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## Abstract

**What does it take** to make justice between the sexes a political issue? Do certain institutional characteristics provide certain gender issues with a more privileged position than others? This study of the gender policy processes in Sweden and Australia from the 1960s to late 1980s addresses these questions. The theoretical approach is twofold. The feminist approach departs from the theoretical understanding that a modern gender policy consists of two potentially contradicting aims; to give women cultural recognition and to provide them with socioeconomic equality. The feminist discussion focuses on how these goals are handled in the policy process. The second approach departs from a historical institutionalist perspective, and sheds light on the possibilities of introducing new political issues — such as gender polices — into the political arena. Here the discussion revolves around the question of whether certain institutional mechanisms accelerate one policy path and depoliticize others.

The research design is a comparative

case study of two countries with ambitions for creating a successful gender policy, but each within different welfare state traditions. Sweden has a strong political tradition of defending social equality, whereas Australia is a contrasting liberal welfare state. Four gender issues are examined; child care, sex discrimination, job training and violence against women. The empirical analysis points out the difficulties of maintaining momentum for public policies that do not correspond well to the welfare traditions in question.

A central result is that in Sweden, the dominating policy path accelerates by focusing on women as workers, and by creating a consensus around important political concepts. In Australia, an equivalent dominating policy path is accelerated when gender issues are formulated as civil rights-issues, and by the establishment of a femocratic network. The dissertation concludes with a process oriented explanation of how institutional features of federalist and centralist state structures effect the policy process.

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*Key words:* Official Feminism, Gender Equality, Women, Sweden, Australia, Policy Process, Historical Institutionalism, Public Policy, Process Tracing, Child Care, Job Training, Sex Discrimination, Affirmative Action, Violence against Women.