Exceptions in the Swedish School System

EXPLORING THE CONDITIONS FACING SECULAR AND
CONFESSIONAL NONPROFIT SCHOOLS

Ebba Henrekson

MARIE CEDERSCHIÖLD UNIVERSITY

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Akademisk avhandling
som för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen vid
Marie Cederschiöld högskola offentligen försvaras

fredag den 10 november 2023, kl 13.00
Plats: Aulan, Campus Ersta

Handledare:

Johan Hvenmark, Docent, Marie
Cederschiöld högskola
Johan Vamstad, Docent, Marie
Cederschiöld högskola
Erika Willander, PhD, Umeå
universitet

Opponent:

Lars Skov Henriksen, Professor,
Aalborg Universitet

Abstract

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In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Swedish school system underwent a series
of reforms that opened up the system for independent schools funded through
vouchers. Since then, for-profit firms have gained significant traction and
constitute a far greater share of the school system compared to nonprofits. This
dissertation aims to contribute to a better understanding of the conditions facing
secular and confessional nonprofit schools, both during the establishment process
and the day-to-day operations. To achieve this aim, I have adopted an institutional
approach which in this case implies that I focus both on formal rules and
regulations (i.e., legal framework) as well as systems of beliefs, values, and ideas.
The articles included in the dissertation analyze four conditions. First, I point to
how confessional schools have always been perceived as deviant and as reducing
social cohesion. This remains true regardless of whether the value system of the
Swedish school system has been said to rest on a secular or a religious foundation.
Second, I show how a lack of a philanthropic infrastructure in Sweden makes it
harder for nonprofits to initiate new schools. Third, I discuss how due to the
marginal presence of independent schools in Sweden before the school choice
reform there is a lack of intermediary organizations giving advice to nonprofit
schools regarding best practices and representing them at the political level.
Fourth, I show how the design of the legal framework of the school system puts
high demands on nonprofit schools to conform both to a bureaucratic logic and
a market logic. Taken together, the results point to various conditions that
contribute to a situation in which secular and confessional nonprofit schools have
difficulties asserting themselves in the Swedish school system.

List of Papers

This thesis is based on the following papers, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.

I.   Henrekson, E., Andersson, F. O., Wijkström, F., & Ford, M. (2020). Civil society regimes and school choice reforms: Evidence from Sweden and Milwaukee, *Nonprofit Policy Forum, 11*(1), 1–37.

II.   Henrekson, E. (2023). The continuation of perceived deviance: independent confessional schools in Sweden 1795–2019. *British Journal of Religious Education, 45*(4), 313–324.

III.   Henrekson, E., & Andersson, F. (2023). Facing newness and smallness: A multiple case study of nonprofits creating schools. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs, 9*(2), 147–163.

IV.   Henrekson, E. (2023) Conflict and consensus in the Swedish parliamentary debates on confessional schools. *Manuscript.*

Contents

1. Introduction

If you were of school age in the 1980s and lived in Sweden, you most likely attended a public school. In fact, 99.5 percent of all pupils in Sweden attended this form of school. As such, the Swedish school system was a virtual public sector monopoly where the vast majority of students attended the public schools in their catchment area, and nonpublic schools accounted for a mere 0.5 percent of total school attendance (SOU 2016:78). During this time, there was a growing feeling of general discontent concerning a school system that was regarded by both the political left and right as too rigid and inflexible (Klitgaard, 2007). In the late 1980s, the Social Democratic Party took some initial steps towards making the system more flexible by delegating the responsibility for education from the central government agencies to the municipalities and making it easier for independent schools to receive public funding. However, it was after a center-right government assumed power in 1991 that the system underwent its most dramatic change. In 1992, this then-newly elected government implemented a school choice reform based on vouchers, for which one of the primary goals was to increase parental choice regarding which schools to send their children to (Werne, 2018; West, 2014). Representatives from the center-right government argued that a wider range of educational options better meet the diverse needs and abilities of individual students and families. As such, one may infer the hope behind the school choice reform to be that it would bring about a more pluralistic school system in which new schools would be established that were different from public schools.

A prominent example of the emphasis on increasing the diversity of different types of schools as one of the objectives of the school choice reform can be found in a Government Bill from 1991/1992 (Government Bill 1991/92:95). In this bill, the newly appointed Minister for Education from the liberal-conservative Moderate Party paints the picture of a new school system characterized by a variety of educational options where parents have the right to choose among different educational providers:

> The new independent schools will be an important complement to the public educational system. Several of the existing [Swedish] independent schools were initially created with a particular pedagogical or confessional

focus. The current educational reform is highly likely to increase the number of schools with these types of foci. Nonetheless, I also hope that the reform will lead to the establishment of schools with different profiles. This would include parent-based cooperatives, particular curricular foci, or rural schools facing the risk of closure that would receive another chance under new management (p. 9, *my translation*).

In the above statement, the Minister of Education specifically mentions particular pedagogical and curricular foci and confessional schools as well as parent cooperatives and rural schools being taken over by new owners. The examples of different school types are differentiated in terms of both ownership and profile. Such a description implies that increased diversity was expected to be achieved by an influx of new schools operated through different organizational forms and with different profiles than those of public schools.

In the first years following the reform, the majority of new schools were indeed the type of school envisioned by the politicians implementing the reform: small schools with a pedagogical niche profile operated by nonprofit organizations.[1] However, after the turn of the millennium, for-profit entities, encompassing expansive multi-school conglomerates, have gained significant traction and now constitute a far greater share of the Swedish educational system than nonprofit organizations (Blix and Jordahl, 2021; Henrekson et al., 2020). Notably, as of 2022, 70 percent of independent primary school students and 87 percent of independent secondary school students were enrolled in a for-profit school. Additionally, the three largest school groups enrolled 32 percent of independent primary school students and 40 percent of independent secondary school students (Henrekson and Andersson, 2022). Moreover, the majority of for-profit schools are indistinguishable from public schools in terms of their profiles or academic orientations (Werne, 2018). Arguably, the Swedish school choice reform has had limited success in diversifying the available types of schools.

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[1] In this dissertation, I primarily use the term nonprofit organizations for organizations belonging to civil society. This term is more common in the American civil society literature than in the European literature. It also carries connotations of service-producing organizations rather than interest or recreational organizations. I have therefore chosen sometimes to use the term civil society organizations instead, primarily in my discussion of the history of civil society in the Swedish context.

In this dissertation, I turn the spotlight on nonprofit schools on the one hand and confessional schools[2] on the other—that is, schools whose ownership structures and profiles tend to distinguish them from the vast majority of schools currently operating in Sweden. However, since the majority of confessional schools are operated as nonprofit organizations, I also view them as a subcategory of nonprofit schools. As I will show, nonprofit schools have thus far largely been ignored in the public discourse, while confessional schools are often debated in the media and policymaking. However, neither nonprofit nor confessional[3] schools have received much attention in previous research.

1.1. The largely ignored nonprofit schools

The concept of vouchers was initially coined in a seminal essay by the economist Milton Friedman (1955). Commenting on the type of schools that would emerge under a voucher plan, Milton Friedman and Rose Friedman (1980) posited that some new schools would likely be established as nonprofit organizations and others as for-profit firms, even though they also admitted that there was (p. 169) "no way of predicting the ultimate composition of the school industry." As shown above, 30 years after the implementation of the Swedish school choice reform, we have the answer to the question of what kinds of schools were established following the implementation of a voucher system in the Swedish setting. However, it is worth noting that the fact that schools can be run as for-profit firms in Sweden makes the country unique from an international perspective. In fact, since Chile banned for-profit schools in 2015, no nationwide setting in the world other than Sweden has permitted for-profit schools to receive public funding (OECD, 2018).

The prominence of for-profit schools has been a recurring topic in policy debates and Swedish media and has often been the subject of criticism (Henrekson and Andersson, 2022). Moreover, several government bills and public inquiry commissions have in recent times proposed different ways to limit or ban the distribution of profits by companies active in the welfare sector. A case in point

[2] I have chosen the term confessional schools since it is the English translation that most resembles the Swedish term (konfessionella skolor) used in public documents and texts.

[3] For exceptions, see Berglund and Larsson (2007); Gerle (1999); Lundgren, (2021); Lövheim (2019); Qvarsebo and Wenell (2018); Sporre (2013); von Essen (2020)

is a public inquiry commission from 2016 (SOU 2016:78) with the purpose of examining how to ensure that public funding of welfare is used for the activities for which they are intended and that any surpluses should, as a general rule, be returned to the activities where they were generated. Findings from the annual SOM survey indicate that 60 percent of Swedes regard the prohibition of for-profit companies from managing schools as somewhat or highly desirable (Lindblad et al., 2022). Interestingly, there is a dearth of discourse regarding nonprofit schools as a viable alternative to for-profit schools, despite the Swedish populace expressing favorable attitudes toward educational choice (Nilsson, 2020). Prior studies on the Swedish education system have displayed a similar tendency to overlook nonprofit schools as a feasible alternative to for-profit schools, although a few exceptions have drawn a distinction between nonprofit and for-profit schools (Forsberg, 2018; Sebhatu, 2017; Vlachos, 2011; West, 2014). This general lack of research is further substantiated by a literature review of welfare and civil society in the Swedish context (Henrekson and Neubeck, 2022). Given the focus on nonprofit schools in this dissertation, it is important to discuss whether and why there might be a substantial difference between schools run as nonprofit or for-profit organizations.

Prior scholars have pointed to the nondistribution constraint as a key structural feature of nonprofit organizations (Hansmann, 1980, 1987; Valentinov, 2008; Weisbrod, 1977). That is, even if both nonprofit and for-profit organizations are private, for-profit organizations are investor owned, and any surplus may be distributed to the owners. In comparison, nonprofit organizations do not have owners and are prohibited from distributing profits. A classical argument for why the nondistribution constraint matters was initially put forth by Hansmann (1980). According to his trustworthiness theory, the nondistribution constraint assures donors that their donations will not be appropriated as profits and signals to consumers as well as policymakers that the trustees of these entities lack incentives to deceive them by compromising on quality or offering unnecessary services. Trustworthiness theory has been criticized on several grounds (see, for instance, James, 1987; Ortmann and Schlesinger, 2003). Most importantly, however, it has been noted that the nondistribution constraint defines nonprofits based on what they do not do rather than what they do (Lohmann, 1992). As

such, this focus fails to acknowledge that nonprofit firms often possess distinct identities rooted in ideologies and social values (Ott, 2001).

The nondistribution constraint, combined with the notion that nonprofits have very different identities than for-profit firms, implies that the pursuit of certain values and ideals arguably forms the core of what nonprofits do, regardless of whether they engage in political voice or the production of services (Wijkström, 2011). In other words, the absence of owners seeking a financial return on their investments enables nonprofit organizations to practice what Bowman (2011, p. 3) has referred to as "values-centered management," in which social, cultural, and spiritual values join with economic necessity to define the objectives of nonprofit organizations. In contrast, even if the priorities of for-profit entities may also include the promotion of social values, it will always be secondary to the primary objective of maximizing the economic value of the firm (Bowman, 2011). In sum, these theoretical arguments imply that the differences between nonprofit and for-profit schools may be substantial.

1.2. The criticized confessional schools

Confessional schools are common in many school systems in the West and reflect the cultural and historical influences of various religious traditions. For example, Catholic schools have a widespread, long-established presence in countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia. In the United Kingdom, 28 percent of primary and 18 percent of secondary school students were taught in state-funded confessional schools in 2019 (Long and Danechi, 2019). A majority of these students attended a school run by the Church of England, but there were also a number of Jewish and Muslim confessional schools. In contrast, there are only 65 confessional schools in Sweden at the primary school level, enrolling merely one percent of the total student body (Henrekson, 2023). At the secondary school level, there are only five confessional schools. In Norway—which, like Sweden, historically had a state church—there were 84 confessional schools in 2018, despite Norway having half the population size of Sweden (NRK, 2018). Thus, confessional schools have a comparatively limited presence in the Swedish setting.

Despite confessional schools being a numerically marginal phenomenon, they are frequently portrayed as a key example of organizations causing societal problems

such as segregation, intolerance, extremism, and religious fundamentalism (Qvarsebo, 2013). Indeed, over the last 30 years, independent confessional schools have been the subject of a heated debate in the Swedish media (Qvarsebo and Wenell, 2018). In op-eds and editorials in leading Swedish newspapers, confessional schools have been described as nurseries for Islamic terrorism and suicide bombers and as operated by religious sects indoctrinating children. In fact, according to a study performed by Lövheim (2019), independent confessional schools were the most discussed subject on religion in media between 1988 and 2018. In response to growing concerns regarding confessional schools, the Swedish government recently commissioned an inquiry into how a statutory proposal could be designed that would bar all future establishment of confessional schools (Dir. 2018:59, SOU 2019:64). Despite confessional schools being a high-profile and decidedly topical issue, research on confessional schools has been scarce in the Swedish setting (Henrekson, 2023); the interest in confessional schools displayed in politics and the media has not been matched by a similar interest among researchers.

1.3. Aim and objective

Given the relative scarcity of both secular and confessional nonprofit schools in the Swedish setting, the aim of this dissertation is to contribute to a better understanding of the conditions facing these schools, both during the establishment process and the day-to-day operations. To achieve this aim, I have adopted an institutional approach which in this case implies that I focus both on formal rules and regulations (i.e., the legal framework) as well as systems of beliefs, values, and ideas. From this emanates the objective to examine four conditions faced by secular and religious nonprofit schools: (1) attitudes toward confessional schools, (2) the funding of new nonprofit schools, (3) the presence of intermediary organizations and networks, and (4) the rules and regulations of the school system.

This aim of the dissertation is justified given that when a well-established system, such as the Swedish school system prior to the school choice reform, changes very quickly, it is relevant to study the outcomes of such a change. As already noted, such research has not previously been conducted with a specific focus on nonprofit and confessional schools. Furthermore, one of my conclusions in this

dissertation is that the school choice reform can be perceived to have facilitated the transition of the school system from a monocentric system guided by a rational state logic to a much more polycentric system characterized by a mix of different institutional logics. The legal framework of the school system coupled with this amalgamation of institutional logics impacts the conditions facing secular and confessional nonprofit schools.

1.4. Structure of the dissertation

The remainder of the dissertation is organized as follows. First, I present its overarching theoretical framework in Chapter 2. Here, I discuss the institutional approach applied in the dissertation and how institutional logics can be understood in the context of the Swedish school choice reform. Next, in Chapter 3, I discuss the transition from a bureaucratic and state-centered system of welfare provision and production to a more privatized and decentralized system. Moreover, in this part, I also discuss how civil society and religion can be understood in the Swedish setting and in relation to welfare provision In Chapter 4, I provide a background for the Swedish school choice reform. In the subsequent chapter (Chapter 5), I discuss previous school research, including an overview of research on the privatization of education from political and policy perspectives, the results of school choice reform in terms of student achievement and segregation, and previous research on confessional schools both in Sweden and abroad. In Chapter 6, I discuss methodological issues, including the research design, methods, and empirical materials. In Chapter 7, the four articles that make up the dissertation are presented. These articles constitute my key contributions of new knowledge to the area in question. In the final chapter (Chapter 8), I summarize the dissertation's key findings and consider them in a broader context and in connection to previous research.

2. Analytical Framework

In this chapter, I will present and discuss the analytical framework of the dissertation. Each article in the dissertation has its own theoretical approach and methodological tools. However, to enable a more comprehensive understanding of these articles and their findings, the dissertation project at large is unified by an analytical framework based on institutionalism and institutional logics, which will be presented here. As the dissertation takes an institutional approach to analyzing the current situation of nonprofit schools in the Swedish school system, I will begin this theoretical section by discussing the implications of this choice. Following this, I will present the concept of institutional logics and discuss how it is used in my research.

2.1. An institutional approach

Institutionalism includes a wide range of different schools of thought in sociology, political science, and economics. They can all be said to harbor a common skepticism against more atomistic accounts of social processes while emphasizing institutional arrangements (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). Although the different orientations share a common focus on institutions, they differ on a number of points, both internally among researchers in the same field and across schools and disciplines. What seems to be universal for all researchers studying institutions, however, is the notion that institutions are more or less stable social structures that prevail over time. For instance, Granovetter (2017, p. 136) suggests that "the most typical definition [of institutions] is that they are a set of persistent patterns defining how some specified collection of social actions are and should be carried out." Echoing this, Giddens (1984, p. 24) maintains that "institutions by definition are the more enduring features of social life […] giving 'solidity' [to social systems] across time and space." By emphasizing the role of institutions as stable structures that endure over time, institutional theory provides a framework for understanding how social systems are shaped by their past and how they continue to exert influence on the present and future.

While most institutional theorists agree with the broad definitions of institutions stated above, the emphasis concerning what constitutes an institution differs among disciplines. For instance, in economics, institutions are typically defined as

formal or informal rules that govern economic behavior and transactions, such as property rights, contracts, and market regulations. A case in point is institutional economist North's (1990, p. 3) definition of institutions as simply "the rules of the game." Sociologists, however, define institutions more broadly as enduring patterns of social behavior and organization, including not just economic institutions but also political, cultural, and religious institutions. These institutions are seen as shaping social norms and values and influencing how individuals interact with one another and with society as a whole. In line with more sociological approaches of scholars in the so-called new institutionalist paradigm of institutional analysis (see e.g., Friedland and Alford, 1991; March and Olsen, 1989; Scott, 2013), I understand institutions as social structures that are based on both formal rules and regulations, such as legal frameworks, as well as symbolic systems deriving from beliefs, values, and ideas. Importantly, institutions evolve incrementally in a path-dependent manner—connecting the past with the present and the future. In line with Scott (2013), I view institutions as operating at multiple levels, from the world system (Meyer, 2007; Meyer et al., 1997) to individual interactions via the sector/field- and organizational levels. The hope is that this view will allow for a nuanced perspective on how the Swedish school system has been shaped both by policy trends on the international arena as well as changes in the national context.

Institutional theory has traditionally provided an explanatory account for the durability, stability, persistence, and inertia of social systems (Clemens and Cook, 1999). As illustrated above, it is often their stabilizing and enduring aspects that are highlighted in the definitions of institutions. Blumer (1986) has pointed out that such a focus can lead scholars, explicitly or implicitly, to regard institutions as self-operating entities, which he regards as a serious mistake. He argues that an overly deterministic interpretation of institutions coupled with an unreflective acceptance of the concepts of norms, values, and social rules can prevent researchers from recognizing that institutions are in fact constantly upheld as well as altered by processes of social interaction.

In addition to the slow and incremental change described by Blumer (1986), institutional environments can sometimes change very quickly—as was the case with the Swedish school system in the early 1990s. These periods of rapid change have been theorized to arise when a combination of circumstances and events

converge to create a moment of heightened instability and potential for significant transformation within institutions (Collier and Collier, 2002; Conran and Thelen, 2016). These junctures or "punctuated equilibriums" (Gersick, 1991; Romanelli and Tushman, 1994) can be triggered by various factors, such as social, political, or economic crises, shifts in power dynamics, technological advancements, or changes in public opinion. Accordingly, institutional development can be characterized as extended periods of slow and incremental change through individual and collective struggles constrained by the lock-in effects and positive feedback loops of past trajectories punctuated by intermittent episodes of significant and rapid change.

Thus far, I have discussed how institutions can be defined and how they can be expected to evolve and change. To inform theories related to institutional change by highlighting the underlying belief systems and values that shape institutions, a body of scholarship has emerged that employs the concept of institutional logics (Alford and Friedland, 1985; Friedland and Alford, 1991; Greenwood et al., 2011; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008; Thornton et al., 2012). In the next section, I will discuss how this concept can be used to understand processes of change within organizational fields. As will be discussed further, in this dissertation, the Swedish school system is understood as an organizational field characterized by various institutional logics.

2.2. Institutional logics

2.2.1. Introducing the institutional logics perspective

The institutional logics perspective was first introduced by Alford and Friedland (1985) to describe contradictory practices and beliefs inherent in the institutions of Western society. Friedland and Alford (1991) argue that there are five core institutions in society—the capitalist market, the nuclear family, the bureaucratic state, democracy, and Christianity—each of which has its own dominant institutional logic. Subsequent work by Thornton et al. (2012) has built upon this typology by suggesting seven ideal typical institutions: family, religion, state, market, profession, corporation, and community. These contending institutions have different practices and beliefs that shape and are shaped by individual behavior. Thus, they are characterized by a particular mix of values, assumptions,

and structures that form their dominant logics or operating principles. As such, institutional logics are posited as defining the content and meaning of institutions (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008). Institutional logics have been defined as:

> socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences (Thornton et al., 2012 p. 2).

In other words, institutional logics can be perceived as guidelines for social action within institutional settings. At the same time, individuals—through their actions, interactions, and interpretations—can challenge and reshape existing institutional logics, leading to the emergence of new practices and the transformation of institutions over time (Creed et al., 2010). This reciprocal relationship between individuals and institutions highlights the dynamic nature of institutional change and the agency individuals possess in shaping social structures (Klein 2015). Such a view reinstates agency within institutional analysis while also avoiding the trap of methodological individualism—that is, the notion that social phenomena should primarily be explained by analyzing the actions and behaviors of individuals as the fundamental units of analysis. By connecting structure to action, institutional logics provide a link between macro and structural perspectives on institutions and more micro and process-oriented approaches (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008).

As will be explored further in the next section, by accounting for both individual agency and the influence of different institutions in society, the institutional logics approach underscores the power struggles and politics that emerge from contradictory logics (Klein, 2015), thereby providing a framework for understanding both endogenous and exogenous institutional change—in other words, how change can occur both from within institutions and because of changes in the broader environment. Taking the school system as a case in point, change can occur both because of external changes (exogenous) in, for instance, the laws and regulations governing the system and because new schools or individuals challenge presupposed ways of doing things from within the system (endogenous).

2.2.2. Conflicting institutional logics

Scholars applying the institutional logics perspective have commonly focused their attention on how institutional logics may be reshaped or customized through various mechanisms in an organizational field (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008). An organizational field can be defined as a set of organizations in a "recognized area of institutional life," such as organizations producing similar services and adhering to the same legal framework (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p. 148). As such, organizational fields comprise a set of actors who interact within a particular institutional domain, such as a school system (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012). Scholars working in a new institutionalist tradition are interested in how actors within these fields are influenced by institutional logics (composed of norms, values, and rules) and how they adopt and adapt to these institutional logics to gain legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991).

The definition of an organizational field commonly employed in new institutionalism can be contrasted with the notion of fields in the thinking of Bourdieu. As will be shown in the chapter on previous research, the Bourdieusian notion of fields has been applied in several previous studies on the structure of the Swedish school system. Therefore, it is important to distinguish these two perspectives. According to the Bourdieusian perspective, a field is a social space structured by the distribution of various forms of capital, including economic, cultural, and social capital. A field is a specific domain of social activity that is characterized by a set of rules, practices, and institutions that govern the distribution of capital within that domain (Bourdieu, 1993). Actors within a specific field compete for access to capital and recognition, and this competition can take the form of symbolic struggles where actors challenge established norms or rules (Bourdieu, 1993). As a result, power struggles and competition are often emphasized in studies that employ a Bourdieusian perspective, while scholars associated with the new institutionalist paradigm are generally more concerned with institutional logics, legitimacy, and the broader institutional context in which fields are embedded.

Much of the research on institutional logics and organizational fields depicts fields as being ordered by an overarching logic and examines the processes through which fields transition from one "dominant" logic to another (Greenwood et al.,

2011, p. 322). These studies essentially highlight the manner by which a "jolt" (Meyer, 1982, p. 515) ushers in a new prevailing logic—effectively separating one relatively stable era of beliefs from another. However, a growing body of research has acknowledged that fields can be characterized by the presence of several (sometimes contradictory) institutional logics (e.g., McMullin and Skelcher, 2018; Russell, 2011; Trætteberg, 2015; Vickers et al., 2017). For instance, a case study of two nonprofit organizations taking control of underperforming neighborhood schools shows how these schools are subject to both demands for greater technical efficiency and results-based accountability and a "community logic" that values schools as community organizations that build interpersonal trust and pay attention to local history (Glazer et al., 2019, p. 388).

The presence of several institutional logics within a specific field has been described as a situation of institutional complexity in which organizations and/or individuals face prescriptions from multiple institutional logics that may or may not be mutually incompatible (Greenwood et al., 2011). Actors are restrained by the dominant logics since these determine what constitutes a recognized problem, a culturally legitimate practice, or a viable outcome. Nonetheless, it should be noted that theory and research also point to a reciprocal relationship between institutional logics and the actions and practices enacted in organizational fields (Creed et al., 2010; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Powell and DiMaggio, 1991). That is, as mentioned earlier, actors participate through their actions in the cocreation of the specific composition of logics within fields and, by extension, in the social construction of their environments.

As described above, the institutional complexity that organizations encounter is never entirely fixed but is rather shaped and reshaped by internal processes within a specific field. As such, the institutional logics perspective opens the door for a nuanced understanding of the processes of institutionalization and institutional change in which the level of internal change and tension is determined by specific features of the social environment. For instance, Greenwood et al. (2011) argue that in emerging fields, there is frequently fierce competition between institutional logics as proponents compete to prioritize logics that promote their material interests or normative ideas. Mature fields, in contrast, tend to be comparatively more stable and have more established priorities between logics. Building on the argument made by Greenwood et al. (2011), if power is concentrated in one or a

few dominant actors in a field, there will be less competition among different institutional logics, whereas if power is more decentralized, there will be more competition. In other words, emerging fields exhibit more competition since power has not yet been consolidated. In addition, the institutional logics prevalent within a specific environment are also shaped by forces external to that social setting, such as more general changes in the values or dominant ideas in society at large.

2.3. Institutional logics in the Swedish school system

In this dissertation, the Swedish school choice reform implemented in 1992, coupled with the preceding Social Democratic reform delegating power to municipalities, is perceived as a rapid institutional change from a bureaucratic, top-down governance system to a more decentralized one (see also, Nyhlén, 2011). In the words of Ostrom (2010), this change can be depicted as a transition from a "monocentric" to a "polycentric" system—that is, a transition from a system directed by a central authority that exercises control through a cohesive governance structure to a more spontaneous one composed of overlapping, competing, and cooperating centers of power and decision-making that make mutual adjustments within the framework of a general system of rules. From this perspective, nonprofit organizations are perceived as embedded in a complex ecology of for-profit, nonprofit, and public-sector organizations acting in an organizational field characterized by multilevel and heterogeneous government arrangements as well as conflicting institutional logics.

As will be discussed further in Chapter 5, previous research on the Swedish school system has tended to take either a state-centered or a market-centered approach. The institutional logics approach shifts the analytical lens to the interplay among different institutional forces and how multiple logics shape and influence organizations. To be clear, this approach does not mean that using either the state or the market as the central point of reference in an analysis is incorrect. However, the institutional logics concept is useful when dealing with phenomena that do not fit into a dichotomous world of "the market" and "the state," such as issues pertaining to the nonprofit sector. Moreover, the institutional logics framework is well suited for highlighting the various ideologies and ideas competing for

influence within the Swedish school system, revealing their underlying value systems, and demonstrating the implications for organizations that operate within this environment. In the Swedish decentralization and privatization reforms of the early 1990s, elements of competition and market logic were implemented in a system that had previously been guided primarily by a bureaucratic state logic. However, as we will see, my analysis shows that these reforms also attempted to introduce a specific type of civil society logic into the provision of welfare services.

It is important to keep in mind that the institutional logics described in the previous section are ideal types and therefore have an infinite variety of real-world instantiations, depending on context and concrete situations (Lounsbury et al., 2021). For instance, it has been pointed out by Thornton and Ocasio (2008) that markets are economic structures as well as institutions that function because of formal laws and normative expectations that change through time and space. Consequently, a market in one historical and cultural context is not the same as a market in another context (Fligstein, 1996). The same argument can also be used for other institutions and logics. For the purpose of my dissertation, I deem civil society to be a central institution in its own right, guided by a civil society logic (see Trætteberg, 2015; Væggemose et al., 2018; Vickers et al., 2017). The two other major institutions important for the analysis of the Swedish school system are the capitalist market and the bureaucratic state. Last, due to the focus on the conditions facing confessional schools, religion is also an important institution to unpack in the Swedish setting. In the next chapter, I will therefore discuss specific aspects of these institutions that can be assumed to impact the conditions faced by nonprofit schools in Sweden and how the logics of these institutions can be interpreted in the Swedish setting.

3. Understanding Institutional Logics in the Swedish Setting

In this chapter, I will examine and discuss the bureaucratic state, the market, civil society, and religion in relation to welfare provision in the Swedish setting. I will begin by discussing the transition of Swedish welfare provision from a system guided primarily by a bureaucratic state logic to one incorporating considerable market logic elements. I will specifically discuss the concept of quasi-markets, which I interpret as the result of the fusion of a market logic with a bureaucratic state logic. Following this, I will discuss two different perceptions of the role of civil society and how the decentralization and privatization of welfare in the Swedish setting can be perceived as an attempt to infuse a specific type of civil society logic into welfare delivery. Finally, I will discuss the historical dominance of the Lutheran Church of Sweden and the recent increase in religious diversity in the Swedish setting.

3.1. A Swedish version of a bureaucratic and rational state

Research and popular descriptions have generally depicted the Swedish approach to welfare policy and delivery before the 1990s as characterized by a monolithic state with a bureaucratic and rational ethos. Indeed, Sweden in the 1980s had the highest proportion of public welfare service employment of any of the Western European countries (Sivesind and Trætteberg, 2017). Arguably the most influential theory in welfare state and civil society research is the welfare regime typology created by Esping-Andersen (1990) in his seminal book *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, in which Sweden is identified as the prime example of a social democratic welfare state regime. According to Esping-Andersen (1990), the principles of universalism and the decommodification of social rights were extended to include the whole population in this regime type. The formula included the introduction of universalistic welfare programs designed to satisfy the needs, wants, and expectations of all strata of the population. Thus, the Swedish welfare model, according to Esping-Andersen, came to be characterized by homogeneity, universality, and equal access for all people, regardless of social position and financial resources. Moreover, the model has been argued to crowd

out the market as well as individual dependency on the family and the church and to result in a society in which the overwhelming majority of welfare services are provided by the public sector.

In a similar vein, Berggren and Trägårdh (2015) argue that during the 20th-century, an overarching ambition of the Swedish state was to liberate individual citizens from all forms of subordination and dependency within the family and on civil society: the poor from charity, the workers from their employers, wives from their husbands, children from their parents, and elderly citizens from the care of their families. Such liberation was sought through a social contract between what was perceived as a strong and good state and equal, autonomous citizens. Rothstein (1994) has called the traditional Social Democratic approach of allocating equal and universal welfare services via bureaucratic planning the "high-quality standardized solution." According to him, the goal of Social Democratic welfare policy during the 20th-century was to create services of such high quality that all citizens, regardless of social class, would support these policies. Furthermore, it has been noted that even in comparison with the other Scandinavian countries, Sweden distinguished itself as the country with the most pronounced opposition to private alternatives within the core domains of welfare (Wolfe, 1989). Thus, the bureaucratic state logic in the Swedish setting can be understood as the rationale that welfare delivery was to be governed by a centralized and bureaucratic state apparatus with the aim of delivering universal welfare services of a high and equal standard in a rational, top-down manner. The traditional Swedish approach to welfare provision can be argued to have been guided almost exclusively by this logic.

3.2. Market influences in Swedish welfare delivery

The hegemonic description of the traditional Social Democratic approach to welfare policy during the 20th-century posits that public dominance in all aspects of welfare provision and production was perceived as necessary to protect citizens from the harmful effects of market forces as well as individual dependency on the family (Esping-Andersen, 1985; Sivesind and Trætteberg, 2017). However, since then, Sweden has become a country with a high share of private alternatives for welfare delivery, with a majority being for-profit firms. This transformation can

be regarded as a radical shift in both mentality and practice from the traditional approach to welfare delivery in the Swedish context discussed above.

3.2.1. The introduction of quasi-markets

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, ideas that can be captured under the umbrella term New Public Management (NPM) (Hood, 1991) took root in many Western countries, including Sweden. Some scholars have argued that this trend has contributed to a convergence of Western welfare systems since countries across regime types have opted in favor of the implementation of business-inspired practices in the public sector and market solutions to public problems (Henriksen et al., 2011). This period was, in many regards, a turbulent time for the Swedish economy. During this time, Sweden experienced the worst labor-market crisis since the 1930s and unprecedentedly high unemployment levels (SOU 1993:16). Between 1991 and 1993, the accumulated fall in GDP was five percent (Lindbeck, 1997). During this period, privatization reforms were introduced that would point Swedish welfare policy in a more market-oriented direction. The aim was to make the Swedish welfare system more efficient by introducing business-inspired practices (Blomqvist, 2004). Such reforms included both a decentralization of responsibility to the municipalities and the opportunity for private firms to enter new quasi-markets for welfare services (Montin, 1997). Quasi-markets can be understood as markets since they replace monopolistic state providers with a competitive model for welfare delivery. However, they are also "quasi" because of certain features that set them apart from more conventional markets (Le Grand, 1991, pp. 1259–1260).

The key features that differentiate quasi-markets from conventional markets have been explained through a supply-side/demand-side dichotomy. In relation to the supply side, it is argued that, unlike in conventional markets, the goal of the participating organizations is not necessarily to maximize profits since both nonprofit organizations and public agents participate (Le Grand, 1991; Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993). Moreover, compared to traditional public service production, the objectives or goals of the actors participating in quasi-markets are also not automatically aligned with political goals (Blix and Jordahl, 2021). On the demand side, Le Grand (1991) has described how quasi-markets differ from conventional markets in at least two ways. First, consumer purchasing power is not expressed

in money but rather in earmarked budgets or vouchers that can only be used for the specific service in question. It is also not the user of the service that generally pays for the service. Second, the user of a service is not always the one exercising choice regarding purchasing decisions. In some instances, the choice of provider is made by a third party, such as a physician, a case manager, or a health agency.

The introduction of quasi-markets to Swedish welfare provision has resulted in the increased importance of both for-profit and nonprofit welfare providers (Blix and Jordahl, 2021; Jeppsson Grassman, 2010) and has led researchers to discuss and theorize on a "new social care mix" (Blomqvist and Winblad, 2019). Nevertheless, it is clear that for-profit providers have increased their presence in welfare service provision to a much greater degree than nonprofits. During the period from 2000 to 2017, for-profit firms increased their share in tax-financed employment in welfare services from nine to 20 percent, while the nonprofit share remained virtually unchanged at approximately three percent (Trætteberg et al., 2023). As such, the Swedish welfare system is characterized by a significant presence of for-profit enterprises offering welfare services and a comparatively limited number of nonprofit organizations. Compared to other Western European welfare states and even neighboring Scandinavian countries, the share of nonprofit welfare employees in Sweden is low. In countries such as Austria, Germany, and France, which have well-established, partly church-based welfare service providers, the share of nonprofit employees in the social welfare sector ranges between 20 and 25 percent (Sivesind, 2017). The United Kingdom, as a prime example of a more liberal model, has nonprofit welfare provision on a level comparable to that of welfare partnership countries. In Norway, the nonprofit share of paid employment in welfare was 8.5 percent in 2017 and in Denmark it was 13.8 percent in 2013 (Trætteberg et al., 2023).

3.2.2. A distinct market logic

Blomqvist (2004) stresses that it is the fashion by which social services are provided that changed in Sweden during what was referred to as "the choice revolution" by center-right politicians of the early 1990s. While the previous system allocated services through bureaucratic planning, the new system is characterized by private providers establishing themselves in an increasingly market-like environment. The decentralization and privatization reforms

incorporated a distinct market logic into Swedish welfare delivery. This market logic is characterized by the search for economic efficiency through the introduction of competition over limited resources and other business-inspired mechanisms in welfare delivery, including the incorporation of profit-seeking actors (Trætteberg, 2015; Wollman, 2014). Such changes were believed to make welfare delivery more cost-efficient and flexible and to improve the overall quality in the long run (Blix and Jordahl, 2021).

Critics have argued that the privatization of welfare services in the Swedish context should be perceived as a neoliberal attack on a welfare state model previously based on social democratic ideals of justice and equality and a progressive model of citizenship (e.g., Berhanu, 2010; Lundahl et al., 2013; Wiborg, 2013). However, stating that the Swedish welfare privatization reforms were primarily motivated by a neoliberal paradigm seeking to implement a distinct market logic in welfare delivery seems overly simplistic. As I will show in the next section, the Swedish school choice reform was also motivated by a wish to move decision-making power over welfare delivery closer to the citizens who use these services and to encourage a more bottom-up approach in which citizens can come together and form their own organizations with financial support from the state— that is, to inject what I will refer to as a civil society logic into welfare delivery. To convey the context necessary for this observation, I will begin by describing and comparing different perceptions of the notion of civil society as well as outlining the history of civil society in the Swedish setting.

3.3. Making sense of civil society in Sweden

The notion of civil society has been a topic of significant scholarly examination throughout history, with its origins dating back to the ancient Greeks and thinkers such as Aristotle and Plato. During its long history, civil society has been understood in various ways by different scholars and thinkers. Edwards (2020) argues that the theories and philosophical traditions concerning civil society can be divided into three major—and sometimes overlapping—categories: (1) civil society as a part of society (focusing on the world of associational life), (2) civil society as a kind of society (focusing on norms and values as well as the achievement of social goals), and (3) civil society as the public sphere (an arena for argument and deliberation). Drawing on Edwards's (2020) first two categories

of civil society, I understand civil society as a distinct institution in society in which the promotion of values and ideals plays a central role.

Before going further, I would like to emphasize that my understanding of civil society as a distinct institution goes hand in hand with theories within civil society research that conceptualize society as divided into several different spheres. The number of identified spheres differs across scholars. The two-sphere model of state and civil society, as outlined by the German philosopher Hegel (1991 [1820]), posits that these two spheres exist in a dialectical relationship. In this model, the state represents the objective, rational sphere, while civil society represents the subjective, individual sphere. Other scholars, such as Cohen and Arato (1992), apply a three-sphere model in their analysis of civil society. In this model, the three interdependent spheres of social organization are the state, the market, and civil society, which must join forces for the good of society. The state must provide the framework for the functioning of the market and civil society, while the market must provide the material means for civil society and the state to achieve their goals. Civil society, in turn, must provide the state and the market with the means for realizing its goals, such as political participation, social cohesion, and the common good. Wijkström (2011) extends this model by proposing an additional fourth sphere: the household or family. This sphere is primarily concerned with the (re)production of relationships within family and friendship networks. Each of these models offers different perspectives on how the different spheres of social organization are related and how they interact. What unites them, however, is the notion that each separate sphere is guided by its own rationality and ways of working. The notion that society can be divided into distinct spheres that are guided by different principles of rationality closely resembles the notion of core institutions guided by distinct logics which forms the basis for the institutional logics perspective discussed in the previous chapter (Alford and Friedland, 1985; Friedland and Alford, 1991; Greenwood et al., 2011; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008; Thornton et al., 2012). However, while, for instance, Cohen and Arato (1992) primarily emphasize the role and contribution of each distinct sphere, the institutional logics perspective delves more deeply into conflict and synergies between different institutional logics.

The different institutions of society should be understood as something larger and more comprehensive than the particular organizations that are active within

them. The civil society institution comprises value systems and visions, phenomena such as civic engagement and civil disobedience, and social roles such as members, activists, and philanthropists (see Wijkström and Einarsson, 2006). As a collective term for the organizational flora of civil society, I use the nonprofit sector, which can be defined as containing all organizations and networks between the family and the state in which membership and activities are voluntary. In the Swedish context, this sector includes labor unions, political parties, churches, and other religious groups, professional and business associations, sports organizations, foundations, and organizations producing different types of welfare services. Given their affiliation with civil society, these organizations are primarily concerned with the (re)production and preservation of social values and ideals, which are upheld and disseminated through the provision of voice and the production of different types of services (see Lundström and Wijkström, 1997, 2012; Wijkström and Einarsson, 2006; Wijkström, 2011).

The perceived role of civil society diverges among theorists depending on their perspective. Scholars who adopt a more neo-Tocquevillian interpretation of civil society generally assume that civic participation and the presence of a thriving set of voluntary associations in society contribute to social cohesion and peaceful coexistence (Trägårdh 2010). In contrast, Scandinavian scholars have tended to emphasize civil society as a diverse arena in which different visions of a good society can be expressed and disputed (Lundström and Wijkström 1997; Trägårdh 2010). According to Wijkström (1998), organizations that are generally perceived as deviant, such as neo-Nazi movements and motorcycle clubs, are also part of civil society. Following from such conceptualizations, civil society serves as an arena in which conflicts manifest and unfold, thereby providing a space for diverse stakeholders to engage in dialog, negotiate interests, and advocate for social, political, and economic change.

3.3.1. The popular movement tradition in Sweden

The view of civil society as a space in which different visions for society compete for recognition aligns with the concept of the Swedish popular movements (*folkrörelser*), which forms the center of the traditional understanding of Swedish civil society (Lundström and Wijkström, 1997; Micheletti, 1995; Wijkström and Zimmer, 2011). The historical roots of the popular movement tradition can be

traced back to the 19th-century, when three popular movements materialized that were to become highly influential in Swedish society: the free church movement, the temperance movement, and the labor movement. These movements were highly influenced by international trends and similar movements in other countries, notably in the United States; a nation experiencing a significant influx of Swedish immigrants at the time which spurred transatlantic cultural exchange (Karadja and Prawitz, 2018). The free church movement was the first to emerge. The free church movement has its roots in 18th-century pietism and the religious revivals of the 19th-century and developed as a reaction against the authority of the state church (Gustafsson, 1968). Although strong Lutheran dominance entailed that deviation from the Church of Sweden was punishable by a loss of inheritance and residence rights until 1860, various free church congregations were established across the country during the 19th-century (Lundkvist; 1977; Sandell 2001). The temperance movement subsequently emerged in the late 1870s, seeking to combat excessive alcohol consumption, and was in part an extension of the free church movements. The movement demanded complete abstinence from its members (Micheletti, 1995). Last, the social democratic labor movement took shape during the 1880s. The Social Democratic Worker's Party (SAP) was officially established in 1889 and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) was established in 1898 (Boucher, 1982). Initially, the movement was greatly influenced by the thinking of Karl Marx but would later become more pragmatic and reformist (Micheletti, 1995). Between 1850 and 1920, membership in the three popular movements grew faster than the population as a whole. This entailed that by 1920 approximately a quarter of all adults aged 15 and over were members of the three movements (Lundkvist, 1977). Although diverse in nature and ideology, the links and cooperation among these movements were frequent and direct. Moreover, they all shared a common ethos as protest movements that demanded fundamental reform of society.

Gradually, the free church, temperance, and labor movements all chose a reformist approach to changing society (Micheletti, 1995). They focused their attention on parliamentary politics, evolving political parties, labor reform, and the issue of prohibition. Through such emphases, they would come to play a decisive role in the development of the Swedish universal welfare state and in the structure and role of civil society. Their organizational structure, explicit political

purpose, and ways of working became paradigmatic for successive popular movements and their organizations (Micheletti, 1995; Lundström and Wijkström, 1997). Consequently, the traditional institutional arrangement became nationwide federal organizational complexes with more or less explicitly stated political purposes in which the local branches were the centers for organizational life. At the core of popular movements' understanding of themselves is the idea of membership and democratic decision-making (Einarsson, 2012; Hvenmark, 2008). Important examples include the sports movement, the environmental movement, and the peace movement. As a result, a strong state would come to coexist with a large civil society, and the relationship between the state and civil society became one of mutual interdependence and interconnectedness (Kuhnle and Selle, 1992; Lundström and Svedberg, 2003). Rather than taking an oppositional stance toward the state apparatus and engaging in lobbying and pressure politics, Swedish civil society organizations became included as partners in neocorporatist decision-making arrangements (Micheletti, 1995; Wijkström and Zimmer, 2011).

The division of labor in the Swedish context between the organizations in civil society and the state has traditionally entailed that the former primarily engaged in political voice (advocacy and interest representation), while the latter ensured the provision of welfare services. However, it has been argued that, within Swedish civil society, organizations have tended (or seemed) to shift their attention from the provision of political voice to the provision of services, including both social services to the general population and member-oriented services (Lundström and Wijkström, 1995, 2012). As pointed out previously, nonprofits still provide only approximately three percent of state-funded welfare services (Sivesind and Trætteberg, 2017). Nevertheless, such observations can be understood as suggesting a tentative movement toward a more service-oriented civil society and should be interpreted as both a shift in practical terms and a normative intellectual change regarding how the role and function of civil society are understood and discussed in both policy and public debates. As I will show in the next section, the role of civil society organizations as producers of welfare has traditionally been far more common in other Western countries.

3.3.2. Swedish civil society in comparison

For a deeper understanding of the particularities of the Swedish civil society tradition and how it impacts the configuration of Swedish civil society today, it is useful to compare Sweden to other Western countries. The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project has carried out regular, systematic comparisons of the nonprofit sectors in different countries since the early 1990s (Salamon et al., 2017). Comparisons are made regarding (1) the overall size of the nonprofit sector, (2) the volunteer share of the nonprofit workforce, (3) the extent to which that workforce is engaged in service delivery as opposed to more expressive functions, and (4) whether financial support to nonprofit organizations comes from government, private fees, or philanthropy. Based on these data, four nonprofit regimes have been identified (Salamon and Anheier, 1998; Salamon et al., 2017). Each of these regimes is linked to a specific combination of class relationships and state-society relations that shape the trajectory of civil society within a given context. According to this classification, Sweden is categorized as belonging to the social democratic regime, which entails a relatively large nonprofit workforce that relies heavily on volunteers who are mostly oriented toward the expression of political, social, and recreational interests. Thus, the structure of Swedish civil society contradicts theories asserting that a large state would inevitably "crowd out" civil society (James, 1989) as well as competition theories in which the main idea is that social and religious heterogeneity leads to large nonprofit sectors while homogeneity is bound to deplete civil society (Boli, 1991; James, 1989; Weisbrod, 1977, 1988).

The specificities of Swedish civil society can be emphasized through comparison with other Western countries such as Germany (welfare partnership regime) or the U.S. (liberal regime) (Salamon et al., 2017). In the U.S., the nonprofit sector is relatively large (both in terms of contribution to the economy as well as workforce) compared to other Western countries and supported extensively by private sources and relatively less by the government. The service share of the workforce is 66 percent as compared to 30 percent in Sweden (ibid.). Comparing Sweden and the U.S., Trägårdh (2010, p. 228) argues that in the U.S. setting, civil society is strongly

associated with civic and communitarian virtues such as altruism, charity, volunteering, philanthropy, religion, nonprofit organizations and a host of activities deemed to serve the common good and providing public benefits, such as education, healthcare and social welfare.

Moreover, the role of the state in the U.S. is much more limited than in Sweden, and there is widespread anti-statist sentiment among the population (ibid.). Such characteristics have led to a situation in which American nonprofit organizations have traditionally performed many of the roles that are delegated to the public sector in the Swedish setting. Consequently, churches, charities, and foundations oriented toward social service production constitute a large part of civil society in the American setting.

In Germany, the nonprofit sector is also relatively large compared to other Western countries, and its workforce is mostly engaged in service functions (65 percent). One major difference between the German and U.S. settings, however, is that in Germany, the nonprofit sector is heavily supported by the government. Traditionally, the Catholic doctrine of subsidiarity has been a guiding principle of social policy (Salamon et al., 2017). This doctrine entails that the delivery of social protection and welfare services should be organized by the social institutions closest to the problem—the family, the parish church, or local charitable organizations. The state is perceived as a last resort to be engaged only when all other institutions fail.

To summarize, the role of civil society varies significantly across countries, influenced by factors such as the political and the economic systems, social values and norms, and historical developments. When comparing Sweden to countries such as Germany and the United States, it is clear that the Swedish nonprofit sector has a rather limited presence in the core areas of welfare despite some modest growth in recent years.

3.3.3. Civil society in the Swedish political discourse

In the public discourse, civil society is a normatively and ideologically loaded concept that is often invoked as a means for the promotion of ideological ends and a remedy for various social problems. Indeed, the perceived role that civil society is expected to fulfill in society differs greatly among different individuals

and groups. Edwards (2020) has noted that conservatives, liberals, and people on the left all view the role of civil society organizations differently. Conservatives tend to see these organizations as vehicles for building and preserving certain moral values, while liberals perceive them as bulwarks against excessive government reach and progressives as platforms for advancing new visions of society. On a similar note, Amnå (2005) argues that the Swedish debate on civil society can be perceived, in part, as a battle for political ownership of the term. When the notion of civil society entered the Swedish public discourse in the early 1990s, it not only divided Swedish politics across political groups but also revived internal tensions between market liberals and conservatives as well as the state-centered left and the popular movement-centered left (Dahlkvist, 1999; Trägårdh, 1999).

An example of an influential spokesperson for a more communitarian and service-focused view of civil society in the Swedish setting is the sociologist Hans Zetterberg. Zetterberg was a key figure in the development of the Moderate Party platform preceding the 1991 election and the "choice revolution" of the early 1990s. The ideological standpoints of the Moderate Party at that time, as well as their conception of what an ideal future should look like, are summarized in the publication Ideas for Our Futures (Moderaterna, 1990), which rests heavily on Zetterberg's (2013) concept of "the many-splendored society." In Zetterberg's view, society can be divided into several self-governing realms. By avoiding the dominance of one realm over the others, society can facilitate personal freedom and fulfillment. The publication expresses explicit suspicion of the Swedish state, which is perceived as having become so all-embracing that it stifles natural communities such as the local neighborhood and the family. It is argued that "if something needs to be done and can be done by civil society, it should be done by civil society, not by the state or local authorities" (p. 6, my translation). In other words, the state should not interfere unless it is necessary which echoes the Catholic principle of subsidiarity which entails that social welfare services are best managed by local entities like families or churches, with the state serving as a last-resort option when other institutions fail Importantly, in the definition of civil society used in the publication, the concept encompasses the market, the family, and the neighborhood, as well as associations, churches, universities, and cultural institutions. The inclusion of universities may seem strange given that most

universities in Sweden are public. However, the authors of the publication would like the universities to have more freedom vis-à-vis the state and one can assume that they would like to see more private universities. This division resembles the Hegelian two-sphere model of social organization, indicating that Zetterberg did not wish to exclude for-profit firms from the delivery of various kinds of services. Nevertheless, the emphasis on citizen action and a communitarian, bottom-up approach is distinctly different from the market logic described above. The communitarian focus is also visible in the government bill (1991/92:95) quoted in the introduction of the dissertation in which parent-based cooperatives and rural schools receiving a second chance with private ownership are identified as specific examples of new kinds of schools and ownership arrangements that the center-right government hoped would flourish under the new school legislation.

Given these nuances, the privatization of welfare services in the early 1990s can be perceived as an attempt not only to apply a market logic to service provision but also to implement a civil society logic distinctly different from the traditional Swedish conception of the role and function of civil society. This civil society logic can be defined as having an increased emphasis on communitarian values and a polycentric, bottom-up approach to the delivery of welfare services. Decision-making regarding, for instance, schooling was to be moved from the central government to the family, and individuals were to be given the means to organize and come together to build society from the bottom up.

3.4. Making sense of religion in Sweden

Comparative welfare state research has partly overlooked religion as a defining feature in welfare state development—possibly with the exception of Catholicism in conservative welfare states (Kahl, 2005). Such omissions are also found in much of the welfare state research examining the Swedish or Scandinavian case. For instance, the analyses by Esping-Andersen (1990) do not consider the Lutheran tradition of the Scandinavian countries. Such oversights are common even though the heterogeneity of educational systems in the West in terms of ownership (the share of private schools versus public schools) has historical roots that often reflect the role of religiosity in the development of power relations in their respective welfare state models (Busemeyer and Nikolai, 2010). Thus, it is important to examine the very close relationship between the state and the

Swedish Lutheran state church to understand the role of religion in shaping the development of the Swedish school system as well as the structure of the nonprofit sector.

3.4.1. The historical dominance of the Church of Sweden

The transition from the Roman Catholic Church to Evangelical Lutheran Christianity took place gradually during the 16th-century and was confirmed at the Uppsala convocation in 1593 (Gustafsson, 2003). For the next 400 years, the Church of Sweden was fully incorporated into the state apparatus. Until 1873, all Swedes were required by law to be members of the Church of Sweden. After this, it became legal to leave the church provided that one joined another recognized religious community. Because of the close ties between the state and the Evangelical Lutheran State Church as well as the restrictions on religious freedom, an overwhelming majority of Sweden's population have historically been members of the state church.

Several researchers have discussed how the historical relationship between church and state in Lutheran countries has contributed to the strong position of the state in these countries and the early introduction of universal welfare programs. For instance, Kaspersen and Lindvall (2008) argue that the privileged position of the Swedish state today is in part a result of its capacity to "appropriate" the local organizational infrastructure of the state church in regard to social welfare and education. Even though appropriation might be an overstatement given that the Church of Sweden was in fact part of the state until the year 2000, it seems plausible that the state's expansion of welfare was facilitated by the fact that the church already had a relatively well-developed system on which the state could build. Kahl (2005) argues that the Reformation launched three different denominational traditions of poor relief in Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed Protestant countries. She notes that the Lutheran poor relief system was secularized and centralized but not built in opposition to the church. Rather, she describes how secularized systems of poor relief were built together with existing religious institutions and in close collaboration with representatives from the church. Kahl (2005) further argues that because of the specificities of Lutheran thought, major welfare state benefits were implemented earlier in Lutheran countries than in Catholic and Reformed Protestant countries. In line with this

thinking, Manow (2004, p. 6f) argues that Lutheran countries implemented major social insurance earlier than countries with other religious traditions since "not much stood in the way of the government taking over responsibility of the welfare of its citizens." In other words, in the Scandinavian countries there existed early on an established idea of a comprehensive welfare system that the state could expand and develop in cooperation with the national churches.

The transition of the responsibility for education in Sweden from the church to the secular authorities took place gradually between the years 1919 and 1962 (Algotsson, 1975; Henrekson, 2023; Kaspersen and Lindvall, 2008; Richardson, 1999). In 1919, the elementary school curriculum underwent significant changes, shifting its emphasis from Lutheran religious instruction to social studies, mathematics, and the Swedish language (Hartman, 2007; UPL, 1919). In the late 1920s, major steps were taken to relocate the responsibility for the schools from the parishes to the local authorities (Gustafsson, 2003). These administrative changes started in the larger cities before spreading to the more rural areas. However, it was not until 1951 that primary school teachers were no longer obliged to be members of the Church of Sweden. The value system of the school system was described as being fully secularized by policymakers in 1962 when the subject of Christianity was deconfessionalized (Algotsson, 1975).

Because of a history of religious homogeneity and close cooperation between the state and the state church, religion has not been a major political cleavage in Swedish politics from a historical perspective (Kaspersen and Lindvall, 2008). However, it has been argued that as a result of recent changes in the Swedish religious landscape, religion has become increasingly more contested and publicly debated (Lövheim and Lied, 2018).

3.4.2. Religious diversity in the Swedish setting

In the last three decades, Sweden has become increasingly religiously and ethnically diverse, for the most part due to immigration and an increase in the number of people not affiliated with a religion. Today, more than two million of Sweden's ten million inhabitants were born abroad; in addition, roughly half a million inhabitants have two parents born abroad (SCB, 2023). The Muslim population is growing, and according to recent estimates, 2.5–8 percent of the population identifies as Muslim or coming from a Muslim family background

(PEW, 2017; Sorgenfrei, 2018; Willander and Stockman, 2020). The number of individuals belonging to Orthodox and Eastern churches increased by 60 percent from 1996 to 2016, and membership in the Roman Catholic Church increased as well (Willander and Stockman, 2020). Therefore, although a slight majority of Swedes (52.8 percent in 2022) are still members of the Church of Sweden, it has been argued that the religious landscape has, in recent years, undergone profound changes toward being more fragmented, diverse, and complex (Furseth, 2018).

These developments have been described as causing a new situation in which religion is still declining in importance due to secularization yet is reasserting itself into the public discourse due to migration and increased societal diversity (Bäckström, 2018; Furseth, 2018). Such a development creates new social divisions and raises new research questions regarding how to organize key national concerns such as the delivery of social welfare services and how to integrate a large number of migrants into Swedish society. It also raises questions concerning how social cohesion is to be understood in an increasingly religiously, socially, and economically divided society (Bäckström, 2018). Göçmen (2013) argues that in light of the new religious diversity and the recent disestablishment of the state church, there has been increased policy interest in religious organizations in the Swedish setting, accompanied by a change in their position in the production of social welfare.

Taken together, the hegemonic logic before the advent of the 20th-century in regard to education and religion was that only the Church of Sweden was expected to run schools. After the responsibility of education was transferred to the secular authorities, education was deemed as secularized. However, recent changes such as the privatization of welfare and increased religious diversity have arguably challenged previous hegemonic logics.

4. Changes in Swedish School Policy in the 1980s and Early 1990s

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the changes in Swedish school policy that occurred during the late 1980s and early 1990s, including the school choice reform implemented in 1992. Herein, I extend the discussion on the privatization of welfare from the previous chapter with an even more explicit focus on the education system. As will be shown, the Swedish school choice reform of the early 1990s must be understood in light of two decades of increased pressure for decentralization from both the political left and right, demands for greater opportunities for citizens to influence decisions that affect their daily lives, and the market-liberal trends of the late 1980s.

4.1. Towards a changed school system

The 1962 comprehensive school reform in Sweden resulted in the creation of a highly centralized school system. This change aimed to ensure uniformity and equal standards across schools, but it also led to issues of effective governance. During the 1960s and 1970s, the school system experienced a rapid expansion that put pressure on resources and decision-making processes, making it challenging to effectively manage and govern all schools at a centralized level (Forsberg, 2015). As a result, from the 1970s onwards, the Swedish welfare state in general and the comprehensive public school system in particular were criticized for being too rigid and inflexible. From both the political right and left, the Swedish welfare system was accused of bureaucratic red tape (Klitgaard, 2007). On the political right, a decentralization of governance to the local level was perceived as a guarantee of greater active citizenship and individual self-governance, while the Social Democrats regarded the municipalities as the natural base of the welfare state (Forsberg, 2015). Moreover, there seems to have been a more general and growing feeling of discontent with the school system among the population at large.

In 1985, the Swedish government launched a major public inquiry commission (*Maktutredningen*) to examine the conditions of the Swedish democracy and the perceived individual agency of citizens to make decisions concerning their own lives and living conditions (SOU 1990:44). As part of the investigation, a major

survey was conducted to examine the population's perceived influence concerning several so-called "civic areas," including education, housing, and health care. The authors concluded that the population experienced a profoundly felt lack of influence in relation to public schools, which was the area in which citizens felt they had the least decision-making power (Klitgaard, 2008). Policymakers and politicians at the time stressed that the school system needed to be more diverse so that education could be more closely aligned with individual needs and preferences (Werne, 2018).

The demand for increased decision-making power and individual agency is often illustrated by the story about the public school in Drevdagen, a rural village in the Dalarna province (Werne, 2018). The local municipality in Drevdagen had long threatened to close the school, but parents had vigorously protested such plans. In 1989, the parents were given permission to take over and run the school as a tax-financed foundation. This event was exceptional given the small number of independent schools receiving state funding at this point. The school in Drevdagen became an important symbol and victory for those opposing the public school monopoly in favor of greater school choice and independent school options. It also became a symbol of what an independent school could look like: a small-scale, idea-driven, cooperative entity governed from the bottom up by engaged parents and teachers.

While there have been independent schools in Sweden for as long as there have been schools, their numbers were very modest before the school reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the early 1980s, for example, just over 0.5 percent of primary and secondary school students attended an independent school (SOU 2016:78), making the school system a virtual public sector monopoly. In the late 1980s, the Social Democratic government implemented several reforms aimed at decentralizing decision-making regarding public schools and making it easier for private alternatives to receive state funding. For instance, in 1988, the responsibility for public primary schools was delegated to the municipalities, while the central authorities remained responsible for setting general goals, funding, and monitoring school quality (Government Bill 1988/1989:4; Klitgaard, 2007). Moreover, in the same year, the Swedish Parliament, based on a proposal from the then-Social Democratic government, decided that independent schools would, in principle, be eligible for state subsidies; the condition was that the

independent schools should differ in some specific respect from (and complement) the education offered in the public school system (Trydegård, 2001). However, the most far-reaching changes to the Swedish school system were implemented after a center-right coalition gained government power in the 1991 election. According to Blomqvist (2004), the former opposition parties accelerated the reforms and exerted stronger efforts to encourage private provision than the Social Democrats, although the overall reform direction remained consistent.

4.2. The 1992 school choice reform

The changes in the legal framework for primary and secondary education introduced in the United Kingdom by the Education Reform Act of 1988 are often cited as an early example of quasi-market experimentation (Le Grand, 1991; Lewis, 2017). In 1992, a similar reform was implemented in Sweden by the center-right government then in power. The implementation of the new school system was swift and not preceded by the normal procedure of a public inquiry commission. According to Klitgaard (2007, 2008), the institutional arrangement of the Swedish political decision-making process, in which power is concentrated in the central government, enabled the ease with which the reform was implemented. At the same time, it should be noted that this swiftness deviated from the tradition of corporatism and the inclusion of a broad set of stakeholders that usually characterizes Swedish policy formation.

The Swedish school choice reform was inspired by Milton Friedman's ideas on school choice and school vouchers. Friedman (1955) argues for a distinction between what activities are appropriate for the government to finance and what activities are appropriate for the government to administer. Based on this distinction, Friedman proposes a voucher program in which the government is responsible for ensuring that all educational institutions adhere to the required standards for educational quality. Furthermore, the government would administer vouchers equivalent to the per-child cost of public education. Parents would then be free to spend this sum on purchasing educational services from an "approved" institution of their choice. The educational services could be delivered by private entities operated as either for-profit firms or nonprofit organizations. The Swedish voucher scheme closely mirrors Friedman's original idea. Students and

parents were initially awarded vouchers amounting to a minimum of 85 percent of the average municipal cost per student. The 15 percent deduction reflected the fact that independent schools were not obliged to provide services such as school health care, extracurricular instruction in their mother tongue for immigrant children, free meals, and transportation. After the Social Democrats returned to power in 1994, this percentage was reduced to 75 percent. In 1997, however, it was increased to 100 percent by the same Social Democratic government in exchange for the abandonment by independent schools of limited student fees, which had originally been allowed (Government Bill 1995/96: 200).

The school choice reform also provided new opportunities for confessional schools to receive state funding. The Swedish National Agency for Education classifies schools as having either a confessional or a nonconfessional orientation. Under the current legislation, based on the Education Act of 2010 (2010:800), independent schools may adopt a denominational orientation as long as it is reported to the Swedish National Agency for Education. All teaching taking place at confessional schools must be nondenominational. However, religious activities, such as worship and prayers as well as teaching in the school's religion, may take place outside of regular teaching hours as long as student attendance is voluntary.

As already noted, a major goal of the school reforms implemented in the late 1980s and early 1990s was to create a more diverse school system in terms of increasing the variety of educational options. By creating a wider range of schools for students to choose from, it was claimed, a greater freedom of choice would be achieved. In a comparative analysis of policy goals, West (2014) has argued that other important goals for the center-right reform in 1991 included increased educational quality and greater cost efficiency. Allowing schools with different profiles and pedagogies to compete with one another was expected to improve the overall quality of education. Moreover, it was expected that the new school system would result in more cost-efficient operations, which would curb the cost of education (see also Hicks, 2015). In conclusion, the reforms implemented during the late 1980s and early 1990s radically transformed the Swedish school system from a highly centralized system to a much more decentralized one. This shift was accomplished with the approval of both the political left and the political right, even though the political right advocated for privatization more strongly than the Social Democrats.

5. Perspectives in Previous Swedish School Research

The research on the changes in the Swedish school system in recent decades is extensive and spans many scientific disciplines and research fields. In this chapter, I will discuss four broad areas of research on the Swedish school system, which all relate to the aim of my dissertation to various degrees. First, I will discuss research on policy development, which is predominantly carried out by political scientists and educators. Next, I will focus on the research, conducted primarily by economists, regarding the academic achievement of students and segregation. Third, I will discuss predominantly sociological research pertaining to school markets and strategic decision-making regarding school choice. Finally, I will consider research on confessional schools, which is principally a research site inhabited by sociologists of religion and theologians.

Since these four areas are studied by researchers grounded in different academic traditions, there is inevitably considerable variation in the methods, analytical procedures, and choice of objects of study. However, as I will show, researchers in the first three research strands predominantly emphasize that the Swedish school system has become increasingly market-like during the decades following the school choice reform—that is, the school system is conceptualized as a market or a quasi-market. Such a shift impacted what has been studied in previous research and, more importantly, what has not been studied. Indeed, the existence of nonprofit schools and how they differ from for-profit schools has barely been touched upon in previous research. The previous research on confessional schools is distinct from other research on Swedish education in that marketization is not discussed to any substantial degree. Instead, the main emphasis of previous studies on confessional schools revolves around the contested role of these schools in an increasingly diverse Swedish society.

5.1. Policy analyses of the school choice reform

Since the partial privatization of Swedish welfare provision as well as the introduction of new public management (NPM) principles in the governing of the welfare state began in the early 1990s, researchers have been keen on analyzing changes in Swedish welfare policy (Bergh, 2014; Blomqvist, 2004; Blomqvist and

Rothstein, 2000; Montin, 1997). Regarding the school system specifically, there is considerable research examining different aspects of the Swedish school reforms taking place in the late 1980s and early 1990s from a policy perspective, including research on policy goals and the impact of political institutions on decision-making (Blomqvist 2004; Klitgaard, 2007, 2008; Lundahl, 2005; Wennström, 2016; West, 2014, 2017; West and Nikolai, 2017) and discussions about the concepts of privatization, marketization, and equality in relation to Swedish school policy development (Bunar, 2010a; Fernández, 2012; Hicks, 2015). Overall, these studies tend to adopt an explicitly or implicitly negative stance toward the developments of Swedish school policy during the last several decades. The reforms are described as marketization and privatization reforms that took place within the context of neoliberalism, characterized by economic, social, and political reconstruction. As a consequence, some scholars, such as Blomqvist (2004), have warned that reforms such as the school choice reform might undermine important characteristics of the Swedish welfare model, including the institutional support of the values of social equality and universal rights.

Many school policy studies have examined the Swedish case from a comparative perspective comparing Sweden with other countries and contexts in which similar school choice reforms have been implemented, such as England (Alexiadou et al., 2016; Hicks, 2015; West, 2014; West and Nikolai, 2016), the United States (Klitgaard, 2007, 2008; Lachance 2020), other Scandinavian countries (Wiborg, 2013), and Germany (Klitgaard, 2007; West and Nikolai, 2016). Several of these studies express a feeling of astonishment and surprise regarding the fact that social democratic Sweden has implemented such far-reaching privatization reforms. Consider, for instance, this quote from Klitgaard (2008, p. 479):

> School vouchers might seem a natural feature of the liberal welfare
> model of the U.S. and American society generally. However, for social
> democratic welfare states in Scandinavia, school vouchers would seem to
> be a contradiction.

It bears mentioning that school vouchers are not universally accepted in the American setting, but rather a topic of deep contention with various stakeholders engaging in a vigorous debate over its efficacy and implications on the wider educational landscape (Ravitch, 2011). Nevertheless, the point of departure for

these studies is commonly that Sweden, with its social democratic tradition, should have been immune to the politics of privatization and marketization, whereas countries such as England and the United States (the home countries, respectively, of Thatcher and Reagan) should have been more prone to adopting such policies. The journey of social democratic Sweden from being a country in which schooling was provided primarily by the public sector to one that implemented a far-reaching privatization reform in education thus becomes an interesting puzzle. The explanations of this conundrum vary among studies but can be broadly divided between an institutionalist and a partisan approach. For instance, Klitgaard (2007, 2008) argues that differences among countries in school voucher implementation can be explained by the different ways in which political institutions affect political decision-making. In contrast, Hicks (2015) argues that in contexts where inequality is low, left-wing parties have far less reason to oppose marketization policies since they are not perceived as an equally large threat (see also Wiborg, 2013, 2015). Lachance (2020) refines the partisan approach by not only looking to explain why a certain country implemented a school choice program but also analyzing differences in the initial design of voucher programs in Sweden and Milwaukee. She argues that the explanation for why Sweden implemented a universal voucher program while Milwaukee initially implemented a means-tested program lies in the nature of the political coalitions promoting school choice in the two settings. Importantly, however, the two voucher systems have become more similar over time (Henrekson et al., 2020). Over the course of the voucher program's existence, Milwaukee has expanded the scope of the program. Moreover, even though confessional schools were not initially allowed to take part in Milwaukee's program, this was changed in 1998 (ibid.).

The studies presented thus far have aimed to explain why school choice policies were adopted or designed in a certain way, rather than to elucidate the outcome of the reforms in terms of organizational development. As such, these studies can be described as taking a state-centered approach. One exception that does discuss reform outcomes is West's (2014) comparison between so-called academy schools in England and independent schools in Sweden. She observes that while all academies in England are operated by nonprofit organizations, the majority of independent schools in the Swedish setting are operated by for-profit firms. However, she does not attempt to explain this difference in more depth.

Considering the aim of my dissertation, it is worth noting that while most of these studies discuss the dichotomy of public and private school providers, they do not draw any more detailed distinctions between different types of independent schools—that is, the distinction between nonprofit and for-profit providers is not discussed, nor is the prevalence of confessional schools.

5.2. Student performance and segregation

In contrast to the studies presented in the previous section, economists and some sociologists have tended to focus on the outcomes of the school choice reforms rather than on the reasons for the reform. Outcome-focused studies predominantly study the effects of school choice reform on student performance and segregation. These studies are relatively far from the purpose of my dissertation, both in terms of methods and research questions. Nevertheless, since this research constitutes such a large and influential part of the overall research on the Swedish school choice reform, it still merits mention.

The primary interest of studies in economics pertaining to student performance is the search for an optimal model of how the education system should be organized to generate maximum efficiency (see Forsberg, 2015). In other words, such research considers how the school system should be structured for students to perform at their highest ability. A central and recurring question in Swedish economic studies is whether free school choice and marketization increase the quality and efficiency of education. This focus relates to Friedman's (1955) claim that vouchers would increase competition between schools and thus increase the quality of education throughout the whole system. Thus, in line with studies on policy, the school system is conceptualized as a market or a quasi-market (Blix and Jordahl, 2021). Students and parents are considered rational agents who choose the school that best fits their needs, preferences, and goals, which puts pressure on schools to continuously improve the quality of the education they offer to attract and retain students.

Although the results vary across studies, it is fair to say that in general, the effects of the introduction of school choice and competition are relatively small when considering the relationship between students' social background and their grades (Böhlmark and Holmlund, 2012; Muench et al., 2023; Vlachos, 2011). However, some studies have demonstrated increasing discrepancies between absolute test

results and grades, suggesting grade inflation (Holmlund, et al., 2014; Vlachos, 2011; Wennström, 2019; Wikström and Wikström, 2005). Again, most studies examining scholastic performance and grade inflation draw a distinction between public schools and independent schools without distinguishing among different types of independent schools, such as for-profit and nonprofit schools. One notable exception is Vlachos (2011), who examines the effects of school choice on educational quality by comparing differences in results among public, for-profit, and not-for-profit schools. He tentatively suggests that students in for-profit schools either perform worse than students in public schools after controlling for socioeconomic background or that for-profit schools have more generous grading practices. The same difference is not discernible when comparing public schools with not-for-profit schools. Vlachos (2011) concludes that more research is needed on the differences in educational quality between for-profit and not-for-profit schools.

Another aspect of the effects of the school choice reform often researched in tandem with scholastic performance is residential and school segregation. Such studies consider whether increased segregation (in terms of factors such as migration background, educational achievement, and social background) in schools is a result of increased residential segregation or a result of individual choices by parents or guardians regarding which school to have their children attend. In general, these studies conclude that the effects of school segregation are complex but that independent schools may have added somewhat to the much more significant effect of increasing residential segregation (Bunar, 2010a; Lindbom, 2010; Lindbom and Almgren, 2007). However, the results depend on which type of segregation is researched (Yang Hansen and Gustafsson, 2016). Moreover, it has been noted by Sahlgren (2013) that studies on school segregation generally do not account for the fact that people tend to move closer to better schools when the proximity principle applies, that is, when children are automatically placed in the school closest to their homes instead of being allowed to choose whatever school they like.

5.3. Individual and organizational responses to marketization

The third research area that I will discuss broadly concerns how different actors (such as schools, students, and school leaders) respond to the competition that results when schooling is marketized. In these studies, different types of schools are discussed and compared. Some studies, such as Allelin (2020), focus primarily on the dichotomy between public and independent schools, whereas other studies distinguish among different types of independent schools. For instance, Bunar (2010b) conducted interviews at seven public schools to examine how a number of Swedish school leaders in urban schools (defined as having a high concentration of immigrant children) defined and responded to competition. His findings reflect that public schools in areas with a high proportion of immigrants primarily compete with three types of schools: "white" schools, ordinary independent schools, and religious and ethnic independent schools.

Several of the studies examining how competition materializes in practice have applied the lens of Bourdieu's theories of fields and different types of capital to analyze mechanisms of social stratification and reproduction (see, for instance, Börjesson et al., 2020; Forsberg, 2018; Törnqvist, 2019). In contrast to the assumption of a rational actor that underpins the economic studies discussed in the previous section, these studies perceive the choices of individual actors as impacted by life trajectories and assets (habitus and symbolic capital) as well as the social context (Forsberg, 2015). For instance, Forsberg (2018) employs a multimethod approach to analyzing the social structure of the field of upper secondary education in Stockholm as well as the positions and strategies of different types of schools. He finds that, depending on their social position in the field of upper secondary education, schools are subject to marketization to varying degrees. As discussed in Chapter 2, by focusing on power struggles over different types of capital, the Bourdieusian perspective places competition at the forefront of the analyses.

In line with a more institutionalist approach, Madestam et al. (2018) analyze how public servants' notion of core public values differs between school leaders working in public and private schools. Importantly, private school leaders are assumed to work in schools operated by for-profit enterprises. Based on a model

of ideal-type organizations (Brunsson, 1994), the authors assume that public and private organizations represent different sets of values. However, the findings indicate that differences between school leaders regarding core public values are quite small. Madestam et al. (2018, p. 148) suggest that these similarities could reflect the fact that independent schools in recent decades have undergone "politicization," while public schools have undergone "companyisation."

The sociological perspectives discussed above analyze differences across schools from various perspectives. Some studies, such as Madestam et al. (2018) and Allelin (2020), draw distinctions primarily between public schools and independent schools operated as for-profit firms, while other scholars adopt a more nuanced perspective on diversity in the school market. Forsberg (2018) discusses how schools differentiate themselves through types of study programs, location, and through their various traditions and histories. Moreover, he considers how different types of organizations (municipalities, private firms, and foundations) develop diverse strategies for strengthening their positions in the school market. In the next section, I turn to research analyzing a particular type of school: confessional independent schools.

5.4. Previous research on confessional schools

Most research on confessional independent schools worldwide has examined countries in which confessional schools constitute a substantial share of the total number of schools, such as the Netherlands (Bertram-Troost et al., 2015; Dronkers, 1995), Belgium (Franken, 2016), the United Kingdom (Dwyer and Parutis, 2013), and the United States (Merry, 2007). Much of this international research revolves around the issue that as European societies are becoming more religiously and culturally heterogeneous and at the same time "less religious," the role of confessional schools is becoming increasingly contested (Maussen and Bader, 2017). Although research on confessional schools in the Swedish setting remains scarce, in line with international research, the contested role of confessional schools in an increasingly diverse Swedish society is the main focus of many of the previous studies on confessional schools.

Several studies on confessional schools in the Swedish setting have focused on how these schools are depicted in the media, highlighting their portrayal as a recent, rapidly growing phenomenon that is associated with social problems

(Lövheim, 2019; Qvarsebo, 2013; Qvarsebo and Wenell, 2018; Sporre, 2013; von Essen, 2020). For instance, Lövheim (2019, p. 273) argues that an analysis of Swedish newspaper coverage of religion from 2008 to 2018 reveals a "continued acknowledgement of religious diversity, a heightened focus on Islam and a public presence of religion, and more contestation regarding the political and social implications of this situation." Furthermore, according to Lövheim (2019), confessional schools constitute the most prominent topic among articles focusing on the public role of religion. Sporre (2013) also uses newspaper coverage as one of her main empirical materials but combines it with reports, evaluations, and inspections from the Swedish National Agency for Education and the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. In her study, Sporre (2013) analyzes value conflicts regarding confessional schools in the public debate in 2010–2012 against the background of an earlier study by Gerle (1999). She argues that the value conflicts observed by Gerle (1999), such as freedom of religion in schools and the conflict between the rights of parents and those of children in education, were still prevalent in discussions concerning confessional schools.

Other research on confessional schools in the Swedish setting includes studies by Berglund (2009) and Brattlund (2009) on religious education in Muslim schools. There are also a few studies that discuss how specific congregations operate schools (e.g., Berglund, 2014; Berglund and Larsson, 2007; Tegborg, 1969; Werner, 2004). Except for Lundgren (2021), however, few, if any, studies have attempted a systematic analysis of the phenomenon of independent confessional schools in Sweden from a policy-oriented historical perspective. In her dissertation, Lundgren (2021) analyzes the Swedish state's perception and handling of religious communities between 1952 and 2019, using confessional schools as one of three focus areas. She concludes that many of the recent controversies and discussions concerning minority religious communities are, in fact, not new issues but have historical roots that go further back in time and are often deeply embedded in the Swedish social contract.

In sum, research on independent confessional schools in Sweden remains scarce. With few exceptions, previous research has tended to examine religious organizations or denominational orientations individually or has analyzed media portrayals of confessional schools. Moreover, many previous studies have described Sweden as a country undergoing a transformation from a religiously

homogenous society to a more religiously diverse society, adopting the view that increasing religious diversity, including a growing Muslim population, leads to new kinds of problem formulations in relation to confessional schools. In line with Lundgren (2021), my own view is that a historical perspective concerning the role of religion in society and education is crucial for understanding the current situation of confessional schools. Although I concede that Swedish society has indeed undergone dramatic changes in recent years, I maintain that many of the problem formulations concerning confessional schools are old rather than new. My dissertation contributes to previous research by providing a comprehensive analysis of both historical and contemporary schools operated by various religious communities as well as an analysis of the political discourse surrounding confessional schools and how this discourse relates to broader perceptions of the role of religion in society.

6. Research Design, Methods, and Material

In this chapter, I describe and discuss the decisions made during the research process concerning research design and methodology to provide context for understanding the findings of this dissertation in more depth. In the first part of the chapter, I lean on Swedberg's (2014) interpretation of the distinction between the context of discovery and the context of justification. In the section on the context of discovery (understood as the early and explorative phase of an inquiry), I discuss the research process from a personal point of view. Subsequently, in the context of justification (when a research idea assumes an appropriate form), I discuss the pragmatic approach of the dissertation and how this relates to the choice to conduct a multimethod study. After that, I present the various types of data that were employed in the articles and describe how these data were analyzed. The chapter ends with a section on ethical considerations.

6.1. The context of discovery

There are various ways of understanding the context of discovery. For some, it means the generation of an original idea for a project, and for others, it constitutes the whole process of inquiry (Paavola, 2006). The context of discovery can also refer to the actual process of reasoning (ibid.). I understand the context of discovery as the first phase in the process of inquiry, in which new ideas for research are generated as well as tentative explanations for an observed phenomenon (Swedberg, 2014). This phase occurs before the context of justification, when these ideas and explanations assume the appropriate form for dissemination to the scientific community.

For Peirce (1992), an element of surprise constitutes an essential part of the generation of new research ideas. He recommends that the researcher read about a subject and pore over facts and details until a moment of surprise occurs, that is, until "some belief, active or passive, formulated or unformulated, has just been broken" (ibid., p. 287). He refers to this process as abduction. Of course, as pointed out by Swedberg (2014), surprise does not always have to play such a crucial part in the justification for why something is worth studying. Research may also be driven by a general interest in the subject or by various nonscientific

motives. However, in the context of this dissertation, surprise did indeed play a role in the choice of subject.

The work of this dissertation began with the observation that Sweden and the U.S. city of Milwaukee in Wisconsin both implemented similar school choice reforms in the early 1990s. However, the results of these reforms in terms of the organizational composition of actors that established themselves within the new systems were strikingly different. This observation was intriguing, especially considering that in the market-liberal U.S. context, no for-profit schools had survived longer than a few years, while religious nonprofits seemed to be very successful. In contrast, in the Swedish context, there were relatively few nonprofit schools, while for-profit schools were proliferating.

Comparative work can be a useful tool when trying to examine a sequence of events within a context that one knows very well (Dogan and Pélassy, 1984; Skocpol and Somers, 1980). As stated by Moore (1966, pp. xiii–xiv):

> [I]n the effort to understand the history of a specific country a comparative perspective can lead to asking very useful and sometimes new questions […] Comparisons can serve as a rough negative check on accepted historical explanations.

This quote illuminates two important and related points concerning the inclusion of a comparative aspect in the dissertation. First, even if the dissertation as a whole primarily focuses on the Swedish case, the comparison with Milwaukee provides a commentary on the Swedish context from an outside perspective, enabling a questioning and reexamination of assumptions that may have been taken for granted. Second, the work with the first article provided the seeds for the three subsequent articles in my dissertation. More specifically, the first article generated ideas, questions, and tentative explanations concerning the current situation of nonprofit schools: Is the specific Lutheran religious tradition in Sweden important for understanding the current population of religious independent schools? Do values or value conflicts play a role in the hostility toward religious independent schools that seems to persist in Swedish politics? What challenges are nonprofit organizations facing at the organizational level in the actual process of starting and operating schools? And should these challenges be understood in terms of more universal organizational theory or in relation to

the specificity of the Swedish case and the design of the voucher system? To meet the demands of the research community, these initial insights have been grounded in a pragmatic research tradition. This foundation, along with the multimethod approach to conducting research, will be discussed in the next section.

6.2. The context of justification

The context of justification denotes the phase of the research process in which the ideas and explanations identified during the context of discovery are transformed into an actual scientific study (Swedberg, 2014), that is, when the research design is developed. The dissertation is a multimethod study that moves among different levels of analysis in the various substudies. The design of the research project is intimately connected to the pragmatic approach taken in the dissertation.

To discuss the pragmatic approach, I will begin by elaborating on the two major philosophical paradigms in the social sciences, which are often considered diametrically opposed: positivism and constructivism. Positivism asserts the existence of a single objective reality that can be uncovered through unbiased empirical research (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). In contrast, constructivism refutes the idea of a single objective reality and argues that subjective inquiry is the only means to comprehend the world. It should be noted, however, that there exist myriad more nuanced positions within these two broad frameworks. Pragmatism, when regarded as an alternative to positivism and constructivism, can be perceived as a way of sidestepping the contentious issues of truth and reality that often characterize discussions in the philosophy of science (Feilzer, 2010). This is achieved by a philosophical acceptance of singular and multiple realities combined with a concrete focus on solving problems in "the real world" (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, pp. 20–28; Dewey, 1925; Rorty, 1991). Consider, for instance, the following quote by James (1907, p. 18): "The pragmatic method is primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes that otherwise might be interminable […] The pragmatic method in such cases is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences." The pragmatic approach thus frees the researcher to select the method that he or she regards as most suitable to solve a particular research inquiry rather than being constrained by the epistemological dichotomy between positivism and constructivism.

Following the pragmatic approach for conducting research, this dissertation is designed as a multimethod study in that it consists of a series of substudies that employ different methods for data collection and analyses. According to Morse (2003, p. 196), a multimethod research design is "used in a research program when a series of projects are interrelated within a broad topic and designed to solve an overall research problem." Moreover, combining and increasing the number of research strategies broadens the dimensions and scope of the project, thereby enabling the researcher to obtain a more complete picture of the phenomenon in question (ibid.). As will be discussed in more detail in the next section, in the various articles in this dissertation, I employ public data on schools, policy documents and previous research, interview data, and transcripts from the parliamentary debates on confessional schools. This approach has allowed me to analyze the conditions facing secular and confessional nonprofit schools from both a contemporary and historical perspective, from inside the schools themselves, and from a political and policy perspective. Multimethod studies can either be conducted through parallel analysis of different types of data or through a sequential analysis in which one type of data provides the basis for the collection of another type (Cameron, 2009). Since the research design of Articles II, III, and IV was constructed in part based on the findings of Article I, the dissertation has a sequential element.

In addition to using multiple methods, the focus of the dissertation moves largely between two different levels of analysis: the societal level (macro) and the field or organizational level (meso). In examining two different levels of analysis and using different empirical data for the articles, the scope of this dissertation is arguably quite broad. The inclusion of several perspectives contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the topic. However, one potential downside of combining different methods through the different substudies is the loss of depth and precision. For instance, if I had not used data from parliamentary debates in the last article, I could have conducted more interviews with representatives from nonprofit schools or examined the history of confessional schools in Sweden even more thoroughly.

6.3. Empirical material and analytical strategy

Because the pragmatic approach allows for the collection of different types of empirical data, both the data collection and the subsequent data analyses involved different processes. In this section, I will discuss the empirical data and analytical strategies used in the dissertation. More precisely, I will discuss the public data from the Swedish National Agency for Education and how and why it was coded, the public documents and previous research on schools, the interview data, and the data from the parliamentary debates. This overview offers the reader a better understanding of the choices and trade-offs made in relation to the empirical material employed in the dissertation.

Table 1: Study design, empirical material, and analytical strategy of the four articles

	Study design	Empirical material	Analytical strategy
Article I	Case study	Public data from the Swedish National Agency for Education and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction	Descriptive quantitative analysis, comparative case study analysis
Article II	Historical policy analysis	Public data from the Swedish National Agency for Education, policy documents, previous research	Descriptive quantitative analysis, discursive policy analysis (i.e., Bacchi's WPR-approach)
Article III	Case study	Semistructured interviews with representatives from three nonprofit schools	Comparative case study analysis
Article IV	Text analysis	Parliamentary debates	Content analysis

In Table 1, the study designs, empirical materials, and analytical strategies of the four articles are summarized. I use four different types of empirical material in the dissertation. I will discuss these four types in the following sections.

6.3.1. Public numbers on schools

In Article I and Article II, publicly available data on independent schools in Sweden are employed. These data were obtained from the Swedish National Agency for Education register. The register presents information on the number of students enrolled in each school as well as the legal form. Moreover, the register classifies schools according to orientation, including whether the school is classified as confessional. In Article I, the Swedish data were compared to similar data from the Milwaukee school district. These data were derived from the Wisconsin Department of Instruction register, which is publicly available and continuously updated. The register data were complemented with information from the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program and the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau to determine whether the schools in the register were new or old, open for business, and religious or secular.

In Article I, the primary focus of the analysis was the distribution of for-profit versus nonprofit schools in the Swedish and Milwaukee school systems as well as the number of confessional schools compared to the total number of independent schools. The classification of schools as either nonprofit or for-profit is based on the legal form specified in the register data. In the Swedish setting, I refer to schools as nonprofits regardless of whether they are run as foundations, associations, or registered faith communities—nonprofit here indicating organizations that are institutionally separate from the public sector and whose legal form disallows any distribution of profits that they may generate. The main distinction between a foundation and an association is that while an association is controlled by its members, a foundation has no members and is thus independent and controlled by its board of directors or an administrator (Hemström and Giertz, 2014). Associations come in two principal forms: voluntary and economic associations (the primary legal form for cooperatives). The legal form of a registered faith community is similar to that of voluntary associations but can only be assumed by faith communities. According to the Swedish National Agency for Education register (as of 2022), 422 schools were run by limited companies

(*aktiebolag*), five by partnerships (*handelsbolag*), one by an individual person (*fysisk person*), 124 by economic associations (*ekonomisk förening*), 98 by foundations (*stiftelse*), 106 by voluntary associations (*ideell förening*), and three by registered faith communities (*registrerat trossamfund*). The first three legal forms were classified as for-profit, while the last four were classified as nonprofit (for a similar breakdown, see Trydegård, 2001). In the Milwaukee setting, the nonprofit schools were operated as 501(c)(3) organizations, or they were created within the boundaries of already existing religious organizations.

The Swedish National Agency for Education classifies schools according to orientation, including confessional orientation (*konfessionell inriktning*), general orientation, or Walldorf orientation (Steiner education). According to this classification, schools that have applied for special permission to include confessional elements in the education provided by the schools are classified as confessional. In the quantitative material used in this dissertation, I rely primarily on the Swedish National Agency for Education's classification system to identify confessional schools. I decided to supplement the data on schools classified as confessional with data on two Jewish schools that were previously categorized as confessional but are now classified as having a general orientation. For the Milwaukee data, schools that have included a religious affiliation on their application forms for participation in the voucher program are considered as confessional in our analysis. As such, both for the Swedish and the Milwaukee data, the classification as confessional is initiated by the schools themselves.

Regarding the legal form of the confessional schools in the Swedish setting, 54 of 65 were operated as nonprofit organizations, meaning that eleven confessional schools were operated as for-profits. However, of the eleven confessional schools that were run as limited companies, eight were owned by foundations and religious communities. It has been noted that it is increasingly common for nonprofit organizations and foundations to direct parts of their operations through limited company subsidiaries (Einarsson and Wijkström, 2021). These companies can be described as being in a borderland or gray area between civil society and the commercial sector. They are operated as limited companies, with all the associated implications in terms of profit requirements, while at the same time being fully managed and controlled by a nonprofit organization. Given that a majority of the confessional schools are nonprofits and that a majority of those

operated as limited companies are owned by nonprofits, in this dissertation, I regard confessional schools as a subset of nonprofit schools.

It should be noted that classifying schools as confessional versus secular is not straightforward. For instance, there are independent schools classified as having a general orientation that are run by organizations that identify themselves as religious in the Swedish setting. Sporre (2013) uses the term faith-based schools in a way that also incorporates these schools. Put differently, the Swedish National Agency for Education's way of classifying schools relies on the practices performed at these schools, while Sporre's classification relies on affiliation with religious organizations. For the sake of the analyses in Articles I and II using public data on schools, I had to decide on which definition to use when distinguishing confessional from secular schools. Relying on the Swedish National Agency for Education's classification seemed less subjective than also trying to include schools operated by or affiliated with religious organizations. This definition also made the data more comparable to the Milwaukee data. However, in the realm of empirical reality, the distinction between religious and secular schools often lacks definitive clarity and is subject to ambiguity. For instance, in the interview study discussed below, two of the included organizations had a religious affiliation. Organization A is an old Christian charity organization, and Organization C is an Arab school with specialized teaching in the Arabic tongue for a diverse set of students with backgrounds from various countries as well as teaching in Islam from a cultural perspective. These schools are not classified as confessional by the Swedish National Agency for Education, nor do they consider themselves to be running confessional schools. However, the religious affiliation of the schools was still considered important for how the mission of the schools was perceived by the individuals running them.

For Article II, the register data were made more accurate for the purpose of the article through the addition of information obtained from the website of each confessional school. This mapping included noting the year in which the school was started and its religious orientation. In some instances, this information could not be retrieved from the websites, and thus, complementary searches were conducted for news articles and government documents (primarily inspection protocols retrieved from the Swedish Schools Inspectorate) describing the schools. This information was utilized to perform a descriptive analysis of the

starting year over time, the range of confessional schools, and their size in terms of the number of students.

This data collection strategy only allowed me to study the schools that are still in operation, which is a limitation of the study. Ideally, I would have been able to obtain data on all independent confessional schools that have been operating in Sweden during the entire period covered in Article II (1795–2019), along with both their starting and end years. This data would have given a more complete picture of the history of confessional schools in Sweden from a quantitative perspective.

6.3.2. Policy documents on schools and previous research

For the work with the dissertation in general, but in particular for Article II, different types of policy documents concerning school policy, such as public inquiry commissions (also called Official Reports of the Swedish Government), protocols, curricula, school legislation, and government bills, were collected and analyzed. In Article II, these policy documents were complemented with previous research on school policy concerning religious independent schools. The previous research and various policy documents were identified in the following way. First, a number of comprehensive texts on the history of the education system and religion and education were identified and read (Algotsson, 1975; Berglund and Larsson, 2007; Boucher, 1982; Kittelmann Flensner, 2015; Richardson, 1999; Sejersted, 2005; Tegborg, 1969, 2001). These texts were chosen because they analyze the education system from a historical perspective and from different disciplinary perspectives. Second, the reference lists of these texts were used to identify additional texts, including research studies and government documents such as school acts, curricula, public inquiry commissions, and government bills. Thus, I used a snowball technique to identify the texts. This approach was preferable to more conventional database searches since I wanted to identify older texts and books, which are not usually available online.

The analytical strategy in Article II is influenced by sociologist Carol Bacchi's "What's the problem represented to be?" (WPR) approach to policy analysis. The WPR adopts a poststructural and critical approach to the analysis of texts that is influenced by Foucault and others questioning broadly held assumptions regarding reason, emancipation, science, and progress (Bacchi and Goodwin,

2016). The WPR approach is an analytical strategy that questions the notion that the role of public policy is to address fixed problems that are out there waiting to be solved. Instead, "it considers how governmental practices, understood broadly, produce 'problems' as particular kinds of problems" (ibid., p. 14). The approach is not supposed to provide a step-by-step guide for analyzing data (Goodwin, 2011), which distinguishes it from other poststructural and discourse-focused methodologies (e.g., Fairclough, 1992; Parker, 1992). Instead, it is designed as a tool to support the researcher in developing a deeper understanding of the policies under scrutiny (Bacchi, 2009). Moreover, since policies are often complex texts with multiple explicit and implicit problem formulations and assumptions, the researcher is encouraged to consider the historical context of the policy when making inferences. In Article II, I carry out a historical review (1795–2019) of the development of policy pertaining to religion, education, and confessional schools. The influence of Bacchi's WPR approach enables a critical deconstruction of the dominant ideals and problem formulations supporting school policy initiatives. However, it should be noted that I apply Bacchi's way of thinking to analyze the overall school policy and policy discussions for specific time periods rather than specific policy texts. This procedure allows for an analysis of change and stability in school policy development over an extensive period. However, some of the precision achieved when analyzing specific policies in more depth is sacrificed.

6.3.3. Interview data

To obtain a deeper understanding of the challenges and obstacles that nonprofit organizations face when establishing and running schools, semistructured interviews were conducted with representatives from three nonprofit schools in Sweden. These interview data are the primary empirical material for Article III. The purpose of the interviews was primarily to seek information regarding the challenges and obstacles related to the initiation and operation of nonprofit school venture projects. As such, the interviewees and their personal opinions were not the topic of interest, but instead, they informed the study's research questions based on their professional positions.

The study design followed the multiple case study approach to conducting research (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Yin, 1981). The three Swedish nonprofit organizations operating schools were selected because they

each represented a unique mode of emergence leading to the creation of new schools (see Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007 for a discussion of the rationale behind theoretical sampling). Moreover, the selected organizations also differed in terms of size and age. The first organization (Organization A) acquired six secondary schools from a bankrupt for-profit school group. A separate foundation was established to operate the school-related activities. The second organization is operating and starting new schools from within the mother organization (Organization B). The third organization is a grassroots project initiated by parents and other individuals dissatisfied with the local public school (Organization C).

For each case, two to four interviews were conducted with people at different levels and positions within the organizations, resulting in a total of nine interviews. Since the organizations conduct other activities in addition to operating schools, such as working with people in homelessness and organizing after-school youth activities, the most important criterion for inclusion was that the interviewee was working or had worked with school-related issues within the organization. This approach ensured that the interview subjects had sufficient knowledge concerning the schools. However, they may have had less knowledge concerning the organization as a whole. Moreover, since we wanted to examine both the establishment of the school ventures and the everyday management of the schools, it was deemed important to identify interviewees who had been active in the organization when the first school was started. To achieve a multifaceted picture of the organizations' school ventures, it was determined that it was critical to include a variety of organizational perspectives. As a result, for each case, interviews were conducted with at least one member of the board of directors, one principal, and one member of the management team. The Muslim school was so small that one of the respondents was both the chairperson of the board and part of the management team. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face. However, due to the preferences of the interviewees, two were conducted over video calls. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. To provide a deeper understanding of organizational strategies and processes, the interviews were complemented with archival material consisting of annual reports, strategy plans, regulatory documents, and mission statements. Both the organizations and the interviewees were anonymized in the article (see the ethical

considerations section for a detailed description of the interview process and anonymization).

The analysis of the interview data followed the steps outlined by Eisenhardt (1989) and Eisenhardt and Greabner (2007). First, individual case histories for each organization were created. The case histories provided an important first impression as well as a general overview of the data. The next step involved a cross-case analysis to identify common themes and significant differences in the experiences of the organizations concerning establishing and operating schools. The data were then organized into tables for comparison of potential themes across the three cases. In the subsequent step, key findings from the interviews were compared with previously identified theoretical concepts, requiring the revisiting of the theoretical framework. Throughout the analytical process, there was recursive cycling among the case data, emerging theory, and prior research.

6.3.4. The parliamentary debates

For Article IV, I wanted to analyze values and value conflicts in the political debates on confessional schools. The primary empirical material for this article consists of speeches from parliamentary debates on confessional schools for the parliamentary years from 1991/92 to 2019/20.

The records from the parliamentary debates are available digitally on the website of the Swedish Parliament. First, a search was conducted using the search term "independent confessional schools" and associated synonyms to identify all records in which confessional schools were discussed during the period under review. This search generated a total of 101 records. After that, all records were read, and those that fell outside of the scope of the study were excluded. For instance, records of discussions on confessional elements in the general education system, e.g., celebrations of the summer or winter holidays in a church, were excluded. Moreover, records merely mentioning confessional schools in the schedule for upcoming or postponed debates were also excluded. This process resulted in the exclusion of 28 records, leaving 73 records for further analysis. Next, all individual speeches in the records discussing confessional schools were identified, which resulted in a total of 327 speeches. All individuals in the material were pseudonymized (see the ethical considerations section).

Alternatives to this empirical material were considered at an early stage. For instance, I considered analyzing both media debates and public inquiry commissions. However, a review of the previous literature revealed that this approach had already been taken (Gerle, 1999; Lundgren, 2021; Lövheim, 2019; Qvarsebo and Wenell, 2018; Sporre, 2013; von Essen, 2020), and I thought that by choosing different empirical material to analyze, I would be able to contribute more to this field of research. Moreover, the politicians participating in the parliamentary debates directly influence resource allocation, school reforms, and policy changes concerning the Swedish school system. Thus, the analysis of the parliamentary debates can add a more policy-oriented perspective to the existing research. I also considered analyzing party programs and party platforms, but a preliminary review showed that these did not discuss confessional schools to a sufficient degree. I also considered conducting interviews with politicians or with representatives from confessional schools. However, one advantage of using parliamentary debates is the opportunity to analyze value conflicts in action, since such debates reflect direct engagement in conversations about confessional schools by individuals with different opinions on the subject.

The parliamentary debates surrounding confessional schools were analyzed through a mix of quantitative and qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980). Inspired by Richards' (2020) distinction between topic, descriptive, and analytical coding, the coding process involved multiple steps. The topic coding entailed labeling text according to subject matter. Specifically, the speeches were thoroughly read, and segments that explicitly discussed confessional schools were coded. In the subsequent round of coding, descriptive characteristics such as party affiliation and opinions regarding confessional schools were coded. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), descriptive coding is akin to quantitative coding, which involves storing vital information about the speaker without interpretation. The parliamentarians who expressed a clear opinion concerning confessional schools were coded as either opponents or proponents. However, the descriptive coding process also included coding individuals who expressed a desire for stricter regulations or a ban on additional confessional schools as "stricter regulation" and those who did not express a clear opinion as "neutral/no opinion." Furthermore, in the descriptive coding, I also identified whether individual schools or faiths were mentioned in the speeches. After completing the topic and

descriptive coding, the analytical coding process was initiated. This step required a greater degree of interpretation and reflection on meaning. First, the material was read in its entirety, and potential themes for coding the different types of arguments used by MPs were identified. Second, these tentative themes were assessed to determine which ones worked and which ones were either too broad or narrow to apply to the material. In this step, some themes were excluded, while others were included. Finally, all material was coded by using the final list of themes, which were parents' rights versus children's rights, integration versus segregation, religious extremism, gender equality, and religion in school and society.

6.4. Ethical considerations

As with all social science research, there have been various ethical issues to consider in relation to the empirical material used. Such considerations include those regarding the data collection process, data handling and storage, analytical procedures, and the presentation of the results. However, since these ethical considerations become most acute when dealing with personal data, in this section, I will primarily focus on the interview data and the data concerning the parliamentary debates.

In the collection, handling, and storing of the interview data, I followed the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (2017). Such guidelines include striving to be transparent, making sure that all participants consent to participate in the study and know about their right to withdraw their participation at any time, and ensuring that data are stored in a secure place and not accessible to unauthorized persons. In what follows, I provide a description of my ethical considerations during the collection and handling of the interview data.

The interviewees participated in their professional roles as representatives for an organization. The focus of the study is to explore organizational processes and structures and their relation to the institutional and political context. The organizations were approached by email, and an initial meeting was set up with the CEO. During this meeting, potential interviewees were identified. I then sent an invitation to these potential interviewees by email presenting myself, the study, and the purpose of the interview. One interviewee requested to see the interview guide before the interview. The interview guide was sent via email to that

respondent a few days before the interview took place. For all except two interviews, I went to the schools where the respondents worked or the headquarters of the nonprofit organizations operating the schools to conduct the interviews face-to-face. My coauthor, who lives in the United States, joined the interviews via video call. Following the wishes of the interviewees, two interviews were conducted entirely over video calls. Before the start of each interview, I once again described the aim and research questions of the study as well as how the collected data would be handled. Regarding the latter, I asked each interviewee for permission to record the interview and informed them that the recording and the transcript would be stored at a secure server only accessible to me and my coauthor. In addition, I informed the interviewees that the data would be anonymized and that the interviewees were free to withdraw their participation at any time during the interview and the subsequent research process. Finally, I informed the respondents that any direct quotes would be sent to them for approval. Later, one participant wanted to make a slight change to the wording in a quote that he had received for approval so that the message could not be misunderstood. This change resulted in the removal of one sentence, which did not change the meaning of the quote.

I have chosen to conceal the names of the schools as well as the individual participants in the study in the transcripts and the published text. Each organization was given a letter (Organization A, B, and C), and, in the text, the individuals are referred to by their professional titles (e.g., the chairperson of the board in Organization A). Moreover, I have been careful to avoid the inclusion of examples or unique details in the text that risk revealing the person. In storing the collected interview data, I have followed the guidelines of Marie Cederschiöld University, which means that both the recordings and the transcripts are stored on secure servers to which only I and my coauthor have access.

According to the Ethical Review Act 2003:460 (*om etikprövning av forskning som avser människor*), all research that involves the handling of sensitive personal information regarding race and ethnicity, political views, religious beliefs, membership in unions, and genetic information should be subjected to ethical vetting before being conducted. The politicians participating in parliamentary debates may choose to follow the positions of their parties when giving individual speeches, but they may also deviate from party lines. It could be argued that when

doing so, politicians are no longer representatives of their parties but express personal opinions. With reference to the Ethical Review Act and the potential that the data from the parliamentary debates may include sensitive personal information such as religious beliefs and political opinions, the study underwent an ethical vetting procedure and was approved (reference number: 2023-01514-01).

For the work with the empirical material consisting of parliamentary debates on confessional schools during the parliamentary years 1991/92–2019/20, enabling the politicians the opportunity to opt out of the study, ensuring the anonymity of the politicians participating in the debate and following a plan for the handling and storage of data were deemed important from an ethical perspective. As a first step, information about the project was posted on the website of Marie Cederschiöld University. This announcement included information about how former and current politicians who thought they could potentially be in the study's empirical material could opt out of the study if they wished. After this notice, all transcripts of parliamentary debates that mentioned confessional schools during the time period for the study were downloaded from the website of the Swedish government. These pdf files constitute the raw data of the study. As these raw data may contain nonpseudonymized sensitive personal data, they were directly stored in a folder within a protected data area on Marie Cederschiöld University's servers. Access to this folder, where the code keys that form the basis for the pseudonymization of the data that were included in the study's analysis (see below) were stored, requires both a password and a specific username. I am the only person with access to this file.

As the raw data that were initially collected contained nonpseudonymized sensitive personal data, the material was pseudonymized before it was further analyzed. This pseudonymization was performed by first copying all the individual speeches in which confessional schools were discussed into a new separate PDF file. Then, the name of each research subject in this new PDF file was replaced by a unique code for the person. Thus, no names of the research subjects appear in the data that were analyzed in the study, but only unique codes that represent each of these individuals. As such, when using pseudonymized files, one does not know who the MPs are. However, it is possible to know whether an MP participated in several sessions in the debates, which party he or she represented,

and in which years the speeches were made—all important aspects for the analysis performed in the study. In cases where research subjects, in their speeches, mentioned any type of information through which they could be identified, this information was removed. If any research subject in the material named another research subject, the latter was also pseudonymized with their unique code. If the MPs mentioned persons other than the research subjects in the material, these external persons were also pseudonymized with a unique code. In the dissertation, the MPs are only referred to by their unique code, and any direct quotes are translated into English and slightly altered (without changing the meaning of the quote) to make it harder to find them using the search function on the website of the Swedish government.

The PDF file collecting the study's pseudonymized data is stored in another folder, also located within a protected data area on Marie Cederschiöld University's servers and access to which requires both a password and a specific username. Access to this file was granted to me and my supervisors. After the completion of the study, both the non-pseudonymized raw data and the pseudonymized data will be archived for ten years in their respective folders. After that, the material will be destroyed in its entirety.

7. Summary of the Articles: Aims, Methods, and Findings

My dissertation consists of four articles that in different ways contribute to a better understanding of the conditions under which secular and confessional nonprofit schools are established and operate. In this chapter, I present the articles in more depth, paying specific attention to the aims, methods, and findings of each article. In Article I, the school systems in Sweden and the city of Milwaukee in Wisconsin, U.S. are compared. The analysis focuses on why two very similar reforms ended up producing strikingly different outcomes regarding the kind of actors that established themselves in the respective school systems. Article II explores the establishment of confessional schools as well as the dominant ideals underpinning school policy initiatives related to the role of religion in education and confessional schools in the period 1795–2019. Article III is a multiple case study of three nonprofit schools in Sweden. The focus is on the challenges and obstacles faced by new nonprofit schools and how the schools manage to maneuver, mitigate, or overcome these challenges and obstacles. Finally, Article IV examines how confessional schools were discussed in parliamentary debates during the period 1991–2019. Articles I and III are written together with the coauthors. Thus, the pronoun "we" rather than "I" is used when discussing these articles.

7.1. Article I: Civil society regimes and school choice reforms: evidence from Sweden and Milwaukee*

7.1.1. Problem formulation and aim

This article is a comparative study of the parallel developments of the educational systems between 1992 and 2018 in two different settings: the city of Milwaukee (WI) in the United States and Sweden. Milwaukee and Sweden were elected because they represent two of the earliest examples of school choice policy reform

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in the world (both reforms were implemented in the early 1990s). However, the outcomes of the reforms in terms of the organizational disposition of the voucher schools ended up strikingly dissimilar. Thus, this article aims to examine why and how these two cases differ. We ask the following question: What are the mechanisms, actors, and contextual and historical factors contributing to the differences in the organizational outcomes of the school choice reforms in the two settings? Theorywise, the article combines a welfare state regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990) and social origins (Salamon and Anheier, 1998) approach with an application of some of the available tools from organizational and historical institutional theory (Capoccia and Kelemen, 1998; Greenwood et al., 2017).

7.1.2. Methodological approach

The rationale for comparing a country (Sweden) with a large metropolitan area (Milwaukee) lies in the difference between Sweden and the U.S. regarding the territorial areas covered by specific school policies. In Sweden, the laws and regulatory framework governing the educational system are entirely determined at the national level through laws passed by the Swedish Parliament and regulations laid down by the pertinent government agencies. In contrast, educational reform policies in the U.S. context most commonly apply to public school districts. It is maintained that the similarities in the regulatory framework are so great that the comparison can be justified. We use comparative data, both public register data and data collected by the authors, on the educational systems in Milwaukee and Sweden to compare and contrast the organizational outcomes of the reforms implemented in the early 1990s.

7.1.3. Findings

At first glance, the voucher reforms in Milwaukee and Sweden seem to have resulted in similar outcomes concerning the number of new independent schools being established in the new system. However, when examining what kind of independent schools have established themselves in the two contexts, stark differences become apparent. In 2018, all independent primary and secondary schools in Milwaukee were operated as nonprofit organizations, despite no explicit barriers prohibiting a voucher school from being operated as a for-profit entity. In contrast, in Sweden, only 38 percent of independent primary schools and twelve percent of independent secondary schools were operated as nonprofit

organizations in the same year. The remaining independent schools in Sweden were operated by for-profit firms. Moreover, in Milwaukee, the absolute majority of independent schools were operated by a religious community, while in Sweden, most independent schools were secular rather than confessional.

We argue that the sharp differences in the voucher school populations can be explained by three specific aspects of the civil society regimes in Sweden and the U.S. The first aspect concerns the role of religious organizations in the respective welfare systems. Faith-based nonprofit providers are natural actors in the U.S. welfare system, not least in regard to education. In contrast, the historically very close relationship between the state and the Church of Sweden and the division of labor between the Church of Sweden and the rest of the public sector can help explain the weak position of schools operated by religious communities in Sweden.

Second, we argue that the presence of intermediary organizations, such as advocacy and lobbying organizations and philanthropic funders, is critical to reform outcomes. In Milwaukee, the reform began as a grassroots movement that engaged a broad spectrum of actors, including think tanks and policy institutions. In contrast, the few nonprofit welfare providers existing in Sweden in the early 1990s did not have the necessary intermediary infrastructure of interest or lobbying organizations to push or defend their case. Moreover, our data uncover the importance of a set of politically influential and financially strong philanthropic actors in Milwaukee with both the ambition and the financial means to back the nonprofit sector. In comparison, the Swedish educational landscape does not contain any strong philanthropic actors (Braunerhjelm and Skogh, 2004; Wijkström and Einarsson, 2018).

Finally, we argue that the organizational composition of the preexisting population of schools will, due to path dependency, impact what kind of actors expand or establish themselves in the new system. When the voucher reform was implemented in Milwaukee, there already existed a population of nonprofit schools when the voucher policy window opened. Sweden, by contrast, had few privately operated schools before the reform. This nonprofit void was instead filled by new for-profit providers.

7.2. Article II: The continuation of perceived deviance: Independent confessional schools in Sweden 1795–2019[*]

7.2.1. Problem formulation and aim

In the past three decades, Sweden has become increasingly religiously diverse, primarily due to immigration. Today, an increasing number of people belong to religious groups other than the Church of Sweden or are religiously unaffiliated (Willander and Stockman, 2020). The new diversity arguably boosts the visibility of old and new religious groups in the public sphere (Sigurdson, 2009). As a consequence, previous research has paid attention to how confessional schools are portrayed in the media, highlighting that the media depict confessional schools as a recent, yet rapidly growing, phenomenon associated with social problems (Qvarsebo, 2013; Qvarsebo and Wenell, 2018; von Essen, 2020). Accordingly, this article aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion on public religion by describing how independent confessional schools were established in Sweden during the years 1795–2019 and by clarifying and deconstructing the dominant ideals that underpin school policy initiatives concerning religion, education, and independent confessional schools. I selected 1795 as the initial year for this analysis because it was when the first still-active independent confessional school was established in Sweden. Specifically, I seek to answer the following question: In what way do independent confessional schools appear problematic in relation to general school policy during the period 1795–2019?

7.2.2. Methodological approach

To achieve the aim of the article, a combination of a descriptive analysis using quantitative data on confessional schools and a critical policy analysis inspired by Bacchi's (2009) "What's the problem represented to be" (WPR) approach was employed. The quantitative data were collected from the Swedish Educational Authorities register, which classifies schools as being either confessional or nonconfessional. The register included 63 operating confessional schools at the primary school level. Two Jewish schools, previously classified as confessional

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but now classified as having a general orientation, were added to the data. The number of schools included in the analysis was thus 65. Variables were added on the schools' size (measured by the number of students), starting year, and denominational orientation. For the historical analysis, key texts were identified, the reference lists of which were then used to find additional texts, including research and government documents such as curricula, public inquiry commissions, and parliamentary bills.

7.2.3. Findings

This article shows that, counter to popular perceptions in politics, the media, and even research, confessional schools are neither a contemporary nor a growing phenomenon. Therefore, although religious diversity in Swedish society has increased considerably after the turn of the millennium (Willander and Stockman, 2020), the pace of the establishment of new confessional schools has not followed suit. Furthermore, what has remained constant during the whole historical period under review (1795–2019) is the perception that the shared norms, values, and customs instilled by the public school system are different from those taught in confessional schools. Thus, regardless of whether the public school system has been seen as resting on a religious or secular foundation, confessional schools have been perceived as deviating from the value system of public schools. Notably, this fact remains pertinent regardless of whether the value system of the public school system is said to rest on a Lutheran or secular foundation and can thus be described, in Casanova's (2014) words, as a "dedifferentiation" of religion.

7.3. Article III: Facing newness and smallness: A multiple case study of nonprofits creating schools[*]

7.3.1. Problem formulation and aim

In primary and secondary education, public institutions generally remain the dominant provider in almost all Western countries. However, some countries, such as Chile, the United States, and Sweden, have elected to implement policies

that allow for educational providers other than public schools at the primary and secondary levels. A central mechanism of these policies is so-called school vouchers, which provide parents with the option to send their children to a school—public, nonprofit, or for-profit—of their choice.

Whereas prior scholarship has focused on new nonprofit school entry from a macro perspective, emphasizing features such as entry rates, policy design, and/or the role of civil society regimes (e.g., Andersson and Ford, 2017; Henrekson et al., 2020), there is a scarcity of research that focuses on new nonprofit school entrants from an organizational and operational perspective. The purpose of this study is to examine new nonprofit school venture creation in the context of the Swedish voucher-based school choice system. Specifically, we ask the following questions: What challenges and obstacles do new nonprofit school ventures face? How do new nonprofit school ventures manage to maneuver, mitigate, or overcome these challenges and obstacles? To guide the analyses, we use the literature on the liabilities facing new ventures (Stinchcombe, 1965; Aldrich and Auster, 1986) and the institutional strand of evolutionary organizational theory emphasizing the critical role of legitimacy (Suchman, 1995).

7.3.2. Methodological approach

Our methodological approach drew on the multiple case study approach to conducting research (Eisenhardt and Greabner, 2007). Following the approach typically taken in designing research using the multiple case study approach, our paper relied on theoretical sampling. We selected three Swedish nonprofit organization operating schools, each representing a unique mode of emergence leading to the creation of new schools: (i) the creation of a new nonprofit organization from scratch, (ii) the acquisition of existing schools by an existing nonprofit organization, and (iii) the creation of a new school venture within an existing nonprofit organization. The analysis is based mainly on interview data from multiple key informants in three key positions within the hierarchical chain of command of the organizations: chairperson of the board, CEO, and school principal. We complemented the interviews with archival material consisting of annual reports, strategy plans, regulatory documents, and mission statements.

7.3.3. Findings

Utilizing the lens of the liabilities of newness and smallness, complemented by an emphasis on external legitimacy, the study highlights several key challenges confronting the three school ventures and examines how these challenges are maneuvered, mitigated, or overcome. As suggested by influential research from the 1980s (Singh et al., 1986), we show that the liability of newness does not apply uniformly to all organizations in a population by examining three different types of new nonprofit ventures (one created from scratch, one built through intrapreneurial efforts within an existing organization, and one created through the acquisition of existing schools). Furthermore, we examine how the specific institutional context of the Swedish welfare state and the design of the voucher scheme impact the kinds of challenges that educational entrepreneurs face. Specifically, the article illuminates two salient challenges for new school ventures: the need for legitimacy from a diverse set of stakeholders (e.g., families/parents and regulators) and the marshaling of sufficient resources for their initial startup phases and day-to-day activities. To cope with these challenges, the new ventures combine an outward conformist strategy with an inward resource replacement strategy. The outward conformist strategy is in line with Suchman's (1995, p. 587) observation that to gain legitimacy, organizations need to signal "allegiance to the cultural order and to pose few challenges to established institutional logics," while the inward resource replacement strategy allows these educational entrepreneurs to launch and nurture new school ventures despite apparent resource constraints.

7.4. Article IV: Conflict and consensus in the Swedish parliamentary debates on confessional schools

7.4.1. Problem formulation and aim

Confessional schools in Sweden have been the subject of intense debates in politics and the media during recent decades. Swedish media debates concerning confessional schools have been analyzed by several researchers (Gerle, 1999; Sporre, 2013; Lövheim, 2019; Qvarsebo and Wenell, 2018; von Essen, 2020). This has been done with an explicit focus on values and value clashes (Gerle, 1997; Sporre, 2013). However, the parliamentary debates have not undergone the same

scrutiny in previous research, even though elected politicians in the Swedish Parliament both frequently debate confessional schools and have the actual power to shape the conditions that face these schools. Thus, this study aims to broaden the literature on values and value conflicts in the debate concerning confessional schools by analyzing its political dimension. To achieve this aim, the study focuses on three research questions to guide the analysis: What arguments are used for and against the continued existence of confessional schools? To what extent are these arguments distributed across the different political parties? What values are invoked in the arguments for or against confessional schools? To guide the analysis, I use previous theoretical work on values from sociology and political science (Knutsen, 1995; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Parsons, 1951; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987; Williams, 1979).

7.4.2. Methodological approach

The unit of analysis of this study consists of individual speeches from the parliamentary debates on confessional schools from 1991/92 to 2019/20. The records of the parliamentary debates are available digitally on the website of the Swedish Parliament. The parliamentary debates regarding confessional schools were analyzed using a mix of quantitative and qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980), in which each speech in the parliamentary debates that contains references to confessional schools was analyzed with respect to the values invoked in the arguments for or against confessional schools. The coding process was inspired by Richards's (2020) distinction between topic, descriptive, and analytical coding, which implies that topic and descriptive coding are quantitative in nature, while analytical coding is more qualitative in that it involves a greater degree of interpretation and reflection on meaning.

7.4.3. Findings

The analysis of the parliamentary debates on confessional schools makes clear that this is an issue that only engages members of parliament (MPs) from some of the political parties, namely, the Left Party, the Social Democrats, the Liberals, the Christian Democrats, and, to a lesser extent, the Moderates and the Sweden Democrats. Moreover, the distribution of standpoints for and against confessional schools corresponds to the left/right divide in Swedish politics. MPs from the Left Party and the Social Democrats are generally against confessional

schools, while MPs from the Christian Democrats and the Moderate Party are mostly proponents. The Liberals are divided, with some MPs being critical of confessional schools and one particular MP fiercely defending their right to exist.

Through the analytical coding, five themes were identified in the parliamentary debates: parents' rights versus children's rights, integration versus segregation, religious extremism, gender equality, and religion in school and society. In contrast to the five value conflicts identified in the studies by Gerle (1999) and Sporre (2013), only one value conflict was identified in the parliamentary debates. This value conflict concerns individual freedom versus the freedom of the religious community or family from interference from the state. Indeed, although the Swedish parliamentary debates on confessional schools are often fiery, there is a great deal of agreement among MPs from different parties concerning the key values that are invoked in the discussions. The primary source of disagreement among MPs instead springs from the divergence of opinions concerning whether confessional schools pose a threat to values such as social cohesion, reason, science, and equality.

8. Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, I will integrate the findings from the four independent studies in a discussion that departs from the general aim and objective of the dissertation. Thus, before we venture into the discussion of the findings, let me first restate the aim of the dissertation. Given the relative scarcity of both secular and confessional nonprofit schools in the Swedish setting, the aim of this dissertation is to contribute to a better understanding of the conditions facing these schools, both during the establishment process and the day-to-day operations. To achieve this aim, I have adopted an institutional approach which in this case implies that I focus both on formal rules and regulations (i.e., the legal framework) as well as systems of beliefs, values, and ideas. The findings of the dissertation will be discussed in relation to four conditions faced by secular and religious nonprofit schools: (1) attitudes toward confessional schools, (2) the funding of new nonprofit schools, (3) the presence of intermediary organizations and networks, and (4) the rules and regulations of the school system.

8.1. A system characterized by various institutional logics

As I have described in some detail in Chapters 3 and 4, the Swedish school system underwent reforms in the late 1980s and early 1990s that radically changed the provision and production of schooling. First, a reform implemented by a Social Democratic government in 1988 sought to decentralize power from the central government to the local authorities. Second, a newly elected center-right government implemented a school choice reform in 1992 that paved the way for nonprofit and for-profit organizations as providers of education through the provision of vouchers.

Scholars researching the Swedish school system have generally conceptualized the school choice reform as creating a market or quasi-market for schooling and emphasized the marketization aspects of the school choice reform. This is true for scholars across different research fields, such as sociology, economics, political science, and pedagogics. Due to this focus on the market aspects of the reform, the aims of the school choice reform have commonly been identified primarily as improving cost control and the quality of education through

competition among different actors (see, for instance, Lundahl, 2002, 2005; West 2014, 2017). As a corollary, previous research has focused extensively on examining how this multi-actor competition plays out in practice. For instance, economists have devoted considerable effort to researching whether and how competition improves student performance, while sociologists have focused on how different actors (such as schools, students, and school leaders) respond to the competition that arises in the politically created school market. Moreover, the ensuing debates in politics and the media regarding the school system have also centered on the market aspects of the school system, notably in debates about how to control company groups operating a large number of schools and how to prevent for-profit providers from collecting excessive profits. However, to some extent, media debates have also focused on the perceived threat posed by confessional schools.

I concede that marketization is indeed an important perspective when researching issues pertaining to the Swedish school system. In particular, Sweden, as the only nationwide such setting globally since Chile banned for-profit schools in 2015 (OECD, 2018), allows school owners, including offshore private equity firms, to earn profits from the operation of schools entirely funded by the public purse. Moreover, the school choice system has seemingly become increasingly guided by a market logic over the course of its existence. During the first decade following the school choice reform, the majority of new schools were operated by small, purpose-driven nonprofit organizations (Werne, 2018). However, since the turn of the new millennium, for-profit organizations, often operating several schools, have come to dominate the school system (Henrekson and Andersson, 2022). In fact, only 30 percent of independent primary school students and 13 percent of independent secondary school students attend schools operated by nonprofit organizations. In addition, 65 schools at the primary school level and five schools at the secondary school level have a confessional orientation. This confirms the suggestion made by Henriksen et al. (2012), that in areas where economies of scale can be attained, it is probable that for-profits will crowd out nonprofits in the long run. Nevertheless, I maintain that a hegemonic conceptualization of the school system as a market or quasi-market has led previous research to overlook certain important aspects and research questions, including the inherent

differences between schools operated as for-profit versus nonprofit organizations as well as confessional schools.

In this dissertation, the school choice reform is perceived to have facilitated the transition of the school system from a monocentric system guided by a bureaucratic state logic to a much more polycentric system characterized by a mix of different institutional logics. This has allowed for an analysis of ideologies and ideas competing for influence in the Swedish school system. My analysis shows that even though increased efficiency through marketization was clearly an important objective, researchers have tended to overlook the impact of a parallel discourse that emphasized citizen action and bottom-up governance. That is, in addition to a market logic, the reform also sought to usher into the school system a distinct type of civil society logic. However, this logic seems to have been largely crowded out by both the market logic as well as the bureaucratic state logic.

Thinking about the school system as a polycentric system characterized by various institutional logics while also turning the spotlight on the inherent differences between nonprofit and for-profit schools further enables, among other things, discussions concerning differing missions and values between schools. In addition, it opens up for analyzing both competitive *and* cooperative patterns, the action of schools in the pursuit of legitimacy as well as the role of religion in the school system and society from a historical and contemporary perspective. Ultimately, it enables an analysis of the conditions facing nonprofit schools within the Swedish school system.

8.2. Four conditions facing nonprofit schools

The four articles in this dissertation examine the conditions for secular and confessional nonprofit schools from various perspectives. In what follows, I integrate the findings from the four independent studies and discuss them in relation to previous research. Moreover, I point to some directions for future research.

8.2.1. Attitudes toward confessional schools

Religious organizations are important for the provision of education and other types of social welfare services around the globe (Bowman, 2011). Such

significance is evident in the origins of many private schools and nonprofit hospitals in the U.S. and England as well as Catholic schools in countries such as France and Austria (James, 1987). In fact, in many Western countries, confessional schools represent a significant share of the total number of schools. For instance, in England, there are nearly 7,000 state-funded confessional schools, which account for approximately 35 percent of the total number of government-funded schools (Long and Danechi, 2019). In Milwaukee, to which the Swedish setting is compared in Article I, confessional schools represent approximately 91 percent of the independent voucher schools. Researchers examining religious welfare provision in the Swedish setting have recently argued that there is a renewed interest in faith-based organizations in this area and that their importance as providers of welfare is growing (Bäckström, 2014; Bäckström and Davie, 2010; Göçmen, 2013). In contrast to these findings, I show (Articles I and II) that confessional schools remain a peripheral phenomenon in the Swedish setting, in which less than one percent of the total number of students attend a confessional school. Thus, in other national settings, there seems to be a drive among religious organizations to open nonprofit schools that is partially lacking in the Swedish setting.

Sweden has a Lutheran tradition in which the Church of Sweden has been the dominant religious actor for the last 500 years. Indeed, the Church of Sweden was part of the state until the year 2000 and is still governed by a different legal framework than other religious communities. Considering the prominent position of the Church of Sweden, a distinction must be made between the reasons for why the Church of Sweden is not, other than in some exceptional cases, operating schools and why confessional schools operated by free churches and other religious communities have always been peripheral in the Swedish setting. As discussed in Articles I and II, before the construction of the Swedish welfare state, the Church of Sweden was an important provider of education in all parts of the country. However, this responsibility was gradually transferred from the Church of Sweden to the secular authorities, and education was gradually deconfessionalized in the period from 1919 to the 1960s. Thus, after the construction of the modern welfare state, the division of labor between the Church of Sweden and the secular authorities entailed that the Church did not engage in the provision of schooling. This situation can be contrasted, for

instance, with England, where the Anglican Church operates a majority of the existing confessional schools (Long and Danechi, 2019).

Let me now turn to schools operated by religious groups other than the Church of Sweden. In Article II, I examine independent confessional schools from a historical perspective in the period 1795–2019. I show how independent confessional schools have invariably been perceived as deviating from the value system of public schools and therefore have been deemed undesirable by the state. This assumption remains true regardless of whether the value system of the public school system was thought to rest on a Lutheran or a secular foundation. As a result, independent confessional schools have either been openly criticized and counteracted by the state or simply ignored. Article IV takes a closer look at value conflicts regarding confessional schools from a contemporary perspective by examining parliamentary debates during the period 1991–2019. I show that confessional schools have been regularly and fiercely discussed in parliamentary debates since the early 1990s, which complements previous research showing a similar inclination in the media (Lövheim, 2019; Sporre, 2013) and in public inquiry commissions (Lundgren, 2021). Notably, in this material, I find substantial consensus among politicians concerning the key values invoked in the discussions. The only value conflict that I find concerns individual freedom versus the freedom of the religious community or family from interference from the state. However, a crucial source of disagreement among parliamentarians concerns whether confessional schools pose a threat to values such as social cohesion, reason, rationality, and equality. Parliamentarians from the left side of the political spectrum perceive these values as irreconcilable with religion, while Christian Democrats argue the contrary.

In this dissertation, I have primarily focused on the structure of the religious landscape in Sweden and the fact that religious actors as providers of schooling continue to be perceived as deviant in relation to certain hegemonic values. In essence, the hegemonic logic in regard to education and religion before schooling was moved to the secular public authorities in the first half of the 20th-century was that only the Church of Sweden was expected to run schools. After this, only the secular public authorities were expected to run schools. Considering the limited number of confessional schools in the Swedish setting, the dissertation highlights how the public focus on certain inflammatory religious issues greatly

outweighs what appears to be motivated by their actual impact on society. Nevertheless, the continuation of confessional schools in the Swedish setting, despite the hostility that they have faced and continue to face, is thought-provoking and interesting and calls for further research on the subject. In particular, research is lacking concerning the characteristics of students who attend confessional schools and why parents are motivated to choose confessional schools for their children.

8.2.2. The funding of new nonprofit schools

All organizations starting new ventures, such as schools, or scaling up their current operations must find a way to acquire the initial funding needed. In the Swedish school system, the government provides funding through voucher payments for the everyday activities of schools once they start to enroll students. However, the government does not provide any funding prior to the arrival of students. For-profit firms starting new schools can obtain funding from investors hoping to see profitable returns on their investments. This approach is not possible for nonprofits since they do not have owners and are prohibited from distributing profits. However, the nondistribution constraint and the absence of profit-seeking owners have been argued to confer an advantage making nonprofits more attractive to individual and institutional donors (Hansmann, 1980; Valentinov, 2008). In Article I, I show that the nonprofit organizations starting schools in Milwaukee benefited from this advantage by collecting funding from various secular and religious foundations. In contrast, the Swedish setting lacked a similar infrastructure of philanthropic actors. This finding is confirmed in Article III, in which none of the interviewed organizations received any philanthropic donations directly aimed at their schools, except for the small Muslim school had received some smaller donations from parents when starting the school. However, two of the interviewees believed that it would have been possible to collect funding for activities organized in addition to the day-to-day management of the schools.

As an explanation for the lack of philanthropic funding for social welfare provision in the Swedish setting, it has been argued that the comparatively large levels of public spending on education and other welfare services have traditionally crowded out philanthropic initiatives (Vamstad and von Essen,

2013). Indeed, philanthropic foundations have been found to play a marginal or complementary role in most fields, except perhaps for the funding of scientific research (Wijkström and Einarsson, 2018). Wijkström and Einarsson (2018) argue that during the development of the social democratic welfare state in Sweden, a culture of suspicion or outright hostility toward private charity was created. Charity and philanthropy were seen as degrading and based on undemocratic and unequal power relations since they made the recipient indebted to the donor (Trägårdh, 2019b). Such sentiment may explain the insignificance of philanthropic contributions in the funding of Swedish schools. That is, the funding of education in Sweden is widely considered a public sector responsibility rather than the responsibility of private individuals and charitable organizations.

There are also ways other than philanthropy for nonprofit organizations to fund new projects or the expansion of existing ones. For instance, as was the case with two of the organizations in Article III, nonprofits can use the surplus from their current activities to start new projects such as schools. However, this is only possible for organizations that are already operational. Other funding strategies include bank loans or different kinds of partnerships with the public or business sector. These alternative finance strategies are not explored in this dissertation. However, exploring the finance tactics of nonprofit schools or nonprofits providing other types of welfare services would be a fruitful avenue for future research. For instance, nonprofits often struggle to obtain traditional bank loans (Brännvall, 2023; Segnestam Larsson 2019). One explanation might be that limited companies are more common and therefore better understood in the banking community compared to democratically governed organizations with collective decision-making and ownership or foundations that can be described as owning themselves. Moreover, future research would benefit from examining how corporate law pertaining to associations and foundations impacts the conditions and opportunities for nonprofit organizations in Sweden (for a seminal contribution to this line of research, see Hallonsten and Sevelin, 2023). For instance, even though nonprofits are not distributing their profits, they are still obliged to pay taxes on profits made from rental income, income from the sale of goods and services, and income from capital. Moreover, only nonprofits engaged in what are called "economic activities" are entitled to deduct VAT. As a result,

nonprofit organizations are in a more difficult financial situation compared to ventures in the form of limited companies with the right to deduct VAT.

8.2.3. The presence of intermediary organizations and networks

Institutional philanthropic donors such as foundations are an important part of the support structure for nonprofit organizations operating schools in many countries. However, new nonprofits need not only funding but also advice regarding best practices for opening and operating schools as well as interest organizations representing them in the political arena. For instance, Facer et al. (2012) have shown how the cooperative movement has recently become one of the largest (secular) coalitions of schools in England. Within the cooperative movement, schools are collaborating regarding both value-related issues, such as how to maintain a commitment to education as a public good rather than a private benefit, and on legal and logistical issues.

Due to the marginal presence of independent schools in Sweden before the school choice reform, no designated umbrella or interest organization existed to promote the interest of these schools and offer advice until after the reform was already in place. Instead, the school choice reform was lobbied for by free-market intermediary organizations such as the influential think tank Timbro (Wennström, 2019). As discussed in Article I, in 1995, the Swedish Association for Independent Schools (*Friskolornas riksförbund*) was established to represent both for-profit and nonprofit schools. The Swedish Association for Independent Schools was structured according to the Swedish model for interest organizations based on membership. Currently, it has approximately 500 individual schools as members. It was not until 2013 that a separate organization was created with the sole purpose of promoting the interests of nonprofit schools (*Idéburna skolors riksförbund*). This organization had 89 member schools in 2023 and openly opposes the operation of for-profit schools in Sweden. The situation in Sweden can be contrasted with that in Denmark, which has a much longer and stronger tradition of nonprofit independent schools. In Denmark, there are at least six different associations representing more than 500 independent schools in the

country (Olsen, 2015). The oldest of these associations traces its roots back to the free school movement of the late 19th-century.

In Article III, two of the nonprofit organizations interviewed operated several schools. The representatives of those organizations claimed that this was an advantage since the schools could exchange experiences and help one another. However, the majority of the nonprofit schools in the Swedish setting are single establishments. Thus, as showcased by the third school in Article III, the lack of intermediary organizations makes them rather isolated and forced to learn by themselves how to survive (and thrive) in the school system, a process that in the case of the Muslim schools was rather slow and painful.

8.2.4. The rules and regulations of the school system

The design of the voucher system might seem straightforward in theory, but in reality, operating a school is a complicated affair. Swedish voucher schools have to follow the school law, are subject to regular inspections, and must enroll enough students to be profitable or at least break even. Article III discusses these struggles in depth. In their relationship with government agencies, schools must demonstrate a certain level of know-how regarding how things should be done to be considered acceptable by the inspection agency. Put differently, the schools need to understand bureaucratic logic and how to conform while still preserving their distinctiveness as nonprofit organizations. This knowledge includes how to pass regular inspections from the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, how to adhere to the requirements set by the school law, and how to write successful applications for extra funding. In regard to attracting students, organizations need to understand and adapt to the logic of the quasi-market.

Even though the basic design of the school system has remained untouched since the introduction of the school choice reform in 1992, there have been numerous small changes in the laws and regulations governing the school system. The school system appears to be on a track of small and incremental change toward increased regulation through the implementation of various public governance mechanisms. This can be seen as a response to the large expansion of independent schools after the year 2000 and an increasing market logic in the school field. A case in point is the evolution of school inspections throughout the last 30 years.

Rönnberg (2012, 2014) describes how, in 1991, school inspections—in the form of individual scrutinies of public schools on a regular basis performed by employed national inspectors—were abolished. However, a decade later, school inspections were reintroduced, and in 2008, a new inspection agency was instituted to inspect schools on a regular basis. Since then, the responsibilities of the Schools Inspectorate have been gradually extended.

With the increasing complexity of rules and regulations governing the school system, policymakers seem to be progressively adapting the voucher system to a reality in which the majority of actors are large, for-profit companies. For instance, in 2019, a new law was passed that demanded stricter examination of future school owners before an application to open a new school could be granted. Part of the cost of this examination was to be borne by the applicant. Moreover, in 2022, the government decided to further increase the fee for an application so that the applicant would fully cover the costs of ownership control. These costs might not be detrimental for large company groups that wish to expand; however, they pose a major obstacle for small organizations and for nonprofits in particular. The emphasis on ownership in the regulation also exposes a poor understanding of nonprofits since these organizations do not have owners in the traditional sense. Rather, nonprofit organizations, including both foundations and voluntary associations, can be said to own themselves.

While previous research has extensively examined the evolution of school inspections within the Swedish education system (Rönnberg, 2012, 2014), relatively less attention has been directed toward comprehensively understanding gradual changes in the application process and entry requirements for new schools. Consequently, a fruitful avenue for future research would be to delve into the less-explored realm of the regulatory changes regarding application processes for new schools to illuminate how these changes might influence the diversity, quality, and accessibility of educational options available to students.

8.3. Concluding remarks

Although he uses different terms, Trägårdh (2019a) has argued that both the traditional logic in which the state is ultimately responsible for the welfare of its citizens and the market logic that has come to permeate welfare in recent years have in common that they both presuppose a universalist individualism. This

universalistic individualism is quite far removed from the more communitarian and community-oriented approaches advocated by politicians and public intellectuals in the context of the introduction of the school choice reform in 1992. It may be the case that, despite widespread popular resistance to for-profit firms in the production of welfare, the logic that these organizations represent is still mentally closer to the Swedes' perception of how welfare should be provided than the logic that characterizes the practices of nonprofit organizations. This alignment is reflected in the suspicion of philanthropy and religious organizations within welfare and can explain why actors such as policymakers and financial institutions find it difficult to understand how nonprofits differ from for-profit companies in terms of both driving forces and organizational structure. As a final note to conclude this thesis, I would therefore like to suggest that if policymakers are serious about nonprofits taking a more significant role in the production of welfare services, they ought to carefully consider the inherent differences between nonprofit organizations and for-profit firms and design legal frameworks that take these differences into account.

Summary in Swedish

Det svenska skolsystemet genomgick under slutet av 1980-talet och början av 1990-talet en serie av reformer som öppnade upp systemet för fristående skolor finansierade genom skolpeng. Sedan dess har vinstdrivande företag fått ett betydande fotfäste och utgör en mycket större andel av skolsystemet jämfört med ideella organisationer och stiftelser. Syftet med denna avhandling är att bidra till en ökad förståelse av de villkor och förutsättningar under vilka sekulära och konfessionella icke-vinstdrivande friskolor etableras och drivs. För att uppnå detta syfte har jag använt ett institutionellt perspektiv, vilket i det här fallet innebär att jag fokuserar både på formella regler och lagar (dvs det juridiska ramverket) samt ideologiska principer och övertygelser, värderingssystem och idéer.

Forskare som studerat det svenska skolsystemet har nästan uteslutande gjort det utifrån att skolvalsreformen skapat en marknad eller kvasi-marknad för skolutbildning och betonat marknadiseringsaspekterna av skolvalsreformen. Som ett resultat av detta synsätt har tidigare forskning främst fokuserat på att undersöka hur konkurrensen mellan olika aktörer utspelar sig i praktiken. Perspektivet i denna avhandling är snarare att skolvalsreformen möjliggjorde en förändring av skolsystemet från ett monocentriskt system styrts av en byråkratisk statslogik till att bli ett mycket mer polycentriskt system präglat av en blandning av olika institutionella logiker. Att betrakta skolsystemet som ett polycentriskt system präglat av olika institutionella logiker, samtidigt som strålkastarljuset riktas mot de inneboende skillnaderna mellan icke-vinstdrivande och vinstdrivande skolor, möjliggör en analys kring skillnader mellan olika typer av skolors värdegrunder och motiv för att bedriva skolverksamhet. Dessutom öppnar det upp för analys av både konkurrens- *och* samarbetsmönster, skolornas agerande i strävan efter legitimitet samt religionens roll i skolsystemet och samhället både ur ett historiskt och samtida perspektiv. Framför allt så möjliggör det en analys av de villkor som icke-vinstdrivande skolor möter och har mött inom det svenska skolsystemet.

Artiklarna som ingår i avhandlingen analyserar flera aspekter av sekulära och konfessionella icke-vinstdrivande skolors villkor och förutsättningar. Först pekar

jag på hur konfessionella skolor alltid har uppfattats som avvikande och som en bidragande faktor till minskad social sammanhållning i det svenska samhället. Detta har varit fallet oavsett om värdegrunden i det svenska skolsystemet har sagts vila på en sekulär eller religiös grund. För det andra visar jag hur bristen på en filantropisk infrastruktur i den svenska kontexten gör det svårare för ideella föreningar och stiftelser att starta nya skolor. För det tredje diskuterar jag hur det, på grund av den marginella närvaron av fristående skolor i Sverige före skolvalsreformen, saknas intresseorganisationer för icke-vinstdrivande fristående skolor som ger råd angående bästa praxis och representerar dem på den politiska nivån. För det fjärde visar jag hur utformningen av det juridiska ramverket för skolvalssystemet ställer höga krav på icke-vinstdrivande skolor att anpassa sig både till en byråkratisk logik och en marknadslogik. Sammantaget pekar resultaten på olika aspekter som bidrar till en situation där sekulära och konfessionella icke-vinstdrivande skolor har svårigheter att hävda sig inom det svenska skolsystemet.

Acknowledgments

There is no doubt that writing a dissertation can at times feel like a lonely endeavor. Nevertheless, behind every dissertation, there are always multiple people in addition to the name on the first page. There are many people who have supported me through this dissertation journey and that deserves my warmest gratitude. First, I would like to thank my primary supervisor Johan Hvenmark. You have with great warmth guided me throughout the process of writing a dissertation. I would also like to thank my two other supervisors Erika Willander and Johan Vamstad. Thank you for carefully reading and commenting on my texts and for all the tips on books and articles that you have provided. Having three supervisors from three different academic disciplines was challenging at times, but I would not have wanted to have it any other way.

I was first introduced to civil society studies after completing my bachelor's degree when Filip Wijkström hired me as a research assistant at the Stockholm School of Economics. Thank you, Filip, for believing in me so early and for being such a dear friend ever since. I also wish to thank all the other colleagues at the Stockholm Center for Civil Society Studies for numerous after-work gatherings and fruitful academic conversations. You will always be my first academic family.

I was lucky to spend time during my dissertation project at both the Institute for Social Research in Oslo and the Institute for Nonprofit Management at the Vienna University of Economics and Business. At both of these places, I was made to feel instantly at home. It was also highly rewarding to present my research at seminars and conferences in both Oslo and Vienna. I wish to thank all of the colleagues who made my research stays truly memorable.

I wish to thank all of my colleagues at the Center for Civil Society Research at Marie Cederschiöld University. I cannot imagine a better environment for conducting my Ph.D. studies. A special thank you to my dear PhD candidate peers who have shared this journey with me, especially my roommates at Diakonisshuset: Rebecka Andersen, Linnea Lundgren, and Anna Mankell.

Last but not least, I wish to thank Fredrik O. Andersson, with whom I have co-written two of the articles in this thesis. I really appreciate your approach to research which entails both effectiveness and letting ideas mature without rushing things. I look forward to working even more with you in the future!

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Appendix: Interview Guide Article III

Provided below is the interview guide for Article III. Before each interview, the guide was updated with concern for the position of the interviewee within his or her organization and my previous knowledge of the organization. For instance, if the interviewee was the head of the board, questions were added concerning the work of the board. If the interviewee was a principal, the interview focused more on the day-to-day activities of the school.

Interview guide

Background items (for interviewee)

Organizational title/role/tasks of the interviewee

Background items (e.g., prior experience, education)

When and why did you start working for this organization?

What is your main motivation for working/volunteering/sitting on the board for this organization?

Process/path to start the school

When did the idea to start a school first surface?

Who came up with the idea?

Who has been the leader(s) of the school project (past and current)

How many individuals/groups, to date, have been involved with the school project

What were the primary (and secondary) motivations for starting a new school?

Please describe the process for creating the school

How has the school project been financed/supported?

- Philanthropic donations?

- Internal funds?
- Public funding?

What has been the most significant challenge(s) so far?

What are the perceived risks of starting the school(s)? (financial, brand, mission drift, other)

Are there any plans/intentions to grow/scale the current school?

Are there any plans/intentions to start additional schools?

<u>Description of school</u>

When did the new school open/start? (year)

What kind of neighborhood/community is the school located in?

Does the school offer any particular curriculum/classes/pedagogies/religious orientation that are different from other schools in the area? If yes, please describe/explain.

Is the school independent or part of a larger network/consortium/system? If yes, please describe/explain.

How many students are currently enrolled?

What is the current demographic of the student population (e.g., gender, race, socio-economic status)?

Is the school engaged in any informal or formal collaborations with other schools or organizations?

<u>Parent organization</u>

Description of the parent organization

- Mission, goals
- Programs & services

Role and relation of the school of core activities/goals of the parent organization

(if religious) Role of religion in relation to school activities/goals?

Government relations

Perception and handling of the school project from the perspective of various state agencies

Was it difficult to obtain permission to start the new school?

Has the school faced any challenge/push-back coming from state agencies about the school and its operations?

Accountability measures?

Future institutional concerns (e.g., changes in policy regulations)

<u>Stakeholder environment</u>

Public perception(s) of school

School in relation to the public school system

Perceptions of school choice/reform

Theses from Marie Cederschiöld University

Nr 1. Anna Holmqvist (2019). Integritet på undantag? En studie av barns röst i patientlagen och patientorganisationer.

Nr 2. Megan Weber Falk (2020). Development and evaluation of the grief and communication family support intervention for parentally bereaved families in Sweden.

Nr. 3. Lilian Pohlkamp (2020) Bereaved mothers and fathers. Grief and psychological health 1 to 5 years after losing a child to cancer.

Nr 4. Bodil Holmberg (2020) Assisterad kroppslig omvårdnad i livets slut på vård- och omsorgsboende. När kroppen inte räcker till.

Nr 5. Rakel Eklund (2020). Barns erfarenheter av "The Family Talk Intervention". Att leva med en svårt sjuk förälder som vårdas inom specialiserad palliativ hemsjukvård.

Nr 6. Filip Wollter (2020). The reasoning behind social work intervention design.

Nr 7. Elin Hjort (2020). Experiences of care and everyday life in a time of change for families in which a child has spinal muscular atrophy.

Nr 8. Hannes Rolf (2020). En fackförening för hemmen. Kollektiv mobilisering, organisering och maktkamp på hyresmarknaden i Stockholm och Göteborg 1875-1942.

Nr 9. Karin Robertsson (2021). Mellan civilsamhälle och folkrörelse. Ett aktörsperspektiv på rekrytering och organisering av medborgerligt engagemang.

Nr 10. Susanne Larsson (2021). Självbestämmande i LSS – en villkorad rättighet för personer med intellektuell funktionsnedsättning.

Nr 11. Anna O'Sullivan (2021). Bereaved family members' VOICES of support and care during the last three months of life for people with advanced illness.

Nr 12. Linnea Lundgren (2021) A risk or a resource? A study of the Swedish state's shifting perception and handling of minority religious communities between 1952-2019.

Nr 13. Anna Mankell (2021) Collective patient participation. Patient voice and civil society organizations in healthcare.

Nr 14. Viktoria Wallin (2022) Mealtimes in palliative care contexts. Perspectives of patients, partners, and registered nurses.

Nr 15. Therese Ydremark (2022) Efter flykten. En studie av civilsamhällets betydelser för deltagande och tillhörighet efter påtvingad migration.

Nr 16. Rebecka Andersen (2022) I kvinnornas värld. Omsorg och tvång på uppfostringsanstalten Viebäckhemmen 1905–1947.

Nr 17. Maria Norinder (2023) A person-centred approach to support family caregivers in specialised home care. The Carer Support Needs Assessment Tool Intervention.

Nr 18. Sissela Odhnoff (2023) Mellan det förflutna och framtiden. En studie av Hyresgästföreningen på 2000-talet.

Exceptions in the Swedish School System: Exploring the Conditions Facing Secular and Confessional Nonprofit Schools.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Swedish school system underwent a series of reforms that opened up the system for independent schools funded through vouchers. Since then, for-profit firms have gained significant traction and constitute a far greater share of the school system compared to nonprofits. The aim of this dissertation is to contribute to a better understanding of the conditions facing secular and confessional nonprofit schools, both during the establishment process and the day-to-day operations. Specifically, I examine attitudes toward confessional schools, the funding of new nonprofit schools, the presence of intermediary organizations and networks, and the rules and regulations governing the school system. Taken together, the results point to various conditions that contribute to a situation in which secular and confessional nonprofit schools have difficulties to assert themselves in the Swedish school system.

Ebba Henrekson received her master's degree in sociology from the London School of Economics in 2017. Since then, she has worked as a research assistant at the Stockholm school of Economics and as a PhD candidate at Marie Cederschiöld University. Her main research interest has been issues pertaining to civil society, education, and religion.

Marie Cederschiöld University has third-cycle courses and a PhD programme within the field The Individual in the Welfare Society, with currently two third-cycle subject areas, Palliative Care and Social Welfare and the Civil Society. The area frames a field of knowledge in which both the individual in palliative care and social welfare as well as societal interests and conditions are accommodated.

MARIE CEDERSCHIÖLD UNIVERSITY