the labor market, especially in Sweden, a framework leaving out access to paid work would fail to shed light on important elements of social policy development. Furthermore, several 'family policy'-measures were

introduced in the 1930s: maternity benefits covering about 90 % of all mothers, free maternity and childbirth services, housing program for families with several children including subsidies and interest-subsidized construction loans (Sweden) (Olson, 1986).

The Pre-war Period

Hobson & Lindholm (1997) direct our attention to the 1930s, a pivotal period of welfare state formation, highly significant in terms of how the Swedish women's mobilization made its imprint on the welfare state in response to several challenges at the time. One of those challenges was defending women's right to work, during a time of high unemployment and recession. Just like their counterparts in Norway, women in Sweden faced great challenges to the right for married women to work. A proposal to restrict access for married women to paid employment in permanent jobs was put forward at the Congress of Joint Trade Unions in Sweden in 1925, but was voted down by a majority (Skrede, 1993). More than nine motions proposing to restrict married women's employment were presented in Parliament, reflecting great opposition to married women's access to employment (Hobson & Lindholm, 1997). All political parties requested limitations on married women's employment.

The opposition to women's right to work in Norway was even stronger than in Sweden and resulted in 'innskrenkningsvedtaket,' the curtail-decision. This decision, Skrede claims, was the other side of the coin of the union movement's success of negotiating an 'industrial wage,' or 'family wage,' upon which the breadwinner model is premised. While the effect of the curtail-decision on married women's (or unmarried women) employment opportunities, in terms of dismissal rate, or not being hired, does not appear to have been great overall,¹⁴ it was of great significance in terms of supporting and maintaining a breadwinner ideology (Skrede, 1984, 1993).

Already in 1920 in Oslo, the Labor party, with support from its women's organization as well as a section of the Conservative party, advocated restrictions on women's employment by the municipalities (Ellingsaeter, 1995). Although some women within the Labor party and the unions opposed the curtail-decision, the decision was made at the Congress of Joint Trade Unions in 1925. Even though the resolution was framed in gender neutral terms, its intention was to bar married women employment (Ellingsaeter, 1995). Both Ellingsaeter and Leira point to the curtail-decision's *symbolic* effect, as the effects on

unemployment were minimal, and few men benefited from it by gaining a job (Leira, 1992; Ellingsaeter, 1995).

The ideological barriers against married women's employment gained strong hold in Norway, and the "weak position of the women's organization within party and unions early in the inter-war period" (Ellingsaeter, 1995:209) may partly explain the extent to which the male breadwinner norm took hold in Norway and its persistence through time. There was no consensus among women on the issue of employment, and on women's 'proper' role in society.

In contrast to Norway, all the women's organizations in Sweden in the 1930s "including the National Housewives Association, defended women's right to work on the basis that it was a citizenship right" (Hobson & Lindholm, 1997:486). Their ability to link married women's right to work to the issue of population decline, a very salient issue at the time, and framing it in terms of 'citizen right' and "the right to work as a mother's right" (Ellingsaeter, 1995:209) not only resulted in no restrictions on married women's right to work, but to anti-discrimination legislation passed in 1938. The firing of married or pregnant women, or single mothers became prohibited by law.

The population issue, which was put forward by Alva and Gunnar Myrdal in *Crisis in the Population Question* (*Kris i befolkningsfrågan*) published in 1934, was very salient at the time. The Myrdals took advantage of the fear of population decline by putting forward recommendations for social reforms, such as government subsidies to families to make it more affordable to raise children, public works, and public housing. As the Myrdals' recommendations coincided with the Social Democratic party's "commitment to social equality and enhanced material welfare" (Haas, 1991), many of them were implemented.

The Swedish feminists' ability to overcome earlier cleavages in the women's movement, such as class and family status (single, divorced, married women), through the citizenship framework made the 1930s a turning point (Hobson & Lindholm, 1997). By turning the debate on married women's right to work "into a fight for the working women's right to marry and have children" (Hobson & Lindholm, 1997:493), women's groups took advantage of the public debate on the population crisis. In Norway, on the other hand, women's position in the labor market was very weak, and according to Leira, women were not conceptualized as workers. In spite of the labor shortage in Norway during the 1950s and 1960s, no efforts were made to get women in to the labor force (Leira, 1992). Women's struggle for the right to paid work,

as well as to equal pay for equal work, would become publicly debated and gain great attention (Mykland, 1979; Ellingsaeter, 1995) again in the 1970s by a highly publicized case of layoffs.¹⁵

While now turning to the 1960s, we will see how women's mobilization, or lack thereof, was played out within the political arena in the two countries, and look at some of the explanations for policy divergence.

Developments in the 1960s

Until the 1960s, no great efforts had been taken on the part of either the Swedish or the Norwegian government to increase its involvement in child care or in reforming maternity leave policies. The two countries did not differ tremendously in terms of these policies. However, the two countries began to diverge in the 1960s. In this section, I will first state the changes that took place in the 1960s in Sweden and Norway within the policy areas under study. Next, I look at possible explanations for these developments.

The Swedish Case

In 1962, there was a shift from the government's limited support for child care (introduced in 1944 when the National Board of Health and Welfare assumed supervising authority over day care centers) to a greater effort to expand day care provisions (Gunnarsson, 1993). Expanding public child care provisions became an explicit government policy goal. As women began to join the labor force in unprecedented numbers, spurred on by employment in the expanding public sector, the demand for child care was increasing, making demand exceed supply. In 1966, only about 10 % of children under the age of seven were in public child care or publicly funded family child care. In 1979, the figure rose to about 40 % (Hinnfors, 1992).¹⁶

Not only did changes in public child care provisions take place during the 1960s, the legislated maternity leave period was extended to six months of paid leave in 1963 (Haas, 1991). Furthermore, in 1967, the Parliament appointed a family policy commission "to investigate how the social insurance system could change to improve women's employment and sexual equality" (Haas, 1991:383). The committee proposed a change from maternity leave to parental leave, to make fathers eligible for benefits. It took

another seven years, however, of proposals and revisions by the committee before parental leave was adopted. This was due to the process of getting input from "industrial shop floors, neighborhood study circles, local union meetings, and women's organizations" (1991:383).

Women's labor force participation increased from 48 % in 1960 to 68% in 1975, but the supply of public child care provisions were more or less unchanged from 1960-1966 (Hinnfors, 1992). With women's rising labor market participation, pressure for solutions to the child care issue was increasing.¹⁷

The Norwegian Case

In contrast to Sweden, the Norwegian government did not take on greater responsibility in either of the policy areas. The Norwegian approach to child care resembled the one during the earlier years of public child care in Sweden: it was a preventive measure for children from families with special needs (Leira, 1992). However, there was a shift, according to Leira, in the 1960s, not in the actual provisions of public child care, as day care centers still were few, but in the government's approach. While earlier, the government mostly saw itself as responsible for supervision, inspection and control of existing day care centers, in the 1960s it began to fund part of the running costs. Thus, a partial move from "a period of supervision" to a "period of subvention" occurred, according to Leira (1992).

In 1960, less than 2 percent of the pre-school children (ages 0-6) were in some kind of day care (Leira, 1992). Most of the few existing institutions were still privately owned, by housewives' associations, parent cooperatives, residents' association, voluntary and charitable organizations. The responsibility for the provisions of child care lay in the hands of the local authorities, and the national government would provide state subsidies for running costs. In spite of this, the subsidies were not "sufficient to encourage local provisions" (Leira, 1992:76). Thus, child care provisions were left to private initiatives. Although the Labor government appointed a commission in 1959 to prepare an overview, and to assess the need of day care provisions, no national child care legislation was passed (Leira, 1992).

Why was the shift of greater government responsibility taking place in Sweden and not in Norway at the time? How did these changes come about? Which factors influenced this development? Next follows a discussion on the Swedish case and the Norwegian case examining some of the factors which influenced this development.

Factors Influencing Social Policy Development in Sweden

One is hard pressed to find any account on Swedish social policy development in the 1960s which does not mention the 'sex role' and 'gender equality' debate. The public debate centered around women's 'double roles' and 'sex roles' and was influenced by two works published in 1962, Eva Moberg's essay "Kvinnans villkorliga frigivning" (Women's Conditional Liberation), and *Kvinnors liv och arbete* (Women's Life and Work) a joint Swedish-Norwegian social science analysis (Hinnfors, 1992; Jensen & Mahon, 1993; Bergqvist, 1998). Moberg argued that women could only be liberated when their role as mother no longer is their principal role and she suggested that a break with traditional gender roles was necessary for a 'humane society' (Bergqvist, 1998). Men's role also needed to be changed, according to Moberg, as men are pressured to advance and compete. Instead, men should lower their economic expectations and participate in household work and raise children (Haas, 1991). The joint social science project provided the "theoretical and empirical fuel in the debate and contributed to a knowledge base for new reforms of family policy" (Bergqvist, 1998:10). It placed the changing of traditional gender roles on the political agenda (both the Social Democratic and the Liberal party made it part of their programs), and this contributed to reform efforts. Some of these efforts were: the expansion of public child care provisions; changes in maternity leave; and later, in 1974, the introduction of paid parental leave; and, the elimination of joint taxation in 1971. Although the public debate in the 1960s certainly contributed, the policy outcome was a result of compromises and struggles, often involving pressure from women in organizations on the labor market, political parties, and their women's wings (Bergqvist, 1998). The government's philosophy had shifted by the mid 1960s in favor of the women's two roles model (housewife-mother and wage-earner), primarily as a result of the public debate on gender roles, according to Haas (1991).

In fact, not only did the Social Democratic party in government shift its philosophy, but there was a shift in all the five main parties regarding their stance on public policies which facilitate women's employment. The parliamentary debate in the 1960s on the issue of public child care reflects the division within and between the parties about policy preferences. Although there were conflicting views on the public child care issue within all the parties, there was no sharp divide between the socialist and non-

socialist blocs on the issue (Hinnfors, 1992). Instead the Liberals sided with the Social Democrats in their support for the dual-earner family model (Hinnfors, 1992).¹⁸ The Social Democrats were at first split between those who favored the male breadwinner model, thus, subsidizing housewives (through child care allowances), and those who supported the dual-earner model with public child care expansion. This split was mirrored even within the women's wing of the party (Bergqvist, 1998). The chairperson of the women's wing of the Social Democratic party, however, supported the introduction of both a child care allowance (government subsidy, similar to a mother's wage) and the expansion of public child care provisions (Bergqvist, 1998:11). For some, the housewife model, underpinned by policies such as child care allowance, appeared ideal, as it meant moving away from having to engage in heavy industrial work.

The child care allowance issue had in different forms and at different times support from all the parties (Bergqvist, 1998). The only exception was the Conservative party, which did not support government intervention in the sphere of caring, and prioritized tax deductions. Not until 1972 did the Conservative party come to accept some form of child care allowance, and very reluctantly some form of public child care provisions (Hinnfors, 1992).

The Liberal party as well as the Center party supported both child care allowance and public child care expansion, albeit to various extents. The Communist party, on the other hand, had a very vague position on the issue, yet strongly supported the expansion of public child care provisions. The Social Democrats, however, abandoned their support for child care allowance in 1972, instead they gave support to parental leave (Hinnfors, 1992).

In fact, all the parties changed their position and preference for family policy instruments between 1960-1973 in response to changes in economic, social and political conditions (Hinnfors, 1992). The growing Swedish economy in the early 1960s and its labor shortage, and after the mid 1960s, the great expansion of the public sector encouraged women's mass entry into the labor market. The dual-earner family model gradually came to dominate and solutions to the child care issue became part of the political agenda.

Haas suggests that the expansion of the Swedish economy and the resulting shortage of male workers partly explain social policy development in Sweden. Instead of recruiting foreign workers (whose assimilation was perceived to be problematic), women were encouraged to enter the labor market (Haas,

1991). In order to make the female labor force more qualified, the government expanded public vocational training programs to include more housewives, and the government increased the number of study grants for higher education, which led to increases in recruitment of females (Haas, 1991). Additionally, all the protective legislation which had limited women's participation in certain jobs was abolished during the 1960s. Gunnarsson states the labor shortage as one, among several factors, which may help explain the expansion of public child care in Sweden. Public investment in childcare, Leira argues, was undertaken in Sweden to meet this demand for labor (Leira, 1992). Furthermore, both Gunnarsson and Hinnfors claim that the cost of living increase made the dual-earner model financially necessary. According to Gunnarsson, this in turn explains the efforts to "create a comprehensive support system for families with young children, a system designed to enable mothers and fathers to work outside the home..." (Gunnarsson, 1993:497). Another factor, Gunnarsson argues, was the strong women's movement changing gender role ideologies in society. The major factor, however, according to Gunnarsson, was the long and stable social democratic rule, which has enabled the party "to put its ideas into action" (1993:491). These ideas coincided with the ideas put forth in the debate about changing gender roles.

In sum, several factors have been suggested as influencing social policy development in Sweden. We will return to some of these explanations in the discussion and conclusion section.

Explanations for Norwegian 'Exceptionalism'

In contrast to Sweden, where day care provisions have been more oriented towards the demands of production of labor, in Norway the main orientation has been socialization (Leira, 1992) and the needs of children (Ellingsaeter, 1998). Leira argues that Norwegian child care policies have not conceptualized married women and mothers as 'labour' (Leira, 1992). Despite the shortage of labor in Norway during the 1950s and the 1960s, women were not recruited as workers, whereas in Sweden, they were encouraged to join the labor force.

Wennemo argues that the participation in government by leftist and religious parties creates the preconditions for an employment-based family benefit system, which tends to support the 'traditional family type' (Wennemo, 1994). She claims that "an important element in the ideology of religious parties is the concept of family wage" (Wennemo, 1994:69). This is supported by Skrede's claim that the 'family

wage,¹⁹ which the Labor Party and unions supported, anchored the male breadwinner ideology in fiscal, industrial, and housing policies in Norway (Skrede, 1984, 1993), thus, this may have slowed the development of public child care. Several measures were taken by the Labor government 1945-1960 which reinforced the male breadwinner model, such as a housing policy which ensured moderately priced housing, even for low-income families, through subsidized loans, low interest rates, and the access to regulated credit (Skrede, 1984).

The German occupation during World War II is also believed to have influenced social policy development in Norway. Leira suggests that the involvement in the war may have affected the policy priorities after the war, and that public child care was not one of the government's top priorities. "[B]asic necessities such as health services and housing were lacking and strongly in demand." Thus, "a cost-demanding reform such as day care had to wait" (Leira, 1992:73). Furthermore, the rationing of consumer goods during the post-war period through the 1950s meant less spending and need for two earner incomes (Skrede, 1984). The male breadwinner/housewife model was thereby maintained and there was little need for an expansion of public child care. The Children's Benefit (Barnetrygden) (listed as Family Cash Benefit in Appendix A.), established in 1946, further reinforced married women's status as mothers (cash benefit was given to families with two or more children, and transferred to the mother). However, as Leira points out, it also acknowledged public responsibility in child rearing as it subsidized the caring for children at home. This is "considered as an important step forward towards universalism in the development of the Norwegian welfare state" (Skrede, 1993:17).

The political parties' stands on public child care were varied, as in Sweden. The Labor party was the first to support center-based day care for pre-school children, and this was made part of the party program from 1949. Not until 1960 did most of the other parties do the same (Leira, 1992). However, the Labor party itself was divided "over the aims of state intervention, and over the division of labour and responsibility between the state and family" (Leira, 1992:69). While in Norway the divide was over selective approaches (targeting only the needy or special groups) versus universalist aims of state involvement, in Sweden it was over the type of care (child care allowances versus public child care). Not until 1975, did the Labor party unite behind the universalist approach, although the modes and the scope of state intervention were still controversial (Leira, 1992).

Women in Norway, as we will learn in the discussion on the 1970s, were more divided on the issues of public child care and mothers' employment than in Sweden. Beginning in 1967, women have organized specific election campaigns. This has involved cooperation between women within political parties and women's organizations outside the established political arena, and reflects one of the few issues that has united women across the ideological spectrum. A process of institutionalization has taken place, as state agencies have taken over the campaigning and are providing funding and administrative resources for it (Skjeie, 1993). While the women's movement has taken an integrationist approach in both countries, their articulation and some of their strategies have differed.

The development of the two countries during the 1960s reflects policy divergence. Although public child care did not expand much in Sweden during the first half of the decade, from 1966 and onwards, however, there was a rapid expansion (Hinnfors, 1992). The government had assumed expansion of child care as an explicit goal. However, it was unable to keep up with the rising demand. In Norway, on the other hand, there was only a selective approach "aimed preventively at children and families with special needs" (Leira, 1992:73). Thus, private child care arrangements had to be sought for the majority of dual-earner families. As public child care provision were scarce, private child minding was an expanding female occupation during this time (Jensen, 1989). Since child minding was informal employment, unreported to the government to avoid paying taxes, the official employment figures, Jensen holds, were misleading (Jensen, 1989). The licensing of informal child minding was discussed during the debate on the Day Care Act in the 1970s. However, no action was taken, leaving private child minding to market forces. Women's labor force participation in Norway was only 36 % in 1960, whereas in Sweden the figure was 50 %. The dual-earner family form was much more prevalent in Sweden and it anchored itself there as child care was included in the wider framework of labor market policies, which occupied a pivotal place in Swedish economic management. This was not the case in Norway.

The parental leave policies also differed between the two countries. Whereas paid maternity leave extended to 12 weeks at flat rate in Norway in 1968, it was 6 months with a 65 % wage replacement rate in Sweden during the same time.

Moreover, there was a clear difference in political agenda setting between the two countries. The women's movement within and outside the established political arena in Sweden put forward demands for

changing gender roles and took advantage of the public debate on sex roles. The feminist movement in Norway, however was not as strong in the earlier part of the decade and was rather divided. The demand for public child care was less strongly articulated in Norway. However, as we will learn in the discussion about the 1970s, Norwegian women united behind a call for increased political representation, which culminated in the 'Women's Coup' in 1971. The extent of government involvement in the social policy areas under study, even during the 1970s, was still very low in Norway, while in Sweden it was rapidly increasing. In Norway, state involvement existed in terms of providing cash benefits, such as child allowances and maternity grants. Despite the Norwegian government's non-involvement approach to child care provisions, there was a slight shift in its approach to social policy in the 1970s. Next, we will turn to the social policy development during the 1970s in the two countries, followed by a discussion on the factors influencing these policy outcomes.

In sum, Norwegian 'exceptionalism' has been explained in terms of the existence of religious influence and adherence to the family wage ideology, a weak and divided women's movement, the existence of an informal market for child minding, and Norway's involvement in the war. In the discussion and conclusion section we will look closer at some of these explanations.

The Swedish Case in the 1970s

The real expansion of public child care occurred in the 1970s, although demand always exceeded supply. The government assumed greater responsibility for child care provisions. In 1973, 11 % of pre-school children were in public child care or publicly funded family child care (full time or part time). In 1979, the figure rose to about 40 % (Hinnfors, 1992; Jensen & Mahon, 1993). Women's labor force participation increased from 50 % in 1960, to 60 % in 1970. For women with children under the age of seven, participation increased from 32 % in 1960, to 50% in 1970, and to 60 % in 1975 (Kolberg, 1992; Bergqvist, 1999). The dual-earner family form clearly came to dominate in Sweden.

In 1974, the parental leave insurance replaced the maternity leave legislation. It was now up to the parents to decide who would take the leave and for what period, and they had the option to share it. Fathers were granted 10 extra days paid at the time of childbirth. While employment-based, the parental leave insurance covered 90 % of the income, although there was a flat rate for those without employment history.

The parental leave period was extended in 1976 from six to seven months, and again in 1978, to eight months with one additional month paid at minimum rate (Haas, 1991).

An important change in tax law took place already in 1966. However, it was made mandatory in 1971 – the individual tax system was implemented (Haas, 1991). This change resulted in lessening the tax burden on families. Furthermore, the tax reform of 1971 reinforced the dual-earner model (Hinnfors, 1992). In the earlier tax system, spouses' incomes were jointly taxed at a more favorable tax bracket than single tax filers, but this was only favorable if the two spouses did not work full time. Thus, it provided disincentives for the dual-earner family forms. In fact, there were few incentives for women to enter paid employment in the earlier system. With the new system, spouses' were often taxed separately, and the economic disincentives built into the earlier system was abolished (Haas, 1991; Hinnfors, 1992).

The Norwegian Case in the 1970s

In 1975, the Day Care Act of 1975²⁰ (Lov om barnehager) was introduced. It "represent[ed] a break with the selective approaches favoured in previous state policies," (Leira, 1992:77), as the Act made local *planning* of day care provisions mandatory. However, as the *actual* provisions were not made mandatory, no real expansion of public child care actually occurred. In 1975, only 7 % of all pre-school children were in state-sponsored day care, up from approximately 3% in 1970 (Leira, 1992). Women's labor force participation was still low; in 1973, it was about 50 % (same as in Sweden in 1960) and rising to a little over 60 % in 1979 (about the same figure for Sweden ten years earlier) (Sainsbury, 1996). The dual-earner family ideology was only beginning to take root in Norway.

Parental leave legislation was instituted in 1978, giving fathers the possibility to share most of the leave with the mother (4 1/2 months). While the wage replacement rate was 100 %, there were many restrictions to the leave that prevented fathers from taking advantage of it. The father's eligibility depended on the mother qualifying for earnings-related benefits, and her employment record determined the benefit level of both parents. If she worked part time, this affected the father's benefit negatively. Furthermore, fathers could only claim benefits if the mother returned to work or studied full time (Sainsbury, 1996).

In 1970, a tax reform took place, abolishing the income-related tax reductions and deductions for providers and replacing it with extended child benefit scheme with fixed rates (Skrede, 1993).

Discussion on the Swedish Case

The introduction of parental leave insurance in 1974 reflects the institutionalization of the new attitudes to gender relations (Bergqvist, 1998). A family law had in fact, "changed to explicitly state that spouses should share breadwinning, housework, and child care" (Haas, 1991:384). While the Parental Leave Act of 1974 allowed either parent to take a leave after birth of a child, it not only embraced the idea of the dual-earner family, but also, the idea that the father can and *should* care for children (Bergqvist, 1999). While having the support of the Social Democratic party, trade unions, and influential social scientists, the parental leave policy "fitted in well with the concern for the low birth rate, an interest in preserving women's employment opportunities, and a new concern for men's liberation" (Haas, 1991:383). Haas points to several factors that account for the easy passage of the bill.

Firstly, at the time of the 1974 legislation, 21 % of the members of Parliament (MP) were women (15.5 % in Norway in 1973) (Bergqvist, 1999). This, Haas claims, was "reflecting both the history of the feminist movement in Sweden and the type of political system Sweden has" (Haas, 1991:383). In fact, the second-wave women's movement which emerged in the 1960s, had "radicalized the terms of the 1960s sex-role debate while it also challenged the primacy of class struggle" (Jenson & Mahon, 1993:89) to which the Social Democratic party was fully dedicated.²¹ The women's wing of the Social Democratic party, while influenced by the discourse of the feminist movement, began to exhibit greater political independence²² (Jenson & Mahon, 1993). This independence culminated in the 'Women's Coup' in 1976 as a response to the failure of the Social Democratic government to include a 'father's month' (exclusively assigned parental leave to fathers) in its proposal to the extension of the parental leave. A group of 18 (out of 36) Social Democratic MPs bypassed Parliamentary group rules.²³ Without informing party leadership, and while having been recommended twice by the Parliamentary group not to submit the bill, the MPs submitted it anyway to the Parliament Office Clerk (Karlsson, 1994). This move reflected a call for a stronger stand on the issue of equality. Due to "the existing wage differentials and career prospects" according to the MPs, the parental leave legislation would not lead to an increased sharing between the parents of the leave, as was the Act's objective, but would result in women staying home (Bergqvist, 1998:16).

A second factor that help explain the easy passage of the bill was the changing structure of the labor market, according to Haas. Increased labor market participation among women changed their outlook, and “fewer women were content with being private domestic workers” (Haas, 1991:384). Thus, preserving employment opportunities through legislated parental leave appeared desirable.

Lastly, Haas suggests that increased competition for voters may have played a role in the support for the parental leave legislation. In fact, all parties advocated gender equality at the time, and the non-socialist party coalition that took office in 1976-1982 even extended parental leave (Haas, 1991).

Furthermore, the issue of separate taxation, while first taken up by the Liberal party, also reflected changing attitudes towards gender relations (Eduards, 1991). The Tax Reform Act of 1971 provided the “institutional preconditions” for gender equality (Bergqvist, 1998), as women now were viewed as independent individuals. Dual-earner family forms were no longer penalized by the tax system.

Although there existed wage differentials between the sexes,²⁴ employed women benefited from wage negotiations by the labor unions (Ruggie, 1987). “[A]s a result of the gradual institutionalization of the policy of wage solidarity,²⁵ the wages of all low-paid workers began to rise in relation to higher-paid workers” (Ruggie, 1987:261), which further encouraged labor force participation. Swedish women embraced the dual-earner model early on and were able to come to a consensus, or at least close to one, regarding the need for an expansion of public child care and parental leave policies. This was not the case in Norway.

In Sweden, the radical socialist feminist movement, Group 8, which was formed in 1971, “reformulate[d] the debate utilizing the unfamiliar discourse of unequal gender power” (Jensen & Mahon, 1993:89). While they influenced the framing of issues, their political discourse was adopted by the women’s wing of the Social Democratic party, who brought many demands to the political agenda, such as adequate public child care, housing reform, and six hour work day for all.

The 1970s also involved women claiming a role within the labor unions. Although Swedish women had won the struggle for married women’s right to work in the earlier era of welfare state building by using the citizenship framework, their position within the labor market and within the unions was relatively weak (although, not compared to Norway). Because many women engaged in part time work, they were not looked upon favorably by unions. Unions originally perceived the history of part time as exploitative and

looked upon women as 'traitors' to class solidarity due to their employment status (Hernes, 1987). The Confederation of Trade Unions opposed part time work, "fearing it would undermine union control of working conditions" (Klausen, 1999:275). A few factors may help explain the more influential position that women gained within the labor movement from the 1970s and onward: increased competition between the political parties, increased feminist consciousness among blue-collar women workers, rising union membership, the expanding public sector and women's increased membership in white-collar unions, as well as women's increased political activism, and the emerging cleavages between the private and public sector.

Discussion on the Norwegian Case

With the introduction of the Day Care Act in 1975, there was a break with earlier selective approaches. "[T]he ambition of the lawmakers was to make state-sponsored day care available to all pre-school children whose parents wanted it" (Leira, 1992:77). Thus, they proposed a universalist approach. Initiated by a bourgeois coalition government in 1969 and introduced by the Labor government in 1975, the legislation had cross-party support. The committee²⁶ appointed by the bourgeois coalition in 1969, while making an assessment of existing child care provisions and future needs for child care, proposed that private child care should fall within the state's jurisdiction. Unlike the Parliamentary debate to follow later, the committee considered 'market forces' regarding the informal care sector (Leira, 1992). The utilization of private child minding was extensive and not regulated by the government. Part of the considerations behind state-sponsored day care was the idea of creating equal opportunity for children. Furthermore, behind the idea of introducing a single term, 'barnehage,' for all types of child care was "a wish to homogenize the provisions for pre-school children and to eradicate the class stamp that was still discernable" (Leira, 1992:81).

There was a distinct difference between the committee debate and the Parliamentary debate, in which the latter indicated that state-sponsored day care was primarily seen as "a professional supplement to primary socialization within the family, and provided in the best interests of the child" (Leira, 1992:83). In the Parliamentary debate on public child care, and in contrast to the 1969 committee and to the Swedish case, equality between men and women and the demand for labor in the economy "were not central issues"

(1992:83). Furthermore, of greater salience was the issue of whether state-sponsored child care should be based on Christian values (Protestant Lutheran).

In fact, this was a heated public debate in Norway starting in the late 1960s until early 1980s. The controversy was over whether or not religion should be included in the opening paragraph of the Day Care Act of 1975. Proponents for the inclusion of religion argued that the majority of Norwegians support the state church, and consistency in values at home, at day care, at school and church was important for “efficient learning as well as personal security” (Bø, 1993:401). The opponents claimed that the increasing religious heterogeneity in Norway would lead to confusion and insecurity among many children (1993:401).²⁷ This connection between child care and religion is unique to Norway, as the issue has not gained importance in Sweden.²⁸ Religious sentiments have been weak in Sweden, and, thus, a strong fundamentalist religious movement supporting the traditional division of labor between the sexes has been absent (Haas, 1991).

Mobilized religious influence such as the existence of Christian parties and their participation in government have been shown to influence the kind of family benefit system that becomes institutionalized, as suggested by Wennemo (1994). The combination of leftist and religious parties, Wennemo claims, tends to result in an employment-based system, lending support to the traditional family type. The existence of leftist parties, and no religious parties, in government, however, tend to create citizenship-based benefits. Although Wennemo’s data show that Norway had no religious party *in government* at the time of the introduction of a family benefit scheme, or during the two years preceding it (assuming that the presence of a religious party would reflect the relative strength of the party at that point in time), a Christian party did exist at the time.

In fact, the influence of the Christian People’s party (Kristelig Folkeparti) in Norway has been noted as a factor which may account for, or partly explain, Norwegian exceptionalism (Leira, 1992). Preference for traditional nuclear family patterns has been more pronounced in Norway than in Sweden, possibly as a result of the influence of the Christian People’s Party. It may have had the effect of ‘maintaining’ an ideology based on a strict division of labor between the sexes, thus supporting the male breadwinner/housewife gender roles.

In Norway, unlike in the other Scandinavian countries, the Christian People's party was established comparably early (in 1933) and has held a relatively strong electoral position (Karvonen, 1994). Although largely a regional party in West Norway from the start, it became a national party in the post-war era. From then onward, peaking in 1973,²⁹ the party has played a rather prominent role in Norwegian politics.³⁰ In Sweden, where the Christian Democratic party (Kristdemokratiska Samhällspartiet) was established in 1964, the party experienced its greatest electoral success as late as 1998 when it received 11.8 % of the vote. However, the party has played an overall minor role in Swedish politics.

Just like in Sweden, the political parties in Norway were divided over their support for different provider models. The Labor party and the Socialist Left party advocated the dual-earner family model, giving support to expanding public child care, whereas the bourgeois parties supported family policies including day care which maintained the male breadwinner model. However, all parties were supportive of increased government subsidies for day care provisions (for running costs and for loans at low interest rates for child care facilities constructions). The only exception was the Progress party (Framsrittspartiet), a right wing party advocating radical tax cuts. The type of child care that the parties support differ to a large extent. Socialist parties (Labor party, Socialist Left party, Red Election party) support full time coverage, while centrist parties (Center party, Christian People's party, Liberals) advocate part time coverage and a lower level of coverage (Bratton & Ray, 1998, unpublished paper). The conservative and right wing parties (Conservative party, Progress party) are also in favor of part time coverage, or no government interference at all in the caring sphere, and low or no level of coverage (Leira, 1992).

The final legislative outcome, the Day Care Act of 1975, gave local governments the authority to decide whether to provide child care, as well as what forms and what extent of it, even though the 1969 committee recommended strict state control and liberal spending on child care. In reality, this meant that only the planning of day care provisions was made mandatory, whereas the actual provision for child care was kept voluntary³¹ (Leira, 1992). Thus, meager provisions resulted.

Leira states, "in principle the Day Care Act represented a break with the selective approaches favoured in previous state policies" (Leira, 1992:77). However, the stress on local autonomy in the actual legislation "implied that selectivity was still basic in the state's approach to [child care]" (1992:88). In fact, those who demanded public child care expansion in Norway were not 'strongly articulated' and represented

by national organizations or lobbyists (1992:130). "Women's associations were divided on the issue of day care and mothers' employment in the mid 1970s, and some of the day care activists advocated day care as relief for the home-based mother, not as a service for the employed one" (1992:131). This is in contrast to Sweden, where there was more of a consensus in support for the dual-earner model, and where there was strong pressure from the women's movement and women's political party wings for the expansion of public child care provisions.

There has been an emphasis on the difference between the sexes within the women's movement in Norway. Women have also stressed "women's rights to be represented by women," and according to Skjeie, the legitimacy of 'descriptive representation'³² in Norwegian society has furthered women's cause (Skjeie, 1991:94). It has been the basis for the introduction of the quota system for public office. Just like Sweden, Norway experienced a women's coup, in 1971, which centered around the issue of representation; namely, attempting to increase women's representation through campaigns in connection with local and national elections (Skjeie, 1991). This coup was staged by an 'unusual alliance' between women's wings of political parties and women groups outside the established political arena. It resulted in the election of a majority of women members in three large local councils, one of which was Oslo (Skjeie, 1991).

Although Skjeie's account of women's mobilization in Norway during the 1970s appears to be inconsistent with Leira's characterization of the same period, it is due mainly to the fact that they examine different aspects of women's agency. While Skjeie looks at women's organizations' effort to increase women's political *representation* in local and national assemblies, Leira focuses on women's organizations' stands on issues of child care and mother's employment and their lack of unity. Although Leira states that the women's movement brought 'women's issues' such as abortion on demand,³³ women's right to paid work,³⁴ and access to child care into the public arena, and later onto the political agenda, she suggests that women's agency played a minor role in the political decision-making process of public child care legislation, due possibly to the lack of unity among women on the issue. Skjeie, on the other hand, emphasizes the 'unusual alliance' towards the end of the 1960s, between women within and outside of the political parties (Skjeie, 1991). What united the women was "the 'common concerns of womanhood'" which also had united them nearly a century earlier in their struggle for suffrage (Skjeie, 1991:93). This concern was based on the idea that men cannot represent women's interests and values, as "women would

add new values and new issues to the political agendas” (1993:232). Thus, women called for greater representation in politics, and the political discourse was often framed in terms of ‘conflicting interests’ between men and women or ‘complementary resources’ of the sexes (1991:93). However, neither argument “specified which experiences were complementary and which interests were in conflict” (1991:93). Not only did the lack of clarity on this issue make women’s demands appear less threatening “to established party priorities and leadership,” but the arguments also suited the ideological framework of both the left and the right (the left adopted the ‘conflict of interests,’ and the right the ‘complementary resources’) (1991:93).

The rhetoric of difference, or the ideology of separate natures of men and women, was abandoned within the women’s movement in Sweden. In fact, the sex role and gender equality debates in the 1960s involving the “vision of equal parenthood which became public policy in the 1960s” (Bergqvist, 1998:5) and was crowned by the parental leave policy in 1974, mostly did away with the rhetoric of difference. The parental leave legislation was premised on the idea of gender neutrality.³⁵ As we will learn in the next section discussing the 1980s and early 1990s, the rhetoric of equal opportunity had taken hold in several policy areas.

The 1980s and early 1990s – Trends of Policy Convergence

In this section I draw on Stetson & Mazur (1995) and the mainstream welfare state literature, as well as work on the EU (European Union), structuring my discussion around the changes that took place within the two countries in the 1980s, and in the early 1990s. Stetson & Mazur assess the record of the state in promoting the status of women, and identify factors that may help explain variations cross-nationally in ‘state feminism’. They claim that high levels of state feminism in a country can be reached through women’s policy machinery, which consists of “agencies that are established by statute, administrative directive, or political resolution” ...”to promote equality and respond to women’s concerns about maternity leave and child care” (Stetson & Mazur, 1995:5,20). State feminism here refers to “activities of government structures that are formally charged with furthering women’s status and rights” (1995:1-2). They find that Norway scores high on the two dimensions that comprise their ‘state feminism’ measure. The first, ‘level of policy influence,’ measures the “extent to which women’s policy offices [have] an impact

on equal employment policy for women" (1995:275). The second, 'level of policy access,' measures the extent to which women's policy offices provide access directly or indirectly to feminist groups, interests, and activists in such a way that they become more powerful actors in the policy process" (1995:276).

Stetson & Mazur's framework on state feminism is useful to help us understand the trend of gradual policy convergence between the two countries. By examining the extent to which women's policy machinery creates opportunities for women's agency to obtain access to the policy making process and influence the policy outcome, I will emphasize how the establishment of the Equal Status Council in Norway has been one important factor behind bringing about greater convergence between the two countries.

Government initiatives in Norway such as the Equal Pay Committee established in 1949, and the Equal Pay Council in 1959, although lacking authority to 'develop women's policy,' were early attempts to promote equality between the sexes (Bystydzienski, 1995). The Equal Status Council established in 1972 (a transformation of the Equal Pay Council) moved the agenda away from solely focusing on equal pay for men and women (for work of equal value) to "cultivat[ing] a network of agencies responsible for the implementation and formulation of policies involved with the promotion of sex-based equality"...."in all sectors of society; family life, working life, education, and the community in general" (Bystydzienski, 1995:186,193). The network comprised of national, regional, and local equality offices within or outside the established government institutions. The use of campaign activities to increase representation of women in elections, and to engage in public debates on gender inequalities, and the increased interaction and exchange between the radical feminist movement and women's organizations resulted in strengthening women's agency and made the Equal Status Council very influential.

Just as the Labor party in Norway was the driving force behind the Equal Status Council initiative in 1972, the Swedish Social Democratic party was behind the creation of the Advisory Council to the Prime Minister on Equality Between Men and Women in Sweden in 1972 (Elman, 1995). However, it created an ideological environment in which the goal for gender equality was framed in gender neutral terms and where the notion of equal opportunity dominated. Gender-specific measures were looked upon with suspicion. Other initiatives that have been taken later in Sweden, such as the Equality Ombudsman, established by a bourgeois coalition government, have followed in the gender-neutral footsteps, and the focus has been solely on

employment issues (Elman, 1995). The Swedish women's movement has not been engaged in the activities of the Equality Ombudsman, and unlike the Norwegian counterpart, this state agency has not "empowered feminist activities or organizations" (Stetson & Mazur, 1995:281).

During the latter part of the 1970s, both Norway and Sweden implemented equality legislation: in Norway, the Equal Status Act was introduced in 1978, and in Sweden, the Equal Opportunities Act was passed a year later. While recounting the process that led to the passing of the Equal Status Act of 1978, Skjeie shows how the Norwegian feminist movement put its mark on the bill, albeit various actors were involved in the process. The committee responsible for drafting the Act was set up by the Labor party, at first comprising of the party itself and union representatives. The proposed Act was in direct confrontation with the Confederation of Trade Unions as the Labor party was seen as overstepping its boundary by seeking to regulate wage negotiations.³⁶ The sole focus of the proposed bill was at first wage regulation. The Confederation did reluctantly and after hearing arguments based on the need to comply with the ILO convention's 'equal pay for work of equal value', agree to comply, but argued that pay disputes involving collective agreements only could be settled in the labor courts (Skjeie, 1991).

Since the Labor party depended on support from the Socialist Left party to get the proposal through Parliament, and the Socialist Left party sided with the feminist movement, the Labor party had to compromise. As the Socialist Left party and the feminists argued against a gender-neutral profile of the proposed bill and its restricted focus on wage regulation, and the Labor party had difficulties gaining enough support, it had to make concessions. By acknowledging that gender-based discrimination is suffered mainly by women, "an opening for the use of positive discrimination in favor of women was established in the law's general clause" (Skjeie, 1991:88). The Act focused primarily on granting women equal access to education and paid employment. However, during the 1980s, with the increased number of women entering the labor market, "the equal opportunity agenda has shifted towards an increasing concern with care policies" (1991:90).

By limiting the focus on employment issues (and having jurisdiction only over the 10 % of the labor market which is not bound by collective agreements), and by assuming gender-neutral notions of equality, the Swedish Equality Ombudsman, and the earlier Advisory Council to the Prime Minister on Equality Between Men and Women, have been ineffective in increasing gender equality. The Equal Status Council in Norway,

however, has been an efficient agency in bringing gender issues to the fore and have these issues to bear on all public policy areas, as well as increasing women's influence in the policymaking process.

In the 1980s, the government in the two countries increased their responsibility in the two policy areas under study. Public child care expanded to include 21 % of pre-school children in Norway, and a little over 40 % in Sweden. By 1988, the equivalent figures had risen to 32 % and 49 %, respectively (Leira, 1992; Sainsbury, 1996). The 1990s saw additional increases: in Norway in 1995, 44 % of pre-school children were in public child care, whereas the figure for Sweden was 59 % (Bergqvist, 1999).

Parental leave extensions also took place in the two countries. In the early 1980s, the leave duration in Norway was 18 weeks, increasing twofold by the mid-1990s to 42 weeks at 100 % wage replacement (or optionally, 52 weeks at 80 %). In Sweden, during most of the 1980s, the parental leave was 9 months at 90 % and three more months at a flat rate. The father's eligibility was dependent on the mother's eligibility for parental leave until 1987 in Sweden. This is still the case in Norway, and has been one reason for the small number of fathers taking advantage of the leave. If the mother at all engages in paid employment in Norway, the amount of the benefit is reduced. Thus, there is an incentive to maintain the traditional family form. Furthermore, in 1993, Norway introduced a father's month, a period exclusively reserved for the father. In Sweden, this was implemented in 1995 (Sainsbury, 1996; Bergqvist, 1999).

Taxation in the two countries has become more similar, although there still exist differences, which can be seen as incentive structures for supporting certain provider models. By the mid-1990s, Sweden had a completely individualized tax system, with no tax relief for a dependent spouse and children. The Tax Reform of 1971 "had diminished the importance of family responsibility as a criterion for tax relief, and its final abolition was an extension of earlier policies" (Sainsbury, 1996:16). Norway's tax system, however, has not become fully individualized and recognizes family responsibilities.

Women's labor force participation has increased in the two countries during the 1980s and decreased in the early 1990s. In 1988, the rate was 72.8 % in Norway; in Sweden, the figure was 80.1 %. In 1993, the figures for Norway and Sweden were 70.8 % and 75.7 %, respectively. Among women with small children (ages 0-5), the labor force participation rate in Norway was 69 % in 1993, and 81 % in Sweden the same year (Leira, 1992; Sainsbury, 1996). Thus, we can observe a similar trend in the two countries. The speed with which Norway is catching up is tremendous. For instance, there was an increase of 25 % in

the number of employed persons from 1970-1990, and 90 % of this increase was among women (Ellingsaeter & Hedlund, 1998).

The policy convergence between the two countries also reflects the fact that Sweden experienced more of a welfare state crisis than Norway during the 1980s and the 1990s, resulting in greater cutbacks in social programs. Thus, Norway was catching up with Sweden's higher overall spending on social welfare relative to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and this was happening at a rather rapid pace as the welfare state crisis in Sweden put a damper on moves towards *expanding* the welfare state. Although Sweden spent more on maternity, paternity, and parental leave as a percentage of GDP than Norway during this time,³⁷ Norway's total social welfare spending as a percentage of GDP increased almost 10 % in ten years (from early 1980s to early 1990s). Sweden's increase was 3 % for the same period (Swank, 1998). Some of the policies that were 'under the ax' in Sweden in the mid-1990s were sick leave insurance, unemployment benefits, and parental leave. The fifteen months parental leave that was implemented in 1989, was scaled back to 12 months in 1994. The wage replace rate for parental leave was reduced to 75 % in 1995. In Norway, although maternity leave was extended and sick leave benefits for parent with sick child was improved, stronger work requirement and stricter qualifying conditions for unemployment benefits was instituted.

Swank (1998) suggests that most of the social policy reforms were related to the rise in unemployment. Similarly, Stephens et al. (1999) point to the sharp rise in unemployment as well as increased government deficit and debt as the main factors behind changes in welfare policies in Scandinavia. The high rise in unemployment was brought on by three major factors, according to Stephens et al. (1999): 1) a simultaneous increase in international interest rates and internationalization of financial markets made the countries unable to maintain low interest rates to provide cheap credit to industrial borrowers; 2) financial deregulations, income tax changes, and exchange rate policy with strong pro-cyclical effects, all which contributed to the overheating of the economy; 3) policies utilized earlier by these countries (expanding the public sector in Sweden; increasing sheltered employment in public enterprises in Norway) were not viable anymore.

As expanding the public sector as a means to overcome unemployment was not a possible option, increases in unemployment put extra pressure on social spending, at the same time reducing contributions

and taxes to the government to fund various social protection programs. Thus, several cuts in social services and benefit levels of various programs were undertaken. Norway, however, due to its revenues from oil reserves³⁸ did not experience as severe of a welfare state crisis as Sweden.

Although the roots of the welfare state crisis preceded Sweden's membership in the European Union (Laatikainen, 1996), the process of European integration may have partly contributed to the crisis. It "encouraged the exodus of corporate Sweden to the EC [European Community] and changed the preferences of governmental leaders in favor of membership"...as capital flight..."to lower wages areas ...undermines the capacity of [the] government to meet [its] full employment goal" (Ingebritsen, 1992:648-49). Ingebritsen suggests that the threat and fear of capital flight led political elites, who depended on business to support their expensive welfare system, to seek membership in the EC. In fact, Swedish direct foreign investment in the EC increased by 500 % between 1985-1990 (Ingebritsen, 1992). "Swedish corporate leaders were influential in convincing the Social Democratic leadership of the advantages of joining the EC" (Ingebritsen, 1996). This did not happen in Norway, and one reason for this is that the "Norwegian businesses did not share a strategic position in the EC debate" (Ingebritsen, 1996:22). The difference in production profiles of Norway and Sweden also distinguishes the extent to which the countries are vulnerable to capital flight. Sweden's "production profile is more diversified...[and]...capital is concentrated in the hands of a few important groups, and there is less reliance on state subsidies to industry..." (Ingebritsen, 1992:648). "The pressure of Europeanization on Norway's raw materials-dependent, oil exporting economy are less destabilizing to the system of industrial relations than they are to Sweden's manufacturing-dependent economy" (Ingebritsen, 1996).

Furthermore, unlike Sweden, "strong centralized economic interests in Norway resisted Europeanization" (Ingebritsen, 1996). Farmers, represented by the agrarian Center party, are politically powerful in Norway, and the country's sheltered agricultural sector has been a political stumbling block to Norwegian membership in EU³⁹ (Ingebritsen, 1995). In fact, state subsidies to farmers are greater in Norway than what the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) provides to the average farmer in the EU (Ingebritsen, 1995). Rural interests' ability to mobilize support among the population against liberalizing agricultural policies is unique for Norway. In Sweden in 1990, on the other hand, the government liberalized agricultural policies to conform with the EC member states by decreasing subsidies to peripheral

regions (Ingebritsen, 1992). The agricultural sector in Sweden prefers CAP to national agricultural policy. The Swedish farmers' party, also called the Center party, no longer represents mainly agrarian interests but also white-collar workers and environmentalists' interests. Unlike its Norwegian counterpart, the Swedish Center party's leadership favored EU membership (Ingebritsen, 1996). In the referenda on EU membership that were held in 1994 in the two countries 52.2 % of the Norwegians voted against membership and 47.8 % for it, whereas in Sweden 52.3 % voted in favor of membership and 46.8 % against it; thus, Sweden became a member of EU on January 1, 1995. There was a clear regional cleavage in both countries between urban and rural areas (rural areas rejecting and urban areas supporting EU entry).

Another visible cleavage was the gender dimension in voting behavior: 57 % of the Norwegian women voted against membership, whereas a majority of men voted for it. In Sweden, only 46 % of the women favored membership, while the figure for men was 57 %. Jenssen & Bratterud (1997) explain this difference between men and women in their stance on the EU question as linked to their values, religious leanings, and ideological preferences. "Women are more left-leaning ideologically, they are more religious and traditionally minded in moral matters, and they show greater sympathy for the values of the social and geographical periphery than men do. All three types of symbolic predispositions are linked with 'no'-voting" (Jenssen & Bratterud, 1997:17). Another explanation for women's 'no' vote was the perceived threat to the Scandinavian welfare states that EU membership posed. As many social policies are based on the idea of gender equality, (e.g. the 1974 parental leave insurance in Sweden was an attempt to institutionalize 'equal parenthood'), any potential indirect or direct pressure for welfare state reform (such as that posed by the EU integration process) has been viewed as an assault on the much fought for gender equality. Furthermore, as women depend more on social programs and services than men do, and on the public sector for employment opportunities, welfare cutbacks have greater consequences for women's daily lives. Is EU membership (or non-membership) detrimental to the 'women-friendly' policies that Scandinavian women (and men) have come to rely upon? What are the effects of EU membership, or non-membership, on 'women-friendly' policies a la Scandinavia. We now turn to this question.

The EU and social policies

No overarching EU welfare legislation exists that grants entitlements to citizens (on the basis of citizenship rights) in member states against Brussels, and no common 'social policy system' has been developed on the EU level or harmonization has taken place of existing national welfare systems. Among other factors, the reason for this is the resistance of some member states to intervene in social affairs. Due to the principle of subsidiarity (that "actions in social and political life should be performed by the smallest possible unit" (Lewis & Ostner, 1994)) in the development of EU social policy, membership for Nordic women, according to Laatikainen, may be 'relatively benign' (Laatikainen, 1996). However, "[s]ubsidiarity's ability to preserve the diversity of national social systems is premised on the assumption that fiscal/monetary policy and social policies are completely separate policy arenas and that integration in the economy and monetary arena will not entail changes in social policy" (Laatikainen, 1996:252). Laatikainen points out that the Scandinavian countries, particularly Sweden, integrate social and economic policies and emphasize full employment policies rather than anti-inflationary measure, and this "has been the precondition for stability of the extensive social systems in Scandinavia" (Laatikainen, 1996:261).

Since social and economic policies have been so intimately connected in Sweden, the loss of macroeconomic tools such as occasional deficit spending "to maintain its preferred social policy of full employment, high revenues from individual taxation, and its wide array of citizenship entitlements" in order to conform to EMU criteria (Laatikainen, 1996:268), entails a great challenge to the Swedish welfare state. Thus, among supporters for this welfare state model, EU membership is perceived as a threat to the system, although the long-term impact of European integration on social policies is uncertain. In countries where parental leave policies, public child care, and other social policies are less developed and gender equality is less far reaching, the EU integration process may be perceived as a progressive force rather than a threat. The European Court of Justice's (ECJ) rulings, for instance, have resulted in strengthening women's position in the labor market in countries where women's position has been particularly weak. However, in the Scandinavian countries where the social policies are highly developed and where there is relative gender equality, skepticism towards the 'European project' is not unusual, especially among women. If EU integration will entail shifting the responsibility for care back to the individual and to families, women have the most to lose.

Hobson argues that “[f]or Swedish women, harmonisation or convergence in gender policies can only mean lowering the levels of benefits, narrowing the scope of public support for services, reductions in public sector jobs, and a general weakening of women’s social and economic citizenship” (Hobson, 1997:61). In her analysis of the framing of gender equality in the European Court of Justice, Hobson finds that although Sweden “has one of the softest laws against gender discrimination in employment among democratic welfare states,” the ECJ’s interpretation of gender equality represents a loss of Swedish women’s economic citizenship (1997:89). Economic citizenship she defines as “the organization of benefits and social services that enable women to combine paid and unpaid work”...as well as...”the proactive policies and laws that seek to redress and compensate women for their discrimination and disadvantage⁴⁰ in employment” (Hobson, 1997:92-93). One aspect of social policy that strengthen women’s economic citizenship in Sweden is that part time workers and people working on temporary contracts, just like full time workers, are entitled to social benefits. Another one is that pension points are earned by people who are home caring for children. These types of policies, Hobson suggests, indirectly acknowledge unpaid work as *work*. The focus of social policy on the EU level has mainly been restricted to employment-related issues, ensuring labor mobility and safeguarding against comparative advantages of states (by abolishing disparities in social protection between member states). The centrality of paid work in EU social policies and social law, and the emphasis of these policies on production, has resulted in “a framework that has shaded out large segments of women’s unpaid work” (Hobson, 1997:73).

One could make a strong case, according to Hobson, that the “lack of childcare and other infrastructures for elderly care are obstacles that inhibit the free movement of women workers since women provide the main source of unpaid care labour in nearly all western societies” (Hobson, 1997:78). She argues that “[f]or women workers in Scandinavian countries, where a highly developed public provisioning of day-care exists, the lack of public funding for day-care in many European countries is an impediment against their free movement across borders” (1997:78).

In countries where benefits and services are provided for by the state as a citizenship right and not as a worker’s right (although worker’s rights coexist with citizenship rights in the Scandinavian countries⁴¹), a move toward employment-related rights may have detrimental effects on ‘women-friendly’ policies in the Nordic countries and, thus, on gender equality. Norway’s non-membership in the EU may give the country

freer reins in terms of maintaining current social policies and developing new ones. Although Norway, too, experiences pressure towards Europeanization, the petroleum sector gives Norway a greater independence than Sweden and enables the country "to retain more of its traditional policies and institutions" (Ingebritsen, 1996). It may just be a matter of time before Norway becomes the leader in terms 'women-friendly' policy development.

Discussion and Conclusion

Although the 'European project' may entail possibilities for women's empowerment, especially for women in countries where they have a weak labor market position, and where social policy systems are not highly developed, the prospect for the same for women in Scandinavia (in this case Sweden) is not great. This brief consideration of the effects of EU membership on 'women-friendly' policies is purely speculative and necessarily incomplete.

While drawing on various literatures in this paper, I have identified several explanations for Norwegian past 'exceptionalism,' (or to view it differently, Swedish 'vanguardism'), a period which spanned most of the 1960s and the 1970s. Country case studies and the mainstream as well as the feminist literature on the welfare state have pointed to the importance of women's agency in social policy development, especially within the two policy areas under study. Women's agency, or lack thereof, appear to have played a pivotal role in affecting policy outcomes in the two countries. By bringing issues of concern to the public arena, the feminist movement has influenced political agenda setting and ensuing policy outcomes.

If we apply Hobson & Lindholm's framework to the Norwegian case, it may be illustrated that "framing in one historical period may leave its imprint on the future articulation of claims and grievance" (1997:488). Just like the French case and the U.S. case, used as examples by the authors to show how a maternalist framing of women's interests restricted their ability to later recast their interests for achieving other goals,⁴² the Norwegian feminist movement, through the rhetoric of difference (in this context meaning the linking of women's identities to their unique capacity to care for children), may partly help explain the slower policy development in Norway.

Although the rhetoric of difference, or maternalist issue framework, and the divisions within the women's movement in Norway influenced policy outcomes that resulted in unfavorable outcomes to women in the

earlier part of the twentieth century, Norwegian women have also been able to utilize the rhetoric of difference much to their favor in recent years, as we have seen in the case of equality legislation. The rhetoric has helped bringing women in to the political arena and gender issues onto the political agendas. As such, the rhetoric of difference utilized by the women's movement has influenced policy outcomes favorable to women. The quota system, for instance, is an example of this, which introduced positive-discrimination measures. The quota system was first used within education and within the labor market, but it has also been used extensively within the political system and public offices. Usually the quota system rule is 40/60 percent, meaning that at least 40 % of each sex should be represented (Skjeie, 1993).

In contrast to Norway, the rhetoric of difference was abandoned within the women's movement in Sweden, instead the ideology of gender neutrality took hold. A comparatively strong and united women's movement has been influential in affecting the faster policy development in Sweden in the two policy areas. In the pre-war period, the Swedish feminists were able to overcome earlier cleavages in the women's movement. While taking advantage of the public debate on the population crisis at the time, and the sex-role debate in the 1960s, the women's movement through its demands for change was able to influence attitudes towards men's and women's role in society as well as policy outcomes.

Although women's agency alone does not give a full explanation⁴³ for the differing speed with which social policies developed in the two countries, and does not either fully explain the specific policy outcomes, I have emphasized the importance of women's mobilization, or lack thereof, in the development of the social policies in this study. Support for this thesis is found among both mainstream and feminist scholars. We may also want to further examine contextual variables within the two countries to get a full explanation for the policy divergence and convergence between the countries. For example, structural changes in the economy during the 1960s and the accompanying increase in demand for women workers in Sweden brought unprecedented numbers of women into the labor force, which in turn increased the demand for social policies facilitating these changes. Although there was a labor shortage during the same period in Norway, this did not happen there. Women were not encouraged to enter the labor market. Furthermore, fiscal, industrial, and housing policies in Norway lent support to the male breadwinner model, resulting in low participation by women in the labor market. In Sweden, in contrast, public child care policies became part of labor market policies. Thus, the dual-earner model was institutionalized at a comparatively early stage. Future research may

want to examine factors related to the labor market in influencing policy development in Norway and Sweden. Other factors such as cultural and religious differences may also merit a closer examination, and so does the interaction between the various variables.

In sum, this study has focused on the influence of women's agency, or lack thereof, in policy development by examining social mobilization, political agenda setting, and legislative outcomes in the two countries. Women's agency, or lack thereof, help explain the earlier divergence and subsequent convergence between the two countries within the stated policy areas. I have also addressed the EU question, and predict that membership in the EU may have negative effects on 'women-friendly' policies in Sweden.

APPENDIX A: LEGISLATION IN NORWAY AND SWEDEN 1945-1995

Norway

Year of introduction
or reform

1946	Family Cash Benefit
1947	Tax Reduction (tax allowances)
1956	Maternity Leave
1959	Tax Reform (separate taxation of married couples)
1975	Day Care Act
1978	Parental Leave Act
1978	Equal Status Act
1988	Parental leave extends to 22 weeks
1993	Father's Month (separate paternity leave)
1993	Parental leave extends to 42 weeks

Sweden

Year of introduction
or reform

1947	Tax Reduction (tax allowances)
1948	Family Cash Benefit
1955	Maternity leave extends to 44 days
1963	Maternity leave extends to 6 months
1971	Tax Reform Act (separate taxation of married couples)
1974	Parental Leave Act
1976	Parental leave extends to 7 months
1978	Parental leave extends to 9 months
1979	Equal Opportunities Act
1980	Parental leave extends to 12 months
1989	Parental leave extends to 15 months
1994	Parental leave is reduced to 12 months
1995	Father's Month (separate paternity leave)

Endnotes

¹ This regime type is characterized by its highly de-commodifying and universalistic programs, commitment to and dependence on full employment, and social rights to benefits based on citizenship. Egalitarianism is a fundamental value and benefits are comparatively high and primarily financed by taxes. Two other regime types are the conservative and the liberal models (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

The conservative model (also referred to as 'corporatist'), of which Germany is the prototype, relies on social insurance schemes and is characterized by its generous transfer payments. Social rights are related to status and class, and church and family play a crucial role. The third regime type is the liberal welfare state, which is distinguished by its means-tested assistance and modest universal cash transfers or modest social-insurance plans. Here the market is emphasized. The United States, Canada, and Australia belong to this liberal model.

² The feminist literature has expanded on Esping-Andersen's work, proposing modifications to his framework by incorporating gender into the analysis. Some feminist scholars have called for a whole new approach in order to better understand and illuminate the gendered nature of the welfare state.

³ Only a few comparative studies examine Norway and Sweden on dimensions related to the two social policy areas of parental leave and public child care (Kaul, 1991; Leira, 1992, 1993; Gornick et al., 1996; Sainsbury, 1996; Ellingsaeter & Hedlund, 1998; Bergqvist, forthcoming 1999). Leira comes closest to making a two-country comparison of these dimensions within a historical framework. She uses "the Swedish data as a contrast, rather than as a direct comparison, to illustrate the differences in approaches to motherhood, employment, and child care within Scandinavia" (Leira, 1993:51), but she does not attempt to explain social policy development *per se*. While focusing mainly on the last two decades and examining variations in women and men's entitlements across the Scandinavian countries, Sainsbury (1996) investigates how gender relations are reflected in social policy legislation. She finds a convergence in social policy provisions in the Scandinavian countries. However, she does not set out to explain which factors may account for this convergence, or conversely, earlier divergence.

⁴ I do not focus on the way in which social policies *change* gender roles/gender equality *per se*. The two cases, however, reveal a feedback loop between social policy development and changes in gender roles: some of the policies introduced were, in fact, explicitly intended to change gender roles (e.g., the Parental Leave Act of 1974, in Sweden).

⁵ While drawing on Esping-Andersen's work, Sainsbury (1996) distinguishes between three provider models of social policy: the male breadwinner model, the individual model, and the separate gender role model. The first model is based on a strict division of labor (husband-earner/wife-carer) where social benefits go to the head of household. Furthermore, spouses' incomes are taxed jointly, tax preferences for dependent family members exist, caring work is unpaid, public policy provisions facilitating female employment are lacking, and female labor force participation is low. Germany is the proto-type of this model.

The individual model is based on a 'shared roles' ideology where dual-earner households are the norm. Benefits go to individuals, spouses are taxed separately, and there is strong state involvement in the sphere of caring. Sweden represents this model, and Norway falls under the final model: the separate gender model. Its ideology is based on a rather strict division of labor between the sexes. Incomes are taxed jointly, and caring work has a paid component to caregivers in the home. Benefits go to men as family providers, and women as caregivers, and there is limited state involvement in the sphere of care. These models illuminate certain gender dimensions, which Sainsbury claims indicate that Norway is an anomaly within the Social Democratic regime type. While this is true for Norway during the post war period up to the early 1990s, this is, as I will show, no longer the case.

⁶ Skrede (1984) also claims that even for a large part of the population in Norway the division of labor, as conceived in the breadwinner/housewife model, was not the case. For instance, agriculture, which has played a prominent role in the economy in Norway until the end of World War II, necessitated women's participation as well as men's. However, Skrede claims that women's labor was not registered as such until the 1970s when it was registered in the national labor statistics as paid work. Furthermore, Skrede states that other data sources suggest that women's participation in paid work was much higher than the census reported (Skrede, 1984; see also Ellingsaeter, 1995). Moreover, as we shall later see, in the public debate about public child care in Sweden during the 1960s, the male breadwinner model gained support from some women partly because for many working-class women "the housewife [model] had long been a desired luxury" (Bergqvist, 1998:10). For them it meant "freedom from heavy industrial work" (1998:10).

⁷ The date is of significance as the 'curtail-decision' took effect, banning married women's access to paid employment. The 'family wage' demand by labor during this time laid the foundation for the 'one income per family' model (Skrede, 1993).

⁸ Some examples of nineteenth century and early twentieth century legislation are: means-tested maternity allowances to single mothers in 1915 (Norway); the state-endorsed alimony claims by unmarried mothers from the fathers in 1917 (Sweden) (Wennemo, 1994). Examples of more employment-based policies are the introduction of state subsidies to voluntary sickness benefit societies in 1891 (Sweden); universal and compulsory old age and

invalidity pension in 1913 (Sweden); compulsory occupational injury insurance in 1916 (Sweden); compulsory accident insurance law for industrial workers in 1894 (Norway); state-subsidized voluntary unemployment insurance in 1906 (Norway); relatively comprehensive compulsory sickness insurance law in 1909 (Norway) (Olson, 1986; Kuhnle, 1986).

⁹ I have chosen Sweden and Norway for several reasons. First, the two countries have been shown to have many commonalities in terms of social, economic, and political factors thought to influence the historical development of social policy. In mainstream comparative analyses of the welfare state, the two countries are considered similar in terms of the role of organized labor and left party strength (Esping-Andersen, 1985; Korpi 1989; Stephens, 1979), constitutional structures (Huber et al., 1993; Lijphart, 1984) such as executive-legislative relations, parliaments, party systems, electoral systems, central-local relations, constitutions (Lijphart, 1984), and the countries have followed similar historical trajectories. Consequently, I can control for a number of variables thought to influence social policy outcome. Other similarities between the countries such as population size, levels of economic development, social structures, international status, extent of geographical area (Kuhnle, 1975), and minority population, although not shown to influence the *development* of social policy, may also provide fertile grounds for a comparison. Furthermore, since Norway has moved very close to the Swedish model in the 1990s in terms of social policy outcomes (thus, Norway is 'growing into' Esping-Andersen's Social Democratic regime type; see discussion below on welfare state regimes), as well as in other policy areas, a historical case-oriented comparative analysis will be particularly fruitful.

The study draws on Ragin's (1987) 'most similar nation' research design. The design is premised on the idea that "a number of theoretically significant differences will be found among similar systems and that these differences can be used in explanation" (Przeworski & Teune, 1970:39). Ragin suggests a methodology that involves matching cases so as to establish experiment-like design, which means restricting the study to countries that are similar on as many theoretically relevant variables as possible (Ragin, 1987:47). Although this strategy may allow the investigator to exclude certain explanatory or confounding variables, thus, controlling for several factors by holding them constant, the strategy is not unproblematic. For instance, by identifying certain features that are shared by the cases as 'commonalities,' the investigator may fall into the 'illusory commonality'-trap as these common features may differ dramatically in causal significance. Although we may never find a perfect solution to this, Ragin's suggestion to examine cases as wholes and try to "decipher how different causal factors fit together" ameliorates some of the difficulties. "By examining differences and similarities *in context* it is possible to determine how different combinations of conditions have the same causal significance and how similar causal factors can operate in opposite directions" (Ragin, 1987:49).

¹⁰ Mainstream theories of the welfare state emphasize different factors as the driving force behind social policy development. The 'logic of industrialism' school (Wilensky, 1975) emphasizes economic growth and the accompanying demographic changes as driving social policy development. This school of thought suggests that countries proceed along a similar evolutionary path as a result of industrialization and economic development, and the studies often focus on social spending effort (often as a share of GDP) as a measure of social policy development. These studies, however, tell us very little about how the resources are distributed within a country, and they do not explain variations among countries with similar levels of spending. The state-centric perspectives focus on the structure of the state and the role of the bureaucrats. The power resources approach stresses the mobilization of labor and left party strength as the determining factors for welfare state development (Stephens, 1979; Esping-Andersen, 1985; Korpi, 1989).

¹¹ Some case studies that examine the political process by which early family policy was formulated emphasize the importance of women's mobilization. A study by Hobson & Lindholm (1997) and Bergqvist's (1998) study on public child care and parental leave policies in Sweden since the 1960s are examples of these. Skrede (1984, 1993) and Skjeie (1991, 1992, 1993) also emphasize women's agency in their studies on the Norwegian case. Leira traces the political process leading up to the passing of the Day Care Act of 1975, by close readings of government documents, and finds little evidence of women's agency. However, the work by Stetson and Mazur (1995) on comparative state feminism shows evidence of women's agency in influencing policy outcomes in Norway in the 1980s and 1990s, the period of policy convergence in the two countries. This paper draws heavily on all of these works.

¹² 'Family policy' can mean anything from child allowances, maternity benefits, dependent tax credits, to housing programs, public education, child care, and parental leave provisions, although for the purpose of this paper we are mainly examining public child care and parental leave provisions.

¹³ Hobson & Lindholm (1997) offer a theoretical approach which brings together the social movement perspective with a power resource framework. Mainstream and variants of feminist theories, they claim, do not consider women as active participants in influencing policymaking. Instead, "...women's interests are subsumed under class interests, or represented in the concept of the family's role in welfare provisioning," or "...women [are] objects but not subjects of policymaking...[or women]...have been ghettoized into female sectors of policymaking" (Hobson & Lindholm, 1997:478). In order to provide a greater understanding for "...when and how gender politics really did matter in the development of the welfare states" in Sweden, Hobson & Lindholm (1997:477-78) emphasize women's agency in the construction of citizenship rights. I believe that this approach is particularly fruitful for several reasons. While mainstream research has greatly increased our understanding about welfare state development, it has failed (or not attempted) to explain differing 'family policy' developments in similar nations. Furthermore, many studies, both

mainstream and feminist, point to the importance of women's mobilization, or lack thereof, in the development of the stated social policies. An unpublished paper by Bratton & Ray (1998) on the Norwegian case, for instance, suggests that women's agency influences the extent of public child care provisions in local communities. In their study of the child care sector in Norway, Bratton & Ray show that high female representation in local government is associated with higher levels of public child care provisions.

¹⁴ Female teachers, however, were greatly affected (Skrede, 1984, 1993).

¹⁵ The lay-offs in 1975 of thirteen married women at Valer Skurlag in Norway, a small timber trading company, claimed as being justified on the basis of their husbands' 'provider capacities' (Mykland, 1979), met with great protests from the women's movement (Ellingsaeter, 1995). This event came to have great symbolic significance for women's fight for the right to paid work (Ellingsaeter, 1995). Women's weak position in the labor market was again revealed, just like in the inter-war period of high unemployment, and the notion of women as a 'reserve-army' became part of the discourse within the women's movement and the unions in the 1970s (Ellingsaeter, 1995).

¹⁶ This shows, as Bergqvist points out, that mothers with young children entered the labor market before public child care became available (1998). Thus, public provisions did not attract women to the labor market. This was also the case in Norway.

¹⁷ A large part of the generation of older women was not in paid employment during the 1960s. According to Hinnfors, they provided much of the care for children at the time to employed mothers (Hinnfors, 1992).

¹⁸ Although they supported it for different reasons: the Liberals for gender equality reasons, and the Social Democrats for class reasons. The idea behind the class argument is that government subsidies such as child care allowances are thought to benefit only those who already could afford to stay home (Hinnfors, 1992).

¹⁹ Wage negotiations resulted in the setting of the industrial worker's average income as a norm (the male breadwinner model).

²⁰ Whereas in Sweden, public child care falls under general laws on social service (Socialtjänstlagen section 12-18), in Norway it falls under a separate law. The planning and actual provision of day care is primarily a local responsibility in both countries (Leira, 1992).

²¹ During the 1970s, the idea of economic democracy involving co-determination and work environment legislation and worker-controlled investment funds took center stage within the labor movement in Sweden, and "kept a class-based representation of political interests and class identities to the fore" (Jensen & Mahon, 1993:89).

²² An example is its call for abortion on demand *before* the government commission had completed its report, a rare move for the women's wing to take (Jensen & Mahon, 1993).

²³ "It had never before happened, neither under Tage Erlander's, nor under Olof Palme's tenure as Party Chairman, that loyalty toward the Party had not been strong enough to maintain Party discipline, [Palme] said" (Karlsson, 1994:6-7).

²⁴ In the industrial sector in 1970, women earned about 80 % of men's wages. In 1980, they earned 90 % (Ruggie, 1987).

²⁵ Solidaristic wage policy was aimed at wage compression across industries and skills. This benefited women as it increased the wages in the low-wage sectors relative to those in the high-wage sectors (Klausen, 1999).

²⁶ The committee comprised of members from the main political parties, experts on child care and education, voluntary organizations providing child care, and government administrators (Leira, 1992).

²⁷ The final legislation of 1975 did not include anything on religion. However, the debate continued, and in 1983 the following clause was added: "Public day care shall help to give children an upbringing in accordance with basic Christian values" (Bø, 1993:401).

²⁸ Day care, unlike schools, has historically not been tied to religion (Bø, 1993).

²⁹ The Danish and Finnish Christian parties also experienced their peak in the 1970s, however, they were established much later than their Norwegian counterpart, in Denmark, 1971, and in Finland, 1958 (Karvonen, 1994).

³⁰ The Christian People's party received 10.5 % of the vote in 1953, and in 1965, 8.1 %. In the latest election in 1997, the party received 13.7 %. In Sweden, the percentage of vote for the Christian Democratic party lingered around 1.5-1.8 from its founding in 1964 to 1988, at which time it received 2.9 %. It has since gained more support (Karvonen, 1994).

³¹ Local authorities were opposed to making provisions mandatory for local government (Leira, 1992).

³² "Pitkin defined a 'descriptively' representative body as one that mirrored the (politically relevant) characteristics of the represented community, and a substantively representative body as one that mirrored the interests of the community" (Bratton & Ray, Unpublished paper:1).

³³ The abortion bill failed to pass by one vote in 1974, but the bill was reintroduced and passed in 1975 and it took effect in 1978 (Leira, 1992). In Sweden, abortion became legal in 1975.

³⁴ This struggle for the right to paid work was lost as we learned in the section on the pre-war period, and was not fully gained until after the war (Ellingsaeter, 1995).

³⁵ Although, as Bergqvist points out, the parental leave legislation of 1974 would only have been truly gender neutral if each parent had been given independent rights to the leave which was *non-transferable* (Bergqvist, 1998).

³⁶ An area of expertise that the Confederation believed should be left to "market participants and their organizations, free from state interference" (Skjeie, 1991:87).

³⁷ In less than ten years (1985-1993) Sweden increased the spending on maternity, paternity, and parental leave as a percentage of GDP by 0.49% (from 0.60 % to 1.09 %), and Norway increased its spending by 0.40 % (from 0.17 % to 0.57 %) during the same time period (OECD, 1995).

³⁸ About 40% of total export revenue comes from the petroleum sector (Ingebritsen, 1995).

³⁹ Although only 5.2 % (112,000 of about 4 million) of the population engages in farming, the historic importance of farming (connected to the early period of nation-building), the political power of the farmers' party (the Center party) and Social Democrats ideological commitment to rural development contribute to the uniqueness of Norway's agricultural policy (Ingebritsen, 1995).

⁴⁰ The term refers to inequalities that are "perpetuated through devaluation and lack of recognition of different cultural values and experiences through discriminatory practices and exclusion in economic, political, and social institutions" (Hobson, 1997:66).

⁴¹ Many benefits, such as parental leave, sickness pay etc. are calculated on the basis of one's earnings.

⁴² In the American case, for instance, where feminists utilized the maternalist frame in order to achieve special legislation for mothers (such as widows pensions, maternal health care, protection for mothers at workplaces), their ability to later (during the depression) recast their interests in terms of the right to work was limited by the earlier maternalist framework (Hobson & Lindholm, 1997).

⁴³ O'Connor et al. suggest that in order to get a 'full explanation' of policy outcomes we will not only have to examine women's political mobilization, but we also need "an examination of the forces which already have been shown to be influential in earlier accounts of policy developments: the character of economic production, demographic characteristics and family and household forms, ideologies and discourses of welfare, the structure of gender interests and the mobilisation of forces around those interest, political institutions and opportunity structures, state capacities, and the like" (O'Connor et al., 1999:36). As exemplars O'Connor et al. mention two comparative studies on Britain and France, one by Jensen and another by Pederson, who examine family policies within the context of "geopolitics, elite fears about declining fertility, different economic profiles, employers' variable demand for women workers, trade unionists' variable strength to enforce a family wage, state capacities and discourses of the family, state and economy" (1999:37). This study, however, is only a modest account that focuses on women's agency in policy development, although it acknowledges other factors in influencing policy development.

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