

CHAPTER I

PRACTICAL THEORY AND THE POLITICS OF GENDER

ON JANUARY 21, 2005, the German parliament (the Bundestag) began discussing a bill to outlaw discrimination in employment, housing, and forms of private contracts. The law would cover discrimination based on gender, skin color, ethnic origin, disability, age, and religion, and it set up a national office to receive complaints and manage statistical information.

But what does it mean to target discrimination in 2005? One might compare the bill to the 1964 Civil Rights Act in the United States and wonder why it took more than forty years for Germany to get to this point. Another might see it as a response to the European Union (EU), for without Europe-level guidelines prohibiting discrimination and demanding member-state action, would Germany even then be considering such a bill? Yet another might observe that, although lacking antidiscrimination laws, German policy long included a strong constitutional mandate for gender equality. The constitution not only asserts that women and men have equal rights (something the US constitution still lacks) but also mandates the state take steps to realize this equality in practice.¹

German women are certainly visible as political actors. The government in 2005 was headed by Angela Merkel, the first female chancellor. The proportion

of women in the Bundestag has steadily risen since the 1970s; in 2005, before Merkel became chancellor, it stood at 32 percent (twice the US figures: 16 percent in the House and 14 percent in the Senate).² German federal states, counties, and municipalities have more than a thousand women's affairs offices charged with advancing women's rights. Gender mainstreaming—scrutiny of public policies for disparate effects on women and men—is institutionalized by federal law.

Among European countries, however, Germany's commitment to gender equality hardly stands out. West Germany had been especially slow in taking measures to enable women to enter the paid labor force, combat stereotypes of women and men or reform family law and social services to be gender neutral. When Sweden and Finland joined the European Union, they succeeded in shifting this more conservative transnational body toward affirming gender equality, mandating "women-friendly" state actions. The EU's resulting directives, along with the incorporation of the different political culture of East Germany, challenged the state to change its approach to women's welfare.³

So is Germany a reluctant latecomer to combating discrimination against women, an exemplary case of feminist political leadership, or a middle-of-the-pack European welfare state? I argue that it is all three, and the variation reflects the different ways women understand and pursue their political interests. The diversity of feminist aims and strategies is easiest to recognize when countries face different problems because of the considerable gap in their standard of living, as between the United States and China. Although highly industrialized countries like Germany, other members of the EU, and the United States face similar challenges and have comparable resources to meet them, their gender arrangements and women's movement mobilizations are also quite various—not simply more or less good for women, but good for different women and in different ways. Like the varieties of capitalism that Hall and Soskice identified, the varieties of ways that feminism works in different countries matter.⁴

As this book will show, Germany's feminism is premised on political assumptions that stress social justice, family values, and state responsibility for the common good. Over generations, compromises between conservatives and social democrats have institutionalized a different set of premises from those of the US and UK women's movements. The latter privilege liberal individualism and equal rights, and they are often presented as if their politics exemplified feminism overall. Comparing German feminism to this more familiar equal

rights model, this book explores how the politics of gender and intersections among social justice movements take distinctive forms that reflect core assumptions about the state, gendered citizenship, and individual rights.

Although the archetypical US case forms a sometimes explicit point of theoretical comparison, the empirical basis of this study is the nonliberal German case. Because most states are not liberal, the frequent equation of feminism with the distinctive shape liberalism gives it may limit appreciation of the challenges and opportunities women's rights struggles face around the world. In other nonliberal contexts, feminists dealing with their own national priorities and institutional opportunities may find parallels to the story of how the German women's movement has developed and changed in interaction with its society and state. The German case is also interesting in itself. Following one case over time offers unparalleled opportunities to see historical legacies, path-dependencies, and strategic choices interacting and transforming movement results.

Like the United States and many other countries, Germany had a highly active and visible feminist movement in the 1970s. Yet when I said I was writing a book that would carry the movement's story to the present, many Germans asked, "But is there any women's movement today?" This is a question many Americans might also ask. Where have these women's movements gone, what have they accomplished, and where might we look for them in the present and future? Have different paths really led to the same outcomes?

The changes I trace will help, I hope, to answer these questions and also broader conceptual ones. First, how are material resources and discursive opportunities connected? Do shifts in political discourse effect material social change? Showing how the class-gender-race intersection works differently in Europe and the United States may help shed light on the consequences the institutionalization of class politics has for gender mobilizations and for equality-difference debates among feminists. Second, what happens to movements when some demands are so mainstreamed into politics that they hardly appear as change, but other demands remain too radical to consider? Comparing how in Germany a strong antidiscrimination policy still seems radical and in the United States paid leaves for mothers are deemed utopian and out of touch with real-world politics invites the question of what makes any political claim radical.

This book reconsiders the conventional notion of radicalism in politics—which associates it with violence and physical disruption—and in feminism—

which associates it with hostility (often to men), anger (rather than hope), and (exclusively) unconventional forms of politics. I argue that radicalism is relational, a specific type of challenge to the politics of a particular time and place. That which is radical stands at the margins, conflicts with institutionalized patterns of power, and in the long or short term undermines the pattern itself. When radical change happens, underlying political relationships change: women become citizens, states take responsibility for popular welfare, and family formation becomes a matter of individual choice rather than kin advantage. Whether abruptly or incrementally, a fundamental transformation occurs—and becomes invisible. The new world that seemed alien and disturbing now appears to be the ordinary, natural arrangement of things.

Because systems of power differ, so do these transformative challenges. This book looks at how arrangements of political power are naturalized, exploring the close connection between feminist movements and national politics. Material legacies of movement mobilizations in the form of institutional resources matter, but so do the discursive legacies that define the questions politics should answer, making some seem common sense and others absurdly radical. To the extent Germany has a less-told story of feminist change, it provides fewer taken-for-granted expectations and more opportunities to see alternative paths, taken or not.

Although focused on the development of the women's movement in Germany, this book offers moments of comparative reflection on alternatives in other contexts to highlight the effects of strategic choice and institutional embedding. The division of Germany into East and West after World War II offers one such contrast. The selective appropriation of ideas and strategies that flow transnationally among movements is another indication of how feminisms respond to their contexts. Contrasts with the United States provide American readers with an opportunity to reflect on their own assumptions, while offering Germans and others skeptical of liberalism a different lens on how its claims may be radically transformative.

The book focuses on what is and is not recognizable, achievable, and actually won by and for feminist politics in Germany, but my aim is to illuminate more general processes of feminist transformation. The differences among systems as to which claims are radical and realizable emphasize politics as a struggle rooted in historically developed material and cultural conditions.

WHY GERMANY?

The German case is distinctive in several ways. Most importantly for my argument, Germany is not a liberal state. Many of the ideas Americans find obvious, such as the central role of individual rights and equal economic opportunity in allowing women full participation in all the goods society offers, owe their prominence to the dominance of liberal political philosophy. Liberalism has not played as important a role in Germany as in the United States or even Britain. German politics has drawn on both conservative views of patriarchal authority and social democratic ideals of justice to forge a social welfare state that prioritizes family support and the social reproduction of the nation. This difference in the material and cultural meanings of the nation-state shapes the work cut out for feminists. Thinking about a nonliberal political context offers a way to theorize the differences in the struggles faced by women's movements around the world.

Germany is not a dominantly social democratic state like Sweden, nor an insistent secular one like France. After World War II, West Germany called itself a "social market economy," but the principles guiding its development owed more to Christian conservatism than to social democracy, and East Germany was created as a communist state. German social democrats have been more organized and influential than classical free-market liberals, but they have more often than not been in the political opposition; explicitly Christian parties led the government in the West, and authoritarian socialism dominated in the East. Policies that encouraged women's paid work and reduced the gender wage gap were much more difficult to realize in West Germany than in its Nordic neighbors, and East German policies that embraced gender-equality goals were discredited by their association with repressive government. The German struggle over a balance between religiously based conservatism and social democracy provides a model for thinking about feminism in many parts of the world. Where social democrats are presumed to be an ally, many of the priorities and struggles in women's movement politics will be affected in ways that are unfamiliar, and hence neglected, in American theorizing about political mobilizations.⁵

Germany is also a federal state. Its central government is limited in many ways, and its states have different traditions. In particular the states that were part of the formerly communist German Democratic Republic (GDR) are more

secular and ambivalent about socialist legacies. They are now subordinate to a larger, more prosperous, powerful Western section that kept the name, nearly all the laws, and the self-concept of the Federal Republic (FRG). The West invested massively in transforming the East, but the Eastern states are still facing more poverty, losing population, and struggling over political identity more than two decades after unification in 1991. Unification has been a vast natural experiment in the effects of political culture and institutions over time.

No less important is the religious difference between north and south. Germany, like the Netherlands, has not committed itself to being a secular state, so both Catholic and Protestant churches have institutional influence. Catholics dominate in the south and the Rhineland, and Protestants in the center and north, but most people, especially in the East, rarely darken church doors. Germany, like many other European countries, struggles with assimilation of immigrants and accommodation of religious and cultural differences. Rethinking what it means to be a full citizen of the German state is complicated by its regional and immigrant diversity, interpreted through the lens of its history of dictatorships, division, and war.

Like twenty-six other European states, Germany also is part of the European Union, indeed its largest and richest member. The EU is less than a state but more than an international organization. As a transnational body, it has been steadily widening and deepening membership since its origins in the postwar economic recovery of the 1950s. Its rules about gender equality and interpretations of what its members can and must do to be gender-fair have a large and growing impact. Both member-states like Germany and the global networks in which German and European feminists participate are ever more influenced by EU-level gender politics. German variation among its federal states and its membership in a "female-friendly" EU gender regime provide important resources for thinking about the interaction among the many levels of political choice, from local to transnational, that define feminist agendas.

Thus no one would call Germany typical, but its policy paths and feminist struggles are also familiar. Equality and difference, autonomy and exclusion, participation and representation challenge women's movements around the world. Liberal political pressures at the transnational level, social democratic parties with influence in government, and cross-cutting interests by religion, ethnicity, and regional and individual economic position are hardly unique to

Germany. Readers familiar with women's movements in other countries will surely see conditions and choices in this story that echo those found elsewhere. Although this book does not claim to be a comparative study, each chapter explicitly engages with examples of such parallels and differences.

Moreover, Germany is certainly not isolated from the rest of the world, and transnational flows of ideas and individuals are highly relevant, as later chapters will discuss. But looking closely at one specific case offers opportunities to see how the prism of local history bends nonlocal influences into particular patterns that vary over place and time. American influences may loom large at times, but their Americanness is more visible to Germans than to Americans, whether as part of their appeal or as a reason for rejection. The shifting global balance of power, in which liberal institutions are growing but American-style feminism is no longer the trendsetter, is both cause and consequence of changes in what German and other national women's movements embrace.

Because this is a story of change, it is not a finished story. The struggles depicted here produce institutional and discursive outcomes that will be used again as tools for later struggles. The chapters approach the story semichronologically, with thematic stresses showing how developments influence those that follow. I argue that social justice movements are forms of politics best understood as *emergent*—tipped and turned by choices and strategies that continue to interact—and *intersectional*—drawing gender, race, class, ethno-national, and other justice struggles into relationship.

RELATIONAL REALISM AS A PRACTICAL THEORY OF FEMINISM

I detour here to present the concepts that inform this analysis. This overview also locates the emergence and intersectionality of social movements in a broader perspective on gender that I call *relational realism*, a way of approaching gender relations as part of a complex, multilevel system.⁶

Relational realism as a perspective combines attention to the objective conditions of a historically material world with the creative capacity of human imagination to socially construct and communicate understandings of it that have material consequences. Relational realism therefore emphasizes an unending struggle to fit the material world to human perceptions of what it is and can

be, a struggle waged among people and groups with different social locations, conflicting material interests and varying power to realize their objectives. In other words, both utopian visions and pragmatic constraints define the substance of politics, producing practices that arise in actual relationships among actors over time. Politics is about choices, and the options do not merely map onto culture, ideology, or material position.

Because relational realism begins from the recognition of human diversity and struggle, it cannot be a theory only about gender. It privileges a complex understanding of intersectionality in which race, class, and gender are social forces that continually define each other through institutional interactions. As Evelyn Nakano Glenn elegantly described race, class, and gender: “They are *relational* concepts whose construction involves both *representational and social structural processes* in which *power* is a constitutive element.”⁷

Relational realism gives equal theoretical weight to discourses (through which representations of reality are socially constructed and made politically effective) and material conditions (through which structural arrangements are institutionalized, resources distributed, and opportunities for action created and constrained). It rejects methodological individualism, emphasizing instead the connections among concepts, persons, and institutions, relations shaped by power in historically emergent interactions. The contingent outcomes of the meeting of diverse human purposes in particular struggles are the foundations for future social arrangements. A practical theory is a redescription of this process in a form useful for guiding human decisions.

A practical theory of feminist politics, therefore, is one that offers heuristics for empowering women in their political choices, such as with whom to ally or what goals to prioritize. Maxine Molyneux’s distinction between “practical” and “strategic” gender interests is a classic example of practical theory, and if this book is successful it will improve on such existing feminist theories of politics. Unlike Molyneux’s model, for example, the relational realist perspective does not privilege nonlocal actors or see a single theory of feminism as attuning women’s choices to some universally knowable strategic interest.⁸ This book thus takes issue with not only the historical materialism Molyneux employed to classify certain interests as strategic, but also the social constructionism that ignores material constraints and makes achieving social change seem a matter of movements wanting particular changes badly enough to just make them happen.

THEORETICAL TOOLS FOR
RELATIONAL REALIST POLITICAL ANALYSIS

The theoretical elements for understanding the story that follows fall into three broad categories: the *system of gender relations* as part of a social order characterized by intersectional relations of power; the *role of political institutions* in the process by which social justice movements are shaped by and shape their societies; and the *significance of political discourse* as an element of both structure and agency in making change. Each element offers part of the overall explanation of how gender politics get done.

Gender Relations

Raewyn Connell advanced several useful ideas for approaching feminist political struggles in a multilevel, emergent and intersectional way. First, Connell distinguished the concept of a *gender regime*—the organization of gender relations in a particular institution like the corporation, family, or state—from the *gender order*—the totality of the gender regimes operating in a particular time and place.⁹ For example, the gender regime of industrial capitalism may be broadly similar across countries, but the industrial phase of capitalism is not uniform, static, or uncontested, and how it is intertwined with other regimes within and across institutions will produce very different local gender orders, with a variety that is evident even from one shop floor to the next.¹⁰ The social order encompasses a gender order along with all other organized relationships—age, nation, sexuality, ethnicity—intersecting in particular local manifestations.¹¹

Keeping gender regime as a concept tied to specific institutions makes it easier to see how these regimes conflict as well as reinforce or echo each other across institutions to make certain feminist changes radically transformative in one setting but perhaps not in another. For example, the distinctively modern regimes in the institutions of paid work and family care create time conflicts, yet they depend on each other economically. “Reconciliation of work and family,” affirmed as a not particularly radical political goal by the EU, can mean different things depending on which institutions are expected to change and whose time and money will be reallocated to achieve a new balance.

The multiplicity of levels at which change is felt, the conflicts among institutions, and the recurring rebalancing among them are evident across other regimes of inequality as well. These tensions—the “contradictions” in capital-

ism between innovation and predictability, individual economic advantage and essential common goods; the “American dilemma” of racism interwoven with valuing equal rights, democracy, and independence; the “paradox” of affirming both gender equality and difference—identify inconsistencies in institutional regimes and their expression in concrete inequalities.¹²

A second conceptual contribution Connell offers is an emphasis on *gender projects* rather than gender identities as the root of politics. Projects are forward-looking, goal-directed sets of actions. A gender project expresses a conscious or unconscious commitment to particular organizations of gender relations.¹³ Gender projects that are political are about changing or preserving a specific gender order or regime, and gender projects that include a conscious aim to empower women collectively are those I define as *feminist*. Gender projects, like all political projects, are inherently intersectional. Movements build alliances using identities that result from the intersections of multiple political projects.

Thus gender relations can change as an effect of projects with other aims. Collective gender projects also inevitably have consequences for other social relations of inequality.¹⁴ An early feminist project was simply to name “a group called women.”¹⁵ Women of color in the United States who were mobilized by this project were also productively critical of its limits. The feedback they provided, a recognition that social justice movements were operating as if “all the women are White, all the Blacks are men,” first elicited their own political claim to be recognized as women of color with a distinctive perspective and then led to a broader theoretical approach called *intersectionality*.¹⁶

Intersectional analysis assumes that feminist political projects can be pursued by movements and organizations that are not exclusively feminist in orientation, and that women’s movements (organized collective action by women, addressing women as a specific constituency) are not always feminist. Women’s movements can be vehicles for racist or antiracist politics, serve economic justice or exploitation, even argue for women’s subordination. Feminist projects themselves vary in content and inclusiveness depending on context, but they are political projects with women’s empowerment as an objective. Their effects need to be evaluated in connection with the other political projects with which they are inevitably entangled.¹⁷

The version of intersectional analysis advanced here follows Glenn in arguing that race, class, and gender are relational social forces through which power

operates materially and discursively. Race, class, and gender are important political relations and consistently give rise to political struggles, but they are not the only such relations (consider sexuality, nationality, and age, for example), nor are they uniformly significant across different institutions.¹⁸ A fundamental goal of this book is to trace how race, class, and gender intersections differ in significant ways in the United States and Germany and why this difference matters. Chapter 2 sets out some of the parameters of these intersections.

Political Institutions and Social Change

Relational realism does not make a strong distinction between agency and structure, since what is done by social actors today may, as a direct result of their action, become an institutionalized aspect of the social order (a social structure) tomorrow.¹⁹ However, scholars interested in social change have found it analytically useful to distinguish between an opportunity structure and active mobilizations for and against change taking place within the limits and possibilities given by that structure.²⁰ *Opportunity structures* are the political institutions that constrain and enable choices and shape outcomes. Policy scholars as well as social movement researchers have focused on the “windows of opportunity” for change produced by specific institutional arrangements of parties, political elites, and other organizations, resources, and leaders, as well as by institutionalized discourses.

Although policy is a steady stream of output of government decision making, most policy researchers tend to imagine an opportunity structure as a closed and stable system in which “windows” occasionally open. This picture is largely accurate in that politics tends to become institutionalized, actors consolidate power over material and cultural resources that advance their agendas, and most changes are modest. Few outputs of a policy system transform agendas, shift power relations, or redistribute resources in a major way. Policy actors may or may not realize which changes will turn out to be transformative (“radical”) because the relationships among elements are complex, contingent, and emergent.²¹

For example, it is unlikely that the US Supreme Court, in affirming the principles of family privacy and limiting state intervention into individual women’s decision making, expected that *Roe v. Wade* would transform American political conflicts for decades to come. Although carefully framed within the discursive limits of US liberalism, as a “reform” should be, the decision also

articulated the recognition of women as full citizens that was emerging transnationally and that opened a particular window of opportunity for feminism. This broader transformation of women's citizenship remains deeply contested in the United States.

The expansion of abortion rights in West Germany in the 1970s could be said to have come through that same "window," yet the "wall" of discourse in which the window opened was significantly different.²² This wall—the limit on what is thinkable by political change agents and on what states are seen as properly doing—is what I call a *discursive opportunity structure*. It is institutionalized in authoritative texts like constitutions, laws, and court decisions. The German discursive opportunity structure in which this window opened differed from the US one. Where the US court affirmed privacy and individual choice, the German court saw a constitutional obligation to protect life and directed the state to take more effective action than criminalization to shape women's decisions, but acknowledged that women inevitably held the final decision in their hands. Because of the different structure of the national discourses in which the transnational opening took place, the material and discursive results for women who want to terminate a pregnancy are quite different in Germany and the United States. But as we will see in Chapter 3, it is difficult to call them uniformly better (or worse) for women.

Institutions also form material opportunity structures: arrangements of power and resources become routine and taken for granted over time, *institutionalized*. The specific institutional structure of a place and time is what Raka Ray called the "political field" in which movement agendas are formed and political strategies considered. She described the development of women's movements in two Indian cities as channeled in different ways by the dominance of a single political party (homogeneous political field) in one and the competition among parties (heterogeneous field) in the other. She presented, as I do, a study of movements as parts of a political field with an institutional character and history that is structurally important. Chapters 4 and 5 respectively consider the "radical" countercultural projects and "mainstream" projects for inclusion in political parties and systems West German feminists took up in response to the distinctive field of opportunities their state presented. The two strategies are related, and the chapters trace the transformations they together brought to German systems of representation of women and women's concerns.

The intersection of nationally based social movements, which was the taken-for-granted institutional form of political projects in the twentieth century, with the emergent institutionalization of transnational advocacy networks at the regional and global level at the end of the millennium, is also part of the transformational story of feminism that the German case illuminates. The German process of feminist institutionalization in and through the state discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 is unlike the American one in that it involves the reconstitution of state sovereignty internally (in the unification of East and West Germany) and externally (globalization in relation to EU authority). This analysis highlights the debates over getting closer to the state, and what the state can and should do to change gender relations, which resemble debates in other countries that also have developed extensive gender policy agencies and frameworks for women's input into decision making.²³

Discursive Politics and Framing Work

Relational realism brings *discourse* centrally into the understandings of what politics is about and how it is done. Building from Nancy Fraser's argument that need definition is the first stage of politics and Michel Foucault's notion of genealogy as a historical analysis of the power that words and categories acquire, the practical theory of relational realism uses a critical analysis of the institutional frameworks of concepts and the framing strategies of specific actors to reveal the workings of political discourse about feminism and gender.²⁴ For feminists, the specific meanings of motherhood and citizenship, equality and autonomy, group-based difference and collective power are at the center of this part of the story. *Framing* is the term used for this discursive work.

I define *framing* as an *interaction in which actors with agendas meet discursive opportunities as structured in institutionally authoritative texts*. This opportunity structure may be taken for granted in accounts of movements' framing struggles, yet authoritative texts—constitutions, administrative regulations, laws, court decisions—are crucial to shaping outcomes. Such texts are usually considered policy documents, but they are also institutionalized results of past interventions to frame issues. As such, they reflect the state's projects, the alliances among movements, and the discursive "walls" in which windows of opportunity open. I distinguish between *active framing* efforts and the institutionalized *discursive opportunity structures* given by frames already in authoritative positions. Frames

institutionally anchored in political texts, such as laws, court decisions, and administrative regulations, have power to include and exclude issues and choices from the realm of politics. These texts are not a single master frame, but rather a network of meaning, a framework, shaping and shaped by the active framing done by actors with agendas.²⁵

Thus the transnational campaign to insist that “women’s rights are human rights” did not simply “bridge” a claim about women’s rights to an existing master frame about rights or even human rights; the campaign changed the practical meaning of “rights” and extended the sense in which women’s experience was validated as human, and did so in a transnational context in which denying women full citizenship in the human community had become increasingly problematic over the previous century.²⁶ As feminists recognized in creating new words for long-existing oppressions (sexual harassment as a term was coined in 1974), absence of discursive resources in the framework of political meanings supports the status quo. One of the most radical actions a movement can take is to transform the language of politics.²⁷

This book is an effort to demonstrate how acting politically in a certain framework means that the projects actors embrace—their *agendas*—are created through the interaction of institutional discursive opportunity structures with the whole selves actors bring to these settings. They think strategically, but with different experiences and goals in mind. Some actors in a social justice movement try to frame a change as modest, practical, yet important, thus a feasible *reform* within the current system; others frame their claims as transformative, sweeping, and perhaps unachievable in the current political institutions. Because these latter, *radical* frames do not resonate with the available discursive opportunity structure, they may not be efficacious. Whether an idea resonates may not matter to radical framers—their desire to be effective may be less powerful than their desire to be visionary, theoretically coherent, or morally pure. However radical in intent, the actual impact of claims-making may be more or less transformative in practice than anyone anticipates.

Reformers and radicals may differ more in the local opportunity structures they confront than in their personal dispositions or political intuitions. Mary Katzenstein demonstrated this in her comparative study of feminists in the US Roman Catholic Church and the US military. Both groups were raised in the same political culture and confronted hierarchical and male-dominated

bureaucracies. But in the church, radical discursive politics challenging the premises of the system took hold, while in the military, reformist approaches to inclusion dominated. The military feminists had resources in existing law (discursive opportunities) for being effective that those in the church did not, and each organizational polity shaped the agendas of the activists within it.

Scholars have suggested that a tension between the radical and reform wings of a movement can be productive (a so-called radical flank effect) and reflect a self-conscious division of labor between organizations.²⁸ For example, Amy Mazur and Dorothy McBride have led a decade-long project of European analysis on the effect of what they call “state feminism”—the expansion of policy machineries dedicated to women’s empowerment—on achieving feminist policy goals. They contend that the most successful strategy combines insiders and outsiders: advancing electoral representation of women, placing feminists in the administrative policy machinery of the state and mobilizing women’s movement activists.²⁹ I attempt to complement their organizational analysis with a discursive one, and I consider what is radical in or outside the context of the state and when and how the relations among radical and reform ideas may be practically productive of change.

The process of change traced in this book reveals feminist actors with radical and reform agendas in Germany. They come together in cooperation and conflict in ways that reflect historically and locally specific struggle, successfully institutionalize only some of the organizations and discourses they produce, and reevaluate their agendas based on their experiences of success and failure.

CONTEXTUALIZING THE GERMAN FEMINIST MOVEMENT

Although this book is a story of changes in feminism, its purpose is not to evaluate what “real” feminism should be or whether the German women’s movement has become more or less feminist, more or less radical, or more or less powerful. It attempts to assess instead what feminism, radicalism, and movement strength have come to mean in Germany. I use comparisons across time and context to highlight what is included and excluded in these terms. But I will have failed if readers take the comparisons as evidence that the German women’s movement is better or worse, stronger or weaker in the abstract than some other movement.