Mothers, Families or Children? Family Policy in Poland, Hungary, and Romania, 1945–2020. By Tomasz Inglot, Dorottya Szikra, Cristina Raţ. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022. ix, 454 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. $55.00, hard bound.

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In 2018, the then and now Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán declared: "demographics stands or falls on women" (Balázs, 2018).[1] The authors of *Mothers, Families or Children? Family Policy in Poland, Hungary, and Romania* could have prefaced their ambitious book with this statement, which perfectly sums up their main argument—that the intertwining of institutions and ideas governing family policy in central and eastern Europe has allowed for continuity and space reform since its inception in the 1950–60s.

Tomasz Inglot, Dorottya Szikra, and Cristina Raţ attempt to solve a mystery in this research-based volume: Why did such different family policies emerge in the states of central and eastern Europe (CEE), when the common historical, political, and economic context after 1945 would suggest institutional convergence? The book focuses on family policies in Hungary, Poland, and Romania from 1950s to the present. Focusing on these states allows the authors to contribute to the general historical approach to welfare studies, as they reveal family policy as a new perspective for analyzing typologies of welfare states. The authors provide their response at various moments in their text, stating at one point that they aim to provide ". . . a better and fuller understanding of the historical origins and diverging trajectories of family policies, as well as the uncovering of the enduring power of the institutions, politics, and idea behind such politics" (44).

The structure of the book makes it compelling reading for both scholars of welfare studies and the general academic public. The book follows a clear and easy-to-follow chronological order that maintains the main goal of the book. After a comprehensive introduction that sets out the premise, aim, and structure of the book, the authors divide the book into two main chapters. The first part deals with the period of "modernization" of family policy, defined as "the formalized process of bringing together all basic benefits and services for working parents, children and families" (9), spanning from 1950s to 2000. The second part analyzes the period defined as "the era of European integration" (197) spanning from 2000 to 2020. A variety of documents are used, ranging from archival documents and historical statistical data to interviews the authors conducted with social and family policy actors to identify "the contradictions of change and continuity" (10–11) in family policy transformation over the decades. A well-rounded conclusion closes the book, which also includes a preliminary analysis of the implications of the coronavirus pandemic for future trends in family policy.

What makes this book particularly interesting for academics and scholars of welfare are the six subchapters that focus on the development of family policy in the three countries considered: Poland, Hungary, and the generally

1. Pivarnyik Balázs, "Family and Gender in Orbán's Hungary," *Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung*, July 4, 2018, at https://www.boell.de/en/2018/07/04/family-and-gender-viktor-orbans-hungary, (last accessed February 19, 2024).

missing from comparative analysis, Romania. Here, the authors have made an impressive foray through archives and statistical databases on family policy in each country to paint a picture of a slowly emerging national framework of social policy centered on a particular ideational interpretation of family and its role in the communist regime (a very important idea of the book). In Poland, this interpretation favored the symbolic unity of the family; in Hungary, the image of the mother; and in Romania, in line with the draconian anti-abortion legislation, the child. Starting with the 1960s, all three ideational interpretations consequently evolved alongside an institutional framework of family policy, shaping the ". . . standard menu (the four pillars) of family benefits and services, including not only upgraded maternity leave, widespread adoption of family allowances, and rudimentary nursery care but also extended childcare leaves and payments and expanded kindergartens in urban areas" (35). The authors explain the continuity and change of these four pillars of family policy through the idea of core clusters and contingent clusters, with the first benefiting in its staying power after the fall of communism and even EU accession from a "powerful connection between institutional and ideational foundations of family policies" (18) and (most importantly) strong support from key political actors.

There are many goals achieved by this book, but three stand out. First, as the authors frequently point out the vast literature on welfare state development, which focuses too much on western states and lacks a comparative historical framework that can integrate and analyze the paradoxical and diverse cases of social policy development in central and eastern Europe after 1989. The historical-institutionalist theoretical lens used here and elsewhere in the literature on welfare state development allows for future comparative Europe-wide analysis. The specific focus on family policy also allows for overcoming the restrictive, welfare regime-type cataloguing, by signaling broader implications of how mothers, children, and families are conceptualized and politicized (see also Crane, 2023).[2] Second, the authors fully explore the notion of ideational content, departing from the sometimes-narrow constraints of sociological analysis. What this accomplishes goes beyond the stated purpose of the book: explaining change and reform in family policy in these three countries, but also goes beyond a new understanding of social policy in CEE. The power of norms, values, and ideas in shaping social policy has been little explored in the CEE countries, and this book provides a very valuable starting point for explaining the central role that family and family policy has played in the discourse and actions of various illiberal and populist actors over the past decade.[3] The third objective is where the book really shines. There is a tremendous amount of research on the development of family policy that fills the gaps in the literature that the authors wistfully identify. While the authors bring to light documents for Hungary and Poland, showing how family

2. Jennifer Crane, "Agents of Change? Families, Welfare and Democracy in Mid-to-Late Twentieth-Century Europe," special issue of *Contemporary European History* 32, vol. 2 (May 2023): 173–85.

3. Paul Ginsborg, "The Politics of the Family in Twentieth-Century Europe" *Contemporary European History* 9, no. 3 (November 2000): 411–44; Paul Ginsborg, *Family Politics: Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival, 1900–1950* (New Haven, 2014).

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policy was shaped, they break new ground with their analysis of Romanian social policy, filling in a previously theoretically and empirically barren land. I would particularly like to highlight the use of interviews with social policy experts, which demonstrate the damage done by the ill-conceived attempts of sociologists and social science academics to translate dogmatic communism into science and practice.

What the book fails to do, however, is convey the urgency and stakes of family policy in CEE and put the recent history of post-communist transition in a better light. When the authors assume a stringent path dependence in explaining the course of family policy after 1989 in the three countries, they miss important points. While the authors spend a great deal of time showing that family policies during the modernization era did not occur in a vacuum but were related to the more ambitious agenda of a new communist society in the three countries, this type of analysis is absent for the post-communist period. The transitions of the three countries were shaped as much by the mainstream actors (internal and external) and path dependency as by what was missing during this period: a robust and diverse civil society capable of influencing the political agenda and political parties that responded to this civil society.[4] Both are important missing pieces of the (apparent) puzzle that is the resurgence of nationalism and right-wing politics in all three countries, in the form of the illiberal offer that includes a strong commitment to the traditional family.[5] The authors only briefly acknowledge that the strong focus on the family and the redefinition of the relationship between nation and family enabled the rise of illiberalism in Poland and Hungary (261–63). The welfare policy apathy of post-communist political parties allowed the newly emerged radical right and populist actors to claim the social agenda for themselves, especially on family policy issues.[6] The fact that family policy during the communist era was shaped by demographic concerns expressed in the form of nativist ideas and gender traditionalism was never really challenged in the three countries (especially in Romania), resulting in a continued conservative stronghold on social policy. As for the missing civil society actors—feminists, Roma or LGBTQIA activists—they were not able to participate in the negotiations of "the good or just society" that shapes family policy (11) during the transition, not because they did not exist, but because they were marginalized. This is seen by the authors as unfortunate but ultimately unimportant to understanding family policy development after 1989. But it is precisely because of this marginalization and the established political parties' lack of interest in social policy that (strictly heteronormative, Christian, and nativist) family policy is used by illiberal actors to win votes.

4. Michael Bernhard, "What Do We Know about Civil Society and Regime Change Thirty Years after 1989?" *East European Politics* 36, no. 3 (2020): 341–62; Michael Dobbins and Rafał Riedel, eds., *Exploring Organized Interests in Post-Communist Policy-Making: The "Missing Link"* (London, 2021).

5. Andrea Pető, "Gender and Illiberalism" in András Sajó, Renáta Uitz, and Steven Holmes, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Illiberalism* (New York, 2021), 313–25.

6. Alina Dragolea, "Illibireal Discourse in Romania: A 'Golden' New Beginning?" *Politics and Governance* 10, no. 4 (2022): 84–94.

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This criticism does not diminish the relevance of this book, however, as scholars of welfare and family policy will benefit enormously from it in their work to understand the past of family policy in central and eastern Europe and to shape an inclusive future for families. Hopefully, the book's ultimate lesson—in this region, the past is never just the past, even for policymakers—will be understood in its scope.

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Outlaw Music in Russia: The Rise of an Unlikely Genre. By Anastasia Gordienko. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2023. xiii, 319 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. $89.95. hard bound.
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Until today, one of the most popular music genres in post-Soviet Russia, the *shanson*, had never received a dedicated study in English. Anastasia Gordienko has addressed this gap through this wonderful and thoroughly engaging book, which investigates the history, characteristics and values of the shanson and its main component, the *blatnaia pesnia*. As she defines it, the blatnaia pesnia is "folklore produced by criminals, outcasts, social misfits, or those living 'outside the law' and associated with . . . underworld culture," as well as "the music—some folklorized, some not—embraced by these populations as their own, and also identified by the general, law-abiding public as blatnye pieces" (7). The shanson, instead, "ranges beyond the blatnaia pesnia" (5) to incorporate songs with no visible connection to the criminal underworld (such as romantic shanson). Gordienko claims that what binds all these songs together, rather than subject, is uniformity of style: use of colloquial speech, unpretentious melodies and a sound "rooted in urban romance, street songs, estrada and restaurant song tradition" (7). Having worked in radio for fifteen years prior to the start of her academic career, the author is in an enviable insider's position, which enables her to access statistics and musicians, and makes her research informed and insightful.

One of the strengths of the monograph is undoubtedly the examination of the linkage between outlaw music and the political, social, and cultural milieus. Equally robust is the analysis of how this relationship has changed over time. By tracing the trajectory of outlaw music vis-à-vis socio-political factors, Gordienko successfully unearths that, rather than a monolithic musical output, outlaw music has radically varied through time. This change is reflected not so much in how the music is written, but mainly in the ways in which it is disseminated, mediatized, received, and perceived.

Such a dynamic conceptualization gives Gordienko the opportunity, in Chap. 1, to persuasively connect theories of musical habitus and individual / collective identity as "becoming" (rather than being) with outlaw music as "a process" (rather than a state). Shifting habits correspond to shifting

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