

## CHAPTER 25

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# GENDER POLICY STUDIES

*distinct, but making the comparative connection*

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UNLIKE many other areas of study in this volume, scholars who work on French gender policy have participated significantly in the new field that focuses on gender and policy issues in a comparative perspective outside of France: feminist comparative policy (FCP).<sup>1</sup> Feminist policy scholars in Western Europe first acknowledged the empirical gaps and gender biases in studies of the state and policy in the early 1980s. By the early 1990s, researchers in North America and Australia joined their Western European counterparts to systematically study the interconnections between gender (the social construction of men's and women's identities), policy, and the state in and across Western democracies. In the mid 1990s, a loose methodological consensus moved the new field into a stage of vitality and institutionalization. In 2014, with over 500 published pieces, an estimated 20 million euros in research funding, over 100 active researchers, and four journals that serve as publication outlets (*Social Politics*, *International Journal of Feminist Politics*, *Politics and Gender*, and *Women, Politics and Policy*), FCP has an important scientific presence in international political science and other adjacent disciplines

As this chapter shows, while French researchers have been involved with FCP projects and non-French scholars have contributed significantly to general understanding, knowledge, and theory on France, gender policy studies in France have maintained a distinctive twist, including more interdisciplinary connections, less formalization, less of an explicit feminist approach, and more use of in-depth qualitative methods. The distinct nature of French gender policy studies has underpinned its dynamism inside and outside France and has allowed French research to make significant contributions to comparative feminist policy studies at an international level.

In the first section of the chapter, the sub-area of FCP is presented in terms of its development since the mid 1980s and the major streams of research conducted by FCP scholars. Next, the context for and features of gender policy studies in France are discussed as well as the evolution of work in three of the research streams of FCP—gendering welfare

states, state feminism, and feminist policy formation. The third section discusses the research agenda for French gender policy studies—including recent innovations in the study of policy implementation—and its comparative connections.

## FEMINIST COMPARATIVE POLICY (FCP): DEVELOPMENTS AND RESEARCH STREAMS

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### Emergence of the FCP Approach and Community, 1980s to the Present

The development of FCP as a field of study has reflected, on one hand, the empirical realities of “feminist” government action in post-industrial democracies; a response to the demands of the second-wave women’s movements in the 1960s and 1970s and the policy campaigns and groups that came out of them through a complex set of policies and structures that were necessarily transversal, located across a range of policy sectors.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, FCP research has been driven by a pragmatic empirical feminist approach embraced by an international community of scholars from Europe, North America, and Australia.

The “integrative feminist approach” uses feminist and non-feminist work and theory to conduct comparative, empirical, and problem-driven analysis where findings can be used to build theory by policy practitioners and activists in their effort to promote gender equality. While FCP research has sought to contribute to non-feminist work, scholars in adjacent areas who are not specialists of gender have tended to ignore relevant findings; thus this dialog has often been one-way, with an “opaque glass wall” dividing the two areas (Mazur, 2012). The major large-scale FCP projects presented in Table 25.1 all embrace the core aspects of this approach.

Gender as a complex category of analysis, the social construction of sexual differences between men and women, and not just sex as a dichotomous variable or women alone, was used early on in FCP studies to capture the inherent power relations in the way states have responded to women’s movement demands. The state has also been a central analytical construct for FCP researchers, but it is not just treated as a single patriarchal entity, as many early feminist theorists had done. Rather, government is more porous and “disaggregated,” with certain arenas being more appropriate sites for feminist action than others (Pringle and Watson, 1992). The issue of state patriarchy, therefore, has been an object of research rather than a foregone conclusion.

Key to understanding and studying whether states can actually pursue a feminist agenda has been the question of whether post-industrial democracies are as democratic as observers think; a question asked by feminist theory more broadly speaking given the way women and gender equality issues have been excluded from politics in the context

**Table 25.1 List of feminist comparative policy research projects**


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**Women's Movements and Reconfigured States** (1997–2003) Banaszak et al. (2003).

**Gendering Europeanisation** (1999–2003) Liebert (2003).

**RNGS** (1995–2011). **Research Network on Gender Politics and the State** <<https://pppa.wsu.edu/research-network-on-gender-politics-and-the-state/>> (e.g. McBride and Mazur, 2010).

**EGG** (2002–5). **Enlargement, Gender and Governance: The Civic and Political Participation and Representation of Women in Central and Eastern Europe** <<http://www.qub.ac.uk/egg/>> (e.g. Galligan et al., 2007).

**MAGEEQ** (2003–7). **Policy Frames and Implementation Problems: The Case of Gender Mainstreaming** <<http://www.mageeq.net/>> (e.g. Lombardo et al., 2009).

**QUING** (2006–11). **Quality in Gender Equality + Policies** <<http://www.quing.eu/>> (e.g. Verloo and Walby, 2013).

**FEMCIT** (2006–10). **Gendered Citizenship in Multi-Cultural Europe: The Impact of Contemporary Women's Movements** <<http://www.femcit.org>> (Halsaa et al., 2012).

**VEIL** (2006–9). **Values Equality and Differences in Liberal Democracies** <<https://www.wzb.eu/en/research/migration-and-diversity/migration-integration-transnationalization/projects/veil-values-equality-and->>>.

**Governing Difference** (2006–9). **A Challenge for New Democracies in Central and South Eastern European Countries.**

**Gender Equality Policy in Practice Project** (2013–20) <<http://www.csbppl.com/gepp/>>.

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of the formal articulation of universal and gender-blind values of equality, freedom, and representation in democracies. Feminist theorists have argued for a better inclusion of women and ideas that favor women's rights in the political process, often through Pitkin's (1967) categories of "descriptive," (the presence of women in public office) and "substantive" (the inclusion of women's interests in public discussions and policy) representation. The issue of democracy and women's representation is central to much FCP work linking the level of democracy to women's enhanced representation; substantively through policy content and descriptively through the participation of women in the policy process.

FCP scholars have used principles of research design and methods developed outside the feminist perspective to pursue a comparative theory-building agenda to identify the dynamics and major drivers of feminist state action. FCP work in the late 1990s utilized small- to medium-*n* analysis—qualitative case studies based on process-tracing, elite interviews, and archival research and the comparative method—and took a "most similar systems" approach, where economic and political development in Western post-industrial democracies are the control variables and variations in nation-based factors are examined as they influence gender, state, and policy issues. In recent years, studies have been on and/or have included countries from Central and Eastern Europe, as the list FCP projects in Table 25.1 above shows.

To implement the comparative agenda, FCP practitioners began to develop international research networks in the early 1980s and in the 1990s created multi-national research projects, securing significant funding to maintain formal research groups with publications, meetings, websites, and newsletters. All but one of the ten FCP projects listed in Table 25.1 have formal international research groups. Most groups have both European (often including researchers who work on France) and North American members, with the leadership not being dominated by a single nationality. The networks have often met at the conferences of the European Consortium of Political Research, the American Political Science Association, the International Political Science Association, and the International Studies Association, thus indicating FCP's strong links to international political science.

Increasingly, FCP researchers have been using quantitative large-*n* analysis, sometimes out of necessity due to the tendency to include more countries in study designs (Htun and Weldon, 2010), as well as the tools of medium-*n* analysis, qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), and mixed-method approaches (e.g. the RNGS study in Table 25.1). In addition, reflecting the methodological pluralism of the feminist integrative approach, more recent feminist research has embraced the European "discursive turn" to focus on framing, discourse, and policy content reflected in most of the projects listed in Table 25.1. Another new development in recent years has been the shift to multi-level studies that examine how gender-state dynamics unfold at all levels of the system—local, subnational, and extra-national, the latter particularly given the role of the EU and Europeanization in the gender policy process at multiple levels (see e.g. Liebert, 2003).

## Research Streams and Cross-cutting Themes of FCP

FCP work can be placed into four different research streams. Research on gendering welfare states takes the welfare state broadly construed as the primary object of analysis in terms of social policy and has had the most success in breaking down the glass wall with non-feminist political science (Pierson, 2000). Using Esping-Andersen's taxonomy of welfare states in Western post-industrial democracies as a critical point of departure (1990), feminist analysts assert that any understanding of the contemporary welfare state must be gendered (Orloff, 1993); that is, placing the question of what the gendered dynamics and impacts of welfare states and social policy are in terms of gender equality (Sainsbury, 2008) at the center of analysis. A special issue of *Social Politics*, edited by Orloff and Palier, exemplifies the way feminist and non-feminist research on welfare states has become integrated (2009).

Feminist policy-formation scholarship scrutinizes the ways in which public policy promotes women's status and strikes down gender hierarchies through the study of the obstacles to and actors, content, and processes of policy that is purposefully feminist. Feminist or gender-equality policy is conceptualized as a distinct sector of government action that has a range of subsectors that promote feminist goals across all the areas

of government action that have the potential to change gender relations. A wide range of feminist subsectors of policy are studied here, from an increasingly cross-national perspective.<sup>3</sup>

Like much non-feminist policy scholarship, research in this area takes a policy stage approach. Problem definition has been a major focus of much FCP work, particularly scholarship that takes a discursive/social constructivist approach (RNGS, MAGEEQ, and QUING in Table 25.1). A special issue of *Revue française de science politique* brought together FCP experts to look specifically at how women's movements contribute to setting the agenda and defining problems on feminist policies in francophone Europe at national and EU level (Boussaguet and Jacquot, 2009a). This focus on agenda setting, problem definition, and policy framing highlights the extent to which FCP work has not focused on policy outcomes and impact. This is an area of weakness of FCP that undermines feminist policy research to systematically determine whether the state has successfully pursued feminist policy in terms of achieving gender equality in society. While calls for more impact and implementation research have been made (Blofield and Haas, 2013), systematic comparative research on the later stages of the policy process is only in its nascent stages and still tends to focus on outputs in implementation rather than impact; although, as will be shown below, research on France has been making significant contributions to policy-implementation studies.

Research into women's movements and policy is concerned with the interplay between women's movements, the state, and policy.<sup>4</sup> A major issue of interest here is to evaluate the success of women's movements in influencing policy. Researchers turned to the state and public policy in the 1990s given the degree to which women's movements had sought to engage with the state over the past forty years at all levels—local, subnational, and extra-national. For feminist analysts and theorists alike, women's movements are defined as a major potential vector of feminist change and women's representation. Banaszak et al (2003) set the stage for this area of FCP research by conducting a comparative study of how women's movements and organizations affected and were affected by "state reconfigurations" in the 1990s. Weldon (2011) asserts that movements—women's and class-based movements—are central to the promotion of democracy, and many other studies have shown that women's movements "matter" in the development of meaningful state action.

State feminism research studies state structures and actors that are formally charged with promoting women's rights and striking down gender hierarchies: women's policy agencies (WPAs)/gender equality machineries and the agents who work for them—"femocrats." The concept of state feminism went from a "loose notion" about women's policy agencies to a more precise analytical construct about whether WPAs worked with women's movements to promote women's interests in the state through both promoting women's movement actors' participation and the inclusion of women's movement ideas in state policy discussions and policy (McBride and Mazur, 2007). Thus, WPAs are potentially important arenas for women's enhanced representation, both substantively and descriptively. Since its creation in 1995, the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State (RNGS), presented in Table 25.1, a 40-member international

research group, has been a major contributor to the research agenda on state feminism. RNGS conducted a cross-national, longitudinal study of the interface between WPAs and women's movements in 17 Western post-industrial democracies across five policy sectors.

## New Cross-cutting Themes

Issues of linkages between women's descriptive and substantive representation have become central analytical foci for many FCP scholars. The questions of whether women make a difference in public policy formation and whether policies are representing women's interests are at the fore of studies on feminist policy formation. At the same time, women's movement and state feminism research that focuses on representation asserts that the ultimate test of democratic performance and representation is whether the substantive content of public policy is taking on formerly excluded interests (Celis and Childs, 2008). A methodologically rich cross-national and cross-regional literature has emerged on quota policies throughout the world as well (Dahlerup, 2006). This comparative work combines three out of the four FCP streams, given that quota policies are a specific example of political representation policies—one of the feminist policy subsectors—and that women's movements and women's policy agencies are potentially major partners in the adoption and implementation of quotas. Also, the new scholarship on quotas examines not just the content and diffusion of quota policies but also whether they make a difference in enhancing women's substantive and descriptive representation in the crucial dynamics of implementation and impact (Krook et al., 2012).

The relatively new concept of intersectionality—the notion that systems of gender discrimination are interwoven with other systems of discrimination and inequality based on ethnicity, race, class, culture, religion, and sexual orientation—is becoming an essential analytical tool as it relates to representation, democracy, and gender equality (Weldon, 2008). For example, working-class Muslim women from North Africa have interests different from upper-class white women in European society. Thus, the representation and the equality policies that are formulated to respond to each group's demands may be quite different. Many of the most recent FCP studies address intersectionality in part, given that this has been placed on policy agendas in European countries and at the EU level in recent years, often through “diversity” efforts as well as on the agendas of certain women's movements, for example FEMCIT and MAGEEQ in Table 25.1. Other studies, building from these research networks, have taken a multi-level approach to examining the integration of intersectionality into gender equality efforts in Western Europe (Krizsan et al., 2012).

The “new institutionalism,” with its emphasis on formal structures, rules, and norms, is an important touchstone for research on feminist institutionalism. Many FCP studies have directly dialogued with the various forms of new institutionalism in their theory building. The international network, Feminism and Institutionalism International

Network (FIIN), was created “to explore the interplay between feminist approaches to gendered institutions and new institutional theory” as its major goal (<<http://www.femfiin.com/>> and Krook and Mackay, 2011). New scholarship on “gender, politics and state architecture” that focuses on the territorial dimensions of government at multiple levels is also a part of feminist institutionalism (Chappell and Vickers, 2011).

## GENDER POLICY STUDIES IN FRANCE

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French scholars and work on gender policy in France have been a part of FCP since its beginnings. The early comparative volumes on gender policy coming out of ECPR meetings often included a chapter on France (Batiot, 1986; Mossuz-Lavau, 1986; Mazur, 1991) and many of the subsequent international research networks included the French case.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, a distinctive approach to gender policy studies has emerged in France, deriving from the specificities of the French context. This approach has led to contributions to the FCP agenda both directly and indirectly with more recent work offering important insights about gender policy implementation, multi-level analysis, the influence of gender-biased states, political representation policy, and the measurement of the impact of women’s movements.

### The Scientific and Political Context

Even though there has been an increase in studies of gender policy in the past few years in France (Achin and Bereni, 2013b; Engeli, Ballmer-Cao, and Muller, 2008; Jacquot and Mazur, 2010; Jenson and Lépinard, 2009; Muller and Sénac-Slawinski, 2009; Perrier, 2013b), this research does not constitute a distinct, self-identified, and structured body of research. To be sure, the various works presented here relate and refer to each other, but they also, and for some of them primarily, relate to other areas of study outside a gender-specific approach focused on the state. This is the result of the specific characteristics of the French scientific and public policy contexts.

#### *The Social Science Context: Strong Interdisciplinary Foundations and Low Institutionalization of Gender Studies*

First, even though French academic departments and faculty recruitment are organized by discipline, there is, compared to other countries, a relatively high level of dialogue between political scientists, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and, to a lesser extent, economists and legal scholars. For example, many research centers, conferences, and journals are interdisciplinary. Gender policy studies reflect this interdisciplinary tendency: they have not only developed in the context of political science but also in that of other disciplines; historians, sociologists, economists, and legal scholars have made significant contributions to the field.

Moreover, political scientists in France are very open to the empirical, methodological, and theoretical input of other disciplines, particularly from sociology and history.<sup>6</sup> They often draw on methods from these fields, for example ethnography, the study of the social trajectories of relevant political actors, or archival research. The value put on in-depth qualitative fieldwork, as well as on historical methods, is a key feature of contemporary French political science. Studies of gender policy in France share the same methodological approaches as policy studies in general and are largely integrated into the mainstream of the methodological and epistemological norms of the discipline (Boussaguet and Jacquot, 2009b).

Second, gender policy studies in France unfold in the context of a low level of institutionalization of gender studies, which is particularly striking when one considers the significant increase in gender-related research in the past few years (Bereni, 2014). There are few separate women's studies departments and it is unusual to find gender-specific courses or subfield offerings. There are only a handful of journals on gender research and a few specific book series on gender at the top academic French presses.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the acceptance of gender-specific perspectives and approaches is more recent and less established in political science than in other social sciences in France (Achin and Bereni, 2013a). The long-standing prevalence of a class-centered analytical perspective on inequality, the perception that gender studies are closely tied to feminist activism and hence unscientific, and the low feminization of political science (especially at the top levels), contribute to explaining this weak and late presence of gender studies within the discipline. While Janine Mossuz-Lavau and Mariette Sineau made pioneering contributions to the field in the 1970s and 1980s (Mossuz-Lavau and Sineau, 1983), studying women in politics and political participation, this area of research only really expanded as of the early 2000s.

This being said, it is the consequences rather than the causes of this weak institutionalization that are the focus here. Indeed, this persisting lack of legitimacy, beyond functioning as an impediment to the development of gender policy studies, has contributed to its current shape and vitality inside and outside France in the following ways. First, the low level of institutional support favored the "mainstream" orientation of these studies: gender policy scholars do not have many gender-specific venues to let their voices be heard. It also increased the lack of unity of the field, since gender policy scholars have not followed the same (if any) formal training in gender studies, and do not primarily relate to gender studies but to their diverse disciplinary or thematic areas (public policy, political history, social movement theory, socio-legal studies, etc.). The weak institutionalization of gender studies at the domestic level has nurtured the development of transnational connections with the FCP community through the various European-level projects discussed above (Jacquot, 2013: 240). Moreover, many individual researchers have conducted two-country studies of gender equality policies, comparing the French case with Canada (Dauphin, 2006; Giraud, 2005; Revillard, 2009b), Germany (Ledoux, 2011; Perrier, 2006), Spain (Froiti e, 2005), Sweden (Morel, 2001), Switzerland (Engeli, 2010), and the United States (Delage, 2013; Morgan, 2006), to mention but a few examples.

### *The Public Policy Context: Social Policy, Parity Reform, and Europeanization*

French public policy and state action is characterized by an established tradition of social policies, many of which have a direct influence on gender relations, such as family policy. Welfare state research was also spurred by significant public funding devoted to the analysis of social and family policy in France, notably by institutions such as the CNAF (*Caisse Nationale des Allocations Familiales*), the national agency in charge of the allocation of family benefits (Commaille, 1993).

The parity reform of 2000, which established quotas for women in elected office, played a major role in structuring research on gender policy issues, as well as favoring a broader awareness of gender issues on the part of political scientists. As Achin and Bereni stress, “the enactment of the 2000 parity law places the question of women and politics at the heart of the functioning of political institutions. [...] Thus] the reform could hardly be ignored by political scientists” (2013a: 32). Another major influence on the framing of gender policy research in France lies in the Europeanization of public policy. As French public policy has been increasingly influenced by the EU, studies of gender policy at the European level, as well as studies of this European influence on French policies, have been conducted, which have been a part of the EU-funded projects discussed above. Hence, the EU itself has played an important role in the expansion of gender policy studies by means of specific funding.

## **Classifying French Research by the FCP Streams**

Gender policy research on France can be classified in terms of three of the four streams of FCP; each stream reflective of developments in the French political system and politics.

### *Gendering Welfare States*

The French state has provided scholars (from France and abroad) with a particularly interesting case in which to study gender and welfare state issues. The study of gender and social policy was also spurred by a strong materialist tradition among French feminist scholars, drawing on seminal theoretical contributions that placed the gendered division of labor at the root of women’s oppression (Delphy, 1998; Kergoat, 2000). Therefore, to the extent that the state was included as an object of analysis in feminist research (which was not always obvious), social policy (and notably aspects affecting work–family reconciliation) was granted particular attention (Barrère-Maurisson, 1984; Commaille, 1993; Gautier and Heinen, 1993). Two major trends of research—historical and contemporary—can be distinguished here.

First, the definition and implementation of a broad social and family policy, including measures such as pension plans, injured workers’ protection, bans on night work, family benefits, and maternity leave, was a key aspect of the consolidation of the French state

during the Third Republic, and as such has been the subject of major historical studies. Not the least of these contributions was showing the role of gender-related issues in state-building, through the study of policy debates such as those regarding maternity leave, early schooling, and family benefits, which unfolded in relation to pronatalist, secularist, and nationalist concerns (Bard, 1995; Cova, 1997; Jenson, 1986; Lenoir, 2003; Michel and Koven, 1990; Morgan, 2003; Offen, 1991). Furthermore, these studies showed how policies were defined and what role women's movements played in their definition (Bard, 1995; Cohen, 2012; Klejman and Rochefort, 1989; Offen, 1984).

Second, sociologists, economists, and political scientists, echoing FCP critiques of Esping-Andersen's gender-blind analysis of social policy (Morel, 2007; Orloff, 1993; Sainsbury, 2008), developed detailed studies of the contemporary French welfare state and its implications on gender inequalities. Work-family reconciliation policies, and notably policies targeting young children's care, have been the object of particular attention in this perspective, with authors often stressing the contradictions between different policy domains and between egalitarian political discourse and concrete policy tools that encourage a traditional division of labor (Fagnani, 1996; 2001; Jenson and Sineau, 2001; Martin, 1998; Revillard, 2006).<sup>8</sup>

Feminist critiques of the *Allocation parentale d'éducation* (APE) provide a case in point of this analysis of the impact of family policy on gender inequalities. Created in 1985, this paid parental leave was made available to "parents" who interrupted their activity to take care of a child under the age of three at home. Promoted in the name of work-family reconciliation, this measure was in fact underpinned, as feminist scholars showed, by pronatalist as well as employment concerns. Indeed, the idea was to reduce the unemployment rate of working-class mothers, for whom the low amount of the benefit associated with the leave was financially interesting compared to the pay they could expect from working part-time at minimum wage. Resorting to the APE, these women would shift from unemployment to "inactivity," contributing to a decrease in (or limiting the increase of) the official unemployment rate (Fagnani, 1996; Jenson and Sineau, 1998). The measure was extended in 1986 and 1994. The measure was used by mothers in 98 per cent of the cases, and it actually resulted in a historic decrease in the labor force participation of French young mothers, particularly for mothers of two children, whose labor force participation rate (for mothers of two including at least one child under three) dropped from 74 per cent in 1994 to 56 per cent in 1998 (Milewski, 2005: 144).

More recently, scholars have paid particular attention to the Europeanization of French work-family reconciliation policy (Jacquot, Ledoux, and Palier, 2011; Morgan, 2009). For example, studying the uses of European resources in domestic family policy reforms, Jacquot, Ledoux and Palier (2011) analyzed French ambivalence towards the EU model, an attitude which they sum up as "boasting ... but learning." Despite the reluctance to refer to EU legislation and a tendency of political elites to see French policy as a model for Europe rather than the inverse,<sup>9</sup> French reconciliation policy has in fact been reformed in a direction that brings it closer to the EU model. These authors thus show how French political discourse regarding work-family reconciliation has

integrated references to gender equality, female employment, and welfare system sustainability beyond the traditional pronatalist argument.

### *State Feminism*

Following the pioneering work by Lévy (1988), studies of French “state feminism” and women’s policy agencies (WPAs) were notably spurred by the creation and experience of Yvette Roudy’s Ministry of Women’s Rights (*ministère des Droits de la femme*), which gave unprecedented visibility to the issue of women’s rights on the governmental agenda during the Mitterrand years through a well-funded national and territorial administration (Jenson and Sineau, 1995; Mazur, 1995b; Thébaud, 2001). As studies conducted in the 1990s and 2000s show, the Roudy ministry was given more resources than any other gender equality machinery established since and some of the highest levels of funding for WPAs in the Western world (McBride and Mazur, 2010). Three trends may be distinguished among the works that have since been produced, either focusing directly on WPAs or placing them at the center of the analysis of feminist policy

The first trend studies these institutions based on historical and/or ethnographic methods, using archival work and in-depth interviews. This published work makes a historical narrative of institutional change, showing how state feminist institutions and policy evolve from one government to the next and identifying different explanatory factors throughout the historical narrative. This body of work also includes detailed study of the social trajectories of the relevant actors as well as detailed descriptions of policy tools and modes of operation (Dauphin, 2010; Jenson and Sineau, 1995; Revillard, 2007; Thébaud, 2001). It has proven fruitful to account for the logics of action of women’s policy agencies, and notably their use of communication and legal tools in order to initiate social and cultural change, as well as their lobbying efforts within the state in order to promote gender equality reforms (Revillard, 2007; Thébaud, 2001). The study of this intra-governmental activism has contributed to work on contentious politics, through the idea of “contentious institutions” lobbying for gender equality from within the state apparatus (Bereni and Revillard, 2012).

The second type of analysis came out of the work of scholars who focused on women’s rights policy in France and identified the key role of the women’s policy agencies, particularly in the 1980s through the Roudy ministry (Lévy, 1988; Mazur, 1995a; McBride Stetson, 1987; Jenson and Sineau, 1995). McBride Stetson’s (1987) study of women’s rights in France and Mazur’s (1995) analysis of equal employment legislation up to the 1990s, which both showcased French women’s policy agencies, actually led them to meet and develop the larger comparative project, RNGS, discussed earlier. Both scholars were fascinated by the strength, power, and influence of the Roudy ministry. Their interest resonated with feminist scholars in other post-industrial countries who had begun to grapple with the notion of a feminist presence within government through WPAs (McBride and Mazur, 2007). At the basis of the RNGS network were the questions: Why was the Roudy ministry so powerful? Did such power make a difference? And did other women’s policy agencies in Europe and North America have the same resources and impact? Thus, this second trend in state feminism work in France represents how the

French case can be the basis of second-generation comparative theory-building studies of FCP.

More recently, a third promising trend in state feminism research has been to move away from the national to the supra- and subnational levels. While many of the earlier studies of women's policy agencies were on national level offices, recent works have challenged this national focus, drawing attention to policy dynamics taking place at the supranational, notably at the European, level (Jacquot, 2013; Sénac-Slawinski and Dauphin, 2006), and to a lesser extent, at the local level (Mazur, 2000; Perrier, 2006). The development of studies of gender policy at the European level accompanied the definition and implementation of the policy itself, and more generally favored the development of gender policy studies in Europe, with significant input from French academics. For example, Jacquot analyzes the evolution of gender equality policy at the European level, from equal pay to gender mainstreaming, shedding light on interactions between WPAs at the national and supranational levels, focusing on the different types of tools (legal, budgetary, cognitive) this policy translated into, and analyzing the complex interplay between gender equality policy and market forces (Jacquot, 2009; 2010; 2014). While much less studied, focusing on state feminism at the local level appears to be a very promising direction of analysis (Mazur, 2000).

### *Feminist Policy Formation: Disaggregating the State; the Field of Women's Advocacy and the Role of Gender-biased Universalism*

Feminist policy formation, referring to the development of specific reforms with significant stakes for gender equality, has been a dynamic field of empirical investigation since the 1990s. Following pioneering works by Mazur on equal employment (1995a) and Mossuz-Lavau on sexuality-related legislation (1991), political scientists, sociologists, and historians have conducted in-depth investigations on the genesis of several landmarks of gender equality policy in France, such as the 1967 law on birth control, the 1975–9 laws on abortion (Engeli, 2010; Pavard, 2012) or the 2000 parity reform (Bereni and Lépinard, 2004; Bereni, 2007; 2015; Lépinard, 2007; Opello, 2006; Murray, 2010). British scholars Allwood and Wadia (2009) have provided an overview of gender equality policies in France in a comparative perspective. Policies less framed on the French political agenda as “gender equality” reforms, but yet including important stakes in terms of their impact on gender relations, have also been objects of investigation, often within comparative frameworks; for example job training (Mazur, 2001), divorce legislation (Revillard, 2009a), prostitution (Mathieu, 2013; Mazur, 2004), secularism and veiling politics (de Galembert, 2008; 2009), assisted reproductive technology (Engeli, 2009a; 2009b), and child abuse (Boussaguet, 2009).

Based on such case studies, the analysis of gender policymaking in France has led to major contributions of broader relevance for a sociology of the state and the analysis of state–social movement interactions. Of particular interest here is the analysis of conflict within the state, which resonates with the way FCP research more generally has disaggregated the state and the focus on different sectors of feminist policy. This dimension of analysis is particularly prominent in studies of gender issues which are also salient

for the family movement, such as abortion, family law, and work–family reconciliation (Jenson and Sineau, 1998; Mossuz-Lavau, 1991; Pavard, 2012; Revillard, 2006).

Indeed, women’s advocacy on these issues has led to the formation of coalitions of feminist actors, inside and outside of the state, which face a strong countermovement; the defense of family interests being upheld by a strong movement within civil society, and strongly institutionalized within the state. As the study of mobilizations around the issue of the financial consequences of divorce shows, the presence of this countermovement and the strength of traditional family values within the state has not only functioned as an impediment to the success of feminist claims, but has also to some extent indirectly contributed to the framing of those claims, for example leading women’s rights advocates to under-invest in the question of the economic consequences of divorce as defined in family law, focusing their activism elsewhere, and notably on equal employment issues (Revillard, 2009a).

Beyond the analysis of conflict inside and outside the state, the study of the adoption of gender-equality reforms also has led to major conceptual innovations in social movement theory, such as Bereni’s concept of a “field of women’s advocacy” (2015), which refers to “the configuration of groups and organizations mobilizing on behalf of women and for women in a variety of social settings, either inside or outside institutions” (Chapter 21, this volume). The diachronic study of how different poles of this field were successively activated during the parity campaign helps shed light on the broader movement–institution connections that favor movement success and policy change, including governmental feedback on movement activity, such as when the setting of the parity reform on the governmental agenda actually spurs feminist activism, instead of putting an end to it as a more sequential model would predict (Bereni, 2009). Thus, French policy work also contributed to the fourth stream of FCP on women’s movements and policy.

The republican universalist nature of the French state and political culture has been identified as an important obstacle to pursuing feminist and gender equality policy (e.g. Bereni, 2007; Offen, 1991). As Lépinard and Mazur (2009) assert, based on a review of the interdisciplinary French and non-French literature, the way in which the Jacobin tradition of defining equality in class-based terms rather than specific vectors of inequality like gender, race, ethnicity, disability, etc. has made it difficult to pursue policies that promote gender equality and strike down sex-based discrimination. Moreover, this formally neutral notion of citizenship entails a deeply engrained gender bias.

The universal abstract figure of the citizen therefore hides, since the French Revolution, a masculine persona and state policies define women as a particular group marked by difference—gender—that needs specific policies that tend to reinforce traditional gender roles and create dual citizenship.

(Lépinard and Mazur, 2009: 248)

This “gender-biased republican universalism” (Mazur, 2001; 2004) has not only been an important variable in explaining more symbolic policy responses and preventing

authoritative policy implementation as feminist policy has evolved in France, but it has proven to be quite resilient over time, apparently embedded in “the logic of appropriateness” (Chappell, 2006) of the French state; an institutional dynamic identified by feminist institutionalists more broadly speaking that has made states resistant to demands for gender equality.

## **THE RESEARCH AGENDA: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND MAKING THE COMPARATIVE CONNECTIONS COUNT**

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The particular shape of gender policy research on France and the way it connects to FCP scholarship, both in terms of its distinctiveness and shared areas of overlap, sets the agenda for French research and FCP research alike. Here, we first examine the French contribution to the emerging comparative agenda on gender equality policy implementation and impact. Next, we turn to future directions for how research on France can further develop the comparative connection and contributions.

### **French Innovations in Studying Implementation and Impact**

The study of gender policy implementation is a particular focus for French political scientists and sociologists, due to a growing interest in policy implementation in general through the convergence of two research foci: understanding policy implementation through “policy tools” (Lascoumes and Le Galès, 2004), and the study of street-level bureaucracy (Dubois, 2010; Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003; Siblot, 2006; Warin, 1993; Weller, 1999). These new research agendas also reflect the ethnographic turn in French social science more broadly speaking, with its focus on policy impacts from the bottom up (Cardi, 2010; Fischer, 2010; Jakšić, 2013; Mainsant, 2010).

Moreover, while not necessarily self-identifying as “implementation studies,” several contemporary studies on gender inequality in the fields of politics, business, education, and sociolegal studies provide precious insights into the diffusion, impact, and effects of gender equality policies. Arguably, the fact that these studies address broader questions than policy implementation as such is what makes them particularly interesting in terms of the analysis of gender policy impact in that they allow for an entrée into policy implementation within its broader social and legal contexts. Drawing on this group of studies, the contributions of contemporary social science research to the analysis of gender policy implementation is presented here in three key subsectors of feminist policy: political representation, equal employment, and gender-based violence.

### *Political Representation*

The implementation of the 2000 parity reform provides a case in point in terms of policy evaluation, in view of assessing the efficiency of punitive as opposed to incentivized or voluntary policy tools. In regional and municipal councils where the lists must alternate men and women in order to be valid, the law has proven very effective: women now represent 48 per cent of all regional councilors and 48.5 per cent of city councilors. Conversely, in department councils, the National Assembly, and the Senate, where the law is only an incentive to proposing women candidates (parties must pay a fine if they do not comply), the increase in the proportion of women is much less significant: women are 13.9 per cent of department councilors, 26.9 per cent of deputies, and 22.1 per cent of senators. Moreover, scholars have addressed the question of how gender inequalities and relationships between politics and gender are transformed in the context of the parity reform in a variety of ways.

First, election results were the subject of a more detailed analysis, showing for example that beyond consolidated figures men remain longer in elected office than women (due to their standing for re-election more often) (Paoletti, 2013). Moreover, the analysis of election results was complemented by more qualitative approaches to gender and elections, notably drawing on a sociology of occupational inequalities and partisan activism to analyze the implementation and impact of parity laws. For example, Catherine Achin showed how being a member of parliament remains a “man’s job,” and how gender segregation remains high within parliamentary activities: for instance, women still tend to be confined to the more “feminine” committees dealing with family or social affairs (Achin, 2005).

The context of the implementation of the parity reform also led to the definition of a major research project at the subnational level, entitled “inventing the elected” (*L’invention de l’élue*) and coordinated by Frédérique Matonti and Marion Paoletti (Achin et al., 2007). Fifteen researchers conducted ethnographic research in eight locations over five years following the enactment of the parity reform (2001–5). They studied how the lists were established, the unfolding of the campaign, and the dynamics of the elected assemblies, through semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. Based on this extensive fieldwork, the authors found ambivalence surrounding the uses of gender in partisan politics following the parity reform.

On one hand, the reform made it possible for women to claim their gender identity and use it as a political resource (valuing their specific input to political life), whereas such a strategic use of gender references was stigmatized prior to the reform. On the other hand, the way the reform was implemented contributed to some extent to weakening women’s legitimacy and power in elected assemblies. For example, in the designation of the candidate lists, male party leaders tended to assign women slots to other under-represented minorities, such as youth and racial minorities. This reinforced the contrast between experienced male candidates and “lay” women. Similarly, the direct observation of the unfolding of the campaigns attests to the prevalence of a strong division of partisan labor (with men putting up posters and speaking in meetings and

women doing the phoning and support, for example). As Bereni notes in a review of this research (2010), this approach differs greatly from the more strictly quantitative evaluation of the impact of quota measures which is more common in English-speaking works on gender and elections.

### *Equal Employment*

Although it was a major focus of studies of gender policy formulation in France, the implementation of the array of highly “symbolic” equal employment policies adopted in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s has not been systematically investigated beyond initial administrative outputs (see e.g. Levy, 1988; Mazur, 1995a; Laufer, 2003) to determine whether these complex policies have been followed through at all levels and have had any concrete impact. Recent work has turned to this important question, opening interesting venues for the broader field of policy implementation. Two examples of recent studies are presented here.

Perrier’s work on the implementation of gender mainstreaming in employment policy at the local level, comparing France and Germany (2006; 2013a) illustrates the difficulties gender equality advocates are faced with when trying to put forward a feminist agenda within existing policy sectors (such as employment, in this case) at the local level. Her case study shows the persistence of gender stereotypes within the occupational routines of street-level bureaucrats in the field of employment policy, which limits the impact of gender mainstreaming in spite of the integration of gender equality principles and goals within employment policy statements as of the beginning of the 2000s.

Using Bereni’s concept “field of women’s advocacy,” Blanchard analyzes how the implementation of equal employment policy, notably by means of training, resulted in the formation of an “equal opportunity in employment field” at the intersection of women’s advocacy, employment policy, and management (2013). Her research opens very interesting avenues regarding the interplay between the institutionalization of a cause at the public policy level and its commercialization as well as its professionalization. She shows how a coalition of trainers and counselors, themselves increasingly professionalized, gradually formed, parallel to the institutionalization of equal employment policy. Research on these actors of the implementation of equal employment policy mainly within the private sector also raises the question of the interaction between the definition and implementation of equal employment policy and the transformation of women’s advocacy, with the development of spaces of contention at the interface of the corporate world and the sphere of social movements (Blanchard, Boni-Le Goff, and Rabier, 2013).

### *Gender-based Violence*

Implementation studies in the field of policies on violence against women also stress the discrepancy between the way an issue is framed (notably by women’s rights advocates) at the stage of policy formulation and the way it is locally appropriated by the actors in charge of its implementation, be they judicial, police, or women’s organizations. Connections with sociolegal studies prove particularly useful in this subsector,

helping make sense of the evolution of policy framing in relation to different areas of law (family law, social law, and penal law). Cadot (2005) shows how feminist policymaking against domestic violence is undermined in the course of implementation at the level of family courts, where lawyers and judges tend to avoid conflict and see violence as a couple rather than a systemic issue. In this context, faults are implicitly conceived as shared, and divorce or separation is thought of as an adequate and sufficient answer to the problem, to the detriment of the actual sanction of the violent act (Cadot, 2005).

Focusing more directly on policy tools that pertain to feminist policymaking, Delage's study of the role played by women's organizations in the implementation of policies against domestic violence sheds light on another tension in the legal framing of gender-based violence, between penal law and social welfare legislation (Delage, 2013). Comparing France and the United States, she shows how in the former the integration of the fight against domestic violence in the occupational routines of social workers results in a social policy framing of domestic violence, as opposed to a strategy of criminalization which is more common in the States.

Studying yet another policy tool in the field of policies against violence (this time, not specifically gender-based violence), the "local security contracts" (*contrats locaux de sécurité*), Lieber shows how this tool designed to fight against "insecurity" in fact poorly addresses the fears experienced by women in the public as well as in the private sphere: violence against women generally is not addressed as such in these contracts, and when it is (such is the case of Paris), it is mainly presented as violence occurring in the private sphere, generally framed as "family" violence rather than gender-based violence, to the detriment of violence experienced by women in the public or semi-public spheres (Lieber, 2003; 2008).

From these cases studies, it is clear that French research is at the forefront of implementation studies, providing important qualitative research of the details of implementation at the local, municipal, and street levels in key areas of feminist policy that are currently being studied by FCP scholarship in equal employment and gender-based violence. The highly developed work on parity reform should provide some important insights for emerging work on quotas from a comparative perspective, although much of the French work on this topic has not been published in English. An emerging comparative research project on gender equality policy implementation, the Gender Equality Policy in Practice project (GEPP), co-convened by Joni Lovenduski, Isabelle Engeli, and Amy Mazur and including many of the French gender policy researchers cited here, will greatly benefit from these fine-grained case studies, in terms of selecting policies to be studied in other countries and in identifying some of the important forces at work that prevent feminist policies from being effectively pursued as future study hypotheses.<sup>10</sup>

## Future Directions

French work has taken seriously the call to conduct studies at the local level and thus can serve as a touchstone for future FCP work that also seeks to look at the local level.

Additional studies in France should be pursued at all of the subnational levels: regional, departmental, and local in multi-level studies, potentially in the context of GEPP. Work on state feminism could benefit from taking this shift to the subnational level seriously, particularly given the existence of a dynamic set of women's policy agencies at the levels of regional, departmental, and municipal councils. These efforts should stay connected to the emerging international efforts on feminist territorial architecture being pursued in the wider FCP community (see e.g. Chappell and Vickers, 2011; Verloo and Walby, 2012), particularly given that this international work pays little attention to the French case.

The identification, operationalization, and application of Bereni's concept of a field of women's advocacy shows great promise for comparative efforts to define women's movements and their roles. The strong evidence in English and French that shows that gender-biased universalism is an important impediment for feminist state action could be better taken up by the FCP community as a major explanation in a comparative perspective, particularly since it shows the degree to which embedded gender-biased state institutions are major impediments to feminist state action.

The intersectional nature of gender equality policy undeniably represents a key direction for future research, in France as elsewhere, at a time when political leaders increasingly refer to gender equality and LGBT rights in order to legitimate restrictive migration policies and discriminatory practices towards religious and racial minorities at the domestic level, in a logic of "homonationalism" (Fassin, 2006; Jaunait, Le Renard, and Marteu, 2013). On a more institutional level, intersections of gender with other bases of social inequality raise much debate regarding the evolution of WPAs and the legitimacy of gender-specific anti-discrimination institutions (Stratigaki, 2008). Indeed the particularities of gender-biased universalism and how French diversity policy has taken a different path to that in most other EU countries may very well be an important comparative point for other ongoing efforts on intersectionality at a comparative level. While there have been some emerging efforts in France to explore intersectionality issues in the gender policy context, and French researchers did participate to a certain degree in the QUING project which focused on equality plus policies, the French case is not included in the new published FCP work on intersectionality (Kirszan et al., 2012; Walby and Verloo, 2012) and intersectionality in the French case has been understudied (see e.g. Bird, 2001). Thus, this area could benefit from additional organization and infrastructure as well.

While the language gap has proven to be less of a problem in gender policy research than in other areas of study in this volume, given the degree to which non-French scholars publish in French and French scholars publish in English, there is still much work to be done in translating both English- and French-language work so that an already strong two-way comparative connection can be made stronger. Some current efforts in France to translate feminist work, by the Institut Emile du Châtelet for example, represent a first step, but they are quite limited. Some English-language publishers, such as Temple University Press, have also shown openness to translating French work in other areas, but again these are very isolated cases. Ideally, French-language scholars should publish

in English and English-language research should be published in French. French-based and internationally based research meetings and conferences have been important sites for this two-way international exchange as well. In one case a research conference held at Queen Mary College in London led to the creation of a gender and politics listserv by Rainbow Murray. More of these collaborative efforts which allow French researchers to better showcase their particular contributions to the international FCP community and vice versa should be pursued to advance the gender policy agenda in general through for example the bi-annual meetings of the ECPR women and politics standing group, the European Conferences on Gender and Politics.

## CONCLUSION

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Far from being an impediment, the distinctiveness of gender policy studies in France has clearly been an asset; it allows for innovative methodologies and theoretical framings that have made solid contributions to the study of gender policy inside and outside France. The use of comparative analysis and the field's strong links to a broader tradition of in-depth empirical investigation in French social science provide these studies with solid foundations. On a theoretical level, French gender policy studies have led to important conceptual innovations. The vitality of implementation studies should be stressed as one of the key assets of contemporary works, with very promising connections to neighboring fields such as the study of occupational inequalities and sociolegal studies.

The extent to which French gender policy studies have made the comparative connection to FCP is quite exemplary for many research areas in this volume as well. While French work has its own identity and strengths that reflect the particularities of the national context and developments in French politics, it has developed a close two-way relationship to comparative work on gender policy on many different levels, which makes the French gender policy scholarship important, useful, and analytically meaningful inside and outside France. Setting the agenda for FCP work in terms of implementation studies and state feminism, French gender policy work has contributed to new trends in FCP including conceptualizing and measuring women's movements, multi-level analysis, feminist institutionalism, quota policies, and sectoral approaches to policy. The extent to which French gender policy studies have not been defined by a women's studies infrastructure in the same way as in other countries has meant that the separation between feminist and non-feminist scholarship is less pronounced. As a consequence, gender policy studies are more integrated into policy studies and the other areas to which French gender policy speaks. As such, French work may be taken more seriously by the mainstream in France than on the international level; there is no opaque wall blocking French gender policy studies. Thus, in the final analysis, French gender policy research is active and important, serving a wide range of scientific communities inside and outside France.

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**NOTES**

1. While other gender policy scholars have identified feminist policy studies, for example Blofield and Haas (2013), Mazur (2002) formally introduced the label “FCP,” and first used the term to describe this emerging area of scholarship. FCP is a part of the larger subfield of study called gender and politics, which covers all of the different aspects of the political system as they relate to gender—policy, behavior, structures, ideas, etc. Thus, this chapter covers only one aspect of the broader field of gender and politics. For the current state of gender and politics in the international context, see Waylen et al. (2013), and in the French context, see Achin and Bereni (2013b).
2. This analysis is based on an assessment of over 400 published pieces of FCP work in Mazur (2002) and of more recent FCP large-scale projects in Mazur (2009).
3. A special issue of *Comparative European Politics* on gender and public policy in Europe covered six sectors (Sauer, 2009; Morgan, 2009; Engeli, 2009b; Zippel, 2009; and Haffner-Burton and Pollock, 2009)
4. It is important to note that although women’s movements are an inextricable part of FCP in terms of the foci of its research streams and are an analytical touchstone, the study of women’s movements, covered in Chapter 21 in this volume, is a separate area, with some overlap with FCP, that is primarily focused on movements, with state interactions being of secondary importance.
5. RNGS in particular systematically incorporated the French case across all five policy areas, in part due to funding from the French Ministry of Social Affairs through the women’s rights administration; only three other countries in the study were able to attain such systematic coverage. For the French-language report on the RNGS findings, which includes a case study of WPAs in the PACA region, see Mazur (2000); for a summary of the findings on France, in English, see Lépinard and Mazur (2009).
6. The new gender and political science handbook coordinated by Catherine Achin and Laure Bereni reflects well this disciplinary pluralism (2013b).
7. See the *Genre et sexualité* series at La Découverte, as well as the *Archives du féminisme* series at Presses universitaires de Rennes.
8. Compared to the previously described historical work, these works on contemporary gender and welfare state issues focus more on policy reforms and implementation than on women’s movement activism, partly because the focus of activism in the past few decades has been elsewhere, notably on equal employment, abortion rights, and more recently gender-based violence issues, rather than social policy and work–family reconciliation.
9. As the authors stress, the equation “high female activity rates + high fertility rates = the French miracle” creates an unexpected consensus between three very different groups; family interests, feminist interests, and policymakers (Jacquot, Ledoux, and Palier, 2011: 81).
10. The French connection is even more direct in this area. The LIEPP (Interdisciplinary Research Center for the Evaluation of Public Policies) program at Sciences Po Paris hosted GEPP’s first research design meeting.

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