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Comparative Historical Analysis of Family Policies in Central and Eastern Europe under Communist Rule and Beyond

In the last months before the fall of the communist regimes in central and eastern Europe, a group of social policy experts at the Polish Institute of Labor and Social Affairs (Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych), an advisory body to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in Warsaw, published a rare comparative survey, “Social Insurance System and Welfare Benefits in the Countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON),” the council being the Soviet equivalent of an international trade organization. This study never mentioned family policy by name but rather focused on the “population problems” experienced by almost all communist countries at the time (Górska and Wiktorow 1988, 95–103). During the 1970s and 1980s, three countries—Poland, Romania, and the Soviet Union—still reported high birthrates and, consequently, relatively robust population growth. Nonetheless, the Soviet data reflected the situation in the central Asian republics, not the European part of the country; in Romania the dynamics of population expansion slowed considerably from 1980 to 1985, and only Poland registered constant rates of population increase from 1975 until 1985. The remaining four COMECON

Table 1.1. Dynamics of population growth in the COMECON countries, 1975–1985, by percentage increase during each period indicated

Countries	1975–1980	1980–1985
Poland	4.6	4.6
Hungary	1.7	–0.6
Romania	4.5	2.4
Bulgaria	1.6	1.1
Czechoslovakia	3.4	1.6
East Germany	–0.7	–0.6
Soviet Union	4.3	4.5

Source: Góralaska and Wiktorow 1988, 97.

states—Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Hungary—all experienced measurable population decline.

The two female authors of this survey publication, Helena Góralaska and Aleksandra Wiktorow, represented the second postwar generation of Polish social insurance experts. They began their careers at the institute during the late 1970s and worked as independent advisors to the Solidarity movement in the early 1980s. Later, under the new democratic regime, Góralaska served as assistant secretary in the labor and social policy ministry (1989–1991) and finance ministry (1992–93), and Wiktorow was deputy minister of labor and social policy (1991–1993) and also chairwoman of the Social Insurance Institute (Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych, or ZUS) (2001–2007). Focusing on what they called “benefits in support of the family” (*świadczenia na rzecz rodziny*), they observed that at the time, in the late 1980s, the scope of this category of benefits in the COMECON countries was so broad that “in essence it is difficult to imagine any new type of social insurance benefit on behalf of the family because [the already existing ones] include even unusual contingencies such as protection for children living with disability and single motherhood” (Góralaska and Wiktorow 1988, 105; translation by authors). Thus, Góralaska and Wiktorow argued that by the end of the 1980s family policies in all of these countries had reached a new stage of maturity, comparable to the rest of the industrialized world, at least in terms of coverage and the range of benefits, if not actual spending and generosity.

Comparative and historical literature largely agrees on the same general periodization of family policy development in all of Europe, even though, as we mentioned in our introductory chapter, only a few studies so far have examined the full spectrum of benefits and services that represent this segment of the welfare state over a longer period of time. Anne Gauthier (1996, 10–11), for

example, distinguishes three major periods: the pre-World War II era, which focused primarily on “endemic poverty,” “preventive health,” and to a lesser degree “steep fertility decline”; the 1945 to mid-1970s period, marked by the expansion of family allowances, more targeted benefits, and the rising challenge to the male-breadwinner model; and the post-1975 period, dominated by fertility declines, aging, and “family-friendly” policies. In another study, which focused exclusively on central and eastern Europe and on the impact of family policy on women’s equality in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, Steven Saxonberg (2014) identifies four critical junctures in family policy development that ultimately determine the “genderizing” or “de-genderizing” character of these schemes. These junctures are the codification of child-care facilities in the 1870s, the reorganization of ministries responsible for family policies under Stalinist rule during the 1950s, the placement of nurseries under the jurisdiction of the health ministries in the same period, and finally the adoption of extended maternity leaves (child-care leaves) in the late 1960s. He argues that due to the long-lasting impact of these specific “institutional and discursive legacies,” the collapse of the communist regimes in 1989 and the subsequent introduction of capitalist democracies in this region cannot be seen as a comparable critical juncture or the beginning of a completely new stage in family policy development. Our research supports this general conclusion, but we offer a different periodization and classification of the relevant legacies that is more sensitive not only to sequencing but also to the timing, duration, and tempo of development of all major family benefits and services.

Furthermore, even though Gauthier does not discuss communist bloc countries, her periodization matches closely what we observed in our examination of Poland, Hungary, and Romania. The interwar period was marked primarily by the adoption of pregnancy protection laws and paid maternity leaves within the insurance system, and only the post-1945 era ushered in a measurable expansion of family policy, most significantly illustrated by the adoption and growth of family allowances. By 1959 these benefits had become one of largest and the most prominent components of communist welfare states, next to old age pensions and health care, similar to western Europe (Gauthier 1996, 197). Many scholars contend that family policies began to take shape on the continent only when the already existing maternity insurance was coupled with family allowances in the mid-twentieth century (Pedersen 1993; Gauthier 1996). In addition, Julia Lynch, a political scientist and expert on western European social policy, views family allowances as a leading indicator of the orientation of the welfare state toward the younger rather than the older population. During the postwar period, partly due to the baby boom that

followed World War II, family benefits accounted for a large share of welfare expenditures and also represented the third-biggest social spending category as a percentage of GDP after pensions and health care (Lynch 2006).

The term “family allowances,” or *les allocations familiales*, adopted in Belgium and France in the interwar period, originated and expanded in continental Europe as a conservative idea related to family welfare and to wage policy (Pedersen 1993). A benefit of the same name was introduced in Hungary for civil servants and in 1938 for industrial workers (*családi pótlék*) as early as 1912 and in Poland for all employees in 1947 (*zasiłki rodzinne*). In Romania, a child allowance (*alocația pentru copii*) for civil servants was introduced during World War II, in 1941, and in 1944 a new family allowance (*alocație de familie*) was adopted for industrial and trade workers, to be paid by their employers. Meanwhile, Bulgaria adopted family allowances for the first time in 1942, the Soviet Union in 1944, Czechoslovakia in 1945, and East Germany in 1950 (Góralaska and Wiktorow 1988, 123). At the same time, “child” allowances, which provided additional financial support to families with children, emerged in Scandinavia, where children’s well-being became the prime focus of social policy (Leira 2002).

In this initial postwar period all European countries, including some within the Soviet bloc, also gradually expanded pregnancy protection and maternity insurance (maternity leave), as well as child-care services, including nurseries and kindergarten. In the next chapter, we further elaborate on the crucial shift in emphasis in Poland, Hungary, and Romania from the accelerated but short-lived expansion of nurseries during the 1950s to kindergarten education during the 1960s and beyond. We must also stress that the 1950s are considered the “peak of the breadwinner model” in postwar western European family policy development (Hantrais 2004, 6). In contrast, the basic premise of communist economies was to address labor shortages by, among other measures, the mass mobilization of women, including mothers, for work in the rapidly developing state-run enterprises. Discursively, this was framed as women’s emancipation, and initially it was accompanied by the expansion of public child-care services, a trend that slowed in the coming decades. In fact, as the “dual-earner model” became the norm within this region from the 1950s through the 1980s and child-care services remained largely underdeveloped, mothers increasingly bore the “double burden” of wage labor and domestic care (Kligman 1998; Fodor 2003; Penn and Massino 2009; Zimmermann 2020).

At the general level, we argue that not only Gauthier’s periodization but also the western European pattern of sequencing family policy development applies to central and eastern Europe, even though the exact timing of the

adoption and expansion of individual benefits varies considerably among all countries on the continent. Yet, instead of the three critical junctures proposed by Saxonberg for the postcommunist region, we identify only one, which we refer to as “modernization,” linked, as elsewhere in Europe, to industrialization and women’s participation in wage labor. As we demonstrate in detail in the next three chapters, the period of modernization of family policies in Poland, Hungary, and Romania, and in the rest of the Soviet bloc as well, occurs with a notable time lag as compared to western European welfare states, explained by delayed state-led economic development that commenced under the communist regimes after 1945. However, modernization varies greatly among these countries in terms of timing and the duration of each specific reform and the laws pertaining to the four pillars of family policy. The previous chapter defined these pillars as the maternity support pillar, the family support pillar, the income support pillar, and the service pillar (see figure I.1). The modernization period also represents an era when the full menu of these benefits and services, including child-care leaves and benefits, was finally adopted. The latter were actually identified by Saxonberg (2014) as the final, fourth critical juncture in family policy development. This was also the time when all these benefits were often upgraded and reformed following the examples of other European nations, in both western and eastern Europe. As we discuss later in this study, we view modernization as a “longer critical juncture” of family policy development. We agree with Giovanni Capoccia and Daniel Kelemen (2007) that a critical juncture can be conceived not only as a single, relatively brief event but also as a series of events that can last for a number of years, as long as we can demonstrate that the duration of this period is “brief relative to the (path-dependent) process that it initiates” (330). Thus, we identify family policy modernization as having begun in about the mid-1960s (“proper modernization” in the early case of Hungary) and in the early 1970s (in the case of Poland and Romania) and as having ended between the mid-1980s (Poland and Hungary) and the early 1990s (in the case of a prolonged modernization in Romania).

We should also note that the beginning of this period coincides with the era of *détente*, when the Soviet bloc countries were eager to “catch up” with Western capitalist democracies not only in economic modernization but also in terms of welfare state expansion, an area of intense ideological rivalry between the East and the West during the Cold War (Inglot 2013). During the 1970s and 1980s, communist states not only rushed to ratify several UN declarations and especially ILO (International Labor Organization) conventions on maternity and family protections (Góralaska and Wiktorow 1988) but also joined and sometimes even initiated various international collaborations related to

demography and reproductive politics (Varsa and Szikra 2020). These countries, for example, organized regular international meetings devoted to discussion and exchange of information, data, and knowledge pertaining to the most recent social policy developments within the Soviet bloc and the rest of the industrialized world.¹ Clearly, during the 1970s, just as was the case in western Europe (Gauthier 1996), once the newest demographic data became available, communist bloc countries started to pay much more attention to population policy and pronatalist ideas on the national and international levels. Indeed, during this period, not just within the communist region but also in the West, Romania was considered a leading country in the area of demographic planning and population policies, and it was Romania that organized the World Population Conference in 1974, held in Bucharest (Doboş 2018). As we demonstrate later in the country chapters, at that time population concerns were the main focus of family policies in Hungary and Romania but much less so in Poland. Even there, however, these issues for the first time appeared on the government agenda as a potential long-term concern to be considered in future social policy reforms (Dzienie 1976).

Furthermore, the modernization period was the time when the family policy concept gained more widespread attention across all of Europe. As Gauthier (1996, 158) noticed, “the term was little used before the mid-1970s,” but after population issues began to attract more attention in numerous countries, it was adopted not only in Germany and Sweden, where it originated, but in other European countries as well (Gauthier and Koops 2018). Still, as Linda Hantrais (2004, 133) has observed, even more recently, in the early 2000s, many governments still did not officially use the term “family policy.” Indeed, for a long time, as we mentioned above, they preferred instead to highlight what was called “social insurance benefits on behalf of the family” and “child-care policy” or to concentrate more broadly on “population policy.” It seems that in the early years of the modernization period, the term “family policy” was imported from the West into the academic debate in the Soviet bloc and as such was accepted by scholars and professionals as they increasingly engaged in meetings and exchanges with their colleagues in the rest of Europe and the United States. Warsaw-based sociologist Małgorzata Sokołowska (1978) referred to this concept in her contribution to the prominent comparative study by American scholars Sheila B. Kamerman and Alfred J. Kahn (1978). She pointed out that during this crucial time, Polish experts, government leaders, and trade union officials embraced new policies designed to “strengthen the family” or “to help the family” (Sokołowska 1978, 242–43). Hungary was among the first countries to officially use the term “family policy” (*család-politika*) as a separate policy area, in 1972–1973, and to institutionalize it on

the central governmental level. As will be discussed in detail in the country chapters, the Family Policy Forum established within the Ministry of Labor in 1974 had to “co-ordinate family policies” and develop family policy directives for local councils and factories (Ferge 1978, 73). In Romania, the term “family policy” was rarely if ever officially used during the communist era, despite the fact that the documents of the Communist Party contained discussion of the issue of support for families with children and the consolidation of “the family.” In this country, pronatalist population policies and the pressure for mothers’ early return to work set the agenda of this domain of the welfare state (Kligman 1998; Popescu 2004a; Doboş 2010).

In sum, we define modernization as a longer critical juncture in family policy development, a juncture that marked the recognition of family policy across Europe and the rest of the developed world as a distinguishable and increasingly essential segment of the welfare state. It was the period of time when in central and eastern Europe practically all countries adopted a standard menu (i.e., the four pillars; see figure I.1) of family benefits and services, including not only upgraded maternity leave, widespread adoption of family allowances, and rudimentary nursery care but also extended child-care leaves and payments and expanded kindergartens in urban areas. Furthermore, during this period pronatalist and demographic concerns, which were often but not always officially designated and embraced as “population policy” (most notably the 1974 World Population Conference, held in Romania [Doboş 2020]), entered the welfare state agenda in most European countries, including the Soviet bloc, and population policy has remained there. In addition, as we show later in the following chapters, this mature stage of family policy development generated its own institutional, ideational, and political legacies, which involved the consolidation of the core and contingent clusters of benefits and services with distinct groups of actors, agency, and ideas behind them.

INSTITUTIONAL LEGACIES

Part I of this book is based on comparative historical analysis and qualitative methodology, and it offers a new synthesis of institutionalist, ideational, and political approaches to the study of family policy development in central and eastern Europe. The historical-institutionalist perspective has been well established in welfare state literature. Julia Lynch (2006), for example, builds her explanation of the historical development of old age pensions and family allowances by emphasizing the impact of structural conditions that make European welfare states, such as the Netherlands and Italy, oriented either toward the younger or the older generation. In her analysis, political choices and ideologies are significant but consistently constrained by preexisting insti-

tutions. Kimberly Morgan's (2006) work adopts a more nuanced approach in her analysis of the religious roots of "work-family policies" in France, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United States. She shows that different types of organized religion have "played a critical role in shaping political ideologies about gender roles and the appropriate relationship between the state and the family" (Morgan 2006, 2) but also combines the institutionalist perspectives of "bounded change" (Thelen 2004), which encompasses political approaches that emphasize actors or agency, with an ideational analysis concerning gender equality (see also Morgan 2013).

Tomasz Inglot (2003, 2008) uses a conventional historical-institutionalist framework in his analysis of welfare states (i.e., state-managed social insurance) in central and eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia), revealing institutional and policy legacies as they unfolded during successive political regimes, including not only the communist era of 1945–1989 but also much earlier, at their beginning in 1919, and up to their end, under democratic rule, around the time of EU accession in the early 2000s. Steven Saxonberg (2014), who concentrates more specifically on family policies and gender equality in former communist countries, engages instead with a combination of historical, sociological, and discursive institutionalism. He concentrates much more explicitly on the ideas behind these policies and their impact on gender equality, starting from the late 1800s and ending in the early 2000s. Historical legacies and critical junctures, he argues, are a reflection not only of path-generating institutional developments and discourses but also societal values and beliefs. At the same time, Saxonberg acknowledges the potential impact of political actors during the postcommunist period, especially women's organizations, political parties, and conservative nongovernmental organizations, but concludes that their influence had been marginal at best, it having been overshadowed by the institutional and discursive legacies of the past (see Saxonberg 2014, chaps. 7 and 8).

In her comparative analysis of the politics of pension policy in France, Germany, and Switzerland, Silja Häusermann suggests a different, multi-dimensional framework for the analysis of social policies, including family policies (family allowances). She emphasizes the new dynamics of political coalition formation in the postindustrial era of welfare state modernization and argues that the most recent family policy reforms, as well as the extent to which they depart from conservative or other welfare state models, mostly likely derive from the new constellations of institutions and actors that can seriously challenge the status quo (Häusermann 2010, 210–15). In her newer research on work-family policies in Germany, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, Morgan shifts our attention back to the "power resources" argu-

ment (Korpi 1983; Esping-Andersen 1990) and highlights the emergence of key political actors—women’s groups within political parties who use their newly gained influence to reshape policy agendas regardless of the “ideational underpinnings” (Morgan 2013, 85) or other institutional constraints on social policy formation.

Ideational explanations, often referred to as discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2008) have been less common than institutional or political ones, but since the mid-2000s they have become increasingly popular among scholars of comparative welfare states, including feminist scholars interested in family policies. Social scientists and historians have continued to explore not only the ideational underpinnings of conservative, liberal, and social-democratic welfare states (Esping-Andersen 1990) in western and eastern Europe but more specifically the gender equality, patriarchal institutions, and normative foundations of family policies often described as child-care policies or work-life policies (Béland 2005, 2009; Heinen and Wator 2006; Szelewa 2019). Indeed, Canadian political scientist Daniel Béland (2005, 13) has proposed a novel research agenda that would examine “ideational forces [that] can either favor significant policy change or reinforce existing institutional paths through the reproduction of a dominant paradigm and the production of frames justifying existing policy arrangements.” He also urged scholars of comparative social policy to create common ground between nonfeminist and feminist analytical frameworks (Béland 2009).

Feminist historians of welfare Jacqueline Heinen and Monika Wator (2006), for instance, pursued this line of research earlier in their case study of child-care policies in Poland before and after 1989. While they examined the institutions and policy legacies of the past, they also discussed the continuity in conservative paternalistic ideas that treated women as “second-class citizens,” both under communism and later, under the new democratic regime. Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (2000), in turn, investigate the politics of gender in central and eastern Europe after 1989 and the consequences of economic restructuring for women’s roles as workers and care providers at home and in the service sector. Polish feminist social scientist Dorota Szelewa (2019) reaches even further back into history and emphasizes the distinction between the continuity of institutions and discontinuity in ideas and goals of child-care policies in Poland, from the interwar period until the communist takeover in the 1940s. She demonstrates that under the new regime, the existing institutions were “converted” to a new purpose of pursuing different ideological goals, reflecting a radical shift in emphasis from the traditional values of maternalism and maternal protection to gender equality and paid work.

In our comparative study, we reinforce and further expand the argument

about the pivotal historical impact of institutional legacies in welfare state development in central and eastern Europe (Inglot 2008) and argue that this contention applies to family policies and more generally also to Romania, in addition to the better-known Visegrád countries of Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia (later Czech Republic and Slovakia). The key institutions that we examine consist of the Bismarckian social insurance administration; relevant legislation (laws); and governmental organizations such as ministries of labor, welfare, or/and social policy (see Inglot 2008) and, to a lesser degree, ministries of health and education in charge of child care—nurseries and kindergartens (Saxonberg 2014). We reveal that in the postwar period Romania followed a similar general trajectory of social insurance development—a conservative, central European Bismarckian model emphasizing the basic and relatively modest benefits administered by a centralized social security agency and supervised by the welfare ministry and the various offices of the Communist Party responsible for socioeconomic policy making.

In addition, communist-era constitutions offered guarantees of equality of women and men, and often social insurance rights as well, in line with the development of “social citizenship” (Marshall 1950) during the years of postwar reconstruction throughout Europe (C. Pierson 1991). We must remember, however, that under authoritarian regimes these guarantees were largely aspirational and symbolic, without effective institutions available to hold the government accountable in case of any violation of such guarantees. After the regime change in 1989, the impact and significance of these basic provisions of law became contingent on the strength of judicial review or the power of respective constitutional tribunals or courts in Poland, Hungary, and Romania and the extent to which successive democratic regimes managed to change their constitutions (Romania in 1991, Poland in 1993–1997, and Hungary in 2011). Although constitutional courts (tribunals) and the judicial systems more generally occasionally played an important role in the three countries in family policy formation, our country chapters highlight their limited impact compared to other institutional legacies, ideas, and actors. Overall, we argue that these fundamental laws for the most part reinforced the state’s orientation toward families, women, or children.

When compared to western Europe, historical investigation of political institutions in central and eastern Europe presents another challenge due to the radical nature of the regime change, from a Soviet-style, Marxist-Leninist dictatorship run by monopolistic communist parties and centrally planned economies to liberal market capitalism and Western-style democracy. Nevertheless, similar to Inglot (2008), Saxonberg (2014), and many others (see Cook 2007; and Haggard and Kaufman 2008), in our study we concentrate

on relevant institutional continuities such as ministries and social security administrations and, to a lesser degree, on official trade union organizations and labor relations boards, often staffed by a mix of old and new personnel, rather than solely on the newly emerging political parties, interest groups, and elections. We supply additional evidence to support the claim that in central and eastern Europe we are dealing with ‘permanent construction sites’ or ‘layered’ structuring of social policy institutions . . . or in short, with ‘emergency welfare states’ (Inglot 2008, 307), which largely constrain the actual and potential impact of these democratic institutions under the new regime, especially during the early period of transformations and before accession to the European Union. Linda Cook (2007), however, reminds us of the contrasting legacies of Soviet versus East European communist rule that impacted future developments after the collapse of the old regime, potentially reinforcing the power of central bureaucracies in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, for instance, while strengthening independent institutions and societal actors in Poland and Hungary as they continue to shape the postcommunist welfare states. Saxonberg (2014, 241, 247), in turn, argues that postcommunist political parties and politics do “matter somewhat,” but in general “postcommunist family policies are more notable for their continuity than for their change.”

Thus, in basic agreement with many, if not all, premises and conclusions of previous historical analyses (Inglot 2008; Cook 2007; Haggard and Kaufman 2008; Saxonberg 2014), we retrace the institutional development of family policies from the time of the communist takeover in the 1940s, through the Stalinist period (from the late 1940s through the mid-1950s) and subsequent periods of liberalization and reform under state socialism, from 1956 to 1989 in Poland and Hungary. Still, we must note that we also pay attention to the early influence of the Soviet model, which Inglot (2008) has deemed less relevant in postwar Poland and Hungary. At the same time, we show that the imposition of the Stalinist blueprint of family policy was more impactful on Romania’s family policy until at least the late 1950s (see chapter 4) than in Poland and Hungary (see chapters 2 and 3).

ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS SHAPING FAMILY POLICIES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

In the country chapters that follow, we identify conventional, communist-era actors and newer types of agency that originated in the late 1980s and especially during the 1990s (table 1.2). The first group includes government officials responsible for the planning and implementation of family policy laws and regulations that were eventually adopted as legislative acts or executive orders. Under communist rule, conventional actors include a handful of people work-

ing at the relevant ministries of social welfare, agencies of social insurance administration, and planning offices, all of which were supervised by Communist Party officials responsible for social and economic policies. We also focus on experts and advisors, frequently associated with research institutes, universities, or ad hoc advisory bodies activated by the government to draft family policy reforms. As we discuss in the country chapters, in Hungary and Romania at various times during the postwar period diverse groups of party economists, demographers, child psychologists, and sociologists involved in poverty research represented influential voices behind these reforms. Nevertheless, as we show later, whereas in Poland all successive post-Stalinist regimes since 1956, and in Hungary the Kádár regime since the mid-1960s, allowed a much wider group of nonideological and nonparty experts into the small circle of family policy planners, in Romania it was the opposite.

In the mid-1960s, the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife, Elena, became increasingly ideological in its approach to population and family policies, silencing all alternative viewpoints and later, in the 1980s, allowing only a gradual return of independent specialists in the areas of demographic forecasting and poverty prevention (Kligman 1998; Doboș 2010; Doboș 2020). In Poland and Hungary, social insurance professionals worked alongside economic planners, labor market specialists, and sociologists interested in women's employment. In all three countries a new generation of experts with a special focus on demography (population policy), a newly discovered area of family policy, became prominent from the late 1960s through the 1970s and 1980s (Dzienio 1976; Kamerman and Kahn 1978; Doboș 2010; Gauthier and Koops 2018; Doboș 2020). In addition, we argue that, especially during the period of modernization, in all three countries occasional intervention and guidance from the very top of the political leadership of the communist regime was essential in reinforcing path-dependent development in the core clusters of family benefits and services while having the opposite effect on the contingent clusters. We also show that despite all these differences, the emergence of pronatalist concerns in all three countries coincided with greater opening to family policy ideas and models developed not only in the "friendly" Soviet bloc countries but in the Western democratic nations as well (Varsa and Szikra 2020). Furthermore, more recent research acknowledges the role of communist women's organizations in shaping welfare policies and women's everyday well-being more generally (Bonfiglioli 2014; Funk 2014; Ghodsee 2014).

We argue that these conventional actors, limited as they were by the institutional legacies of the welfare state, including Bismarckian social insurance, persistently underdeveloped child-care systems (nurseries and kindergarten), and Stalinist social planning, with its rigid labor and wage controls, often

Table 12. Intensity of involvement by major domestic actors in family policy making in Poland, Hungary, and Romania from 1945 until the EU accession, 2004–2007

Categories of actors (agency)	Poland		Hungary		Romania	
	1945–1989	1990–2004	1945–1989	1990–2004	1945–1989	1990–2007
<i>Conventional actors</i>						
Top communist-era leaders	moderate	n/a	strong	n/a	strong	n/a
Relevant government ministries (welfare, labor etc.)	strong	strong	moderate	weak	weak	moderate
Communist Party ideologues	weak	n/a	moderate	n/a	strong	n/a
Economic and financial planners	strong	strong	strong	moderate	moderate	moderate
Social insurance bureaucracy	strong	strong	weak	weak	weak	moderate
Social (family) policy experts affiliated with the government	strong	strong	strong	strong	weak	moderate
Demographers and population policy experts	weak	weak	strong	strong	moderate	weak
Labor unions and professional organizations	weak	moderate	moderate	moderate	weak	weak
Independent experts and organizations (including churches and religious organizations)	moderate	moderate	moderate	moderate	weak	weak
<i>New actors</i>						
Women's agency* (government and nongovernment-affiliated female experts and organizations)	weak	moderate	weak	weak	weak	moderate
New political parties and party leaders	n/a	moderate	weak	weak	n/a	weak
New NGOs and civil society actors	n/a	moderate	n/a	moderate	n/a	moderate

*We trace the origins of women's agency to the communist era and also examine its potential impact in the transition from the old to the new regime.

displayed considerable autonomy and bargaining power to shape the direction of policies and even attempt to influence the top leadership. This bargaining of course intensified on the eve of democratic transition in the late 1980s and became much more visible and consequential after the change in the political and economic regime during the 1990s. In the country chapters that follow we demonstrate in considerable detail the continuing influence of the communist-era actors, especially former government officials, social policy experts, and epistemic communities involved in welfare state research and practice in all three countries.

The nature and composition of family policy agency experienced the most dramatic change later on, with the emergence of new actors such as policy entrepreneurs representing newly created political parties, new independent scholars, free trade unions, and various nongovernmental organizations that increasingly focused on different areas of family policy, on women's rights, and on gender equality. Some of these organizations, including members of the Solidarity movement in Poland and several independent NGOs after 1989, were closely allied with the Catholic Church, while others arose as country chapters of transnational (trans-European) nongovernmental groups and brought new ideas to domestic agendas. Different lobby groups, such as those aiming at reforming early preschool education, worked closely with a variety of conservative or liberal political parties and less frequently with the former communist parties in government during the 1990s.

The moment of transition when conventional actors clashed with emerging new actors was captured very well, for example, by Polish economist and social policy expert Michał Winiewski during 1987–1988, when the last communist regime, led by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, initiated a series of economic reforms and a political liberalization that eventually led to the Round Table Talks with the Solidarity opposition and to the democratic breakthrough in 1989. As Winiewski observed, social policy making during this period of rapid change was influenced by competing “conservative groups within the government administration” (including political decision-makers), economic planners, the emerging political opposition (the underground Solidarity movement openly challenging the communist regime), and social policy experts who struggled to advocate for more social spending and attention to badly needed welfare state improvements and reforms. Significantly, he added, these welfare experts apparently shared exactly the same concerns with their colleagues in all “socialist” countries (Winiewski 1988a, 81). We must note that although in Poland, and to a lesser extent in Hungary as well, the political opposition exercised significant influence during the final years and months of the old regime, this was not the case in Romania. Still, in the years that

followed, these conventional actors, including members of the anticommunist opposition, now also included supporters of neoliberal economic policies, all of whom became notable and influential, if not always the most prominent players in family policy making.

In our study we also engage with feminist scholarship and its focus on the potential impact of women's agency, and we pay special attention to the activities of individual female politicians, government experts, and women's groups of various kinds. We reveal the presence of these actors before, during, and after the modernization period and argue that even though in general their impact appeared quite limited in comparison to institutional and ideational legacies, nonetheless it varied greatly among the three countries, with much more visible influence in Poland than in either Hungary or Romania. The composition and the impact of the conventional versus new and emerging types of actors from 1945 until the early 2000s is explained in table 1.2. As this table indicates, the strongest continuity in all three countries is demonstrated in the category of conventional actors labeled as "social policy experts affiliated with the government." Also, Hungary and Romania display a similar and consistently strong influence of demographers and population policy experts that is absent in Poland. At the same time, however, we notice substantial variety in terms of the impact of various types of old and new agency in each individual country and across political regimes. These differences will be analyzed in more detail in the country chapters that follow.

IDEAS AND DISCOURSES IN FAMILY POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Analysis of the influence of ideas and discourses on family policies has appeared in scholarly literature, usually in connection with the study of welfare regime typologies (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999; Leitner 2003), gender equality in welfare states, children's rights, or pronatalism-population policy. The most prominent typologies that deal with women's equality as the preferable outcome of family policies involve the concepts of familialization versus defamilialization, first used by social policy scholars such as Ann Orloff (1993), Gosta Esping-Andersen (1999), and, most famously, Sigrid Leitner (2003). Leitner directly links familialization with the conservative welfare state regime that supports women's role primarily as a mother and carer, while the other regimes may offer a wide variety of defamilializing public and private policy solutions. In the only large, historical study of central and eastern Europe to date that deals with these concepts, Steven Saxonberg (2014) focuses instead on the degenderizing versus genderizing potential of social (child-care) policies. He sees degenderizing policies as serving the goal of women's equality, explicitly genderizing measures as "openly supporting of separate gender roles

by inducing women to stay out of the labor market” (2), and implicitly genderizing approaches as basically following free market, neoliberal, or laissez-faire ideas in labor and social policies. Thus, he labels the Czech Republic as mildly degenderizing, Hungary as explicitly genderizing, and Poland as implicitly genderizing. Arguably, we could develop similar categories in reference to more or less emphasis on child welfare, child well-being, and child poverty by using available international comparisons (Daly 2006; Bradshaw 2018) or even pronatalism by relying on the available historical information on family policy measures influenced by demographic considerations (Gauthier 1996). Nonetheless, as we stated in the introduction, in this book we refrain from offering any new typologies of this kind, and we do not directly discuss family policy outcomes as the main goal of our analysis.

Ideas and value preferences of decision-makers figure prominently in our discussion inasmuch as these represent reform agendas and interests of relevant actors and institutions behind either path dependency, as observed in the core clusters, or occasional path departure, as seen in the contingent clusters. In our separate investigations of family policy development in Poland, Hungary, and Romania from 1945 until the early 2000s, we label each of these as mother-oriented, family-oriented, and child-oriented countries, respectively. In other words, we uncover historical evidence that all four pillars of family policy benefits, considered jointly in each country from a long-term perspective, display clear preference for women as mothers and workers, as we observed in Poland; for families as the main focus of national population policy, as seen in Hungary; or for children’s welfare as the discursive goal of the state in Romania. Under communist rule, we argue, these three orientations emerged gradually but quite visibly as each country expanded its social insurance coverage, family or child allowances, and child-care services, periodically adding and amending family policy legislation. More important, we show that these emphases became consolidated, along with the core clusters during the modernization period, from the mid-1960s through the late 1980s. In addition, as we will discuss further in part II of the book, the more recent, accelerated process of family policy reform following the EU accessions not only reflects path dependency in terms of institutions and actors involved in the core clusters but also displays ideational continuity of these contrasting orientations in each country, helping us to better explain the persistent variation in postcommunist welfare state development (Cook 2008; Inglot 2008; Haggard and Kaufman 2008; Szelewa and Polakowski 2008; Saxonberg 2014).

When, in the historical chapters that follow, we analyze the postwar development of family policies during a period of more than sixty years, we do not imply a direct connection between each of the three orientations and a corre-

sponding ideological preference for a conservative or nationalist right wing, socialist (social-democratic) left wing, or, on the center-right of the spectrum, liberal or neoliberal ideologies of any sort. Instead, we view mother orientation in Poland, family orientation in Hungary, and child orientation in Romania as contested ideational spaces that, depending on the timing of crucial family policy reforms, represent the result of complex bargaining among a variety of actors and ideas that ultimately settle on a compromise that in turn generates and reinforces path dependency. We argue that during the communist period, in each country, the composition of these actors and their main goals and objectives did not shift radically enough to create any additional ideational critical juncture or shift the orientation from one type to another. As we will see later in the book, such a possibility emerged more recently in Poland, but even there the enhanced ideological challenge from the proponents of family orientation has not yet resulted in the wholesale displacement of the mother orientation (see chapter 6).

In fact, in their historical study, Heinen and Wator (2006) distinguish two distinct periods of family policies in Poland. They point to 1944–1955 as the period of emphasis on “worker-mothers” and the subsequent period, 1956–1970, as the orientation toward “mother-workers” (192). They also refer to the later period of the 1970s and 1980s as the time when women showed the “tendency to withdraw into the family sphere” largely due to the “worst collective child care situation” in the entire Soviet bloc (194). In the chapter that follows, we largely confirm these findings, but we also further explore many more ideational dimensions and discuss various debates surrounding benefits and services that targeted women in their roles as both mothers and employees. In contrast, in Hungary we notice a much broader and more consolidated consensus on pronatalism and the family as the focus of social policy efforts, but even there the ideational consensus was increasingly and repeatedly challenged from the mid-1980s until the mid-1990s. In Romania, as we will discuss in chapters 4 and 8, we witnessed arguably the most radical shift, from coercive pronatalism, imposed in the mid-1960s, to softer disincentives to have more than three children after the fall of the communist regime. In this country, the persistent child orientation has been coupled with the expectation of mothers’ early return to work ever since the period of modernization.

Finally, in contrast to the majority of previous studies on family policy development, we emphasize the antecedents and the process of policy making, with special attention to chronological dimensions, such as timing, sequencing, duration, and tempo (fast-tracking) (see also the introduction). While we acknowledge the significance of family policy outcomes such as gender equality, child well-being, and changes in fertility or in population growth, in this

book we concentrate our analysis primarily on the interplay of various actors and ideas across time and the formation of family policies in the past and the present. Our choice to limit discussion of family policy outcomes has been motivated, first, by a shortage of reliable and comparative data from the central and eastern European region, especially for the period from 1945 until early 2002, and, second, by our understanding of the theoretical and empirical limitations of any efforts conclusively demonstrating causality between institutional, political, and ideational factors and particular policy outcomes. In his survey of 238 studies in family policy and women's employment published between 1980 and 2016, Italian sociologist and family policy expert Emanuele Ferragina (2020, 1045) argues that future "comparative work must be more careful of the temporal dimension [and] distinguish between short- and long-term effects of policy and propose analyses with more recent data." He also adds that "the results of quantitative studies could be sharpened with findings from qualitative research or ad hoc studies of crucial cases" (1045). Indeed, although we do incorporate discussion of family policy outcomes wherever possible and when they are relevant to our main argument, especially in part II, in the period when more reliable and comparable data are available for the post-EU accession period, we believe that the main contribution of this study lies elsewhere. A better and fuller understanding of the historical origins and diverging trajectories of family policies, as well as the uncovering of the enduring power of the institutions, politics, and ideas behind such policies, sheds new light on the opportunities and perils of reforming welfare states not only in central and eastern Europe but in all polities and economies across the continent and beyond.