



REVIEW ESSAY: GENDER POLITICS IN POST-SOCIALIST CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPEAN STATES

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Gal, Susan and Gail Kligman. 2000. *The Politics of Gender After Socialism: A Comparative Historical Essay*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Galligan, Yvonne, Sara Clavero, and Marina Calloni. 2007. *Gender Politics and Democracy in Post-Socialist Europe*. Opladen, Germany: Barbara Budrich Publishers.

Guenther, Katja M. 2010. *Making Their Place: Feminism After Socialism in Eastern Germany*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Introduction

This article reviews three books that explain why there have been no grassroots, large scale feminist movements in post-socialist Central Eastern Europe¹ in the twentieth century, despite conditions which would seem to provoke collective mobilization around women's interests. Although this is not the central or only research question addressed by the authors, all devote significant attention to explaining how the socialist past came to definitively shape public discourses on feminism in ways that inhibit popular support for mass feminist movements.

The selection of books represents tremendous breadth on the topic: Gal and Kligman's book, *The Politics of Gender After Socialism: A Comparative Historical Essay*, offers an anthropological and historical perspective on gender politics in the region during the twentieth century; Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni's book, *Gender Politics and Democracy in Post-Socialist Europe*, approaches the topic from the discipline of political science; and Guenther's book, *Making Their Place: Feminism After Socialism in Eastern Germany*, presents a sociological perspective. Whereas Gal and Kligman rely primarily on secondary sources, Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni combine secondary sources with their own survey research, and Guenther's study is

1. This essay uses the term "Central Eastern Europe" to refer to the Czech Republic, the former East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia.

grounded in fieldwork conducted over several years. Guenther's careful case study of two cities in eastern Germany complements and illustrates more general themes discussed in the regional analyses offered by the other two books. Finally, the dates of publication ensure that the analyses include not only research conducted in the 1990s, but also more recent research up to and including 2010. In short, the selection of books provides a range of disciplinary perspectives and methods, as well as broad geographical and temporal coverage.

The first part of this essay will describe the phenomenon it seeks to explain, namely, the absence of mass feminist movements despite the presence of conditions which would seem to favour them. The second part of the essay explores the authors' explanations for this absence. Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni, as well as Gal and Kligman, argue that feminism and socialism are discursively constructed in Central Eastern Europe in ways that connect and undermine both. Guenther agrees that the discourse connecting feminism and socialism is consequential but demonstrates that this connection can aid, not only hinder, feminism's reception. Because the focus of their analysis is on the discursive construction of socialism and feminism in a particular time and place, the authors are less concerned with assessing the transferability of the wide range of feminist schools of thought developed in the West and more concerned with demonstrating how hegemonic discourses in Central Eastern Europe stigmatize the term "feminism," regardless of its particular variety or correspondence to what Westerners would classify as feminism, frequently drawing upon an oversimplified caricature that erases its diversity and internal debates. Thus, this essay uses the term "feminism" as the authors do to describe a nodal point in a discourse. Finally, this essay concludes by considering how an expanded conceptualization of gender ideologies can offer a richer, more complete explanation of gender politics, and how discourse analysis can complement other explanatory factors.

The Dog That Didn't Bark

The topic of this article takes into consideration Tilly and Tarrow's (2007, 198) suggestion to investigate not only cases of contentious politics but also instances where mobilization does not occur despite conditions that would seem to favour it. Referring to the title of the Sherlock Holmes mystery, they implore us not to overlook "The Dog That Didn't Bark." This essay asserts that one can learn much about gender politics in Central Eastern Europe by investigating the absence of feminist movements in the region.

There is remarkable agreement among the authors reviewed in this article that feminist discourse does not resonate for most women in Central Eastern Europe. There have been no largescale feminist movements anywhere in Central Eastern Europe during the twentieth and early twenty-first century, and gendered political discourse does not receive popular support (Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni 2007, 83). In fact, European Union (EU) enlargement resulted in a clash between Western liberal feminists and Central Eastern European women who considered feminist discourse hopelessly out of touch with reality and destructive for society (28). Despite the proliferation of women's groups thanks to funding from other states (particularly the Netherlands and Sweden), this tendency has not so far stimulated broad-based mobilization around women's interests. Most women's groups are staffed by women who do not consider themselves feminist and lack a political, social, and financial base in their local communities (Guenther 2011). Gal and Kligman succinctly summarize the observations of many: "The term

‘feminism’ is treated with ridicule and derision in public forums, often by women as well as men. Feminism is not just controversial; it is stigmatized” (98). Though there are exceptions to this view, including those carefully described by Guenther, many Central Eastern European women consider feminism not to be merely irrelevant or uninteresting, but discredited and dangerous.

However, this does not signal the absence of gender politics in the region. Gal and Kligman carefully analyze the role of gender politics under socialism and after the transition to democracy. For example, gender politics topped the agendas of the (mostly male) political leadership immediately after 1989. In the context of tremendous political challenges and economic crises—writing constitutions, reforming legislative politics, and state-building—politicians debated at length questions of abortion and contraception, birth rates, childcare, and proper sex, and most countries had revised abortion laws within two years of the fall of the old regimes in the absence of any grassroots mobilization or pressure to enact such reforms (15).

Gal and Kligman explain that gender politics make good politics because they cut to the core of the nature of the new state and state-citizen relations. For example, political debates over abortion and day care concerned the identity of the state. Would it be Catholic or secular? Would it be a social welfare state or not (Gal and Kligman 2000, 24)? Politicians revised policies to assert the morality of the new state while condemning the immorality of the old one. For example, Gal and Kligman write: “whereas Communism, it was claimed, corruptly allowed the killing of foetuses, or equally corruptly cared only about increasing the labour force, post-communist states could and should make principled, moral decisions about such matters” (29). Similarly, abortion debates after the unification of West and East Germany concerned issues of citizenship and representation. When East Germans learned that they would lose access to abortion under West German laws, many East German men and women protested, arguing that this constituted a loss of democracy and individual rights for women. When their protests were not registered, many felt like second-class citizens in a state designed to represent West German men (Gal and Kligman 2000, 24; Guenther 2010, 35).

Gal and Kligman point out that nationalist discourse pays special attention to the politics of reproduction. Politicians have long had a tendency to assess the health of the state by the size of the nation (18-19). Population decline is disturbing because it means that nationals are migrating out and because immigration is viewed as an undesirable means of increasing the population (29). Thus, politicians focus their attention on birth rates. But nationalist discourses contain internal contradictions:

Because national movements are most frequently conceptualized as ‘deep horizontal (male) fraternities,’ they often implicitly adopt the logic of patrilineal systems in which women are not only the indispensable locus of continuity, but also the outsiders who must be controlled. [. . .] A classic means of such control is the regulation of women’s reproductive capacity, whether by forcing unwanted births or restricting wanted ones. (Gal and Kligman 2000, 26)

The reforms ushered in after 1989 had a dramatic impact on women. Parliaments reduced maternity leave, access to childcare, and pensions. At the same time, market liberalization brought with it the privatization and restructuring of women-dominated sectors such as healthcare, education and banking, resulting in higher unemployment for women compared to men. This, combined with unequal pay, job discrimination, and women’s overrepresentation in

informal-sector jobs offering no benefits, resulted in the “feminization of poverty” (56, 82). Even policies that did not systematically favour the male breadwinner nonetheless had disparate effects on women (73). However, despite new forms of social stratification along gender lines, the absence of gendered political discourse rendered these changes invisible and difficult to name and address.

Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni explore the absence of gendered political discourse by examining women’s representation in the political sphere. They do not define representation exclusively in terms of the number of women politicians; indeed, under socialism, women held political office at rates higher than in West European countries, but they were not democratically elected and had little real political influence (89-90, 93). On the other hand, women were quite active in pro-democracy groups and mobilized on issues of particular interest to women. Unfortunately, their contributions to democratization were marginalized after the transition, and their ability to influence the political agenda on women’s issues was limited. Most instances of women’s mobilization at the national level typically did not last for more than a few years after 1989. For example, Poland’s Solidarity trade union created a Women’s Section after 1989, but then disbanded it upon learning that its members supported the legalization of abortion. Second, during the period of 1989-2005, the average percentage of women politicians in Central Eastern Europe dropped from 27 percent to 17 percent, while it rose from 13 percent to 22 percent in other European Union countries during this time (92). To be fair, women have moved into previously male-dominated positions in foreign affairs, trade, and interior affairs, and a few women have served as prime ministers, speaker to the national assembly, and party leaders in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia (73-74). Still, the exodus of women from politics warrants explanation.

Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni identified both “supply” and “demand” barriers to women’s involvement in public office by interviewing women in the region. Some supply barriers include self-inhibition, expectations of women’s family responsibilities, and negative stereotypes of women in politics. The women interviewed felt that some women would opt out of politics due to political apathy, defeatism, and the belief that politics is a dirty business belonging to a man’s world. Others felt that women’s family responsibilities leave no time for political involvement. Still others were intimidated by widespread stereotypes of, and negative treatment toward, women in politics. Women politicians interviewed for the study said they were routinely ignored, dismissed, rebuked, and patronized by male colleagues, and that the media treated them as beauty contestants rather than as consequential politicians. Moreover, the families of women in politics were closely scrutinized for any problems, which would then be blamed on the woman’s political involvement. Despite these obstacles, the women interviewed did not identify discrimination as a barrier. In addition to these “supply” barriers, there are demand barriers in that women’s contributions are not valued. Women are routinely relegated to low-rank positions and excluded from the informal networks male politicians use to rise up the ranks. They feel pressured to act like men to be accepted and are therefore inhibited from representing women’s interests. Even when they conform, they do not receive the same level of support and investment that male candidates receive (96-101).

In sum, despite political debates about issues that disproportionately affect women, women are not taking the lead in these debates. Not only is there a decline in women’s political representation but also (and perhaps more importantly) gendered political discourse is resisted. The question is, why?

The Power of Discourse

Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni, as well as Gal and Kligman, argue that some feminist critiques developed in Western liberal democracies are rejected in post-socialist European countries because they are premised upon historical experiences not shared by Central Eastern European women during the twentieth century and may propose solutions that appear irrelevant if not destructive. However, Gal and Kligman further argue that historical events alone do not explain the hostility toward feminism. In addition, feminism and the socialist past are discursively constructed in ways that connect and discredit both simultaneously. This section will begin by presenting Gal and Kligman's discussion of some of the important differences in the historical trajectories of Central Eastern European countries and Western liberal democracies to provide a context for their detailed discourse analysis. Next, it will explore their analysis, which makes the case that the discourse surrounding the socialist past and feminism connects and undermines both. Finally, it will discuss how Guenther's case study of two eastern German cities departs from the other two books in terms of empirics but supports the thesis that the discursive linkages between feminism and socialism explain hostility or receptivity to feminism.

Gal and Kligman reconstruct the historical development of the public and private spheres in Western liberal democracies and in Central Eastern European socialist societies to show how these spheres were differently configured and what implication such differences had for women. Before introducing their analysis, it is helpful to summarize the historical backdrop against which their analysis is positioned. In Western liberal democracies, the division of the public and private spheres can be traced to the advent of industrialization. Whereas men occupied the public sphere and could participate actively in economic and political life, women occupied the private sphere and were deprived of political influence. This social bifurcation constructed women—as distinct from men—as a politically disenfranchised class with distinct interests born from shared collective experiences within the private sphere that were not represented by their democratic governments. One purpose of feminist mobilization was to assert women's place in public life and to give women equal representation in democratic politics.

In contrast, Gal and Kligman point out that pre-socialist Central Eastern European economies were not predicated on urban male workers and female housewives but on landless agricultural labourers of both sexes; in most cases, industrialization arrived with the advent of socialism (45). Because industrialization and socialism came hand-in-hand, configurations of public and private spheres, as well as state-citizen relations, emerged that differed dramatically from those that developed in the West. This, in turn, shaped the kinds of claims women would and would not raise.

Gal and Kligman argue that socialist states attempted to erase the public/private distinction by abolishing the private sphere completely but instead unintentionally created new divisions. Socialist states defined citizens as workers first and foremost; virtually all women were required to work outside the home and all work was public. Moreover, states socialized household (private) work by setting up at least rudimentary childcare facilities, public cafeterias, laundry facilities, and other means for handling household tasks, while at the same time encouraging men to help out with household chores. However, because these institutions and policies required extensive state funding, were resisted by the population, and were not enforced, women still retained sole responsibility within the home for household tasks and childrearing, while also managing the double burden of full-time employment. Whereas many Western liberal feminists

sought to free women of their confinement to the private sphere so that they could fully participate in public life, Central Eastern European women were thrust into a public life controlled by the state and struggled to protect the private sphere.

Just as some activities were pushed into the public domain, others retreated to the private sphere. This was especially true of economic production and of civic and political life. Low wages forced families to turn to the second economy to survive. Most production occurred within the household, making the household the locus of real economic activity. Both men and women participated in the second economy, and yet the household was feminized. Even greater partitioning occurred within this realm, as civil and political engagement repressed in public life retreated to the private sphere. Political action, resistance, and activities associated with civic life took place in the home, and these could be further subdivided into (male) resistance and (female) support (Gal and Kligman 2000, 47-52).

State-citizen relations differed in other ways as well. Most obviously, socialist states repressed political expression and violated the human rights of both men and women. Women could not claim, as in the West, that they were denied democratic rights already enjoyed by men, since both were oppressed by the state. Gal and Kligman write: "People perceived a fundamental distinction between the state, understood as a powerful 'they' who ran the country, and the family, the private 'us' who sacrificed and suffered. The private/public distinction was mapped onto us/them in a way that departed from bourgeois logic" (50). The fact that both men and women felt oppressed by the state encouraged an ethic of collusion between them against the state.

Because the private sphere was seen as the only realm free from state intrusion and the locus of authentic expression, civic values, political engagement, and economic production, the private sphere was valued more highly than the public sphere. Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni point out that the importance placed on the family as a refuge from a grey socialist public life, and on women as transmitters of culture and protectors of threatened national and religious values, reinforced women's traditional gender roles, while also raising their authority within the home. Strong and feminine women were idealized, and "feminization" became a form of political dissent (23-24). In contrast, public politics came to stand for oppression, not freedom. Thus, Gal and Kligman explain that the motto "the personal is political" alarmed some Central Eastern European women, who thought that bringing politics into the private sphere would not bring democracy and fairness into the family, but "surveillance, corruption, and humiliation into the home, destroying the only social arena that, despite its actual problems, seemed to many a realm relatively free from state intrusion" (101).

Another significant point is that the socialist state claimed to have fully emancipated women, although the reality did not live up to the ideal. Socialism promised women full employment, pregnancy and maternity leaves; the state provided paid leave to attend to children's needs, children's allowances, childcare and afterschool care, access to birth control and abortion; liberal divorce laws enabled women to retain their children and housing; and many household tasks were socialized. In many ways, such policies did equalize gender relations. Women under socialism did not experience some of the forms of discrimination decried by Western feminists such as exclusion from the workforce. Moreover, women were not dependent on men but on the state (Gal and Kligman 2000, 5). However, some forms of inequality remained: low and unequal pay, sex segregation that pushed women toward unchallenging jobs in traditionally female sectors, no possibility for advancement, and no possibility to opt out of the workforce to avoid the "double burden." Despite these problems, the party line was that women were fully

emancipated and no one could claim otherwise without undermining the state. Thus, many women's primary experience of "state feminism" was negative: it was imposed from above, poorly carried out, and hypocritical.

To summarize, Gal and Kligman argue that the collective experience of women under socialism differed substantially from that of women in Western liberal democracies. They were not excluded from the workplace, and the state made provisions for childcare and other forms of labour traditionally assumed by women. Women were politically disenfranchised, but so were men; they felt victimized as ungendered citizens of socialist states, not as women. Nor were women economically dependent on men; both worked, and both were mutually dependent on each other to cover basic household expenses from their meagre wages. The private and public spheres were differently constructed such that the private sphere was more highly valued than the public one, increasing women's status within the home rather than diminishing it. Finally, socialist states claimed to have officially emancipated women. However, many women were ambivalent about the forms such emancipation took.

The authors insist that divergent historical experiences alone do not explain hostility to feminism. Rather, this hostility can be explained by the way in which feminism is discursively constructed. For example, Western feminism was portrayed in Central Eastern Europe by its most negative, simplistic, and discredited stereotypes and consequently rejected out of hand (Gal and Kligman 2000, 103). As a result, Western feminism is viewed either as a bourgeois foreign import or as an ideology opposed to men, family, and femininity (Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni 2007, 28, 82; Guenther 2010, 42). This contradicts local discourses emphasizing the need for cooperation between men and women against the state to protect family life from state intrusion. In more recent times, the fact that most women's non-governmental organizations in Central Eastern Europe are funded by Western donors has led some to criticize Western feminists for taking the same top-down approach used by socialist states (Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni 2007, 82).

Perhaps most damning is the way that regional discourses view feminism as inextricably bound to socialism. Some argued that since socialism had already emancipated women, there was no need for feminism (Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni 2007, 56, 82). Others associated feminism with socialism's more negative qualities, ridiculing both. Because women's equality was imposed top-down without grassroots support, it was discredited as unauthentic, unnatural, and oppressive. Socialist states created women's organizations and quotas for women politicians, but these did not increase women's substantive representation. Instead, women's organizations were used to rally support for the regime and the party, and women politicians were viewed as mere tokens without any real political influence, much less a mandate to represent the interests of a democratic polity. Such institutions undermined the project of women's emancipation, delegitimized women's activism, equated feminism with the repression of democracy, freedom, and human rights and made it difficult for people to take feminist discourse seriously (Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni 2007, 56, 72, 82; Gal and Kligman 2000, 101). Moreover, the special policies for women sometimes worked against them. Gal and Kligman note: "In Hungary and the German Democratic Republic women were increasingly accused – as much by system critics as by system supporters – of being unfairly advantaged, denatured, and perverted by their alignment with the state" (52).

In short, for most of the twentieth century, feminism was wedded to the state, and this forced marriage was not a happy one. Post-socialist discourse draws on this historic experience to argue for minimal state intervention in matters concerning family and gender relations. Gal and

Kligman point out that “pension schemes and unemployment insurance receive far more sympathetic political attention than parental or child support arrangements”(70). Moreover, there is a rise in conservative parties promoting “family values” that present feminism and socialism as partners in crimes against families (Guenther 2010, 127; Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni 2007, 82). In the context of the region’s political cultures, increasing the involvement of the state in women’s issues is not seen as a desirable or effective way to advance women’s interests and political representation.

Although there is great convergence among authors in explaining post-socialist anti-feminist sentiment, Guenther’s case study offers a fascinating counterpoint. She examines feminist movements in two eastern German cities: Rostock and Erfurt. Rostock’s feminist movement thrived whereas Erfurt’s never gained traction. The research design is intriguing because Guenther selected cases to induce variation on the dependent variable (presence vs. absence of a feminist movement) while controlling for country differences by selecting cities in the same country. Her study reveals that the success or failure of feminist movements depends on the way feminism and the socialist past are discursively constructed. She argues “[r]ather than being repressive, under specific conditions, socialist legacies may actually be progressive, enhancing, instead of limiting, the efforts of feminist movements to achieve gender equality” (7). Similarly, Western feminism can be construed either positively or negatively in public discourse. Her conclusions depart from the other two books in showing that socialism does not inevitably lead to an anti-feminist backlash; nonetheless, her findings reinforce the thesis that public discourse created an indissoluble bond between feminism and socialism.

For example, citizens of Rostock were nostalgic for some aspects of the old socialist regime, as demonstrated not only through public discourse but also by significant electoral support for refashioned communist-successor parties such as Party of Democratic Socialism and the Social Democratic Party (Guenther 2010, 69). Rising unemployment—especially for women—was an unexpected and unwelcome result of German reunification. Residents accepted the notion of state intervention to remedy economic and social problems, and neo-socialist feminists who emphasized employment opportunities and programs that would help women balance work and family found attentive ears. Consistent with values developed under socialism, feminists in Rostock avoided discourses that pitted women against men, instead emphasizing cooperative collaboration.

Additionally, feminists linked their claims to the city’s pre-socialist history. Rostock is a port city on the Baltic Sea that has a centuries-long tradition of women working and managing households alone during their husbands’ long absences at sea. Feminists’ advocacy for equal employment opportunities and programs that would help women balance work and family did not seem particularly “socialist,” since they tapped into gender roles developed over centuries (Guenther 2010, 61, 187). Guenther elaborates: “In some other post-socialist areas, the socialist family model was received as a state-imposed emancipation of women and emasculation of men. This was not the case in Rostock, where the GDR’s model of gender relations was congruent with existing local practices and traditions” (61).

Finally, feminists in Rostock linked their claims to EU accession and to neighbours such as Sweden. Instead of delegitimizing feminism as a foreign Western import, this strategy legitimized it by tapping into the city’s identity as an outward-looking port open to exchanging

ideas with other European countries, particularly neighbouring Baltic states (Guenther 2010, 72, 90-99). Rostockers' acceptance of state involvement in women's issues made them receptive to EU programs that emphasized women's employment and gender mainstreaming (87-90).

In contrast, Erfurt rejected its socialist legacy and aligned with western German models rather than Swedish models. Restructured socialist parties received negligible electoral support, and neo-socialist feminism was discredited. The feminist movement in Erfurt was splintered into two groups: conservative feminists aligned with the Christian Democratic Union and radical feminist aligned with western German feminism. Neither of these gained traction in Erfurt, and their competition with each other prevented the formation of a strong coalition necessary to win the city's support (110, 145). Moreover, women's organizations in Erfurt did not seek funding from the European Union in part because European Union programs emphasizing employment and gender mainstreaming did not resonate with them (157-158).

Guenther's study shows the importance of public discourse in shaping support for feminism. The greatest strength of her analysis is its identification of critical causal mechanisms and processes such as the relative strength or weakness of electoral support for restructured socialist political parties, the degree of tradition, conservatism and religiosity in a particular location, the ability of a feminist movement to link its claims to local traditions, the city's geography and the neighbours with whom the movement aligns itself, and the movement's ability to scale-shift up and across.

However, her explanation of the causal link between Erfurters' religiosity and lack of support for feminism is confusing given the evidence she presents. For example, Guenther (111-112) notes that women's groups in Erfurt got their start meeting in churches. This suggests that churches were at least nominally supportive of women's organizing. Additionally, Rostockers named their women's centre after the Beguines, a medieval women's lay Roman Catholic community. If religious traditions were so detrimental to feminist movements in Erfurt, why did feminist organizations draw upon them?

Reflections on Gender Ideologies and Discourses

The three books reviewed in this article share a tendency to examine gender ideologies by examining feminism. This presents an analytical problem because it artificially constricts the universe of cases to two types of cases: those where feminism is absent, and those where it is present. This renders invisible a wide range of gender ideologies. While all authors sensed there was more to the story and touched upon masculinism, conservatism, anti-socialism, and religiosity, what is needed is a broad analytical framework encompassing a wider range of gender ideologies and linking them to governing ideologies. This is particularly important if we seek to construct concepts that travel, for, as Gal and Kligman point out, "Western feminists seemed to have forgotten that far from being an exception, the case of East Central Europe is fairly typical: large feminist movements are rare in the world" (99).

Georgia Duest-Lahti's (2008) spectrum of gender ideologies could be useful in this regard. She defines gender ideologies as "structured beliefs and ideas about ways power should be arranged according to social constructs associated with sexed bodies. It is ideas about how gender and power should be put into action" (160). She proposes a spectrum of gender ideologies along the dimensions of feminalism and masculinism, where feminalism is defined as an ideology "that begins from and generally prefers that which is associated with human females, often conferring advantages on them that can include equality with males," while its counterpart,

masculinism, is defined as an ideology “that begins from, and generally prefers, that which is associated with human males, usually giving advantages to them, and may include the option of gender equality as advantageous” (174, 183). She demonstrates how these dimensions can elucidate gender politics in the United States by identifying twelve families within these dimensions arranged according to their affinity with governing ideologies from the left to the right of the political spectrum (176). For example, at the far political left of the spectrum is social democrat feminism and enlightened left masculinism, while at the far political right of the spectrum is new right feminalism and new patriarchy (176). This typology is not intended to be universal and can be adapted to various contexts to show how feminalism and masculinism encompass a range of gender ideologies that offer researchers a lens through which to see a more complete picture of gender ideologies.

Duest-Lahti’s (2008) conceptualization of gender ideologies offers several important insights worth highlighting. First, masculinism and feminalism are interrelated dimensions; to understand one, we must examine both. So often masculinism remains invisible to researchers because it is the hegemonic norm against which feminalism appears aberrant. Placing masculinism at the front and centre of analyses of gender politics enables us to better understand and question political behaviour (Duest-Lahti 2008, 165). Indeed, Galligan, Clavero, and Calloni, as well as Gal and Kligman, describe transformations that point to the increasing influence of masculinism in post-socialist politics. A more detailed investigation of masculinist discourses would offer a more complete explanation of popular resistance to feminism.

Second, the spectrum sensitizes us to the range of feminisms constituting feminalism, reducing the risk of faulty analyses due to having overlooked particular varieties of feminism. At the same time, it offers “a means to take seriously pro-woman political thought by women who do not consider themselves feminists” (Duest-Lahti 2008, 190). Such a conceptualization is better suited for examining Black womanist thought and postcolonial pro-woman thought (190). It could be particularly useful for investigating gender politics in predominantly Catholic countries such as Poland with a long tradition of marianism, a current political scene in which women politicians are most prominent in conservative right-wing parties, and a civil society featuring women’s groups aligned with the Catholic Church.

A major strength of the works reviewed here is their detailed investigation into the ways that discourse shapes behaviour. Analyses of public discourses offer a deeper and richer understanding of the logic and emotions underpinning political phenomena than one would gain from, for example, survey results. Nonetheless, we do not know how widely such meanings are held. Moreover, generalizations applied to many countries minimize within-country variation, masking contradictory empirical evidence such as that found by Guenther. This critique notwithstanding, all authors convincingly demonstrate the explanatory power of discourse. Guenther’s work is particularly thought provoking in that it disentangles conflicting attitudes toward socialism and teases out their contradictory consequences for feminist discourse: whereas strong anti-socialist discourse stigmatizes feminism, the discourse of post-socialist dystopia and nostalgia for elements of the past assesses feminism more sympathetically. These analyses invite us to speculate on the implications of other potential permutations and combinations. For example, how might the discursive construction of feminism shift if it were unbound from socialism and linked to pre-socialist women’s movements or post-socialist EU accession?

Additionally, future research could examine the ways in which institutions and discourses interact. For example, the weakness of civil society in the region presents institutional barriers to mobilization, but this phenomenon is itself shaped by public discourses that denigrate

involvement in the public sphere. In his analysis of the weakness of civil society, Howard (2003) identifies three contributing factors: mistrust in communist organizations, the persistence of friendship networks, and profound disappointment with developments of the post-socialist period, resulting in a general preference for pursuing one's goals in the private sphere rather than the (discredited) public sphere. Discourses surrounding the past shape current behaviour, including the willingness (or lack of willingness) to engage with public institutions.

Howard's (2003) analysis sheds light on the reasons why "NGO feminism," rather than grassroots, broad-based feminist movements aimed at large-scale structural transformations, has become the dominant model of feminism in the region (Guenther 2011). Feminist non-governmental organizations (NGOs) contribute to feminist goals largely by building up feminist civil society, offering services to women, and engaging in limited, issue specific advocacy on public policies concerning women. Less, if any, effort is made to address gender inequality by mobilizing the public to engage in formal politics aimed at challenging the status quo. Instead, feminist NGOs work closely with EU organizations, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and states to advance their goals. In fact, some feminist NGOs have been able to garner a measure of legitimacy by tapping into the EU's discourse on equality and by drawing upon EU expectations, policies, and programs to push for more egalitarian policies at the state level (Guenther 2011, 873). Returning to the metaphor of the dog that doesn't bark, perhaps it is time to shift from asking why it doesn't and when it will, to observing the other dogs in the pack and how they interact.

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