

Spring 2011

Scandinavian Dream: A Region's Common Philosophical Principles Resulting in Equality, Prosperity, and Social Justice

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**Scandinavian Dream:
A Region's Common Philosophical Principles
Resulting in Equality, Prosperity, and Social
Justice**

*A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Liberal Studies*

by

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May 2011

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INTRODUCTION

The Scandinavian nations of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden arguably enjoy a level of human equality, liberty, and prosperity unsurpassed by any other region today. Why and how is that? An analysis of this region's historical, social, and economic ties – from the industrial revolution to the present – reveals that the formation of a set of common philosophical and foundational principles led to Scandinavia's present position. These principles center on the belief that the individual, regardless of gender or social-class, must be free to determine his or her own destiny; furthermore, it is society's obligation to remove all barriers that may keep someone from fulfilling one's human potential. This common belief-system led to the creation of Scandinavia's comprehensive social-welfare system over eighty years ago, fusing free-market capitalistic and social-democratic platforms. Along with the analysis of this region's historical, social, and economic ties, a closer investigation into each nation's individual social-welfare system, focusing on gender equality, health care, education, and income distribution, explains how these principles formed Scandinavia's unique identity.

The term "Scandinavia" was first coined in the first century A.D. by a Roman officer named Gaius Plinius Secundus who travelled to the southernmost part of the peninsula shared by Norway and Sweden. Over the centuries this term has been used to refer specifically to the nations of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. This area is often also referred to as the "Nordic Region" or the "Nordic Nations" which comprise these three countries but also include Iceland and Finland. This Nordic designation is a relatively contemporary term used to highlight the common political and social policies

the five nations share. Because Denmark, Norway, and Sweden's history is more intricately linked through common philosophical and foundational principles, Iceland and Finland will not be discussed in this paper.

The Scandinavian peoples have consistently been rated as having the highest standards of living in the world. In October of 2010 the London-based analytical center, Legatum Institute, announced the top ten nations in the world with the highest prosperity-index based on economics, health, liberty, education, entrepreneurship and social-capital influence. Norway was rated first; Denmark was rated second and Sweden was rated sixth in the world.¹ Norway was also ranked first on the United Nations' 2010 quality-of-life list in its annual Human Development Index² for the eighth straight year. Denmark and Sweden also made the top twenty on the list. These three nations have consistently dominated the rest of the planet when it comes to quality of life and equality of its citizens.

Massive investments focusing on providing generous social services is a continuing priority for the Scandinavian nations. A collective decision was made that in order for every individual to be truly free, prosperous, and have the potential for happiness, certain basic needs should be met automatically. This involves the idea that for any individuals' potential to have a chance for realization, certain functions of society should be birthrights. Universal health care and post-secondary education – paid for through a progressive tax system, are two of those birthrights guaranteed to all. This stems from the mindset that in order for all to have the potential for prosperity, the

¹ "Prosperity Studies." *Legatum Institute*. 2010 <http://www.li.com/prosperityindex.aspx>

² "Human Development Reports." *United Nations 2010 Quality of Life Index*. 2011. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/>

burden of paying for these basic civic needs should be taken off the table automatically.

All citizens, regardless of their wealth or status, start out with these basic rights.

Besides access to universal health care and post-secondary education, women in the Scandinavian nations enjoy among the highest levels of equality in the world. Part of the region's social-safety net includes the mindset that the concept of *person* is “broadened to include women and promote their access to individual rights, to political representation, to work, and education.”³ Quota laws in these three nations require that a certain percentage of government representation be made up of women. This is one of the key factors why Denmark, Norway, and Sweden continue to rank among the highest in the world for equality and prosperity of its citizens.

But these concepts, as well as Scandinavia's prestigious position on the world-stage, did not happen overnight. Historical, cultural, and economic factors have played a crucial role in the formation of a unified consciousness unique to this special region. This consciousness has been monumental towards cultivating a culture centered on social welfare, opportunity for all its citizens, as well as gender equality.

But it was not always this way. Long before the modern Scandinavian welfare safety-net system was created, the region looked very different. It was in the early to mid-nineteenth century, as the industrial revolution in Europe and North America intensified, that the modern Scandinavian identity, culture and systems of operation began to take shape. By the mid 1800s much of Western Europe and the United States were rapidly transforming their economies from pre-dominantly rural/agrarian to urban

³ Hanne Haavind, “Understanding Women in the Psychological Mode: The Challenge from the Experiences of Nordic Women,” in Fehr, Jonasdottir, Rosenbech, eds., *Is There a Nordic Feminism?* (UCL Press LTD London, UK, 1998) 247

ones. And they were getting richer in the process. The Scandinavian region also experienced an economic blossoming, albeit at a smaller scale.

In order to get a proper understanding of how the industrial revolution contributed to the shaping of the Scandinavian region one has to know the political reality at this time. It was not until 1905 that the contemporary sovereignty of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden came to be. Up until the year 1814 Norway had been a province of Denmark for approximately three hundred sixty years. Over those three and a half centuries Danish influence over Norway was immense, from education to language to culture. It was during this time that Danish and Norwegian identity blurred, and regional connections intensified. But Denmark also maintained a firm grip of power over the Norwegian economy, often at the cost of Norwegians, in order to benefit the Danish mainland. More on this subject will be presented in the historical analysis of part I.

By 1814 Norway entered into a “personal union” with Sweden under a peace agreement, thus ending over three hundred fifty years of Danish domination and influence.⁴ A loose federation developed between Norway and Sweden. Although still not fully autonomous, Norway “enjoyed almost complete domestic self-government”⁵ during this union until 1905; Norway’s declaration of independence from Sweden in 1905 solidified the present geographical and political identities of the three nations. Norway’s separation from Denmark in 1814 and from Sweden in 1905 was peaceful with no combat experienced. Because the present political and geographical boundaries of the three nations did not exist until 1905, Norway was often referred to as Norway-Denmark

⁴ Stein Kuhnle, *Patterns of Social and Political Mobilization: A Historical Analysis of the Nordic Countries*. (Sage Publications, Ltd., London, 1975) 8

⁵ Ibid 9

until 1814 and Norway-Sweden until 1905, although most historical documents still simply called that area Norway even when the region was under Danish or Swedish rule.

SCANDINAVIA PRE-INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION:

But even before these series of political unions occurred, other factors contributed to why this area grew so closely together. The physical barrier of the Baltic Sea that separates Scandinavia from the continent of Europe kept this area isolated for centuries, especially before Christianity came to the region. Although there was some contact between Scandinavians and the continent in the centuries leading up to the Middle Ages, it was extremely limited. Expeditions conducted by Secundus were very infrequent, and to the Romans this area was often a total mystery. This sense of isolation contributed greatly to the formation of a *Scandinavian-ness* consciousness. The long, cold and dark winters often meant only a handful of hours of sunlight in the southern parts of Scandinavia, and *no* sunlight the farther north settlers were, which often meant communities had to depend on each other for survival. The towns and cities in Scandinavia were often very tiny over the last two thousand years, as the total population of Scandinavia was a little over four million up until around 1800.⁶ Interdependency grew among the citizenry which often included all classes, from rich to poor.

All throughout this timeframe of intertwining rule and economic and cultural binding, this sense of *Scandinavian-ness* solidified. The region's geographic proximity with each other, along with the physical barrier from the rest of the European continent (with the exception of Denmark) by the Baltic Sea, contributed to this unique identity,

⁶ "Population of Scandinavia." *Historical Atlas*. <http://www.tacitus.nu/historical-atlas/population/scandinavia.htm>

and was a natural counter to the “pan-Germanism and pan-Slavism,”⁷ as well as French nationalism forming on the continent in the mid to late nineteenth century. The adoption of a common currency unit, the krone, in 1875 marked an additional step in binding the cultural and economic ties this region had been experiencing for centuries. Although the krone was minted separately in the three different regions, it was legal tender and usable in all of Scandinavia.⁸

Along with these intertwining cultural and economic ties the impact of the Reformation united Scandinavians “spiritually under the banner of Lutheranism.”⁹ The introduction of Lutheranism to this region played an integral part in binding the faith of nearly every single Scandinavian. Before Lutheranism arrived religious faith was a combination of Catholicism mixed with old Norse/Pagan beliefs. This helped Scandinavia find commonality with its own culture and heritage rather than looking to far-off Italy for spiritual revelation.

SCANDINAVIA DURING INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION:

As mentioned earlier, during the industrial revolution the Scandinavian region was predominantly rural and agricultural, as was much of Europe at the time. With a total population of just under six million people by 1850 the economic position was precarious compared with other regions in Europe and North America with larger populations and greater resources. Still, Scandinavia’s natural resources – with its abundance of waterfalls in the Norwegian mountains along with its many fjords, to the discovery of phosphoric iron out of the northern Swedish region – allowed this area to

⁷ T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*. (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1979) 221

⁸ *Ibid*, 254

⁹ David Arter, *Scandinavian Politics Today*. (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1999) 15

compete with its neighbors in the fledgling industrial world, with standards of living slowly increasing.

Despite an increase in relative standards of living, huge droves of Scandinavians left the region for North America in the last half of the nineteenth century. Factors such as famine and lack of work opportunities – combined with the promise by the United States government of free land for immigrants in the western frontier – contributed to the exodus of so many to the new world. The vast majority of those who left Scandinavia were rural farmers, and the highest levels of emigration to the United States occurred between the 1860s and the 1880s. By 1910 the United States census counted that one million two hundred thousand Swedes, eight hundred thousand Norwegians, and three hundred thirty thousand Danes were either born in their native lands or were children of parents born in the old country.¹⁰ These figures accounted for 20% of Sweden's population, 34% of Norway's population, and 13.2% of Denmark's population in 1910, just to put these figures into perspective. By the early twentieth century, however, the wave of emigrants dried up to a trickle owing to the increased opportunities for even the poorest in Scandinavia.¹¹

As the industrial revolution contributed to the molding of Scandinavia's present identity, the political situation in the region continued to evolve and respond to the rapid changes taking place. Between 1814 and 1905, Sweden and Denmark were considered the established and older nation-states because of their autonomous independence. Norway, although enjoying relative self-governance as mentioned earlier, was really

¹⁰ Ibid, 257

¹¹ Ben Arneson, *The Democratic Monarchies of Scandinavia*. (D. Van Nostrand Comp: New York, 1949) 15

considered a “proto-state”¹² of Sweden at the time. For the Norwegians during this time national identity played a critical role in the political priorities throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century until independence in 1905. For Sweden and Denmark, economic issues related to the protection of industry, agriculture and free trade were the dominant political priorities to increase prosperity.

The mid 1800s saw the *democratization* of the Scandinavian region beginning to take shape. Unlike in other parts of Europe – France, for instance – where true democracy formed over many years and out of violent, bloody revolutions, the shift toward more representative forms of governing in Scandinavia was peaceful. Influenced by much of the industrial changes going on in the rest of the continent, the Scandinavian region sought to transform and modernize its economic structure. Abolition of gild restrictions and of commercial monopolies between 1839 and 1857 in Denmark, Sweden and the Norwegian region paved the way for economic growth, and prosperity began to increase for more individuals to the point that an emerging and influential middle class started taking shape.¹³

As the economies continued to modernize and increase, the governing bureaucratic structures of the time paved the way for many of the big expansions in communication and transportation within Scandinavia. While private industry undertook the massive projects, the governments of each nation were responsible for the funding of the telegraph and railroad systems linking the region by the end of the nineteenth century. Private banks, on a large scale basis, began to form in the 1850s in each region, but it was

¹² David Arter, *Scandinavian Politics Today*. (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1999) 30

¹³ T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*. (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1979) 227

still largely the government that funded nation-wide projects, and not private industry. This is important to note considering contemporary Scandinavia's tradition of a strong, centralized government in each nation.

As part of this Scandinavian identity began to form, a sense of regional uniqueness from the rest of Europe began to take root. At the same time, however, national pride also developed within Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, as each nation examined individual priorities and needs. By the early to mid 1800s, the first examples of the concept of a social safety-net for the populations' most vulnerable began to appear. As early as 1843 public health became a dominant concern in Sweden and in 1848 Norway passed a law demanding better treatment for the mentally ill.¹⁴ Universal elementary education was introduced in Denmark as early as 1814, with Sweden following suit in 1844 and Norway in 1860.

Common philosophical and foundational principles of what society was to expect from its government began to form during the industrial period. For Scandinavia in particular, the response by the three governments to insure the welfare of its citizens during this period of economic transition owes itself, in part, to Scandinavia's regional separation from the European continent. Since the mid nineteenth century this separation contributed to a Nordic way of thinking, separate from the rest of Europe. Alongside the spread of this nationalistic discourse an "individual Nordic spirit, community"¹⁵ developed. During this time there were many who actually dreamed of a unified Scandinavia, but national identity within the three areas of the region was too strong and

¹⁴ Ibid 229

¹⁵ Bente Rosenbech, "Nordic Women's Studies and Gender Research," in Fehr, Jonasdottir, Rosenbech, eds., *Is There a Nordic Feminism?* (UCL Press LTD., London, UK 1998) 344-45

overcame that dream. This idea, however, was eventually replaced by “cultural coalitions working in civil society...political utopianism was replaced by pragmatic co-operation.”¹⁶

As the political parties began to form in the mid to late 1800s women played an unusually active role in politics in Scandinavia. Like women in other nations, Scandinavian women joined groups to organize. Unlike in other nations, however, Scandinavian women were organizing decades before those in other parts of Europe. During the 1870s the first social democratic women’s organizations began to form. Cultural factors played a role in this. For instance, the fact that the region’s dominant religious denomination was Lutheran contributed to this more progressive environment for women. Traditionally and statistically, nations in Europe with a strong Catholic foundation have given the fewest gender rights and protections. Nations with a strong Lutheran foundation have given the most.

Philosophical and political theories of the time also played a role in the mid 1800s in forming political parties. Many of the parties that presently exist in the region were influenced by these theories, forming the basis for their identities and purpose. The ideals of communism and socialism were very influential with the liberal, left-wing parties that began to form in Scandinavia, as in other parts of Europe. During this time, Sweden and Denmark tended to lean more to the liberal side of the political spectrum, due to each nation’s stable national identity and structure. As a result of this reality women’s struggle for gender equality was easier initially in Sweden and Denmark more so than in Norway. Because Norway was a proto-state of Sweden *nationalism* was the

¹⁶ Ibid 345

dominant ideology at the time, which the conservatives gravitated towards. Norwegians struggled to lift themselves out from underneath the shadows of Swedish and Danish influence in search of their own national identity. The conservative parties managed to capitalize on that national search for self-realization, consequently putting women's rights on the back-burner. However, left-wing liberals did manage to secure the parliamentary government in 1884 in Norway for a while, mobilizing women there to demand equal treatment.

A sense of fairness for all citizens took a dominant hold in Scandinavia. More and more people entered the middle class, and standards of living continued to increase through the urbanization of the industrial revolution and from the historically large agricultural communities in the region. A sense that *everyone is in this together*, as mentioned earlier, contributed to the region's philosophical identity and sense of purpose. Despite the political turmoil that eventually led to the independence of the three nations and the breaking up of the Swedish/Danish dominance, the cultural and social networks were so strong that the region remained peaceful. While the ideas of socialism gained favor in many parts of Europe they were especially influential in Scandinavia. In a sense, the socialist philosophy was already parallel with the region's ideas on fairness and equality. The liberal and social-democratic political parties in each of the three nations identified the most with socialist philosophy, and were the largest proponents advocating for women's equality, as well as for political and economic reforms that made income distribution more equitable among all of the citizens.

SCANDINAVIA POST-INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION:

By the early twentieth century the cultural and historical ties that united this region remained influential in the continual formation of Scandinavia's identity. In 1919 the *Nordic Associations* was created which unified passport laws, making it seamless for citizens of Denmark, Norway and Sweden to live and work in any of the three nations. With the political situation of the region the most stable it had ever been in its history, the social democratic parties began to obtain real reforms to put this region's philosophical ideals into law. The economic crash of 1929 in the United States, followed by the world-wide depression, gave the left-leaning political parties the biggest boost ever toward garnishing lasting power and influence in Scandinavia.

By 1933 the social-democratic parties of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden all took control. Between 1933 and the end of World War II the Scandinavian region recovered from the 1929 economic collapse more rapidly than other parts of Europe, and substantial social reforms were made aimed at protecting its citizens. In Denmark, a nation-wide insurance system was created under the Public Care Act, under a principle that public assistance should be given to all with "no stigma of pauperism."¹⁷ During this period taxes in Denmark increased by 30 percent on the wealthiest citizens. Norway and Sweden followed suit. Sweden enacted laws guaranteeing holidays for all employees at the employer's expense, as well as began the financing of generous family and maternity allowances. Norway made extensive extensions of its insurance and pension system, strengthening it with guarantees that all citizens would get a pension for life after an allotted time of work.

¹⁷ T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*. (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1979) 324

Despite Norway and Denmark's occupation by the Nazis for five years during World War II their cultural and political identities remained intact. And although these two nations aided the Allies as much as they could during the war, and occupation, and fought the Nazis in certain ways, they remained true to their peaceful roots, and worked to maintain their cultural uniqueness. Although Sweden has been criticized for making deals with Nazi Germany in order to remain neutral, many Swedes, including the government and royal family at the time, made great strides in aiding their Scandinavian neighbors, as well as the Allies, during the war. By the end of World War II Scandinavia shared an "almost ecstatic sense of relief because their national and individual liberties were no longer in danger of extinction."¹⁸ Within a short period Scandinavia's economies recovered and the citizens had among the world's strongest social safety-nets, with a vast amount of protection. As the post-war economic miracle began to take shape in Europe – aided with generous subsidies provided by the United States – the Scandinavian economies flourished, and the expansion of social welfare continued.

SCANDINAVIA TODAY:

Today the Scandinavian nations are often referred to as the welfare states. This reference is due to the generous tax-funded public services such as universal health care, free post-secondary education, paid family-leave (for both mothers *and* fathers) and vacation time, as well as numerous free and/or low-cost child-care facilities that are offered in each nation. While many other countries have similar socialistic government benefit programs none are to the same scope as in Scandinavia. This region is a model when it comes to the fusion of capitalism and social-democratic ideals. Unlike in other

¹⁸ Ibid, 351

industrialized nations, for example, social issues such as ample child care, adequate health care, and paid time-off are at the forefront of the three Scandinavian governments' policies. When it comes to gender equality "care is treated seriously as a policy issue and attention to the just divisions of caring responsibilities plays out in mainstream political discourse."¹⁹ Probably the biggest factor that has contributed to Scandinavia's high standard of living centers on this region's choice to make gender equality a priority.

Although political parties have changed hands over the decades since the 1930s the fundamental philosophical identity of Scandinavia has remained the same: maintaining a strong democratic system that celebrates individual freedom and equality. Part I of this paper investigates further the historical, social and economic ties that have contributed to Scandinavia's unique identity. Part II explains each nation's current approach to health care, gender equality, education, and income distribution and underscores the region's historical philosophical foundations and ties that have led to its current prosperity.

¹⁹ Anne Scott Sorensen, "Taste, Manners, & Attitudes – the Bel Esprit & Literary Salon in the Nordic Countries c. 1800," in Fehr, Jonasdottir, Rosenbech, eds., *Is There a Nordic Feminism?* (UCL Press LTD., London, UK, 1998) 129

PART I – ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC TIES

In order to fully appreciate how the Scandinavian region has achieved its current level of social equality and economic prosperity, an in-depth analysis of the historical, social, and economic events – from the industrial revolution to the present – linking Denmark, Norway, and Sweden is necessary. First of all, as briefly mentioned in the introduction, Scandinavia – as it is termed today – refers only to the three nations of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. These nations are part of a league called the Nordic Nations as well, and share that designation with Finland and Iceland. The reason Finland and Iceland are not considered part of Scandinavia has to do with geographic and lingual ties that these two countries do not share with Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Iceland is an island-nation separated from the European continent and did not experience much of the same historical and cultural events that the three Scandinavian nations did. And although Finland is geographically very close to these three nations – sharing the Baltic Sea with Sweden – its language is not Germanic-based as Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish are. Finnish history is also more closely linked with Russia due to its very close proximity with that country.

Today the five nations comprising the Nordic Nations share more in common than at any other time, but for the purpose of this paper, and to make a distinction, only Denmark, Norway, and Sweden’s commonalities and shared-history, which contributed to a common philosophical identity and purpose, will be explored.

Section 1: “SCANDINAVIAN-NESS”

The Scandinavian region’s unique geographic location on the European continent – detached by the Baltic Sea to the south and the Arctic Circle to the north – combined with the harsh winters, religious homogeneity and mainly rural/agricultural history all contributed to this region’s formation of an identity independent from that of the rest of Europe. For centuries leading up to the end of the Roman Empire this region was somewhat of a mystery to the rest of the European continent. In the first century A.D. a Roman officer, author, and natural philosopher named Gaius Plinius Secundus (also referred to as Pliny the Elder) wrote of the “unexplored island or islands” off the main landmass called Jutland which is part of modern-day Denmark. He was referring to the southern parts of the peninsula off the Baltic Sea that comprise modern-day Norway and Sweden and called that area *Scatinavia* and was later misread and changed to *Scandinavia*.²⁰

Later on throughout the Roman Empire the Scandinavian region was thought to be made up of a series of large islands, coined the Scandiae islands by the mathematician Ptolemy. Gaius Plinius Secundus and Ptolemy’s writings influenced Germanic writers who wrote of the history of the Goths and other barbarians in the north. In these writings they refer to the area “separated by sea from the land of Europe” as Scandza.²¹

The term *Scandinavia* really became fashionable in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a way to identify and recognize this region’s commonalities. It became particularly popular among the Scandinavian peoples themselves in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden as a method of celebrating a shared history, language and culture during the

²⁰ T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*. (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1979) 9

²¹ “Scandza Definition.” <http://www.wordiq.com/definition/Scandza>

nineteenth century as the industrial revolution began to rage through Europe and America. A sense of nationalistic pride was also sweeping through the west at this time and Scandinavia was no exception.

Although this region's contemporary prosperity and social equality owes its development in part to the industrial revolution, Scandinavia's unifying influence was formed before this period. Besides the obvious geographic and linguistic similarities that have helped blend this region, three major historical events occurred that directly contributed to Scandinavia's development of common philosophical principles. The first was the Union of Kalmar in 1397 – which essentially unified the entire land-mass region of the present day nations of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden into one kingdom. This union “constituted the second largest aggregation of European territories under a single sovereign.”²² Denmark controlled most of the entire region although technically Norway and Sweden were supposedly “equal” with Denmark. The Danish king at the time imposed high taxes over the Swedish and Norwegian regions and popularity with the union declined significantly. Still, the union lasted almost one hundred thirty years until around 1524, when the second major historical event that contributed to Scandinavia's present situation occurred.

This second major event happened around 1523 and 1524 when Gustavus Vasa, of the Swedish region, successfully separated power from Denmark and became king of a newly independent Sweden. During the end of the fourteenth century, at the start of the Union of Kalmar, Norway was heavily influenced by Sweden linguistically and economically due to its shared geographic border. This changed over the years however,

²² David Arter, *Scandinavian Politics Today*. (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1999)
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as Danish influence from the Kalmar Union strengthened Denmark's hand, and by the 1450s Norway essentially became a province of Denmark with Sweden's influence diminishing.²³ This Danish-Norwegian union lasted over three hundred sixty years during which time Denmark's power over Norwegian affairs was dominant.

The third major event occurred in 1814 when Norway broke away from Denmark and entered into a new union with Sweden which lasted until 1905, at which point in time Norway declared full independence from Sweden, resulting in the present geographical and political make up of the three nations.

The Union of Kalmar, named after the Swedish castle in which the treaty was signed, was meant to strengthen the Scandinavian region by unifying the smaller, regional monarchies within the three nations into a single powerful monarchy. Although it was an attempt at regional unity, governing was still fairly independent throughout the different areas. Despite this, Denmark was the most powerful of the three, and Sweden was never really happy with the conditions of the union. The ruling governors in Sweden in the early sixteenth century, known as the Riksdag, felt the Danes were encroaching too much into Swedish affairs. The Riksdag unanimously elected Gustavus Vasa King of Sweden in 1523 and a year later Vasa declared the Union of Kalmar dead and Sweden and Denmark were officially separated.²⁴

Throughout the entire time period of the late Middle Ages leading up to the Renaissance the peasants of Scandinavia enjoyed a higher level of prosperity than those living in other parts of Europe. For instance, peasants in Sweden were never serfs. In

²³ Ben Arneson, *The Democratic Monarchies of Scandinavia*. (D. Van Nostrand Comp: New York, 1949) 19

²⁴ *Ibid*, 41

Denmark, although the King ruled, power was often shared and divided among four estates: the nobility, clergy, burghers and peasants. And while the nobility and clergy exercised the most control over the King, the burghers and peasants had a seat at the table in decision-making which often afforded them a higher standard of living.²⁵ Another significant distinction from the rest of Europe at this time was that a large percentage of the peasantry was literate, owing to the relatively small populations, and signaling a relatively strong emphasis on education combined with a sense of fairness for all citizens in this region.

Over the centuries, however, the Danish kings and estates often challenged each other's power. It was not until 1848 when King Frederick VII pressed to limit the monarch's authority once and for all in Denmark, with the drafting of a liberal constitution, thus paving the way for more democratization in Denmark.²⁶ This led to the creation of the Landsting – a chamber of individuals representing ordinary Danish citizens in government.²⁷ The Landsting lasted until 1953, when Denmark's parliament changed to a unicameral system and changed its name to the Folketing.

For Norway, the Union of Kalmar was a way to make Norway equal to that of Denmark and Sweden. That did not happen, and instead the Norwegian area of the region became a proto-state of Denmark and eventually Sweden. For the next four hundred years Swedish and Danish influence over Norway reached all realms of society. It was during these centuries that the three regional languages – Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish – solidified to their present forms. The three languages are virtually

²⁵ Ibid 21

²⁶ Ibid, 24-25

²⁷ Stein Kuhnle, *Patterns of Social and Political Mobilization: A Historical Analysis of the Nordic Countries*. (Sage Publications, Ltd., London, 1975) 12

indistinguishable from each other except for changes of spelling. Scandinavians today could go to each of the three countries and speak their own language to a local citizen and be understood. They could, vice versa, understand the responses without a need to translate. This remarkable circumstance allowed the three areas to further come together in shared cultural and regional ties.

Despite this new reality for those living in Norway, “strong historic memories” of this region’s past and customs were not totally abolished, and a sense of national pride and feelings simmered under the surface, especially during the time of Danish rule.²⁸ In fact, Norway drafted its own constitution in 1814, the same year Sweden took control of the country. Despite having strong influence over Norway, the Swedish monarchy respected Norway’s constitution and recognized the nationalistic pride of the Norwegians and allowed Norway to keep a governing apparatus, called the Storting. When Norway eventually gained independence in 1905 the Storting remained as Norway’s representative body of government. During the time between 1814 and 1905, when Swedish influence over Norway was dominant, Norwegians made more changes to fit their ideal of how they wanted their own society to function. The Storting banned the institution of the nobility in 1821 and enforced only the ideals of parliamentarianism, strengthening the ideals of equality among the citizens and seeking to minimize distinctions among social classes.²⁹ They did this while under the sphere of influence of Sweden which still had a nobility-class.

²⁸ T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*. (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1979) 89

²⁹ Stein Kuhnle, *Patterns of Social and Political Mobilization: A Historical Analysis of the Nordic Countries*. (Sage Publications, Ltd., London, 1975) 12

Sweden always maintained a strong tradition of stability and sovereignty over the centuries, even during the Union of Kalmar, that helped foster a solid sense of identity in its citizens along with relative prosperity. When Sweden exited the Union of Kalmar with Denmark it was a peaceful transition. And although there has been a royal presence in Sweden for centuries, a strong sense of unity for all Swedes has kept the monarchy's power limited. The governing political structure, called the Riksdag, formed in 1435 and for centuries ruled alongside the Swedish kings.³⁰ In 1719 a constitution was approved by the Riksdag limiting the king's power permanently and greater democratization formed in the early eighteenth century on through the nineteenth century during the industrial revolution as the country's modern political parties and ideologies began to form.

Despite the political tensions caused by Denmark's sphere of influence from the Union of Kalmar – and the consequent failure to truly unite Denmark, Norway, and Sweden into a single country – the social, cultural, linguistic, religious, and economic ties that formed from that Union did more to unite the region than any political treaty could have.

It is critical not to underestimate how important and influential the unifying effects of Lutheranism was to the Scandinavian consciousness. The single biggest reason Lutheranism spread so collectively in this region is due to the decision and determination of the monarchs to make Lutheranism the national religion.³¹ Their collective *spiritual* alliance resulted in “no serious breach” or conflict taking place between the three

³⁰ Ben Arneson, *The Democratic Monarchies of Scandinavia*. (D. Van Nostrand Comp: New York, 1949) 41

³¹ T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*. (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1979) 90

kingdoms, and instead solidified a spiritual and moral link between the kingdoms' peoples.³²

Before Lutheranism came to the region the monarchy's views on spirituality was a mixture of pagan myth and humanism. Catholicism played an influencing role with the monarchy as well, and several churches existed in Scandinavia for centuries since Christianity was introduced to Scandinavia around the year 1000. When German preachers came to Scandinavia to teach about Luther's writings there was a particularly strong interest taken for a number of reasons. Germanic influence – which the Scandinavians were already partial to due to linguistic and cultural ties – was prevalent in the region. Also, Catholicism was never particularly embraced in Scandinavia the way it was in the southern regions of Europe due to the requirement of Latin-language sermons during services.

When the monarchs of Scandinavia converted to Lutheranism they soon abolished all other established forms of religious practices, specifically the Catholic faith. The governing structure in Denmark voted to abolish the Catholic Church organization in the region³³ and made aspects of the Lutheran faith more accessible to all aspects of society. Bibles were printed in Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish instead of the traditional Latin. Both testaments of the bible were translated into Danish by 1550 and Swedish by 1541. Norway was forced to read bibles in Danish until around 1584 when the Norwegian version was released.³⁴ The translation of the bible into the vernacular significantly contributed to the binding relationship of the Scandinavian peoples. And with sermons

³² Ibid 90

³³ David Arter, *Scandinavian Politics Today*. (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1999) 15

³⁴ T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*. (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1979) 94

and other church services no longer in Latin, communities had new opportunities to foster regional spiritual customs and traditions that focused on Scandinavia, rather than far-off Catholic Italy. The Reformation “stimulated nationalist influences in each of the Scandinavian lands, and though at varying paces, it also bound them together by strong cultural ties”³⁵ that strengthened this unity.

Today, of course, freedom of religion is a reality in all three nations, and there are many who do not practice any religion at all. It is interesting to note that as early as 1950 almost all of Scandinavia’s populations – 98% in Denmark, 97% in Norway, and 99% in Sweden – identified themselves as Lutheran. By 2010 the figures have dropped to 85% in Denmark, 86% in Norway, and 80% in Sweden.³⁶ Even though religion is no longer a unifying force in Scandinavia today it can not be disputed that its rich, historical contribution is strong and evident in fostering an identity separate from the Catholic Church and the rest of Europe.

Section 2: SCANDINAVIA DURING INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Before the industrial revolution in the mid-1800s, Scandinavia was pretty much an under-developed, rural region of the world. With the exceptions of Copenhagen, Oslo (called Christiania in the nineteenth century) and Stockholm – the capitals of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden – almost the entire region was agricultural farmland. Between 1850 and 1914 Scandinavia “underwent an economic transformation” changing the

³⁵ Ibid 94

³⁶ “Religion in Denmark.” *Denmark.net*. <http://www.denmark.net/denmark-guide/religion-denmark.html>; “Religion in Norway.” *VisitNorway*. <http://www.visitnorway.com/en/Articles/Theme/About-Norway/History/Religion-in-Norway/>; “Are Swedes Losing their Religion?” *Sweden.se*. <http://www.sweden.se/eng/Home/Society/Religion/Reading/Are-Swedes-losing-their-religion/>

region from under-developed to “small-scale” competitors with all of the other most advanced industrial powers at the time.³⁷

In 1865 the total population of the three Scandinavia nations was just under seven million (four million in Sweden and a little more than a million each in Denmark and Norway). This was a little more than the population of New York state in the same year. But the Scandinavians quickly embraced emerging technologies in harnessing their natural resources for economic gain. In Denmark, farming had long dominated the life of the peasantry. In 1866 land along the sandy areas and coastlines of Jutland, which hugs the Baltic Sea, was reclaimed through draining and afforestation to produce new farmland for farmers to increase yields.³⁸ A decade later cultivation of fodder-crops and sugar-beets became some of Denmark’s largest exports along-side dairy products like cheese and milk. Agricultural co-operatives were formed that both men and women could join and that operated to secure fair wages and working conditions.

Handicraft-products for the home market were also an expanding export industry in Denmark. With Copenhagen situated right on the Baltic Sea raw materials needed for these products were easily brought into the capital. With the importation of coal and iron an engineering and shipbuilding industry began to flourish. One industrial Dane, named T.F. Tietgen, founded a telegraph company, a shipping company, and an engineering firm in the 1870s giving Denmark new world-wide connections with the outside world.³⁹ The Danish government utilized Tietgen’s companies to set up a nation-wide transportation and communication network.

³⁷ T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*. (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1979) 249

³⁸ *Ibid* 251

³⁹ *Ibid* 251

In Norway the exportation of ice between 1880 and 1898 totaled half a million tons. Besides ice, shipping was the chief stimulus to economic growth there. By 1880 Norway possessed the world's third largest fleet of merchant navy ships travelling the world deploying large tonnage of materials for countries.

For Sweden the steam-driven sawmill revolutionized the timber industry, greatly increasing production of wood products. By the end of the nineteenth century the technology used to exploit phosphoric iron ore gave Sweden a new primary export which the world desperately needed for machinery. By this time the Scandinavia of today began to take shape as the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture began to fall rapidly. It shrank from three-quarters of the total population of the three nations to less than half between 1870 and 1910.⁴⁰ This is significant to note because the switch from agriculture to industry influenced where and how people lived. More people moved to the capital cities and to other urban areas, and away from the rural farmlands. This "affected both political and social developments" as demand for more political and social justice began to increase.⁴¹ This will be explained in more detail later.

Electricity proved to be a massive game-changer for Scandinavians, much as it was for the rest of the industrializing world. By the mid-1880s Norway and Sweden figured out how to harness the massive potential in electrical energy through their abundance of waterfalls. By 1900 over two-thirds of the electricity in Norway and Sweden came from hydro-electricity using just their waterfalls. Sweden became one of the world's leading manufacturers of electrical equipment. Norway took advantage of

⁴⁰ Ibid 255

⁴¹ Ibid 255

the proximity of many falls to the west-coast fjords and built new manufacture-plants for various products that the world needed.

As the region continued to change economically so too did Scandinavia's political identity. Throughout the 1800s the governments made changes giving more and more access to all classes. As early as 1833 the Norwegian Storting already had forty-five peasants represented out of a total chamber of only ninety-six. That was nearly half of the Storting.⁴² In Sweden a law passed in 1843 broadened already existing liberal laws that ensured the peasantry had access to representation in the Riksdag. And in Denmark in both 1837 and 1841 measures were passed ensuring that the middle and lower classes had a say in deciding matters of local community government.

By the mid-1800s the nobility-class in Scandinavia was all but extinct. It was already gone in Norway due to the Storting's ruling years before, and Sweden's nobility-class was less than 1% by 1850. The middle-class was emerging as the dominant role-player. This liberal influence in strengthening the power of the middle and lower classes was a deliberate attempt to modernize the economic structure of Scandinavia to increase its prosperity. It also falls in line with the common philosophical principles of the region that *everyone is in it together*, as mentioned before. By 1857 all three nations had shipping and trading agreements giving free access to each others' harbors and waterways, doing away with tariffs and trade-taxes and fees. To ensure transportation on the seas for ordinary citizens the three governments also organized a boating/ferry system linking the three countries together in a common commute-pattern and sea-transportation system.

⁴² Ibid 222

This region's common philosophical principles – a sense of unique community and welfare for all – were for the first time beginning to be implemented on a nation-wide and region-wide level. Everything from criminal law to prison conditions to relief for the poor to civil rights for Jews began to be implemented.⁴³ The movement for the emancipation of women also started as early as 1857 when all three countries passed laws easing inheritance rights for women and allowing them to pursue limited forms of employment. As mentioned in the introduction, universal education at the elementary-level became compulsory by the mid-1800s. And standards for public health were becoming major priorities.

Along with these economic and social initiatives the issues of voting and representation intensified as the 1800s progressed. As early as 1815 Norway and Denmark had “the most democratic suffrage system in Europe.”⁴⁴ At that time almost 50% of all men above the age of twenty-five years could vote in those two countries. And although women still did not have the right to vote many laws protecting the rights of women existed in Scandinavia that did not exist in the rest of Europe. As political parties began to emerge women took an active participatory role.

Possibly as a result of the torrential energy of the industrial revolution, the emergence of varying political and philosophical theories and ideas swirled around Europe during the 1800s. Ideas such as communism and socialism and utopianism were circulating throughout the continent as a reaction to the geographic, economic and political changes brought about by the industrial revolution; and this reaction spread

⁴³ Ibid 229

⁴⁴ Stein Kuhnle, *Patterns of Social and Political Mobilization: A Historical Analysis of the Nordic Countries*. (Sage Publications, Ltd., London, 1975) 17

north to Scandinavia. One of the grim consequences to come out of the industrial revolution – an era of rapid technological progress – was the appalling working conditions that the vast majority of the working poor, regardless of race or gender, endured. For most on the continent and in America, factories, coal mines, and assembly lines had sprung up with no safety requirements. As mentioned in the introduction, the ideals of socialism and communism were very influential in the Scandinavian region – with those ideologies’ theories on equality, for all, including humane working conditions. These ideals particularly resonated with the left-leaning thinkers on the political spectrum.

As more Scandinavians became prosperous during this time period the idea of a unified Scandinavia began to be discussed again. Many students in the regions’ universities, along with Utopian-minded thinkers, called for a renewed discussion in unifying the three parts of Scandinavia. Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were already so similar linguistically and culturally, and had so many laws inter-linked with each other dealing with trade, working, and other agreements allowing citizens to live and work in each area, that the idea of unification was a popular one. And with a common currency accepted in all three countries in place by 1875 the region was, for all intents and purposes, practically one nation already. Many romantically called for a nineteenth century version of the Union of Kalmar that would unite Denmark, Norway, and Sweden into a grand Northern European power. But alas, there was too much national sentiment and pride, especially from Norway and Sweden – weary of a Denmark that could gain too much political power again. Norway was part of the personal union with Sweden at this time and was enjoying more autonomy than it had under Denmark during the last three

centuries. Norwegians particularly were not excited about the idea of Denmark exerting policy-influence over Norway again. The idea of unification lost popularity and by the twentieth century the common currency was dropped for individual national ones. What emerged instead was a renewed strengthening toward regional, cultural and economic ties that linked the three regions but maintained national boundaries.

As in many other parts of Europe, Scandinavia was forming into modern democratic nations during the mid-1800s. The elected governing structures of these countries were steadily transforming this region into modern democratic institutions. In Denmark by 1849 three political parties took shape within the Landsting/Folketing: the Social Democratic Party, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Left Party. In Sweden the modern political parties had developed by 1866 and by the end of the nineteenth century the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, and the Social Democratic Party were in place. And in Norway the Liberal Party, the Labor Party, and the Conservative Party came into being.⁴⁵

In both Denmark and Sweden the Social Democratic Party held the majorities during the mid-1870s and 1880s, and then again starting in the early 1920s. They kept control through the 1929 crash, gaining majorities (possibly as a result of the crash) and maintaining majorities through the end of World War II. Even though Denmark was occupied by the Nazis during part of World War II their governing structure was allowed to exist under a modicum of limited influence in the nation. In Norway the dominant party was Labor, whose political priorities centered on those of the working class and

⁴⁵ Ben Arneson, *The Democratic Monarchies of Scandinavia*. (D. Van Nostrand Comp: New York, 1949) 52-66

sought to increase equality among workers, much like the Social Democratic Party in Sweden and Denmark.⁴⁶

With the Social Democratic and Labor Parties in power an increase in the formation of employee unions occurred throughout Scandinavia leading up to the nineteenth century. Trade councils and labor associations sprouted up in big cities as well as smaller towns throughout the three regions. These unions demanded fairer wages and better working conditions such as limiting the amount of hours people were forced to work. Organizations such as the *Union of Swedish Printers* formed in 1881, the *Norwegian Iron and Metal-Workers* in 1890, and the *Danish Laborers* in 1897. By 1899 a three-nation trade union federation, called the *Scandinavian Worker's Congress*, formed to administer worker's rights throughout Scandinavia.⁴⁷

The creation of organizations and unions corresponds with the region's common philosophical principles and ideals of fairness for all that has existed throughout this area's history and culture. The Social Democratic Parties were a "natural accompaniment to the rise of trade unionism"⁴⁸ and towards equality for all. Although women did not have the right to vote in the nineteenth century, they did play an active role in politics in the mid to late 1800s, organizing for equal treatment. In Denmark, the *Danish Women's Association*, founded in 1871, was the first of its kind in northern Europe and strongly advocated for women's equality.⁴⁹ In Sweden the first women's organization formed was comprised of both conservative and liberal-leaning women.

⁴⁶ Ibid 64

⁴⁷ T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*. (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1979) 266

⁴⁸ Ibid 266

⁴⁹ Ibid 262

Called the *Organization for Married Women's Right to Private Property*, it was founded in 1873.⁵⁰

For all of the progress made during this time economically and socially for Scandinavia, women were still not on an equal footing with men. That is why women began to mobilize into political organizations. They often sided or aligned themselves with the Social Democratic Party, or liberal-based party of the region. These parties were the more progressive when it came to the recognition of women's rights. Their main goals were to secure a woman's right to vote and equality in the labor market. In Denmark the campaign for women's suffrage included unifying parties. Danish women's groups focused mainly on legal and educational reforms through inter-Scandinavian co-operatives. When it came to suffrage the *Danish Women's Association* (DWA) was hesitant to demand votes for women fearing a loss of respectability. But when electoral reform was raised in 1898 within the Danish Parliament there was no mention of women. As a result the DWA joined with other feminist groups like the *Danish Women's Association's Suffrage Federation*.⁵¹ They pushed for reforms and when the Reform Liberals and Social Democrats aligned and gained power in 1913 universal suffrage was achieved by 1915.

By the end of the nineteenth century employment options were still limited for women. If one was married the general consensus was that she did not work. And if she was unmarried only limited forms of employment were available. Many women

⁵⁰ Wetterberg, Christina Carlsson, "Equal or Different? That's Not the Question. Women's Political Strategies in Historical Perspective," in Fehr, Jonasdottir, Rosenbech, eds., *Is There a Nordic Feminism?* (UCL Press LTD London, UK, 1998) 29

⁵¹ Joni Lovenduski. *Women & European Politics: Contemporary Feminism & Public Policy*. Univ of Mass Press, Amherst, MA, 1986, 49

advocated for a “system of insurance for motherhood” that would give a monetary benefit for having a child that would go directly to the woman in an attempt to promote greater female independence from men. Even though this call of “pay for motherhood” did not succeed, it was still a revolutionary demand for equality for its time. And this demand became a reality when Sweden became the first of the three Scandinavian nations to pay women a stipend for having children starting in 1948. More on this will be discussed in the gender equality portion of Part II. In 1910 women were allowed to “participate in the preliminary work leading to a unified Nordic legislation on domestic relations.”⁵² In 1914 women’s organizations from across Scandinavia achieved a “uniform, Scandinavian legislation of domestic relations, resulting in a unified matrimonial legislation.”⁵³ And between 1918 and 1927 bills were introduced in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden placing spouses on an equal footing and introducing a mutual obligation of support.⁵⁴ By the early twentieth century “liberal reform movements” advocated for women’s rights.⁵⁵

Within the individual nations the struggle for women’s equality was varied. In Sweden the movement was divided along class lines and there was a debate whether women should join with working-class men in the struggle for universal suffrage. By 1909 Swedish women obtained the right to stand for municipal office, but still did not have the right to vote. Women in Norway were the first to gain universal suffrage out of the three nations in 1913, and it is interesting to note that the first female representative

⁵² Bente Rosenbech. “Nordic Women’s Studies and Gender Research,” (344-357) taken from Is There a Nordic Feminism? Fehr, Jonasdottir, Rosenbech, eds., UCL Press LTD London, UK, 1998

⁵³ *Ibid*, 346

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 346

⁵⁵ Joni Lovenduski. Women & European Politics: Contemporary Feminism & Public Policy. Univ of Mass Press, Amherst, MA, 1986, 48

elected to the Storting was voted into office two years earlier, in 1911.⁵⁶ In Sweden women did not receive suffrage until 1919 and in 1921 five women were elected into the Riksdag.⁵⁷ Danish women earned full suffrage in 1915 and by 1918 – just three years later – 3% of members of parliament (MP) were women.⁵⁸ For comparison purposes the first woman was elected to the United States Congress in 1917. Today almost half of the representatives in each of the parliaments in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden comprise of women. In the United States the percentage of female representatives in the Congress is 17%.

With the increased power of the Social Democrats and Labor Parties in the three countries, combined with the continuing influence of women’s organizations, the emergence of a solid and strong social safety system was clearly visible by the beginning of the twentieth century. Throughout the late nineteenth century little improvements in the life of the average working citizen were being made. At the dawn of the new century those in power sought to create a lasting system representative of Scandinavia’s unique history and philosophy.

By the late 1910s and early 1920s, large-scale attempts in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were made to carry out these principles to give every Scandinavian citizen the opportunity for a prosperous, free and happy life. In a region of the world already dominated in most part by the middle class, the liberal tradition of economic prosperity and social equality was “strong enough to allow free play to reform movements of

⁵⁶ Bergersen, Kristin. “Quick Facts: Women in Decision Making-Norway.” *European Database*. <http://www.db-decision.de/CoRe/Norway.htm>

⁵⁷ Taschke, Katharina. “Quick Facts: Women in Decision Making-Sweden.” *European Database*. <http://www.db-decision.de/CoRe/Sweden.htm>

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Jacobsen, Helle. “Quick Facts: Women in Decision Making-Denmark.” *European Database*. <http://www.db-decision.de/CoRe/Denmark.htm>

every kind.”⁵⁹

At the onset of World War I the three nations remained neutral – refusing to fight on either side. However, it is interesting to note that trade continued during the war years and Norway indirectly aided Great Britain with imports of raw materials that were used during the war. Likewise Sweden continued trade with Germany during the war, providing iron ore and other raw materials needed to continue the fight. At the conclusion of the war the three nations joined the now-defunct League of Nations as a single-entity, with their main objective to “organize disarmament” among all of the nations. These three nations followed suit with this philosophy. In 1922 Denmark slashed its defense budget by one-quarter, followed by further cuts in navy and army funding. In Sweden the act of compulsory service in the military was ended by 1925 and reductions were made in the defense budget. Norway slashed its defense budget in half at the end of World War I, and further slashed it by one-eighth by 1933.⁶⁰

Section 3: CREATION OF PRESENT SOCIAL SAFETY-NET SYSTEM IN SCANDINAVIA

Between the end of World War I and the 1929 stock market crash full political democracy was achieved in the three Scandinavian nations. Full power was organized by the governing structures in place and the monarchies of each nation now only had a symbolic role. The crash of 1929 created a world-wide depression that was also felt in Scandinavia. During the 1910s in Sweden, the Social Democrats briefly ceded power to the Conservatives. In Norway during this same time period the Conservatives also took slim control. In Denmark the Conservatives never gained power, while the Liberal Left Party held a slim majority over the Social Democrats.

⁵⁹ T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*. (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1979) 263

⁶⁰ *Ibid* 316

After World War I the Social Democrats regained control in Sweden in 1920 and maintained power for decades, dramatically increasing power in the 1932 election following the 1929 stock market crash. In Norway the Labor Party regained power in the 1927 election there, and doubled its majorities in 1933.⁶¹ And in Denmark the Social Democrats wrestled the majority away from the Liberal Left in 1924 and doubled its majority by 1935, remaining in power through the end of World War II.

This region was already on a path towards building a strong, middle-class society based on the ideals of freedom and equality. The 1929 stock-market crash and subsequent world-wide depression gave the Social Democratic Parties in Denmark and Sweden and the Labor Party in Norway the unique opportunity to push their agendas forward for each nation. The decimation of the private-sector business structure resulted in a massive loss of employment and income world-wide. This event solidified in most Scandinavians' consciousness that a strong government force – based on the collective will of the people to provide foundational protections concerning health care, education, monetary insurance for the unemployed, disabled, and the elderly, and to maintain a system of equality – must be a central part of society. Businesses come and go, and their main goal is to make profit. Government has to exist to ensure policies preserving those social priorities.

The Social Democrats and Labor Party wanted to cement those common philosophical principles into a system that would last throughout the generations. The strength these political parties obtained in the 1920s and early 1930s gave them “their

⁶¹ Ben Arneson, *The Democratic Monarchies of Scandinavia*. (D. Van Nostrand Comp: New York, 1949) 59-71

first real chance”⁶² to create such a lasting system. To beat down unemployment the Scandinavian governments ratcheted up their co-operative movements – specifically of Danish agricultural produce and of electrical engineering in Sweden. This led to the creation of the entity *The North European Society* which helped cut the prices of services by one-third in Scandinavia during the depression to off-set inflation.⁶³ These co-operatives had a stimulative effect that encouraged businesses to re-hire those who lost their jobs.

In Denmark, the Landsting/Folketing worked to create the Public Care Act – a nation-wide system of insurance to help the unemployed, regardless of social-class. And in Sweden the Riksdag sought to work with the private sector to mediate relations between employer and employee. The *National Un-Employment Commission* was formed. It called in “representatives of labor and industry, and agreements were fostered between worker and employer to speed production.”⁶⁴ The Commission claimed that during the wake of the depression their policies “in a large measure accounted for the fact that the wholesale unemployment in Sweden has been reduced to normal proportions faster than in most of the European countries.”⁶⁵

Huge investments in public-works programs throughout Denmark, Norway, and Sweden during the 1930s also helped stabilize these economies, and helped these nations to absorb the negative impacts of the depression better than others. In Sweden alone between October 1931 and February 1932 seventy-five new major public-work projects were approved that boosted employment and benefited the nation.

⁶² T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*. (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1979) 322

⁶³ *Ibid* 323

⁶⁴ Marquis Childs, *Sweden: The Middle Way*. (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1936) 150

⁶⁵ *Ibid* 150

In 1933 Denmark instituted the National Insurance Act which promised a pension to all those past the age of sixty-five. In Norway the pension-system began in 1936. And in Sweden an extension of a 1913 law calling for insurance for the elderly was expanded in 1935 under the National Pension Act promising a pension for all citizens at age sixty-five for life.⁶⁶

Denmark also passed the National Insurance Act in 1933 making health insurance compulsory. Every person from the age of twenty-one to sixty-five must contribute to a health insurance scheme called a *Sygekasser* – which literally translates in English to a *Sick Club*. For those with lower wages the government pays the costs of the *Sick Club* with subsidies. Through these insurance schemes maternity benefits were paid out to new mothers, and later expanded to include fathers, and will be explained further in Part II. In Denmark practically all hospitals are operated either by local authorities and municipalities or by the national government, although there are private clinics in operation as well where citizens can choose to go for care.

Compulsory health insurance was enacted in 1930 for all Norwegians between ages of fifteen and seventy years of age (or until retirement when it is completely free without taxation). As in the United States, health insurance in Norway is generally provided by the citizen's employer. The difference between the United States' system and Norway's system is that health insurance is still guaranteed by the Norwegian government if a citizen loses his or her job or quits, at no cost to the citizen. The system COBRA in the United States exists for those who are laid off from their jobs, but people

⁶⁶ Ben Arneson, *The Democratic Monarchies of Scandinavia*. (D. Van Nostrand Comp: New York, 1949) 241-244

have to pay monthly premiums not covered by the government to continue coverage. And one needs to keep in mind that this system in Norway started in 1930. COBRA did not exist until near the end of the twentieth century in the United States and very few United States businesses offered health insurance to citizens in the 1930s.

In Sweden national health insurance became compulsory in 1950, much later than in Denmark and Norway. Sweden's system calls for Swedish citizens to receive free hospitalization and medical care, as well as a daily stipend for each day of work missed. The whole system is paid through a progressive taxation system in which the wealthiest citizens pay the majority of the costs and those citizens within the lowest tax brackets pay virtually nothing, but still receive the same medical care and quality.⁶⁷ The creation of several maternity and infant hygiene clinics spread throughout urban and rural Sweden in the 1930s and continued over future decades, and are available free of charge to citizens. Each county in Sweden is also charged with providing housing for the mentally ill and disabled who are unable to care for themselves. Under the health insurance scheme no one can be turned away from quality care due to economic circumstances.

The three Scandinavian nations created an inter-regional co-operative agreement guaranteeing that any citizen, from any of the three nations, has access to free medical care regardless of where he or she is. For instance, if a Norwegian is living or visiting in Sweden or Denmark and requires medical care, that Norwegian will be treated as if he or she is a citizen of the country from which care is delivered. For certain major medical procedures "periodic inter-Scandinavian" payment settlements are made to each nation to

⁶⁷ Ibid 250

cover extreme costs.⁶⁸ Denmark, Norway, and Sweden “have frequently been likened to a social laboratory, a place of experiment and research; that enjoys standards of hospital and medical care probably unequalled anywhere else.”⁶⁹

Scandinavians spent heavily on the public provision of education for its citizens during the 1930s and has continued this funding commitment through the end of the twentieth century on to the present. Free public education is compulsory for all children until the age of sixteen in the three nations. After the completion of high school, students have the option to go on to a university if their national test scores and grades qualify them into one. The other option is to go to a trade/vocational school to learn a skill to prepare them for the workforce. Both the trade/vocational schools and university costs are free to the student and are paid for through national taxes. This benefit is not merely limited to those just out of high school. Older workers seeking training of new skills for work, or who need to learn a new skill for another career have access to these educational resources for free. More on this topic will be covered in Part II.

Although it is true that the United States instituted many social safety-net provisions similar to those of Scandinavia following the stock-market crash of 1929 and the resulting depression, there are stark contrasts between the motives of the two regions. Before the depression that resulted in nearly 25% unemployment in the United States, there was a *strong* national consensus of limited governmental regulation over free-market principles, as well as little calls for a social safety-net. The depression caused a cataclysmic shift of mentality in the United States, throwing the Republicans out of

⁶⁸ Ibid 240

⁶⁹ T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandinavia*. (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1979) 370

congressional power and handing the Democratic Party control of all three branches of government. President Franklin D. Roosevelt took the opportunity of the depression to change the trajectory of where the United States had been going. For decades before the 1929 crash the Scandinavian nations had already built strong, centralized governments responsible for many public welfare systems. National forms of health insurance, pensions, income distribution, as well as opportunities for women were in place. What Roosevelt and the ruling Democrats did in the United States during the 1930s was bring that country a little closer towards the direction Scandinavia had been going towards since the late 19th century.

To this day the United States remains deeply divided – mainly along Democratic and Republican lines – on what the role of government should be. One side wants a strong governmental force responsible for a safety-net system that will protect the most vulnerable citizens and help ensure a more equitable playing field for all. The other side wants very limited government and virtually little or no safety-net system in place of a complete free-market capitalistic system, where every citizen is more or less *on his or her own* to either succeed or fail. Scandinavia was more homogeneously aligned in its philosophical ideals of what the role of government should be both before the depression and on through the events leading to World War II.

At the onset of World War II Scandinavia wished to remain neutral, echoing its call after World War I for peaceful means of solving conflict. When Hitler eventually invaded and occupied Denmark and Norway, however, that hope of neutrality was dashed. Norway's monarchy escaped to Britain and formally joined the Allies against the Nazis. Both Danish and Norwegian insurgents fought an underground resistance to try

and destabilize the Nazi occupiers. Although Sweden was able to maintain its neutrality based on economic agreements made with Hitler, the government eventually passed laws during the war restricting trade with Germany in an attempt to decrease Hitler's economic strength. The Swedish government "dropped its exports to the Germans" and the quantity of iron ore sent to Germany was reduced dramatically.⁷⁰ And thousands of Norwegians were smuggled into Sweden secretly by the Swedish government to help them escape the Nazi occupiers. Although Sweden stayed neutral, the government did work to aid the Allies secretly, while at the same time struggling to maintain their system of democracy and way of life. The nation did this while trying to minimize the risk of Nazi occupation themselves.

At the end of the Second World War in 1945 the main objectives of Sweden and newly liberated Denmark and Norway were to return to their "pre-war boundaries and pre-war systems of government."⁷¹ New elections in each country kept Labor in control in Norway and the Social Democrats in power in Denmark and Sweden. During the reconstruction, Sweden's economy flourished and prospered much faster than Denmark and Norway's did – owing to the fact that they were occupied for nearly five years. It took approximately three years for Denmark and Norway to produce at or above pre-war levels. And as post-war economic prosperity spread throughout Europe during the next two decades Scandinavia enjoyed every part of that prosperity.

It was during the post-war years that Scandinavia's welfare system grew to include and have a reach in all aspects of society today– from virtually free child care

⁷⁰ Ibid 348

⁷¹ Ibid 351

facilities for working parents to assisted living spaces for the elderly and disabled. And of course health care and education continued to be priorities for each of the nation's governments. And while the feminist movement world-wide exploded in the 1960s and 1970s, strides had been made towards gender equality in this part of the world even before that time. The concept of fairness regarding income distribution plays a major role in the tax revenue collection in the three Scandinavian nations. Heavy taxes are levied on those individuals making the most income in a progressive system. Those making the least amount are taxed very little or not at all. Corporate taxes are also levied, along with caps that heads of businesses can make; and the gap between those making the most in Scandinavia and those making the least is much smaller than in most other parts of the world, especially in the United States. This has played a major role in maintaining Scandinavia's goal of equality among all citizens. The current welfare system as it applies to gender equality, health care, education, and income distribution will be discussed in Part II.

PART II: SCANDINAVIA'S PRESENT SOCIAL SAFETY-NET SYSTEM

Part II will investigate this vast safety-net system in its present form in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. It will examine how the cultural and philosophical principles that developed over the last one hundred fifty years, and that are unique to this region, affect citizens in their daily lives through a solid, centralized *cradle-to-grave* system in each nation. Although each nation is responsible for its own safety-net system, the common philosophical principles developed out of the region's historical, cultural, religious, and economic ties discussed in Part I have also resulted in a shared-vision of this system, with each Scandinavian nation taking very similar approaches to how its system is implemented. The social safety-net is integrated into the fabric of Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish society; citizens benefit from this system from the day they are born throughout their entire lives. It was specifically these historical principles that fostered the region's current approach to gender equality, health care, education, and income distribution in the social safety-net, resulting in high levels of social equality and justice.

These four parts of Scandinavia's welfare system encapsulate the region's common philosophical principles of an egalitarian way of life. An environment where gender equality is not only fostered and maintained, but emphasized and celebrated, is a natural result of Scandinavia's past. The steps these three nations have made to achieve gender parity reflect those principles.

Scandinavia's approach to health care today is another consequence of the region's historical and cultural ties. The idea that equal access to health care is a birthright, regardless of gender, income or class, is vital to this region's mission of equality and prosperity for all citizens. The way Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have ensured specific health care benefits and assurances for women, especially, has helped to strengthen gender equality within these three nations. The following portions on gender equality and health care will reveal that these two areas really go hand in hand within a contemporary society.

Access to equal and free education for all citizens is yet another vital component of Scandinavia's welfare system. But these three nations do not just end with free schooling for children. University and college education, along with vocational training and job training for employees and other adults is also free, and widely available and encouraged for citizens of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. The emphasis on education and *life-long learning* to better one's way of life is strong in this region, and the access to these educational possibilities further reflects Scandinavia's philosophical principles of equal opportunities for everyone to discover and achieve his or her full potential.

Lastly, income distribution is probably the single biggest tool the Scandinavian nations utilize to achieve social equality. The gap between those citizens in Denmark,

Norway, and Sweden making the highest income levels and those citizens making the lowest income levels is among the narrowest in the world. In a region that believes that those benefiting the most have a legal and moral obligation to contribute to society in a manner to ensure prosperity for all, Scandinavia's tax laws for businesses and citizens are among the most progressive and regulated in the world. As a result Scandinavia has among the lowest levels of poverty in the world; in fact, the region has consistently been rated as having among the world's highest standards of living.

This region's safety-net system has lifted the burden of direct payment for health care, child care, and education. Laws and regulations guaranteeing women equal opportunities to men have also contributed to Scandinavia's present prosperity. All four components of the safety-net discussed below are reflections of these nations' common philosophical ties, and each systems' results will be discussed in Part II.

GENDER EQUALITY

The concept of gender equality is vital to Scandinavia's philosophical ideal of a free and egalitarian society. Since World War II and on through the rest of the twentieth century – as well as into the twenty-first – Scandinavia's increasingly broad and complex social safety-net has made gender equality a central hallmark and priority to ensure women have the same opportunities as men to live a free and independent life. For Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, gender equality entails the following components:

Equal distribution of power, care and influence; a society free from gender-related violence; equal pay for equal work; men and women must have equal rights, duties and opportunities in all spheres of life; opportunity for both male and female parents to raise their children and elect to work if they want to with as little or no burden as possible.⁷²

The actions and policies the three Scandinavian nations have adopted over the last eighty years have resulted in some of the highest levels and proportions of gender equality in the world. Within Denmark, Norway, and Sweden the concept of *person* is

⁷² "Areas of Co-operation: Welfare and Gender Equality." *NORDEN – Nordic Council of Ministers*. 02-05-2011. www.norden.org/en

“broadened to include women and promote their access to individual rights, to political representation, to work, and to education.”⁷³ What is even more important for the identification of the “female subject is the demand for security and responsibility in the personal choices of love partner and whether to have children.”⁷⁴ For women in Scandinavia today, individual rights are secured not only through competition with males *on equal terms* but through the development of a welfare state directed at the distribution of health and care for both genders. The idea that society and government supports the position that gender should be taken out of the equation completely is paramount in this region. A result of these policies has been the mindset that an extensive social policy be directed at “more or less all sections of the population, based on citizenship and universal benefits.”⁷⁵

According to Andrée Michel, author of *Family Models of the Future*, it is in Scandinavia – along with Finland and Iceland – where one has the best chance of attaining true gender equality. In the article she writes, “these are the only countries where laws are not consistently based on traditional roles. The woman is viewed as a whole person existing in her own right.”⁷⁶ She goes on to say that all measures that are constraining or repressing are looked at as a hindrance. After World War II Denmark, Norway and Sweden developed an inter-governmental commission to define policies on gender equality. One of the impacts of that commission was to ensure that the idea of

⁷³ Haavind, Hanne. “Understanding Women in the Psychological Mode: The challenge from the experiences of Nordic women,” (243-271) taken from *Is There a Nordic Feminism?* Fehr, Jonasdottir, Rosenbech, eds. (UCL Press LTD London, UK, 1998) 247

⁷⁴ *Ibid* 247

⁷⁵ Kvist, Elin and Peterson. “What has Gender Equality Got To Do With It? An Analysis of Policy Debates Surrounding Domestic Services in the Welfare States of Spain and Sweden.” *NORA (Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research)* 18:3, September 2010, 185-203

⁷⁶ Michel, Andrée. “Family Models of the Future,” (474-487) taken from *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*. Bridenthal & Koonz, eds. Houghton Mifflin Company USA, 19

gender equality be ingrained in children's consciousness from an early age. An example of how this could be achieved was to ensure that school textbooks in all grade levels would minimize masculine and feminine roles. Students of both genders would also be required to take home economics courses, as well as basic mechanic courses to ensure all were getting access to the same skills.⁷⁷

Another approach the three nations use is to address gender equality as both a social and political issue. The idea that society is not made up of male-breadwinners, but dual-breadwinners, as well as an increase in women's participation and representation in governments that have power over policy decisions, is vital to fostering a sense of equality among genders. After World War II initiatives were created as an attempt to increase gender equality by encouraging women of all ages and classes to mobilize for equality; while at the same time integration policies from the government were being designed and implemented to help make this goal more realistic.⁷⁸ Quota systems and goals were instituted over the coming decades in an attempt to increase opportunity for women to be represented in public and private institutions. Political parties instituted gender-specific requirements by the 1970s and by 1987 Norway instituted a quota regulation mandating that at least forty percent of all publicly appointed boards and commissions be comprised of women.⁷⁹

Helga Hernes, a Norwegian political scientist, wrote that her vision of a women-friendly society mirrors a society where gender, itself, would not even be at the forefront when it comes to justice. A *just* society would be one where women have a natural

⁷⁷ Ibid 19

⁷⁸ Skjeie, Hege; Siim, Birte. "Scandinavian Debates on Citizenship." *International Political Science Review* Vol 21, No 4 (2000): 350

⁷⁹ Ibid 349

relationship with their children, or spouse, or just to themselves, their work, and public life.⁸⁰ In order for women to have any real opportunity of equality in society, all barriers related to gender have to be removed or minimized to the highest extent possible.

If a society starts out with the standard mindset that a *society of equality* is built on the premise of both male *and* female breadwinners, then government action to make that standard mindset a reality can help to implement that way of thinking. Reforms such as the expansion of free child care facilities and of parental leave for both parents; as well as equal pay for equal work all become standards as just one part of society's attempt at gender equality, and this is what Denmark, Norway, and Sweden has attempted to do over the last half-century.

A crucial piece of the Scandinavian consciousness regarding gender equality is the idea that society must make a woman's "social participation broader and more influential" in the development of society itself."⁸¹ Women, themselves, must play an active role in suppressing historical and social pre-conditions that have kept women in an inferior position. Scandinavia's deliberate attempt at delegitimizing the idea of male dominance is one of the most effective measures that have contributed to this region being among the most gender-equal. The idea that masculinity equals dominance is strongly discouraged in this part of the world. In fact, the whole idea of "gender segregation," or assigning labels, or definitions to gender, is seen as a hindrance to gender equality.⁸²

⁸⁰ Ibid 352

⁸¹ Hanne Havind, "Understanding Women in the Psychological Mode," taken from Is There a Nordic Feminism, UCL Press, LTD London, UK, 1998 (248)

⁸² Ibid 252

Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have shared, over the last one hundred fifty years, a common goal of equality of the sexes. From the end of World War II research on gender roles and their impact on society have been discussed throughout the region. Significant research institutions formed on the subject. One such institute, set up in 1995 called the *Nordic Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Research*, in Oslo, Norway, works with other institutions in the region to develop policies on gender equality. A predecessor to that, the *Nordic Forum for Research on Women in the Nordic Countries*, founded in 1981, is an inter-Scandinavian research hub that also works in the region to promote more equality of the sexes.⁸³

Another crucial component of Scandinavia's attempt to maximize gender equality is the development of specific policy schemes devoted solely to family-care and welfare in general. These include generous child allowances (for both mothers and fathers) and parental leave benefits.⁸⁴ Unlike in other parts of the world, such as the United States for example, the term *welfare* has a very different connotation in Scandinavia. In Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, welfare is seen not only as a right but as a principle means of actualizing "egalitarian and redistributive ideas" through social benefits and public services to promote social rights.⁸⁵ In this region of the world a *welfare right* is synonymous with notions of "social equality, social citizenship and social justice," and citizens have come to look at their societies as the *Peoples' House*.⁸⁶ There is a strong mentality in Scandinavia that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few. And

⁸³ Bente Rosenbechm, "Nordic Women's Studies and Gender Research," taken from *Is There a Nordic Feminism*, UCL Press, LTD London, UK, 1998 (351)

⁸⁴ Lin, Ka. "Sectors, Agents, and Rationale: A Study of the Scandinavian Welfare States with Special Reference to the Welfare Society Model." *Acta Sociologica* Vol 47 No 2 (2004) 146

⁸⁵ *Ibid* 150

⁸⁶ *Ibid* 150

the general consensus is that the best system is one where everyone is part of a collective system to start with, where access to services, programs, and opportunities to be successful in life is easily and readily available.

The idea of society providing a strong social safety-net is not seen as paternalistic or enabling laziness, or dependence. On the contrary, it is the central philosophical argument for ensuring gender equality and citizens' rights and freedoms. Without this safety-net in place, the risk of discrimination becomes too great. Over the last forty years efforts made in the three Scandinavian nations toward developing social and public policies have been aimed at increasing equal employment opportunities for women. Policies aimed at "securing women's labour market participation – such as parental leave and child-care arrangements"⁸⁷ have helped ensure greater economic mobility for women.

The use of quota rules in the political parties of each nation has led to greater participation of women in the political process. In the mid 1970s two left-leaning political parties in Norway, the Socialist Left Party and the Left Party, both instituted regulatory changes mandating that at least 40% of party composition be comprised of women. In Norway today there are three governmental bodies that exist designed to monitor and ensure gender equality in the country: The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, The Gender Equality Ombudsman and The Centre for Gender Equality.⁸⁸ The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs was first established in 1956 as the Ministry of Family and Consumer Affairs, evolving over the decades to the current structure and is responsible for

⁸⁷ Skjeie, Hege; Siim, Birte. "Scandinavian Debates on Citizenship." *International Political Science Review* Vol 21, No 4 (2000): 346

⁸⁸ Bergersen, Kristin. "Quick Facts: Women in Decision Making-Norway." *European Database*. <http://www.db-decision.de/CoRe/Norway.htm>

budgeting resources ensuring gender-equal practices both in government and private-sector jobs in Norway. The Gender Equality Ombudsman's "main task is to make sure that the provisions given in the Gender Equality Act of 1978 are followed."⁸⁹

The provisions of the 1978 Gender Equality Act include requirements that discriminatory treatment of men and women on the grounds of gender is prohibited; that differential treatment of men and women only may be in accordance with the Act if the treatment promotes gender equality; and certain professions such as the care for small children has been an area where positive action has been used for men, whereas women have benefited from positive action in schools, universities and the work place.⁹⁰ The Centre for Gender Equality was established in 1997 and replaced the Gender Equality Council from 1972, which had replaced the Equal Pay Council from 1959. The Centre's main obligations are to "promote gender equality in different areas of society: education, business life, politics, and domestic life."⁹¹ The fact that such councils were created at the highest levels of government as early as the 1950s supports the notion that the Scandinavian region has led the planet over the last half century when it comes to gender equality.

In Sweden there also is a quota system used within the political parties delineating that at least 50% of the member representation is made up of women. Within Sweden's constitution there is a section known as the *Instrument of Government* that specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender and is a "source of legal protection" for

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Ibid

women to use against unequal treatment based on gender.⁹² As mentioned in Part I, Sweden's National Insurance Act provides health insurance and other benefits to all Swedish citizens. The Act works in conjunction with other legal entitlement provisions known as the Code of Parenthood and the Parental Leave Act "that lays the conditions of shared responsibilities for the home and children equally on women and men."⁹³

Like Norway's ministries that work specifically to ensure gender equality, Sweden's own government apparatus is known as the Ministry for Equality Affairs. This ministry aims and works toward "efforts to promote equality at the national and regional levels, and to develop methods for integration and implementation of a gender perspective (mainstreaming) in all policy areas."⁹⁴ It provides gender equality training and counseling to the public at large, as well as works with the private sector to ensure that gender discrimination is not occurring. Starting in 1994 the Prime Minister, in conjunction with the Riksdag, mandated that all future Prime Ministers' twenty-member cabinets be gender-equal and consist of ten men and ten women.

Sweden passed an Equal Opportunities Act in 1980, and it was updated in 1992 strengthening its purpose of promoting equal access for both women and men with respect to employment, working conditions and opportunities for personal development at work. Laws governing the amount of paid leave that fathers can take for their children were brought into parity with those benefits for women in the 1990s, leading to a more gender-neutral system for both parents.

⁹² Taschke, Katharina. "Quick Facts: Women in Decision Making-Sweden." *European Database*. <http://www.db-decision.de/CoRe/Sweden.htm>

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Ibid

Under Sweden's national insurance law, an expectant mother is given access to prenatal care and advice free of charge; she is also given a cash stipend for giving birth. This benefit has been in place since 1948. Parental leave and employment benefits became standard for new parents, especially mothers, as the idea of comprehensive child-care became engrained into national law in the late 1940s and early 1950s. At the time, "social legislation was adopted" in the post-war period easing the economic burden of having children.⁹⁵ All mothers who are employed at the time of pregnancy and birth receive "cash maternity benefits in proportion to the amount of income-loss incurred."⁹⁶ The same applies to fathers taking time off for paternal leave. Any parent who takes parental leave will have his or her job reserved should they want to return to work. For comparison purposes the first legislation passed in the United States that *mandated* some form of protection for working parents taking parental leave for child care was not enacted until 1993, under President Clinton and the Democratically-controlled Congress; this was over forty years after Sweden.⁹⁷

Like in Sweden, the Danish constitution embodies the principle of gender equality. Over the last sixty years five government acts have been passed dealing specifically with eliminating discrimination based on gender and maximizing the potential for gender equality in Denmark. These acts covered the following areas: Equal opportunity, equal pay, equal treatment, equality in appointing members of public committees, and in appointing board members of the civil service. And in 1987 the

⁹⁵ Carl Uhr. Sweden's Social Security System. (Univ of California Press, Riverside: 1966) 11

⁹⁶ Ibid 13

⁹⁷ Milgrom; Petersen; Snartland. "Equal Pay for Equal Work? Evidence from Sweden and a Comparison with Norway and the United States." *Scandinavian Journal of Economics* Vol 103 No 4 (2001) 563

Danish government instituted a *Plan of Action on Gender Equality*, imposing pressure on the public sector as well on the private sector to ensure the respect for gender equality.

Unlike in Norway and Sweden, quota laws in political parties no longer exist in Denmark. They were abandoned in 1996 after being implemented in the 1970s and used within the Danish political parties. The quota laws that existed in the 1970s were originally created based on recommendations from the *Commission on the Status of Women in Society*. This Commission also paved the way for the creation of the Equal Status Council, which is the primary government structure in Denmark that enforces gender equality.⁹⁸ The primary duties of the Council are to promote equality of men and women in society, at work, in training and education, and in family life. It also works to ensure opportunity for reconciliation of working life and family life, women managers, or measures that may contribute to provoke changes in the gender-divided labor market, as well as working to promote gender mainstreaming. And in 1999 the position of Minister on Gender Equality was created as a permanent government position working alongside the national ombudsmen to ensure gender representation.

Within the last thirty years the three Scandinavian nations have reached almost complete equal political representation by gender. Below shows the percentage of women in the parliaments of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden in 1984:

Denmark's Folketing:	15%	(27 women out of 179 seats)
Norway's Storting:	22%	(38 women out of 169 seats)
Sweden's Riksdag:	28%	(55 women out of 349 seats)⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Jacobsen, Helle. "Quick Facts: Women in Decision Making-Denmark." *European Database*. <http://www.db-decision.de/CoRe/Denmark.htm>

⁹⁹ Joni Lovenduski. *Women & European Politics: Contemporary Feminism & Public Policy*. Univ of Mass Press, Amherst, MA, 1986, 232

Below shows the percentage of women in the parliaments of the three Scandinavian nations in 2011:

Denmark's Folketing:	40%	(72 women out of 179 seats)¹⁰⁰
Norway's Storting:	41%	(70 women out of 169 seats)¹⁰¹
Sweden's Riksdag:	45%	(158 women out of 349 seats)¹⁰²

Again, for comparison purposes, below shows the percentage of women in the United States Congress (both the Senate and House of Representatives) in 1984:

House of Representatives:	5%	(22 women out of 435 seats)
Senate:	2%	(2 women out of 100 seats)
Total:	4%	(24 women out of 535 seats)¹⁰³

In 2011 the percentage of female representatives in the United States Congress has increased in the last quarter-century to the current figures below:

House of Representatives:	17%	(74 women out of 435 seats)
Senate:	17%	(17 women out of 100 seats)
Total:	17%	(91 women out of 535 seats)¹⁰⁴

The purpose of comparing the percentage of female representatives of the three Scandinavian nations with that of the United States is to highlight that, although progress has also been made in the United States when it comes to gender equality in the national political arena, that nation still has not even reached the same level of female

¹⁰⁰ "Welcome to the Danish Parliament." Denmark's Folketing Official Website (in English): www.ft.dk/English.aspx

¹⁰¹ "About the Storting." Norway's Storting Official Website (in English): www.stortinget.no/en/In-English/About-the-storting

¹⁰² "Official Constituents." Sweden's Riksdag Official Website (in English): www.riksdagen.se/webbnav/index.aspx?nid=1831&m=1

¹⁰³ "Women in Congress." *United States Congress Official Website*. <http://womenincongress.house.gov/historical-data/>

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

representation as Norway and Sweden had in 1984, and only just barely achieved a higher percentage than Denmark did in that year. This only further supports the suggestion that Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have achieved a system of ensuring gender equality that surpasses most other industrialized nations, including the United States. It should be noted that the percentage of female representatives in the Danish parliament presently, although impressive, is lower than in Norway and Sweden. As mentioned earlier, Denmark abandoned its quota laws requiring gender parity in political parties in the mid-1990s, suggesting a correlation between the disuse of such requirements and a drop in female representation in parliament in that country.

The United States government does not have a federal-level agency or commission dedicated solely to increasing or monitoring gender equality, as do none of the fifty states. The closest governmental agency that exists that investigates instances of discrimination based on gender is the Office for Civil Rights, which is part of the Department of Health and Human Services, currently directed by Secretary Kathleen Sebelius.¹⁰⁵ Most public and private businesses, agencies, and institutions in the United States, however, do have policies barring discrimination based on gender.

Attempts at making the private-sector labor market available to women in the Scandinavian nations over the last 40 years have also dramatically increased female employment in the three nations. An expansion in the availability of part-time work “has been essential” in female labor-force participation rates.¹⁰⁶ Below lists the percentage of

¹⁰⁵ Office for Civil Rights. *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*.
<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/index.html>

¹⁰⁶ Anne Lise Ellingsæter, “Changing Roles: Trends in Women’s Employment and Gender Equality,” (364-382) taken from *Welfare Trends in the Scandinavian Countries*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1993, 371

women in the three Scandinavian nations in both full and part-time employment by the end of the twentieth century:

Denmark:

Full-time:	59.7%
Part-time:	35.8%
Total Percentage of Women Working:	78.2% ¹⁰⁷

Norway:

Full-time:	55 %
Part-time:	45%
Total Percentage of Women Working:	73.8% ¹⁰⁸

Sweden:

Full-time:	55%
Part-time:	40%
Total Percentage of Women Working:	73.2% ¹⁰⁹

Below lists the percentage of women in both full and part-time employment in the United States by the end of the twentieth century:

United States:

Full-time:	74%
Part-time:	26%

¹⁰⁷ Jacobsen, Helle. "Quick Facts: Women in Decision Making-Denmark." *European Database*. <http://www.db-decision.de/CoRe/Denmark.htm>

¹⁰⁸ Bergersen, Kristin. "Quick Facts: Women in Decision Making-Norway." *European Database*. <http://www.db-decision.de/CoRe/Norway.htm>

¹⁰⁹ Taschke, Katharina. "Quick Facts: Women in Decision Making-Sweden." *European Database*. <http://www.db-decision.de/CoRe/Sweden.htm>

Total Percentage of Women Working: **59.2%**¹¹⁰

As one can see the percentage of part-time employment among females is vastly higher in the three Scandinavian nations than in the United States, as well as the overall percentage of women working in total. Starting in the 1970s large scale access to part-time employment increased exponentially for women in the Scandinavian nations. This time period correlated with the world-wide feminist movement of the late twentieth century in which the struggle for gender equality reached massive levels in the industrialized world. The increased number of Scandinavian women working part-time also suggests that there is more opportunity in that region for women to select work hours based on their individual circumstances. Unlike in the United States, Scandinavian women do not have to worry about taking a full-time position for health insurance or other benefits, since health care is provided regardless of employment. The same is true for child care and elderly care. The opportunity to work part time is an important tool allowing people to earn income and accommodate personal needs at the same time.

Gender equality is still a major struggle today. No country in the world can boast of full, universal gender equality; the three Scandinavian nations cannot even do this. But the feminist struggle in the last one hundred fifty years has pressed this issue globally and many strides have been made bringing women into a more equal footing with men. Gender equality in Scandinavia has been a natural part of this region's common philosophical principles and the push for that equality came many decades before the global feminist movement of the 1970s. Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have done more

¹¹⁰ "Quick Stats on Women Workers, 2009." *United States Department of Labor*.
<http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/main.htm>

to implement deliberate, gender-specific equality legislation and policy laws than any other region in the world.

They purposely crafted a social policy consistent with this region's historical and cultural philosophical principles of fairness and equality. Because of these unique values Scandinavia's social safety-system provides an environment where women have more of an opportunity to achieve their own personal goals and life-aims on an equal level with their male counterparts. These nations have proven that when a society works to promote the equality of men and women through laws, through resources and benefits, and through a shared philosophical ideal, both sexes have the opportunities to achieve their potential.

HEALTH CARE

A major component of Scandinavia's comprehensive social safety-net system is its approach to health care. This region's policies regarding access to health care are consistent with the common philosophical principles of equality for all, regardless of gender, race, and one's income-level because access to health care is free to all. Within Denmark, Norway and Sweden the health care systems are all almost exclusively publicly-funded through a progressive, single-payer taxation process. Most hospitals in each of the three nations are also publicly owned and managed. Every citizen in Scandinavia is born covered and protected with health insurance for life. No matter if the individual switches jobs, moves to a different city, is retired or unemployed, each person has health coverage. This is a vastly different process than what is used in other nations, the United States for example, where citizens are not automatically born covered under any sort of national health insurance system.

Scandinavia's health care system is considered publicly sponsored, or *socialized*, since everyone, regardless of income level or pre-existing condition, gets equal access to

the same health care. Within the three countries the “national government is responsible for a significant level of funding and cross-regional coordination”¹¹¹ of health care. Financing and control, however, is decentralized to county and community levels. Locally elected citizens within individual communities are responsible for ensuring the primary care coverage of citizens. These *county councils* are formed and elected “exclusively for the purpose of providing health care and other social services.”¹¹²

There are four main laws regulating benefits in Denmark: the Hospital Act, the Public Health Insurance Act, the Medicines Act, and the Consolidated Social Services Act. The Hospital Act establishes and maintains regulations for inpatient, maternity, ambulatory, and rehabilitative care, as well as delegates responsibility for these services to the various county councils.¹¹³ The Public Health Insurance Act specifies benefits for outpatient and child care, as well as other forms of maternity care. It also oversees reimbursements of pharmaceuticals like prescription drugs. The Medicines Act regulates the “populations’ access to pharmaceuticals and oversees the process of approving medicines by the Danish Medicines Agency.”¹¹⁴ And finally the Consolidated Social Services Act oversees the planning and financing of specialized care, such as long-term inpatient, outpatient and home care, along with rehabilitative care following hospital treatment.

As mentioned earlier, the county councils are responsible for the main decision making needs of that county’s population. These councils are elected by the local

¹¹¹ Weiner, Jonathan. “Primary Care Delivery in the U.S. & 4 Northwest European Countries.” *Milbank Quarterly*, Vol 65, No 3, (1987) JSTOR, 428

¹¹² *Ibid*, 429

¹¹³ Bilde; Ankjaer-Jensen; Danneskiold-Samsøe. “The Health Benefit Basket in Denmark” *European Journal of Health Economics*, Vol 6, (Dec, 2005) JSTOR, S11

¹¹⁴ *Ibid* S11

populations and determine defined benefits for the local populations. The four acts mentioned above guarantee that every Danish citizen has access to quality emergency and non-emergency medical care when needed. Hospitals are financed by the counties and the federal government through tax revenues. Each county is responsible for determining the “content and costs of hospital activity through the use of detailed budgets.”¹¹⁵

Individuals are free to go to any public hospital of their choice in the country for emergency care. Citizens are also able to use any of the limited private hospitals in Denmark for emergency treatment, however, payment for services may be required upfront and then the citizen could apply for reimbursement from the government.

Regarding outpatient care, Danish citizens choose between two health insurance schemes. Scheme One is a medical plan that provides free primary and preventative care each year. Citizens get to choose their primary care physician but can only make changes once a year. Citizens are also allowed to choose specialists if they have to be referred to one by their primary care physician. Approximately 98% of the Danish population choose Scheme One, and are entitled to tax-paid services and pay little or no out-of-pocket co-pays. Any co-pays that may be issued are usually eligible for full or partial reimbursement from the government.¹¹⁶ Individuals who choose Scheme One select from a specific list of physicians and specialists within their local communities, and have to register with those physicians and specialists each year. If they want to change primary care physicians and specialists before that official “change period” citizens must give justification and get special permission from the county councils.

¹¹⁵ Ibid S15

¹¹⁶ Ibid S15

Citizens who choose Scheme Two, which about 2% of Danes do choose, have a “wider choice of providers but are less entitled to reimbursement”¹¹⁷ for any out-of-pocket expenses for specialized care. Citizens who select this scheme are opting to pay more out-of-pocket for the benefit of a wider choice of health options. They pay approximately two-thirds of the cost and get about a third of health care costs reimbursed.¹¹⁸ Within both schemes general physician services, such as ear, nose, and throat doctors, as well as psychiatric and oculist services are free of charge. Below is a list of what is fully, partially and not covered under Scheme One which is the plan the majority of Danish citizens select:

<u>TYPE OF SERVICE:</u>	<u>COVERED BY SCHEME ONE:</u>
General Services	Full Coverage
Dentist Services	Partial Coverage (School-age children, disabled, elderly, and low income citizens are FULLY covered)
Tube Feeding	Full Coverage
Physiotherapy	Partial Coverage (FULLY covered for those with specific diagnoses)
Psychiatrist Services	Full Coverage (Referral from physician required)
Chiropractor	Partial
Ear-Nose-Throat Specialist	Full Coverage
Dieticians	No Coverage ¹¹⁹

The dispensing of prescription drugs in Denmark is handled through a reimbursement system. The price for “any given prescription drug is uniform”¹²⁰ in Denmark to rule out price competition among retailers. There are approximately two

¹¹⁷ Ibid S15

¹¹⁸ “Denmark – Health.” *Encyclopedia of Nations*.
www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Europe/Denmark-HEALTH.html

¹¹⁹ Bilde, Ankjaer-Jensen, Danneskiold-Samsoe. “The Health Benefit Basket in Denmark.” *European Journal of Health Economics*, Vol 6, (Dec, 2005) JSTOR, S16

¹²⁰ Pedersen, K. “Pricing and Reimbursement of Drugs in Denmark.” *European Journal of Health Economics*, Vol 4, No 1, (2003) JSTOR, 61

hundred eighty-five privately owned – but heavily regulated – pharmacies in the nation where consumers can get prescription drugs. If citizens receive drugs while in the hospital for treatment, the cost of the prescription is free and the citizen does not have to pay any out-of-pocket expenses.

Reimbursement for prescriptions depends on the drug itself. If the prescription is prescribed for a specific medical health need the citizen will be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses. Prescriptions for specialized needs, such as treating erectile dysfunction, are not reimbursable. Pharmacists are required to dispense the cheaper of any drug to the consumer; if there is a generic available the pharmacist must sell that unless the physician prescribing the drug specifically decides against it for whatever reason. Danish citizens pay for the drugs out-of-pocket and submit applications to their local county council for reimbursement. The citizen is free to choose the non-generic brand and purchase the more expensive name brand if he or she wants. The government will, however, only reimburse the citizen for the price of the generic if it was also available.

Prenatal care in Denmark is among the best in the world. Approximately 92% of Danish women receive prenatal care during pregnancy. In the United States it is approximately 79%.¹²¹ In Denmark the recommended number of prenatal visits is nine. Employed women must get a pregnancy certificate from their health care provider in order to get the minimum fourteen weeks of paid maternity leave. Part of the protection employed women have is the ability to take their prenatal care visits during working hours without penalty if it is more convenient. And while Danish women do not receive

¹²¹ McQuide, Delvaux, et al (eds) "Prenatal Care Incentives in Europe." *Journal of Public Health Policy*, Vol 19, No 3, (1998) JSTOR, 331

a financial incentive to attend prenatal classes, they do get a stipend from the government upon having the child, which is approximately twelve hundred dollars.¹²² While fourteen weeks is the minimum mothers have to take maternity leave, the amount offered by the government is actually higher. New mothers in Denmark are guaranteed up to twenty weeks paid maternity leave, and after that they can continue taking more at a reduced pay amount. Fathers in Denmark are allowed to take up to ten weeks paid leave, unless the father is the only parent of the child, in which case up to twenty weeks paid leave is allowed.¹²³

Child home-care visits for new parents are a widely used and available benefit in Denmark. After a family brings a new-born home “child care specialists” are available, free of charge, to assist new parents with questions and concerns regarding the care of their infants’ first months of life. These specialists are trained and certified to assist new parents. This benefit is funded through the health care system.¹²⁴

Care for the elderly in Denmark is also managed through the nation’s health care system. The municipalities within the local counties are “legally responsible for nursing homes, day nursing facilities, home nursing services, home help, meals on wheels, and sheltered housing.”¹²⁵

Norway’s health care system follows a philosophy similar to that of Denmark’s in that one of the main objectives of the welfare policy is that “health services should be

¹²² Ibid 342

¹²³ “Parental Leave Policies in 21 Countries: Assessing Generosity and Gender Equality.” *Center for Economic and Policy Research*. <http://www.lisproject.org/publications/parentwork/parent-leave-report.pdf>

¹²⁴ Kameron; Kahn. “Home Health Visiting in Europe.” *The Future of Children*. Vol 3 No 3, (1993) JSTOR, 49

¹²⁵ Raffel; Raffel. “Elderly Care: Similarities and Solutions in Denmark and the U.S.” *Public Health Reports*, Vol 2, No 5 (1987) JSTOR, 495

allocated according to people's need, and not according to ability to pay."¹²⁶ Norway's health care system includes a public insurance scheme model in which everybody is covered for primary care needs, and the majority of services are financed through taxes, although a portion of the system relies on patient co-pays as well. Municipalities and local counties are responsible for setting up and providing necessary primary physicians services, and most primary care physicians are government employees. These municipalities are also responsible for running the services in local areas.

Responsibility for services fell to municipalities under a law passed in 1984 called the Municipal Health Act, which was an attempt by the federal government to decentralize authority away from the federal level and give locally elected officials a greater say in organizing primary services. Like in Denmark, these services are financed by a progressive taxation system, with those at the highest income bracket contributing more in taxes toward the health care system, and those making the lowest income paying the least or no amount in taxes towards health care. More on the determination methods for the percentage of taxes that goes towards health care costs in Norway will be discussed in the Income Distribution portion of Part II.

Norway also relies on a small co-pay system for access to services, in which each patient pays approximately ten dollars for each visit for primary care, depending on income level. Those earning at the lowest income levels in the nation are not required to pay this co-pay. Citizens who reach one hundred thirty dollars in co-pay fees within a one-year period will not be required to pay additional co-pay fees if more primary-care

¹²⁶ Grytten; Rongen; Sorensen. "Can a Public Health Care System Achieve Equity? The Norwegian Experience." *Medical Care*, Vol 33, No 9, (1995) JSTOR, 938

visits are needed or required.¹²⁷ These co-pay fees cover approximately 24% of the total costs of running primary care health services in Norway, while public funding covers the remainder.

Below is a list of general health care services that are either fully or partially covered by the system:

<u>TYPE OF SERVICE:</u>	<u>COVERAGE:</u>
General Primary Care Services	\$10 co-pay/not to exceed \$130 a year, otherwise free; income level also determines whether any co-pays are charged
Dental Services	Partial Coverage with some reimbursement. No charge for dental services for children under age 18, for anyone diagnosed with a developmental disability, pensioners receiving long-term nursing care, and adults making within a certain income level
Emergency Care/Hospital Stay: Prescription Drugs	100% Free Drugs for specific medical needs reimbursable; elective drugs usually not reimbursable
Psychiatric Services	\$10 co-pay, otherwise no other charge; 100% covered under the age of 18

Parental leave is a hallmark of Norway's health care system. New parents now can enjoy a total of fifty-two weeks at 80% of employee pay or forty-two weeks at 100% pay after the birth of a child.¹²⁸ Fathers are allowed to take up to thirty-five weeks paid

¹²⁷ Ibid 940

¹²⁸ Rindfuss; Guilkey, et al (eds). "Child Care Availability and First-Birth Timing in Norway." *Demography*, Vol 44, No 2 (2007) JSTOR, 349

parental leave.¹²⁹ Norway is also a pioneer in the reduction of pregnancy-related mortality, and reports some of the lowest maternal deaths from pregnancy in the world. Between 1980 and 2000 there were less than five maternal deaths, per year.¹³⁰ Giving birth in Norway is 100% covered by the health care system. Upon birth or adoption of a child, a cash subsidy is given to the parents, or single parent, for each child each year until the child reaches the age of three.¹³¹

Access to prenatal care in Norway is similar to that in Denmark. There are no direct financial incentives or payments given to women during pregnancy who are employed, however, women are allowed paid time off work to attend prenatal classes. Unemployed women have the same access to free prenatal classes and are given a one-time special allowance of approximately four thousand dollars during pregnancy.¹³²

Sweden's health care system mirrors Denmark's and Norway's in the fact that it also has a single-payer, tax-funded system that covers 100% of citizens. There are three main principles under the health care system's mission: equal access, care based on need, and cost effectiveness.¹³³ Almost 10% of Sweden's Gross National Product (GNP) goes towards health care costs, which is similar to the percentage of GNP that goes towards health care in the United States.¹³⁴ One of the main differences between the health care

¹²⁹ "Parental Leave Policies in 21 Countries: Assessing Generosity and Gender Equality." *Center for Economic and Policy Research*. <http://www.lisproject.org/publications/parentwork/parent-leave-report.pdf>

¹³⁰ Austveg; Sundby. "Norway at ICPD + 10: International Assistance For Reproductive Health Does not Reflect Domestic Policies." *Reproductive Health Matters*. Vol 13, No 25 (2005) JSTOR, 25

¹³¹ Ibid 27

¹³² McQuide, Delvaux, et al (eds) "Prenatal Care Incentives in Europe." *Journal of Public Health Policy*, Vol 19, No 3, (1998) JSTOR, 336

¹³³ "Sweden's Health Care System." *Swedish Health Care*. <http://www.swedishhealthcare.se/swedenshealthcaresystem.html>

¹³⁴ Weiner, Jonathan. "Primary Care Delivery in the U.S. & 4 Northwest European Countries." *Milbank Quarterly*, Vol 65, No 3, (1987) JSTOR, 432

systems in the United States and in Sweden is that roughly 40% of citizens in the United States lack health care coverage. In Sweden, like in the other Scandinavian nations, emergency and hospital care treatment is free of charge with no co-payments. Maternity clinics, child health clinics, public dental facilities, and local nursing home-care services are also covered under Sweden's national health insurance system and there is no additional charge to patients when services are needed.¹³⁵

Financing for the system comes through a combination of a progressive taxation system, as well as through social insurance funds from the National Sickness Fund. County and municipal taxes can also be assessed on local citizens, but cannot exceed 30% of earned income, set by the national government.¹³⁶ Most of the time there are no co-pays assessed for primary care visits in Sweden. On the occasion that a co-pay is issued for a specialized visit the amount is usually under ten dollars, and is free for children and those making below specific income levels.¹³⁷

As in Denmark and Norway regional county councils are responsible for hospitals and primary care in Sweden. Most physicians, nurses, and other practitioners are "salaried government employees."¹³⁸

Parental leave is an especially important part of the health care system in Sweden. Parents are given up to twelve months paid parental leave after the child is born. Fathers are given the exact same amount as new mothers for parental leave, making Sweden the

¹³⁵ Saltman, Richard. "Competition and Reform in the Swedish Health System." *Milbank Quarterly*, Vol 68, No 4, (1990) JSTOR, 601

¹³⁶ *Ibid* 600

¹³⁷ Weiner, Jonathan. "Primary Care Delivery in the U.S. & 4 Northwest European Countries." *Milbank Quarterly*, Vol 65, No 3, (1987) JSTOR, 434

¹³⁸ *Ibid* 429

only nation in Scandinavia to offer a fully equal distribution of paid parental leave to both genders.

Below is a list of general health care services that are either fully or partially covered by Sweden's system:

<u>TYPE OF SERVICE:</u>	<u>COVERAGE:</u>
General Primary Care	Usually 100% covered, some co-pays required
Dental Care	Adults charged co-pay for cleaning/check-ups; extensive dental procedures covered 100%; Children/Adolescents up to age 19 covered 100%
Emergency/Hospital Care	100% covered ¹³⁹

Child care in Scandinavia is also a major benefit for Scandinavian parents, and is covered under each nation's health/welfare system. A higher percentage of children aged zero to six years spend time in child care facilities in Scandinavia than in the United States. The costs of child care are heavily subsidized by each Scandinavian nation, and in many cases those parents with lower incomes do not pay any costs for child care assistance. Below is a chart comparing each nation's percentage of children in child care, by age, as well as the percentage covered by each government:

<u>Nation:</u>	<u>Age:</u>	<u>Percentage Covered:</u>
Denmark	0-2 Years Old: 48%	0-2 Years Old: 70-80%
	3-6 Years Old: 82%	3-6 Years Old: 70-80%
Norway	0-2 Years Old: 20%	0-2 Years Old: 68-70%
	3-6 Years Old: 63%	3-6 Years Old: 68-70%

¹³⁹ "Sweden's Health Care System." *Swedish Health Care*.
<http://www.swedishhealthcare.se/swedenshealthcaresystem.html>

Sweden	0-2 Years Old: 33% 3-6 Years Old: 72%	0-2 Years Old: 82-87% 3-6 Years Old: 82-87%
United States	0-2 Years Old: 5% 3-6 Years Old: 54%	0-2 Years Old: 25-30% 3-6 Years Old: 25-30% ¹⁴⁰

It should be noted that the percentage of child care covered by the United States government is primarily for low-income earners meeting national or state poverty level requirements that qualify them for child care assistance. The difference between the assistance offered in the United States and in all of Scandinavia is that child care is available to all parents in Scandinavia at a substantially reduced, or free, rate. In the United States child care costs fall almost 100% on the parents unless they meet certain income levels, in which case there are various government programs that can assist.

Regardless of one's philosophy over how health care should be administered, the fact remains that the systems used in the Scandinavian nations have significantly removed financial burdens off the backs of citizens when it comes to medical care. Regardless of income level, an individual can go to the hospital for emergency care and have his or her needs met in Scandinavia. The same is true for preventative and general primary care. Although it is true that one will not be turned away from emergency care in the United States even if one cannot show proof of ability to pay, the individual in the United States is charged the medical fees, which can run into the thousands and even tens of thousands of dollars if that individual does not have medical insurance. And if the individual is ultimately unable to pay, the hospitals absorb the costs and the charges eventually get passed on through increased fees or charges that others have to pick up.

¹⁴⁰ Waldfogel, Jane. "International Policies toward Parental Leave and Child Care." *The Future of Children*, Vol 11, No 1, (2001) JSTOR, 106

And those who attempt to pay their medical bills in the United States but get overwhelmed by the costs often face bankruptcy. In 2007 almost 62.1% of all bankruptcies in the United States were medical ones.¹⁴¹ And 92% of those individuals or families that filed bankruptcy due to medical reasons had medical debts exceeding five thousand dollars. The rest had to file for bankruptcy due to loss of “significant income due to illness or mortgaged a home to pay medical bills.”¹⁴²

The idea of going into massive debt, or possibly even losing one’s home, in order to pay medical bills is a completely unacceptable policy in Scandinavia. Going back to this region’s common philosophical principles, the idea that *everyone is in this together*, rings especially true within each of these nations’ health care systems. Health care is viewed as each individual’s right. The governments of this region believe strongly that access should not be based on one’s ability to pay. A sense of collective investment in health and well being of every citizen is at the forefront of the health systems in these countries. As such the mindset that coverage be spread, like an umbrella, encompassing everyone is more popular than the idea that each citizen is responsible for his or her own health care. Because of this philosophy the citizens of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden enjoy among the highest health standards in the world.

Universal medical care, in the way that exists in Scandinavia and in most of Europe, almost came to be in the United States during the Great Depression. President Franklin Roosevelt attempted to include compulsory health insurance for all Americans within his New Deal legislation but was shot down by almost all those in the Republican

¹⁴¹ “Medical Bankruptcy in the United States, 2007: Results of a National Study.” *American Journal of Medicine*. http://www.pnhp.org/new_bankruptcy_study/Bankruptcy-2009.pdf, 1

¹⁴² *Ibid* 1

minority and by a number of congresspersons within his Democratic Party as well. Roosevelt feared that if left within the legislation, which included the provisions to create Social Security, the whole thing would fail a vote, so it was removed. Various attempts at increasing access to health care through government means have taken place over the decades since the 1930s.¹⁴³ Medical care provided to United States military personnel, current and retired veterans, as well as those Americans on Medicare most closely resembles the type of medical service received in Scandinavia, because both the health system used by the American military, as well as Medicare is a single-payer system paid for by American tax-payers. The main difference of course, is that it is only offered to those in the military as well as those who qualify for Medicare.

The new health care system passed by President Obama and the Democratic-controlled Congress in 2010 mandates that nearly all American citizens obtain health insurance coverage. This is an attempt at achieving nearly universal health coverage in the United States. This is a system radically different from the ones that currently exist in Scandinavia, because it will still rely heavily on private health insurance companies to provide health insurance to the vast majority of citizens, as opposed to the single-payer system that exists in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. It will, however, increase subsidies that the American government will provide to low-income citizens to basically pay for the costs of obtaining health insurance. This is a step towards achieving universal coverage there.

The health care systems in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are part of each nation's overall welfare and social-safety net system. Access to health care for all

¹⁴³ "A Brief History: Universal Care Efforts in the US." *Physicians for a National Health Program*. http://www.pnhp.org/facts/a_brief_history_universal_health_care_efforts_in_the_us.php?page=2

citizens, regardless of income level, is an essential and vital component of this region's philosophy of equality and equal access for all citizens.

EDUCATION

Another vital part of Scandinavia's comprehensive social safety-net system is its massive commitment to public education for all citizens. Every Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish citizen is born with the right not only to free access to education during childhood, but also has access to higher education and/or vocational training opportunities at virtually no cost. This differs from the educational system in the United States, where public education is free and available to all students through the end of high school. After that point the cost of higher education, or other training institutions, falls on the student. Although financial aid is widely available for students to assist with these costs, it is typically based on specific income levels, making many American students ineligible for aid and responsible for the economic burden.

In Scandinavia that economic burden is lifted completely for those seeking further education beyond the compulsory grade-levels. In this region everyone is given the same opportunity regardless of income-level, to access some form of higher education or training for free. This philosophy of full access reflects the region's overall idea that everyone must have the same opportunity, from birth, to be successful throughout his or her life. Education is considered a vital link to the capacity of citizens to lead productive lives in adulthood, and every opportunity is given to individuals to earn an academic education, or receive vocational training, or job-training to enhance existing skills.

Scandinavia's commitment to education also validates the region's common philosophical principles regarding equal access. And although the Scandinavian nations are responsible for implementing their own educational guidelines and requirements, due to the region's cultural and political past, the three systems are very similar. Primary and lower-secondary public education is compulsory for specific age groups in all three nations, and is offered free of charge. These grade levels are roughly equivalent to elementary, middle, and the first two years of high school in the United States. Upper-secondary education in Scandinavia resembles the last two years of high school in the United States, but typically last up to three years. Students enter programs designed to prepare them for either higher education or for vocational training. And although upper-secondary education is not compulsory in Scandinavia the vast majority of students continue through these grade levels anyway, underscoring the region's cultural commitment to education.¹⁴⁴ All levels of compulsory education, upper-secondary and vocational training education, as well as higher education is free to the student, funded by taxes through each nation's social safety-net system. Another major component of Scandinavia's education system is its investment in adult training and on-the-job development after the traditional education years.

As mentioned above, each Scandinavian nation's education system follows similar guidelines, but there are marked differences. Denmark's system focuses on the principle that access to education be "coherent, comprehensive, and egalitarian"¹⁴⁵ while

¹⁴⁴ "Denmark – History and Background." *Education Encyclopedia*
www.education.stateuniversity.com/pages/368/Denmark-HISTORY-BACKGROUND.html

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

at the same time comprising of “pathways into further and higher education.”¹⁴⁶

Compulsory education in Denmark began with the School Law of 1814, mandating that all boys *and* girls receive the same schooling from age six to twelve or thirteen.¹⁴⁷ The fact that girls were included within this law as early as 1814 underscores Denmark’s historical commitment to gender equality decades before many other nations in the 19th century.

In 2007 Denmark’s government finished a report detailing the nation’s goal of making Denmark a trail-blazer in European education, as well as making the nation “a leading knowledge society with strong competitiveness and strong cohesion.”¹⁴⁸

Objectives include a strong and coherent system from pre-school through higher education where all citizens have equal opportunities to excel. This system must be world-class and relevant in order to “match the needs of the labour market and the society.”¹⁴⁹ Included in that report is an emphasis on global perspectives that must be included in all education programs.

In Denmark the path of education for pupils begins with pre-school. Within pre-school the main goals are as follows:

- Students have a positive start
- Language assessment begins at age of three and again at age of six
- Subject-based teaching, in Danish language, to be introduced – especially in reading – in pre-school classes¹⁵⁰
- Students have access to pre-school up through the calendar year of their sixth birthday, at which time they begin primary school.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid

¹⁴⁷ Carol Gold. Educating Middle Class Daughters: Private Girls Schools in Copenhagen 1790-1820 (Royal Library: Copenhagen, 1996) 32

¹⁴⁸ “Life Long Learning.” *Danish Ministry of Education*
www.eng.uvm.dk/Fact%20Sheets/General/Lifelong%20learning.aspx

¹⁴⁹ Ibid

¹⁵⁰ Ibid

- The concept of *playing* is determined to make up a central element of teaching in pre-school
- Program of teaching is to lay the “foundation for the school’s educational program as a whole and create cohesiveness in the transition between a child’s daily life at home and school”¹⁵¹

Within the primary and lower-secondary school systems, called *Folkeskoles*, the following national goals have been set:

- All pupils gain excellent skills and knowledge
- The responsibility of the *Folkeskole* is to provide pupils with the tools to promote creativity and independence to prepare them for further education
- Students be the *best in the world* in four specific areas: Reading, Math, Natural Science, and English¹⁵²

Learning and becoming fluent in English is one of the highest priorities within the education systems in all three of the Scandinavian nations. Following World War II the national governments in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden made a vested commitment that English be a compulsory language taught to all citizens so that they could have more communicative opportunities with the rest of the world. Scandinavia can be a lonely part of the world; and with approximately twenty million people in the world only speaking Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish, being able to communicate in English is a crucial link. Today nearly 100% of Scandinavian citizens under the age of sixty speak English fluently alongside their native languages.

Students who attend the primary and lower-secondary *Folkeskoles* attend between the age of seven and sixteen or seventeen in Denmark, lasting approximately ten years. About 13% of Danish children between the ages of seven and sixteen attend private schools as opposed to the public *Folkeskoles*. There are approximately four hundred

¹⁵¹ Ibid

¹⁵² Ibid

ninety-one private schools in Denmark, of which about ninety-one thousand students attended in 2006.¹⁵³ Private schools are recognized in Denmark as equivalent to the *Folkeskole*, but must adhere to specific educational standards, similar to private-secular, private-religious, and charter schools in the United States. Private schools in Denmark receive a grant from the government to help ensure these educational standards, with the remaining funds coming from tuition paid by the families.

Over 94% of students in Denmark move on to some form of upper-secondary and/or vocational training *Youth Education* program, as it is called.¹⁵⁴ Once students enter *Youth Education* they can choose two tracks: General Upper-Secondary Education Courses or Vocational Education Training Courses. The first option prepares students for higher education at universities and colleges. The second option trains students for trades or further apprenticeships, although opportunity for higher education also exists for those picking the vocational option.

Within the General Upper-Secondary Education option students have four tracks that they choose from:

- The Gymnasium (STX)
- The Higher Preparatory Examination (HF)
- The Higher Technical Program (HTX)
- The Higher Commercial Examination Program (HHX)

Both the STX and the HF programs consist of mostly general education-type courses such as the Humanities, Natural Science, and Social Science. The HTX program focuses on technological and scientific subjects, and the HHX focuses on business and socio-economic disciplines, as well as foreign languages. Every student who chooses any of

¹⁵³ Ibid

¹⁵⁴ "The Danish Education System." *Cirius Danmark*.
http://www.ac.dk/files/pdf/Danish_Education_System.pdf

the above concentrations also takes a standard curriculum of specific courses in Danish, English, and math.¹⁵⁵

There are approximately one hundred forty-six schools with STX and HF programs, sixty with HHX and thirty-eight with HTX programs. This accounts for approximately seventy thousand pupils, per year, and makes up about 60% of Danish youth who go into the General Upper-Secondary Education program tracks of the *Youth Education after Folkeskole*.¹⁵⁶ Below is a further description of each of the four General Upper-Secondary Education program tracks:

Gymnasium (STX) – General Education and study preparation is the main focus of the Gymnasium. Students who complete this program prepare for higher education in a university or college. It is a three-year program that involves compulsory subjects along with three specialized subjects (such as humanities, natural and social science), along with electives and a specialized study project. Compulsory subjects include Danish and English each year, along with math, art, as well as an option for a second foreign language.

Higher Preparatory Examination (HF) – This program also prepares students for higher education but places more emphasis on theoretical and practical aims to “develop the student’s capacity for in-depth study.”¹⁵⁷ Studies are similar to that of the Gymnasium except this is a two-year program and is more fast-paced. One of the other differences between this program and the Gymnasium is that there is not a specific concentration that students pick.

¹⁵⁵ “Fact Sheets.” *Danish Ministry of Education*. <http://eng.uvm.dk/Fact%20Sheets.aspx>

¹⁵⁶ Ibid

¹⁵⁷ Ibid

Higher Technical Examination (HTX) – This program focuses more on technical and natural sciences, rather than on the humanities and social sciences. For those students interested in the medical field, engineering and computer-based studies at the university, this would be the program for them. Courses in technology, natural sciences, communication, along with the standard general required courses are also offered through this track.

Higher Commercial Examination – (HHX) – This program offers vocational perspectives to students who also plan to go on to a university or college. Emphasis is placed on business economics and socio-economics in this program. International business and economics-based courses are also required.

The upper-secondary system in Denmark is designed to give students the maximum amount of options possible that matches their abilities and interests. Those students who are academically stronger are placed in tracks that focus more on traditional school subjects, and typically prepare students for higher education. Those students who are academically weaker are given equal opportunities to develop and grow at their own potential. Vocational training options are widely available for students after *Folkeskole*. Approximately 40% of Danish students pursue a vocational track every year. For those students who elect for the Vocational Education Training Courses in anticipation of earning a trade or apprenticeship after Upper-secondary education the following options are available:

- The Vocational Education and Training (VET)
- Basic Vocational Education and Training Program (EGU)
- Agricultural, Forestry, Maritime and Home Economics Program (SOSU)¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ “Denmark.” *Euro Education*. www.euroeducation.net/prof/denmarco.htm

Approximately 30-50% of the time is spent on school subjects and 50-70% is spent on trainee/apprentice/business work.

The target groups of students for these vocational education programs are those who exhibit a weak educational background and/or are not academically inclined. The programs aim to train students in a trade that will lead to a productive career. There are approximately one hundred twenty-five vocational and education-training programs in Denmark. Approximately fifty-six thousand students “commence a full-time vocational education every year.”¹⁵⁹ Ninety-seven institutions are technical colleges, commercial colleges, and agricultural or a combination of various trades. Another twenty or so in the nation offer social and health care training programs. Below is a list of programs students can choose:

- Motor vehicle, aircraft, rail maintenance
- Building/Construction
- Animals/Plants/Nature
- Business
- Transport/Logistics
- Health Care Administration¹⁶⁰

Approximately 80% of students who start a *Youth Education* program complete it. The percentage of students who complete a *Youth Education* program and go on to higher education is 52%

The university/college system in Denmark is similar to that in the United States in that most offer Bachelor degree, Master degree, as well as various Doctoral degree programs. Tuition at public and most private higher educational institutions is free of charge, and in many cases students going to university/college receive a cost-of-living

¹⁵⁹ Ibid

¹⁶⁰ Ibid

grant awarded by the *State Educational Grant and Loan Scheme Agency*, which is part of the Danish ministry of Education. Admission into a university/college in Denmark depends on the student's examination scores from his or her Upper-secondary school, similar to SAT or ACT scores in the United States.

Like in Denmark, Norway's commitment to education is very high. Equal access to education is also a central part of Norway's social safety-net system, reflected in the region's common philosophical principles of social equality for all. The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research's mission on education for children and adolescents is as follows:

Education for all is a basic precept of Norwegian educational policy. Children and young people must have an equal right to education, regardless of where they live, gender, social and cultural background or any special needs.¹⁶¹

Like in Denmark, public university and college is free of charge for Norwegian citizens. Approximately six-hundred thousand pupils attend public primary and lower-secondary schools in Norway, and almost ten thousand attend private schools. Just fewer than two-hundred thousand students attend public upper-secondary schools and about fourteen-thousand attend private ones. Nearly another two-hundred thousand students attend universities and colleges each year adding to over one million people from primary to higher education courses at any given year. On top of that, another one million people participate in adult education/job training courses each year. That is about two million

¹⁶¹ "Education: From Kindergarten to Adult." *Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research – [www.udir.no/upload/Brosjyrer/Education in Norway.pdf](http://www.udir.no/upload/Brosjyrer/Education_in_Norway.pdf)* (5)

people out of a nation with a total population of about four and a half million, or almost half the national population engaged in some type of schooling.¹⁶²

Investment in education in Norway is among the highest priorities, and costs over 7% of national GDP, compared to just fewer than 6% in most other European countries, and about 5.7% of GDP in the United States.¹⁶³ Educational grades-levels in Norway are similar to that of Denmark in many respects. One part that differs, however, is that kindergartens are not mandatory in Norway. Primary and lower-secondary education, like in Denmark, is compulsory and lasts for about ten years, but kindergarten is not part of those ten years and Norwegian parents can choose to send their children to it or not. Children attend compulsory school from age six to sixteen. Universal education in Norway began as early as 1739, and from 1889 until 1969 it was compulsory for seven years of a child's life. After 1969 it was increased to nine years, and in 1997 adjusted again to ten years for all children born after 1991.¹⁶⁴ Part of the reason the number of compulsory years in Norway was relatively low, compared with other western nations until just recently, stems from the nation's past, as well as the relative isolation of Norway's towns and communities closer to the Arctic Circle. For centuries well into the middle of the twentieth century, many children simply joined their families to work either in farms or joined trades and apprenticeships for survival. As Norway became more integrated and less agrarian an emphasis on strengthening the national education

¹⁶² Ibid 5

¹⁶³ "Education Statistics: Education Spending (% of GDP) (most recent) by country." *Nation Master*. www.nationmaster.com/graph/edu_edu_spe-educaiton-spending-of-gdp

¹⁶⁴ "Education: From Kindergarten to Adult." *Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research* – www.udir.no/upload/Brosjyrer/Education_in_Norway.pdf (9)

curriculum occurred throughout the nation, and a higher focus on remote and rural areas took place along side the more urban centers of the country.

There is a national curriculum that all children in both public and private primary and lower-secondary education must follow. All students must study the following subjects over the ten years:

- Norwegian
- Math
- Social Science
- Natural Science
- English
- Food/Health
- Music
- Physical Education
- Student Council Work
- Religion/Philosophy/Ethics

English is compulsory as early as grade one, when children are six years old. Student Council Work represents community service that all Norwegian school children engage in, reflecting the nation's philosophy of public engagement and public service.

Once students complete lower-secondary education they can qualify to enter upper-secondary schools, which are roughly equivalent high schools in the United States. Like in Denmark, Norwegian students pick two paths in upper-secondary schools: general studies which lead to higher education or vocational education programs that lead to a career. Individuals between the age of sixteen and twenty-one who neither attend an upper-secondary program or are not employed are required to check in with officials of that county in which they reside each year for counseling options on educational advancement or vocational training.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Ibid 12

Regardless of whether a student chooses the general studies path or the vocational training path, opportunity to go on to higher education exists for all students. Pupils in vocational courses are given an opportunity to obtain “additional qualifications required” for higher education by studying one extra year of general courses.¹⁶⁶

For those students who pursue vocational education tracks and decide not to continue on with a traditional form of higher education within a university or college, there is an alternative called Tertiary Vocational Education, which does not require higher education entrance exams to qualify. These types of programs are funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and accredited by the *Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education*.¹⁶⁷ Programs last from half a year to two years and prepare students for training in some type of trade.

For those students entering the traditional higher education programs, there are seven universities, twenty-four state colleges and thirty-one private institutions to choose from in Norway. These institutions serve approximately two-hundred thousand students a year. Just under twenty-five thousand of these students choose private university/college institutions. Higher education is fully funded by the tax-payers in Norway, and admission is based on successfully completing upper-secondary schools and examination scores.

Adult education and continuing job training is extensive in Norway. Approximately ten thousand adults receive education at primary and lower-secondary levels each year. Approximately three thousand of these individuals are immigrants

¹⁶⁶ “Norway.” *Euro Education*. www.euroeducation.net/prof/norco.htm

¹⁶⁷ “Education: From Kindergarten to Adult.” *Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research* – [www.udir.no/upload/Brosjyrer/Education in Norway.pdf](http://www.udir.no/upload/Brosjyrer/Education_in_Norway.pdf) (15)

either learning basic Norwegian language skills, or primary and lower-secondary level schooling if they did not receive it in their native countries. The other seven thousand individuals are individuals with special needs such as intellectual disabilities.¹⁶⁸

Approximately twenty-thousand receive education at upper-secondary levels; and about fifteen-thousand receive training at university-levels, with another seventy-thousand or so participating in some type of training/skill courses in any given year.¹⁶⁹ The concept of *life-long learning* is strong in Norway; and the aim is “to make it possible for the adult segment of the population to strengthen their competence throughout their career pathways.”¹⁷⁰ This emphasis on life long learning is further evidence of Norway’s commitment to opportunities for all citizens, not just those of traditional school age, to better themselves through educational advancement, and reflects the nation’s common philosophical principles.

Like in Denmark and Norway, access to public education from the primary years (and including university education or vocational training) is widely available in Sweden and is free of charge. The basic principle is that education needs to be free, available to all regardless of gender, race, or geographic location. An *explicit objective* of the Swedish educational system is that “Sweden should be a leading country in terms of knowledge characterized by high-quality education and life-long learning for growth and impartiality.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ “Adult Learning at Primary and Lower-Secondary Level.” *Statistics Norway*
www.ssb.no/grsvo_en

¹⁶⁹ Ibid (19)

¹⁷⁰ Ibid (19)

¹⁷¹ “Education in Sweden 2009.” *Statistics Sweden 2009* -
<http://www.svshv.umu.se/internationalt/SCB%20Education%20in%20Sweden.pdf> (11)

Although pre-school is not compulsory in Sweden, many parents put their children in one of the myriad pre-schools available in the nation for a variety of reasons, whether because they go to work, or they want to expose their children to social interactions with other children their age. Activities in pre-school range from learning the alphabet and basic counting to other social activities providing a fun learning environment before compulsory school begins.¹⁷² In 2009 there were approximately ninety-eight thousand children attending pre-school classes. Each municipality in Sweden offers pre-school classes to children up to the age of six. A pre-school class covers at least five-hundred twenty-five hours a year and includes meals. In fact, Sweden and Finland are the only two countries in the world that serve free lunches in public schools to all compulsory grade levels. Sweden's commitment to a quality education goes beyond just learning in the classroom. The nation recognizes that in order for every child to have an equal chance of being productive each day in school basic access to a healthy meal is essential. This decision to provide free meals to every student in compulsory grade-levels reinforces Sweden's philosophy that equality in health and education is vital. It supports the nation's commitment to achieving equal health standards for all, along with removing the economic burden from parents to have to pay for school lunches. This helps to achieve Sweden's dream of a fully egalitarian society, and reflects this nation's shared past with Denmark and Norway.

From age seven to sixteen children in Sweden are required to attend primary and lower-secondary schools. Compulsory schools in Sweden started in 1842 with only a limited number of years of attendance required. In 1962 the nine-year "compulsory

¹⁷² "Education Sweden – A Lesson For Life." *Sweden.SE – Official Gateway to Sweden*. <http://www.sweden.se/eng/Home/Education/Basic-education/Facts/Education-in-Sweden/>

comprehensive school” path was enacted.¹⁷³ The Education Act of 1985 gives parents the choice of where they want their children to attend school within the municipality they live in. It also allows them to choose private schools as well, which are funded through taxes.

The curriculum in primary and lower-secondary schools consists of the following subjects:

- Swedish
- Math
- Natural Science
- Social Science
- English
- Second Foreign Language of student’s choice (usually French, German, or Spanish)
- Arts
- Physical Education¹⁷⁴

Like in Denmark and Norway, English is compulsory for Swedish students in primary and lower-secondary schools. By year nine nearly 94% of Swedish students will have had at least five years of English language courses.¹⁷⁵ Unlike in Denmark and Norway, however, no formal grades are issued to children in primary and lower-secondary schools in Sweden. Instead, students receive the following designations: Pass, Pass with Distinction, Pass with Special Distinction, Grade Not Issued. In order for students to qualify to move on to upper-secondary grade levels they must receive a minimum of “Pass.”¹⁷⁶ In the 2007/2008 school year nearly 90% of students qualified to go into upper-secondary grade levels with slightly more girls than boys qualifying. Those 10%

¹⁷³ “Compulsory Basic School.” *Compulsory Education*. www.sverigeturism.se/smorgasbord/smorgasbord/society/education/compulsory.html

¹⁷⁴ “Education in Sweden 2009.” *Statistics Sweden 2009* - <http://www.svshv.umu.se/internationalt/SCB%20Education%20in%20Sweden.pdf> (32-33)

¹⁷⁵ Ibid 33

¹⁷⁶ Ibid 35

of students who do not qualify typically require an additional year of compulsory schooling to go on to upper-secondary education, or choose vocational options outside of the education system.¹⁷⁷

Sweden's upper-secondary education system is not separated into general studies and vocational tracks like in Denmark and Norway. Instead students can choose between general studies and the vocational studies within the same school, and either can lead to higher education upon completion. All students follow a standard curriculum; however, those who designate that their goal is to go on to a university must specify a major. The social sciences and natural sciences programs are among the most popular of the categories, with approximately 21% choosing social science and 13% choosing natural sciences. Smaller percentages of students choose from a list of other tracks, such as the arts, health programs, engineering, and business courses.¹⁷⁸ Those students who do not choose an academic track can choose from various vocational options.

Admittance into a university or college in Sweden depends on successfully passing exams and fulfilling upper-secondary education requirements. For those students admitted into a public university or college, tuition is free. A combination of grants and low-interest loans are offered to Swedish students to cover housing/cost of living fees if they move out of their parents' homes.¹⁷⁹ Advanced vocational training for those who choose not to attend university, or for those who do not qualify for university, is widely available throughout Sweden for free. They are organized by "municipalities, companies,

¹⁷⁷ Ibid 36

¹⁷⁸ Ibid 40

¹⁷⁹ "Education Sweden – A Lesson For Life." *Sweden.SE – Official Gateway to Sweden*. <http://www.sweden.se/eng/Home/Education/Basic-education/Facts/Education-in-Sweden/>

organizations and industries for higher learning.”¹⁸⁰ And opportunities for job-training and adult education are also widely available for those seeking to better themselves academically or economically.

Education is seen as a vital tool for prosperity in Scandinavia. The opportunities for all citizens to actively pursue an education, or to learn a trade that leads to a career or to update skills for an existing job, is vital for the social mobility of all citizens in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. This region’s strong commitment to making education accessible to all is a cornerstone of each nation’s society and reflects the common philosophical principles that advocate equal opportunity for all. What makes Scandinavia stand out particularly is the incorporation of all aspects of the region’s social safety-net into each nation’s education policies as a whole. From as early as the mid-1800s compulsory education, in some fashion, was required for both boys *and* girls. Gender equality is a vital component of the education system in these nations, where women are guaranteed every opportunity to pursue an educational option of their choice and ability. The absence of tuition-fees from higher education, vocational and adult training ensures that every Scandinavian citizen has the same opportunity to achieve life-long learning without income being a factor.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid

INCOME DISTRIBUTION

One of the most significant aspects of the Scandinavian social safety-net relates to how Denmark, Norway, and Sweden tackle the issue of income distribution within their societies. One of the single biggest factors contributing to the relatively high standard of living among the vast majority of Scandinavian citizens is due in many ways to policies related to distribution of wealth, both *horizontally* and *vertically*. This will be explained in further detail below. Currently the Scandinavian nations rank as having among the lowest levels of income inequality in the world. As of 2009 Denmark ranked first out of one hundred thirty-six nations with the lowest levels of income inequality. Sweden ranked third, and Norway ranked sixth.¹⁸¹ For comparison purposes, the United States ranked ninety-fifth of one hundred thirty-six nations with the lowest levels of income inequality.¹⁸² The 2010 Human Development Index Report, compiled by the United Nations that monitors data ranking nations based on factors such as life expectancy, access to education, employment, standard of living, liberty, etc., places the Scandinavian

¹⁸¹ "International Comparisons: Social Inequality (Gini Coefficient)." *Retire Abroad*.
<http://www.retire-abroad.org/blog/2009/11/14/international-comparisons-social-inequality-gini-coefficient/>

¹⁸² "Country Comparison-Distribution of Family Income-Gini Index." *Central Intelligence Agency* -
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2172rank.html?countryName=Haiti&countryCode=ha®ionCode=ca&rank=8#ha>

nations in the top twenty, with Norway ranking first, Sweden ninth, and Denmark eighteenth.¹⁸³

There are many factors and policies related to redistribution implemented in the Scandinavian nations that have led to greater income equality among its citizens. Some of this is *vertical* – progressively higher taxes imposed on those with the highest incomes to help cover benefits of the social safety-net system that those with lower incomes can access. This helps create a *horizontal* effect in which all members of society, regardless of income, enjoy the same social benefits created by those progressive taxes. Those *cradle-to-grave* benefits such as child care, parental leave, health care, elderly care, free higher education, pensions, etc., are accessible to all, even those with the highest incomes, encompassing all citizens.¹⁸⁴ These policies of “equalizing” wealth among all citizens correlate with Scandinavia’s common philosophical principles discussed throughout this paper. The idea that *everyone is in this together*, and that the higher level of prosperity everyone has, the better off all of society will be, is at the forefront of Scandinavia’s consciousness, and is reflected through the region’s policies on income distribution.

It can be argued that Scandinavia’s policies on income distribution essentially allow many components of the greater social safety-net system to exist. It is specifically due to the progressive taxation system imposed on individuals making the highest incomes, along with taxes incurred on businesses, which allow the generous health care, child and elderly care, pension and education policies to function. Likewise, the

¹⁸³ “Human Development Index Report.” *United Nations*.
http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2010_EN_Tables_reprint.pdf (10)

¹⁸⁴ Palme, Joakim. “Income Distribution in Sweden.” *Japanese Journal of Social Security Policy*. (Vol 5, No 1) June 2006, 16-17

“relatively favorable position” women in Scandinavia have compared to women in other parts of the world, pertaining to equal employment opportunities, helps to prevent women from being marginalized into an income-depressed group. Without equal opportunities of employment for women, income inequality among the sexes would be unavoidable. Scandinavia’s policies on income distribution are really an extension of the region’s gender equality policies, and this has resulted in Denmark, Norway and Sweden having among the lowest levels of income inequality among women and men in the world, and this is significant.

The purpose of income distribution in the Scandinavian nations is to reduce the level of poverty with the goal of eliminating it entirely. These nations have come closest in achieving this goal by creating societies where parents have the resources to place their children in child care facilities without economic burdens, and where individuals can access medical treatment regardless of income levels, and where the elderly can receive a strong and stable pension, along with reliable health care, and where citizens can receive an education for free in order to improve their standards of living. That embodies the common philosophical principles shared by Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, and is why the social safety-net is so strong.

As mentioned in the beginning of this section, Scandinavia has among the lowest levels of income inequality in the world. This is measured using the Gini Coefficient, a global method that “measures the inequality of income distribution within a country.”¹⁸⁵ It varies from zero, which indicates perfect equality, with every household earning exactly the same, to one-hundred, which implies absolute inequality, with a single

¹⁸⁵ “Gini Coefficient.” *The Economist* - <http://www5.economist.com/research/Economics/alphabetic.cfm?term=gearing>

household earning a country's entire income. Currently Denmark has the lowest Gini Coefficient number in the world at 24.7. Sweden has the third lowest at 25.0, and Norway is ranked sixth globally with 25.8.¹⁸⁶ For comparison purposes the Gini Coefficient of the United States is 40.8.

The Gini Coefficient also reveals that in Scandinavia those earning the lowest income amounts have a larger share of the national income than any other region, and those with highest income levels actually have among the lowest share. This is vital to point out because it presents a clear and stark contrast between how Scandinavia and the United States prioritizes the economic well-being of all of its citizens. If you make a low-income in Denmark, Norway, or Sweden, the chances are high that you will have a higher standard of living in any of those nations than you will if you live in the United States.

Below is a chart highlighting the poverty rate of elderly citizens, along with two-parent and one-parent family households in each Scandinavian nation and the United States:

<u>Group:</u>	<u>Denmark:</u> ¹⁸⁷	<u>Norway:</u> ¹⁸⁸	<u>Sweden:</u> ¹⁸⁹	<u>United States:</u> ¹⁹⁰
Elderly: 2-Parent Household:	4.0%	4.6%	0.1%	20.5%
	4.3%	3.4%	5.0%	12.9%

¹⁸⁶ "International Comparisons: Social Inequality (Gini Coefficient)." *Retire Abroad*. <http://www.retire-abroad.org/blog/2009/11/14/international-comparisons-social-inequality-gini-coefficient/>

¹⁸⁷ Birchfield, Vicki. Income Inequality in Capitalist Democracies. Pennsylvania State University Press (2008) 193

¹⁸⁸ Ibid

¹⁸⁹ Ibid

¹⁹⁰ Ibid

1-Parent Household:	15%	12.6%	9.0%	51.0%
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As with the Gini Coefficient, the chart above reveals the sobering difference in poverty levels between the Scandinavian nations and the United States. Although between 9-15% of single parents in Scandinavia do live in some form of poverty, those figures pale in comparison with the United States, where nearly half of all single-parent households live in relative poverty. All of the components of the Scandinavian social safety-net system work in conjunction to keep poverty levels low in those nations. Specific social policies geared toward assisting parents, like free child care, health care, school lunches, new-baby care, etc., all work to help parents with the economic burden of raising children. Gender-equal laws and policies mandating that women be paid the same wages as men, as well as have equal opportunity for advancement, play a pivotal role in reducing poverty among that group. The social safety-net system works in harmony, like a well-oiled machine, providing all citizens with an equal chance of prosperity.

Like with policies related to gender equality, health care, and education, the three Scandinavian nations' approach to income distribution follows similar paths. But there are some distinctions. Sweden's taxation system on individuals centers on a progressive method, where those making the highest incomes pay the most in taxes, as well as various other taxes and corporate taxes. Starting in 1991 a reform in the tax laws reduced the amount of taxes the highest income earners had to pay, and an increase in the value-added tax was also implemented. The value-added tax imposes special taxes on certain luxury items such as high-priced vehicles, boats, expensive media equipment, etc., as a way of raising revenue. These are items that typically those with high income levels purchase so this tax would normally just apply to those individuals. Child allowance

amounts, as well as the allowance for income dependent housing, were substantially increased to avoid the effects of income inequality.¹⁹¹

The highest-paid earners still pay a high amount in taxes, up to 50% of their income. Corporate tax in Sweden is assessed at 26.3% of worldwide income that companies participating in Sweden must pay. Businesses with investments in Sweden are required to pay that percentage in taxes as well.¹⁹²

The distribution of family gross income among families making those incomes in Sweden is 6.6%, compared with 3.8% in the United States. The top income earners in Sweden represent 38% of family gross income and 44.5% in the United States.¹⁹³ This is important to highlight because it reveals the economic security those with the lowest incomes in Sweden have compared to those in the United States.

Another factor that has reduced the rate of income inequality in Sweden is the participation rate of citizens in labor unions. Sweden has the highest labor union participation rate in Europe, as well as the rest of the industrialized world, presently at 89%¹⁹⁴ of workers, both public and private. Comparatively, the labor union participation rate in the United States in 2010 was 11.9%, down from 20.1% in 1983.¹⁹⁵ One out of every five employees in Sweden is a public-sector worker, where collective bargaining has strongly contributed toward reducing income inequality. Private sector employees in Sweden also have strong collective bargaining rights. Over the last 15 years the “real

¹⁹¹ Aronsson, Thomas; Palme, Marten. “A Decade of Tax and Benefit Reform in Sweden: Effects on Labour, Welfare, and Inequality.” *Economica*. Vol 65, No 257 (1998) 39

¹⁹² “Corporate Taxes in Sweden.” *Invest Sweden* – www.investsweden.se/Global/Global/Downloads/Fact_Sheets/Corporate-taxes-in-sweden.pdf

¹⁹³ Smeeding; O’Higgins; Rainwater (eds). *Poverty, Inequality and Income Distribution in Comparative Perspective*. Urban Institute Press (1990) 34

¹⁹⁴ Birchfield, Vicki. *Income Inequality in Capitalist Democracies*. Pennsylvania State University Press (2008) 194

¹⁹⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics - <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/union2.pdf>, 1

median household” among middle-income workers in Sweden has increased 14%.¹⁹⁶ It is interesting to note that between 1970 and 1990 there was another limited reform of national taxes prior to the 1991 tax reform mentioned earlier; starting in 1970 the average annual growth in social spending decreased slightly, and over the next twenty years to 1990 social spending, per capita, was reduced by 4.2%.¹⁹⁷ By the late 1980s, however, Sweden experienced an economic recession resulting in a moderate spike in unemployment. That prompted the 1991 tax reform, reducing the tax burden on the wealthiest income earners. The ability to collectively bargain for benefits among both public and private-sector employees remained strong throughout the early-1990s’ recession, however, and by the mid-1990s Sweden’s economy pulled out of that recession and hiring picked up again. The redistribution policies of the 1991 tax reform that included increased social benefits in child-care, elderly-care, along with keeping collective bargaining for existing employees, helped to keep income inequality in check in Sweden.

This is the complete opposite approach of what Republican members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate in the United States (along with many Republican governors) are doing to help tackle the recession. Rather than increase taxes on the highest income earners to strengthen existing social-safety net programs for those making the lowest incomes, proposals to cut taxes for the wealthy, along with dramatically reducing social-safety net programs are being proposed. In one of the worst economic times since the Great Depression of the 1930s, those earning the least in the

¹⁹⁶ Birchfield, Vicki. Income Inequality in Capitalist Democracies. Pennsylvania State University Press (2008) 194

¹⁹⁷ Ibid 194

United States and who are in the highest need of social assistance, risk having benefits dramatically reduced or eliminated. And for those public-sector employees in states governed by Republicans, many of their collective bargaining rights and benefits are in danger of being dramatically reduced in the name of balancing state budgets. Again, this is a fundamentally different position and approach from the one the Scandinavian nations have taken in the past.

The idea of a strong egalitarian society is deep-rooted in Sweden, going back to its common philosophical principles with Denmark and Norway. A survey conducted in 2001 asking Swedes whether they believe it is the responsibility of government to reduce income inequality revealed that 80% of respondents either strongly believed that or were not opposed to it, with 20% saying they either mildly disagreed or strongly disagreed.¹⁹⁸ The total percentage of Swedish citizens living below the poverty line in Sweden is just under 5%, compared with about 17% in the United States, and child poverty in Sweden is virtually non-existent, with less than 3% living in poverty, compared with just over 20% in the United States.¹⁹⁹

Like in Sweden, Denmark follows a similar policy regarding income distribution and has among the lowest gaps of national wealth between income earners. The income gap between the highest and lowest earners is narrow relative to other industrialized nations. By the beginning of the twenty-first century the percentage gap of national earnings between the richest and poorest one-third of the Danish population was 37%. In

¹⁹⁸ Birchfield, Vicki. *Income Inequality in Capitalist Democracies*. Pennsylvania State University Press (2008) 193

¹⁹⁹ "Child Poverty." *Organization for Economic Co-Operation & Development (OECD)* – <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/52/43/41929552.pdf> (1)

the United States that same percentage gap is 48%.²⁰⁰ Policies and laws that work to reduce income inequality are at the heart of Denmark's income distribution policies, and its social safety-net over all. As in Sweden, many economic burdens are removed from low income earners, allowing them more disposable income.

Starting after World War II and deepening in the 1970s, the idea of "leveling of incomes" as a way to increase income equality became standard government social policy in Denmark. Advancement of employment opportunities for women over the last half of the twentieth century contributed significantly to the equalizing of incomes as well. There was a "fairly massive move towards a more equal distribution of incomes"²⁰¹ among the sexes during this time, increasing the standard of living, especially among unmarried women. The corresponding increase in social safety-net services such as subsidized child and elderly care, along with the nation's overall health care system, has significantly contributed to narrowing income inequality levels between the sexes.

This is significant as it shines further light on the fact that Denmark, along with Norway and Sweden, has a specific philosophy when it comes to gender equality, and has effectively implemented that philosophy into its income distribution and health care policies. The Scandinavian nations understand that these ideas go hand in hand. Gender equality can only really be achieved when there are laws recognizing that both men and women are separate individuals, independent of each other, and where both genders must legally be recognized as equal. For instance, historically women have carried a higher burden concerning child care and elderly care than men have. Without laws and policies

²⁰⁰ Forster, Michael; Pearson, Mark. "Income Distribution and Poverty in the OECD Area: Trends and Driving Forces." *Economic Studies*. No 34 (2002) 15

²⁰¹ Smith, Nina; Pedersen, Peder. "Trends in the Danish Income Distribution." *Center for Labour Market and Social Research* (July 1997) 29

assisting citizens with those social issues the possibility of gender equality dramatically decreases in a society.

Presently those making less than half of the national average earnings in Denmark do not pay income taxes. Those making between half and 100% of the national average pay a percentage in taxes ranging from 10-50% of earned salaries, depending on the income level. Those with the highest incomes in Denmark can be taxed up to 70% of income; however the amount usually does not exceed 50%.²⁰² Again, this correlates with the vertical and horizontal effect mentioned at the beginning of this section.

Housing allowances for those making the lowest incomes help to ensure that everyone, no matter the income-level, can afford a stable and safe place to live. Total public spending on housing policies and subsidies was approximately 2.7% of GDP in Denmark.²⁰³ There are two main housing allowance schemes: One for low income households, and one for people receiving disability assistance.

Corporate tax in Denmark is similar to Sweden's, but it is slightly lower in that it imposes a flat rate of 25% on the income of a corporation. Their domestic and foreign earnings are all taxable.

Like in Denmark and Sweden, Norway has led the world in terms of working towards creating among the world's most socio-economically equal society. With a Gini-Coefficient of 25.8, Norway ranks sixth in the world of having the lowest income inequality among its citizens. Norway's welfare benefits for all citizens, combined with a progressive tax system, work together to narrow the income gap between the richest and poorest Norwegians. The share of wealth owned by the lowest 20% of income earners is

²⁰² OECD – Economic Surveys, Denmark, OECD Publishing, Vol 2006/7 (May 2006) 94

²⁰³ Ibid 112

9.5% and the share of wealth by the highest 20% of income earners is 37%.²⁰⁴ That is a difference of 27% between the spending power of the richest and poorest citizens in Norway compared with a difference of 48% in the United States.

Corporate taxes in Norway are similar to that of Sweden and Denmark's, set at 28%. However, due to Norway's huge oil deposits companies involved with oil or gas in this nation pay a "special oil tax of 50%" in addition to that 28% flat fee.²⁰⁵ Income from capital is also taxed at 28%, but dividends earned are only taxed at 11%. The corporate taxes in Scandinavia are actually considerably lower than in the United States, which has a corporate tax rate of almost 40%, however, various tax loop-holes, as well as tax-break incentives in the United States keep many forms of revenue from being collected.

Corporate taxes in Scandinavia are kept low to attract businesses and investment to the region but are heavily regulated to ensure a steady revenue stream to help fund each nation's vast social safety-net system.

Personal income tax in Norway is assessed in three brackets based on income. For those individuals making between four thousand and forty thousand dollars a municipal income tax of 28% is assessed and no national income taxes are assessed. For those making above forty thousand and up to one hundred nine thousand dollars the municipal tax, plus a national income tax of 13.5% is assessed for a total of 41.5%. And for those making above one hundred nine thousand dollars the municipal tax is assessed, plus a national income tax of 19.5% is assessed for a total of 47.5%.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ "Income Share Held by Highest 20% in Norway." *Trading Economics* - <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/norway/income-share-held-by-highest-20percent-wb-data.html>

²⁰⁵ "Taxation – Norway." Encyclopedia of the Nations. <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Europe/Norway-TAXATION.html>

²⁰⁶ Ibid

Regarding child poverty, Norway is the only nation rated by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre to have a society “where child poverty can be described as “very low and continuing to fall.”²⁰⁷ Approximately 3.4% of children in Norway live in “relative poverty,” compared with 21.9% of children in the United States. During the last decade of the 20th century, child poverty rates declined by 1.8% in Norway.

The collective decision of Norwegian citizens to have policies and laws mandating that those benefiting the most from society also pay the most to maintain that society has contributed to this nation having among the highest standards of living *for all of its citizens*. This validates the country’s common philosophical principles that Norway shares with Denmark and Sweden, and is a testament to the relatively low percentages of poverty among all groups in these nations. One can not help but recognize the vital connectivity this region’s income distribution policies have with its rankings as global leaders in being among the most socially and economically equal. These nations have proven that policies that favor all instead of just a few work for the benefit of society. These nations have also shown that prosperity can be achieved by more when the most economically prosperous in society gives more. Scandinavia’s shared historical past has resulted in these economic policies, and has revealed that all components of the social safety-net system rely on each other, reflecting the shared values of the peoples of these three nations.

²⁰⁷ “Child Poverty in Rich Countries 2005.” – UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre - <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/repcard6e.pdf> (6)

CONCLUSION

The complex and expansive social safety-nets of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are integral parts of the fabric of Scandinavian identity. As explained in Part II, each nation's approach to gender equality, health care, education and income distribution is all linked together to form an interdependent blanket for all members of society. The *cradle-to-grave* benefits representing the heart of the region's social safety-net system also reveal the brilliant concept of what it is to be Scandinavian: *free* and *equal*. The basic concept of equality for all means just that, equality *for all*. One can argue that being *free* and *equal* is what it means to be an American as well. But the facts presented in this thesis show that the Scandinavian nations have come farther than any other nation in history in eliminating gender and income inequality; and this region has made massive investments insuring that all citizens have equal access to health care and education.

Regardless of one's income, gender, race, or cultural background, everyone in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden is equally entitled to quality health care and education. Women are legally protected in each nation from discrimination based on gender, and enjoy a higher participation rate in national government positions than any other region in the world. Those citizens earning the highest incomes pay more in taxes to help fund the social safety-net so that, in turn, those with the lowest income levels can live prosperous

lives without the worry of figuring out how to pay for health care, child and elderly care, or their retirement. Those with low incomes are entitled to the same family-leave benefits that those with higher incomes are, and everyone is given a pension when he or she reaches retirement years, so that even in one's golden years a prosperous standard of living is still ensured. It is no accident that women make up nearly half of Scandinavian government representatives, compared with just 17% in the United States. Just like it is no accident that poverty levels in Scandinavia are a fraction of the poverty levels in the United States. The purpose of this thesis is not to bash the social policies of the United States, but to pay respect to a region in the world that has done more than just *talk* about freedom and opportunity for all of its citizens. The United States has worked to resolve these issues, but without a doubt Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have done more.

They have done more through the interwoven policies directly impacting all segments of their society. Laws mandating equality for women, health care for all, higher education for all, social benefits for parents to take care of their children, or elderly parents, or disabled individuals, all reveal a society that makes all its citizens the priority. The laws and policies Scandinavia has incorporated directly result in the high quality of life citizens there enjoy. The United States has invested in assisting those citizens living below the poverty line with health care and education. The fact remains that many of these social policies are income level-driven. Many millions of Americans who are categorized in the *middle-class* are expected to pay for the costs of education on their own, as well as find their own health insurance if they are unemployed or if their employer does not offer insurance. The social safety-net system in the United States is segregated, in a sense, to assist only the *very* poor or the *very* rich. The system supports

the wealthiest Americans in the form of very low taxes that are assessed. That leaves huge swaths of society without a comprehensive safety-net. How does that achieve equality? How does that ensure all have a healthy quality of life?

That is the difference between Scandinavia and the United States. Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have enacted policies that cover *all* members of society from birth in its social safety-net system, so that everyone is guaranteed a healthy quality of life. Quality of life is an important priority in the Scandinavian nations, and the investment in ensuring that poverty affects as few people as possible is apparent. These nations not only have among the lowest levels of overall poverty out of any other industrialized nations, but Denmark, Norway, and Sweden also have among the lowest levels of child and elderly poverty as well. Child poverty is less than 3-5% in these nations, compared with 20% in the United States, the world's richest and most industrialized nation. That is a striking example of the social priorities this region places on its citizens.

But Scandinavia did not just come up with these utopian ideals and social policies over night. As this paper has explained, this region's advances and progressive social safety-net is the result of over 150 years of historical, cultural, economic and religious ties binding Denmark, Norway, and Sweden into a bond of common philosophical principles. The close proximity of these nations, combined with the physical barrier this region has with the continent of Europe by the Baltic Sea, isolated the peoples of this part of the world for centuries – during which a culture developed with common values and priorities. Linguistic similarities made communication seamless, and political treaties united this region for hundreds of years. This region's harsh winters and long periods with little or no sunlight helped to shape this region's vision of itself and of the world.

That resulting vision became a belief that *everyone is in this life together* – in other words, no one is superior to another person, no man, no woman, no child. In order to survive, everyone must have a place, an equal footing, in order to contribute his or her strengths, for the good of everyone. The result became the formation of a belief-system founded on egalitarian ideals. As the industrial revolution progressed so did these common philosophical ideals and principles. These principles advanced in the political spheres to include social policies based on social justice, proper working conditions, benefits for families, and especially for women. Women make up nearly half of Scandinavian society. As the 20th century dawned this region became a leader in its commitment to empowering women and putting in place policies protecting gender rights. The region's history proves it. As early as the Industrial Revolution women were working side by side with men, whether politically for equal rights, or on the land to survive. Education for girls was not only encouraged, but *mandated* by these three governments in the early 1800s. With the parliaments of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden presently comprising nearly 50% male and female representatives, that is true democracy occurring. The region's commitment to gender equality has been strong for a very long time and is a shining example for the world.

As with gender equality, this region's unbroken promise to its people to ensure equal access to health care and education, as well as a strong pension for life, has done more to reduce and effectively eliminate poverty than any other region. As presented earlier, Scandinavia has among the lowest levels of income inequality among its citizens. That means that these democracies have come closest to full egalitarianism than any other. To some other nations that may not be a priority. In the United States policies are

currently in place to reward those who become wealthy. Some could argue that this kind of policy acts as a motivator in society to work as hard as possible in the hopes of one day becoming rich. But it is impossible for *every* citizen in a country to be rich. The Scandinavian approach has worked more effectively to ensure that nearly 100% of citizens *are not poor*. Not everyone may be rich in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, but at least everyone has access to medical care, education, and many other social benefits without the economic burden of struggling to pay for such services out-of-pocket.

The policies, guidelines, and laws that comprise the social safety-net systems in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden work in an interdependent circle. All of the different parts work together in order to function properly, and have resulted in the world's most egalitarian region. These policies have created a *Scandinavian Dream* in which all members of society start out in life with a *real* opportunity to live a healthy and productive life.

These opportunities exist because of the specific belief that all citizens must have the resources *of* society in order to truly be equal. Members of society can not be equal unless both laws and guidelines are in place ensuring that both men *and* women are equal from the beginning. Gender equality is crucial to this philosophy, and Scandinavia has proven its recognition of this, as reflected in this thesis. The same applies to health care. How can a society be equal when some citizens have access to quality health care and others do not? Health care is not a luxury; it is a vital component to living. Once again, this region has recognized that health care is a birth right, and has worked to ensure that all citizens have the same access. The income distribution policies these nations have implemented have also proven the economic priorities Denmark, Norway, and Sweden

have made ensuring that as few citizens live in poverty as possible. These commitments have been demonstrated by their global rankings as champions in working to eliminate poverty from their societies. All of these achievements highlight Scandinavia's philosophy that all members are interdependent; and this is reflected in their social safety-net.

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