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**GENDERING GOVERNANCE? CIVILITY AND THE GENDER GAP IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE**

**Introduction**

This article is a preliminary attempt to begin to isolate and examine some of the political factors that have not yet been fully associated with European integration. With the enlargement of the European Union (EU) to 27 member-states in May of 2004, many questions remain unanswered about (1) the institutional shape-to-be of the EU; (2) the role of these institutions in policy-making; and (3) the relationships between EU institutions, policies, and the populations of the member-states. As economic barriers between states in Europe continue to erode, new governance structures are required to enforce market competition, harmonize regulatory standards and policies, and manage political inputs. The process of market integration, therefore, has required the emergence of regulatory regimes that can exercise authority in an emerging, post-territorial political space.

European integration can, therefore, be understood as consisting of economic, political, and social components. While originally oriented toward economic interdependence and growth in the form of the European Coal and Steel Consortium, the 1990s saw dramatic increases in the political and policy-making role of the EU, but in conjunction with greater public awareness and debate about the three questions noted above. In particular, the era of "permissive consensus" came to an end as the EU gained in political power, only to have that power questioned in the light of both institutional and societal gaps between citizens in the member-states and the EU.

As a result of these three components, and in particular the attempt to link economic liberalization with a level of political authority above the nation-state, the EU can also be understood as a case study in globalization. Characterized by multiple, often intersecting and overlapping levels of decision-making, transnational policy networking, and a reconfiguration of Westphalian sovereignty, the EU has been referred to, perhaps erroneously, as the first post-modern state. The "regulation of deregulation" above the nation-state in the EU has not only weakened and modified traditional locations of

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political authority, it has also coincided with processes of fragmentation, sub-national and regional empowerment, and the decline of state-based authority. Simultaneously, it has been characterized by increased market interdependence, labor mobility, and as a result, a need for policy and regulatory harmonization. The EU, therefore, captures many of the political and policy-making tensions created by globalization, and the process of integration can provide insight into both the solutions and outcomes of these tensions.

Consistent with this, the questions raised by European integration must also consider the socio-political effects of economic integration, policy harmonization, and political change. This is particularly true in East Central Europe (ECE), where the promise of membership in the EU has been a driving force behind political, economic, and policy reforms, but not without social and political effects. In particular, the push-pull tensions of globalization embodied in European integration can also be factors in the political, economic, and social life of women. While promoting liberal democracy in the pan-European sense, the integration of economies and polities may also be marginalizing women and enlarging, rather than closing, the economic and political disparities between men and women. This article, therefore, examines a component of the gender gap in East Central European political life, but chooses to do so by focusing on issues of civil society and their connections to the more common (and important) economic and employment-based differences between men and women. By doing so, I hope to contribute to the discourse about the ways that the socio-political effects of integration (particularly issues of citizenship, democracy, and involvement in civil society) are both mediated by, and affect, gender and other cultural factors. This, in turn, holds implications for the democratic future of the enlarged European Union, and ultimately transnational governance.

This study focuses on Poland as a case study to examine the gendering of political life in East Central Europe (ECE) during the 1990s. Following the collapse of Communist Party rule and the adoption of democratic political institutions and practices in conjunction with economic reforms, Poland was identified by scholars, EU policy officials, and Polish policy officials to be an economic and political front-runner in the post-communist states of ECE. Not only has the Polish economy improved dramatically over the past 15 years, but the combination of Solidarity, the strength of the Roman Catholic Church, and the failure of communist policies of normalization to end Polish anti-communism and dissent, all pointed to the existence of Polish civil soci-

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