

Swedish 'sin'

Prepared by C. O. Alm

Early mentioning of Northern sexuality by outside observers

- Ibn Fadlan account you read before
- Adam of Bremen, Mary Wollencraft (cf. Glover & Marklund 2009)
- Linnaeus and sexuality in nature

"The 20th-century case of Swedish sin offers an interesting contrast to this commentary in that it is rationality and not barbarity, backwardness, primitivism or nativism, which is at the root of this sexualized image"
(Glover & Marklund 2009:488)

Frederick Hale (2003)

- Before 1950s people did not really comment upon Swedish sin
- Topics of focus before the 50s included welfare state, government's role, social democratic policies (vis-à-vis depression and the New Deal)
- *Sweden: The Middle Way* (1936)
- Some scholarly treatment of Scandinavian relationship structures, etc., but that did not reach the general US public

A few events in 1951-1956

- Arne Mattson's *Hon dansade en sommar* (*A summer of happiness*): nude bathing scene with Ulla Jacobson & Folke Sundquist (1951). Won the Golden Bear, lauded at Berlin and Cannes film festivals. Forbidden in some parts of USA. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUDhxpGue1g>)
- Ingmar Bergman's *Summer with Monika*: another nude bathing scene with Harriet Anderson (1953)
 - Theme of nude swimming became perceived as Swedish tradition (still pops up here and there, e.g., in Colin Nutley's 1992 *House of Angels*)
- *Playboy*
- Sex associations with contemporary popular music
- Kinsky report had scientifically revealed that women also had a libido
- 1955: *Time Magazine* published article "Sin and Sweden"
- Followed by *Focus* article "Is it true what they say about Swedes and sex?"
- Scientific interest in Scandinavian sexuality, e.g. Siemens and Geis (1956)

"Sin and Sweden" (1955, Time)

Observations generally from Hale (2003), unless otherwise stated

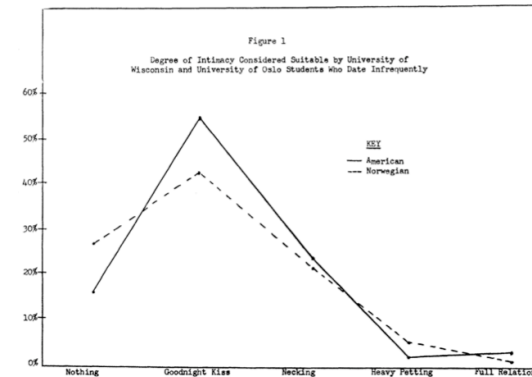
- "[...] in modern Sweden, where sociology has become a religion in itself, and birth control, abortion and promiscuity — especially among the young — are recognized as inalienable rights" (Brown 1955)
- Article characterized by factual errors and exaggerated statements, broad overgeneralizations. It also "bordered on plagiarism" (358), given a previous article published by Coghill in *Birmingham Post* (UK)
- Methodologically unsound/unethical
 - Brown 'interviewed' a few people without revealing his identity at a dinner party (including Ottesen-Jensen from the National Council for Sexual Education)
 - Likely not a representative sample of Swedish clergy
- "essay elicited a nearly global storm of responses from readers [...]" (364)
- In Hale's conclusion: "[...] the contextual analysis of Brown's commentary on Swedish sexual mores reveals how a journalist who was not competent to write about a particular topic can nevertheless shape international opinion" (371; emphasis added)

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From Courtship Patterns of Norwegian and American University Students (Simens & Geis 1956:337)

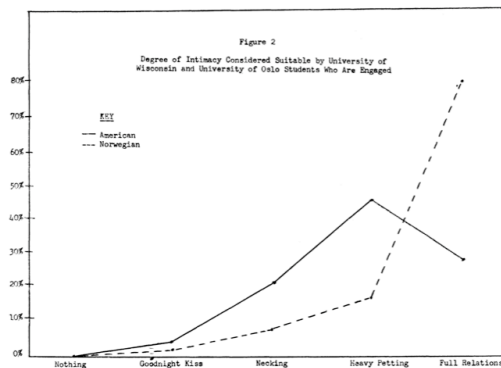


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From Courtship Patterns of Norwegian and American University Students (Simens & Geis 1956:338)



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From Courtship Patterns of Norwegian and American University Students (Simens & Geis 1956)

From "Summary":

- "The Norwegian girl in dating situations typically shares half of the dating expenses; the American girl rarely bears any of the dating expense"
- "In courtship intimacy patterns, as with her male national counterpart, the Norwegian girl is rather strict in intimacy terms at the early stages of the relationship, compared with the American, but considerably more liberal at the later stages of the courtship relationship, particularly during the engagement period." (338)

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"Sin in export" (Arnberg 2009)

- Referring to Lennerhed, Arnberg points to the connection between sexuality and the Swedish model (the third way; the welfare state)
- Immoral sexuality considered one of the ways of escape from living conditions Swedes were not content with, despite the welfare state's boosting their standard of living (cf. 469)

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"Arabian Nights in the Midnight Sun"

(N. Glover & C. Marklund, 2009; 'the below is mostly based on summarizing discussion in Arnstad 2009)

- Glover & Marklund claim that tension surrounded sexuality the 1950s in the US
- *Sweden – Heaven and Hell* (Scattini 1968)
- US fascination with European sexuality as an intriguing 'Other'
- "Sweden-sex nexus [...] include not only sin but also more general notions of sexuality, promiscuity, and frivolty, and even eroticism and (female) beauty" (Glover & Marklund: 492)
- Draw an intrinsic link to Edward Said's concept of *orientalism* and the European fascination with the Orient (e.g., Arabian deserts-'harems') as a sexualized 'Other'
- One crucial difference: modern/progressive (Sweden) vs. racist overtones (Orient)

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Concept of "sexual democracy"

- Swedish point of view to sexuality perceived by US liberal academics as "rational, democratic and utopic" (Arnstad 2009:Kultur 9)
- Evolving into matter of national pride, as a feature of progressiveness
- Part-and-parcel of Swedish nation brand
- 'Inga from Sweden' as a national selling point
- Glover & Marklund (2009) highlight the negotiation process between national and international discourses that reinforce each other

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Not just progressive: the program of eugenistic sterilization in Sweden

- Reveled in an article in daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* in a 1997, the existence of a forced sterilization program from 1934 to 1976 (mostly active until mid-50s) caused an uproar among Swedes
- Social democratic party's *folkhem* (people's home) era
- Legacy of Swedish Racial Hygiene Society, Institute of Racial Biology, work by Gunnar and Alva Myrdal
- Prevent 'spread' of hereditary disease, mental illness
- 2000 a governmental report found that **more than 20,000** had been forcibly sterilized (excl. unknowns & "volunteers")
- Financial compensation issued by gov. to many victims

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Concept discussion: naked ≠ sex

- naked body is not necessarily perceived as sexual (e.g., sauna, topless sunbathing, children without bathing suits, etc.)
- Education: from sex to living together education
- A few practical tips about sauna etiquette:
 - nakedness in sauna does not project sexual overtones
 - no staring
 - saunas may be mixed-sex or single-sex
 - wearing towel is OK

See: <http://www.cankar.org/sauna/howto/howto.html> for sauna etiquette

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Progressive take on prostitution

In 1999: a new law went into effect

- Who commits a crime in the case of transaction sex, according to Swedish law?
- How does law regard male/female prostitutes?
- How popular is the law in Sweden? Critique?
- How common is it to pay for sex in Sweden?
- What other countries are adopting the system?

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Quick read of two BBC articles from 2002 and 2009 & pair discussion

- *When did Sweden legalize gay adoption? Was this before or after the legalization of gay marriage? Why do you think they happened in this order?*
- *Is this new legislation expected to make a difference in the ease of adoption or the adoption rate?*
- *What did gay adoption legislation signify in practice and why?*

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