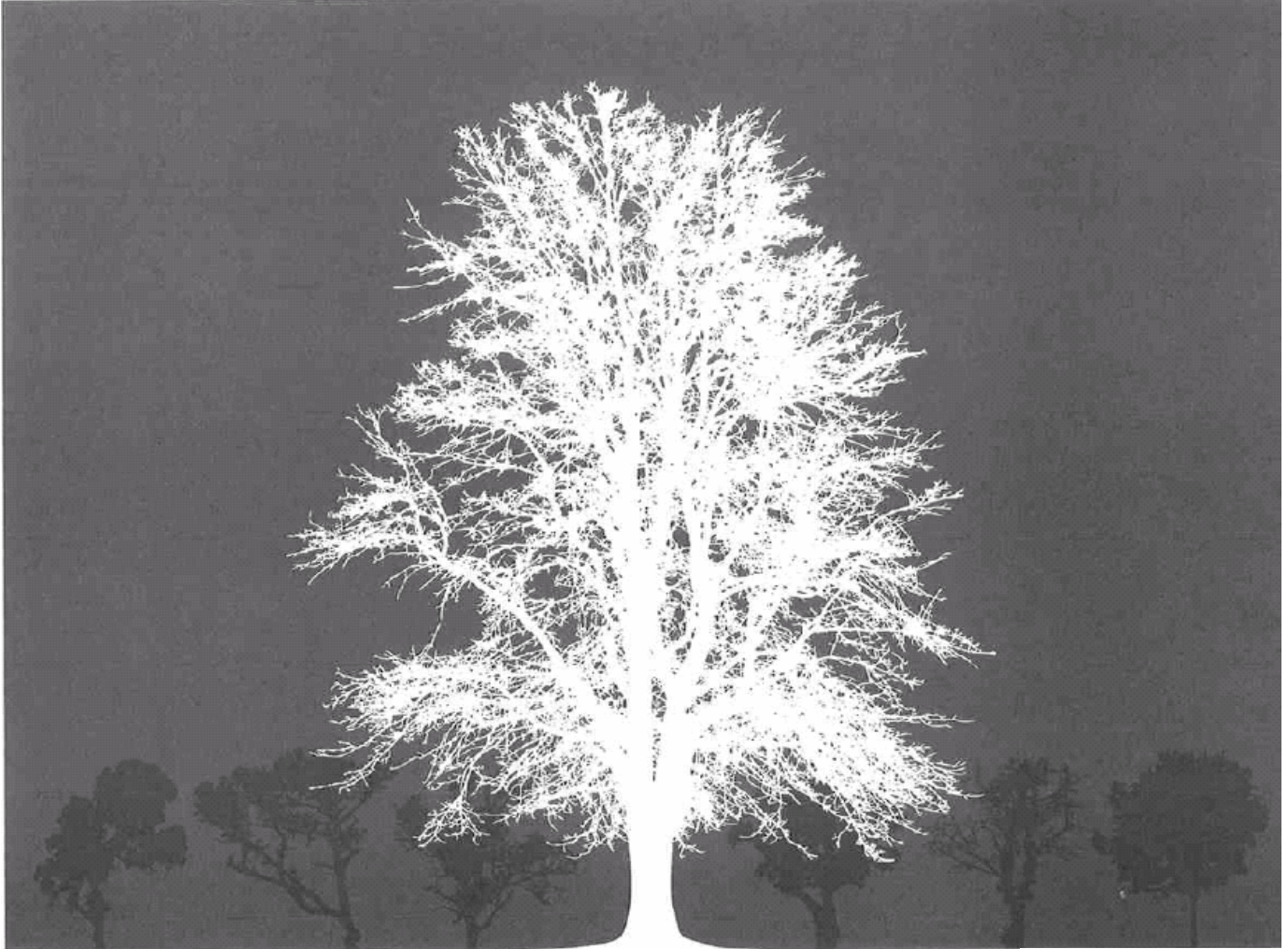


# Working Papers on University Reform



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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Universitetskole  
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## Women in Academia

- Women's career paths in the social sciences,  
in the context of Lund University and Swedish higher education

Susan Wright

Working paper no. 7, October 2007

**Women in Academia**  
**- Women's Career Paths in the Social Sciences, in the context of Lund University**  
**and Swedish higher education**

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This working paper series is published by the research unit "Transformations of universities and organizations" at the Department of Educational Anthropology at the Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus. The series brings together work in progress in Denmark and among an international network of scholars involved in research on universities and higher education.

"Transformations of universities and organizations" aims to establish the study of universities as a field of research in Denmark. The field has three components: International and national policies to revise the role of universities in the knowledge economy; the transformation of universities as organizations; and changes in teaching and learning in higher education. The research unit aims to understand each of these components in the context of the others and explore the links between them. The central questions are: How are different national and international visions of learning societies, knowledge economies, and new world orders spurring reforms to the role and purpose of universities and to the policies and practices of higher education? How do university reforms introduce new rationalities of governance, systems of management and priorities for research and teaching? How do managers, researchers, and students negotiate with new discourses, subject positions and forms of power arising from university reforms? What kinds of changes are students, academics and university managers themselves initiating, and how do these interact with reforms coming from governments and international organizations? This interaction is central to the work of the research unit.

The unit draws together ideas and approaches from a range of academic fields and collaborates internationally with other higher education research environments. Currently the unit's main activity is a research project, 'New management, new identities? Danish university reform in an international perspective' funded by the Danish Research Council (2004-2007). The unit holds seminars and there is a mailing list of academics and students working in this field in Denmark and internationally.

Members of the unit include professor Susan Wright, Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus, associate professor John Krejsler, Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus, assistant professor Jakob Krause-Jensen, Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus, Ph.D. student Gritt Bykærholm Nielsen, Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus, and research assistant Jakob Williams Ørberg, Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus.

Further information on the research unit and other working papers in the series are at <http://www.dpu.dk/site.asp?p=5899>. To join the mailing list, hold a seminar or have material included in the working paper series please contact professor Susan Wright at [suwr@dpu.dk](mailto:suwr@dpu.dk) or at the Department of Educational Anthropology, Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus, Tuborgvej 164, 2400 Copenhagen NV, Denmark.



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## Introduction

This research was conducted as part of the Leaky Pipe project, funded by the European Union. The project invited visiting professors to Lund University to meet with and support their PhD students in the social sciences, and especially to try and discover why women PhD students are leaking out of the pipeline of an academic career.

The Leaky Pipe project involved the four units of media and communication, the sociology of law, sociology and anthropology (the latter two form the Department of Sociology).<sup>1</sup> This piece of work on ‘Women’s career paths in academia’ concerned mainly staff and PhD students from sociology, with some participation from anthropology.

Sociology at Lund University has an equal distribution of men and women staff. Many students and academics remarked that people refer to this numerical equality by saying that the sociology unit is ‘women-dominated’. In contrast, the students and staff I spoke with still experienced it as male dominated. During my visit in February 2007, I offered to convene a series of workshops on ‘Women in Academia’ in which participants tried to work out what was happening.<sup>2</sup>

## Method

Three workshops on women in academia were held on 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> February 2007 for any students or staff who were interested. Most participants came from sociology, with a small presence from social anthropology, so we focused mainly on the sociology unit. The aims were to pool our existing knowledge and make inquiries into what was happening in the sociology unit, in Lund University and more widely in Swedish higher education. Was the pipe indeed leaking? At what points? Could we identify reasons? Were there any positive signs of change?

At the first workshop participants established what existing knowledge was available, in published form, from their own research, or from personal experience. Six participants offered to make short (15 minute) presentations for discussion at the second and third workshops. Helena Ledje and Terese Anving gathered statistical information on the sex

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<sup>1</sup> Each of these disciplines is referred to as a unit or academic unit in this report, and the word department is reserved for references to the situation before 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006 when all four units were in the same department, or to the current department which covers sociology and anthropology.

<sup>2</sup> I visited Lund University on 1 February, 12-22 February and 26-29 March 2007 and conducted the following activities:

- Women in Academia at Lund/Swedish Universities – Participatory research through 3 workshops with staff and students, further interviews and a search for previous research
- 12 tutorials with students of 1-2 hours each
- 2 workshops on writing and editing abstracts and journal articles (4 hours per workshop, total of 18 students from four academic units)

distribution at different stages of the academic career in sociology at Lund University and in Swedish higher education. Malin Espersson investigated whether women PhD students took disproportionately high amounts of sick leave at Lund. Ann-Mari Sellerberg researched the effects of a national reform which was intended to increase the number of women professors. Anett Schenk produced statistics to show the potential for women offered by the expansion of the Swedish higher education sector. This statistical information revealed moments of leakage, points of blockage, and the opening of new pipe-ways for women in academia.

The statistics gave information on sex, but we were also interested in gender. We sought to understand aspects of the organisational environment that promoted certain kinds of gender identities over others, to the detriment of not just some forms of femininity but also of some forms of masculinity. The sociology department had been well researched in the past. A report on gender in the department (Bosseldal and Esseveld 1998) had made a number of recommendations and several other staff members had undertaken major research projects on gender and higher education. Helena Ledje read and summarised much of this Swedish literature.<sup>3</sup> We also drew on the experiences of students themselves to suggest improvements. Here Terese Anving, Marie Nilsen and Anett Schenk added important dimensions because they had experience of studying at other universities and in other countries. Finally, Sue Wright, as a visiting professor on the Leaky pipe project, raised some issues about PhD students at Lund, that she had noticed from her outsider's perspective or that students had recurrently mentioned in tutorials. As we identified points from these different sources, they were written on cards and stuck to the walls of the seminar room. Over the three sessions, we created wall charts of knowledge from previous research, the results of our research, remaining gaps in our knowledge, and practical suggestions for improvements. In the last session, we 'read the walls' to summarise our discussion (See illustrations).<sup>4</sup>

From the start, it was hoped that the results of these workshops would be taken up by a project to improve the work environment in the sociology department, which was to commence shortly. In order to give the person appointed to that project a base from which to begin, it was agreed that the workshops would result in a report, summarising the existing literature, our research, and our recommendations for action. Whereas the 1998 study had generated considerable attention at the time, its recommendations had been largely ignored and the conditions it described had broadly continued to the present. The hope this time is that the work environment project, with the continuing support of the workshop participants, would be able to make a difference.

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<sup>3</sup> Many thanks to Helena Ledje for making major contributions to our information base and for suggesting and orchestrating the method of developing wall charts.

<sup>4</sup> Issues were colour coded: affecting women – pink, affecting men – blue, affecting both sexes – green. Headings were in red and sources in yellow.



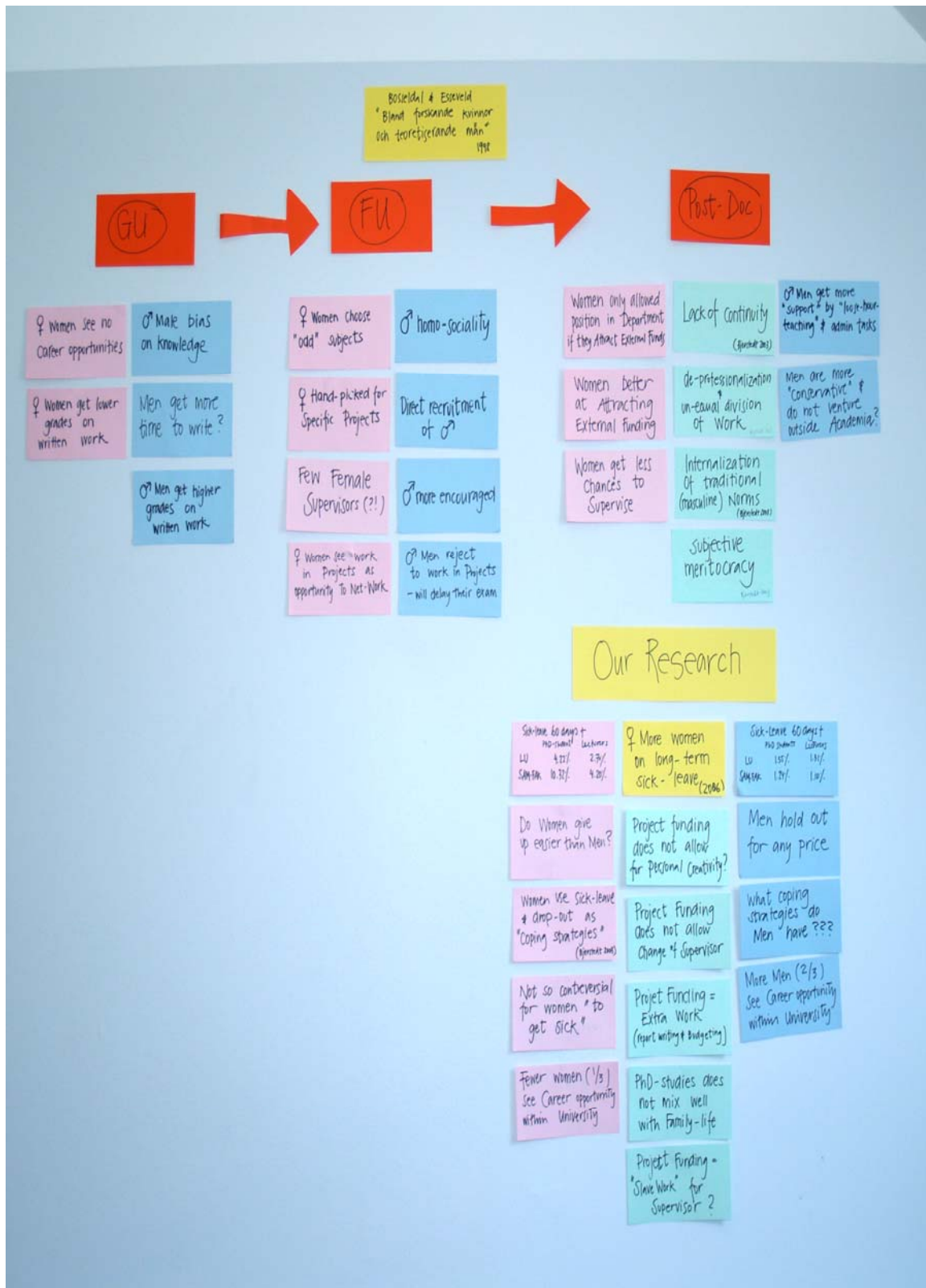


Figure 1: Research results assembled on the wall of the seminar room.

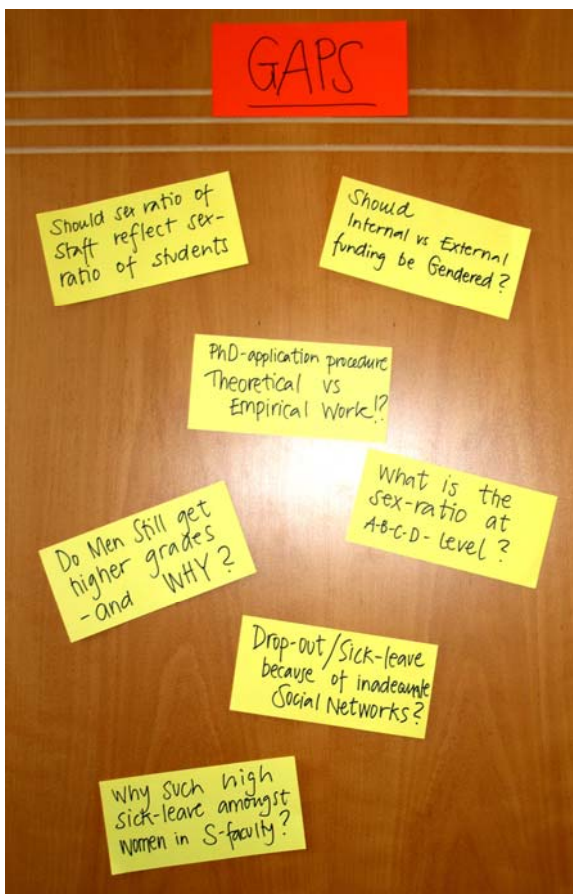


Figure 2: Knowledge gaps and solutions round the other walls of the seminar room.

## **Undergraduate and master's level sociology at Lund**

Our study of the academic career path started at undergraduate level. It is known that in the first term women constitute 70% of the sociology students. It is also known that the percentage of women sociology students declines in the later courses but precise numbers are not available and the reasons for the attrition of women students are unknown.

**Recommendation: The sociology unit should assemble statistics on the sex of students taking its basic level and master's level courses, identify the points where numbers of women students decline, and try and establish the reasons.**

Only 30% of the students starting the course are male, yet a much larger proportion of them complete a master's in sociology and go on to a PhD compared to the women students. Why is the retention rate so high for men and the attrition rate so high for women? A small survey conducted in sociology at Lund by Bosseldal and Esseveld (1998) identified that the best marks were obtained by men students with a male supervisor and the worst by women students with a male supervisor. They suggested that there is more of a supportive environment among male students and staff, so that male students receive more encouragement and may also more easily gain extensions to deadlines so they have more time to write. They also noticed that male students choose topics for their assignments which are more theoretical and mainstream, whereas women choose quirky or 'odd' topics which are less easy to translate into the knowledge traditions of the department. Finally and concretely, male students get higher marks than women for their written work.

**Recommendation: Revisit Bosseldal and Esseveld (1998) and investigate and remedy the inequalities they identified at undergraduate and master's level.**

One student provided a comparison between her experience as a master's student at another university and as a PhD student at Lund University to point to two important weaknesses in the social environment. First, at the other university there was a welcome week in which academic staff held a range of activities. Through these activities, students began to know the academics as people, and the students made social contacts with each other. Student networks formed that sustained themselves throughout the programme. In sociology at Lund, there were no equivalent groups or networks among the students. Second, at Lund the majority of students do not follow a programme; they go from one six month course to another and meet a new set of students and a new lecturer each time. That makes it hard to form student groups with continuous contact. The short-term contact between students and academic staff also makes it difficult for a student to build up a relationship with a lecturer who believes in you. Some of the men seem not to experience these two problems, maybe because, as an easily identifiable minority among the sociology students, they find each other and are noticed by staff.

Students also warned that when student networking is not the norm, there is a danger that those who do form groups are viewed as creating cliques. To avoid networking becoming divisive, it is important for social networking to become part of the generalised 'culture' of the unit.

Sue Wright added that UK research on first year students' learning environments identified that the most important factor preventing 'drop-out' was the creation of informal social contacts and more formal study groups among students, through which they could discuss lectures, literature, essays and how they related the course to their lives. One student emphasised that student networks are also important in supporting students to make the transition from master's to PhD.

**Recommendation: Explore the reasons for the low transition rate from master's to PhD among women as compared to men in sociology at Lund.**

**Recommendation: Use students who have experience of other universities where there is a culture of student networking and mutual critical encouragement to see how to develop similar informal structures at undergraduate, masters and PhD levels at Lund.** (Some precise suggestions at PhD level are further developed below).

## PhDs in sociology at Lund

Table 1 shows that in Autumn 2005 there were slightly more women PhD students than men (53% women as against 47% men). Roughly half of the PhD students (27 people, 49%) had no funding, of whom 56% were women and 44% were men. This situation arose because before 1998 students could enrol for a PhD without funding. At that time there was a very large number of registered and self-funding students, and intense competition for a relatively small number of funded PhD positions. Since 1998<sup>5</sup> all students have to have a position with four years' funding for their salary and research in order to register for a PhD. There is still a population of unfunded students who registered before 1998 and, in addition, there are some students whose funding has run out. These students receive tuition and can participate in seminars but they feel they are not fully included in their units because they do not have an office or the possibility of a day-to-day presence or involvement in affairs.

It is not possible to see any trends in the distribution by sex of unfunded PhDs because the sociology unit has not assembled the statistics which would show how many PhD students lacked funding before the 1998 reform.

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<sup>5</sup> Forskarutbildningsreformen that came into effect 1 April 1998.

Table 1. Categories of registered PhD students by sex

	Spring	1996		Autumn	2005	
Category	No.	Women	Men	No.	Women	Men
Total	?	?	?	55	53% (29)	47% (26)
With funding	48	44%	56%	28	50% (14)	50% (14)
Without funding	?	?	?	27	56% (15)	44% (12)
Of those with funding:						
Internal funding	26	31% (8)	69% (18)	12	25% (3)	75% (9)
External funding	6	50% (3)	50% (3)	16	69% (11)	31% (5)
Adjunct	2	50% (1)	50% (1)	0		
Amanuenses	14	64% (9)	36% (5)	0		

Sources: For 1996 Bosseldal and Esseveld (1998) and for 2005 Helena Ledje from departmental records

Table 1 also shows that, of the half of the PhD students who were funded in 2005, exactly half were women. But there are two kinds of funding, and here there is a striking difference between women and men. Twelve students had ‘internal funding’. That is, the state allocates funding to the department, which then selects the PhD students. Of these ‘internally funded’ PhDs, only a quarter were women in the sociology unit. In contrast, PhDs supported by ‘external funding’ were disproportionately (69%) held by women. This is where a member of staff contracts with a sponsoring organisation to undertake a specific piece of research.

In Spring 1996, men also had the lion’s share (69%) of the internal funding, so that has not changed, but then men had half of the externally funded PhDs, whereas that kind of PhD has been feminised.

## Theory versus projects

Both students and staff referred to ‘internal’ as against ‘project’ PhDs and regretted that many, informally, attributed a much higher status to the former. As it is mainly women academics who raise the project funding, and mainly women students who fill the ‘project’ PhD positions, they were actively contesting this status differential between ‘internal’ and ‘project’ PhDs. Yet there were some material and academic issues that needed examining if this dichotomy is to be overcome.

The main issue raised by PhD students was that with ‘internal’ funding, the students set their own research agenda. This meant they could build on interests, and especially

theoretical issues, raised in their master's dissertation. There is a counter argument that 'internal' PhDs lack the funding that 'project' PhDs have for empirical work, so they have little option than to do desk-bound research. For whatever reason, 'internal' was associated with 'theoretical' in the discourse of both students and staff. In a sociology unit that is (or was) known in Sweden for its theoretical strength, students felt that the allocation of 'internal' PhD positions prioritised opportunities for any eventual academic positions.<sup>6</sup>

In a project-funded PhD, the topic, and sometimes the method, is predetermined in the contract between the academic staff member and the funding organisation. There are two main features which seem to be the basis for attributing a lower status to this kind of PhD. First, a project often has an empirical focus to satisfy the funder, and some students felt they did not have sufficient possibility to develop the theoretical aspects of their material. Second, however good the relationship between the student and the project leader (who is also often the supervisor), students pointed out that they had to fit their research interests into a frame not of their own devising. This often means they have to put their own research interests and the theoretical development of their master's thesis on 'hold'. Instead, they have to try and understand the expectations of the funder as well as the supervisor, and get inside the implicit as well as explicit framing of the project, before they can develop their own distinctive contribution. This experience is a rare and major asset for future project-based research work inside or outside the academy, but it is a far cry from an image of academic research based on theoretical and methodological autonomy, which is reproduced in the 'internal' PhDs.

It seems that 'project' PhDs have some distinct advantages over 'internal' PhDs, especially when it comes to employment. Students generate contacts and experience through their project which can often lead to a job afterwards, whereas 'internal' PhD students lack these opportunities for employment outside academia. If women are seeing that there are very few academic jobs, and are counting themselves out of the academic labour market right from the start, then the networks and experience of a 'project' PhD can offer an excellent route into other labour markets. On the other hand, men with an 'internal' PhD were thought to 'hang on' by doing 'loose hours' teaching and short term administrative tasks in the university until an academic job came up. One example of a woman trying to help other women 'hang on' by networking them into loose hours teaching in university colleges indicated that men might be given preference in this work.

**Recommendation: The employment pattern of graduates needs further exploration. How many academic jobs have women and men with a doctorate in**

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<sup>6</sup> It seems that the sociology unit has in the past ranked the top applicants and then allocated 'internal' funding to those who did not already have another source of funding. As many of the good women candidates had been enterprising and had already obtained project funding, they did not get the prized 'internal' PhD positions and the internal PhD funding went predominantly to men. This mode of allocation may be best for the sociology unit, as it maximises the number of PhD students, but it is not necessarily fair to the students, and inadvertently it has had the effect of reinforcing the gender division between the two kinds of PhDs.

**sociology from Lund gained in recent years? Do women/project based PhDs have the same opportunities as 'internal' PhDs to 'hang on' (e.g. through casual teaching contracts) and build up credentials for an academic career? Or, do women see the lack of academic jobs as too big a block in the pipe to even aspire to overcome? Are women being realistic in seeking work in other job markets and are men/theorists disadvantaged and forced to seek academic employment as a default position?**

**Recommendation: Both kinds of PhDs need to offer students opportunities for employment inside and outside academia. 'Project' PhDs should be assured the time and possibility to develop the theoretical potential of the research, and ensure the student the chance of employment in academia. 'Internal' PhDs should include opportunities to gain the wider contacts and experience needed for employment outside the academy.**

Staff that I talked to echoed this discourse about theory and projects from their own point of view. One common refrain was that male colleagues tend to teach and do theory, while female colleagues bring in project funding and keep sociology financially afloat. But there was another twist. One male colleague said that, from his experience, it was almost impossible to get funding from the funding councils for work on sociological theory, or even for empirical work that would raise critical questions about Swedish society. In his view, future funding was almost entirely for instrumental (uncritical) empirical studies. He felt that no-one in the department wanted that.

If this view is widely held in the department, it would seem that staff should explore this situation collectively to:

1. Work out a funding strategy for the department to ensure a balance and connection between empirical and theoretical work for both staff and PhD students. (Maybe ask the research council to match-fund externally funded projects around a theme, so as to optimise the empirical work and develop its theoretical implications?)
2. Ensure that project based PhD project funding includes sufficient time for the student not only to generate new empirical knowledge but also to advance the theoretical understanding of the field, so that all funding types for PhDs equip students equally for the academic labour market.
3. Revisit and rethink one of the basic questions of the social sciences - the dynamic between empirical and theoretical knowledge creation - within the current and likely future conditions for academic work. The absence of a critical sociological approach to this core disciplinary issue leaves policy makers using shaky 'models' for making academic work 'relevant', e.g. the Triple Helix, Mode 1 and Mode 2 Knowledge, or unspecified measures of 'excellence'. This sociological thinking on the dynamic between empirical and theoretical knowledge creation is needed not only for the survival of individual academic disciplines but more widely for the development of grounds on which to argue for the future of a social science which is relevant and critical, empirical and theoretical.

**Recommendation: Staff and PhD students in sociology should engage in a rethinking of the dynamic between empirical and theoretical knowledge creation in the social sciences, within the current context of academic work. This is, first, in order to develop a funding strategy for the department's development of research that is relevant, critical, empirical and theoretical. Second, this is to ensure that all types of PhDs both generate new empirical knowledge and advance the theoretical understanding of the field, so that all students are equipped equally for the academic labour market.**

### **Sick leave among women PhD students in the social sciences**

(information supplied by Malin Espersson)

Table 2. Sick leave, 60 days or over, in 2005

	PhD Students		Academic Staff	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Social Science Faculty	10.32%	1.24%	4.20%	1.10%
Lund University	4.22%	1.54%	2.70%	1.31%

Source: Lunds Universitet Personalenheten

Both students and staff were concerned that women PhD students may be 'leaking' out of university and thence losing their chance of an academic career, through long term sick leave. Malin Espersson presented figures (Table 2) which showed that in the Social Science faculty, the percentage of women PhD students on long term sick leave in 2005 was a staggering 10.32%. This was over double the percentage of women PhD students on sick leave at Lund University as a whole, and nearly 9 times higher than the percentage of male PhD students on sick leave in the Social Science faculty (Table 2). The percentage of women PhD students on sick leave in the faculties of Social Science (10.32%) and Humanities (9.94%) was far higher than in other faculties (e.g. 3.06% in natural sciences). The high rates pertained to PhD students in particular: the percentage of academic staff on sick leave in the social sciences was similar to several other faculties.

Further data showed that this very high percentage of women PhD students in Social Sciences on sick leave has been continuous from 2003 (10% women as against 1% men) to 2006 (10% women as against 2% men). We were at a loss to find a reason that would explain the high figures in social science. Any general explanation – that women have more caring responsibilities than men, do a much larger share of the housework, and take 83% of maternity leave – would apply to women in all faculties. There clearly is a problem that needs further investigation.

**Recommendation: Further investigation is needed into the reasons for high levels of sick leave among women PhD students in the social sciences. As it is very**



**important not to personalise and stigmatise students on sick leave, we recommend a historical study that would generate a population large enough to be anonymous.**

## **Environment of critical encouragement**

Participants raised the question, whether there is such a high rate of sick leave and drop out among women students because of lack of social networks? Here Sue Wright supplied some observations arising from her tutorials with 12 PhD students. A majority of students wished to talk about issues they did not know how to deal with. These were described as ethical, political or methodological, but regardless of label, concerned 'studying up'. Instead of the social sciences' usual studies of people weaker than themselves, these students were making ethnographic analyses of elites, powerful organisations or systems of government. This is at the cutting edge of the social sciences, so no wonder they felt they had problems in working out how much they should respond to informants' attempts to steer or control their studies, how to deal with gaps in information due to government officials' blocking access, or ethnographic material which showed disparities between what people said about themselves or their organisation, and how they actually acted. On all these issues, Sue Wright could give examples from her own or others' work to help the student think with, but it was more important to ask questions and hear what the students themselves were trying to get at in their study, and how they felt they should deal with it. Many used phrases such as, 'I know I should not say this, but I really think...' or 'I can't do this, but what I really want to do is....' They knew how they wanted to develop their analysis but were limiting themselves because of what they felt were their discipline's conventions. Most important, many said that they had not had an opportunity to talk like this before. Without any criticism of their supervisors, they explained that they initiate a supervision by sending a draft text for discussion. But they did not know how to write about these issues, so they had not discussed them in depth with their supervisor. They needed a good listening to! It was also striking that not many of them talked to each other about these issues, which were core to their studies, but which they did not know how to deal with. One effect was that, in writing their thesis, they were skirting round the political or ethical issue that lay at its core: they were holding back from achieving the full potential of their research. Another effect was that some of these students were lacking confidence in their analysis, just at the time when the next generation of social scientists needs courage to make bold analyses of political changes, both to protect research freedom and demonstrate its importance for society.

Students asked me to hold workshops on writing and editing in groups, following the pattern of a PhD course I held in Denmark. I held two workshops on writing and editing, focusing first on abstracts and then on journal articles. In both sessions, groups of 3-4 students read each other's work and helped to edit it. The technical issues about what an abstract or an article should look like, was the easy part. The students found they had to learn a lot about the writer's research aims, motivation and methods. They clearly gained a great deal from listening to each other and discussing the aspects of

their studies that they did not now how to deal with. They also had to think carefully about how to work with colleagues so as to criticise through encouragement. The aim was to build up each other's confidence, not put anyone down. We discussed the negative effects of phrases like 'not theoretical enough' or 'argument needs further development'. We took an 'academic literacies' approach (Lea and Street 1998) which sees the student as needing to unpack the seemingly transparent, but highly obfuscating language of academic comment and analyse the politics and structures of academic work as part of the process of learning how to write.

Four writing groups have grown out of these workshops. Each is making its own arrangements but they meet approximately every month and take it in turns to discuss a student's work. Some of the members of these groups have the skills to be able to spread this practice more widely among students in the department. Such writing groups could be a way of creating the support networks among students that they said they missed (above).

I also discussed with staff the idea of organising a weekly or fortnightly PhD student workshop, along the lines I have experienced in UK universities, where the staff member is just the facilitator. The aim would be for students to get to know each others' work, and to organise their own programme of activities, focusing on whatever issues face them at the time. Some students might be concerned with designing their fieldwork, others with a theoretical issue in literature, still others might have just completed their fieldwork and be unsure how to turn their material into chapters, and some might be tussling with finding the 'red thread' running through their thesis. It is the responsibility of students themselves to organise the workshop sessions so as to engage their colleagues in discussion of the issue they are struggling with. The role of the facilitator is to ensure students maintain a respectful and encouraging tone towards each other, and to field any queries on which students may seek their advice. In the UK, such workshops have built very strong student communities which benefit from learning about each other's very different research topics, and encourage each other in a shared commitment to make advances in their discipline.

Students also asked for much more transparent and written guidance to help them when they first took on teaching tasks in the department, e.g. what is expected in terms of seminars; how to mark papers. This is another area where students are expected to understand inexplicit expectations and obscure language and feel they cannot ask without danger of looking stupid.

**Recommendation: The department should support the development of a stronger community of PhD students by encouraging students to organise their own writing groups and by facilitating a weekly graduate workshop.**

**Recommendation: The department should provide new PhD students with written guidance and clear guidance when they start teaching and similar tasks.**

## Academic positions at Lund

Overall 55% of staff in the sociology unit are women, but the breakdown between categories of staff presents a very strange picture (Table 3). Only 33% of lecturers are women, which is a slight advance on 1996 where 25% of lecturers were women. However, in 2005, 70% of the docents were women in contrast to 33% in 1996. One possible explanation is that several male docents had left to take chairs elsewhere, whereas more women stayed and waited for promotion within Lund. At professor level, 50% were women in both 1996 and 2005, although the number of professors has increased from 4 to 10 in that period. In 2005 slightly more of the women had advertised chairs (which are more prestigious) and more of the men had a professorship as a personal promotion. This distinction between advertised chairs and personal promotion arises from the professor reform which was not funded by the government, so many new professors have been promoted without a rise in salary or a change in their working conditions.

Table 3. Lund University Sociology Unit – sex distribution within each academic position

Table prepared by Helena Ledje

Spring 1996				Autumn 2005			
<b>Permanent</b>	No.	Women	Men	<b>Permanent</b>	No.	Women	Men
Total	24	33% (8)	67%(16)	Total	33	55% (18)	45%(15)
Full professor	4	50% (2)	50% (2)	Full professor	10	50% (5)	50% (5)
				Advertised Chair	5	60% (3)	40% (2)
				Personal Chair	5	40% (2)	60% (3)
Docent	15	33% (5)	67% (10)	Docent	14	71% (10)	29% (4)
Lecturer	4	25% (1)	75% (3)	Lecturer	9	33% (3)	67% (6)
Research Ass.	1	0% (0)	100% (1)	Research Ass.			
<b>Temporary</b>							
Total	45	38% (17)	62% (28)				
Docent	2	50% (1)	50% (1)				
Lecturer	18	44% (8)	56% (10)				
Research Ass.	1	0% (0)	100% (1)				

This sex distribution in the hierarchy of academic positions looks very strange. The normal pattern of sex inequality in a discipline with predominantly women undergraduates is for the proportion of women gradually to decline in relation to men at postgraduate and lecturer levels, and then for men to dominate at docent and professor levels. Two things may help explain the pattern in the sociology unit.

First, it seems that it is an excessively ageing unit. In Autumn 2005, the youngest member of staff in the sociology unit was 46 years old, no lecturers were under 50, and only 12% of the unit's total staff were 50 or under. In the social sciences faculty 36% of lecturers (37% for women) and 7% of professors (7% also for women) were 50 or under. In the university as a whole 51% of lecturers (49% for women) and 22% of professors (19% for women) were 50 or under. The sociology unit is therefore very much older than the averages for both the faculty and the university, and presumably there have been long periods when new staff have not been appointed. Second, the situation at professor level may reflect the effect of the professor reforms, that is, the number of professors has increased, but in this case, the proportion of women has not increased.

### **The professor reform** (information supplied by Ann-Marie Sellerberg)

New national regulations, brought in on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1999, had the dual aims, that the number of professors in Sweden should double, and that the percentage of women professors should grow. The first of these aims has clearly been achieved. As seen in Table 4, the number of professors in Sweden grew by 88 per cent between 1994 and 2005 and by a further 12 per cent in the following year. Between 1994 and 2005 the percentage of professors who are women increased from 7 to 17 per cent, but it stopped growing in the following year. It would be interesting to know to what extent the initial increase in the percentage of women professors was due to new appointments of women, or whether it was for example more men retiring, that has made the difference. It would also be interesting to know what proportion of the new women professors are internal promotions without a rise in salary or change in working conditions.

Table 4. Swedish professors

	1994	2005	2006
No. of professors	2083	3930	4416
% of whom were women	7%	17%	17%

Sources: Högskoleverket 1996, 2006, 2007

To see whether the professor reform is changing the face of sex distribution in Swedish academic hierarchies, Helen Dryler (Forska 2006) made a report for the Högskoleverket (National Agency for Higher Education) which traced those who had defended their PhDs between 1980 and 1991. Of the 1991 cohort, there were 800 men and 400 women, and twelve years later 8% of the men, but only 4% of the women, had become

professors. This is evidence that women still seem to have only half the chance that men have of reaching the top.

It is apparently widely argued in Sweden that sex equality will gradually be established of its own accord and over time. Even though there are now higher numbers of women in the lower levels of the academic hierarchy, it is becoming clear that the situation will not right itself. The national percentage of women lecturers has been at the same level, 35%, for a long time. Two journalists, Pia Brandelius and Anita Jekander (2005) have argued that the figure stays at one third, because if it goes over, people start suggesting that women are dominating high positions. Workshop participants recognised this discourse regarding the sociology unit where numerical equality is referred to as women's domination. Another reason why the sex imbalance will not right itself is that under the professors' reform, people had to nominate themselves for promotion. This, women are notoriously reluctant to do. The Swedish experience seems to be that women are slower than men to put themselves forward for promotion, but their case is better prepared and they are more successful when they finally do so. A third reason why the gender balance will not right itself automatically was revealed by research into the natural sciences faculty at Stockholm University, which asked active PhD students about their future plans. There were equal numbers of male and female PhD students in the faculty, but two thirds of the women said they planned to find a job outside the university, whereas two thirds of men said they wanted a career in academia. The professor reforms do not therefore seem to have generated the desired optimism among women that they can pursue a successful academic career.

## **Women and the academic career path**

Anett Schenk's presentation (Appendix 2) looked at three forms of sex segregation in Swedish higher education and identified one area where there are improvements in women's career paths, which should perhaps be better known among women. First, in disciplines where women form the majority at undergraduate level, there is a strikingly low rate of transition into postgraduate degrees. However, second, there is an increase in the number of women enrolling in traditionally male subjects at undergraduate level which do have a good transition rate. Third, although the vast majority of students and staff are at 'old' universities, the 'new' institutions, which have received research resources and permission to offer postgraduate education since 1977, have higher percentages of women research associates, lecturers and professors.

Feminisation of a workforce usually heralds a worsening of salaries, organisational resources and working conditions – but in the new universities the opposite is the case. New universities have much higher increases in their funding, a much higher percentage of PhD students are employed (62% as against 45% in new universities) and at nearly the same rate of pay. Salaries for other positions are nearly as good in the new as in the old universities, and professors' salaries are better in the new universities. Anett Schenk

concludes that these 'new' research universities offer good opportunities for women academics which challenge established academic gender structures.

**Recommendation: Make it known among women that 'new' universities with research resources offer career opportunities for women in academia. But watch whether women who progress through this route are successful in moving to high prestige positions in 'old' universities. If this transition is possible, there is a chance of changing opportunities for women in 'old' universities; if not, there is the danger of the emergence of a 'two tier' academic career.**

## Conclusion

The workshops identified that the pipe might start leaking at undergraduate and master's level. In a two tier PhD system, men receive the majority of 'internal' funding and 'hang on' for an academic career. Women for the most part take on 'project' PhDs, and may do so with little optimism about their chances of an academic career, but good possibilities of employment in the field under research.

The age structure in the sociology unit is more unbalanced than other departments at Lund, and has a very strange sex distribution across the hierarchy of positions. In general, the professors reform, while increasing the number of professors, seems not to be giving women confidence that they can reach the top in an academic career.

Most important, at undergraduate and postgraduate level, women seem to be especially lacking networks among their fellow students that can provide informal support, critical encouragement and information. At PhD level, students encountered through the Leaky Pipe project do not know each others' work in detail, lack opportunities to talk through with each other what they are trying to do, and have not built up a community committed to exploring how they can use their studies to make distinctive (Lund) advances in social science.

The description of the Leaky Pipe project quoted Mary Frank Fox in her article, 'Women, science, academia, graduate education and careers' (2001: 663):

'Just as organisations are structured, so they can be restructured. The structure is not written in stone, it was not inscribed on a sacred mount, and it is not an unalterable plan. It is social and it is malleable'.

In this spirit, this report on the results of the workshops on women in academia makes a number of recommendations to improve the learning experience of PhD students and provide greater opportunities for women in academia. Hopefully these results and recommendations can be taken up by the project to improve the work environment in sociology at Lund University.

## **Appendix 1. Participants in the Women in Academia Workshops**

Anett Schenk  
Annika Capelán Köhler  
Ann-Mari Sellerberg  
Charlotta Zettervall  
Chia-Lin Yang  
Helena Ledje  
Malin Espersson  
Maria Nilsen  
Steven Sampson  
Susanna Persson  
Terese Anving

Thanks to the following for conversations on the topic:

Johanna Esseveld  
Malin Åkerström

## Appendix 2. Gender Segregation by Anett Schenk

This paper is based on Anett Schenk (forthcoming 2007) 'New Universities and New Opportunities for Female Academics in Sweden', in: Renata Sieminska / Annette Zimmer (eds.) *Gendered Career Trajectories in Academia in Cross National Perspective*, Warsaw.

There are three dimensions to gender segregation:

- vertical – women may constitute above half of the undergraduates in some disciplines but they are a small fraction of the professoriate
- horizontal – women are clustered in certain areas of science
- contractual – men are more likely to have tenure; women are more likely to be on short-term and part-time contracts

(ETAN – European Commission, Working Group on Women and Science (2000) *Science Policies in the European Union: Promoting Excellence through Mainstreaming Gender Equality*, Luxemburg: European Commission Publications.)

### Figure 1: Percentage of First Degree Students 1989/90 – 1993/94 enrolled in Postgraduate Education (within 3-4 years after graduation) by Discipline

Source: Kim 2001: 40

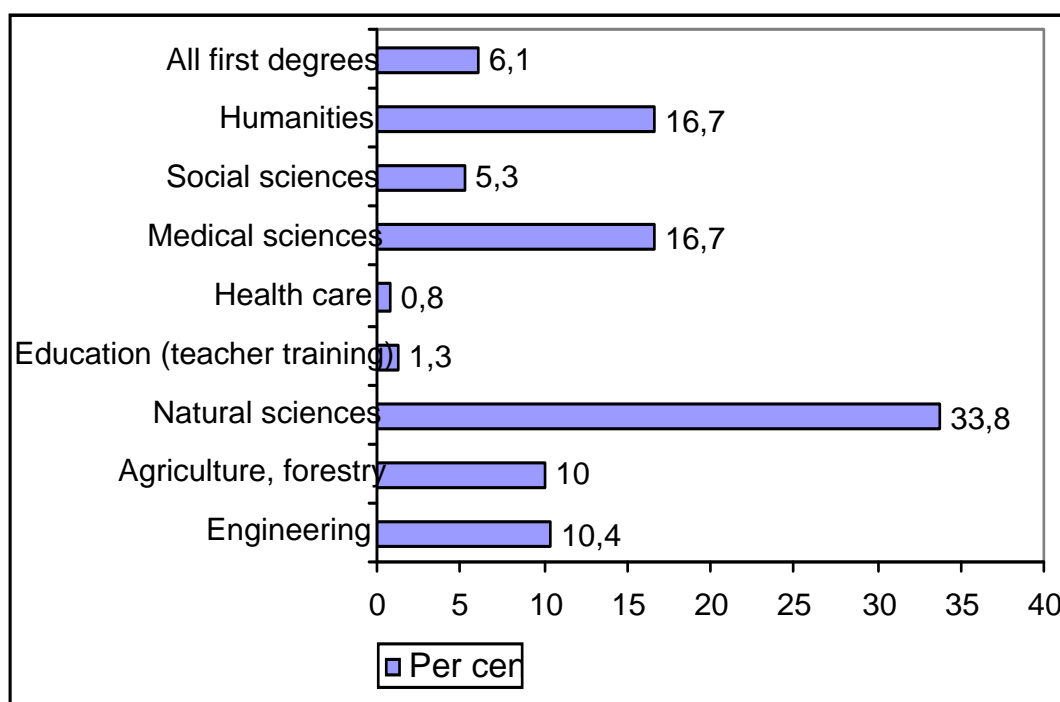


Figure 1 illustrates the transition from undergraduate to post-graduate education by discipline. As we can see, disciplines dominated by women (such as health care or teacher training) show a strikingly low transition rate. This is mainly caused by labour market requirements, but reduces at the same time the cohorts of women that may



pursue a research career. One question in this context is, why do women tend to enrol in areas with a lower transition from undergraduate to postgraduate education? Women who are interested in working at a hospital could just as well decide to study medical science instead of health care – why don't they?

**Table 1: Newly-enrolled students 2001 / 2002 in comparison with 1993 / 1994**

	2001 / 2002			CHANGE IN % COMPARED WITH 1993 / 1994		
	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
<b>All</b>	<b>78.390</b>	<b>46.200</b>	<b>32.190</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Programmes for professional degrees</b>	<b>28.070</b>	<b>16.670</b>	<b>11.400</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>
Humanities / Theology	160	90	70	-26	-29	-23
Law / Social Sciences	1.980	1.500	490	20	33	-8
Teacher Training	8.400	6.640	1.800	6	9	-4
Natural Sciences	280	240	40	-17	-19	-8
Technology	10.460	2.660	7.790	12	54	3
Agriculture / Forestry	310	200	110	-12	58	-51
Medical Science / Odontology	610	400	210	-17	8	-43
Health-related Science	5.450	4.760	690	18	17	24
Fine and Applied Arts	410	200	210	27	33	22
<b>Programmes for general degrees</b>	<b>50.320</b>	<b>29.520</b>	<b>20.800</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>29</b>
Humanities / Theology	17.110	10.760	6.350	44	39	52
Law / Social Sciences	27.220	15.820	11.400	53	68	36
Natural Sciences	7.290	3.410	3.870	32	63	13
Technology	4.730	1.610	3.120	104	232	70
Medical Science / Odontology	850	610	240	232	261	173
Health-related Science	1.070	920	140	-12	-14	1
Fine and Applied Arts	1.480	850	630	264	244	294
Others	810	600	210	118	117	121

Source: Statistics Sweden 2003b: 11

Swedish higher education offers two kinds of degrees: professional and general degrees. It is the latter category that contains the 'real' cohorts for an academic career. We can see that in general women and men tend to follow the same pattern when enrolling for professional or general degrees: 64% of women and 65% of men enrolled in a programme for general degrees. It is interesting that patterns of horizontal segregation seem to change. In 2001/2002 women enrolled to a lesser degree into health-related sciences. At the same time they enrolled to a stronger degree in male-dominated disciplines such as technology and medical sciences – their increase outnumbered even the growing enrolment of men.

Instead of distinguishing between universities and university colleges, it is also possible to focus upon the institutions that actually have research resources and distinguish between 'old' and 'new' institutions. The year 1977 marks the distinguishing point. The reform of that year opened up the process of founding new university colleges and of awarding research resources to new institutions of higher education – even though it took until the 1990s for this to gain momentum. Institutions that received research resources and the permission to offer post-graduate education in or after 1977 are labelled as 'new' institutions (see Table 2). Table 3 shows on the one hand that the old institutions enrol and employ the vast majority of students and academic staff. At the same time we can see that the new institutions show a higher feminisation-rate.

**Table 2: Old and New Institutions with Research Resources**

OLD INSTITUTIONS	NEW INSTITUTIONS
Uppsala University	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Lund University	Karlstad University
Gothenburg University	Växjö University
Stockholm University	Örebro University
Umeå University	University College of Kalmar
Linköping University	Blekinge Institute of Technology
Karolinska Institute	Malmö University College
Royal Institute of Technology	Mid Sweden University
Luleå University of Technology	University College of Mälardalen
Chalmers University of Technology	University College of Jönköping
Stockholm School of Economics	

**Table 3: Women and Men at new and old Institutions with Research Resources 2001/2002 (1997/1998)**

	TOTAL	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION RATE IN %
Students at old institutions	59 (65)	55 (61)	66 (70)	57 (54)
Students at new institutions	27 (21)	28 (21)	26 (21)	63 (58)
PhD-students at old institutions	92 (95)	92 (94)	92 (95)	45 (40)
PhD-students at new institutions	8 (5)	8 (6)	8 (5)	46 (44)
Lecturers at old institutions	43 (54)	44 (56)	43 (53)	54 (52)
Lecturers at new institutions	31 (28)	29 (26)	33 (30)	51 (47)
Research associates at old institutions	87 (92)	85 (92)	89 (91)	37 (37)
Research associates at new institutions	10 (7)	12 (7)	9 (8)	44 (34)
Senior lecturers at old institutions	66 (77)	64 (77)	67 (77)	30 (24)
Senior lecturers at new institutions	19 (15)	18 (15)	19 (15)	33 (24)
Professors at old institutions	83 (88)	78 (82)	83 (89)	13 (10)
Professors at new institutions	13 (9)	16 (13)	12 (9)	18 (16)

Own calculations based on Statistics Sweden

**Table 4: Sources of Financial Support for active PhD-Students 2001<sup>7</sup>**

UNIVERSITY / UNIVERSITY COLLEGE	NUMBER OF ACTIVE PHD-STUDENTS & % OF WOMEN	SUPPORT IN % OF NUMBER OF ACTIVE PHD-STUDENTS		
		Employment for doctoral students	Professional work combined with research activity	Support missing or work with no relation to research activity
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.560 (45)</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Old Institutions</b>	<b>17.150 (45)</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
Uppsala University	2.410 (45)	51	10	12
Lund University	3.040 (43)	47	5	8
Göteborg University	2.170 (54)	32	9	12
Stockholm University	1.900 (51)	38	14	12
Umeå University	1.120 (49)	53	5	12
Linköping University	1.230 (43)	49	3	11
Karolinska Institute	1.950 (61)	26	16	20
Royal Institute of Technology	1.630 (24)	52	8	1
Luleå University of Technology	470 (26)	56	5	1
Chalmers University of Technology	1.040 (31)	72	5	-
Stockholm School of Economics	190 (35)	17	48	11
<b>New Institutions</b>	<b>1.500 (46)</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	790 (48)	62	14	4
Karlstad University	150(52)	71	1	1
Växjö University	140(40)	70	3	10
Örebro University	170 (52)	44	-	14
University College of Kalmar	30(50)	53	13	31
Blekinge Institute of Technology	50 (15)	74	-	-
Malmö University College	40 (57)	49	-	-
Mid Sweden University	20 (50)	72	6	-
University College of Mälardalen	60 (18)	55	-	-
University College of Jönköping	50 (38)	94	-	-

Based on Statistics Sweden 2003c: 20

Higher feminisation is often accompanied by lower status – often measured in terms of money. This does not, however, fully hold true for the new institutions. From 1998/1999 to 2002/2003 the sum of money allocated to the new institutions increased by 52 per cent compared to 32 per cent for the old institutions (Swedish Parliament 1998/1999, 1999/2000, 2000/2001, 2001/2002, 2001/2002a, 2002/2003, 2002/2003a).

<sup>7</sup> Not all sources of support are included in this table: 'Education Grant', Appointment at University / University College 'Stipends' are missing. For these data see Statistics Sweden 2003c: 20.

Another indicator is the financial support given to doctoral students at old and new institutions of higher education. In 2001 the new institutions could offer employment for 62 per cent their doctoral students, while only 45 per cent of the PhD-students at old institutions had such an opportunity. It was possible for nine per cent of the doctoral students at old institutions to combine professional work with their research. This was also true for eight per cent of the doctoral students at new institutions. When it comes to doctoral students who had no financial support or who worked on topics unrelated to their research, then the new institutions did better than the old institutions. Ten per cent of the doctoral students at the old institutions lacked financial support, but only five per cent at the new institutions.

Finally, a comparison of the level of salaries shows that the new institutions do rather well in ensuring a financially stable situation for their doctoral students. In 2000 the average salary for the doctoral students who had employment at their institution was 18.228 SEK at the new institutions. The average salary at the old institutions was only 107 SEK higher. The Blekinge Institute of Technology offered the highest salary at 20.321 SEK for their employed doctoral students. This tops even the salaries of well-established institutions for Technology like the Royal Institute of Technology (19.630 SEK), Luleå University of Technology (19.485 SEK) or Chalmers University of Technology (18.944 SEK) (SULF 2001).

The rather small difference between salaries is also true for other academic positions. In 2002 lecturers at new institutions received on average 25.448 SEK, compared to 25.906 SEK for their colleagues at the old institutions. Senior lecturers at old institutions had a salary 373 SEK higher than senior lecturers at new institutions who received 31.611 SEK. Professors at new institutions had on average a higher salary than their colleagues at old institutions: 43.061 SEK compared to 42.437 SEK (SULF 2003).

We can see that the new institutions are far from being unattractive or low-status despite their high rate of feminisation. This means in the best case that the new institutions really offer new (and better) opportunities for female academics, which could challenge the established gender structures in academia. In the worst case, however, it is possible that the new institutions will distribute their financial support and research opportunities according to the same gendered patterns as the old institutions.

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