

ethnic conflict elsewhere. Davis beautifully illuminates how sectarian identities are historically constructed through microprocesses, and how various actors seek to use historical memory for political gain. He also offers a message of hope for Iraq, but one demanding of both political elites and intellectuals (in Iraq as well as in other countries) that they recognize their role in producing the narratives that can either open—or foreclose—promising political outcomes.

After the Fall of the Wall: Life Courses in the Transformation of East Germany. Edited by Martin Diewald, Anne Goedicke, and Karl Ulrich Mayer. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006. 408p. \$65.00.
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— Benjamin Robinson, *Indiana University Bloomington*

This volume is an empirical analysis of “life courses”—individual trajectories through major rights of passage—in the transition of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) into an enlarged Federal Republic (FRG) in the period from 1989 to 2003. The published study draws on survey and interview data collected in 1991–92 and again in 1996–97, from three birth cohorts (1939–41, 1951–53, and 1959–61) in the East German Life History Study (EGLHS). This remarkable data set allows areas of impact to be distinguished and separately evaluated, rather than making disaggregated claims about how individuals raised in socialism fared under rapid privatization and the liberalization of society. The study offers a differentiated picture of the way an abrupt—even “radical” (p. 46)—social transformation affects different cohorts in various life phases. The underlying data is comprehensive enough to allow these lives to be understood across a broad spectrum of institutionalizations—structures, moreover, that exhibit a greater range of formalization than those captured by census data or other aggregate statistics. Thus, the data allow finer distinctions between phases in labor market adjustment, job mobility, and the lateral or vertical shifts involved with such changes. It addresses the relationship between different social systems, including intimate and instrumental networks of family and acquaintances, class status, ideological conviction, familial status, and gender.

This rich trove of data is analyzed in 13 chapters by nine contributors, allowing readers to focus on findings in their specific areas of interest. The utility of *After the Fall of the Wall* lies in its empirical basis and convincing formulation of what stories the data tell and how these stories stand with respect to hypothetical narratives based on macroeconomic, historical, and sociological assumptions.

Regardless of the specific nature of the “abrupt social transition” involved, the volume represents a substantial achievement in data collection and presentation about life histories under social stress, justifying its scholarly worth for a range of disciplines from anthropology to cultural

studies that might avail themselves of its findings. As Karl Ulrich Mayer emphasizes in his synoptic chapter, the transition of East Germany to capitalism presents a case of sharp social discontinuity in which individual capacities, experiences, and expectations are subject to sudden requalification. This case is unique in the almost experimental delimitation of the time and scope of the transition, the clear distinction between the “departure” and “destination” societies (p. 2), the population affected, and the parameters of the change.

The reunification of Germany in 1989 was a case in which a single national group, divided for 40 years on the basis of social system, was suddenly reintegrated on the model of the larger of the two divisions. How did this transformation, in a sense “controlled” for the single largest imponderable—national cultural history—affect the institutional biographies of those generations that lived through it? This is a momentous question to which the book supplies some interesting answers, albeit answers that are not fully spelled out in terms of their political significance. The empirical precision and interpretative openness of the conclusions, however, are merits of a volume that offers itself as a basis for further work on the significance of the data. For example, contrary to many assumptions, the data show that “downward mobility was much more frequent than upward mobility” (p. 71) in the economic transformation of East Germany. At the same time, “many East Germans were proactive in their job search” (p. 73), a finding that also runs against assumptions that blame East Germans’ supposed lack of initiative for their downward mobility.

Several distinctions of the methodology should be noted. In both the design of their data and their analyses, the authors focus on what they call “life courses.” This term needs to be distinguished from the notion of “everyday life” used in works like Alf Lüdtke and Peter Becker’s (1997) *Akten, Eingaben, Schaufenster: Die DDR und ihre Texte. Erkundungen zu Herrschaft und Alltag*, as well as from the notion of lived experience used in the cultural study of narrative and visual representation (e.g., Jonathan Grix and Paul Cooke, eds., *East German Distinctiveness in a Unified Germany*, 2002). In both of these alternative approaches, the experiential—the subjectively perceived, recognized, and assessed—aspects of life in the GDR and FRG are chronicled and analyzed. Expressive communication media, ranging from intimate diaries and formal poetry to commercial décor, are examined with respect to what they reveal about life experiences, identities, and communities.

As used in this volume, “life courses” is a very different sort of term: “By the term *life course* sociologists denote the sequence of activities or states and events in various life domains spanning from birth to death . . . embedding . . . individual lives into social structures . . . and institutional settings” (p. 11). Life is understood in generic

fashion—as indicated by the focus on categories like generation and gender. It refers to patterns and regularities in collective settings, even where the macrodata refer to intimate life (marriage, children). To an extent, this understanding of “life courses” is justified by the methods and goals of a study like this. On the other hand, that a work adheres to a specific methodology does not absolve it from criticism. The EGLHS data would reveal more of their significance—and attract more readers—if the authors took better cognizance of the alternate approaches of everyday life history and cultural studies.

The methodology might also be contrasted to sociological analyses of political legitimacy, revolution, and legality, as well as analyses of political and cultural elites. Such contrasts both justify the merits of Martin Diewald et al.’s approach and highlight the way in which the approach constricts its interpretative range. In this respect, the most unfortunate loss in this study concerns the senses of what “socialism” and the “abrupt transition” from it to market society are. The FRG, for example, is reduced to a “*soziale Marktwirtschaft*” (p. 9), whereas a more refined distinction of its identity vis-à-vis other forms of capitalism would have better indicated the political stakes of the transition. To be fair, the volume includes a comparison with Poland in Chapter 11. Nonetheless, the approach overemphasizes the inevitability of both the transition and its outcomes. The question of ongoing political allegiances, especially to the successor party to East Germany’s former ruling party, and how such affiliations relate to what the authors call “control and agency beliefs” (pp. 214 ff) is mooted. Precisely this question, however, would reveal whether agency beliefs extend to practical engagement with political institutions.

A final comment must be made concerning the poor English. The prose style across the various contributions is already turgid enough, conforming relentlessly to the language of data exposition with minimal connection to the extensive interpretive literature. That nearly every page suffers, in addition, from nonidiomatic English is a serious burden on the reader. This lack of editing for linguistic clarity is a major flaw that could easily have been addressed with careful proofreading before publication.

Global Feminism: Transnational Women’s Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights. Edited by Myra Marx Ferree and Aili Mari Tripp. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 325p. \$65.00 cloth, \$23.00 paper.
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At first glance, this book appears disjointed and unusually broad. A careful reading, however, reveals the vast nature of the subject the editors astutely attempt to cover: the transnational dynamics of a variety of issues impacting on

women’s rights and concurrently being impacted by women’s activism.

The book is divided into three sections. In Part I, Mary Marx Ferree, Aili Mari Tripp, and Peg Snyder address the multifaceted directions of the meaning and practice of transnational feminism. This section captures the essence of the complex and difficult conceptual and practical developments in the field where human rights, social movements, development studies, and other topics interact. Ferree explains how transnational opportunity structure affects women’s activism locally. Snyder sees the United Nations as a “godmother” in its role as the initiator of local activism. She argues that the UN involvement changed it as an institution, and humbly leaves out her own unique and invaluable role as the founding director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Many activist women in the developing world who have made major positive changes in their communities praise Snyder for her insight and dedication long before these issues became academically and commercially popular. Her analysis is imbued with deep experiential understanding of the history and process of women and development issues. She deservedly credits the women of developing countries for broadening and enriching the definition and practice of feminism. She also recognizes that women in the United States separate their interests from women worldwide and remain aloof from courage and determination, which colors the activism of the South. This point is echoed in Tripp’s piece, which identifies several causes, including the growing complacency in the North, strengthening of conservative political forces, demise of the labor movement, and reduction in the numbers of activist women holding political position. Global networks are increasingly being initiated and led by women of the South. Due to the expansion of the Internet and other global communication networks, regional and international networking has increased. While the goals and priorities are decided in the South, the funding comes from the North.

In Part II, the readers are presented with three completely unrelated cases, all rich in data and analysis. Yakin Erturk looks at the competing forces in the unique case of Turkey where all dichotomized boundaries of Islamism and secularism, traditional and modern, democratic and authoritarian, are present and interact. She acknowledges contradictions associated with the market economy where women have opportunities but their bodies have turned into commodities. The tone is correctly cautious, as she is aware of contradictory outcomes for women. Sarah Swider’s interesting piece shows us a new model of organizing by the most unlikely group, domestic workers in Hong Kong. Hilka Pietila explains gender mainstreaming in Finland and the role of the women’s movement, with useful lessons to be learned. Aida Bagic’s ethnographic analysis of donor-recipient encounters in post-Yugoslav women’s organizations is a must-read. As an insider with firsthand