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‘Not too many ladies, but too few gentlemen’

On the gendered co-production of social science and its publics

Per Wisselgren

The role of the public is a theme that has been much debated during the last two decades of research on the history and sociology of science.¹ Science popularization, science and the media, and the public understanding of science are some of the emerging subfields that have addressed the theme, as have discussions of concepts such as ‘public science’ (Bensaude-Vincent 2001; Lewenstein 1995; Bucchi & Neresini 2008; Ekström et al. 2010a). Although these research areas have considerably enriched our understanding of the intriguing relationship between science and its publics—by offering a vast array of detailed historical as well as contemporary case-studies, and by suggesting different explanatory models—it can be observed on the whole that, first, surprisingly few studies have paid more systematic attention to the role of gender in these discussions; second, that the bulk of case-studies have focused on the natural, technological, and medical sciences, whereas empirical studies of the social sciences have remained relatively thin on the ground; and third, that most often the agency of the public has been downplayed in relation to the scientific community (Higgitt & Withers 2008; Cassidy 2008; Fyfe & Lightman 2007).

In this essay I will discuss the role of the public with an explicit focus on its gendered aspects in the history of the social sciences. More specifically, I offer a case-study on the early formation of academic

social science in Sweden in the closing decades of the nineteenth century—that is, a process which traditionally, both in Sweden and elsewhere, has been relatively narrowly focused on a limited number of male founding fathers and their theories (Deegan 1988; Wobbe 1995; Silverberg 1998; Marshall & Witz 2004; see also Yeo’s essay in this book). Empirically, the case-study is centred on the very first public social science lectures given at Stockholm University College in 1888. By analysing this seemingly peripheral event, and by paying special attention to the public reception of the lectures, it will be argued that two of the most commonly used models of the public understanding of science are insufficient to explain the composition of the audience and its actual importance in this specific case. Instead, I will argue that it is necessary to situate the event historically in its broader social, cultural, and political context, and to apply a more circular perspective to the distribution of agency, if we are to understand the full complexity of the co-production of early academic social science and its gendered publics during this formative phase.

Public social science lectures in Stockholm in 1888

The particular event in question, the first public social science lectures at Stockholm University College, actually consisted of two parallel series of lectures given by invited international scholars. The one was the Russian Professor of Law Maxim Kovalevsky, the other the French economist Ludovic Beauchet. Both series took place in the autumn term of 1888. At the time, the lectures were regarded as a remarkable public event, partly due to the institutional setting, but also because of the current status of the social sciences, as well as the international reputation of the invited lecturers.

Stockholm University College was then relatively new, having been founded only ten years earlier, in 1878, as the first Swedish metropolitan higher education institution, in contrast to the two existing, traditional universities in the provincial towns of Uppsala and Lund. (The University College in Gothenburg, Sweden’s second largest city, would be founded only a few years later, in 1891.) For that reason, Stockholm University College had a relatively modern and progressive profile in the academic landscape as an urban and research-oriented institution, one which was relatively open both to the new group of women students—who had been formally admitted to higher educa-

tion only five years before the University College opened—and to new subject areas (Johansson 2004).

At that point, however, there were no chairs in the social sciences in Stockholm, social science being then a new and still vaguely defined field. There were a limited number of chairs in political economy, political science, and law at Uppsala and Lund universities, but they were of a more traditional type, aimed at the training of civil servants, rather than being research-oriented and connected to the modern social sciences that were developing in Europe and the US. This was also one reason why the public social science lectures were given by invited international scholars.

Although neither Maxime Kovalevsky nor Ludovic Beauchet is especially well-known today, both of them were internationally prominent at the time. Kovalevsky belonged to the inner circle of the founding generation of international social science and was a close friend of René Worms, who set up l’Institut Internationale de Sociologie (IIS), the world’s first international sociological association, in Paris in 1894. When the IIS held its second international congress in 1895, Kovalevsky both gave the opening address and was elected vice-president. Later he became its president, and over the years he contributed frequently to its journal, the *Revue Internationale de Sociologie*, also the first of its kind. A few years after the turn of the century, Kovalevsky was appointed to the first chair of sociology in Russia, in St Petersburg, which goes some way to explaining why he has been accorded the epithet of ‘the greatest Russian sociologist of the pre-war period’ (Timasheff 1948: 442; see E. Kovalevsky 1938; Schuerkens 1996; Consolim forthcoming).

When visiting Sweden in 1888, Kovalevsky gave a series of sixteen lectures on the theme ‘The evolution of the family and property rights’, which described from a social evolutionist point of view the way in which the institution of the family had come into being in primitive tribal society, and had developed in three evolutionary stages, from the ‘matriarchal, polygamous family group’ to the ‘patriarchal family’ to the ‘modern, monogamous family couple’. The centrality of the topic as well as Kovalevsky’s scientific reputation are partly illustrated by the fact that when the lectures were later published under the title *Tableau des origines et de l’évolution de la Famille et de la Propriété* (1890), the book was reviewed in international journals, translated into Spanish and Russian, and even cited by Friedrich Engels in his *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats* (1892).

Ludovic Beauchet had also been actively concerned with the social evolution of the family—in works such as *Étude historique sur les formes de la célébration du mariage dans l'ancien droit français* (1883) and *Formation et dissolution du mariage dans le droit islandais du moyen-âge* (1887)—but his series of twenty lectures in Stockholm had another focal point, being entitled ‘The relationship between the individual and the state in economics’ (KB 1888; Stockholms högskola 1899; Westrin 1904). But without doubt, it was Maxime Kovalevsky who was regarded as the intellectual star and the main public attraction.

Already before the two lecture series had started there was considerable press attention, with several reports in the Swedish newspapers about the coming event, primarily focused on Kovalevsky. *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, for example, gave its readers to understand that he was a brilliant lecturer with an international reputation, who had ‘received especially favourable reviews’ in prominent international journals by some of ‘the foremost scholars of the present time in the same branch’, and that the event was going to be one of broad public interest ‘and for this reason the educated classes of our capital city will probably be eager to attend his lectures, to which admission will be free’ (*NDA* 1887; all translations from the Swedish are my own). In June, the newspaper *Skånska Aftonbladet* had published an interview with the Russian professor, and, as the event came closer in time, separate invitation cards were distributed (*SkA* 1888; KB 1888).

When the very first lecture was about to take place, *Stockholms Dagblad* was one of the newspapers to have a reporter on the spot. Afterwards he was able to report on the front page that:

Professor Maxime Kovalevski's first lecture this Saturday (6.45–7.30 p.m.) attracted almost as many people as the lecture hall (Stockholm University College's Room No. 2, 3rd floor, Kungsgatan 30) could hold, it was attended with great interest, and it evoked vigorous expressions of approval when it ended. We have summarized the main points of the argument in today's issue. (*StD* 1888a)

Equally, the subsequent lectures were reported in similar detail by the same newspaper (*StD* 1888b–c).

All this may give the impression that the public social science lectures were regarded as very successful, with unusually good media coverage,

all designed to market the new academic social science to its newly identified public.

However—and this is what makes this particular case interesting and heuristically useful—at the end of the day, once the two lecture series were complete, the final judgement was not so universally positive after all. The *Dagens Nyheter* reporter, for example, regarded the whole business as fundamentally flawed. Not that there was anything wrong with the lectures as such. On the contrary, they were declared to be highly relevant and to have been presented with impressive clarity and elegance. The anonymous reporter likewise commended the legitimate purpose underlying the initiative, and was gratified to note so many had attended the lectures. The only problem, it turns out, lay in the fact that they had attracted the *wrong* public, or as the reporter formulated it: ‘For the lecture theatre is being filled, not of course by too many ladies, but by too few gentlemen’ (*DN* 1888). And this was not a lone voice. In similar vein, the Stockholm University College annual report commented, if in more diplomatic language, that the series of lectures had attracted ‘a numerous (predominantly female) audience’ (Stockholms högskola 1899).

These comments raise a number of questions both as regards the specific arrangement as such and also in terms of the public aspects of the social sciences more generally. Basically, these boil down to two concrete questions. First, why were women in the majority in the lecture room? And, second and perhaps even more puzzling, why was this regarded as a problem at all?

At the same time there is something instructive in the very direction of the comments, in the way they distract our attention away from the academic setting towards the significance of the audience and its composition. Evidently, it was considered insufficient to have a large and anonymous audience. This gives us reason not only to analyse the role of the social-scientific public in closer detail, but also, as a next step, to relate this discussion to some of the most commonly used explanatory models within the field of public understanding of science.

Three models of science and its publics

The public understanding of science is one of the research areas that has been most explicitly concerned with the intriguing relationship between science and its publics. An important step was taken when

the journal *Public Understanding of Science* was launched in 1992 (Bodmer & Wilkins 1992), since when the field has expanded rapidly and broadened in scope. There are now also several useful overviews available that set out to trace the most significant patterns and trends in the development of the area (for example, Wynne 1995; Lewenstein 2002; Lewenstein 2003; Bauer et al. 2007; Bucchi 2008; Bauer & Howard 2012; Suerdem et al. 2013). As these overviews show, a number of explanatory models have been used to analyse the relationship between science and its publics. For our purpose, three of the most common explanatory models will be briefly described below.

The first and most traditional model is the *linear deficit model*. This explanatory model is relatively narrowly centred on the relationship between science and the public. It is based on a linear and one-way-directed diffusionist understanding, according to which knowledge is produced at one end (by science) and consumed at the other end (by the public). The act of knowledge transfer is usually interpreted in terms of popularization or dissemination, where the media is seen as a relatively passive link in the hierarchical communication from those who know to those who are lacking knowledge. Early research on the public understanding of science was often informed by this model. Although most researchers in the field today are wary of these kind of explanations, similar conceptualizations of the relationship between science and the public are still frequently used, for example, in the political discourse on research policy, in the media, and among proponents of popular science (Wynne 1991; Lewenstein 2002; Ekström 2004).

The analytical point to be made in this context is that although the public social science lectures in Stockholm at first glance might seem open to interpretation as a successful event according to the linear deficit model, it is apparently insufficient to answer the two basic research questions of this essay, that is, why women were in the majority in the audience and why this was regarded as a problem. This brings us to the second explanatory model.

The *dialogical feedback model* has developed out of a critique, which has become more frequent over the years, of the simplified and overly one-way-directed character of the first model. This has motivated a general shift towards more dialogical models that acknowledge the active participation of the public in the scientific process (Suerdem et al. 2013). The media's role in this context is also recognized, and sometimes the very phrase 'public understanding of science' has been

criticized in favour of ‘public communication of science’, or ‘public engagement with science’ (Lewenstein 2003; Bucchi & Trench 2008; Schäfer 2009). Sometimes this discerned trend is based on the assumption that public and science relations in recent times have developed towards new and emerging forms of interactivity, for example, in the form of organized patient interest groups, and hence that today’s publics are more actively involved in the making of scientific knowledge than were yesterday’s audiences (Bucchi & Neresini 2008). An important counter-argument to this rhetoric of newness, however, is offered by Shapin and Schaffer’s classical study (1985), which emphasizes the active participation of the public at Robert Boyle’s scientific experiments back in the seventeenth century. Today, this type of dialogical model is mainstream in the public understanding of science. But still, it should be noted that the explanatory framework is relatively science-centred, and restricted to the internal communication process between science and its publics, though with a recognition of the media filtering, distorting, or amplifying this interaction.

In relation to the case-study, the dialogical feedback model enables us to handle the second research question and potentially explain why the majority of women in the audience were regarded as a problem. But still the model is insufficient to answer the question why the lectures attracted more women than men. Consequently, to analyse this first and more basic question we need to further widen the contextual approach.

The third and final model, the *circular co-production model*, goes one step further in problematizing the linear model. Like the dialogical model, it acknowledges the role of the public as a source of legitimacy, but it does so by including a broader context, taking non-academic institutions and a more complex set-up of actors into account. Cooter and Pumfrey (1994), for example, have argued that while scientists have enrolled a public, so too has the public enrolled the scientists, but also that patrons can have similar effects on the reconfiguration of the cultural context of science. Hence, it is emphasized that knowledge is produced not only in the scientific community, but at a plurality of sites, with a cross-talk of interactions, where the roles of producer and user are blurred, which speaks in favour of a more circular distribution of agency, according to which knowledge and social order are mutually constructed and co-produced (Jasanoff 2004; see Wynne 1995; Einsiedel 2004; Bucchi 2008).

Patronage, social reform, and knowledge circulation

To answer the two research questions, I will argue that, in line with the third model, we need to look beyond the interaction between, on the one hand, Kovalevsky's and Beauchet's lectures and, on the other, the audience in the Stockholm University College lecture room, and take into account the considerably more complex setup of actors, networks and social structures, inside as well as outside the academic setting, if we are to understand the dynamics and reception of the lectures (see Shapin 1990; Cooter & Pumfrey 1994; Jülich 2002; Fyfe & Lightman 2007). Here four points will be made, each of which is related to the broader—economic, social, cognitive, and political—contexts of the public social science lectures.

The first point, concerning the economic context of the event, is that, contrary to what might be thought, it was not the Stockholm University College that was responsible for inviting, organizing, and funding the lectures. Instead, the initiative to bring in Kovalevsky and Beauchet came from an non-academic body, the private Lorén Foundation. The Foundation had been set up in 1885, with the explicit purpose to promote the rise of academic social science in Sweden, and came to play a significant role in that context, partly because of the lack of an existing funding infrastructure for what, after all, was a patchily developed knowledge area. To fulfil its goal, the Foundation took several important initiatives. Research projects were initiated, international travel grants were disbursed, a social-scientific library was built up, a publication series was established, academic courses were initiated, and popular lectures were arranged. In this sense, the Lorén Foundation functioned like a funding agency, research institute and lobbying organization combined, with its tasks to finance and conduct 'purely scientific research', and also 'to disseminate more widespread knowledge of the social sciences' (Lorén 1885; Wisselgren 2000).

The second point to be made concerns the social context of the public event, both in terms of the social network of the Lorén Foundation and its broader social base. The work of the Foundation was led by a five-person board of directors. These included the author Anne Charlotte Leffler, one of the most prominent figures in Sweden's literary realism movement of the 1880s; the mathematician Sonya Kovalevsky, the country's first woman professor and also a distant relative to Maxime Kovalevsky; Axel Key, professor of social medicine, principal of Karolinska Institutet, and a member of the board of Stockholm University

College; the economists David Davidson and Johan Leffler, the former an associate professor at Uppsala University and the latter a second cousin of Anne Charlotte Leffler; and the sixth person in the board, the author Ellen Key, who acted as a deputy member.

There are many things that could be said about the composition of the board, such as the remarkable mixture of competencies and professional backgrounds as well as the gender balance, which was quite extraordinary for that time. We return to that. What is more important from a network perspective, however, is that the Foundation board constituted an influential group of well-known individuals, firmly anchored in the academic, cultural, and political establishment of the day. Although the private Lorén Foundation was formally located outside academia, its personal networks connected it with the academic board of Stockholm University College as well as with Karolinska Institutet and Uppsala University. This tightly knit web of relations helped to secure the scientific legitimacy of the Foundation’s activities.

What was crucial in this context, however, was that the Lorén Foundation also had a far broader social base in the contemporary social reform movement, that is, the wide array of individual actors, smaller groups, and often informally organized associations—mainly from within the educated, urban middle classes—which were discursively centred on the pressing, and hotly debated, ‘social question’, and equally on the notion that these identified social problems should be politically handled by social reform, preferably based on social research (Wisselgren 2012). The crucial link between the Lorén Foundation and the social reform movement is also illustrated by its stated aims, for the Foundation’s purpose was not only to promote the rise of Swedish academic social science, but also, as its founding document stated, to contribute ‘especially to investigations of the social question’ (Lorén 1885). This direct and close connection between social science and the social reform movement was in no way unique to the Lorén Foundation, or even for the Swedish case. In the USA, for instance, as Turner and Turner (1990) have shown, ‘sociology’ and ‘social science’ before the First World War were almost synonymous with ‘social reform’. And on the more general level of the sociology of knowledge, Eyerman and Jamison (1991: 59) have argued, with an eye to social movements, that new knowledge often emanates from the cognitive praxis of social movements.

A closer look at the cognitive aspects of the contemporary social reform movement reveals a third point to be made in this context,

concerning the fluid epistemic boundary between literature and social science. This was already hinted at by the composition of the Lorén Foundation board and its mixture of cognitive competencies. It is no coincidence, I would argue, that three of the six board members, Ellen Key included, were authors. Not only were Ellen Key and Anne Charlotte Leffler well-known authors and typically engaged in the social questions of the time in general and the woman's question in particular, but Sonja Kovalevsky, too, was active as an author and playwright, over and above her professional duties as a professor of mathematics at Stockholm University College. The role of these—and other—authors in the history of social science, in turn, has to be understood as part of the historically close and overlapping relationship between literature and social science during the nineteenth century. Many of the realist and naturalist authors and playwrights—such as Dickens and Eliot, Balzac and Zola, and Ibsen, Strindberg, and Leffler, to name but a few—wanted to describe and understand modern society, and drew public attention to social inequalities in order to promote social reform initiatives, sometimes with explicit social-scientific pretensions, as Lepenies (1985) has shown. On the other hand, as Connell (1997) has argued, 'sociology' at this time—before it was academically institutionalized and professionalized—was often understood as a popular literary genre, which was both consumed by the same groups of readers and distributed through the same publication channels. Hence, it was not that strange that Gustaf Steffen, one of the holders of a grant from the Lorén Foundation and the man who would later become Sweden's first professor of sociology, chose to publish his first article on sociology in a literary anthology published by the Swedish Society of Authors (Sveriges Författarförening) (Steffen 1896), or that Ellen Key, in her role as an intellectual, was an important mediator and introducer of contemporary international sociologists such as Herbert Spencer and Charles Letourneau (Ambjörnsson 2012).

A fourth and final point to be made, which brings us full circle, back to the first research question, is more directly concerned with the gendered aspects of the contemporary social reform movement and its importance as an arena for women's action. This much was already evident in the uncommonly early gender equality the Foundation board, and once again this has to be seen in historical perspective. In Sweden, women did not obtain the vote until 1921, and although higher education was formally opened to female students in 1873, there remained several

structural and cultural barriers in place, including an overwhelmingly masculine academic culture and formal restrictions that prevented women from taking salaried university positions. Furthermore, traditional legislation on marriage and divorce was not modernized until in 1920, and the job market in general—with the exception of a few areas such as nursing and teaching, along with philanthropic work, journalism, and literature—was more or less closed to this group of middle-class women (Berg et al. 2011). The point is that the social reform movement in this respect offered an important semi-public arena with unusually wide spheres of action where women could engage with scientifically informed and political issues, which otherwise were dealt with in more restricted, homosocial male spheres. For this reason, the social reform movement was not only open to women, but in important respects was led and driven by them, as is illustrated by the composition of members of the Central Association for Social Work (Centralförbundet för socialt arbete), which was set up as an umbrella organization for the many smaller social reform societies a few years after the turn of the century (CSA 1928; Wisselgren 2006).

Hence, when Maxim Kovalevsky and Ludovic Beauchet gave their series of public lectures on the origin of the institution of the family and the relation between the individual and the state, respectively, both issues of which were central to the ongoing discussion of the social question, it should come as no surprise that they appealed not least to the social reform movement, with its female majority.

In one of the few existing empirical studies on the gendered aspects of scientific publics, Higgitt and Withers analyse the female audience at the meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS), and conclude that the female audience merely played an indirect and relatively passive role in the way it helped to ‘(re)define the categories of “science” and the “public”’, and ‘create a sociable milieu within an emerging public science’ (Higgitt & Withers 2008: 26–7). In contrast to Higgitt and Withers, I would argue, in our specific case, that it is more correct—from a circular co-production perspective—to interpret the gendered audience at the public social science lectures in Stockholm as a historically situated expression of the extra-academic social reform movement, and hence to emphasize its active and formative role in the early shaping of academic social science in Sweden.

Policing the public between research and reform

But why was the fact that the majority of the audience were women thought a problem? To answer this second research question, we must narrow the perspective and revisit the second explanatory model of the dialogical feedback relationship between science and its publics, with a special focus on the legitimating functions of scientific audiences. In short, my answer is that ‘the problem’ can be explained with reference to an internal conflict between two partly different goals of the new social science more generally. This conflict can be termed in different ways. Higgitt and Withers aptly describe the BAAS as trying ‘to serve two masters—science and the public’ (2008: 9). A slightly different way of formulating the same task is to recognize the eagerness for any new scientific knowledge area to be both scientifically credible and publicly relevant (Shapin 1990). Evans (2009) speaks of ‘audience boundary work’ and the dual challenge of credibility, whereas Burawoy (2007) has discussed the conflict between ‘professional social science’ and ‘public social science’.

In the case of the Lorén Foundation, there was a similar internal potential conflict built into its very twofold aim—to promote social science and to handle the social question—that went to the heart of research-based reform and the relation between scientific legitimacy and political relevance. There was not necessarily a contradiction between the two goals. The Foundation’s strategy was to fulfil both aims by inviting two internationally renowned scholars to speak, and by opening their lectures to the public and hence sanctioning the new knowledge area as an issue of public importance in the pursuit of social reform. However, this strategy also reveals an important discrepancy between the rhetorical general public addressed on the invitation cards and in the newspapers (that is, literally everyone interested in the topic) and the actual target group, which was far more restricted. The latter group, given the reality of the socio-economic structures, was partly and implicitly defined by the practical arrangements, with the lectures given in French and with the academic setting in Stockholm University College, which excluded the vast majority of the population in Stockholm. But in fact the target group was even more exclusive than that—and here again we need to broaden our contextual approach—for at a time when academia was still heavily dominated by men and when women still did not have the vote, what was needed to sanction the subject’s scientific legitimacy and political relevance was a distinguished audience defined in terms of

both class and gender. In that sense, the answer to the second question of why the dominance of women was regarded as a problem is that the lecture was attended ‘not of course by too many ladies, but by too few gentlemen’, or, as the *Dagens Nyheter* reporter put it baldly in the same article, ‘the politically enfranchised segment of the capital’s population’ (*DN* 1888). In this respect, the making of political order should not be seen as separate from the making of scientific credibility, but quite the opposite, as a mutually shaped co-production of social science and social order (Jasanoff 2004).

The Lorén Foundation was well aware of the importance of a publicly recognized authority for the new social sciences, and hence also sensitive to the public reception of the lectures. As a consequence the Foundation changed its strategy. After the ‘failure’ of the first public lectures in Stockholm, there were no more invited international scholars. Instead, the Foundation chose to focus all its efforts, resources, and remaining strength on a new strategy, aimed at institutionalizing the new knowledge area by promoting new chairs in the subject. During the final years of the 1890s, almost all its money was channelled to a small number of individuals who it regarded as especially promising. And all of them happened to be men. Interestingly, this change of strategy coincided with a masculinization of the board of directors, as Anne Charlotte Leffler, Sonja Kovalevsky, and Ellen Key were replaced by Gösta Mittag-Leffler, Carl Montan, and Hugo Hamilton. The Foundation changed in the space of only a few years from a gender-equal board to an all-male board (Wisselgren 2000).

In one important respect the new strategy was very successful. As a result of the repeated funding from the Lorén Foundation in the final years of the 1890s, Knut Wicksell, Gustaf Steffen, and Gustav Cassel became professors and took up their new combined chairs in economics, financial law, and sociology at Lund University in 1901, Gothenburg University College in 1903, and Stockholm University College in 1904, respectively, marking the breakthrough of professional modern social science in Sweden.

Evans (2009) has argued that the process of defining scientific audiences is one of the most central components in the boundary work of a disciplinary identity. In his article on early American sociology and its publics, he maps out how the sociological audience was differentiated, existing links were broken, and scientific boundaries reconfigured. Much in line with Evans’s argument, I see the Lorén Foundation’s change of

strategy as an example of ‘audience boundary work’, which marked a historic turning-point of more general importance, and signified not only a break between academic social science and the social reform movement, between literature and social science, but also a process with profoundly gendered implications (see Deegan 1986; Wobbe 1995; Silverberg 1998).

(En)gendering early academic social science and its publics

In this essay, I have argued for the active role of the public and its gendered aspects in the making of early academic social science in Sweden. By analysing the reception of the public social science lectures at Stockholm University College in 1888 and the fact that women were in the majority in the audience, two questions present themselves. First, why did the lectures attract a mainly female audience? And second, why this was seen as a problem?

On the theoretical level, I would suggest that a linear deficit model is both too narrow and too one-way directed to answer both questions, whereas a dialogical feedback model enables us to get a handle on the question of the legitimacy of the social sciences, but not the question of the composition of the audience present in the lecture room. Instead, I would say that a contextually widened and more circular perspective, which takes into account a considerably broader setup of actors, institutions, and social movements, is needed to answer the two research questions and to understand the dynamics and complexity of the relationship between early academic social science and its gendered publics in Sweden during this formative phase.

By adopting a circular co-production perspective, it has been shown, on the empirical level, that the fact that women were in the majority in the audience at the public lectures reflected the historical importance of the contemporary social reform movement, with its many socially, politically, and scientifically engaged women. In answer to the second question, about the ‘failed’ character of the event, it is suggested that it must be seen in the historical context of the restricted authority of women as political and scientific subjects.

Although a concrete result of the ‘failure’ of the public social science lectures was that women were excluded from the increasingly academized and masculinized knowledge area, this essay makes the point that

we should not ignore the active participation of women during this formative moment of Swedish academic social science. Unless we take into account the broader social, cultural, political, and profoundly gendered processes that preceded the (male) breakthrough generation of modern social science, there is a clear risk that we will blackbox the agency and historical importance of both the social reform movement and the many women who were involved in the early formation of Swedish social science. In relation to the general scope of the present volume, this particular case of the gendered co-production of social science and its publics can be seen as a prime argument for studying social science in context.

Notes

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