

Thirty Years of Feminist Comparative Policy Research: Making Policy Studies Matter

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With the take-off in comparative policy studies that place gender at the center of analysis, Feminist Comparative Policy (FCP), beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the interface between the study of gender and public policy analysis is nothing new.¹ The plethora of scholarship, research projects, refereed publication outlets and courses across the globe attests to the success and contributions of gendered policy analysis. This paper takes stock of current developments in this large, growing and highly cosmopolitan body of work through presenting the approaches, findings and contributions of three different studies of FCP in Europe: an analysis of nine international projects on gender and policy involved over 160 researchers (Mazur 2009a); a multi level and comparative study of gender and policy across seven different policy areas conducted by nine scholars (Mazur and Pollock 2009); and a comparative study of the impact of women's movements on policy formulation within European countries and at the EU level by six researchers (Boussaguet and Jacquot 2009).

In assessing these studies the paper provides a composite picture of the highly vibrant field of FCP today. It shows how this relatively new field is making important and crucial contributions to our understanding of the democratic process and theorizing about democracy through a focus on state action. As such gendered policy analysis, is a central part of policy studies making it more meaningful and theoretically relevant. This large body of work should not and cannot be ignored, as it continues to be so many non feminist policy scholars. As Sonia Mazey (2000:334) aptly stated nine years ago.

Gender is a salient dimension of public policy-making processes and outcomes and therefore merits serious consideration by public policy analysts and practitioners alike.

Making Gender Matter: The Development of Feminist Comparative Policy

Before examining the three different recent FCP studies it is important to first identify this relatively new field of study. Feminist Comparative Policy assesses how, why and to what end the contemporary state in western post industrial democracies has responded to demands for the advancement of women's rights, gender equality and striking down gender based inequities in society through policies and structures. A wide range of state responses has been studied in comparative perspective, either in single national case studies or in cross-national studies, since the field first took shape in the early 1980s. This work studies feminist, gender-specific and gender neutral policies that affect gender relations, women's policy agencies and femocrats, construction of gender and its impact in policy formation, gender and welfare states, and women's movements relations to the state. With over 100 practitioners active in nearly all Western post industrial democracies, a significant level of scholarship—in 2001 over 400

¹ The use of the notion of gender here incorporates its multiple meanings in terms of studying gender specific phenomenon—sex as a variable and women's political mobilization, i.e. women's movements, women's political participation etc. and the construction of men's and women's identities in relation to each other and women. Feminism is defined as a set of ideas that encapsulates the promotion of women's rights and status however they are defined within a give context and the reduction of gender-base hierarchies. For more on gender see Bereni et al. (2008) and on feminism see (McBride and Mazur 2008). For a recent French-language analysis of how gender is used in political science see Jenson and LéPinard (2009).

published works were identified, an established scientific infrastructure, FCP has become a highly institutionalized area of study.²

In the past several years, there has been a growing effort among French speaking scholars in France, Switzerland, Belgium and Canada to examine gender and politics issues in a comparative perspective in a field where the lingua franca has tended to be English. Echoing the movement in non feminist policy studies in France, French scholars have begun to engage with the English language literature and bring their own national approaches to bear in new and path breaking FCP research (e.g., Engeli et al. 2008; Parini et al. 2006, S nac-Slawinski and Dauphin 2006; and Tremblay et al. 2007).

Whereas FCP has become increasingly institutionalized, comparative policy studies that have developed outside of the purview of gender, referred to here as non feminist policy studies, have remained remarkably untouched by FCP. To be sure FCP scholarship is published in comparative policy and politics journals,³ and some mainstream work has taken on feminist critiques, for example in the area of welfare state scholarship (Sainsbury 2008) or Muller’s recent work on gender policy (Muller 2008 and Engeli et al. 2008) . For the most part, however, much scholarly work on public policy often either ignores gender issues or takes an “add women and stir approach” where sex or gender is added at the margins of the study.⁴

There is continued resistance to the serious treatment of gender in the agenda-setting literature in the USA (Kenney 2003), but also in Comparative Politics more broadly speaking (Tripp 2006 and Chappell 2006) as well as the study of new institutionalism. Indeed, the *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics* published in 2007, and the *Oxford Handbook of Institutions* published in 2006 had neither separate chapters on gender nor any significant treatment of the wealth of scholarship on what has become to be recognized as the “Comparative Politics of Gender”.⁵ While the reasons behind this gender gap are complex and often related to methodological and epistemological differences, there seems to be a real resistance to bringing gender into analyses in any serious manner. Moreover, many feminist-inspired studies that take an empirical approach work with concepts, frameworks and theories that come from non feminist scholarship. In other words, feminist and non feminist policy studies are far from being integrated.

An Assessment of International Gender Policy Projects

² For more on FCP as a field of study see Mazur (2002, 2007) or in French, Jenson (2008). While the focus of FCP has been western post industrial democracies through a mid range theoretical approach where propositions about feminist policy dynamics only apply to those countries, other feminist policy scholars have examined questions of gender and the state outside of the West, often rejecting the observations and proposition about policy dynamics in the Western world or significantly elaborating them in broader cross-national studies that span the globe (Rai 2003, Waylen 2007; Krook 2008; Htun and Weldon 2008).

³ See, for example, two special issues in the *Review of Policy Research* in 2003, the *Journal of European Public Policy* in 2000 and *Comparative European Politics* in 2009.

⁴ See for example the marginal treatment of gender in the Comparative Agendas Project (Special issue of *Journal of European Public Policy* 2006).

⁵ See the “Critical Perspectives” section in the June 2006 issue of *Politics and Gender*. For a broad offering of the new comparative gender and politics literature see Krook and Childs (2009).

International collaboration has been a major hallmark of the growth and development of comparative scholarship on gender and policy since the first FCP studies came out in the 1980s. Today, it has become a permanent fixture of the new and increasingly institutionalized field. In the mid 1990s, researchers began to form more structured networks to carry out large-scale projects that combined cross-national comparative analysis with country-based expertise. A first-wave of projects conducted national and regional studies. Several years later, a second-wave of studies took a more cross-national approach, including more countries, with the organization of large international networks of country experts that developed integrated research designs, coordinated highly complex cross-national projects and received significant levels of public funding. A part of this second wave has been to examine the European-specific gender and policy puzzle in the context of Europeanization and the formation of gender mainstreaming and other feminist policies at the national level. Increased EU funding for gender mainstreaming and gender equality from the Fifth and Sixth Framework Programmes has been a driving force in the development of large-scale ambitious research programs. The nine projects examined here are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. List of FCP Research Projects

Women's Movements and Reconfigured States (1997-2003) Banaszak et al. (2003)
Gendering Europeanisation (1999-2003) Liebert (2003)
RNGS (1995-2009). Research Network on Gender Politics and the State http://libarts.wsu.edu/polisci/rngs
EGG (2002-2005). Enlargement, Gender and Governance: The Civic and Political Participation and Representation of Women in Central and Eastern Europe http://www.qub.ac.uk/egg/
MAGEEQ (2003-2007). Policy Frames and Implementation Problems: The Case of Gender Mainstreaming http://www.mageeq.net/
QUING (2006-2011). Quality in Gender Equality + Policies http://www.quing.eu/
FEMCIT (2006-2010). Gendered Citizenship in Multi-Cultural Europe: The Impact of Contemporary Women's Movements http://www.femcit.org
VEIL (2006-2009). Values Equality and Differences in Liberal Democracies http://www.univie.ac.at/veil/
Governing Difference (2006-2009). A Challenge for New Democracies in Central and South Eastern European Countries http://typo3.univie.ac.at/index.php?id=17202

While by no means the only projects that take a cross-national perspective (e.g., Hirschmann and Liebert, 2001; Lister and Carbone, 2006; Beveridge, et al. 2000; Bayes et al., 2006; Kittilson, 2006; 2008), these studies were selected for their relatively high levels of funding and of developed research infrastructure and for combining large “n” cross-national

comparative analysis with qualitative country-specific studies. As such, they share a striking number of commonalities. The following are seven of the most common feature across the nine projects, features that reflect the broader trends of FCP as a field of study.⁶

1. An International Collaborative Group with Funding and Infrastructure

The projects include a structured group of country experts and/or researchers from each country in the study that meet regularly to discuss the research design, data collection issues and results as well as to participate in study dissemination. All of the projects obtained funding from public research organizations, seven out of nine from EU Framework funding, for over 11 million euros in all. Study coordination and dissemination was facilitated by a network website as well, meaning that project findings have been made available to the public well after the end of the project.

2. An Academic, Policy-Oriented and Educational Focus

The studies publish results in scholarly outlets. Seven out of nine explicitly share findings with more applied policy audiences through the dissemination of findings, policy recommendations, public fora, development of training for stakeholders and bringing public officials into the design phases of the project. These activities were held at local, national and EU levels. It is clear, in large part due to funding requirements, that connecting projects to stakeholders, if not directly influencing policy outcomes, is an important theme running throughout the projects. Graduate student education was also an integral part of project organization with all groups including graduate students as staff and researchers and one project, FEMCIT, had a course design component.

3. Bringing-in Gender, Women's Movements, Policy, Debates/Framing, Institutions and Intersectionality

Research foci, central research questions, and similar findings are also shared to a certain degree across the projects. All of the projects brought gender in as a unit of analysis where gendered notions or gender processes are important objects of analysis or driving forces. Several of the studies identified dominant gender norms and attitudes as importance obstacles to achieving feminist policy outcomes. For most of the projects, the women's movement is a significant part of the analytical puzzle either through specifically analyzing the role and influence of women's movements or tracing the presence of women's movement actors and ideas in policy debates; several studies showed that policy change was difficult without the active presence of women's movement actors. Several projects have assembled unprecedented datasets on women's movements across issues and over time. Women's movements are seen as important agents of representation and the policy-making arena, within and outside of legislatures, with state-based policy making arenas being potential sites for women's substantive and descriptive representation.

⁶ This analysis is taken from Mazur (2009a) which also covers each project's infrastructure, research questions, methodology, theory, results and policy relevance.

All of the studies focus on state-based action either through an analysis of policy debates or of links between problem definition and policy outcomes. Policy debates and framing are important units of analysis with particular attention paid to the construction of public meanings and discourses. The studies tend to focus on policy development, formulation and content of formal policy statements and legal frameworks; very little attention is paid to the intricacies of the implementation or the impact of those policies on women's status and rights. Institutions are also an important shared object of analysis; through treatment of the state as a whole, the analysis of state-based actors and agencies or showing that institutional arrangements, or the "political opportunity structure (McAdam et al. 1996)." In the more recent studies, intersections between gender, race, class, culture, sexual orientation, etc. is an important focus.

4. Operationalize and Contribute to Feminist and Non-Feminist Theory with a Focus on Democracy and Representation

Both feminist and non-feminist theories are used across the studies, with several studies explicitly seeking to bridge the gap between feminist studies and other political analyses that do not take gender into account. Many of the studies used and develop democratic theory, theories on representation, theories of the state, social movement theory, gender/welfare regime theory, theories on Europeanization, and, most recently, theories on intersectionality. An important theoretical theme running throughout all of the studies is how to make democratic processes more open, inclusive and representative, with women's movements having great potential to make stable and new democracies more democratic.

5. Comparative Case-Based Analysis with a New Focus on European Countries outside of Western Europe

The projects also share a cross-national perspective, in most instances using the selection of country cases as a means to sort through similarities and differences in outcomes and in determinants – in other words to test hypotheses about policy dynamics. Several studies explicitly adopt the Comparative Method or Qualitative Comparative Analysis in selecting the countries included in the study. Seven out of the nine studies focus uniquely on European countries -- four of those include both Western and Eastern Europe, one include only Western European countries and two focus primarily on Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe. Thus, important cross-national cultural differences between East and West are examined in some of the studies – with significant variation between the Central and Eastern European countries coming out as an important finding.

6. Analysis Over Time and Space and Across Issues

Time, space and issue are also important shared analytical lenses across all of the projects. All of the projects conducted research over the long haul to assess changes over time. The studies focused on the West tended to assess changes in policy and politics since the second wave of the women's movements, while the studies on Central and Eastern Europe started from the transition from communist to democratic regimes. MAGEEQ began its analysis at the height of the UN's women's policy process in 1995 to evaluate whether the Beijing process had any impact in Europe. Multi-level analyses are a part of all the studies to varying degrees given that

seven studies deal with the EU and processes of Europeanization and mainstreaming at some level. Several studies included a sub-national level of analysis as well. Similarly, a focus on different issue areas is a part of most projects; in several, the same selection of issues was examined for all of countries in the study. Findings in some of the studies show there are important variations in political dynamics across different issues areas even within the same country.

7. Multi-Methodological Approaches with Uniform Methodological Tools

While a formal mixed-methods approach is only used in the RNGS project, many of the studies combine several different approaches to research and analysis. All studies bring together on some level large ‘n’ analysis with country-based qualitative analyses and present both qualitative and quantitative results. There is an unusual intermingling of post modern approaches related to feminist standpoint theory, interpretivism and social constructivism that avoid formal theory building with more “empirical/ neo positivist” feminist approaches that formally operationalize variables and test hypotheses.⁷ In several of the studies, an explicit interdisciplinary approach is taken. Many of the studies follow a uniform method to collect data and present findings, often some form of process-tracing, with the analytical methods and data collection protocol developed and agreed upon by the group.

Multi Level Comparative Gender and Policy Studies in Europe

A recent collection of articles brings together scholarship on different sectors of feminist policy in Europe at both the national and EU levels that resonate with the many of the features of the nine internationally networked projects.⁸ Morgan (2009) analyzes the development of general trends in caring time policies – leave and child care policies together – across all Western European countries in the context of changing gender and welfare state regimes and the new economic imperatives of employment and stalled growth. Engeli (2009a) compares two highly controversial aspects of national reproduction policies: abortion policy, that has been the object of a great deal of feminist research, and artificial reproductive technology (ART) policy, that has only recently has been placed under the feminist microscope. The latter policy, she notes, has only appeared on government agendas since the 1990s as a result of technological developments, and addresses the hot-button issues of female surrogacy and same-sex parenting. Engeli compares the two policies in Great Britain, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland, and Belgium.

Reflecting the growing awareness of diversity politics in contemporary Europe and considerations about the intersections between gender, race, and culture,⁹ Sauer (2009) conducts a comparative analysis of “headscarf regimes” in Austria, the Netherlands and Germany,

⁷ For more on different feminist approaches to research see Harding (1987) or Hawkesworth (2006).

⁸ Scholars first presented their findings for this project at a conference organized by Mark Pollock at Temple University in 2007 and then were asked to contribute to a special issue in *Comparative European Politics* (April 2009) on “Gender and Public Policy in Europe”, edited by Amy Mazur and Mark Pollock. Mazur’s article on the nine research projects in the previous section of this paper was a part of this special issue. For copies of the articles in that special issue go to <https://mysite.wsu.edu/personal/mazur/home/default.aspx>.

⁹ For more on intersectionality as a research concept see Weldon (2008).

pointing to new challenges to feminism that have often produced deep divisions in women's movements.

Until recently, the scholarly study of women's political representation was a distinct sub-field, at some distance from the analysis of gender policy issues. More recent work on gender and representation is bridging the gap between the two areas of study through a focus on substantive representation (e.g. Celis and Childs 2008). The study by Celis (2009) is a part of this shift in analytical focus. She presents research on the activities of women and men MPs in budget debates in Belgium from 1900-1979, to develop and to better understand the link women's substantive representation and public policy outcomes. The puzzle addressed is whether the increased presence of women representatives brings in a better treatment of women's issues in policy discussions and decisions and if so, whether women representatives speak for the full range of women's interests.

Moving to the EU level, Zippel (2009) provides analysis of two additional areas of policy central to promoting women's rights and status – work and sexual violence – in her analysis of the formulation and implementation of the 2002 Equal Treatment Directive, which established new rules on sexual harassment in the EU. Focusing on a relatively new policy issue in Europe, transposed from the US, Zippel shows the way in which national and supra-national levels interacted through the entire policy process, arguing the policy represented a new approach to gender equality at work with an emphasis on women's rights as individuals outside of any consideration of their maternal roles.

With a focus on the policies of EU governing structures themselves, Hafner-Burton and Pollack (2009) assess the promise, and limits, of the gender-mainstreaming mandate established by the EU's executive Commission. The concept of gender mainstreaming, they note, has been identified as a potentially revolutionary influence on gender politics, but it has also been intensely controversial, with some critics arguing that mainstreaming is inherently flawed and has only drawn attention and resources away from specific policies designed to benefit women. Presenting new research on the implementation of mainstreaming in the Commission, Hafner-Burton and Pollack argue that mainstreaming has thus far failed to diffuse a gender perspective to all EU policies, a weakness that they attribute to the Commission's nearly exclusive reliance on socialization and "soft" incentives.

Avedeyava's study (2009), brings the issue of the New Europe to the center of the analysis, in terms of the accession of Central and Eastern European countries to the EU, and the challenges faced by those countries in adapting their national gender regimes to the demands of EU membership. Avedeyava's analysis of the enforcement of EU gender equality principles in national legislation and in the creation of government agencies for equality in Latvia, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic shows considerable, and surprising, variation in the implementation of EU policy mandates, an outcome that she attributes to national variations in the strength of women's movements as well as the party composition of governments in power across her four cases.

Taken together these studies make a solid contribution to FCP and also to comparative policy studies on Europe more broadly speaking in the following ways.

1. *A Feminist and Gendered Perspective*

First and most obviously, each of the comparative studies continue the tradition of taking a feminist approach to their object of study. Despite the diversity of coverage in terms of issue-area and geography, each piece places gender at the center of the analysis, focusing on the central questions of improving women's rights and striking down gender hierarchies. In many cases, the authors spell out the policy relevance of their findings, seeking to improve gender equality through dissemination of results and policy recommendations to practitioners, activists and citizens. This "problem-driven" (APSA, 2004) or "use-inspired" approach (Stokes, 1997) is found in seven out of the nine of the international FCP projects. Five of the articles in the issue focus on policies that have an explicit feminist intent: Engeli, on abortion policy, Hafner-Burton and Pollack on gender mainstreaming, Zippel on sexual harassment and Avedeya on equality policies and machineries. Morgan, Engeli and Sauer examine gendered policies – on caring time, reproduction, and the veil – to determine whether and how they have been framed to address women's rights and strike down gender hierarchies. Many of the authors also seek to bring in feminist policy actors – movements and/or agencies – as potential influences and objects of analysis.

Sauer and Celis, moreover, engage directly with the canon of normative feminist theory and political philosophy. Sauer brings theoretical discussions of racial diversity and feminism into her analysis of veiling policies, and Celis speaks directly to feminist theories of representation and presence and seeks to generate a theory about better substantive representation for women through her empirical analysis.

At the same time, many of the studies presented here draw from, and seek to inform, non-feminist literatures as well. Morgan, for example, locates her study of caring time policies within the welfare-state as well as the feminist policy literature, Avdeyeva draws on competing theories and cross-national studies of Europeanization, and Hafner-Burton and Pollack provide a rationalist account of EU decision-making with potential applications to a wide range of cross-cutting or "mainstreaming" mandates.

2. *Epistemological and Methodological Diversity*

As in the case of the nine gender projects, recent gender and policy scholarship brings together different epistemological approaches to research that are typically at odds with each other. While all of the authors in this study clearly take a "feminist empirical approach" (Harding 1987) through seeking to test current hypotheses or generate new hypotheses about the dynamics of gender policy and its drivers in empirical analysis, scholars like Sauer and Celis combine this empirical approach with more social constructivist and interpretive approach through a focus on policy frames.

Reflecting the trend in cross-national analysis to include more countries, this study takes a comparative approach, with each author examining a range of countries selected to demonstrate cross-national patterns of policy-making or to test competing explanations for policy processes and outcomes. Morgan, for example, describes patterns of caring time policies across all

Western European countries, while Zippel assesses the poor enforcement of the 2002 sexual harassment directive across the various EU member states. Engeli, Sauer, and Avedeyeva go further, employing careful case selection to test theoretical propositions about the determinants – institutional, party-political, social-movement-related, or ideational – of policy outcomes.

3. Broad Coverage, but a Focus on Policy Outputs over Outcomes

The comparative analyses together provide a quite thorough picture of recent gender policy issues in Europe in terms of the range of policy issues, country coverage, level of government and, to a lesser degree, stage of policy process. Each study covers many of the key areas of feminist government action that have been identified by feminist policy scholars (Mazur 2002): reconciliation of work and family life, equal employment policies, reproductive rights, diversity, representation, gender equality, sexuality and violence, and “blueprint policies” including general gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming. In terms of geographic coverage, some of the studies follow the familiar, most-similar-systems approach of comparing West European countries, while others follow the lead of recent multinational research projects in focusing on Central and Eastern European countries or comparing countries across Western and Eastern Europe. The multi-level nature of the analysis also means that the collective picture of gender and policy dynamics drawn by these articles will also allow for the national-EU nexus, with less emphasis on sub-national politics.

Echoing similar trends in the nine gender and policy projects, these pieces tend to focus on policy formulation and outputs more than implementation and policy outcomes and impacts. Morgan, Engeli, Sauer, and Celis look at policy content and legal documents as objects of analysis, with relatively little focus on outcome or social impacts – whether gender relations actually changed. Avdeyeva and Zippel, by contrast, are primarily concerned with implementation and enforcement of EU mandates, but they examine outputs – programs, enforcement structures, etc. -- without looking at whether there is larger impact on society. (For both authors, it is arguably too early to examine the implementation and impact of very recent policy mandates.) Hafner- Burton and Pollack, finally, examine the implementation of the EU gender-mainstreaming mandate, but the focus is on the policy outputs of the Commission at the EU level, with no analysis of the effects of EU policies “on the ground” in the member states.

For the most part, this common focus on policy outputs rather than on outcomes is a function of resources: even in the age of multinational, multiannual research projects with government funding, the resource demands of engaging in comparative studies of implementation and impacts of public policies on gender relations are enormous. Mapping and explaining national variation in implementation and outcomes of gendered public policy can and should be the focus of the next generation of large, publicly funded, cross-national research projects.

4. A Mixed Record of Feminist Policy Success

There is a mixed picture of feminist policy success presented. In the case of caring time policy, for example, Morgan shows that feminist demands for policies that better balance work and home for both men and women were shunned in favor of leave and child-care arrangements

that were built on the notion that women would work part-time and be the primary caretaker. Governments across Europe have responded to political demands for assistance for working parents, Morgan argues, but they have done so in ways that run counter to aims of feminist policy activists.

Engeli and Avdeyeva demonstrate considerable variation in feminist policy success in their respective domains. In Engeli's study of ART and abortion policy, dynamics tended toward the more women-friendly end of her three-level measure – only three out of 18 country cases fell in the restrictive category and nine cases were ranked in the permissive category and six in the intermediate. In Avdeyeva's study of Central and Eastern European accession countries, Lithuania reached “comprehensive policy reform” where EU gender equality principles were taken on in national policy statements and strong and authoritative equality policy agencies set-up, with Poland and Hungary at “adequate” levels and the Czech Republic showing only “marginal” reform.

Even where policy outputs bear the hallmarks of feminist theorizing or activism, implementation and effectiveness may be lacking. Both Zippel and Hafner-Burton and Pollack show that EU-level policies, such as the 2002 Directive on sexual harassment and the Commission's gender mainstreaming mandate, were drawn up largely by European femocrats (with the support of some member governments, members of the European Parliament, and the European women's movement), and are in principle remarkably progressive, approaching or even exceeding the standards of the Union's most progressive member states. Nevertheless, Zippel demonstrates that the 2002 Directive leaves considerable latitude in implementation to the member states, while Hafner-Burton and Pollack demonstrate the difficulties in implementing gender mainstreaming even within the Commission's Brussels bureaucracy. The key to successful implementation, they argue, is to “get the incentives right.”

5. *A Search for Drivers: What Are the Ingredients for Feminist Policy Success?*

The cross-national studies lend little credence to claims that feminist policy success can be understood in terms of national or regional patterns, which has been an assertion of recent feminist and non-feminist policy studies. While Morgan identifies a general convergence in models of caring time policies among western countries which tends to blur national or regional trends, Engeli's study of the two policy sectors in seven countries found different policy outcomes across the two sectors in France, Switzerland and Great Britain, but not in Belgium or the Netherlands. The cross-national variation in feminist policy outcomes in Avdeyeva's study calls into question any notion of regional trends in policy dynamics.

Examining the influence of the key variables in many feminist comparative policy analyses -- women's movements actors in society (autonomous women's groups, feminist experts, women's commissions in political parties and trade unions etc.) and the state (women's policy agencies, women in parliament) – we see at best a mixed record. On the negative side, feminist/women's movement actor influence was mitigated in caring time policies due to the economic context and public support for established gender roles, according to Morgan. Engeli and Sauer, in their studies of ART and diversity policies, similarly demonstrate the limits on the influence of feminist ideas and actors. In the ART case, Engeli argues that while the influence of

women's movements was important in some cases, the most important factor in explaining reproductive policy variation was the organization of doctors. In the veiling policies examined by Sauer, women's movements played an important role in more women-friendly policies, but in conjunction with the particular approach to church-state relations.

Avdeyeva similarly sought to test hypotheses about the significance of the women's movement and other feminist policy actors, with mixed results. While women's movements and other feminist policy actors (such as the caucus of women legislators in Lithuania) were crucial actors in some cases, their activism was neither necessary (as in the case of Poland, where a left-wing government implemented gender-equality legislation with little social-movement pressure) nor sufficient (as when the women's movement was forced to engage with right-wing governments in Poland and the Czech Republic). Hafner-Burton and Pollack point to the apparent failure of efforts by women policy advocates to diffuse a gender perspective beyond a few core Directorates-General in the European Commission. And Celis study of women's representation in Belgium, like other recent work in comparative feminist policy, finds that not all women represent feminist interests and not all women's interests are necessarily feminist.¹⁰

Thus a strong and active women's movement is not necessarily a precursor for successful feminist policy outcomes; but it can be important in certain cases depending on the line-up of other influences. Active women's policy agencies, long the focus of study in Comparative Feminist Policy studies, appear to be even less important in the cases examined in this issue. One of the most suggestive findings of these studies is that the determinants of policy outputs and outcomes – and hence the success or failure of policies from a feminist perspective – are highly variable, shifting across issue-areas as well as cross-nationally. Factors, such as the party-political composition of the government in power, may be crucial determinants of policy in some areas (see Avdeyeva on blueprint policies in Central and Eastern Europe) and irrelevant in others (see Engeli on ART).

Feminist Movements and Policy Formulation in Comparative Perspective: Identifying the Dynamics and Determinants of Feminist Success

The last FCP study to be examined focuses on the impact of women's/feminist movements on the complex process of policy formulation and adoption proposal generation, a part of the policy process that is crucial to the democratic process and is associated with a rich scholarly tradition of study, particularly in the anglo-american literature.¹¹ The study includes two case analyses of feminist policy formation in France on *égalité professionnelle* policy (Revillard 2009) and *parité* policy (Bérénis 2009), two comparative analyses of anti child sexual abuse policy (CSA) in Great Britain, Belgium and France (Boussaguet 2009) and of artificial reproductive technology policy (ART) in France and Switzerland (Engeli 2009b) and a final study of gender mainstreaming policy at the EU level (Jacquot 2009).

¹⁰ The RINGS project, examined by Mazur in this volume, also differentiates between women's movements and feminist movements, which are a subset of women's movements (McBride and Mazur 2008). Similarly not all women's policy agencies represent feminist positions.

¹¹ This study came out of a day-long conference organized by Laurie Boussaguet and Sophie Jacquot at CEVIPOF in January 2008 and was published in a special issue of the *Revue Française de Science Politique* (April 2009).

Here the findings of a separate qualitative comparative analysis of all of the cases together are presented in terms of the dynamics and determinants of feminist policy formulation (Mazur 2009b). Findings which echo many of the same contributions of the other FCP studies assessed above. The analysis determines to what degree the elaboration of policy was a “feminist success” and what were the major drivers of that success. Feminist success is defined as feminist movement actors gaining access to the policy formation process, or “descriptive representation” AND feminist movement ideas being a main part of the content of problem definition, proposal generation and the final policy adopted, or “substantive representation”.¹² Table 2 below presents the feminist success scores on each case on a scale from 0 to 3 for each type of representation and from 0 to 9 for overall representation.¹³

Table 1. Scores for Feminist Success on Policy Formation

	DR	SR	Total
Low (0-3)			
ART in France, 1980s-2004	1	0	1
CSA in France, 1980s	1	1	2
CSA in the UK, 1980s	1	1	2
CSA in Belgium, 1980s	1	1	2
Medium (4-6)			
*Egalité Professionnelle in France, 1965-1983	2	2	4
ART in Switzerland, 1980s-1998	2	2	4
*Parity in France, 1992-2000	2	2	4
*Gender Mainstreaming in the EU, 1980s-2000s	2	2	4

*Explicitly Feminist Policy

Overall Trends in Feminist Policy Dynamics

Taking the eight cases together, the following observations can be made about feminist policy dynamics and the nine determinants of success that were examined as hypotheses in the original study.

Absence of High Feminist Influence – The absence of cases of high feminist influence is no surprise given the challenges and obstacles posed to formerly excluded groups to enter institutionalized subsystems and arenas to bring in ideas that challenge the standard operating procedures and long-held values. At the same time, feminist influence reached a moderate level, albeit at the lowest level of the second category, in half of the cases. It is important to note that the absence of high cases may be due to the particular selection of policy cases. In two previous

¹² Pitkin’s (1967) taxonomy of representation has been adopted by FCP scholars as a core conceptual tool in analyzing public policy dynamics and determinants.

¹³ For details on the hypotheses, operational definitions, coding and scoring systems from the original study see Mazur (2009b).

studies of feminist policy formation that use a similar scoring system, there were significant numbers of high level of feminist success (Mazur 2002 and 2003).

All Women's Movement Actors and Ideas are Feminist -- All of the women's movement actors that came forward elaborated arguments that went beyond presenting women's claims in terms of a common gendered identity to bringing arguments for advancing women's rights and status and analyses of the gender-biased and even patriarchal nature of society. This meant that when policy frames were gendered a feminist stance was brought into government arenas, which is not always necessarily the case when women's movement actors come forward. Given that feminist approaches are arguably more challenging and threatening to the status quo, more general notions of women's identity, it is not surprising the feminist actors in these cases had less success in entering the system and getting their ideas into the dominant frames of policy debate. Thus, these cases taken together suggest the challenges to making the state more feminist in terms of specific ideological positions.

Link Between Descriptive and Substantive Representation -- In all cases but ART in France, levels of descriptive and substantive representation were the same, indicating a link between the presence of feminist actor and feminist success in policy framing and outcomes. While certainly an important proposition, that women's movement actors have to be present in order for women's movement ideas to be incorporated in policy debates and policy outcomes, this link is not always obvious. Only ¼ of all of the cases analyzed in the larger study of feminist policy formation mentioned above had the same level of descriptive and substantive representation. Although a recent study of family leave policy showed that descriptive representation was important in achieving women friendly outcomes (Caul Kittilson 2008).

Does Country/Region or Sector Matter?

The cases suggest that there are more trends by sector than by country. While feminist policy success was split evenly across the four French cases, there were low levels of feminist policy influence across the three cases of anti child sexual abuse policies in three quite different political systems in the UK, France and Belgium. Thus, there do not seem to be any significant country patterns in terms of feminist policy dynamics. Similarly, a certain level of feminist policy success does not seem to correspond with a specific type of gender policy regime type. Switzerland and the UK- both classified as "market oriented" gender policy regimes had both moderate and low levels of feminist success and France and Belgium classified in the "general support category" had both low and moderate. These cases confirm what other feminist and non feminist research has shown, policy dynamics do not follow any general "national policy style". More specifically, in terms of the nine hypotheses about the determinants of feminist success, the absence of country or regional patterns indicates that the overall institutional design, cultural tradition or approach to gender of a given country is not salient in understanding the drivers of feminist policy influence.

While there are clearly no system-wider trends, sector and policy type do seem to be salient. Policies that explicitly targeted women's rights achieved higher levels of representation than non feminist policies, except for the case of ART in Switzerland. Also, given that the non feminist policies were all focused on issues of the private sphere and the body, there may be a

tendency for this policy to be more resistant to change. Although the moderate success of the Swiss case suggests that not all body politics policies lead to lower levels of feminist success. The importance of the policy sector points to the need to examine the context of the subsystem for insight into what explains for feminist success or not, a context which changes according to issue area.

Assessing Individual Hypotheses at the Sub System Level

Political Opportunity Structure, Veto Points, Institutional Design -- There is no a clear link between a more open POS at the subsystem level and feminist policy success. Cases of low feminist success occurred in both closed and moderately open policy subsystems. The decision-making sub systems around ART and CSA policies in France were quite codified, only including the medical interests for ART and the child protection groups for CSA. In Belgium, subsystems were moderately open with the possibility for broad government consultation with a range of groups. Similarly, there were both open and closed subsystem in the cases that reached moderate feminist success. In the French case the broader employment policy sub system is very closed allowing only tri-partite negotiations between official representatives of labor, management and the labor administration. In Switzerland, the system in general is more open to outside influence, but in this case with the call of a referendum and the official government consultation, the process was arguably the most open of any of the cases. The POS for parity in France and mainstreaming in the EU were not as open as the Swiss case, but not as closed at French employment policy. In France, the parliamentary process allowed for the influence of the women's policy agencies and other groups coming forward in commission hearings and in the EU, the Commission process through the Directorate Generals. While the access is oriented toward elites a range of representatives from NGOs and experts are consulted.

Women's Movement Strength/Resources/ Characteristics – When taking two different perspectives on the impact of the women's movement – women's movement overall strength and the cohesiveness of women's movement actors on the particular issue, stronger women's movements have some link to higher levels of feminist success, but cohesiveness does not. On women's movement strength, a measure of combined activism and institutionalization is adapted from the RNGS project. The measure shows that there is a tendency toward the lower cases to correlate with less strong movements and moderate cases to occur in the context of stronger movements. Although not all the low feminist cases occurred in the context of the weakest category of movement strength (there were three categories) and the Swiss case of ART occurred at a time of low movement strength. For movement cohesiveness there is no clear link. Feminists were unified in all of the cases but two – French ART in the lower feminist success category and French parity in the moderate category. Keeping in line with the absence of country trends, the French feminists who took positions on égalité professionnelle developed a quite cohesive position.

Party in Power/ Influence of the Left – The presence of a left-wing or a right wing government in power did not make a difference either with any tendency for moderate cases of success to occur under left-wing governments or right-wing governments to produce lower feminist policy success. Here the EU is excluded from the analysis given the institutional design of the supra national policy process.

Economic Climate -- There does not seem to be a clear correlation between specific economic climate and feminist policy success. Seven out of the eight cases occurred within the context of rising neo liberalism and economic retrenchment; thus indicating no particular trends toward success or failure in a set of similar economic circumstance. In the case of French *égalité professionnelle*, a feminist success occurred in a period of economic growth. Taking a closer look at the two cases directly involving economic issues – the French case of EP and the EU case of mainstreaming – a favorable economic context may have made the argument for sex- based equality more appealing for policy makers in the French case and a retrenching economy in the 1990s may have meant that authoritative gender mainstreaming was less appealing for policy makers at the EU level.

State Feminism/ Strategic Partnerships/ Feminist Advocacy Coalitions – There is more saliency with this factor, particularly when examining the importance of strategic alliances between femocrats in state based women’s policy agencies and feminist actors in society. Women’s policy agencies either in parliament or the executive branch worked directly with women’s movement actors on all of the cases of moderate feminist policy influence, but the Swiss case. Even in this case, while there were no women’s policy agencies present, feminists from autonomous groups worked with members of parliament from the ecology and Christian democrats through the pursuit of a common policy goal, which suggests that an advocacy coalition was important, although not with a common feminist belief system across all actors. In the less successful cases, in only the Belgium case was there evidence of a strategic alliance between the Deputy Secretary of Emancipation and feminist groups; feminist groups and actors were consulted a contributed to an official position of Minister Miet Smits on the issues. In the other low cases, there were no willing partners in government to take up the feminist cause in a meaningful manner even in the two French cases in which the Minister of Women’s Rights was present, but did not work actively with feminists on the policy issue. Thus, showing that the mere presence of a powerful women’s ministries is not enough for feminist success without meaningful collaboration with women’s movements or state feminism.¹⁴

Critical Actors/ Policy Entrepreneurs/Male Allies In all of the cases there were no individual male decision-makers who came forward to support the feminist cause being advanced. In most of the cases there were prominent women who pushed for feminist policy stances -- Deputy Secretary of Women’s Emancipation, Miet Smits in Belgium CSA, Yvette Roudy in French parity, social worker Liz Kelly in the UK, Agnés Hubert, gender equality unit head and French feminist expert Jacqueline Laufer in the EU and in one case a powerful individual contributed to reducing feminist success—Odile Quentin as head of the EU gender equality unit. But the presence or absence of a feminist policy entrepreneur did not necessarily translate directly into feminist success or failure.

Influences Beyond the National Level -- This factors is quite salient in understanding the ingredients for success. In the four cases of low feminist success, there was no evidence of a transnational advocacy network being involved with the national level policy making or any

¹⁴ While state feminism has been associated with the general activities of women’s policy agencies, more recently the term has taken on a more specific meaning- the effective collaboration between women’s movements and agencies (Mazur and McBride 2008).

significant influence from the United Nations or the European Union, particularly given that the politics of the body and private sphere issues are not treated by the EU. Obviously there is no direct EU influence in any Swiss policy formation; so this case should not be given the same level of importance in the analysis of this hypothesis. In addition, there was no evidence of a transnational advocacy network on ART in Switzerland. In three out of the four cases, influences beyond the national level were quite important. In French EP, the CTF based feminist network was inextricably linked to the EU through the “boomerang effect (Keck and Sikkink 1998)” using the EU policy to which French femocrats had contributed as a major tool to convince recalcitrant policy makers to change their position on women’s employment. In the case of parity, activists compared France to other countries and were active in the EU based network on women in decision-making. For the EU, the influence was from members states and from the UN – feminist experts from member states played crucial roles in the velvet triangle and the 1995 Women’s conference was an important factor in securing EU attention.

Issue Priority as a New Hypothesis – One additional driver that came out in the CSA cases and the EU gender mainstreaming is the overall priority of the policy issue. In all four cases, when government decision-makers decided to make the issue a top priority, a different set of actors was brought forward and the issue was moved into a subsystem far away from the feminist articulation of the position. Without the presence of feminist actors, then their demands were no longer articulated as the issue became more important. This may explain more why in the three cases of CSA the non feminist actors were able to close out any feminist analysis once it was officially recognized that the problem did not only affect girls and hence should be a more highly prioritized problems- the feminists were unable to control the agenda. This did not happen in all cases, however, in parity and *égalité professionnelle* in France and ART in Switzerland moving the issue higher on the government’s decisions agenda did not lead to any loss of control by the feminists.

Putting it all together – Configurations of Causal Factors

As the analysis here has shown and reflecting the findings of similar studies, there is no single factor that explains success. But there does appear to be certain combination of factors that come together that produce more or less success for particular cases. For all of the cases but the Swiss case-- a stronger women’s movement with state feminist partnerships and extra-national influence were present; they did not share the presence of a left-wing government, an open POS, a cohesive women’s movement or the presence of critical actors. The crucial factors in the Swiss case were the dynamics of the coalition that formed around ART, the openness of the sub-system and the absence of feminist division around the issue; thus showing that there is more than one route to feminist success. The line-up of factors on the less successful cases also confirms the importance of the strength of the women’s movement and the presence of a state feminist strategic alliance and extra national influence, given that these conditions were missing.

Returning to the larger question of government response to social movement demands, this study has confirmed the findings of other FCP studies that focus on the interface between social movements and the state. That is, the contemporary state does respond to new demands for social change that challenge the status quo. The extent of that change is limited, particularly when demands are explicitly feminist and in policies that focus on body politics. The state is

more open to feminist influence on policies that are meant to be promoting women's rights than in policies that do not have an explicitly feminist goal.

The absence of any male allies that came forward to push for feminist demands, identified as important players in other gender-specific policies, suggests that advancing feminist ideas as opposed to broader women's movements demands is quite threatening to the established system. Men may see taking a position on these issues to be too risky for their political careers; in any case women decision-makers clearly do not. At least in these cases, in order for feminist demands to be included in policy outcomes, they need to be brought forward by feminist actors; another observation not necessarily brought out by the existing work on FCP. Thus, this study provides new and important insights about explicitly feminist movements and their influence in the policy process. The bottom line here is that democracies are responsive to new social demands as long as they are not too threatening to the established approach and frame on issues.

Confirming the findings of previous FCP work, the key to understanding why some feminist demands make it through system better than others is less in any national policy style than in the specific sector and type. Indeed, the importance of the sub system as a unit of analysis, a site for policy dynamics and an explanation for change should no longer be an object for debate. Any single monolithic cause is also ruled out by this study. The complex picture presented here brings out the importance of state feminist alliances, stronger women's movements and the influence of factors outside of the political system, whether it be at the national or supra-national level, particularly for policies that are explicitly feminist. The priority given to a policy issue also has some influence on the extent to which feminist actors and ideas gain access to state policy arenas. Institutional design, presence of a left-wing government, movement cohesiveness, and the presence of critical actors, often identified as important factors by comparative political analysis, proved not be salient here. Thus, while on hand statements like institutions and politics matter or that feminist division undermines movement success should be mitigated in light of the findings of this study; on the other, theories of state feminism and frameworks that include the importance of international influences are validated.

Conclusion

This analysis of these three large-scale studies in FCP shows that policy studies are alive and well when taking gender into the mix. With a relatively common purpose, the over 160 scholars in 27 countries have made solid contributions to the comparative study of public policy, contributions that cannot be ignored by policy scholars and comparativists who do not focus on gender. In some ways gender and comparative policy scholarship has not changed since the first formal assessments of FCP as an emerging field. Gender remains a fundamental category of the analysis; issues of patriarchy, gender-biased norms and the state are at the center of study designs; feminist and non-feminist theory continues to be operationalized in studies, and comparative theory building based on qualitative analysis is an important part of analysis. At the same time, there have been significant new developments.

While not a pre-requisite, the creation of a large international research group is becoming more of the norm, as a reflection of shifting priorities of major government funding agencies and efforts to include a broader range of countries into comparative studies. One of the major

features of FCP work in the past was that theorizing and analysis took a mid-range approach and a most similar systems design with theoretical propositions coming from studies only applying to western post-industrial democracies. The argument was that other experts of non-western countries would need to test the validity of the propositions about post-industrial democracies, before any definitive statements about gender and politics could be made about the rest of the world. The inclusion of East Central and South Eastern European countries into the analytical purview of studies opens the door for the consideration of countries from outside of the West with different levels of economic and political development and cultural contexts. As a result, FCP is faced with a new level of cultural diversity and the need to rethink core analytical concepts to make them better “travel” across cultural boundaries.¹⁵ This new development may allow FCP analyses of western countries to bridge the gap with a growing and rich body of comparative work on non-western countries and research that analyzes trends across a broad range of regions of the world.

Another important development is the increased French participation in the FCP community, the special issue in the RFSP and other French work on particularly *les politiques de l'intimes*, illustrates well the important place for Francophone scholars.

The analytical perspective of FCP has clearly gone beyond the nation-state to include a multi-level approach where the sub-national and extra-national levels are just as, if not more, important than the national level. Also, cultural differences must be placed in an intersectional perspective where race, ethnicity, class, religion, and sexual orientation become important and fundamental considerations alongside gender. Time period and policy issue area have also become salient analytical dimensions when understanding the dynamics and determinants of gender and policy processes; perhaps even more important than nation-level trends and dynamics.

Normative and empirical questions of democracy have increasingly become a focal point of FCP studies; in terms of placing women’s movements at the center of making the democratic process more democratic, and for the newer democracies in terms of effective transitions to democracies. An increasing emphasis on representation as a means to link issues of women’s presence to policy outcomes in the FCP scholarship dovetails with comparative scholarship on women in politics, which is also taking a more systematic look at substantive representation and policy outcomes. Thus, whereas in 2002, the work on women’s political representation was identified as an adjacent area of research, today policy and representation research are becoming one and the same. Here too intersectional approaches are becoming essential; women’s interests, movements and representation must be disaggregated and understood in terms of differences among women by religion, race, ethnicity, class, etc.

Methodological pluralism is also a more pronounced attribute of feminist comparative policy work. While much work is qualitative emphasizing the importance of expert analyses of country cases and process tracing, studies are increasingly bringing in quantitative large “n” analysis out of necessity, due to the shift toward including more countries in study designs. An emerging part of the feminist approach is to more formally conceptualize and to develop specific

¹⁵ For more on the importance of concept traveling in the construction of gender and politics concepts see Goertz and Mazur (2008).

data collection and analysis techniques, drawing from both feminist and non-feminist work. While earlier FCP studies tended to take a more “empirical feminist approach” where studies were designed to test hypotheses through empirical analysis without putting into question the scientific method, recent feminist research has brought in post modern approaches based on feminist standpoint theory and social constructivism with a focus on framing, discourse and policy content and often a rejection of the scientific method.

This shift is not necessarily positive. On one hand the key issues of whether formal policies are effectively implemented to actually change gender relations in society is left relatively unexamined; on the other, an absence of clearly articulated hypotheses, formal concepts and findings may limit the broader empirical and applied messages of the studies. At the same time, the increased emphasis on connecting to public officials and citizens to research through dissemination and training, an emphasis brought in by a more post modern approach, potentially outweighs these empirical gaps.

Identifying common trends in findings is still an open-ended question; awaiting a systematic meta-analysis of all current FCP work to try to develop propositions about gender, policy and the state that can be fine-tuned in future studies. Indeed, the FCP projects reviewed in this article do not directly build from each other and have little direct intra-group communication except through a few individuals who are in several project. Analyzing the results and common conclusions of all current FCP research has the potential to build a bridge among all of the studies and in so doing to allow FCP scholarship to more systematically contribute to theory building and the cumulation of knowledge.

This paper has begun to build the bridge—the studies analyzed here show that successful feminist public policies result from the interaction of a highly complex set of forces that shift from one sector and case to another with few national or regional logics. Hence, while a set of familiar factors that explain policy outcomes in some sectors are identified – including the party composition of domestic governments, domestic political opportunity structures, the strength of women’s movements, critical actors, women’s policy agencies and pressure from international organizations or transnational advocacy networks, among others – those same factors seem secondary or irrelevant in other sectors, or their importance may be conditioned by interaction with other variables. In other words, there is no single magic bullet for feminist policy success. For this reason, while scholars should seek to determine broad patterns in public policy and determinants of policy success across issue-areas and countries, such studies will also have to be attentive to the particularities of issue-areas that differentially engage domestic governmental and non-governmental actors and political opportunity structures, policy frames, and international organizations and networks.

One characteristic of FCP which has remained constant over the years is the degree to which non-feminist policy studies and political science continue to ignore gender and policy research. Mainstream comparative politics and policy studies still do not integrate the findings of feminist scholarship in a meaningful way or bring gender, women’s movements, or women’s representation in as an important aspect to be analyzed in comparative studies of democratic politics. To be sure, there has been an increase in publications of gender research in non-

feminist journals, but few non-feminist scholars have seriously gendered their own analysis beyond isolated cases or the more normal approach of “add women and stir.”

In closing, FCP is a vibrant and successful field, which stands to make fundamental contributions to gendering political analysis, scholarly thinking on democracy and to the actual operation of democracy itself at the local, national and international levels. Indeed, this area of scholarship has become an integral part of contemporary policy studies and arguably has made them more theoretically meaningful, vital and unified. At the same time, there is still much progress to be made in overcoming scholarly resistance by non-feminist analysts and building from the lessons drawn from these projects in future studies through development of studies of policy implementation, extending the scope of analysis beyond Western democracies, and better integration of different feminist approaches. This reflection hopefully will contribute to this complex and exciting process to move the field forward.

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