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FEMINIST MOVEMENTS IN A  
GLOBALIZING WORLD:  
GERMAN AND AMERICAN  
PERSPECTIVES

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Edited by  
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## FOREWORD

This volume features new perspectives on the women's movements in the United States and Germany in the beginning of the twenty-first century. Both movements have contributed substantially to the programmatic articulation and political implementation of gender equality in the course of the last hundred fifty years. The transatlantic dialogue between these movements has been most fruitful in recent decades yet it reaches back—over the hiatus of the two world wars—to a rather intensive exchange a hundred years ago, culminating in the visit of the eighty-five year old Susan B. Anthony and other American feminists at the momentous meeting of the International Council of Women in Berlin in 1904. It was at this time that an American feminist expressed her surprise about the strong oratorical skills and organizational prowess of their German sisters. Susan B. Anthony, she wrote, “could only deduce that a strong and powerful woman's movement lay behind this.”<sup>1</sup>

The state of mutual alienation and discovery has long been superseded by that of close cooperation within a framework of international organizations. The current discourse is shaped by the realization how much local feminism is being shaped by the increasingly global context. As German women have been helped by the establishment of European legislative structures, American feminists have learned to use globalizing initiatives for their legal agendas. The intensive exchange has not necessarily diminished the different outlook on goals and strategies in the two movements. The legacy of the class-based division in the German women's movement before World War I and the close affiliation to (and at times absorption by) the socialist parties is still reflected in the social empowerment strategies of German feminists since the 1960s. The American women's movement, an early advocate of democracy, property rights and personal self-development, had its own legacy in the race-based exclusionary policies of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These legacies and the different political cultures in both societies still provide ample space for misunderstandings and learning opportunities.

This volume leads right into current debates on local developments and their increasing interconnectedness in the age of internationalization and globalization. It contains revised versions of papers delivered at the AICGS workshop, “Feminist Movements in a Globalizing World: German and American Perspectives,” on May 18, 2001. The volume's focus is threefold: First it illuminates differences and similarities of the women's movements in both

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societies, something that needs to be periodically debated in order to counter misunderstandings and further cooperation. Secondly, it advances the current awareness of the effects of globalization, delineating strategies for utilizing them for the goal of gender equality both locally and globally. Thirdly, the volume represents a barometer of certain currents of feminist scholarship, which the editors, Silke Roth and Sara Lennox discuss in their introduction. While the volume is carried mainly by the sociological and political discourse that Silke Roth organized for the workshop, it also reflects the need to understand the effect of the women's movement on the development of German Studies in the United States since the late 1970s. Sara Lennox, a Germanist and enthusiastic leader in this enterprise, shows the various steps in which the feminist agenda was integrated into German Studies, adding substantially to the differences in the disciplinary outlook between the United States and Germany.

Silke Roth deserves particular praise for bringing the workshop and the volume together. We thank both editors as well as the contributors for their spirited efforts towards a broad and provocative assessment of the state of the American and German women's movements. We also thank the Heinrich Böll Foundation for its support toward the distribution of the volume.

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Director, Harry & Helen Gray  
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#### ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup>. Quoted by Patricia Herminghouse, "'Sisters, Arise!' The Intersections of Nineteenth-Century German and American Feminist Movements," in *The German-American Encounter: Conflict and Cooperation between Two Cultures, 1800-2000*, ed. Frank Trommler and Elliott Shore (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2001), 50.

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## INTRODUCTION

Sara Lennox and Silke Roth

### COMPARING WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AND FEMINISMS

When, at the German Studies Association conference in October 2000, Frank Trommler asked us to organize an AICGS workshop that focuses on comparative approaches to American and German feminism, we were confronted with a dilemma: given the current state of the women's movements of both countries, how could we best illuminate their similarities and differences? For several reasons, a comparison of the accomplishments of academic feminism in German and the United States did not seem productive. First, in both of our fields, literature and sociology, national feminist approaches have converged and diverged over the past thirty years. At the present moment what counts as a feminist research method in both disciplines is quite similar on both sides of the Atlantic. Thus, little would be learned from their comparison. Secondly, it is no longer possible to talk about a single feminist approach in either literature or sociology. In literature alone, feminist versions of many different methods exist: feminist cultural studies, feminist new historicism, feminist reader-response criticism, feminist psychoanalytic approaches, and so on. Given that proliferation of feminisms, it would have been difficult even to determine what we were choosing to examine, had we focused on academic feminism. Finally, the perspective employed by academic feminists themselves has itself changed in recent years. Many feminist scholars have abandoned their earlier focus on gender alone and now explore areas (for example, the constitution of national or racial identity) in which gender, while remaining a fundamental analytic term, is no longer the single or even primary category of investigation. In many women's studies programs (like that of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst) such a method is termed an "integrative analysis," and students in such programs are taught to regard categories of race and class (as well as those of religion, ethnicity, and sexuality) as equal in importance to the category of gender.

Therefore an examination of academic feminism seemed an unproductive topic for our workshop. But we also realized that progressive movements, including feminism, seemed at the moment to have been forced back into a defensive posture vis-à-vis the neo-liberal—or worse—policies of the state.

## Introduction

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We thus thought it might be useful instead to investigate what women in political movements were actually doing and how we as feminist scholars might go about describing them. And, indeed, the productive and informative day-long workshop provided comparative information about women and the women's movements in Germany and the United States, also addressing differences as well as similarities in German and American feminist methods.

The contributors to this volume focus on the different yet related experiences of the German and American women's movements. From a comparative perspective, the papers discuss current strategies and practices on both sides of the Atlantic, such as "gender mainstreaming" and the pursuit of "gender democracy." They assess the building of international networks of feminists around the globe and the diffusion processes that accompany the globalization of social movements. But while global diffusion processes constitute an important context for the development of strategies, the developments of social movements are also shaped by the historical context and current political developments. Drawing on literature on social movements and globalization, Silke Roth provides a theoretical framework for addressing feminist movements in a globalizing world while Myra Marx Ferree describes the current state of the American and German women's movements in a global perspective. Her discussion of the differences and development of the women's movements includes a historical perspective addressing the emergence of these movements in the mid-nineteenth century. Claudia Neusüss, member of the executive board of the Heinrich Böll Foundation (affiliated with the Green Party), introduces the concept of "gender democracy" and describes how it is implemented within this organization. Gender democracy is a version of the strategy of gender mainstreaming, which has also been adopted by supranational organizations like the United Nations and the European Union. Ingrid Miethe focuses on the emergence and development of the East German women's movement before the *Wende* and after unification. She explains the double marginalization of East German Women—as East Germans and as women—as a result of the West German culture of dominance, which can only be overcome through more equal interaction, cooperation, and collaboration between East and West German feminists. Cynthia Deitch addresses the implications of a change in government for the women's movement, in particular what effects the new Bush administration has on the American women's movement. Sara Lennox might seem to be an exception here, since she is the only participant in the workshop who is not a sociologist or political scientist. However, her paper

fits in two ways. First, she too is addressing what a group of women has done and how their activities have transformed a particular sphere, that of the discipline of U.S. German Studies. And, secondly, she focuses on how and why American feminists see Germany and its women in a particular way. The perspectives these feminist scholars employed thus forced workshop participants to confront a final question also of critical importance to feminist scholarship: through or via what categories do we see our objects of feminist investigation, and to what degree do these categories themselves help to constitute what we believe we see?

Frank Trommler first proposed the initial idea for this workshop. After a preliminary conversation with Sara Lennox about the workshop's basic concept, Silke Roth put it all together and edited the manuscripts.

**GENDER, GLOBALIZATION, AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS<sup>1</sup>**

Silke Roth

**THE GLOBAL CONTEXT OF WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE  
ACTION**

Today's women's movements are increasingly internationalized and professionalized and influence politics at the global level. Like the organizations of other social movements, women's organizations reach from grassroots level to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOS), reflecting the changing relationship between global and local developments. In the era of globalization, social movements not only act locally but also globally. Thus the much-described globalization of capital markets and deregulation processes is accompanied by the emergence of new political actors. An optimistic view on globalization would then suggest that globalization might also lead to an expansion of human rights, to a shift towards the rights of individuals regardless of nationality, to the expansion of an international civil society and to cross border solidarities.<sup>2</sup>

Like any other social, political or economic development, globalization processes are gendered. This means that "advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine."<sup>3</sup> Consequently globalization both shapes and is shaped by gender relations and reproduces, challenges, and modifies gender differences in the spheres of production and reproduction. For example, global cities are not only strategic sites where global economic processes are coordinated, but also a place where large numbers of women and immigrants are incorporated in the service sector that caters to the strategic sectors.<sup>4</sup>

One aspect of globalization is the feminization of employment. On the one hand this term refers to the increasing number of women in the labor force, on the other it points to the deterioration of working conditions with respect to labor standards, income, and employment status – for both, men and women – addressing the fact that women conventionally constitute a high proportion of workers doing low status work. Feminization then means that some women gain greater personal autonomy and more control over budgeting while some men lose ground. Furthermore, globalization and feminization of the economy

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are accompanied by a greater participation of women in the public sphere. While literature on globalization and restructuring initially ignored gender aspects, there is now a growing body of literature addressing this relationship.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, theories of social movements have focused for a long time on movements with (presumably) all-male constituencies and marginalized or overlooked findings of gender theory and women's movements research. However, the institutions and processes crucial for the development of these movements are gendered as well. They encompass state institutions, and supranational organizations as well as discourses and framing processes.<sup>6</sup> Drawing on research about international and transnational women's movements, I will discuss four dimensions of global mobilization—international and transnational networks, framing processes, new information technologies, and supranational structures. These dimensions are overlapping rather than mutually exclusive.

## **INTERNATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS**

Networks are decentralized non-hierarchical coalitions of groups that can include both organizations and individuals. They play an important role in various stages of organizing on a global level, for example by framing debates and getting issues on the agenda, by encouraging discursive commitments from states and other policy actors, by causing procedural change at the international and domestic level, by affecting policy, and by influencing behavior changes in target actors.<sup>7</sup>

International and transnational advocacy networks that were able to create solidarity across nations (even those at war with each other) existed already in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The international organizations of the women's peace movement like the International Council of Women founded in Washington, D.C., in 1888, the International Woman Suffrage Alliance formed in Berlin in 1904, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, established in The Hague in 1915 represent examples for such networks. Activists in these networks engaged in emotional labor like fashioning expressive public rituals of reconciliation, forming intense affective ties in form of international friendships and family-like relationships, and drawing on the emotional template of mother love as a universal bond in order to build solidarity among internationally active women.<sup>8</sup> Compared to these women's

organizations, men in different kinds of transnational organizations—socialist and peace movements, for example—were less successful in creating collective identities that transcended the nation state at the turn of the twentieth century. Ironically, the assignment of emotion to women, a key element in the polarization of male and female and in the creation of gender hierarchy, worked to women’s advantage in their quest to create a collective identity that would bind the world together rather than tear it apart.<sup>9</sup>

The network structure is an institutionalized, appropriate, and effective means for women’s movement activists to work together across different perspectives and experiences that are based on nationality, ethnicity, and class. It keeps activists aware that the majority of the world is not affluent and permits quick action on issues affecting women as they emerge anywhere around the globe.<sup>10</sup> For a long time social-movement literature focused on hierarchical organizational structures. Studies on feminist organizing thus provide important insights for the analysis of decentralized non-hierarchical coalitions of groups in general that are typical for transnational movements, not only for the women’s movement.

### FRAMING PROCESSES

Transnational mobilization does not only encompass organizational but also discursive aspects. Framing processes include the diagnosis of social or political problems, the identification of alliances and enemies, and solutions to the diagnosed problems as well as strategies to attain these goals.<sup>11</sup> In the context of global organizing framing processes are crucial in order to link local struggles to global networks.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, only organizations that share similar views of the origins of the conflict as well as common ideological frameworks and goals have significant impact on the elaboration of international norms.

The proliferation of feminist organizations around the world resulted in the “multiplication of the places and spaces in which women who call themselves feminists act”<sup>13</sup> and a wider scope of what came to be defined as issues relevant to women’s status. Based on the increasing diversity of where and how feminist discourses circulate, the NGOization of women’s groups became more diffused as did notions of professionalization and specialization, the emergence of a transnational agenda, and the generation of new knowledge about international feminism.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the discourse in the international women’s movement

shifted toward a more prominent link between feminism and development, leading to the formation of issue-based networks.<sup>15</sup> Increasingly, the South is shaping the agenda of the international feminist movement. In addition, in the former socialist countries in which western feminists, in particular Americans, set out to help building feminist movements, the pressure to accept western norms was sometimes rejected as western definitions of politics, civil society, and the state often conflicted with post-socialist women's experiences.<sup>16</sup>

The example of the international women's movement shows that the distinction between conscience constituents and direct beneficiaries<sup>17</sup> cannot easily be drawn in the global context. Aside from conflicts between movements and their adversaries, one can also notice the growth of conflicts between feminists from the North and the South in the middle of the 1980s and between western feminists and women's movement activists of the former socialist countries in the 1990s. In the context of global organizing, activists from advanced capitalist nations might at times experience challenges from the South and are forced to reconsider their agenda and strategies.

### **NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES**

Neither transnational networks nor framing processes would be possible without the use of information technologies and the media.<sup>18</sup> Feminist movements also increasingly use new information technologies. GLOW – the Global Center for Women's Studies and Politics developed by the Feminist Institute of the Heinrich Böll Foundation is an example for the use of the Internet. GLOW represents the basis for a global feminist internet public.<sup>19</sup> Rather than concentrating on one country or a particular women's community, GLOW aims at global networking through information both about local activities and global communities through mobilizing for campaigns as well as initiating a virtual discourse and transfer between science and politics in the area of women's and gender studies. Of course, access to new information technologies depends on financial and other resources. Taking race, class, and gender differences into consideration, in the United States some women (and men) might face similar conditions as some women (and men) in developing countries. Furthermore, the access to the media<sup>20</sup> in general and to information technologies in particular is gendered.<sup>21</sup>

### SUPRANATIONAL STRUCTURES

Finally, the transnationalization and globalization of protest issues are strongly influenced by the political authorities on the international level, supranational power centers, and political structures. As the emergence of the nation state created a platform for the transformation of political protest from the local to the national level,<sup>22</sup> new transnational political structures like the United Nations further the globalization of social movements.<sup>23</sup> The United Nations offers organized social movements a broad platform by granting them consultative status. By providing social movements an action space, the United Nations is an example for supranational political opportunities.<sup>24</sup>

For example, when the United Nations declared 1975-1985 the Decade for Women, it brought broad attention to their disadvantaged status in many parts of the world, especially in the underdeveloped regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The mid-decade conference of “regional” organizers in Copenhagen spurred formalization of supranational organizations, supported national feminist mobilization, and regional meetings in the South. In Mexico (and other Latin American countries), the International Women’s Year led to linkages between middle-class and poor women and put pressure on the Mexican government to change laws that were discriminatory towards women.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the United Nations not only provided a supranational structure for the women’s movement but also transformed itself through the creation of permanent agencies that address gender issues.

The emergence of supranational power centers such as NATO, GATT, the European Union and the United Nations is one of the consequences of globalization. These organizations regulate problems shared by the nations belonging to these structures. It also means that these organizations that try to solve “international” problems become the target for protest movements. However, it is important to distinguish between regional alliances like the European Union and world communities like the United Nations, some of which imply a loss of sovereignty for the nation-state while others do not diminish the national prerogatives of states. Consequently, the same supranational body might represent opportunities to one movement and constraints to another. For example, there are vast differences in expectations about the positive and negative consequences of the European Court and its affect on women-friendly policies in member states.<sup>26</sup> At one end of the



spectrum, prophecies of doom—the end of gender equality as we know it—can be found in the Scandinavian debate.<sup>27</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, optimism emerges that the European Court is able to end gender discriminatory practices and to increase women's influence in policy making. The latter stance is taken by feminists in societies where women not only have few social rights but also a weak position in the labor market and minimal representation on political bodies.<sup>28</sup>

### CONCLUSIONS

The effects of globalization are certainly contradictory. This brief discussion of four dimensions of globalization and social movements in a gender perspective—networks, framing processes, new information technologies and supranational organizations—suggests that it is necessary to differentiate with respect to various aspects: first, some movements and their constituencies might benefit from supranational opportunity structures while others experience globalization as detrimental. Second, some supranational organizations might provide opportunities for global organizing while others might result in constraints (e.g. World Bank v. United Nations). Third, movements in some countries might benefit from globalization processes while others might experience a retrograde step. Therefore the answer to the question whether globalization has positive or negative effects for social movements and civil society is: it depends. We need more case studies that inform us as to who benefits from what processes. One hypothesis I would suggest is that those with the least power and resources might benefit the most, for example through the globalization of human rights. But one could also argue that positive mobilization effects depend on the access to resources. For example with respect to AIDS and its repercussions, “Act Up” in the United States was more successful than “Aids in Africa.”

Finally, given the lack of parties at the supranational level outside of the European Union, where European parties exist with specific political platforms, one can certainly say that social movements and international advocacy networks have important functions as watchdogs. As growing international organizations they challenge supranational authorities. The women's movement that successfully changed the development agenda provides an excellent example for this.

ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>. Parts of this article were presented at the DAAD Conference “The Global Condition,” Berkeley, February 15, 2001. I gratefully acknowledge helpful comments from Fazila Bhimiji, Sasha Constanza-Chock, Myra Marx Ferree, Francois Guesnet, Claudia Neusüss, Regine Schönenberg, Frank Trommler, and Kathrin Zippel as well as and Ilonka Oszvald for editorial assistance.

<sup>2</sup>. Cf. Saskia Sassen, “Towards a Feminist Analysis of the Global Economy.” From Saskia Sassen. *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), 81-109.

<sup>3</sup>. Joan Acker, “Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations,” *Gender and Society* 4 (1990), 139-58, here 167.

<sup>4</sup>. Sassen, *Feminist Analysis*.

<sup>5</sup>. For example Susan Tiano, “Gender, Work, and World Capitalism: Third World Women’s Role in Development.” In Myra Marx Ferree and Beth B. Hess, eds., *Analyzing Gender* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1987); Kathryn B. Ward, “Reconceptualizing World Systems Theory to Include Women.” In Paula England, ed., *Theory on Gender: Feminism on Theory* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1993); Brigitte Young, “Globalisierung und Gender,” *Prokla* 28 (1998); Christa Wichterich, *Die globalisierte Frau* (Hamburg, 1998); Sassen, “Globalization”; Valentine M. Moghadam, “Gender and the Global Economy.” In Myra Marx Ferree, Judith Lorber, and Beth B. Hess, eds., *Revisioning Gender* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1999).

<sup>6</sup>. Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier, “Guest Editors Introduction: Special Issue on Gender and Social Movements.” Part I, *Gender and Society* 12 (1998): 622-4; Myra Marx Ferree and Silke Roth, “Gender, Class, and the Interaction Between Social Movements: A Strike of West Berlin Day Care Workers,” *Gender and Society*, 12 (1998): 626-48; Silke Roth and Myra Marx Ferree, “Editorial: Geschlechtsblinder Diskurs: Geschlechterverhältnisse und Frauenbewegungen in internationaler Perspektive,” *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen* 14 (2001): 4-12.

<sup>7</sup>. Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

<sup>8</sup>. Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor, “‘Loving Internationalism:’ Die Gefühlskultur der internationalen Frauenbewegung, 1888-1945,” *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen* 14 (2001): 54-64. (See also Leila Rupp, “Constructing Internationalism: The Case of Transnational Women’s Organizations, 1888-1945,” *American Historical Review* 99, 1994: 1571-90.)

<sup>9</sup>. *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>10</sup>. Myra Marx Ferree and Mangala Subramaniam, “The International Women’s Movement at Century’s End.” In Dana Vannoy, ed., *Gender Mosaics. Social Perspectives. Original Readings* (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2001), 496-506.

<sup>11</sup>. The concept of framing which goes back to Erving Goffman’s *Frameanalysis* (New York 1974) was introduced to social-movement theory by David A. Snow, E. Burke Rochford, Jr. Steven Worden, and Robert D. Benford, “Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation,” *American Sociological Review* 51

(1986): 464-81. For an overview see Robert Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611-39.

<sup>12</sup>. See, for example, Franklin D. Rothman and Pamela Oliver, "From Local to Global: The Anti-Dam Movement in Southern Brazil, 1979-1992," *Mobilization* 4 (1999): 41-57.

<sup>13</sup>. Alvarez 1997, 2 in Ferree and Subramaniam, "International Women's Movement," 500.

<sup>14</sup>. Ferree and Subramaniam, "International Women's Movement."

<sup>15</sup>. Thus one could also speak about a "feminization of NGOs" which includes not only feminist criticism of the development agenda including participatory development, nonhierarchical structures, and attention to woman-centered development but also the number of women working in NGOs. See for example the study of women's projects of the Heinrich Böll Foundation: Birte Rodenberg and Christa Wichterich: *Macht Gewinnen: Eine Studie über Frauenprojekte der Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung im Ausland* (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 1999).

<sup>16</sup>. For a different assessment see Valerie Sperling, Myra Marx Ferree, and Barbara Risman, "Constructing Global Feminism: Transnational Advocacy Networks and Russian Women's Activism," *Signs* (in Print).

<sup>17</sup>. John McCarthy and Mayer Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (1977): 1212-41, define those who support a movement without benefiting directly if movement objectives are achieved as conscience constituents.

<sup>18</sup>. See, for example, Markus S. Schulz, "Collective Action Across Border: Opportunity Structures, Network Capacities, and Communicative Praxis in the Age of Advanced Globalization," *Sociological Perspectives* 41 (1998): 587-616.

<sup>19</sup>. Helga Braun, "Ein virtuelles feministisches Vernetzungsprojekt im Internet," *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen* 14 (2001): 114-8.

<sup>20</sup>. Cynthia M. Lont, "The Influence of the Media on Gender Images," in Dana Vannoy, ed., *Gender Mosaics. Social Perspectives. Original Readings* (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2001), 114-22, characterizes the current situation as "symbolic annihilation" of women despite the increasing participation of women in the media and the diversification of the way women are portrayed.

<sup>21</sup>. See for example Nancy Hafkin and Nancy Taggart, *Gender, Information Technology, and Developing Countries: An Analytic Study* (Washington, DC: USAID, 2001).

<sup>22</sup>. Charles Tilly, *The Contentious French* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1986).

<sup>23</sup>. Florence Passy, "Supranational Political Opportunities as a Channel of Globalization of Political Conflicts: The Case of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." In Donatella della Porta, Hans Peter Kriesi and Dieter Rucht, eds., *Social Movements in a Globalizing World* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 148-69.

<sup>24</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>. Marta Lamas, Alicia Martinez, Maria Luisa Tarres, and Esperanza Tunon, "Building Bridges: The Growth of Popular Feminism in Mexico." In Amrita Basu, ed., *The Challenge*

## Gender, Globalization, and Social Movements

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*of Local Feminisms: Women's Movements in Global Perspective* (Boulder: Westview, 1995).

<sup>26</sup>. This is pointed out by Barbara Hobson, "Economic Citizenship: Reflections through the European Union Policy Mirror." In Barbara Hobson, ed., *Gender and Citizenship in Transition* (New York: Routledge 2000), here 95.

<sup>27</sup>. Hobson summarizes the feminist debate on the welfare state. For example, Swedish women play an important role as political actors, and Sweden is seen as a watchdog for gender equality in the EU. *Ibid.*, here 86.

<sup>28</sup>. *Ibid.*

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**THINKING GLOBALLY, ACTING LOCALLY: GERMAN AND  
AMERICAN FEMINISM IN THE WORLD SYSTEM**

Myra Marx Ferree

Although it was the environmental movement that popularized the slogan, “think globally, act locally,” this is also a good description of feminist activism in the world today. On the one hand, there are more global networks and international interests among feminists today than in the 1970s and 1980s, which contributes to an understanding of women’s issues in world-system terms. On the other hand, much actual feminist mobilization is local and particular, tied to the specific realities and political opportunities and constraints of the national systems in which they act.

This paper attempts to make sense of these contrasting but complementary tugs by using the specific experiences of the German and American women’s movements to show both the global context and the local distinctiveness of contemporary feminism. My argument is that efforts to achieve a more gender-fair society, which is what I mean by feminist activism, take specific paths in each country, but that there are some common paradoxes that emerge in both. These paradoxes reflect certain tensions facing the women’s movement globally. In order to develop this idea, I first offer a very brief review of the historical development of women’s movements, suggesting a few of the key issues that this history presents to German and American feminists. I then outline the course of separate development of the American and German women’s movements, necessarily simplifying this picture but hopefully highlighting a few of the key turning points and critical tensions in each. I finally return to the global stage to point out some of the transformations in the transnational arena. Here I suggest that some of the common problems that German and American feminists face, despite their different local manifestations, are best understood as part of a global process.

**THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF FEMINIST MOBILIZATION**

To begin this story, we should step back in time to the earliest days of the women’s movement. That is, not the 1960s and 1970s, let me remind you, but the 1840s and 1850s. Think of the year 1848 as a critical date for both countries’ women’s movements. It is the year that efforts to produce a liberal united

Germany first failed, and also the publication year of both the Communist Manifesto and the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments. Thus, 1848 can be seen as a symbolic year for both the emergence of an international socialist movement that has had world-shaping and world-shaking consequences and of a no less international women's movement for recognition as equal persons and citizens. The American authors of the Seneca Falls declaration had just returned from an international anti-slavery convention in London, and the claims that they brought against the United States were demands that women around the world were also beginning to raise.<sup>1</sup> However, the basic rights to own property, control their own bodies, to receive an education, to secure an economic livelihood outside of marriage, and to be citizens and voters which women as women were demanding were and are not just defined by gender status but also by class, race and political system. This means that from the very beginning, the women's movements of Germany and the United States developed in quite different ways, because the political systems and internal conflicts of each country placed gender relations in a specifically different context.

### **LENSES OF RACE AND CLASS**

Certain of these differences continued to play an important role when women's movements began to remobilize in the 1970s. The liberal revolutions of the nineteenth century that enshrined notions of individual rights and liberty along with notions of democracy, property rights, and personal self-development had succeeded in France and the United States but failed in Germany. The bourgeois individual as a politically empowered citizen became an important element of the American self-understanding, but was not central to German political thought.<sup>2</sup> Instead, the conflict between capital and labor in Germany gave rise to the largest socialist party in Europe in the nineteenth century and made Germany the center of an emerging socialist internationalism. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century conflicts between feminism and socialism in what strategies would lead to improvements in women's status led to a fragmentation into a specifically upper middle class feminism and a working-class feminism that was subsumed within the socialist party and saw its claims as achievable only after and through a socialist revolution. This class-based

division in women's movements was not only typical of Germany, but diffused over time with international socialism to typify many of the world's women.<sup>3</sup>

However, the United States was the exception. American exceptionalism, as it is called, means that only in the United States did a strong socialist party fail to flourish, and consequently, the division of feminism along class lines was not as pronounced there either. Women's movements in the United States were divided instead, as the country was, by conflict along racial lines. Slavery, the Civil War, the Jim Crow segregation of the post-reconstruction era, genocidal wars against Native Americans and the continuing racial exploitation and exclusions of Hispanic populations in the Southwest and Asian immigrants in the West shaped American feminism.<sup>4</sup> Women's movements in the United States, which were committed to a liberal definition of women's rights as equality and individualism, were constantly confronted with the question of whether or not their demands for inclusion, citizenship and self-determination were really being made on behalf of all women or only represented the empowerment of racially dominant white women. Feminists were consistently divided on this question and struggled over just how gender and race were to be understood.<sup>5</sup>

As the United States emerged as a world power in the twentieth century, white American women generally accepted the ideas of racial superiority that also guided the colonial empires of Europe in their dealings with the rest of the world.<sup>6</sup> These ideas came under attack internationally in the wake of World War II and the rise of national independence movements around the world. But while race was understood in Europe as an international issue of colonialism, the connections between women of color in the United States and the two-thirds of the world's women who are not white were already salient. The anti-war movement of the 1960s simultaneously questioned the racism of the war in Vietnam and the racism of American Apartheid in the South. The connections between socialism and nationalism in the newly independent countries of Africa and Asia tended to lead Europeans to see post-colonial developments most readily through the lens of class, leading some to see an expanded arena of class conflict and others to view the situation as the extension of the benefits of capitalist development to the "underdeveloped" world. American women were predisposed to understand the position of women in post-colonial societies through their already well-developed lens of race and to place all "women of color" into the same conceptual category.

In sum, both nationally and internationally, the context for feminist activism in Germany was set by an agenda in which class issues were prominent and divisive, but in which issues of race could be treated as remote and unthreatening. In contrast, in the United States, racial divisions were salient and white dominance problematic from the beginning, but issues of social class were largely silenced. Demands for gender equity took shape within and through these race and class cleavages.

### ORGANIZATIONAL LEGACIES

In both Germany and the United States, as well as world-wide, the development of women's movements in the early part of the twentieth century also left historical legacies in the form of organizations. International women's organizations were founded in this early wave of feminism that continue to exist to the present day, but also national organizations were formed in ways that included or excluded specific groups of women, and defined women's and men's interests in particular ways.<sup>7</sup> American women had a legacy of national organizations of women and networks of women in both political parties, in unions, and in local governments on whom they could draw when they again began to mobilize in the 1960s, as well as a history of white dominance within those organizations to confront.<sup>8</sup> German women were confronted with the reality of their division into two separate states with very different commitments to class politics and the history of socialist organizing of women, as well as very different approaches to understanding fascism.

These historical roots are often obscured by thinking of the women's movement as beginning only in the 1960s and 1970s in either country. Let me therefore make one additional historical point, namely, that the degree of internationalism manifested by women's movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was far more substantial than it was at the height of the cold war when feminist re-mobilization began. In contrast to the 1960s, women in the earlier part of the century formed international organizations for suffrage, peace and women's education that had hundreds of thousands of members; international socialist congresses also brought women activists together despite the enormous costs that distance imposed; colonial relationships fostered travel and trade relations in which women also became internationally knowledgeable and experienced actors. It was the disruptions of two world



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wars and the subsequent division of the world into two hostile blocs that brought internationalism to an atypical low point by the 1950s, and which also—and not coincidentally—marked the low ebb of women’s activism in Europe and the United States.

Our short historical memory offers the 1950s as the epitome of “traditional” values and practices in family and gender relations. Actually the 1950s are the bottom of a curvilinear path taken by many diverse social indicators in the twentieth century: women’s age at marriage, likelihood of not marrying at all, higher education, formation of women’s social organizations and explicitly feminist activism are all higher in the 1920s and 1980s than in the 1950s.<sup>9</sup> The rates of international trade, formation of international organizations, and immigration also hit bottom in the 1950s and are just now equaling or in some cases surpassing the rates that were typical of the early twentieth century. Just as some of the differences between German and American feminism have their roots in the historical developments of these movements, some of the current expansion of global consciousness and organizing among women’s movements in both countries also needs to be understood in reference to the re-emergence of internationalism that the cold war had blocked.

### **FEMINIST REMOBILIZATION IN GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES**

What then are some of the features of the new feminist remobilization of the late twentieth century in both countries, and how are they both similar and different? Both Germany and the United States were deeply affected by the cold war in their self-conceptions. Both Germanys formed their self-images and shaped their politics through processes of system-competition in which the other side became an important negative reference point but also therefore a locus of self-criticism.<sup>10</sup> East Germany had a “baby-year” of maternity leave, and West Germany had an active antiwar movement, both of which could be used by dissidents on the other side to pressure their own governments. The anti-communist politics of both West Germany and the United States, however, included an emphasis on conservative gender values. The Communist Party did not achieve the emancipation of women it proclaimed anywhere in the East, but it served as a reference point in justifying women’s subordination in the West.

The remobilization of feminism in both West Germany and the United States sprang from social movements that questioned the red-baiting that was used to suppress criticism of a government and its policies. In the United States this was the southern civil rights movement initially and then the wider anti-war mobilization and new left politics of students in the north. In West Germany, this was the student movement that arose, as in most of Europe, out of a dissatisfaction with the conservatism of the trade unions, the militarism of cold war geo-politics, and the unfinished legacy of fascism.<sup>11</sup>

### **DEVELOPMENTS IN WEST GERMANY AND THE GDR**

In Germany these developments went through three distinct phases. The first phase, in West Germany, was marked particularly by the historical confrontation between feminism and socialism, and was distinguished by a rejection of the once-dominant division between working-class socialist feminism and bourgeois equal rights feminism. This rejection took the form of a claim for autonomy for women, which carried multiple meanings in this historical context. One meaning was a refusal to accept the classic socialist position that subordinated women's claims to the success of the party as a whole, and thus a rejection of the party-based women's organizations of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as authentic carriers of women's demands for liberation. This also meant the repudiation of male-dominated leftist student groups and male-dominated socialist revolutionaries in the rest of the world as being appropriate representatives of women. Instead, women committed to autonomy formed new, non-hierarchical local groups that began from the position of women's interests as women taking priority, and rejecting co-operation with men as necessarily leading to subordination.<sup>12</sup>

Rethinking socialist orthodoxies about whether the overthrow of capitalism would really usher in a new age of equality for women did not mean accepting that capitalism was or could be good for women. In that sense, the new feminism developing in West Germany remained more influenced by socialism than American feminism ever was. But the question of whether socialism was good for women became a central one, and the countries of Eastern Europe became a point of comparison and critique. In another sense, the demand for autonomy was also an appeal for individual rights and self-determination that were central to classical liberalism. As a political position, this was historically weak in

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Germany. Neither conservative Catholic nor social democratic parties in West Germany after World War II were particularly interested in issues of individual rights, and both saw meeting women's needs indirectly through the improvement of the position of the male head of household as taking priority over increasing women's ability to act freely as individuals.<sup>13</sup>

The defining development in West Germany during this first period of feminist re-mobilization can thus be seen as the emergence of a call for women's individual rights and personal autonomy in the context of new and equally autonomous women's organizations. This phase of development was marked by questioning what, if anything, socialism had to offer women. The generally negative view of women's organizations in East-Central Europe and of the GDR in particular was in tension with the recognition that women in the west continued to be denied substantive benefits, such as abortion rights and state-supported childcare that GDR women enjoyed. The commitment to improving women's status took first priority, and changing gender relations was seen as relatively unproblematically uniting women in a common struggle for autonomy.

By the early 1980s this stance was already beginning to change, as feminists who had experience in autonomous women's groups and the local projects that they gave birth to began to question their separation from the conventional modes of party politics and the lack of control over mainstream political decision-making that this entailed. Two somewhat separate but related developments began to bring feminists out of the separatist stance that had been integral to their early demands for autonomy.<sup>14</sup>

On the one hand, the development of the Green Party as a new political alternative that was not easily classifiable in the left-right terms of conventional class politics attracted many feminists. The anti-hierarchical, counter-cultural political style of organizing that initially characterized the party was compatible with the loose local network structure of the autonomous women's movement, and many of the environmental and anti-war positions of the party were also consistent with feminists' substantive political preferences. Thus some autonomous feminists became Green Party loyalists without thereby feeling that they had given up their commitment to women's autonomy as a political priority. This feeling was not necessarily shared by other autonomous feminists, and conflicts and compromises within the Green Party also raised questions for some of the feminists who had cast their lot with them.

On the other hand, the 1980s also saw the emergence of women's offices within local and state governments as so-called *Frauenbeauftragte* were appointed to oversee women's advancement within the government and to provide a central contact point for women citizens with their governments. There was a clear tendency for Green and SPD governments to take the lead in bringing women's concerns into government in this way and to give greater resources, authority, and status to such offices. These women's affairs officers provided a new source of networking among the autonomous feminist activists and their projects but also linked them increasingly with women in the parties and in professional and civic organizations who were also concerned about women's rights. The increased flow of government funds to autonomous women's projects was one of the goals that women's affairs offices took up, as well as affirmative action within city and state governments.

Thus, if phase one of West German feminism was a tension between autonomy and socialism, phase two was characterized by a tension between autonomy and integration within the political structure. Phase three, the 1990s, represents the period of unification. The predominant theme here is the tension between East and West. The very different organization of women's lives in each country led to quite different understandings of women's oppression and freedom in each. Full employment, state-run childcare, and legal abortion gave women in the GDR more freedom from the family and private forms of patriarchal control without weakening male dominance in the public sphere of the state power or challenging the political control of the state over both men and women as citizens, while in former West Germany women's public citizenship had grown both through autonomous organizing and integration into the political system without being able to dislodge the private patriarchy of the nuclear family dependent on a male breadwinner.<sup>15</sup>

### THE AMERICAN CASE

The phases of development in the United States were quite different.<sup>16</sup> Lacking the historical confrontation with socialism as a defining feature of the first phase, American feminists experienced the 1970s as a period of uncontested success and growth. The women's movement grew out of the civil rights movement for African-Americans and used an analogy between gender and race to extend federal guarantees of equal citizenship to both

previously excluded groups. The strong commitment to a liberal ideology of equal rights provided a supportive background for a wave of early legislation that mandated equal treatment of women and men in education and on the job, and the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973 secured an individual right to abortion without a massive feminist mobilization on this issue.

The defining tension for American feminists in this period was more between radical feminists and liberals. The radical feminists emphasized cultural differences between women and men, the underlying androcentrism of the liberal system as a whole and the exclusion of women's distinctive role as mothers from an equal rights model of feminism. Liberal feminists themselves were divided between those who were more critical of capitalism, more attentive to racism, and more sympathetic to social democratic means of achieving equal rights for all and those who took a more mainstream view of individual achievement and meritocracy as the values accompanying equal rights for women. However, in the 1970s, feminist awareness of race typically took the form of a positive analogy between gender and race as systematic forms of exclusion and a confidence that both could be addressed by comparable programs and policies. The critique that in this model "all the women are white and all the blacks are men" raised by women of color in the late 1970s shook this complacency.

The 1980s in the United States was a period of reaction and resistance, marked by the mobilization of active anti-feminist organizations. Campaigns against abortion rights gained an important victory when the Supreme Court upheld the Hyde Amendment's definition of choice as something that could be limited by a woman's ability to pay. The classically liberal Equal Rights Amendment was stopped cold in the state legislatures by the campaign mounted by Phyllis Schlafly and her allies. The once-Democratic Southern states turned Republican in reaction to the Democratic Party's support of African-American civil rights, and the Reagan revolution shifted the political landscape to such an extent that support for social spending on domestic issues of poverty and social justice became a political liability. Both parties began to move to the right. Feminist groups increasingly allied themselves with the Democratic Party. Conflict over the extent to which feminist groups were dominated by an agenda shaped only by privileged white women's needs took place throughout the decade. Women of color pushed with increasing success for all feminists to

acknowledge the intersections of gender, race and class and to campaign for social justice across the board.

The 1990s in the United States were the Clinton years, and offered many American feminists the Hobson's Choice of supporting a Democratic Party that had moved considerably to the right, abandoning the New Deal commitment of support to poor mothers and their children in the name of welfare reform, or looking for an alternative in a winner-take-all system in which third parties are "spoilers" rather than allies. The Republican Party was no longer a viable alternative for feminists: it had become no longer a party sympathetic to classic liberal individualism but instead embraced a New Right family values agenda that was explicitly anti-abortion, anti-gay rights and for male authority in the family as well as seeking radical repeal of progressive taxation and all forms of social redistribution to the poor. Self-identified feminists and African-Americans were the two most reliably Democratic constituencies in the 2000 election, but disappointment with Democrats' commitment to social justice also fueled the Nader candidacy. The selection of George W. Bush by the Supreme Court has led to rollbacks in a number of areas, including the closing of the federal office for women's affairs, but is also notable for the increased normalcy of appointments of women to cabinet positions as well as a continued expansion of women elected to political office.

What do either of these two separate and very different courses of development have to do with the international arena to which I referred initially and to which I promised to return? Both remobilizations took place not in isolation but in a world system that was also changing in important ways over the past decades. I want to now place these two different movements in a context of international developments that echo in different ways in each country and pose different quandaries and opportunities for each.

### **INTERNATIONAL FEMINISM AT THE MILLENIUM**

I want to point out three significant and interrelated developments that have been the keystones of a greatly expanded international women's movement worldwide at the end of the twentieth century. The first is a shift in discourse globally to include women's voices and perspectives. The remnants of the international women's movement that had survived from the early part of this century were influential in persuading the United Nations to designate 1975-

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1985 as the Decade for Women and to sponsor international conferences to address the status of women worldwide. The conference in Mexico City that began the decade was dominated by official representatives of the various countries and was marked by sustained confrontation between the representatives of the global North and South over questions of development and economic inequalities. Feminist rethinking of what their position was in this world system began here in earnest, with a proliferation of networks and groups both within and across national boundaries. Subsequent conferences in Copenhagen, Nairobi and Beijing continued to provide a spur to networking, and brought increasing participation by non-governmental organizations of feminists as well.<sup>17</sup>

Based in these and other international conferences and networks, explicit discussion about women's status in regard to both questions of population and of economic development became part of the transnational discourse, not only in the United Nations but also in institutions such as the World Bank. Women's distinctive voice, in the form of autonomous feminist organizations that meet and network internationally, made women present in the policy discourse of national states and transnational institutions to an unprecedented extent. One of the most obvious forms of this shifting international context of discussion is the emergence of a political frame that emphasizes that "women's rights are human rights." But equally significant, in my view, is the reframing of gender and economic development to emphasize that women are human resources and the reframing of population control to emphasize women's education and social empowerment as a brake on fertility.<sup>18</sup> All three of these changes are in the direction of liberalism as a political discourse of rights, human capital and individual self-development, but all three also show the extent to which a feminist understanding of women as fully human persons has diffused across issues and constituencies to shape a variety of programs and policies.

### **THE BOOMERANG EFFECT**

Second, these emergent networks and transnational organizations also brought pressure on individual governments to account for the status of women in their own countries to international forums, and global conferences brought with them demands for statistical measures to show the relative success or

failure to make progress in advancing the status of women in human resource terms. This growing international accountability for women's rights gives women in many places the opportunity to pressure their own governments to live up to international norms of equal opportunity, what Keck and Sikkink call a boomerang effect. This has provided women in many countries with international political leverage that has been applied nationally with great effect, most notably through demands for incorporating women more fully into the political machinery of government.<sup>19</sup> These incorporations take the form of women's ministries and women's affairs offices, as we see them in Germany, and to some extent the offices on women in the U.S. departments (when there have been Democratic administrations in the White House) and appointments of women to the cabinet and other executive roles, regardless of the party in power.

Overall, this global transformation in accountability for gender equality has contributed to bringing women into policy making and transforming outsider feminist movements into transnational advocacy networks composed of elite women with connections to formal politics who can exercise influence backstage and through official channels rather than by taking to the streets in mass mobilizations.<sup>20</sup> Increasing numbers of women have gained insider status and used it to promote the well-being of women as a whole, something that has always been an "outsider issue."

### NEW GEOGRAPHIES

Third, the collapse of the cold war standoff between capitalist and socialist blocs has also weakened the usefulness of classic left-right terminology without in the slightest reducing the global problems of social and economic inequality. The global South and North, rather than East and West, has become the axis of political attention. A neo-liberal economic order of free trade and global exploitation of human and environmental resources has brought us back in some regards to the conditions of dominance more reminiscent of the colonial empires of the early twentieth century than of their dissolution in the aftermath of World War II. Not only the internationalism but also the extreme inequalities of the early twentieth century have returned, most obviously in the United States where the rollback of rights and protections for the poor is a dominant political theme. Structural adjustment and European market integration are



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also neo-liberal policies with similar implications, even if on a less dramatic scale.

I would therefore sum up these three changes as a shift in discourse to a diffuse inclusion of women within the model of political liberalism, an opening of the opportunity structure for women's participation in both formal politics and informal NGO or civic activism, and a shift in the potential alliance structure for feminists that makes a variety of forms of challenging neo-liberal economics possible.

### NEW CHALLENGES

What are the different challenges here for the German and American movements? German feminists' concern with autonomy fits in part within the liberal political discourse of women's rights, women as human resources, and women's individual empowerment that has diffused through the international system, but does not acknowledge political liberalism as a whole as having a value for women. This is a contradiction that also relates to the expansion of the neo-liberal economic order, since it suggests that there may be some merit in exploring when and how political liberalism as such is more or less necessarily tied to the economic liberalism with which it historically developed. Is it possible to detach the universal and emancipatory elements of liberal political thought from its class and race based roots? Are international feminist discourses pointing to such possibilities also for German politics in the future, and is this a good or bad thing for the movement? American feminism, in contrast, resonates with the contemporary discourses of transnational feminists, which might either be an indication of the extent to which great-power relations of dominance continue to shape the international agenda of feminist organizations or could suggest that liberal frames of reference are not necessarily as oppressively inegalitarian in politics as they are in economic affairs. Women in post-colonial societies, like women of color in the United States, are not nearly as dismissive of rights language and personhood issues as the classic socialists have been, and a rethinking of rights in the post-cold-war era may be part of what feminist discourse contributes globally.

The transnational leverage that has opened up opportunities for political participation and accountability for women's status has had more far reaching effects in Germany than in the United States. Both in terms of party inclusion

of women candidates at all levels and women's policy machinery in the form of women's ministries and women's affairs offices, German feminists have made their government more formally responsive to women as a distinctive constituency than American feminists have.<sup>21</sup> Both German and American feminists have made party alliances and participate as insiders in the political system, and in this they are characteristic of changes in feminism that are occurring all over the globe. But the more professional, expert, and issue oriented participation of feminists in formal politics and advocacy networks has also been accompanied worldwide by a demobilization of feminist politics on the streets. Are these really zero-sum alternatives for feminists, or are there ways in each separate political opportunity structure for feminists to pursue unruly protest politics that mobilizes the excluded without giving up the access and credibility they have gained in insider politics?

Finally, in the newly realigned world in which North and South, rather than East and West, are the axes of division, it might be fruitful to ask what the opportunities are for feminists who do not want to repeat the class and race mistakes of their early twentieth century counterparts to find new alliances and fight in creatively different ways for social justice? This is a proposition that feminist environmentalists and anti-racists have been struggling with, but one that also poses challenges to the movements of both countries that they have barely begun to address.<sup>22</sup> Like their early twentieth-century forerunners, feminists have to find a politics that speaks to the global trade in women's bodies for sex and for domestic labor; the international consolidation of agriculture in cash-crop agri-businesses that exhaust natural resources and impoverish those who formerly lived from the land; and the vast migrations of labor and of work that are transforming national populations and identities.

The feminist agenda of the twenty first century is therefore clearly international, but it is also one that is still obviously open-ended and still in flux. Although the American women's movement's legacy of race politics and the German women's movement's awareness of class issues can both contribute to the more integrative analysis that many contemporary feminists seek, both of these histories offer problems as well as possibilities to consider. Although this paper looks backward at a long and complex history, its conclusions lie somewhere in the unfinished struggles of the future.

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ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>. The classic account of the U.S. mobilization is in Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle* (New York: Norton, 1959). Similarly classic German accounts of their nineteenth-century foremothers can be found in Ute Gerhard, "Über die Anfänge der deutsche Frauenbewegung um 1848," in Karin Hausen, *Frauen suchen ihre Geschichte* (Munich: Beck, 1983), and Margrit Twellman, *Die deutsche Frauenbewegung: Ihre Anfänge und erste Entwicklung, 1843-1889* (Meisenheim: Hain, 1972).

<sup>2</sup>. See for example, Ute Gerhard, *Debating Women's Equality: Toward a Feminist Theory of Law from a European Perspective* (Rutgers University Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup>. For example, Raka Ray's *Fields of Protest* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999) provides a good illustration of the different forms feminist politics take in a socialist dominated city and a more politically diverse city in India in the late twentieth century that echo some of the agenda-setting effects of socialist predominance among social movements in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Germany. Marielouise Janssen-Jurreit, *Sexism: The Male Monopoly of History and Thought* (New York: Farrar, Strass, Giroux, 1982) details the feminist quarrel with socialist ideas in Germany.

<sup>4</sup>. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), provides an overview of the gender, race and class conditions of the United States in the period between the Civil War and Second World War in which feminist struggles were waged.

<sup>5</sup>. See not only Flexner but also Steven Buechler, *Women's Movements in the United States* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

<sup>6</sup>. Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997) examines turn of the century-feminist organizations in this light.

<sup>7</sup>. In addition to Rupp, 1997, on women's international organizations at the turn of the century, see Nitza Berkovitch, *From Motherhood to Citizenship* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), for a focus on the political organizing around women's work that has happened internationally throughout this century.

<sup>8</sup>. See the overview in Myra Marx Ferree and Beth B. Hess, *Controversy and Coalition: The Women's Movement through Four Decades of Change* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>9</sup>. Nancy Cott's study of feminism in the 1920s, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), illustrates this point rather nicely.

<sup>10</sup>. Robert Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) provides a detailed analysis of the entanglement of gender ideology and cold war politics in the self-definition of Germany through the lens of family law revisions made in the immediate postwar period.

<sup>11</sup>. The U.S. second wave origins story is told effectively in Sara Evans, *Personal Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1979) as well as in Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2000). The German origins story is best captured in Herrad Schenk, *Die feministische Herausforderung* (Munich: Beck, 1980).

## Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

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<sup>12</sup>. I offer a more detailed overview of this period in “Equality and Autonomy: Feminist Politics in the United States and West Germany,” in Mary Katzenstein and Carol Mueller, eds., *The Women’s Movements of Western Europe and the United States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).

<sup>13</sup>. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, is particularly enlightening on this point. Note that while this history highlights the West German experience, the East German communist party, the SED, shared with the SPD in the West the classic socialist position of subordinating gender interests to class mobilization and class-based policymaking. However, SED policy did focus on freeing women for “productive labor” by positive support for care-taking needs in the family. And yet, it trumpeted this instrumental use of women’s labor power as the emancipation of women and as a substantive accomplishment for which women should be grateful; increasingly women in the GDR criticized this approach, expressing this critique first in fiction and eventually in feminist mobilization. See Myra Marx Ferree, “The Rise and Fall of ‘Mommy Politics’: Feminism and German Unification,” *Feminist Studies* 19:1 (1993): 89-115.

<sup>14</sup>. I discuss these developments in more detail in “Institutionalizing Gender Equality: Feminist Politics and Equality Offices,” *German Politics & Society*, Issue 24 & 25, Winter 1991-2: 53-66.

<sup>15</sup>. I discuss this phase in more detail in “Patriarchies and Feminisms: The Two Women’s Movements of Unified Germany,” *Social Politics* 2:1 (1995): 10-24.

<sup>16</sup>. The account here is an abridgement of the historical overview of U.S. feminism in Ferree and Hess, *Controversy and Coalition*, Third edition (New York: Routledge 2000).

<sup>17</sup>. See the discussion of feminism and globalization in Myra Marx Ferree and William A. Gamson, “The Globalization of Feminism: Abortion Discourse in the U.S. and Germany,” 40-56, in *The Globalization of Social Movements*, ed., Donatella Della Porta, Hanspeter Kriesi and Dieter Rucht (London: Macmillan/New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999).

<sup>18</sup>. The development of human rights discourse supporting women’s rights is well described in Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), and the somewhat earlier emergence of a liberal rights discourse on women’s employment in Berkovitch’s *From Motherhood to Citizenship*. The discussion of the transformation of the population control agenda to emphasize women’s empowerment is reviewed in Ferree and Gamson “Globalization of Feminism.”

<sup>19</sup>. Dorothy McBride Stetson and Amy Mazur, *Comparative State Feminism* (Sage, 1995) provides illustrative examples of how this process has worked in Europe and the United States, while Barbara Nelson and Najma Chowdhury, *Women and Politics Worldwide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), offer a more global set of examples which for reasons of brevity and inclusion are somewhat more superficial about each of the individual cases.

<sup>20</sup>. Roberta Spalter-Roth and Ronee Schreiber provide the distinction between “outsider issues” and “insider tactics” in their article by this name in Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin, ed., *Feminist Organizations* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

<sup>21</sup>. The differences in strategy and outcomes for feminists are examined in relation to the controversy over abortion in both countries in Myra Marx Ferree, William A. Gamson, Dieter Rucht and Jürgen Gerhards, *Shaping Abortion Discourse* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), particularly chapters 7 and 9.

<sup>22</sup>. For one environmentalist view of these alliances see Noel Sturgeon, *Eco-feminist Natures* (New York: Routledge, 1997), and for an anti-racist view see Patricia Hill Collins, *Fighting Words* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

**IF MEN ARE PART OF THE PROBLEM, THEY HAVE TO  
BECOME PART OF THE SOLUTION—GENDER  
DEMOCRACY: A COLLECTIVE PROJECT OF THE HEINRICH  
BÖLL FOUNDATION**

Claudia Neusüss<sup>1</sup>

Before I describe the Heinrich Böll Foundation's project on gender democracy, let me first sketch out the situation of women and men in unified Germany and the international adoption and diffusion of the concept of gender mainstreaming in the context of the United Nations and the European Union.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently I will describe how gender democracy, as a crucial project of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, is implemented on all levels of the organization, what practices are used to raise the consciousness of the staff and how the Foundation communicates the goal to the public.

**GENDER RELATIONS IN UNIFIED GERMANY**

In the Basic Law of 1949, direct discrimination on the basis of sex was removed. However, the elimination of indirect, consequential discrimination, including particular gender-related life patterns is still needed. To give an example: economic resources remain unequally distributed between genders. On average, women are still earning 25 percent less than men although they have made much progress in the areas of formal education and qualification as well as in the employment sector, achieving equality with men in some areas, and leading in others. Yet there is still a characteristically limited, gender-specific choice of careers, and the training options available are also gender-related. In newer fields such as information technologies, the number of women is considerably lower than that of men. In Germany—in contrast to the United States—a particularly stubborn “men's biotope” is the business sector. Less than 10 percent of senior management positions are occupied by women. After the Berlin Wall came down, the western “wage-earner” model for gender relations established itself in the former East Germany; important conditions such as public care for children and the elderly were discontinued, reprivatized, and in this way reassigned to women. Nevertheless women in East Germany have a strong and “unbroken” orientation towards employment. The unemployment rate of women is still much higher than in West Germany.

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Even for “new” men—men who increasingly want to get involved in housework and childcare—the situation is not without difficulties. They are confronted with barriers of deep-seated gender patterns in companies and businesses. The public discourse shows that men’s lives are increasingly burdened by opposing demands.<sup>3</sup> From the perspective of shared “housekeeping,” the often lower earnings of women are scarcely sufficient to support the whole family. The differences in real earnings represent therefore an extremely unfavorable factor in negotiation processes on gender-specific work distribution between women and men.

And yet, it is misleading to speak of “the” women and “the” men. Sexuality, class, ethnic identity, disability or ageing also exert influence on social situations, normative attribution, and lifestyle options. Looking at the next generation, the increasing self-confidence of young women is obvious. Pragmatic, individual perspectives on life are oriented towards a life model that combines work, relationships and living with children. According to current studies, the issues of equal earnings, the compatibility of career and family, and the relevance of women’s politics in contrast to how this is often portrayed in the media, are of great importance for young women.<sup>4</sup> Young men, on the other hand, tend to orient themselves towards traditional patterns and hardly question the gender-specific distribution of work, as far as the specific sharing of work is concerned, when one gets married and when children are to be looked after. Overall, living together includes new self-evident truths set alongside the conventional gender-role views.

The issue of violence in gender relations has moved closer to the center of public discussion. This can be seen, for example, in the new law of the Social Democratic and Green Party coalition government, which makes possible the expulsion of violent men from the shared home. In addition to protecting women as victims and focusing on the problem of the men’s guilt, there are now more and more discussions and activities involving men who are confronting their gender role critically and are themselves becoming active in opposing male violence, as can be seen by men working within the church or in gay working groups. In conjunction, the role of men as victims of male violence is also being increasingly dealt with as a problem.<sup>5</sup>

## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

At the level of world politics, within the framework of the UN conferences, which present the significant trans-national intersection points, the activities of women's movements, increasingly international in the 1990s, have had a formative effect. The lobbying for women's rights, the demand for gender justice and the goal of a gender-just model of development have been key issues. The documents resulting from these conferences are important references for political action at national, regional and international levels. The integration of women's and gender-political issues in the political agenda was an achievement of the 1990s, particularly of the UN Conference for Women in Beijing in 1995. "Empowerment of women" and "gender mainstreaming" were identified as key instruments in the dismantling of gender hierarchies. In practice, the principle of gender mainstreaming corresponds with the idea of cross-sectional politics and assumes that equal opportunities for the sexes can only be achieved if this goal, the inclusion and institutionalization of women's interests and the gender approach, is pursued in all areas of politics. This goal is realized through a clear reference to the decision-making processes of organizations. The consistent application of gender mainstreaming amounts to the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of decision-making processes in all political and work areas of an organization.

The signing of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 made gender mainstreaming compulsory for all member states of the European Union. In July 2000, the German Federal Cabinet decided to implement gender mainstreaming in all fields of politics and to include it in the standing orders of the federal ministries. It is now the task of the government and the administration to develop suitable instruments and measures with which to integrate gender mainstreaming into political and administrative work.

### **THE HEINRICH BÖLL FOUNDATION**

The Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBS) is a political foundation that provides political education on questions of human rights, sustainable development, the empowerment of women and gender-democracy. The Foundation works within the framework of the Green Party's values. It is dependent on the Green Party



as the election results influence the Foundation's budget, but it is independent in its program making. The work of the Heinrich Böll Foundation is midrange-oriented and aims for agenda setting. Compared with the party it is less influenced by daily politics.

The foundation has about 180 employees, a budget of DM 70 million and 160 projects in almost fifty countries around the world. Seventy percent of the staff members in leading positions are female and 12 percent have an immigrant background. There are sixteen international offices, in Rio de Janeiro, Johannesburg, Brussels, Chiang Mai/Thailand, Sarajevo and Washington, D.C., to name just a few. The offices are responsible for organizing contacts and cooperative projects with partners. They establish political dialogues between various political actors in Germany and those in other countries. Next to migration, gender democracy ranks particularly high in the Foundation's work.

### **GENDER DEMOCRACY IN THE HBS**

Gender democracy—as a term—was brought into the reform debate of the newly established Heinrich Böll Foundation in the mid-1990s by Halina Bendkowski, a political pioneer and sociologist from Berlin.<sup>6</sup> The newly created mixed-gender organization was searching for an innovative approach toward feminist politics.<sup>7</sup> Gender democracy is a normative term, which has as its political goal the creation of democratic relations between women and men. This refers to equal opportunities for women and men in politics, to society's sharing of resources between women and men, to the critique both of authoritarian-hierarchical, undemocratic structures in private relations and the explicit, violent exercise of power by men over women. Gender democracy can be as relevant for men as for women. Thus men should be addressed especially emphatically as a group and motivated to greater active engagement and collective responsibility for this political goal. Here democracy is being applied to gender relations. The term democracy contains, at least potentially, the recognition of equal rights for different people, and thus sufficient openness and the assurance that neither men's nor women's groups be stratified. Democracy is seen as a project.

Gender democracy—as a visionary goal—means that gender identity is not defined by the bipolarity of man/woman but rather by a potential multitude of gender and sexual identities. It means that human relationships are not

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hallmarked by gender-specific power and supremacy mechanisms. Instead everyone has the chance, independently of gender attribution, to develop relationships and interactive situations. It means that the symbolic ordering of gender is not shaped by exclusion, stereotypes and clichés about “the” man and “the” woman; instead it displays a variety of models and lifestyles that are considered equally valid. Accordingly, gender relations are not dictated by patriarchal structures; there is no allocation of positions, work or power on the basis of gender; equal opportunities exist independently of gender attribution.

### **IMPLEMENTING GENDER DEMOCRACY<sup>8</sup>**

A strong commitment of top and middle management is crucial for the implementation of gender democracy: the executive board, responsible for strategy development and the planning of resources, is supported by an advisory board. The advisory board for the collective project of gender democracy supports the board in the development of strategies and planning of processes and advises the employees about the practices of implementation. It works internally (e.g. advising, reflection, qualification), and externally in the socio-political public arena with its own events and activities. The department directors are responsible for conceptualization and operative application within the departments in the context of the overall strategy. The cooperation between board and department management is based on agreed-upon goals. Issues and ideas spanning departments are dealt with in department management meetings together with the board and with the participation of the advisory board for gender democracy.

The project coordinators are responsible for the application of gender democracy within their team. The project coordinator for international general key projects in the area of women’s and gender politics conceptualizes, in conjunction with the head of the foreign department and the board, certain important aspects. She advises regional project coordinators in the development of the empowerment program and of the gender-democratic criteria for the other (mixed-gender) program lines. On the basis of a board decision, for the international projects a minimum level of 30 percent has been set in the areas of empowerment and gender-political projects. The expert board for gender democracy deals with exemplary issues and problem approaches in the

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individual fields of the Foundation, serving as a forum for systematic discussion. The working group meets monthly.

### **THE FEMINIST INSTITUTE AND THE *FRAUENRAT***

The Feminist Institute works with a certain degree of autonomy (e.g. budget planning) and plays an important role in the concept of gender democracy. The Institute and its employees have the responsibility of maintaining feminist traditions and taking up new developments of the (international) women's movements and applying them to the Foundation. Further tasks focus on supporting integration, agenda setting, and providing critical assistance to the collective project of gender democracy. The Feminist Institute is an important cooperative partner for projects spanning several departments as well as the circulation of information and experience, and should therefore be drawn upon by department directors, expert consultants and project coordinators.

An important structural element is the honorary expert advisory board called *Frauenrat* (women's council), established by the statutes of the Foundation. Offering support to the development of the collective project of gender democracy in an internal and external advisory capacity, it is to be consulted in advance of any structural changes to the Foundation which are of gender-specific relevance. The coordination of the *Frauenrat* is the responsibility of the advisory board for the collective project of gender democracy. The supervisory board and the members of the assembly are presented at regular intervals with progress reports and problems in the conception and application of the collective project of gender democracy. It guarantees bridge-building between the different bodies of the Foundation.

### **GENDER DEMOCRACY AS A SOCIO-POLITICAL MODEL**

The goals of both establishing equal participation of men and women in the political decision-making processes and providing equal access to resources on the socio-political level require changes in existing power relations, even in democratic systems. If power is positively defined as the access to and control over resources as well as decision-making and organizational opportunities in public life (politics, business, science, culture, etc.) and in the private sphere (family, couples and inter-personal relationships, household, etc.) no supremacy

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should be derived from this position. What is important, irrespective of gender, is the ability, strength and opportunity to act, to negotiate, to resist oppression, to define, to decide, to develop and to mediate. In companies, career patterns of women and men are determined by achievement levels and requirement profiles which are still based on hegemonic male life trajectories which often debase female-typed skills or activities. The creation of gender-democratic relations is therefore an important social and political task, which also signifies the dissolution of (hegemonic) maleness as the dominant social structuring pattern. The equality of all life-styles with their physical and socio-cultural differences is the model and guiding line.

For several years, male and female staff members in the Heinrich Böll Foundation have been successfully putting gender democracy into practice step by step. The Foundation is therefore a model for other organizations, which often refer to it as a source of support and advice. Through supporting exemplary projects and processes and through the practices within the organization itself, the Foundation will remain active in future gender-democratic restructuring of political and social organizations.

### **GENDER DEMOCRACY AS A STRATEGIC DIMENSION OF THE HBS**

A collective project of all HBS employees on all levels, gender democracy represents an integral part of (re)organization processes of the Foundation. Gender sensibilization is a prerequisite for the application of the collective project of gender democracy; the potential of women and men will be developed within the framework of appropriate qualification and personal development programs (e.g. gender training).<sup>9</sup> The following description outlines the strategic goals of the organization rather than their actual implementation.

The gender competencies of the employees are regarded and evaluated as relevant key qualifications. They make up an important element of the “human capital” of the Foundation. Gender competency and gender expertise combine the ability to reflect upon one’s own gender-role pattern with knowledge about the origin of gender differences, the experience of the complex structures of gender relations, and their construction. This knowledge enables differentiated analyses of, for example, the social and personal access to power, distribution of resources and the sharing or work in society. Gender competence is thus

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the practical handling in practice of the results and experiences of gender analyses, gender-related research, educational and advisory work, the application of this knowledge in one's own everyday working life, and the sensitive forming of gender relationships.

On the basis of meaningful analyses and evaluations, gender competence and professionalism are systematically developed. They are included in the content of all programs, projects and in the political education work in Germany and abroad. Gender democracy covers the shared responsibility of women and men, i.e. the responsibility for the internal application and the application on the political level falls on both (all!) genders. Gay and lesbian politics as well as "queer" studies are given particular significance in the statutes of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. They are an important area of cooperation for the organization, with the goal of removing discrimination and making use of research and scientific knowledge for educational purposes.

Measures towards supporting both women and specific projects towards reflective men's politics are instruments of furthering political progress and facilitating new knowledge. For example, specific concepts for the support of women are a significant part of gender-democratic politics and the work of the Foundation should the specific analysis show disparities or discrimination to the detriment of women.

The collective project of gender democracy includes concepts for the support of women and empowerment processes, but is not limited to these aspects. It is therefore necessary to support reflective work on the part of men, in order to incorporate the practical and theoretical applications developed in men's (gender) research and education (e.g. encouraging boys and men to reflect upon their acceptance of gender roles and images). The focus is on gender relations, which should be aimed more consistently on projects and programs based on the dialogue between the sexes. Gender democracy is a central model of the Foundation's culture. It is made apparent in processing themes and realizing projects, e.g. in the appropriate structuring of questions and basic conditions. The advance of the examination of themes, goals and targets through gender analysis, combined with the documentation of pertinent reasons behind decisions are crucial aspects of this process. Especially interesting for a "learning organization" are goal conflicts. Goal conflicts and their specific resolution (e.g. in dealings with cooperating partners or in the context of current pressure for action) are seen in principle as relevant learning

areas for the further development of the collective project of gender democracy. Within the framework of reporting on the application of the collective project, goal conflicts are documented and are made available towards the reflection and knowledge development of the organization as a whole.

### **MAIN ACTIVITIES OF THE HBS**

The main activity of the Heinrich Böll Foundation is political education in Germany and abroad as well as the support of new generations in science and social politics. All factors influencing the education process function as a “secret curriculum” either towards the strengthening of gender-hierarchical relations or towards their removal. The consistent application of the collective project of gender democracy, as the integrated treatment of gender issues in all political education processes, makes this relationship transparent. Gender relations are taken into consideration in every education process on the interaction level as well as on the level of content. Political education, conceptualized and organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, is conscious of the gender images it projects. It is structured by gender-sensitive adult educators. It incorporates same-gender target groups as well as mixed-gender groups. The knowledge resulting from women’s, men’s and gender research is known or available and integrated into all political education material. This includes the organization of conferences that contribute to the conceptualization of the approach of gender democracy. For example, in the year 2000 a big international conference was conducted under the heading “Gender democracy—Variety of Visions, Visions of Variety.” It focused on the possibilities of implementation of different political concepts both in the areas of institutional affirmative action policy and queer theory.

The foundation’s information material is based on a gender analysis. Currently, the political education work of the Foundation fulfills gender-democratic criteria only partially. To optimize this, the gender-competence of the employees is (further) developed. Processes and structures between the board and the department directors are made stricter and more specific. The board and senior staff can thus expect to play a more significant role in the realization of the model. The consistent application of the collective project of gender democracy requires, for example, adequate time resources. These are defined in the agreements made between the board and senior staff. The greater

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the time pressure under which the organization has to act, the more conventional are its actions. Time resources and “time islands” are therefore crucial for conceptualizing the process of gender democracy.

In order to enable the assessment of changes and achievements in terms of the specified goal definitions, a constant flow of gender-specific data and statistics is necessary. One goal in the area of personnel politics of the organization is to encourage men in particular to take advantage of parental leave,<sup>10</sup> or to work part-time in order to counteract gender-specific divisions of labor. Given a high proportion of part-time work in the Foundation,<sup>11</sup> men and women have learned to claim it equally. Statistical monitoring detects changes and helps counteract them if necessary. Additional gender education, training of “multipliers” in the departments, as well as coaching, counseling and qualitative controlling are developed and applied as instruments in support of the collective project of gender democracy. According to the constitution of the Foundation, there has to be a quota of 50 percent women in all positions.

At job talks, male applicants might be confronted with an all female hiring committee. All applicants are expected to competently address the common project of gender democracy. In the past, such hiring practices— not being confronted by a male on the hiring committee—have led to insecurity and confusion. While quite common for most women, they often constitute a first in male applicants’ lives.

### **DIALOGUES ON GENDER DEMOCRACY**

The “Dialogues of Gender Democracy,” conducted in cooperation with the weekly paper *Freitag*, constitute a key project on gender-democracy in the public. Four times a year the Foundation invites outstanding experts and activists in various fields. In the beginning a “gender mixed” couple provides inputs with a gender perspective on different topics. Moderators encourage a dialogue between them and the audience. Recent themes were idea and theory of gender democracy, political parties, economy, racism, and development policies. These events bring people together who rarely talk about gender issues or do it for the first time in public. To put gender democracy on the public agenda is a major goal. Another important goal is to get more men involved in the gender discourse. Forty percent male participation at one event was the peak in 2000; overall figures vary between 20 and 40 percent. The “Dialogues” are documented and constitute an important element of the

information offered by the Heinrich Böll Foundation.<sup>12</sup> An important element for the internal work on gender democracy is the conceptualization in cooperation with the different departments of the organization. This brings synergy to the programming process in the different fields of concern and contributes to the development of the collective project in the organization.

One highlight in 2000 was the dialogue between the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and a top manager of debis/Daimler-Chrysler.<sup>13</sup> In this connection it might be mentioned that Daimler's merger with its American partner Chrysler led to the first encounter of the management with women at middle and top management levels on the U.S. side. In Germany, Daimler's management is predominantly white and male. It led to a wide press response but also became a starting point within the ministry for more involvement in questions of gender-mainstreaming and the reorganization of an institution towards gender-democracy. In autumn 2001 the dialogue program features the challenges of red-green politics in different fields like labor market or family politics.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the Federal Republic of Germany, the influence of women's "movements," the development of feminist theories, and the various applications of feminist politics have brought about much change in actual social relations. Gender democracy as a vision and model builds on these developments. Feminist approaches are an important and strategic element in a two-track system of the community project of gender democracy.

The concept of gender democracy represents a change in perspective from the view that the (supposed) shortcomings of women form the starting point. This concept projects the interests and needs of women and men towards the goal of a legitimate gender policy. If men are part of the problem they have to become part of the solution too.<sup>14</sup> The reconstruction of masculinity is part of this approach. A legitimate gender policy must, however, include all genders, women, men, transsexuals, etc. One strength of the approach is that it is a political concept that draws attention and curiosity and offers the possibility of new alliances. The responsibility of men is emphasized and reconceptualized through a reframing of women's issues and gender-political discussions in the context of the work towards a gender just democracy.



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>. The paper is based on ideas and discussions between the author and the responsible experts for gender democracy in the Heinrich Böll Foundation, i.e. Gaby Schambach, Henning von Barga and Angelika Blickhäuser, one of the gender trainers. I gratefully acknowledge helpful comments from Silke Roth.

<sup>2</sup>. See also Silke Roth "Gender Democracy as a New Paradigm of the Women's Movement – Watering Down Feminism or Recruiting Third Wave Feminists?" Paper presented at the 25th Annual Meetings of the German Studies Association, October 4-7, 2001, Washington, DC.

<sup>3</sup>. The women's magazine *Brigitte* 19 (2001) recently reported on "Die Herren der Erschöpfung," the men of exhaustion. This play on words cannot easily be translated into English—it refers to the "Herren der Schöpfung"—the men of creation, emphasizing the dominant position of men.

<sup>4</sup>. Cf. Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, *Fraueninteressen und Frauenpolitik: Eine Repräsentativbefragung zu den Interessen von Frauen und ihren Erwartungen an die Politik* (Allensbach: Institute für Demoskopie, 2000).

<sup>5</sup>. Nungesser, Karin, „Können Männer Opfer sein?“ *Freitag* 44, Oktober 26, 2001, 18.

<sup>6</sup>. Halina Bendkowski, „Es gibt keine Alimente: Letter to the editor,“ *Die Tageszeitung*, August 19, 1998, 14.

<sup>7</sup>. Helga Lukoschat, *Vorschläge zur Verankerung feministischer Politik in der reformierten Stiftung – Kurzstudie* (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 1995).

<sup>8</sup>. Cf. Margret Krannich, ed., *Geschlechterdemokratie in Organisationen: Dokumentation einer Fachtagung der Hessischen Gesellschaft für Demokratie und Ökologie* (Heinrich Böll Stiftung Hessen) vom 10. und 11. Juli 1999 in Frankfurt (Frankfurt am Main, 1999); Claudia Neusüss, „Democracia de género: Renanimación feminista o viraje hacia un diálogo entre los sexos?“ In Enrique Gomáriz and Angela Meentzen, eds., *Democracia de Género: Una Propuesta para Mujeres y Hombres del Siglo XXI* (1a. Ed. San José, Costa Rica Fundación Género y Sociedad, Geso, 2000), 39-48; Claudia Neusüss, „Von der Frauenförderung zur Geschlechterdemokratie – Frauen und Männer müssen sich in Bewegung setzen!“ In Margret Krannich, ed., *Geschlechterdemokratie in Organisationen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1999), 15-19; Heinrich Böll Stiftung *Geschlechterdemokratie 2000* (in Print); Helga Lukoschat, „Das Konzept der Geschlechterdemokratie und seine Umsetzung in Organisationen“, in Gleichstellungsstelle der Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart, ed., *Chancen und Risiken der Verwaltungsreform für Frauen – Dokumentation* (Stuttgart: Gleichstellungsstelle der Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart, 1998).

<sup>9</sup>. Angelika Blickhäuser and Henning von Barga, *Gemeinschaftsaufgabe Geschlechterdemokratie: Gendertraining als Instrument der Gemeinschaftsaufgabe und Profilentwicklung von Einrichtungen* (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2000).

<sup>10</sup>. On average, less than 2 percent of those taking parental leave in Germany are male. (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 2001).

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<sup>11</sup>. Forty percent of women in the workforce work part time but only 5 percent of men. (Mikrozensus 1998).

<sup>12</sup>. See for example, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, *Geschlechterdemokratische Dialoge IV: Gender-Mainstreaming + Empowerment = Geschlechterdemokratie?! Dokumentation der Veranstaltung vom 10. Oktober 2000* (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2001).

<sup>13</sup>. Heinrich Böll Stiftung, *Geschlechterdemokratische Dialoge III: Gender-Mainstreaming in Wirtschaft und Wirtschaftspolitik. Dokumentatin der Veranstaltung vom 11. Juli 2000* (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2000).

<sup>14</sup>. See also Enrique Gomarez, „Postfeminismo, conflicto des sexes o democracia de Género: la encrucijada del siglo XXI,“ in: Enrique Gomáriz and Angela Meentzen, eds., *Democracia de Gener: Una Propuesta para Mujeres y Hombres del Siglo XXI* (1a. Ed. San José, Costa Rica Fundación Género y Sociedad, Geso, 2000), 49-63.

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**WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN UNIFIED GERMANY:  
EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS OF  
EAST GERMAN WOMEN<sup>1</sup>**

Ingrid Miethe

**EXPERIENCING A CULTURE OF DOMINANCE**

As a lecturer at an East German university I have a recurring experience: If I ask students to write about the women's movement or the status of women in Germany, they will almost certainly write a history of the West German women's movement. East German women students at an East German university, in a seminar taught by an East German, report on West German history. Isn't that paradoxical? Or is it symptomatic of the situation in post-unification Germany? Whenever I go to a colloquium, there are always papers on subjects that end with the words "in Germany." "Women's Movement in Germany," "Education in Germany," "Generations in Germany," and so on. Because the status of women was completely different in East and West, I have been repeating the same question for years: "When you say Germany, are you talking about East or West Germany? Admit it." I know the answer, but I can't help asking the question, just to make the answer explicit. The answer is, "Of course I am talking about West Germany." And why the hell, I think at this point, don't you say that you are talking just about West Germany, and not about Germany as a whole?

I argue that this recurring experience is not an exception. It is symptomatic of the situation in a "united" Germany. This phenomenon seems to be reminiscent of a debate in the United States a couple of years ago—the discussion about black and white history.<sup>2</sup> To what extent does the history of the United States include the history and the experiences of black people? Or does it just mean the history of white Americans?

Furthermore, the relationship between East and West Germany reminds us of a discussion of men and women. Whom do we mean when we say "people" or "person"? Do we really mean men and women, or just white, middle class men? Quite often the ostensibly neutral word "people" is used in the latter sense.

In general terms, the phenomenon I am addressing can be described as a culture of dominance.<sup>3</sup> According to Birgit Rommelspacher, a culture of

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dominance means that, “our entire way of life, our self-interpretation, and the image we form of others, are cast in categories of superiority and inferiority.”<sup>4</sup> Culture here is used in the global sense of “an ensemble of shared meanings which express the current constitution of society, particularly its economic and political structures, and its history. [Culture] determines the behavior, the attitudes and the feelings of all who live in society.” And this culture, Rommelspacher continues, is characterized “in western society mainly by various traditions of dominance,” and hence by superiority and inferiority.<sup>5</sup> The relationships of power in society have inscribed themselves in thinking and in feeling, in the unconscious and in the mores. Rommelspacher draws a distinction between despotism (*Herrschaft*), which is based primarily on repression, commandments and prohibitions, and dominance, which relies on broad approval because it rather discreetly reproduces political, social and economic hierarchies through social structures and people’s internalized norms.<sup>6</sup> The “culture of dominance” describes the situation in Germany very well. More specifically—as I will show more detail—it describes the relationship between women and women’s movements in East and West.

Before I turn to the current situation from an East German point of view, I will provide a brief sketch of the history of the East German women’s movement which can be roughly divided into three periods: first, the pre-1989 period; second, the time of general political upheaval, which also represents a peak in the history of the women’s movement; and finally the time from German unification to the present.

### LOOKING BACK: BEFORE 1989

In contrast to other eastern European countries, there had been informal women’s groups in the German Democratic Republic that considered themselves part of an independent women’s movement, i.e. a movement separate from state-sanctioned organizations, at least since the beginning of the 1980s. By organizing largely under the roof of the evangelical church, the independent women’s groups took advantage of the only form of publicity found outside the sphere of state institutions. They addressed issues that were ignored or stigmatized by the state, such as women and peace, anti-militaristic child-raising and non-ideologized child care, combining family and career, feminism, lesbianism, domestic violence, etc. These topics are very much like

those discussed in the West German women's movement. In the GDR, however, issues such as non-ideologized childrearing and combining career and family have always been significantly more important than in West Germany. Feminist topics and theoretical discussions, on the other hand, were of marginal importance.<sup>7</sup> The number of the women's groups in the 1980s, many of which existed only ad hoc, can only be estimated roughly. Although only seven women's groups are documented in the files of the State Security Service (*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, Stasi*),<sup>8</sup> Samira Kenawi<sup>9</sup> has identified some 100 women's groups. The national networking meetings were attended by sixty to 300 women.<sup>10</sup>

A small proportion of these groups consisted of women active in the church and dealt with Christian topics such as feminist theology. The vast majority of the groups—mainly women's pacifist groups and lesbian initiatives—included Christian women and women active in the church, but considered the church mainly as an umbrella. The “Women for Peace” groups, founded in 1982, were the first major mobilization of women that attained a certain public visibility. These groups formed in response to a government plan to include women in compulsory military service.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1980s there were also several initiatives to set up women's meetings in state-organized cultural centers, or to establish aspects of critical women's studies in the academic sphere. While such initiatives remained isolated events, the church offered an opportunity for networking on a national level in the context of synods, women's festivals and small *samizdat* publications. In this way a small but relatively close-knit network of women's groups had developed by 1989. Although this network did not survive the social upheaval of 1989, it was a substantial prerequisite for the rapid mobilization of so many women in the 1989/90 period of intense political activity.

### **THE WENDE OF 1989 AND THE “INDEPENDENT WOMEN'S FEDERATION”**

1989 was the year in which the socialist state system finally collapsed with the opening of the border to West Germany in November. When a “round table” was organized among government and dissident groups as an interim quasi-governmental body, the “Independent Women's Federation” (*Unabhängiger Frauenverband, UFV*) was formed in order to take part in

## Women's Movements in Unified Germany

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it and to try to influence the formation of the post-socialist society and the impending German unification. The UFV united existing and newly created women's initiatives and individuals from various social spheres. In this transitional period preceding the first post-socialist elections of March 1990, the Independent Women's Federation was the only nationally known women's political organization.<sup>12</sup>

The membership of the UFV is problematic since it did not develop regular structures and formal membership. Its first meetings in February of 1990 drew up to 3,000 women. After the poor results in the parliamentary elections, about twenty-five delegates and staff of the new organization met regularly, representing women's initiatives totaling perhaps 250 to 350 members, however, this "base" continually declined. In an alliance with the East German Green Party and the civil rights groups, the UFV attained seats in the first all-German parliament. Organizationally it did not merge with those parties, and therefore won hardly any seats in later elections. After 1994, the UFV was represented only in some municipal councils.<sup>13</sup>

Between 1993 and 1996, the UFV organized several all-German women's political conventions intended to advance communications between East and West, and to build political pressure on women's issues. In 1994 the UFV was the chief organizer of the nationwide "Women's Strike Day '94." This event was linked with hopes for an all-German initiative to represent women's interests. In the same spirit, several post-strike networking meetings were held between representatives of the East German UFV and the mostly West German women of the Cologne-Bonn strike committee. While the West Germans supported the development of a joint statement of goals and the foundation of a nationwide women's party, the East German UFV representatives saw this as a danger to the network-like alliance policy that had been attained during the strike, and gradually withdrew from this collaboration. Hopes for an all-German initiative were not fulfilled; women from East and West Germany could not reach agreement.<sup>14</sup> The overwhelming majority of women left this organization during the first two years following the *Wende*, most of them going on to create a heterogeneous, pluralistic women's political infrastructure in various institutions. The UFV was finally disbanded as a national organization in 1998.

The women's initiatives and projects obtained a significant part of their resources through job creation measures in East Germany which were funded

by the government as a means to fight the rapidly rising unemployment following the collapse of the socialist state and the introduction of the market economy. The fact that they form a segment of the job market therefore characterizes the structure of the women's projects<sup>15</sup> to a much greater extent than in West Germany.<sup>16</sup> Many women earned their living in such projects as long as public funds were available (until about 1994).

The women's movement, like any popular movement, is difficult to put into numbers. Rucht and his collaborators<sup>17</sup> estimate that the number of women's projects in four selected cities (Berlin, Leipzig, Halle, Dresden) increased from about twenty-eight groups in 1989 to some 123 groups in 1993. According to these figures, the women's movement is the sector of the East German social movement spectrum that developed most visibly after 1989.<sup>18</sup> This increase in the number of women's projects goes hand in hand with the fact that many women who are active in the East German women's movement today were not active before 1989. This is primarily because women's projects suddenly became a job market after 1989, and provided jobs for a number of unemployed women, including women who had not been involved in the women's movement before. This means that the composition of the active group changed after 1989. The women who had been active in the independent women's movement under the GDR today represent a minority.

Since the peak in spring of 1990 the potential for women's mobilization has further declined. The highest participation is generated mainly by the organization of feminist conferences, which reflects the fact that the majority of the women's movements' base membership in East Germany as well as in West Germany comes from the college-educated middle class. The all-German "Women's Strike Day 1994" mentioned above was prepared with great enthusiasm by an alliance of different women's organizations from unions, parties, the UFV, and the autonomous women's movement. The response mobilized was nonetheless low.<sup>19</sup>

While the current conditions of the women's movement and infrastructure in East Germany now pretty much resemble those in West Germany, certain clear differences can be observed. The fall of the Berlin Wall suddenly brought organized women in East and West face to face. Interest was high on both sides and so were the expectations. When sisterhood was found only in isolated areas, the disappointment was accordingly great.<sup>20</sup>

## WOMEN AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN UNIFIED GERMANY

Let me describe on two levels how the relationship has evolved ten years after the unification of Germany. First, I will focus on the distribution of women's projects, then I will turn to the attitudes and motivations of women in such projects.

### **The Distribution of Women's Projects**

The transformations in East Germany after 1989 were almost entirely a matter of the East adapting to the West. The women's movement in East Germany today reflects the result of a wholesale transfer of the West German social system to East Germany. Issues that are debated more intensely today include many that were taken for granted in day-to-day life under socialism, such as the right to abortion, the right to work, or social welfare issues.<sup>21</sup> The forms of action and organizational structures have also adapted to the Western model. The quantitative distribution of women's projects in East and West has also become similar.

The statistics I am presenting here are based on an analysis of the CD-ROM *Frauen-Netze 2000*, which represents all nationally active and most regionally active groups in Germany.<sup>22</sup> Looking at the absolute figures, one notices first of all that there are fewer women's projects in East Germany in 2000 than in West Germany. East German projects represent only a fraction of the nationwide German scene. However, if the number of women's projects is seen in relation to the population of the respective states, the picture is quite different. The highest concentration of women's projects by state is found in the three city-states, Bremen, Hamburg and Berlin.<sup>23</sup> Apart from these, the primary discrepancy that appears is not between East and West, but between North and South. The farther south we go, the fewer women's projects we find. The Eastern states conform to this pattern as well.



Figure 1: Number of Women's Projects, absolute

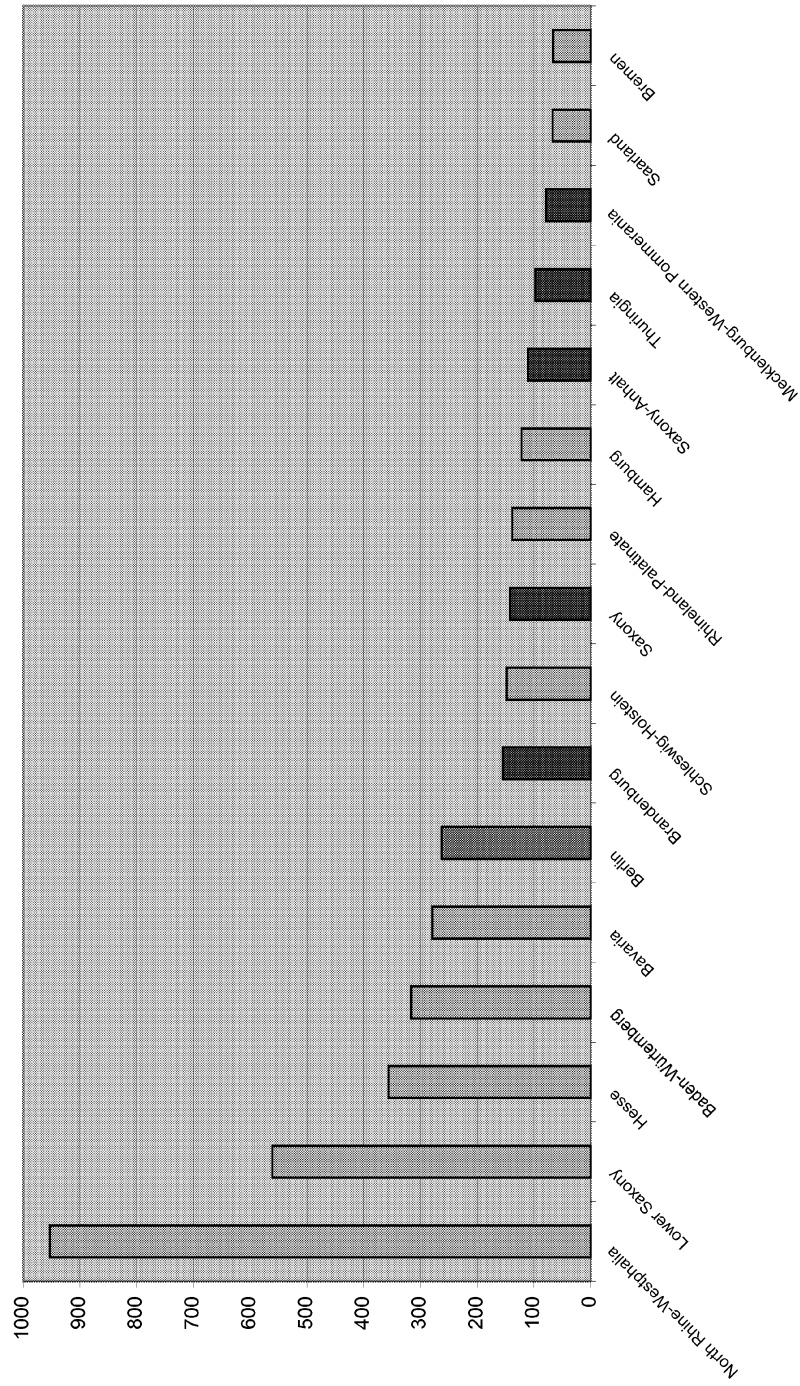
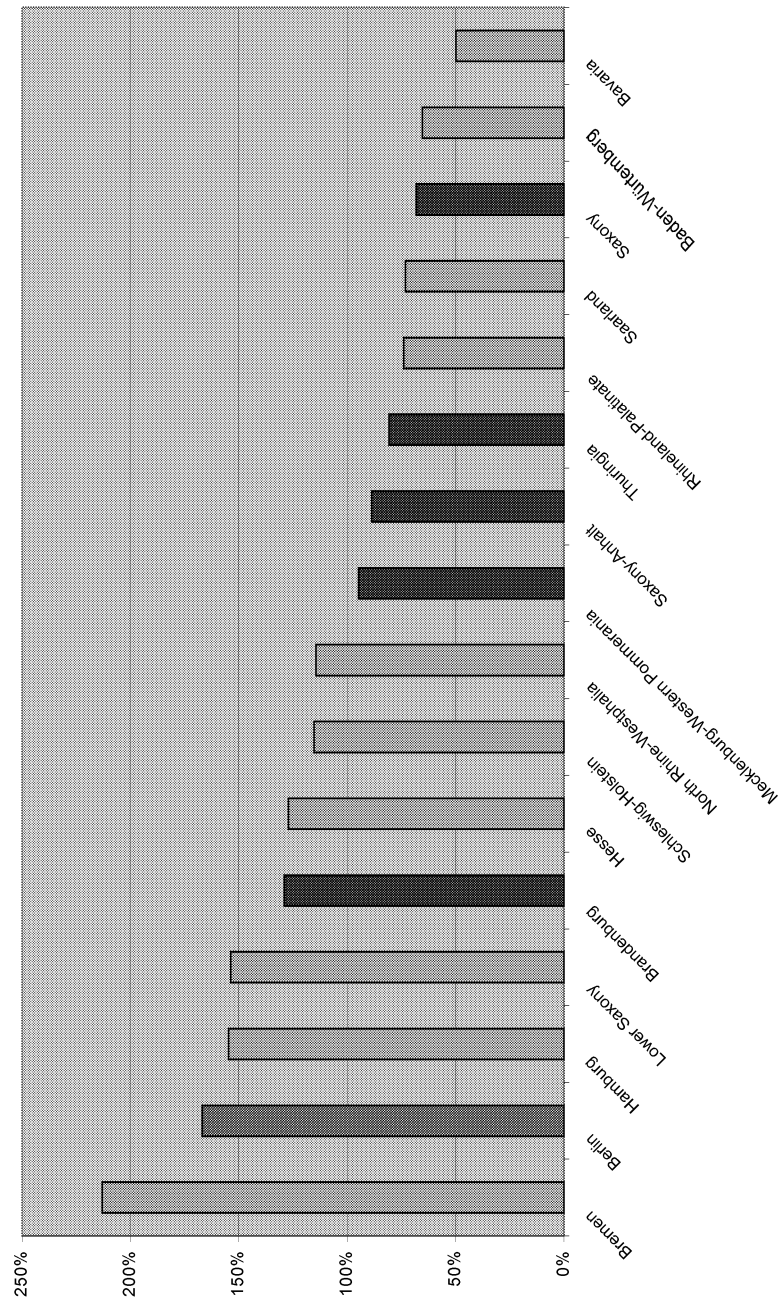


Figure 2: Number of Women's Projects per Capita (deviation from average)



This North–South divide can be correlated with the fact that the conservative parties, with rather traditional policies on women and the family, are stronger in the South. This interpretation is further supported by the fact that there are proportionally fewer women’s projects today in Thuringia, which was a “feminist stronghold” before 1989, than in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, where the women’s movement was hardly active before 1989. The state government of Thuringia has been dominated since 1989 by conservative parties, while Mecklenburg-West Pomerania is the only state governed by a “red–red” coalition between the Social Democrats (SPD) and Socialists (PDS, the successor to East Germany’s ruling Socialist Unity party, SED). The interests of the women’s movement are given a significantly higher priority in both the PDS<sup>24</sup> and the SPD<sup>25</sup> than in the conservative, family-oriented CDU.<sup>26</sup>

The figures support the statement that East Germans are neither more nor less feminist than West Germans. In relation to the population density, the number of East German projects is about average or slightly lower, and corresponds to the distribution in Germany as a whole, with concentration in the city-states and a decrease in the conservative South. The two states with the lowest proportion of women’s projects are both in the West: Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg.

The absolute numbers of women’s projects indicate that East German projects are always in the minority compared with West German projects. This is not surprising, since East Germany constitutes only 20 percent of the total population of unified Germany. However, this means that East German women and projects will always be a minority in discussions taking place at the national level in Germany, both quantitatively and—to return to my personal experience and the “culture of dominance” thesis—structurally. In national debates, the context is set by the West Germans, while the East German position is articulated as a deviation from this norm. As a result, East German women are forced to argue from a defensive posture. Although the structure of women’s projects in East Germany has adapted to that of West Germany, certain East German positions have been preserved or redeveloped which either have their roots in pre-1989 experience, or have grown out of the 1989 transformation itself.

### MOTIVATIONS AND ATTITUDES

The German unification threw together two systems that could hardly have been more different from one another. East Germany held a leading position with regard to women's employment, with over 90 percent of women working outside the home. West German women by contrast had a relatively low employment rate, and in day care the Federal Republic of Germany, where the traditional image of the woman as mother and housewife predominated, represented the rear among European countries. Accordingly, women's attitudes in the two parts of Germany developed quite differently.<sup>27</sup> Employment continued to be a key issue for women in East Germany, consequently East German women's projects dealt much more often with topics such as vocational skills or the combination of family and career.<sup>28</sup>

Child-rearing issues are also related to this development. In East Germany, those involved in the women's movement tend to be mothers, unlike many women in the West German women's movement. Hence Eastern women do not show the same propensity to formulate the issue favored by West German women as the necessity of choosing between having children and having a career. According to their pre-1989 experience both can be combined. The women are aware of the price of double and triple burdens: nonetheless, for East German women the issue is not whether, but how children and career can be combined.<sup>29</sup>

Another difference between East and West Germany can be seen in the fact that issues of feminist theory—to the extent that such a generalization is admissible—are not accorded the same crucial value in the East that they are in the West. Setting aside the differences in socialization and experience, one reason for this is that East German projects represent meeting places in a changing everyday environment, having inherited the functions of disintegrated neighborhood and youth work. The women's projects perform a certain amount of social work between the previous society and the new, democratic, free-market society. Accordingly, many such initiatives offer for example child-care and social and legal counseling.<sup>30</sup>

Another point of conflict is the attitude, more often taken for granted in East Germany, that the state is an instrument responsible for solving problems that affect women.<sup>31</sup> For this reason too, East German feminists have had fewer reservations than many of their Western counterparts about making use

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of public funding. Another controversial issue in years past has been the attitude toward including men. The call for joint action with men is heard much more frequently in East Germany than in the West.<sup>32</sup>

However, not all positions argued by East German women today are rooted in the period before 1989. On the contrary, Eastern women have also gained experience during the years since the unification of Germany, which affects relations between East and West: an experience of structural discrimination. This discrimination is twofold. On the one hand, women are discriminated against as women. While there are some problems in the thesis that has been brought forward that women are the losers in the unification, it is true that the massive reductions in jobs and day care facilities in East Germany since 1989 have primarily affected women. On the other hand, East German women are also subject to a second kind of structural discrimination as East Germans. There are certainly situations in which East German feminists feel themselves to be addressed as East Germans rather than as women.

This means specifically that unemployment among East German women, at 21 percent, is significantly higher than among East German men (16 percent). This corroborates the “losers in the unification” thesis. Both of these figures, however, are in contrast to unemployment of 8 percent among West German men and women.<sup>33</sup> This means that unemployment is higher overall for both sexes than in West Germany. Average incomes tell a similar story. On the average, women in both East and West earn less than men.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, however, East Germans in many industries are paid about 20 percent less than West Germans. Yet East Germans, at least public employees, work two hours longer per week (Federal Office of Statistics). Ten years after the unification, Germany is far from fulfilling the labor unions’ oldest demand, “equal pay for equal work.”

This structural discrimination in unified Germany is still more striking if we shift our attention from workers and public employees to take a look at executive-level positions. Women are familiar with this phenomenon: the higher the position, the lower the proportion of women. In Germany, the upper echelons show not only a lower proportion of women, but also fewer East Germans. A representative study of management fluctuation in East Germany concludes: “The higher the position, the greater the proportion of West Germans.”<sup>35</sup> The only exception, the study finds, is in politics, where East Germans are represented in proportion to their presence in the population, especially at the

## Women's Movements in Unified Germany

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local and state levels. East Germans hold 8 percent of the top positions in unions and industry associations nationwide; 12 percent in the media; 13 percent in the cultural sector; 7 percent in academia; 3 percent in public administration and 0 percent in the military. Overall, East Germans occupy 12 percent of upper-echelon positions.<sup>36</sup> Set in relation to their proportion of the population, this figure implies that East Germans have a much poorer chance than West Germans of rising to elite positions in unified Germany. Rolf Reißig calls this situation an obstruction of young East German's chances of advancement.<sup>37</sup> These statistics not only demonstrate poorer career chances for East Germans, but also suggest that the cultural meanings that are being transported are not neutral. Media, universities, and public administration are dominated by West Germans. As presented by the media and all educational institutions, the West is the norm and the East deviates from it.

While the experiences of increased discrimination against women since 1989 bring East German women closer to their West German sisters, the experience of structural discrimination against East Germans reinforces the distance between women in East and West. Here we see the category of gender to be relative, as it is to race and class.<sup>38</sup>

### **LIVING IN AND DEALING WITH A CULTURE OF DOMINANCE**

Let me return to my East German students: Why do these young women today only report West German history? Cultural dominance is not a conscious process—neither on the part of the dominant group nor on the part of those discriminated against. But, as Birgit Rommelspacher points out,

The person's self-image is decisively marked by his or her position in the power structure of society as a whole. Powerlessness is also expressed in the denial of an identity that adequately expresses one's own experiences and life context... The denial of identity is thus a characteristic of cultural dominance.<sup>39</sup>

Zygmunt Bauman<sup>40</sup> describes the situation in still stronger terms as a fundamental characteristic of modern nation-states, which "strive to establish common behaviors by continuous propaganda campaigns. They create a

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‘historical memory’ and do their best to discredit and restrain those who cannot be subsumed in what is considered to be a common history.”

Nor is the women’s movement proof against such mechanisms, according to Rommelspacher:

The more successful it becomes, the more it is hegemonically oriented. The more women establish themselves, the more they also participate in the dominant value system, which excludes women and men from discriminated-against groups. (...) This means that it is no longer enough for feminists to look ahead in their fight for emancipation and to concentrate on the oppression which they are fighting. Rather, they must also look back, in order to see whom they are leaving behind.<sup>41</sup>

Women’s experiences in East Germany go against the grain of the dominant historical memory in Germany. This is why, when I ask my students about German history, they recount West German history. They experienced the GDR only as children; they grew up after the Wall had come down. What they know of East German history is only what they were told at school or at home. And these narrations—especially those in the public sphere—recount West German history as the history of all Germany.

Ten years after unification, the dispute between women in East and West is no longer as fierce as it was in the early 1990s. From my subjective point of view as a participant, as a woman born and raised in the GDR, but with a Western academic socialization—as a traveler between two worlds, to a certain extent—there are several reasons why the division is less acute: First, the intense debate of recent years has gradually created on both sides an awareness and acceptance of each other’s difference. Second, both sides have withdrawn to a large extent into their respective separate contexts, while maintaining productive cooperation and personal friendships at certain points. Third, East German viewpoints—not to be confused with West German views on East Germans, which are by no means rare—are seldom heard in the German public sphere anyway, and participation in public debates is often limited to token *Ossis*. Women’s forums are no exception. Fourth, time was on the side of the West German women’s movement. The western women are not only in a quantitative majority, but the social context that gave shape to their specific answers is now the context in Germany as a whole. East German experience in comparison is an old wives’ tale with no current point of reference. Finally,

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in the meantime a generation of women has grown up in East Germany who have unconsciously internalized the West German dominance.

The subordination of the non-dominant group is always accompanied by a denial of their identity by the culture of dominance.<sup>42</sup> I know only few West German women who see themselves as representatives of a culture of dominance. They do not want to dominate; they are always looking for ways to resolve the dominance. And in face-to-face interaction, the dominance can be resolved. Nonetheless, however, whether or not they want to be, both sides are seen as representatives of their respective social systems. Women in East and West are not only different, but the difference itself is embedded in a hierarchical structure. And the hierarchy tacitly underlies many East–West discussions as a subtext. A truly common, productive communication between East German and West German women can only come about when this subtext is taken seriously and strategies are developed to deal with it.

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>. The paper has greatly benefited from comments and suggestions from Myra Marx Ferree, Silke Roth, the editors and the audience of the conference “Feminist Movements in a Globalizing World – German and American Perspectives.” They bear no responsibility for the present version. A special thank to Tony Crawford for the help with the translation.

<sup>2</sup>. Cf. Myra Marx Ferree, “Institutionalization, Identity, and the Political Participation of Women in the New Bundeslaender,” *Research on Russia & Eastern Europe* 1996, 2: 19-34.

<sup>3</sup>. After Birgit Rommelspacher’s German term Dominanzkultur. Birgit Rommelspacher, *Dominanzkultur: Texte zu Fremdheit und Macht* (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1995).

<sup>4</sup>. Ibid., 22-3.

<sup>5</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>. Ibid., 26.

<sup>7</sup>. Cf. Samira Kenawi, *Frauengruppen in der DDR der 80er Jahre: Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Weibblick, 1995); Ingrid Miethe, *Frauen in der DDR-Opposition: Lebens- und kollektivgeschichtliche Verläufe in einer Frauenfriedensgruppe* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1999); Ingrid Miethe, „Frauenbewegung in Ostdeutschland: Angekommen in gesamtdeutschen Verhältnissen?“ *Beiträge zur feministischen Theorie und Praxis* 23(54): 9-22.

<sup>8</sup>. The State Security Service only counted the Women for Peace groups, since feminist groups were not classified as antagonistic to the socialist state.

<sup>9</sup>. Kenawi, „Frauengruppen.“

<sup>10</sup>. Anne Hampele, *Der Unabhängige Frauenverband: Ein frauenpolitisches Experiment im deutschen Vereinigungsprozeß* (Berlin: Berliner Debatte Initial, 2000), here 46.



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<sup>11</sup>. Ingrid Miethe, “‘From the Mother of Revolution’ to ‘Fathers of Unification:’ Concepts of Politics among Women Activists Following German Unification,” *Social Politics* 6:1 (1999): 1-22, and Ingrid Miethe, “Changes in Spaces of Political Activism: Transforming East Germany.” In Roswitha Breckner, Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, and Ingrid Miethe, eds., *Biographies and the Division of Europe: Experience, Action and Change on the ,Eastern Side‘* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 2000), 315-34.

<sup>12</sup>. Cf. Myra Marx Ferree, “The Time of Chaos was the Best: Feminist Mobilization and Demobilization in East Germany,” *Gender and Society* 8 (1994): 597-623.

<sup>13</sup>. Cf. Anne Hampele, “The Organized Women’s Movement in the Collapse of the GDR: The Independent Women’s Organization (UFV).” In Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller, eds., *Gender Politics and Post Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union* (New York/ London: Routledge, 1993), 180-93; Hampele, *Der Unabhängige Frauenverband*.

<sup>14</sup>. Silke Roth and Myra Marx Ferree “Sisterhood and Solidarity? Mobilizing for the Women Strike Day in Germany, March 8, 1994.” Paper presented for presentation at the meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society, Boston, MA. Hampele, *Der Unabhaengige Frauenverband*.

<sup>15</sup>. Women’s projects are projects that are initiated and carried out by women. Those projects focus for example on occupational, educational, political, or cultural aspects.

<sup>16</sup>. Such funds have also played a role in West Germany but a much smaller one.

<sup>17</sup>. Dieter Rucht, Barbara Blattert and Dieter Rink, *Soziale Bewegungen auf dem Weg zur Institutionalisierung? Zum Strukturwandel ‘alternativer’ Gruppen in beiden Teilen Deutschlands* (Frankfurt / New York: Campus, 1997), here 82.

<sup>18</sup>. *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>19</sup>. Roth and Ferree, “Sisterhood and Solidarity?”

<sup>20</sup>. Cf. Katrin Rohnstock, ed., *Stiefschwestern: Was Ost-Frauen und West-Frauen voneinander denken* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1994); Dorothy Rosenberg, “Stepsisters: On the Difficulties of German-German Feminist Cooperation,” in Fred Casmir, ed., *Communication in Eastern Europe: The Role of History, Culture and Media in Contemporary Conflicts*. (Mahwah / New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 1995), 81-109; Ulrike Helwerth and Gislinde Schwarz, *Von Muttis und Emanzen: Feministinnen in Ost- und Westdeutschland* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1995).

<sup>21</sup>. Myra Marx Ferree, “The Rise and Fall of ‘Mommy Politics’: Feminism and Unification in (East)Germany,” *Feminist Studies* 19:1 (1993): 89-115; Myra Marx Ferree, “Patriarchies and Feminisms: The Two Women’s Movements of Post-unification Germany,” *Social Politics* (1995): 10-24.

<sup>22</sup>. Cf. *Frauenetze 2000/1: 4600 Adressen und Informationen aus Beruf, Weiterbildung, Politik, Kultur und Frauenbewegung. Zusätzlich Branchen* (Köln: die media), 1 CD-ROM. The groups are attributed to the Land in which their projects are located. This blurs the focus slightly, since West German women have been involved in initiating projects in East Germany. On the other hand, inland migration from East to West is stronger than in the opposite direction, so that East German women are also active in West German projects.

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<sup>23</sup>. East and West Berlin are grouped together in these figures because it is difficult to attribute the various projects to one side of the city or the other. Many projects that originated in West Germany are now located in East Berlin (cf. the project mentioned by Claudia Neusüss in this volume), and present-day statistics on Berlin generally do not distinguish between East and West.

<sup>24</sup>. Astrid Hedin, *The Politics of Social Networks: Interpersonal Trust and Institutional Change in Post-Communist East Germany* (Lund: Department of Political Science, 2001).

<sup>25</sup>. Petra Weis, "Hürdenlauf um die Macht? Politische Partizipation von Frauen in der SPD und die Quote," in Eva Maleck-Lewy and Virginia Penrose, eds., *Gefährtinnen der Macht: Politische Partizipation von Frauen im vereinigten Deutschland – eine Zwischenbilanz* (Berlin: Sigma, 1995), 65-82.

<sup>26</sup>. Ingrid Reichart-Dreyer, "Partizipation von Frauen in der CDU," *ibid.*, 37-63.

<sup>27</sup>. Ferree, "Mommy Politics," Ferree, "Patriarchies and Feminisms."

<sup>28</sup>. Hampele, *Der Unabhängige Frauenverband*, here 181 ff.

<sup>29</sup>. Cf. the different attitudes between Eastern and Western women towards work and children in Helwerth and Schwarz, "Von Muttis und Emanzen," 94-129.

<sup>30</sup>. Cf. Hampele, *Der Unabhängige Frauenverband*, here 181.

<sup>31</sup>. Christina Schenk and Christiane Schindler, "Frauenbewegung in Ostdeutschland – Innenansichten." In Eva Maleck-Lewy and Virginia Penrose, eds., *Gefährtinnen der Macht: Miethe "Frauen in der DDR."*

<sup>32</sup>. Cf. Helwerth and Schwarz, "Von Muttis und Emanzen" here 130-48; Miethe, "From the Mother of Revolution," here 17.

<sup>33</sup>. Statistisches Bundesamt, ed. (in cooperation with WZB and ZUMA), 2001. *Datenreport 1999. Zahlen und Fakten über die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung), here 84. A Potsdam study of elites drew similar conclusions: Wilhelm Bürklin and Hilke Rebenstorf, *Eliten in Deutschland: Rekrutierung und Interpretation* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1997).

<sup>34</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>. Hans-Ulrich Derlien, "Elitenzirkulation in Ostdeutschland 1989-1995," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B 5/98: 3-17, here 15.

<sup>36</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>. Rolf Reißig, *Die gespaltene Vereinigungsgesellschaft: Bilanzen und Perspektiven der Transformation Ostdeutschlands und der deutschen Vereinigung* (Berlin: Dietz-Verlag, 2000).

<sup>38</sup>. These kinds of discrimination are certainly not the only forms of dominance within German society—the situation of migrants reflects another, to name just one example, but that is beyond the focus of this paper.

<sup>39</sup>. Rommelpacher, 186.

<sup>40</sup>. Zygmunt Bauman, "Moderne und Ambivalenz." In Uli Bielefeld, ed., *Das Eigene und das Fremde: Neuer Rassismus in der Alten Welt?* (Hamburg: Junius, 1991), 23-49, here 34.

<sup>41</sup>. Birgit Rommelspacher, "Right-Wing 'Feminism:' A Challenge to Feminism as an Emancipatory Movement." In Nira Yuval-Davis and Pnina Webner, eds., *Women, Citizenship and Difference* (London/New York: Zed Books, 1999), 54-64, here 63.

<sup>42</sup>. Ibid.

**U.S. FEMINIST DOMESTIC POLICY ACTIVISM  
IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION**

Cynthia Deitch

When I was invited to the May 2001 conference titled “Feminist Movements in a Globalizing World” to speak about how the U.S. feminist movement was responding to the election of George W. Bush, the contested results of the 2000 election were still fresh in mind. There was a sense among feminists that women’s rights in the United States were under attack from a conservative administration. Some level of feminist mobilization in response to the politics of the Bush administration seemed possible. NOW (National Organization for Women) had just held a national march in Washington to defend abortion rights. The National Council of Women’s Organizations (NCWO) had called a national Women’s Equality Summit for September.

Subsequent events shifted the political context several times. First, the sudden and unexpected ascension of Democrats to the leadership of the U.S. Senate for the first time in six years, when Senator James Jeffords of Vermont left the Republican Party to become an independent in June of 2001, temporarily created a new optimism among feminist policy activists in Washington.<sup>1</sup> After the tragic events of September 11, political attention in Washington and across the nation focused on American response to terrorism. The specific political context that I originally examined in my paper receded into the past. In keeping with the theme of the conference, and of the other papers as well as world events, I extended my analysis to locate the U.S domestic feminist policy agenda within the context of globalization as well as American partisan politics.

I examine four national policy issues that were important to feminist policy activists during and after the 2000 presidential election, and are likely to remain on the agenda. For each case, I consider where the policy fits within the domestic feminist agenda, how it is affected by partisan politics within the United States, and what a globalization lens adds to our understanding. Two of the policies, reproductive rights and protection from violence against women, are widely understood as key feminist issues within the United States. For these two issues, feminist policy arguments draw on a traditional individual rights framework within American law plus, to some extent, on an emerging international human rights discourse, to demand rights to bodily autonomy. The other two policies, social security reform and welfare reform, are not as

widely understood as feminist issues in the United States. Both policies involve questions of social provision and the role of the welfare state. I suggest links to economic globalization that are not regularly made in U.S. policy discussions of social security or welfare. Before proceeding with specific cases, I specify what part of the American women's movement I discuss, and what I mean by globalization.

### FEMINIST POLICY ACTIVISTS

My use of "feminist policy activists" refers to a specific segment of the contemporary U.S. women's movement and a particular range of political activism. I refer to advocacy organizations with an active presence in Washington, D.C., that primarily work "within the system" to effect change in American national policy on issues of concern to women. This part of the women's movement is sometimes called the "women's lobby,"<sup>2</sup> a label that is somewhat misleading because the Washington women's policy organizations, as a group, do more than lobby; some organizations do no actual lobbying at all. As organizations with non-profit status under the tax code, most are limited by law to spending only a small portion of their resources on lobbying and are not able to officially endorse or contribute money to political candidates for elective office (NOW is an important exception). Thus, though informally often allied with Democratic Party rather than Republican Party politics, most of the Washington women's policy organizations officially define themselves as non-partisan or bipartisan. I use the terms "women's" and "feminist" organization broadly to refer to organizations that advocate for positions and issues on the feminist agenda, whether or not the organizations officially use the word "feminist" to describe their work.

Although the work of individual organizations vary, as a group women's policy organizations are frequently involved with the following activities: They may work with sympathetic members of Congress and congressional staff to shape legislation. They work in coalitions with other women's, civil rights, and labor organizations, among others, on specific policy issues. In coalition work, an organization such as OWL (Older Women's League), for example, will advocate for older women's interests in coalitions with other women's organizations on an issue like domestic violence, and advocate for women in coalitions with other organizations concerned with aging on issues such as

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Social Security reform. Women's policy organizations disseminate information about policy issues, typically providing some type of feminist or woman-oriented perspective on the issue. They direct information to members, supporters and sympathizers through newsletters, public speaking, email lists and web pages, with increasing reliance on Internet technology. They attempt to inform a broader public through press releases and media strategies.

Feminist policy activist organizations typically monitor legislation on specific issues with the aim of preventing legislation they support from quietly disappearing in the legislative process, or legislation they oppose from sneaking through the process unnoticed. Organizations send out alerts to mobilize supporters to take action. Frequently, the requested action is to contact members of Congress about a piece of legislation; occasionally the action is a rally or march. In addition to (or in place of) the advocacy activities mentioned above, some women's policy organizations specialize in research on policy issues affecting women, or legal challenges to public policy in the courts.

Given that feminist policy activist organizations have successfully mastered the techniques of insider or interest group politics,<sup>3</sup> that playing insider politics may tend to have a conservatizing effect,<sup>4</sup> and that "outsider" grass-roots feminist activism is much less visible today than in the heyday of the 1970s, there is debate in the academic literature<sup>5</sup> whether to view the Washington women's policy organizations as typical interest group organizations or as social movement organizations. I suggest it is not an either/or case; the feminist policy organizations are in many ways hybrid organizations that collectively engage in a range of interest group and social movement activities. Spalter-Roth and Schreiber<sup>6</sup> describe dynamic tensions between "outsider issues and insider tactics" such as "marketing feminist issues in the dominant language of individual liberalism" while trying to mobilize and educate around structural issues. Spalter-Roth and Schreiber also note that to gain power and legitimacy in the policy process, feminist policy activists often need to be perceived as speaking in a unitary voice for all women, which creates tension with efforts to recognize differences among women and the need for more diversity in feminist policy organizations and coalitions. The hybrid feminist policy organizations continue to balance insider and outsider tensions.

It is important to recognize that the Washington policy organizations described above are only one segment of a larger women's movement that is amorphous, diffuse, and some would say fragmented. Other active parts of

the movement include unaffiliated individuals, grass-roots groups not affiliated with national organizations, groups that focus on state and local issues, on media, culture, or the arts, and on direct service provision such as rape crisis centers and shelters for battered women. There are also women's organizations in Washington and elsewhere that focus primarily on international issues, whereas my focus here is on American domestic policy activists.

### GLOBALIZATION

As indicated earlier, I am interested in exploring ways to better incorporate a globalization perspective into feminist discussions of American domestic policy. In using the term "globalization," I draw on the literature that critiques globalization as largely or potentially anti-democratic, and sympathizes with the anti-globalization social movement.<sup>7</sup> Globalization encompasses a number of interrelated political, economic, and technological trends frequently described as including the following: Political realignment following the fall of the Berlin Wall and end of the Cold War led to the emergence of the United States as the sole and uncontested super power. At the same time, non-state political entities have gained increasing attention in the international arena. Examples of non-state entities include multinational corporations, transnational organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the older World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), indigenous peoples, local NGOs (non-governmental organizations), as well as international (non-state) terrorist networks. The spread of neoliberal political ideology champions the role of the market, privatization and de-regulation policies. Economic globalization refers to rapid increases in international flows of trade, finance, and people. Part of the international movement of goods and services includes illegal trade in drugs, weapons, endangered animals, and the increased trafficking in women. Advances in computer and telecommunications technology are frequently associated with globalization.

Discussions of gender and globalization examine how structural adjustment policies fostered by international lending organizations such as the World Bank and IMF affect women more than (or differently from) men.<sup>8</sup> For example, when debtor nation governments privatize health, education, water, electricity and other services, poor families lose access to services, and women in poor families take up the burden of providing care for family members. Globalization

processes also affect women's employment in agriculture and manufacturing, and women's immigration.

Saskia Sassen's analysis<sup>9</sup> of how globalization is gendered suggests several additional points that I find especially helpful for thinking about globalization processes in relation to U.S. domestic politics and policies. Sassen views economic globalization as a transformation of both economic activity and the organization of political power. The economic transformation includes the increased incorporation of poor women, especially poor Third World women, into wage labor through both offshore production and immigration. Sassen describes how globalization is restructuring major cities in the United States with consequences for gender, race, and class divisions in the American economy. Politically, Sassen suggests that as globalization decreases the sovereignty of the traditional nation-state, it creates openings for non-state actors such as women, immigrants, refugees, indigenous peoples, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to become visible as participants in international relations and subjects under international law. Sassen views international human rights law, in the context of globalization, as providing a potential opening for women, minorities, and immigrants, for example, to make claims and demand rights as persons, regardless of citizenship. In the sections that follow, I consider possible linkages for connecting American domestic policy issues on the feminist agenda with globalization processes.

### **ABORTION POLITICS AND THE GLOBAL GAG RULE**

I begin with the issue of abortion, using abortion politics to illustrate how the Bush presidency altered aspects of the political terrain for feminist policy activists in Washington. The "Global Gag Rule" or "Mexico City Policy" that Bush reinstated by executive action on his first full day in office provides my first case to explore the intersection of globalization processes and U.S. policy on a feminist issue.

The fate of abortion rights during the George W. Bush presidency was one of the greatest concerns for feminists following the 2000 election. Probably the biggest fear for pro-choice activists was that future Bush appointees to the United States Supreme Court would tip the balance of the Court decidedly against *Roe v. Wade*, thereby ending the legal right to abortion as established by the Supreme Court in 1973. Feminists also saw a continued erosion of



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reproductive rights through a variety of restrictions on abortion, restrictive policy on stem cell research and sex education, among other issues, and through anti-choice appointments to key cabinet and other positions (in Health and Human Services and Justice Departments, for example), as well as judicial appointments below the Supreme Court level. Early messages from the Bush White House indicated that the President would not initiate anti-abortion legislation, but neither would he veto such legislation if Congress passed it.<sup>10</sup>

Compared to the Clinton years, abortion rights advocates (as well as feminist advocates more broadly) lost “access” to the White House under Bush, lost the presidential veto in case a Republican Congress passed anti-abortion legislation, and lost potential influence in nomination processes for appointments. Access to White House staff is important to interest groups as a source of timely information and as a pressure point for attempts to exert influence. Feminists had much greater access to the White House during the Clinton Administration than under the Republican administrations before Clinton, and than under the George W. Bush Administration following Clinton. For pro-choice advocates, the presidential veto of anti-abortion legislation was never taken for granted under Clinton, but with organized pressure it was achieved in critical cases such as the late-term or “partial birth” abortion conflict. (In contrast, feminist policy activists who opposed the 1996 welfare reform legislation had no such success in advocating for poor women’s rights during the Clinton Administration). Other changes reported by feminist policy activists in the early months of the Bush Administration included a change in political climate wherein feminist advocates did not expect to gain ground, and a sense that issues such as pay equity and paid family leave that had made no real progress during the Clinton years were on an even further back burner after Bush became President.<sup>11</sup>

The legal right to abortion has remained a highly contested issue in American politics since the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision of 1973. Public opinion data indicate that a very large majority of the American public consistently favors the right to a legal abortion in at least some circumstances beyond saving the life of the pregnant woman, and a majority call themselves pro-choice. However, a majority also tends to support some restrictions on abortion that pro-choice activists would oppose. Attitudes toward abortion have remained fairly stable since 1973, and differences in opinion between women and men tend to be minor.<sup>12</sup> In American partisan politics, the hard line

opponents of abortion without any exceptions tend to be aligned with conservative Republicans whereas the advocates of legal abortion with no additional restrictions are aligned with liberal Democrats. Part of George W. Bush's electoral strategy on abortion in 2000 was to avoid alienating the hard line anti-abortion religious and socially conservative right, while appealing as a "compassionate conservative" to moderate pro-choice Republican women.

Considering the political context described above, it is significant that the Bush administration's first salvo on the abortion front was to reinstate the global gag order. Bush took action on the abortion front on his first working day in office—which was also the week of the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* and a time of anti-abortion activist mobilization—by issuing an executive order to reinstate the "Global Gag Rule" or "Mexico City policy." The Global Gag Rule prohibits any U.S. international family planning assistance dollars from going to NGOs abroad that use any of their own private funds to provide abortions, provide any information about abortion, or advocate for abortion rights in their own country, even if abortion is legal in their country. A Boston Globe editorial observed, "Bush paid his dues to antiabortion supporters in a way that will affect only poor women in foreign countries, not American women."<sup>13</sup> Similarly, pro-choice activists noted that there are not any pro-choice Republican voters for Bush to worry about among the women abroad affected by the Global Gag Rule.<sup>14</sup>

Conflict over the Global Gag Rule has been a feature of partisan and presidential politics over four administrations.<sup>15</sup> In 1984, under President Ronald Reagan, the United States first announced the Global Gag Rule restrictions at the Second International Conference on Population in Mexico City, hence the policy is also known as the Mexico City Policy. Following Reagan, George H. Bush continued the Mexico City Policy during his Presidency. In 1993, President Clinton rescinded the Global Gag Rule as one of his first acts in office. Anti-abortion lawmakers continued to attempt to reinstate the Gag Rule over the next five years. In late 1999, the rescinded Global Gag Rule became one of the casualties of a protracted conflict over the fiscal year 2000 appropriation bills. Clinton eventually agreed to a deal with Congress whereby the Global Gag Rule became law (rather than administrative policy, as in previous years) for one year in exchange for Congress agreeing to pay one-billion dollars in back UN dues. As part of the agreement, the President had the authority to waive the Global Gag Rule restrictions, which Clinton immediately did. In Fall

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2000, Congress substantially increased funds for international family planning and removed the Global Gag Rule language from the spending bill, but no funds could be spent until February, 2001. By that time, George W. Bush was in office.

In immediate response to Bush, twenty pro-choice, women's rights, and population organizations signed a letter to the President protesting the reinstatement of the Gag Rule. In subsequent months, the feminist response also included both legislation and litigation. In Congress, pro-choice lawmakers such as Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Representative Nita Lowey (D-NY) introduced bills to repeal the Global Gag Rule. Pro-choice advocates enjoyed several short-lived victories in committee, achieved by convincing some Republicans to vote against the White House position. However, President Bush made clear that he would veto the entire State Department Authorization Act if the Gag Rule was not reinstated. The arguments that pro-choice advocates made against Bush on the Global Gag Rule included the following: the President misled the public when he claimed the Gag Rule prevented taxpayer funds from paying for abortions because other law already accomplished this end; his policy violated free speech abroad in ways that would be unconstitutional and unacceptable if attempted at home; and his action on the Global Gag Rule contradicted his administration's own avowed commitment to promoting democracy abroad.<sup>16</sup>

On the litigation front, The Center for Law and Reproductive Policy (CLRP) initiated a law suit against President Bush charging that the Global Gag Rule was both a violation of the U.S. constitutional right to free speech of Americans involved in women's health work internationally,<sup>17</sup> as well as a direct contravention of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by the United States in 1992.<sup>18</sup> CLRP also claimed that its own ability to communicate with gagged citizens and activists in other countries was restricted. Human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch supported CLRP's lawsuit.<sup>19</sup>

The work by women's policy organizations to educate and mobilize pro-choice support to oppose the global gag order, and more generally on issues of foreign aid for international family planning, brings together national and global issues in several ways. Feminists have used the Global Gag Rule policy to mobilize pro-choice women in the U.S. to support international family planning aid for poorer women in other parts of the world, and to link a threat

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to reproductive freedom abroad to threats to free speech and abortion rights at home.

Applying a globalization analysis, several interesting points emerge in the examination of the Global Gag Rule case. First, the foreign aid assistance in question goes to local women's NGOs (or NGOs assisting local women), not to governments. The gag order would, from the view of feminist opponents of the policy, unfairly restrict the political agency of women activists and women's NGOs in other parts of the world. The debate is not over whether specific foreign governments are eligible for USAID family planning funds and it is not about what national policies on abortion specific countries may have. Rather, the American policy directly impinges on NGO activity by and on behalf of women in poor regions of the world. Second, the Center for Law and Reproductive Rights, along with other U.S. women's groups, successfully framed at least part of the opposition to President Bush's action on the Global Gag Rule in the terms of international human rights discourse. Feminist responses to the Global Gag Rule make visible women and women's NGOs in the U.S. and in developing countries as non-state actors in international relations and international human rights law. Third, the international economic context in which structural adjustment policies are pressuring debtor nations to privatize health care provision makes American aid for family planning to clinics in poor countries especially critical. My last point, linking the Global Gag Rule to structural adjustment policies has not been part of public debate, but is another way of thinking more globally about U.S. international family planning policy.

### **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT 2000**

In contrast to the deep ideological and frequent partisan divisions over abortion policy, domestic violence legislation often garners strong bi-partisan support, including some support from quarters frequently at odds with feminists over abortion and other issues. Reauthorization and expansion of the 1994 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was one of the last acts of Congress of importance to feminists in the final weeks leading up to the 2000 election. Both presidential candidates officially supported VAWA reauthorization (although Bush was initially unaware of the pending legislation when asked about it at a campaign stop).

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Despite a close-to-unanimous level of bi-partisan support in the final vote, VAWA reauthorization was nearly a casualty of partisan political positioning in 2000.<sup>20</sup> The first comprehensive federal legislation on violence against women, the 1994 Violence Against Women Act, required reauthorization in 2000. Without legislative action, federal funding for domestic violence programs under VAWA would cease in October 2000. Activists first attempted to advance VAWA reauthorization legislation in 1999, but found that politicians preferred to wait until closer to election time to pass legislation widely viewed as appealing to voters. Prominent Republicans strongly supported the legislation along with many Democrats. However, during the 2000 Congressional session, VAWA legislation was repeatedly stalled in committees. Advocates complained that conservative Republican committee chairs were not holding hearings needed for the legislation to advance, preventing a floor vote, and stalling as leverage for deals with the Democrats on unrelated legislation.

In the weeks of impasse leading up to passage, feminist activists mobilized repeatedly through a press conference with many lawmakers of both parties, a national lobby day, a rally on the steps of the Capitol, and Domestic Violence Awareness Month events in October in Washington and around the nation.<sup>21</sup> Although VAWA 1994 officially expired before the reauthorization passed, and some Congressional leaders appeared willing to let it die, the combination of mobilization of support and an imminent election resulted in nearly unanimous votes.

Although advocates stated a preference for a vote on a stand-alone VAWA bill,<sup>22</sup> VAWA reauthorization was eventually attached to another piece of legislation that was further along in the legislative process as a tactic to overcome obstacles in the Senate. The other bill prohibited sex trafficking, also a feminist concern. The VAWA part of the legislation as well as the whole package, including trafficking and some smaller crime bills, passed both houses of Congress with overwhelming support from both parties for the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act of 2000. The VAWA section of the law provided funding through the year 2005 for shelters and other services for victims, training and assistance for law enforcement officials, and funding for the National Domestic Violence Hotline, among other provisions.

Expanded protection for battered immigrants was widely hailed as the most important addition to previous VAWA legislation. Prior to VAWA 1994, immigration laws gave citizens and permanent residents total control over their

spouses' immigration status, often forcing battered immigrant women to remain in abusive relationships. VAWA 1994 provided a remedy but subsequent immigration reform laws undermined VAWA protections for immigrants. VAWA 2000 removed U.S. residency and "extreme hardship" requirements for immigrant women to receive VAWA protections, allowed immigrant women to obtain lawful permanent residence without leaving the country, restored access to VAWA protections removed by 1996 immigration reform laws, and created a new type of visa for some victims of violence.<sup>23</sup>

The trafficking provision of the law combats the trafficking of persons into the sex trade in the United States and internationally through prosecution and punishment of traffickers, as well as protection and assistance to victims. It includes protection for women not protected by other laws because they lack U.S. citizenship or appropriate immigration documents. Among feminists active on sex trade issues, there were debates over the language and limitations of the legislation, including the definition of trafficking as coerced, excluding prostitutes and other "voluntary" sex workers. There were also debates about the merit of separating sex trafficking from other trafficking in persons for exploitative labor.<sup>24</sup>

The last-minute politically expedient measure of attaching VAWA to the sex trafficking bill served to link the two issues officially within national public policy to a greater extent than had been the case previously. For the last round of mobilization, VAWA oriented email lists and web pages also informed constituents about the trafficking bill and trafficking alerts included information on VAWA reauthorization. After the legislation passed, newspaper reports discussed the two main sections of the bill together.

There are several links between VAWA 2000 and globalization. One is the link with the legislation prohibiting trafficking noted above. Although, as mentioned, there are divergent views among feminists on some aspects of the trafficking policy as it passed, the issue of international sex trafficking connects feminist concerns with globalization processes. The second link is the expanded protection for immigrants under VAWA 2000. According to Sassen, women immigrants are a focal point for developing a feminist analysis of globalization. Both the VAWA and the trafficking sections of the 2000 law explicitly extend rights to non-citizen immigrants that were previously denied. Third, international human rights claims are part of more global feminist activism to end violence against women and trafficking of women.

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**WELFARE REFORM REAUTHORIZATION**

In 1996, Congress passed, and President Clinton signed into law, welfare reform legislation that many feminist policy activists strongly opposed as punitive and harmful to women. Gwendolyn Mink called the 1996 welfare legislation the “most aggressive assault on women’s rights” in the twentieth century.<sup>25</sup> The 1996 Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) provision of the welfare reform legislation is up for reauthorization by Congress in 2002. Policy activists on all sides of the welfare issue began preparing for the 2002 welfare reform reauthorization debate even before George W. Bush took office.

Among other provisions, the 1996 welfare reform policy implemented time limits on welfare receipt, allowed states options to require employment as a condition for assistance and to “divert” poor women into jobs rather than ever applying for welfare. Proponents of the policy who proclaim it hugely successful tend to define success by (a) large numbers of poor single mothers who left the welfare rolls, whether or not there is any record of where they went, and (b) documented large numbers of women who moved from welfare to some form of paid employment, whether or not they remained in poverty. Critics of the 1996 legislation tend to question whether moving large numbers of families from welfare into the ranks of the working poor constitutes success, and whether the employment gains can withstand a period of economic recession. Feminist critics also raise questions about the emphasis on marriage as a solution to poverty, the devaluation of unpaid care work, and the need for better childcare, among other issues.

Drawing a linkage between American welfare reform and economic globalization requires a focus on the low-wage service sector jobs that provide employment for single mothers moving from welfare to work. Sassen<sup>26</sup> develops an analysis to show that the same set of global economic processes that prompted transnational corporations to move plants and offices abroad also contributed to a large supply of low wage jobs in the United States, including low-wage service sector jobs that traditionally and predominantly employ women, especially in major urban areas.<sup>27</sup> She links the growth of new forms of employment-centered poverty in the United States with structural changes associated with economic globalization. Although Sassen seeks to explain the place of immigrant women in the global economy, the global economic restructuring she examines also affects former welfare recipients. My argument

is that along with immigrant women, women who have been forced to migrate from welfare to work as a result of the 1996 welfare reform policy are also moving into low-wage service sector jobs that economic globalization helped create in the United States. The much-heralded so-called success of the 1996 welfare reform legislation has depended on the demand for low-wage labor in the service sector of the economy of large cities, and is thereby linked to globalization. What proponents call success would not be possible without the creation of a supply of low wage service sector jobs for women that are also filled by immigrant women (who, if non-citizens, are not eligible for welfare).

To clarify, I am not suggesting that the 1996 welfare reform policy was simply a capitalist plot to supply low-wage workers for specific sectors of the economy. Rather, I see the 1996 welfare policy as the culmination of a policy effort that some lawmakers and political constituencies had long desired for a number of reasons.<sup>28</sup> I argue that the impact of globalization on the American economy, not simply the short-term period of unprecedented economic prosperity in the late 1990s, is important for understanding the economic context in which the unprecedented punitive welfare reform policy of 1996 was implemented and declared “successful.”

In addition to the context of economic globalization I suggest above, there are several other possibilities for thinking about global linkages to U.S. welfare reform policy. First, grass roots welfare rights activists such as the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, and feminist analysts such as Diane Pearce,<sup>29</sup> suggest an international human rights approach, linking the right to welfare to a right to economic security. Second, we can think of the forced incorporation of large numbers of poor single mothers into the low-paid labor force in the United States as one of a variety of global processes of incorporation of poor women with children into paid labor, for diverse reasons and under locally specific conditions in different parts of the world. Third, studies of European welfare states also show a general trend toward more restrictive, less generous reform of social welfare assistance for single mothers,<sup>30</sup> often related to a neo-liberal effort to shrink the welfare state. At present, feminist and other discussions of U.S. welfare policy for single mothers rarely mention international issues, linkages, or comparisons.



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## SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM

The last policy issue I will address is Social Security Reform. The future of Social Security (federally administered old age insurance) has been a “hot button” policy issue in American politics for a number of years. Many Republicans and some neo-liberal Democrats have attempted to introduce arguments for some form of privatization of Social Security. Traditional New Deal Democrats, labor unions, and feminists, among others, oppose privatization. Social Security reform is not widely recognized as a feminist issue. However, a number of women’s policy activist organizations have, in recent years, staked out a feminist position against privatization of Social Security.

In 1998, the National Council of Women’s Organizations (NCWO) formed a Women and Social Security Task Force with the stated goal of helping policy makers understand women’s stake in the Social Security debate.<sup>31</sup> NCWO defines itself as a bipartisan network of over one-hundred women’s organizations representing more than six million women. It is the only formal, non-temporary, multi-issue national organization of women’s organizations. The criteria for membership include endorsing a limited number of policy positions, including opposition to privatization of Social Security. The Women and Social Security Task Force works with NCWO member organizations to carry out a public education campaign aimed at informing women across the country about how Social Security Reform is a women’s issue. The NCWO and Task Force positions are informed by research by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR). The argument is that Social Security is a women’s issue because women make up 60 percent of Social Security beneficiaries and depend more heavily on Social Security income than do men. The anti-privatization argument is that, first, privatization is not a good policy for anyone, and second, privatization is especially harmful to women because women earn less and live longer than men on average.<sup>32</sup>

Although discussions of globalization are not usually part of the Social Security Reform debate within the United States, there are potential links. First, anti-privatization struggles are a salient part of the anti-globalization movement. As mentioned earlier, privatization of previously public social welfare services and benefits, as well as utilities such as water and electricity, are frequently part of structural adjustment policies. Anti-globalization activists and analysts have argued that women often bear the brunt of negative

consequences of the privatization of health and welfare provision because women are more likely to be poor and have responsibility for the care of children and other family members. We might conceptualize the globalization linkage on Social Security privatization as a parallel, rather than directly inter-related, struggle. The impetus for privatization in the United States and other highly industrialized western (or global north) countries is not from the structural adjustment policies affecting poorer countries in the global south. However, there is a commonality in the pro-market ideology that informs both the structural adjustment policies in poor countries and the pro-privatization initiatives in the United States and parts of Western Europe.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

I have suggested several different avenues for exploring linkages between feminist policy activism on American domestic issues and transnational struggles by women and other anti-globalization activists. For example, increased immigration and sex trafficking of women are aspects of economic globalization. In the case of VAWA 2000, the success of activists in expanding national policy on violence against women to include services and legal protection previously denied immigrant women and victims of trafficking is a feminist response to globalization, though not usually described as such. The global spread of neo-liberal pro-market privatization policies is another aspect of globalization. The anti-privatization position on U.S. Social Security Reform adopted by a large coalition of women's organizations has the potential of linking women's policy activism in the United States with struggles against privatization of social welfare benefits, often led by women, in other parts of the world. To the extent that global economic restructuring helps create a demand for the low-wage labor of women in an expanding service sector, we may link the implementation of U.S. welfare reform policy that forces single mothers into poverty-wage service sector jobs to economic globalization.

In developing an analysis of how globalization is gendered, Sassen<sup>33</sup> suggests that as economic globalization increases the importance of non-state entities such as the WTO in international law and international relations, it also creates possible openings for less powerful non-state actors such as NGOs and women, among others, to make claims under international human rights law. Feminists and other activists have used this opening to challenge the Bush

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Administration's reinstatement of the Global Gag Rule, and to frame discussion on a range of other issues including welfare rights, violence against women, and sex trafficking to name a few.

The analysis presented here is an initial exploration of possible linkages between American feminist domestic policy activism and globalization processes. A fuller analysis might include additional policy cases and additional globalization processes as well as implications for future policy initiatives. A feminist analysis of globalization in the context of American politics and policy should integrate discussions of difference—of class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and age, for example, that are not explored here. A fuller exploration might propose practical strategies for integrating globalization perspectives into U.S. domestic-oriented feminist activism, and for using the analysis to build cross-border solidarities among activist women.

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<sup>2</sup> Johanna Brenner, "The Best of Times, the Worst of Times: Feminist in the United States." In Monica Threlfall, ed., *Mapping the Women's Movement: Feminist Politics and Social Transformation in the North* (London: Verso, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Myra Marx Ferree and Beth Hess, *Controversy and Coalition: The New Feminist Movement Across Three Decades of Change*, 3rd edition (New York: Routledge, 2000); Roberta Spalter-Roth and Ronnee Schreiber, "Outsider Issues and Insider Tactics: Strategic Tensions in the Women's Policy Network in the 1980s," in Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin, eds., *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 105-27; Joyce Gelb and Marian Lief Palley, *Women and Public Policies: Reassessing Gender Politics* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia Press, 1996); Brenner "Best of Times."

<sup>4</sup> Ferree and Hess, "Controversy and Coalition."

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<sup>10</sup>. Vicki Saporta, Leslie Watson, Jackie Payne, Marilyn Keefe, and Karen Raschke, "Rolling Back Reproductive Rights: A Look at the New Administration." A Friday Forum presented by the Institute for Women's Policy Research and the George Washington University Women's Studies Program, April 27, 2001.

<sup>11</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>. The public opinion patterns noted are based on my analysis of data from the 1972-1998 General Social Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.

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<sup>14</sup>. Saporta, Watson, Payne, Keefe, and Raschke, "Rolling Back."

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<sup>25</sup>. Gwendolyn Mink, *Welfare's End* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

<sup>26</sup>. Sassen, "Globalization."

<sup>27</sup>. Ibid, here 111-31.

<sup>28</sup>. Cf. R. Kent Weaver, *Ending Welfare as We Know It* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).

<sup>29</sup>. Diana Pearce, "Rights and Wrongs of Welfare Reform: A Feminist Approach," *Affilia* 15:2 (2000): 133-52.

<sup>30</sup>. Jane Lewis, ed., *Lone Mothers in European Welfare Regimes: Shifting Policy Logics* (London: J. Kingsley Publishers, 1997).

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**AMERICAN FEMINISTS AND U.S. GERMAN STUDIES**

Sara Lennox

In an article published in early January 2001, Munich's *Süddeutsche Zeitung* offered its readers an inside scoop on the latest developments in U.S. German Studies. Recently returned from the Modern Language Association convention, the largest academic assemblage of American literary scholars, the article's author reported that, to his dismay, German Studies panels had focused on the old tried-and-true issues of women, foreigners, and fascists—*Frauen, Fremde und Faschisten*. Feminist Germanists (or *der Feminismus*, as he termed it) celebrate women authors without regard to quality, he maintained, as long as their works can be construed as striking a blow against patriarchy, and they have now recruited foreign writers for the same purposes. Postcolonial scholars-come-lately, American Germanists, he went on, are also frantically beating the bushes in search of German-language writers of non-German ethnicity, whether those writers be colonial African poets or German-Turkish politicians—though such writers are of interest to feminists only if they are obviously hostile to the white male mainstream. Even better if the writers are also antifascists, since, he claimed, the longest running hits of all are brown. So, the article continues, “a lot was said this year about Holocaust memorials in Berlin and Jörg Haider's campaign against multiculturalism, but relatively little about current authors. At the MLA, German literature is of interest only if it can be pressed into the service of a particular current cultural struggle.” The article's author concluded: “Postcolonialism rightly reproaches nineteenth-century European scholars for instrumentalizing the Orient or the New World but never understanding it correctly. At the MLA convention it's possible to observe how this process functions the other way around.”<sup>1</sup>

As might be imagined, the *Süddeutsche* article occasioned some indignation among American Germanists, though they were relieved to discover that its author, Jefferson Chase, was himself a failed U.S. Germanist. His disgruntled portrait of Germanists at the MLA could thus be dismissed as the sour grapes of a scholar unable to obtain an academic position in a field with whose foci he so strongly disagreed. Here, however, I want to maintain that, though I entirely disagree with his derogatory assessment of our field, Chase's description of U.S. German Studies, his snide tone and errors of fact and emphasis aside, is not otherwise so very far off the mark. Like Chase, I will argue here that

many American Germanists indeed view contemporary Germany through the lens of the three “F’s,” *Frauen, Fremde und Faschisten*, an alliterative triad to which I would wish to append a “G,” globalization, an “H,” heterogeneity, and an “I,” interdisciplinarity. Moreover, it is true, I will assert, that the party responsible for this perspective on Germany is indeed “*der Feminismus*”—that is, the U.S.-trained feminists within U.S. German Studies who over the past quarter-century have in the main taken the lead in introducing such new issues and approaches into German Studies. And, finally, I will maintain as well that this new perspective may indeed be viewed as peculiarly American, if “American” is understood as a shorthand term describing the range of methods and emphases first elaborated in feminist and other areas of Anglo-American literary and cultural studies and then imported into German Studies by feminist Germanists. Sara Friedrichsmeyer and Patricia Herminhouse, writing in 1996 as editors of the *Women in German Yearbook*, even trace that “Americanization” of German Studies back to the earliest feminists in the field: “Although we doubt that those feminists in the early 1970s who wanted to open the field to new influences framed their goal in terms of an American instead of a German *Germanistik*, many of their achievements, we believe, have led in that direction.”<sup>2</sup> In this paper I want to begin with those early feminists and their institutional embodiment, Women in German (WiG), the disciplinary organization to which virtually all U.S. feminist Germanists belong, to examine how, over the past quarter century, feminist Germanists have transformed their field. I want first to examine how Women in German members drew on the example of the U.S. women’s movement to open German Studies to new disciplinary practices—“certain modes of communication involving a spirit of cooperation and collaboration,” as Friedrichsmeyer and Herminhouse put it<sup>3</sup>—bringing a new collegiality into many German departments where supercilious and sexist self-promoters like Jefferson Chase might indeed not be welcome. Then I want to trace the steps via which feminists introduced the new perspectives mentioned above into U.S. German Studies, enabling the discipline to emancipate itself from its dependence on German *Germanistik* and constitute itself instead as a field with a distinctly U.S. profile. I will conclude by outlining some recent exemplary studies by feminist Germanists to suggest the path-breaking directions in which the field of U.S. German Studies seems likely to move next.

### THE GENESIS OF U.S. FEMINIST GERMAN STUDIES

To argue that the earliest or any other U.S. feminist Germanists ever manifested a single American, feminist, or any other unitary or homogeneous identity would be to deny the hybrid and heterogeneous origins of their method at a moment when hybridity and heterogeneity are among the methodological criteria that U.S. feminists prize most. Of course the young and not quite so young American women who comprised U.S. German Studies' first feminists had constructed their own professional identities vis-à-vis the German literature and culture that they studied. Their own teachers in American German departments had often been German refugees from the Nazis or the Federal Republic's economic miracle who were strongly invested in preserving an image of a "better Germany," paid little attention to debates within the U.S. academy, and sought acknowledgement for their own scholarship primarily in Germany. In the late sixties and early seventies, proto-feminist Germanists were also shaped not only by the emerging American women's movement but by the Frankfurt School-influenced Marxism of their fellow graduate students, and to this day both the theoretical and practical orientation of feminist Germanists remains significantly more influenced by Marxism and other left perspectives than most other areas of feminist literary scholarship. The accomplishments of the GDR, whose new leader Erich Honecker had just declared a policy of "no taboos" in cultural production, also impressed future feminists, especially as a flood of women's writing began to pour forth from the GDR in the early seventies. As Friedrichsmeyer and Herminhouse observe: "The utopian potential of the GDR as a place where women could be granted legal rights, not only to jobs, but also to training and advancement, and where the government could recognize the needs of children and grant access to abortion, struck a chord with the discontents of feminist Germanists."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, scholarship on the GDR promoted those feminist discontents in far more concrete ways: at a reception during a path-breaking 1974 conference on the GDR where, as disciplinary legend would have it, male faculty sat on chairs and female faculty and graduate students sat on the floor, it all "clicked" (to use *Ms. Magazine's* term) and the organization Women in German was born.

The structures the new organization put into place to support feminist scholarship, teaching, and survival in U.S. German departments were very



pragmatic and very American, quite different from the relatively free-floating, mostly intellectual, and highly European-identified connections of the Marxist Germanists to whom the new feminists also felt affinities. By the time of WiG's first newsletter, published on December 10, 1974, the founding group had already met once more at the Midwest MLA, scheduled a session on "Women and Germanistik" at the 1975 AATG, issued a call for papers for a special journal issue on the same topic, organized a collective in Madison to publish the newsletter, and called for contributions to the newsletter on courses taught, research in progress, suggestions for translations of works by and about women, bibliography exchange, and resource information. "We women in Germanistic need to keep in touch with others in our discipline. We need to know who we are, where we are located and what we are doing in our teaching and research, especially in relationship to women's studies," the newsletter declared.<sup>5</sup>

WiG's first of many MLA sessions, focused on teaching the "bourgeois tragedy," was held at the 1975 MLA, and its first annual academic symposium and retreat took place at Miami University of Ohio on September 24-26, 1976 (an arrangement that continued for another year and was then abandoned for a more congenial format that allowed academic discussion to take place in an informal setting). Reflecting qualities of the early U.S. New Left and early feminism, the organization from its outset stressed inclusivity (initially called "Women in Germanistik," by the second newsletter WiG had changed its name to "Women in German" so that high school teachers would not feel excluded), egalitarianism, and a kind of hands-on personal contact, support, and solidarity that WiG members then might have termed "sisterhood." Announcing the first conference, *Newsletter* number eight proclaimed: "Coming forward to retreat. Until now Women in German [the newsletter] has been a thread connecting us in scattered places. Now we will come together, face to face, to strengthen those connections and to make sure that we don't retreat into academic isolation."<sup>6</sup>

### **U.S. FEMINIST GERMANISTS TODAY**

What continues to characterize the organization and members of Women in German until the present day, and what makes them, I would contend, so very American, is their ongoing commitment to the forms of sisterhood and solidarity that characterized the U.S. women's movement in the late 1960s

and early 1970s. Perhaps a little paradoxically, that principled commitment to feminist practice also distinguishes feminist Germanists from U.S. academic feminists in many other disciplines and may help to explain how and why feminist Germanists have exercised a positive influence more generally over collegial relationships within their departments and the discipline. Women in German continues to attempt to bridge the divides that rend the academy. In contrast to other areas of feminist literary scholarship, the most senior and esteemed feminists within German Studies are not only members of Women in German, but regularly attend and enthusiastically participate in its annual meetings. They are also willing to take on the organization's thankless drudgery, ranging from conference arrangements to organizing panels at the MLA, GSA, AATG, and WiG itself that WiG members vote to sponsor. Senior WiG members have shown themselves deeply committed to the welfare of their *Nachwuchs* and have arranged numerous WiG panels addressing interview skills; syllabus, c.v., and teaching and tenure dossier preparation; journal and book publishing; grant applications; and many other topics. One session per conference is permanently allocated to pragmatic pedagogical techniques. To enable younger WiG members to gain organizing skills and visibility, all WiG panels are chaired by one senior and one less-experienced WiG member, and graduate students are guaranteed seats on WiG's six-member Steering Committee. A bit to my own distress, WiG members recently voted to elect a president to augment the Steering Committee, though, once elected president, Jeannine Blackwell has refused to allow WiG members to relinquish their democratic rights and insists on acting only as the organization's spokesperson. WiG's structures for organizational decision-making also continue to illustrate *Basisdemokratie* at its best, and its boisterous and frequently chaotic business meetings open to everyone attending the conference almost always arrive at decisions with which everyone is satisfied. Each conference also ends with a speak-out session that recalls the "criticism/self-criticism" practices of the American New Left in its provisions for members to assess the general success of the conference and, if there are complaints, to devise mechanisms to enable us to do better at our next meeting.

Together with its challenges to divisions between those at the top and the bottom of the academic hierarchy, WiG also acknowledges the connectedness of the personal and the professional, beginning every WiG conference with a panel that addresses personal concerns. The conference attempts to introduce

and integrate new attendees into the group, while also recognizing differences among members, with special meetings for lesbians and for graduate students. As well, the conference attempts to combine work and pleasure: for many years the conference's Saturday meetings have concluded with a cabaret poking fun at conference proceedings, followed by a dance. Since our first meeting in St. Augustine, Florida, where conference attendees took one look at the long white beaches and quickly rearranged the conference schedule so that an afternoon was free for fun, all Saturday afternoons have been left open to allow conference-goers to enjoy the pleasures of the locale where the conference is held. Finally, the organization performs a very significant support function for many feminist Germanists, providing a small respite from the "balancing act" of juggling numerous incompatible obligations, comforting and sustaining WiG members in hostile departments, and allowing those with more congenial colleagues to spread the lessons they have learned from WiG into the profession at large.

In this regard WiG also carries on the peculiarly American feminist politics of the early U.S. women's movement by holding two mutually-contradictory political positions at the same time, both agitating as liberals for feminists' integration into the academy as it presently exists and simultaneously advocating for far-reaching qualitative changes in all of society that would enable the transformation of both men and women. As Jeanette Clausen observed as long ago as 1984, WiG members conceive WiG to be a concrete utopia, a site where we can begin to realize our visions and reflect upon goals that extend beyond the immediately pressing problems of our daily lives.<sup>7</sup> Though WiG has exercised some influence over feminist literary scholarship in Germany, an inspiration for at least two organizations, the now defunct *Frauen in der Literaturwissenschaft* at the University of Hamburg and a recently-founded organization with the same name in Bremen, both the structures and institutional traditions of German universities and the ideological assumptions underlying German feminism have prevented any similarly-principled organization from arising within German *Germanistik*.

**FEMINISM, FOREIGNERS, AND FASCISM  
PLUS GLOBALIZATION, HETEROGENEITY, AND  
INTERDISCIPLINARITY**

Though the organization Women in German has helped American feminist Germanists to preserve the best aspects of the early U.S. women's movement, in their theoretical approaches to German literature and culture WiG members have very much changed with the times, again mainly following the lead of their feminist sisters in other areas of the U.S. academy. As Jefferson Chase rightly observed, the initial emphasis of feminist Germanists and all other academic feminists was of course women. Feminist Germanists first focused on the genre of feminist analysis of sexism initiated by Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970). By its second newsletter, WiG had already begun its (eventually astonishingly successful) campaign against sexism in textbooks, and its first conference examined, among other topics, sex role stereotyping in U.S. and GDR children's readers and cast "A Critical Look at Brigitte." The examination of sexism in literature slid easily into another familiar standby of feminist scholarship, "Images of Women in the Works of ...," the second conference exploring the woman question in the early work of Döblin, Volker Braun's Tinka, and "Women and the Aesthetic of the Positive Hero in the GDR." Because Germanists came somewhat late to feminist scholarship, those early variants of feminist analysis coexisted with approaches that were more in vogue in the mid-seventies, and WiG's first conferences also undertook the resurrection of "lost" women authors and activists and the reinterpretation of those better known, so that papers at the first WiG conferences also focused on women's literary salons in Berlin around 1800, revolutionary women in imperial Germany, and women deputies in the Weimar Republic's *Reichstag*.

Reflecting the U.S. academy's hostility to theory in the early seventies (somewhat astonishing in the light of what has transpired since) and the formalist bent of most American literary scholarship then, early U.S. feminist literary analyses often lacked theoretical underpinnings. For once, the Federal Republic came to the aid of feminist Germanists in the form of Silvia Bovenschen's Frankfurt School-influenced article of 1976, "Concerning the Question: Is There a Female Aesthetic?" and her book *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit* (1979). By the end of the decade, under the influence of French theory as well as U.S. cultural feminism and what Elaine Showalter later termed

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“gynocritics,” the study of female writers alone, many WiG members, like other U.S. (and West German) feminists, believed they knew the answer to Bovenschen’s and many others’ questions about female specificity: women (*tout court!*) were not only quite different from men (an assertion that would have horrified sixties feminists), but quite probably also superior to them—doubtless the reason Jefferson Chase failed to comprehend the feminist MLA presentations! The task of feminist scholars thus became the delineation of that difference via retrieval and elaboration of an autonomous female subculture that patriarchal domination had hitherto obscured. By 1979 the problem of female difference seemed to be resolved in its favor, and the WiG session at the MLA addressed “Women’s Letters, Diaries, and Autobiographies” in order to investigate the question of “a feminine or feminist aesthetic: are there specific ways in which women write differently than men, and if so, what do these differences mean.”<sup>8</sup> Though that approach is now long-discredited, the seventies’ intensive focus on the accomplishments of women writers began slowly to transform the canon of U.S. German Studies, so that—in some contrast to Germany itself!—it has become increasingly unacceptable to generate lists of major German authors that fail to include women, or, as a consequence of the very visible presence of feminists at academic meetings, to assemble conference programs that do not display a significant female presence.

WiG’s first venture onto the territory of “foreigners” or *Fremde*, Jefferson Chase’s second category of U.S. Germanist emphasis, was a trifle ill-fated, perhaps in part as a consequence of German Studies’ own awkwardness in dealing with German writers of non-German ethnicity. From 1980 onward WiG had invited a guest speaker to its conference, usually a German woman writer or filmmaker (so much for Chase’s reproach that American Germanists fail to attend to contemporary German authors!), and its guest in 1987 was the Turkish-German writer Aysel Özakin. WiG had arranged a lecture tour through the United States for Özakin that was to culminate in her arrival at the WiG conference in Portland, but she broke off her travels mid-tour and went home again, both exhausted by her strenuous journey and disinclined to be treated by U.S. Germanists as the token representative of all Turks in Germany. Happily, since that time WiG members have developed a more nuanced understanding of German multiculturalism and have been responsible for numerous panels and publications on various dimensions of hyphenated German

identities. More obviously here than in their focus on women, American feminist Germanists' interest in the texts and lives of so-called foreigners in Germany can be traced to specific developments within U.S. academic feminism. As Myra Marx Ferree emphasizes in her essay in this volume: "Conflict over the extent to which feminist groups were dominated by an agenda shaped only by privileged white women's needs took place throughout the decade. Women of color pushed with increasing success for all feminists to acknowledge the intersections of gender, race and class and to campaign for social justice across the board."<sup>9</sup> White American feminists' sometimes grudging recognition of differences among women, and their reluctant acknowledgement of their own implication in structures of race and class oppression, made it increasingly impossible for American feminist scholars to make general claims about all women. Those insights, in conjunction with a particular American feminist appropriation of poststructuralism, led to a reconceptualization of femininity as a social construction that was both context-specific and always defined in reciprocal relationship to the category of masculinity. That new U.S. feminist understanding of women's implication in their society of origin demanded a new scholarly approach to women's experience and cultural production that came to be termed "Gender Studies." Though German feminist scholars did not attend to differences among women or women's culpability until the late eighties at the earliest, the approach has in the intervening years exerted so strong an influence over German feminist methods that "gender" has become a term indispensable to feminist scholarship in the German language and the Suhrkamp Verlag's feminist series is entitled—in English—"Gender Studies."

Here Jefferson Chase's observations about Germanists' fixation on *Fremde* and fascists intersect with what I have termed heterogeneity. Though it was U.S. exile scholars who first focused American Germanists' attention on fascism, U.S. feminist Germanists learned from other areas of U.S. feminist scholarship, including both the writing of U.S. scholars of color and historian Claudia Koonz's *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (1987), that the role German women played in fascism was not merely that of victim. After the hitherto repressed issue of Jewish identity arose quite unexpectedly at its 1980 conference, WiG organized a panel focused on German-Jewish women writers at its 1981 conference and in 1982 examined "anti-Semitism and other forms of racism, homophobia, biases based on age,

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class—all the oppressions which have historically been used to divide us” in the course of a panel entitled “Speaking the Unspeakable.”<sup>10</sup> Many subsequent U.S. feminist German Studies scholars have examined German women writers’ opposition to National Socialism and the texts of German-Jewish women writers, though doubtless a residual reluctance to explore women’s full complicity in fascism has been responsible for an almost complete lack of attention to Nazi women’s writing. Since the mid-eighties American feminist scholars have also examined race and racism in Germany using categories of Black/white employed in the United States, and both that U.S. paradigm and an interest in attracting more diverse students to German department classrooms account for an attention to the Afro-German experience almost entirely missing in Germany itself. As the German Americanist Berndt Ostendorf has maintained, “[T]he discourse of difference and the nurture of ethnic *Gemeinschaft* (community) is popular on the left in America and on the right in Germany”;<sup>11</sup> it is perhaps a tribute to feminists’ left origins that, especially after the rise in xenophobic attacks that accompanied German unification, a number of U.S. feminist Germanists considered it a matter of moral urgency to draw attention to Germany’s diverse populations and took the lead in moving multicultural issues to the forefront of American German Studies in special issues of journals, conferences, and scholarly publications, often thereby abandoning their focus on gender issues. As I have argued elsewhere, the particular optic of U.S. feminist Germanists “allowed them to emphasize the heterogeneity of German identities and conceive Germany to be a multicultural country. By the 1990s ... [they] had helped to constitute American German Studies as a field whose multicultural emphases made it a discipline distinctly different from German *Germanistik*”<sup>12</sup>—exactly as Jefferson Chase complained.

Nor is Chase wrong about U.S. Germanists’ perhaps somewhat belated attention to issues of colonial discourse and postcoloniality—or the role feminists have played in initiating investigations of that neglected field. In their afterword to the 1994 *Women in German Yearbook*, editors Jeanette Clausen and Sara Friedrichsmeyer called upon WiG members to commit themselves to the production of a feminist literary criticism “that is truly international and multicultural.” “We are not the first to recommend that Germanistik become more international, more heterogeneous,” Clausen and Friedrichsmeyer declared, “but we are the first to suggest that WIG can and should play a

leadership role in providing direction for that change...”<sup>13</sup> U.S. feminist Germanists enthusiastically rose to that challenge. With feminist Germanists in the majority on the divisional committees of the MLA that select forum topics, at the 1994 meetings the three sessions of the division on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries addressed colonialism, while the three sessions of the twentieth-century division examined minority literature; in 1995 the three nineteenth and early-twentieth-century forums dealt with colonial fantasies, while one twentieth-century forum and a special session considered postcolonial perspectives. U.S. feminist Germanists have also published the overwhelming majority of books on colonial and postcolonial topics, including Arlene Teraoka’s *East, West, and Other: The Third World in Postwar German Literature* (1996), Nina Berman’s *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne: Zum Bild des Orients in der deutschen Kultur um 1900* (1997), Susanne Zantop’s *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870* (1997), and *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy* (1998), a collection coedited by Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Susanne Zantop, and me. More recently, American feminist Germanists and their friends have taken the lead in a new project that would involve “De-provincializing Germany,” that is, rethinking German history and culture from a perspective that is no longer Eurocentric, and reconceptualizing “German Studies in a Globalizing World,” the title of a recent workshop at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Such initiatives not only showcase American Germanists’ concern with globalization, the second descriptive term I applied to U.S. German Studies at the outset of this paper, but also demand an intensified attention to interdisciplinarity, my third term. To be sure, feminist scholars both in Germany and the United States have from the outset insisted upon the necessity of interdisciplinary investigations: as historian Gisela Bock put it in her opening speech to the first Berlin Sommeruniversität in 1976: “Scholarship on women has to be interdisciplinary: for a single scholarly discipline [*Wissenschaft*] or method doesn’t suffice to answer our questions.”<sup>14</sup> The WiG conference featured interdisciplinary panels of feminist scholars from outside of literary studies at its 1982 and 1995 conferences, and for the past ten years a group of U.S. feminist Germanists has met annually with a group of feminist historians of Germany to explore how they differently configure the same objects of study. It is striking how many articles in the *Women in German Yearbook*



turn to paradigms elaborated by scholars who are not only not German, but outside of literary studies altogether, including linguists, historians, political scientists, anthropologists, philosophers and social theorists. A great many U.S. feminist Germanists would now acknowledge their indebtedness to the interdisciplinary methods of British cultural studies and use the term “German Studies” to describe their field, and it was feminist Germanist Irene Kacandes who outlined the fundamentals of that method in her introduction to *A User’s Guide to German Cultural Studies*. Perhaps it is also no coincidence that the three women on the eight-member committee of the German Studies Association that wrote the guidelines for German Studies programs were also feminist Germanists. Since much of the newest scholarship on globalizing approaches has been written by postcolonial scholars situated in disciplines like anthropology, geography, and history or in various non-European area studies programs, the newest initiatives demand yet a greater interdisciplinary stretch, requiring that U.S. Germanists, with feminists once more in the lead, now reach into fields that will take them far beyond the boundaries of both German *Germanistik* and even of U.S. German Studies as it has been hitherto conceived.

### U.S. FEMINIST GERMANIST SCHOLARSHIP

To conclude my investigation of the role that American feminists have played in U.S. German Studies, I would like to examine the cases of two exemplary scholars, one very senior and one very junior, whose scholarship manifests the qualities I have identified above. The first is Susanne Zantop, murdered in her home in Hanover, New Hampshire, in January 2001, and my account of her illustrious career will allow me once more to pay tribute to her accomplishments and the transformative influence she exercised over our field. In all of her scholarship, Susanne drew upon her rigorous interdisciplinary training—a master’s degree in political science from Stanford, a master’s in comparative literature from UMass, and a Ph.D. in comparative literature from Harvard—to expand the scope and purview of German Studies research. She was among the earliest scholars in our field to “de-provincialize Germany” by exploring German connections to many areas across the globe. In a monograph and edited collection on Heinrich Heine, she explored the accomplishments of that cosmopolitan figure in under-researched areas: in

his connections with Mexico, Latin America, and Southern Europe, in his work in and relevance for the visual arts. Susanne also undertook groundbreaking work in feminist German Studies: through her critical editorship of a number of out-of-print women's texts and in her co-edited collection *Bitter Healing*, she made texts by almost unknown German women available to an English-language readership. A scholar whose investigations focused on periods before the twentieth century, Susanne did not address fascism in her own research, but she was a committed antifascist in her political and personal life, and her scholarship dealt with areas of German history in which the ground may arguably have been prepared for National Socialism. She may be longest remembered for her book *Colonial Fantasies*, which transformed German Studies scholarship, as well as the field of colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial theory, by showing how significant colonial thinking was for a *Kulturnation* that had no real colonies of its own. She continued that project in *The Imperialist Imagination* and at the time of her death was working on a sequel to *Colonial Fantasies* tentatively entitled "Colonial Amnesia." In 1999 she was also co-organizer of a conference on *Deutsche und Indianer—Indianer und Deutsche*, once more exploring the significance of German encounters with heterogeneous others for Germany's own history and culture. Nor did she ever consider herself too distinguished or too overtaxed to take on the labor necessary to reproduce the profession: in 1998 she became co-editor of the *Women in German Yearbook*, served on numerous other editorial committees, skillfully chaired her own department, Dartmouth's Women's Studies Program, and its study abroad program, and served as mentor to many younger scholars and her own students. Esteemed for her generosity, warmth, kindness, and hospitality as well as her superlative research, Susanne was an exemplary feminist Germanist in every regard.

To demonstrate that the model Susanne represented will be carried on and that my encomium here to feminist Germanists does not apply merely to members of my own generation, I will use as my second example Beverly Weber, a graduate student of my own just beginning her dissertation, a project she outlined in a talk she presented in May 2001 in connection with the UMass Women's Studies Lecture Series. As Jefferson Chase observed of U.S. Germanists, Beverly indeed recruits foreigners to her feminist Germanist project as she explores the writing of the Turkish-German author Emine Sevgi Özdamar to discover how the female body is constructed and utilized by various

national(ist) discourses. Her method, which she terms transnational cultural studies, as well as her topic of study, strays far from traditional *Germanistik* in its indebtedness to postcolonial studies and feminist anthropology and its emphasis on the relationship of the local/particular to the global. She not only emphasizes the heterogeneous in her description of Turkish-German culture as a contested site that is the product of multiple material, social, and political forces, but is also sensitive to the danger of misreading cultures so far removed from her own, hence situates her literary analysis in the context of German immigration policy, the history of immigration to Germany, the variety of Turkish-German experiences in Germany, and the politics and culture of Turkey itself. (In fact, she has begun learning Turkish to understand these effects more fully.) And, finally, she indeed conceives her project to be a contribution to a larger cultural and political struggle as it investigates how constructions of gender circulate in the world and in what ways women could resist those constructions, appropriate them imaginatively, or imagine beyond them.

In the year 2000 volume of the *Women in German Yearbook*, the first volume that Susanne Zantop co-edited, she and her fellow editor Patricia Herminghouse comment in their preface on what the volume's essays reveal about the state of "Feminist Studies in German Literature and Culture," the *Yearbook's* subtitle: "While we note a greater interest in theories that emerged from a US context and therefore a greater willingness to integrate German issues into a larger theoretical framework, we also realize that traditional feminist approaches seem to be yielding to other critical paradigms, many of which are indebted to feminist scholarship, although they no longer openly relate to immediate feminist concerns. It is as if gender as a category of investigation had lost its critical edge, just as feminist political practice currently appears to be fragmented and disoriented."<sup>15</sup> Perhaps so. But it might also be the case that, as the work of Susanne Zantop herself and other feminist Germanists like Beverly Weber seems to demonstrate, feminist scholars in German Studies now use the critical perspective they honed in their gender-based scholarship to address both gender and other German topics they may now believe to be of greater political or ethical urgency. It is true, as Jefferson Chase complained, that U.S. Germanists often perceive Germany to be a country quite different than the one many Germans believe they inhabit. We American Germanists, however, conceive our different perspective to be an advantage, not a limitation, that allows us to pose questions—regarding gender, multiculturalism, colonialism and postcoloniality, heterogeneity and particularism, the meaning

and functionalization of Germany's past, and the role of the nation in a globalizing world, among many other things—that German *Germanistik* and other areas of German scholarship have too seldom stepped forward to address. Many U.S. Germanists indeed view their research as an intervention into particular contemporary cultural struggles about the meaning and uses of German culture. Such political and ethical engagement characterizes much German Studies scholarship, and it is a position at which, without the contributions of American feminists, the field of U.S. German Studies might otherwise never have arrived.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>. Jefferson Chase, "Dr. habil. Harald Schmidt: Amerikas Germanisten suchen das Land der Deutschen," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 9 January 2001, 17.

<sup>2</sup>. Sara Friedrichsmeyer and Patricia Herminghouse, "Towards an 'American Germanics'?" Editorial Postscript," *Women in German Yearbook 12* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996): 233.

<sup>3</sup>. *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>4</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>. Evelyn Torton Beck and Nancy Vedder Shults, "NEWS from Women in Germanistik," *Women in German Newsletter* 1, 10 December 1974, 1.

<sup>6</sup>. Angelika Bammer, Evelyn Torton Beck, Viktoria Harwig, Sara Markham Pietsch, and Christa Stutius, "Women in German," *Women in German Newsletter* 8, September 10, 1976, 1.

<sup>7</sup>. Jeanette Clausen, "Sieben Jahre 'Women in German:' An- und Widersprüche einer feministischen Germanistik in den USA," in *Feministische Literaturwissenschaft: Dokumentation der Tagung in Hamburg vom Mai 1983*, ed. Inge Stephan and Sigrid Weigel (Berlin: Argument, 1984), 146.

<sup>8</sup>. "Research," *Women in German Newsletter* 17, November 30, 1978, 6.

<sup>9</sup>. Myra Marx Ferree, "Thinking Globally, Acting Locally: German and American Feminism in the World System," in this volume.

<sup>10</sup>. Angelika Bammer and Jeanette Clausen, "Speaking the Unspeakable," *Women in German Newsletter* 26, November 1981, 17.

<sup>11</sup>. Berndt Ostendorf, "The Politics of Difference: Theories and Practice in a Comparative U.S.-German Perspective," in *Multiculturalism in Transit: A German-American Exchange*, ed. Klaus J. Milich and Jeffrey M. Peck (New York: Berghahn, 1998), 36.

<sup>12</sup>. Sara Lennox, "Feminisms in Transit: American Feminist Germanists Construct a Multicultural Germany," *ibid.*, 77.

<sup>13</sup>. Jeanette Clausen and Sara Friedrichsmeyer eds., "WIG 2000: Feminism and the Future of Germanistik," *Women in German Yearbook* 10 (1994): 269.

<sup>14</sup>. Gisela Bock, "Frauenbewegung und Frauenuniversität: Zur politischen Bedeutung der 'Sommeruniversität für Frauen,'" in *Frauen und Wissenschaft: Beiträge zur Berliner Sommeruniversität - Juli 1976* (Berlin: Courage, 1977), 18.

<sup>15</sup>. Patricia Herminhouse and Susanne M. Zantop eds., "Preface," *Women in German Yearbook* 15 (2000): xii.

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