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## Gendering Migration Research

Lotta Vikström, *Gendered Routes and Courses. The Socio-Spatial Mobility of Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Sundsvall, Sweden*, Diss, Umeå University, Umeå. 2003. 328 s.

This study explores the similarities and differences between the migration routes and life courses of men and women who came to Sundsvall before and during the expansion of this sawmill town. Vikström opens with a thoughtful, sweeping, and absolutely up-to-date essay on the possibilities and obstacles to explaining and researching historical migrations. The first section grapples with the conceptualizations of human mobility since Arthur Ravenstein over a century ago; it explores the implications and disservices of modernization theory to the study of migration, of macro- and individual-level analyses, of networks and systems perspectives. Vikström acutely addresses the question of gender as both historically situated and socially constructed, and thus an extraordinary challenge to the migration scholar. The second section on modelling migration takes these multi-level insights into migration into account, then introduces two kinds of sources – the Demographic Data Base of Umeå University (the computerized parish records of Sundsvall) created by Umeå's tireless demographic team, and the other sources that offer a counterpoint to the parish records – local newspapers, hospital records, police reports, and Board of Trade statistics.

Attention to geographic patterns of movement demonstrates again that Ravenstein was right: women move shorter distances than men, but are more likely to move. Surprisingly, more women than men moved to this sawmill town. Equally important, the men and women were much alike: young, single, and independent. This is exactly the kind of careful comparative data that migration scholars need in order to analyse the differences that gender makes, and does not make. As Vikström points out, there was more difference between the pre-industrial migrants and the industrial cohort than between the men and women. Yet she investigates the time dimension most exactly, tracing and reflecting on women's propensity to move farther as the nineteenth century went on. This leads to the feminist question whether or not migration is liberating. And do women move farther than before because the constraints on them are loosened, or do they move farther because they are more eager to escape these constraints? Both are probably true.

Analysis of migrants' life-course in Sundsvall shows the advantages of the Demographic Data Base, since it is robust enough for multivariate analysis. These analyses enabled Vikström to see that men and women had different migration patterns: skilled men were most likely to move on, whereas *pigor* (servant-women) left Sundsvall with the greatest haste. Vikström's analyses also match findings for other cities that indicate that migrants did not pay the so-called "urban penalty"

of early death because they were a self-selected population of the relatively young and strong. She also demonstrates that the very hard labouring lives and lifestyles of young male immigrants took a greater toll on them than did women's indoor working lives and abstemious habits.

Nonetheless, newspapers and police reports belie the complex and tidy results of multivariate analyses; they indicate that, first, urban life was more "turbulent" than the parish records indicate and second, that women had a greater variety of occupations than those registered by the ministers. Only women were vulnerable to pregnancy; this physical signal of women's social and physiological vulnerability was as prevalent in Sundsvall as elsewhere – about one child in four was born out of wedlock. Vikström finds, as others have, that although some women left home "in the name of shame" when they became pregnant, it was more common for women to become pregnant and not marry when they were in town, unprotected by male relatives and a village social system that allowed night courting, but also recognized that a marriage should follow pregnancy. Yet pregnancy out of wedlock in Sundsvall did not ruin a woman's chances for good work or for marriage.

Women's labor is the thorny central question of this study. Why were more women than men attracted to this male-employing lumbering town? What did they do for a living? The parish records list most women as "pigor", but Vikström asks what that means, and whether or not the women really worked as servants. Here the parish records are not helpful, but other sources reveal that there were all sorts of maidservants, including those working for several bachelors reported by ethnographer Ernst Beckman; other women were milliners, seamstresses, teachers – and even mill-workers and dockworkers. Some women whose life stories were reconstructed from newspapers and police reports do not appear in the parish records at all.

Vikström's study makes six distinct contributions to the historical study of migrations. It seats migrants to Sundsvall in both macro- and micro-settings, so that the reader understands them in this specific context, but also as part of the reformulation of the working class that came with the industrial revolution. Vikström also confirms the high mobility of this period, and discerns where gender matters and where it does not. Very discerning, the study both confirms and challenges the value of and findings from parish records. Likewise, it both confirms the historical importance of domestic service for young single migrant women and questions this category to which young women were dismissively assigned. Finally, the power of the study lies in its dynamic view of migrations, as "both the result of large-scale transformations and the cause of them", as Vikström shows the reader in case after case of men and women who left home for Sundsvall and there became changed men and women, whether or not they moved on.

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