

Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to describe and analyse how, between 1898 and 1937, women organised themselves in two peace organisations which protested against the wars, the growing militarism and the military education in schools. Their strategy was to take part in the political life of the country and to promote popular awareness and education about peace. The dissertation will also describe and analyse the women's strategies to gain influence and power in the male structures of society, with special focus on people's attitudes to war and peace.

Two women and a network around them are used as an illustrative example of how women worked and developed strategies for their activities in the organisations. Emilia Broomé started and was chairwoman of Sveriges Kvinnliga Fredsförening (SKF) from 1898 to 1911. Matilda Widegren was the first chairwoman of the Swedish section of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) between 1919 and 1937. In Swedish the section was called Internationella Kvinnoförbundet för Fred och Frihet (IKFF).

The empirical findings of the dissertation have been analysed using a hermeneutic approach and theories developed in the field of women studies. The empirical material is partly based on the unique records from the time when the two organisations were active. Theories developed by Joan Scott and Yvonne Hirdman have been used as an analytic tool at the overall level. For the analysis of the participants' actions on the group level and individual level, theories developed by Berit Ås, Hildur Ve and Carol Gilligan have been used.

My results show how women, deprived of formal power, developed special strategies to gain influence. In the early stages it was through the men that they made their suggestions. At the same time, they worked in the movement for women's suffrage. Through that strategy they could achieve marginal changes. Despite their low level of formal representation I suggest that women's influence on society and its development even before they gained the right to vote was fairly extensive.

When suffrage was attained for women, they also achieved formal influence in society, but as far as war and other military defence issues were concerned, women were largely excluded (and still are today). After the introduction of general suffrage it was still often the case that they had to use informal means to influence decisions.