

## Abstract

The implications of studying married women's transition to paid employment during the 1970s in an equality perspective are clarified in the introductory chapter. Equality between the sexes connotes a more equable distribution of resources. Equalization among social classes is not usually implied in this term. Empirically, then, married women as a group are compared to married men as a group. However, in the present study, a class comparison also is made between manual worker households and salaried employee households.

In chapter 2, the conditions for the entry of housewives onto the labour market are examined against the background of how the interplay between the institutions of family, market, and state has changed. The role of the welfare state in Sweden as producer of services and jobs has expanded since the middle of the 1960s at the expense of the family and market. The transition to paid employment by married women is directly linked to the rise in the employment of married women in the public sector.

In chapter 3, an analysis is made of how the class composition of the family was affected by the entry of housewives onto the labour market. The encounter between classes within the family became more frequent with the increase of the so-called class-heterogeneous families. However, the greatest increase was observed among families where both spouses work in traditional salaried employee occupations or in manual worker occupations, thus reinforcing the class-homogeneity of wage-earner (excluding self-employed persons) households.

The analysis in Chapter 4 is aimed at the class differences in gender distribution of paid employment, household work, and incomes over time. A class-wise levelling took place during the 1970s. Women manual workers increased their hours in paid employment more than women who worked in salaried employee occupations. Manual worker households witnessed a pronounced equalization of wages, which was not the case in salaried employee households. The distribution of household work became more equable in manual worker households but was still less traditional in the salaried employee households in 1981.

A contribution is made in Chapter 5 to the international discussion on possible drawbacks of the Swedish trend towards equality between the sexes. The psychological well-being of those women who entered the labour market was initially better and became even more favourable than for the average women of the same ages. The transition to paid employment among married women does not imply that the family as institution has decreased in popularity. Nevertheless, the stability of individual families has been weakened.