

Is the Swedish day care model for others to follow?



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After Prime Time: What type of childcare is best for children?

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...welfare and development through family

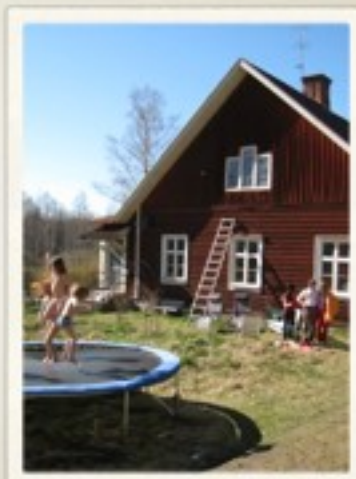
About Jonas Himmelstrand

- * Born Swedish and has worked in Sweden for most of his life.
- * Human resource consultant and educator running his own business in Sweden since 1981.
- * Author of the Swedish book, "Following your heart – in the social utopia of Sweden".
- * Spoken on Swedish Family Policies in a fourteen cities in ten countries including the Swedish, British and Irish Parliaments, and the UN.
- * Founder of the Mireja Institute, www.mireja.org.
- * Been a member of the Advisory Board on the EU Familyplatform project.
- * Faculty member of The Neufeld-Institute in Vancouver, Canada, www.neufeldinstitute.com.
- * Married to Tamara, has three children and presently lives in Finland on the Åland Islands.



The famous Swedish statistics

- * Lowest infant mortality
- * Very high life expectancy
- * Relatively high birth rate
- * Low child poverty
- * Comprehensive day care
- * High education spending
- * Equality – gender equality
- * 16 month parental leave



The Swedish family policy model today 2013

- * No babies in day care – only parental leave first year.
- * A full 93% of all 18 month-5 year olds are in day care, predominantly day care centres.
- * Day care is at very low cost to parents. It is more than 90% tax subsidized, equivalent to about 16 000 euros per child/year.
- * No national home care allowance – no home care tax benefits.
- * Day care and dual-earner households are strongly encouraged both culturally and financially.
- * Home care, granny care and neighbor care is culturally strongly discouraged. Even child-minding is discouraged.
- * Home education is in effect illegal.

The quality of Swedish day care

- * Day care group sizes for under 3s are never below 10 children, often 14 and sometimes 17 children, or more.
- * Day care group sizes for the 3-5 year olds can be upwards 25-30 children, or more.
- * Average day care child-staff ratio all ages is a bit above 5:1, but 7:1 and even 10:1 do exist.
- * There is no regulation of group sizes or child-staff ratios.
- * The traditional focus on play, which once made Swedish day care famous, is now being diverged into learning.
- * Three established Swedish psychiatric and educational experts say the quality has fallen to a level where some children risk having their development impaired or arrested.

Envisioned Swedish family policy model outcomes

- * Greater gender equality.
- * Improved child social development.
- * Improved child academic development.
- * To even out social-class differences.
- * Liberating mothers from their motherhood instincts.
- * The "work policy" – every adult, man and woman, in full-time employed work, and every child in full-time day care from one year of age.
- * Greater adult life satisfaction, through more employed work, and less family work.

Actual outcomes 30 years later

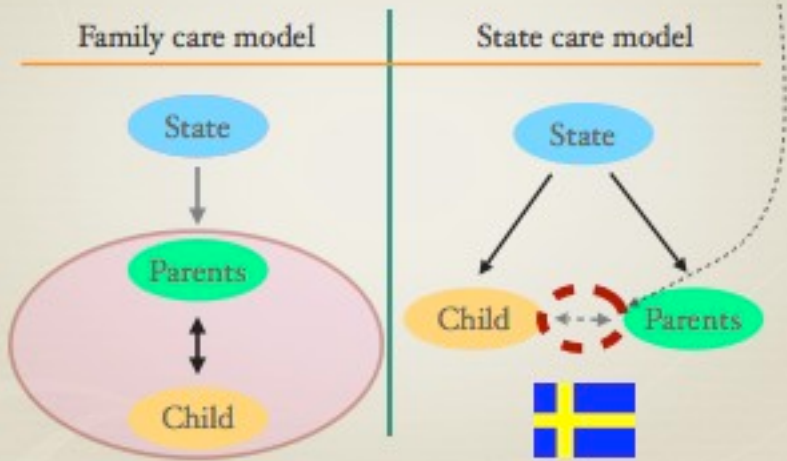
- * Strong increase in self-reported psychological ill health in youth.
- * Strong increase in diagnosed psychiatric disease among youth.
- * Plummeting educational results in schools.
- * Increase in discipline problems in schools.
- * Very high rates of sick leave among women.
- * Day care staff one of three top groups in sick leave statistics.
- * Deteriorating quality of parenthood, even middle-class.
- * Quality in Swedish day care is plummeting.
- * Lowered total fertility rate – although relatively high in Europe.
- * Highly gender segregated labour market, and high gender pay gap.
- * Ideologically motivated interventions by the social authorities.
- * Very high youth unemployment.

Is there a causal link?

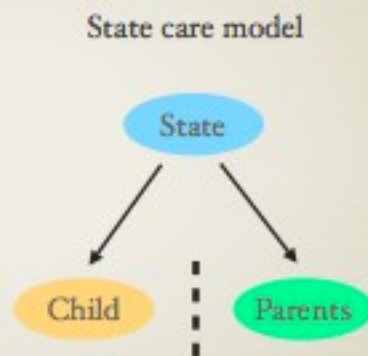
Possible causal explanations

- * **Lack of emotional nourishment to infants can create chronically low thresholds for stress throughout life.**
- * **Early exposure to large groups of peers, creates peer-orientation and emotionally defended children. (Read the book: "Hold On To Your Kids", by dr Gordon Neufeld.)**
- * **Peer-orientation leads to disinterest in learning, bullying, gangs, flat-lining of culture and promiscuity.**
- * **Emotional defendedness lowers the children's "teachability" and sets the stage psychological problems of various kind.**
- * **The culturally endorsed early separation of infants from parents causes stress in parents, and possible sick-leave.**
- * **Large state intervention in family life, reduces parents sense of responsibility for the care of their children.**

The Swedish day care problem in a nutshell – state care weakens parental care



The Swedish day care problem in a nutshell – ultimate risk of social breakdown



Sweden



The Scandinavian countries



The Nordic countries



How many children below 3 use the home care allowance?



Current Swedish family debate

- * Swedish schools are in an alarmingly poor state.
- * Day-care, but also Night-care, Weekend-care and Summer-care.
- * Suggested compulsory day-care being suggested as a good thing.
- * Suggested compulsory school for 12 years until age 18.
- * Every child has the right to day care – parents must not hamper.
- * Day care encouraged – even when parents are on parental leave.
- * Unemployed have to use day care to keep unemployment benefits.
- * Gender equality – a very strong ideology in Sweden.

The last few months family news

- * 9 out of 10 pre-school teachers cannot follow national curriculum – too little time.
- * One out of three 16-year-olds cronicly stressed.
- * Increasing number of oneyearolds in pre-school, up 17% since 2005.
- * 43% of girls stressed about body, weight and looks.
- * 13% of the age group 15-24 see life as meaningless.
- * High school riot in Gothenburg – "Our generation will go crazy".
- * Strong increase in psychiatric drugs for youth – not tested on youth.
- * A week long riot in Stockholm. Even 12 yearolds are burning cars!
- * Two out of three Stockholm school children age 8-10 can't sing.

Reasonable learnings from the Swedish family model

- * It seems to be a well-supported hypothesis that Swedish family policies have lead to negative developmental outcomes for children, parents, and families.
- * The basic reason for the negative developments seems be that individual child care has become a state political decision based on political ideology, rather than a parental decision, based on the needs of the individual child.
- * Every society has to protect parental choices about the care of their children. The state should stay neutral to all forms of care, including home care, and not be supporting one over another, culturally or financially.
- * The institution of family needs support and respect from government as family is the key institution for close relationships in the western world today.
- * Work for the good of society needs to be acknowledged. Raising children is certainly one of them. Women sometimes make different choices than men. Their choices as highly valid and worthy or respect – true gender equality.
- * Swedish family policies are not sustainable. They need to be researched and understood in depth before any attempt to emulate them in any way is done.

Thank you for your attention!

**A handout of the slides will be available
within a week at:**

www.mireja.org/130625.html

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Links

- Mireja – The Mireja Institute, welfare and development through family
www.mireja.org
- Articles in English by Jonas Himmelstrand
www.mireja.org/articles.html
- Jonas Himmelstands speech on the future role of family;
at a seminar in the Swedish Parliament December 8, 2008.
www.stratletter.com/dec10speech.html
- Haro – Swedish organisation for freedom of choice, equality and
parenthood, www.haro.se
- Rohus – The Swedish Association for Home Education
www.rohus.nu

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(Three leading Swedish day care experts write about the severely decreasing quality in Swedish day care.)
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