

# Gender and the Solvency of Professionalism: Eastern German Journalism before and after 1989

Dominic Boyer

In this article, the author examines the intersection of gender, professionalism, and post-socialist transitions in East-Central Europe through a case study of the gender politics of journalistic labor in eastern Germany before and after the collapse of the GDR in 1989 to 1990. Beginning with the concrete ethnographic problem that gender tends to be marginalized within eastern German journalists' contemporary narratives of professional experience and transition, the historical study offers clear evidence of the gendering of professional life both before and after 1989, and even of a notable shift in models of professional femininity. In the course of the article, the author builds toward the argument that the relative inattention to gender in post-socialist professional transitions can be retraced to what he describes as the "solvent" effect of professionalism upon social knowledge. By this, he means that professional economies of discourse and practice tend to subvert other dimensions of social knowledge (including gendered knowledge) in favor of professional identifications and meanings.

*Keywords:* gender; professionalism; journalism; post-socialist transitions; Germany (East)

It's about being a journalist, above all a journalist. And then, you know, a woman.

—Erika G., newspaper journalist in Berlin,  
interview with the author

In this article, I discuss the intersection of gender, professionalism, and post-socialist transitions. Although this intersection has not been highlighted in the rich academic literatures that accompany each of these issues, I begin with the premise that each teaches us a good deal about the others, especially when looking at the context of Eastern Europe after 1989. Examining at some length the gender politics of journalistic labor in eastern Germany before and after the collapse of the GDR in 1989 to 1990, I

seek to explain the concrete ethnographic problem that gender is marginalized within eastern German journalists' narratives of professional experience and transition despite rather clear evidence of the gendering of professional life both before and after 1989, and even a notable shift in models of professional femininity. In the course of the article, I build toward the argument that the relative inattention to gender in post-socialist professional transitions is no one's failure. Rather, it is a testament to what I describe as the "solvent" effect of professionalism upon social knowledge, by which I mean that professional economies of discourse and practice tend to subvert other dimensions of social knowledge (including gendered knowledge) in favor of professional identifications and meanings.

One of the dilemmas of addressing the solvency of professionalism is the reflexive problem that its epistemic priorities implicate both professional practitioners and academic observers of professionalism. Methodologically, formal interviews with professionals tend to exacerbate this problem by drawing attention to professional concerns on both sides of the interview and by concomitantly devaluing domains of knowledge deemed extra-professional. One thus typically encounters both testimonies and theories of professionalism that simply do not account for gender at all. I argue, however, that gender brings the solvent capacity of professionalism into high relief not least because gendered knowledge is never fully assimilable to the epistemic norms of professionalism. Indeed, gendered knowledge represents a kind of critical "surplus" in professional economies of identification that exceeds the expectations that professionalism sets for it. In the reflections of eastern German journalists upon their professional transition after 1989, gendered knowledge continually reasserts itself at the margins of professional self-knowledge, drawing our attention to the limits, and especially to the social character, of the universalist claims of professionalism itself.

If professionalism has not often been highlighted in studies of eastern European post-socialist transitions,<sup>1</sup> the place of dis-

1. See, however, Dominic Boyer, "On the Sedimentation and Accreditation of Social Knowledges of Difference: Mass Media, Journalism and the Reproduction of East/West Alterities in Unified Germany," *Cultural Anthropology* 15:4(2000): 459-91; Andreas Glaeser,

courses and practices of gender in these same transitions has recently received a good deal of attention.<sup>2</sup> In a major conceptual and empirical overview of the tasks of the study of gender in post-socialist transitions, Susan Gal and Gail Kligman argue, “Attending to gender is analytically productive, leading not only to an understanding of relations between men and women, but to a deeper analysis of how social and institutional transformations occur.”<sup>3</sup> My hope is that this article will represent a further contribution to understanding why this is so. For purposes of sketching the context for the social transformation of journalism in eastern Germany, I begin with the gendering of labor in the German Democratic Republic.

### **Gender and labor under socialism in the German Democratic Republic**

Elsewhere in the same essay, Gal and Kligman caution against reifying a single normative or ideological approach of eastern European socialist states to women and to gender relations more broadly:

---

*Divided in Unity: Identity, Germany, and the Berlin Police* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Christine Leuenberger, “The End of Socialism and the Reinvention of the Self: A Study of the East German Psychotherapeutic Community in Transition,” *Theory and Society* 31 (2002): 255-80; and Amy Ninetto, “On Our Terms: Translating Culture in the New Russian Scientific Economy” (manuscript, 2002).

2. For example, Hermine G. DeSoto, “‘In the Name of the Folk’: Women and Nation in the New Germany,” *UCLA Women’s Law Journal* 5:1(1995): 83-101; Barbara Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to Market: Citizenship, Gender, and Women’s Movements in East Central Europe* (London: Verso, 1993); Margit Feischmidt, Eniko Magyari-Vincze, and Violetta Zentai, eds., *Women and Men in East European Transition* (Cluj-Napoca, Romania: Editura Fundatiei pentru Studii Europene, 1997); Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller, eds., *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Gender after Socialism: A Comparative-Historical Essay* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, eds., *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Eva Huseby-Darvas, “Feminism, the Murderer of Mothers’: The Rise and Fall of Neo-nationalist Reconstruction of Gender in Hungary,” in Brackette Williams, ed., *Women Out of Place: The Gender of Agency and the Race of Nationality* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Joma Nazpary, *Post-Soviet Chaos: Violence and Dispossession in Kazakhstan* (London: Pluto, 2002); and Marilyn Rueschemeyer, ed., *Women in the Politics of Postcommunist Eastern Europe* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994).

3. Gal and Kligman, *Politics of Gender*, 3.

Indeed, socialist regimes were often characterized by contradictory goals in their policies toward women: they wanted workers as well as mothers, token leaders as well as obedient cadres. While officially supporting equality between men and women, the regimes countenanced and even produced heated mass media debates about issues such as women's ideal and proper roles, the deleterious effects of divorce, the effects of labor-force segregation—such as the feminization of schoolteaching and agriculture—and the fundamental importance of “natural difference.” These debates revealed the paradoxes and contradictions in official discourses, as well as more general tensions in both policy goals and the system of political-economic control.<sup>4</sup>

Interestingly, the field of contradictions that Gal and Kligman identify in socialist policies and practices concerning gender can be traced back to Marx and Engels's theoretical work on women, property, and the division of labor in society. In their work in *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels connect the structural inequities in the division of labor to private property, viewing them as equivalent expressions of the social relations of “naturally-developing society.” They write further that the “slavery” of women and children to men in the context of the family is the “seed” or “embryo” of all further forms of property (“also *das Eigentum, das in der Familie, wo die Frau und die Kinder die Sklaven des Mannes sind, schon seinen Keim, seine erste Form hat*”).<sup>5</sup> Marx and Engels argue that unequal gender relations in the family and the concomitant tendency toward the commodification and exploitation of women and their work constitute the original form of the bifurcation of individual and collective interests. Therefore, these inequalities are unavoidable until society reaches the historical threshold of communism, at which point, they theorize, individual and collective interests throughout society will be reconcilable.

The future socialist paradox concerning gender relations is also contained in embryonic form here. The emancipation of women from the “latent slavery” of the family is a critical sign of the historical attainment of communism. And yet as the most fundamental expression of both the division of labor and property

4. *Ibid.*, 5.

relations in society, gender equality must await the total, global completion of the revolution, a completion that the socialist parties of Eastern Europe were quite aware continued to elude them. The ideological groundwork was thus laid for an unsettled relationship between gender and socialism. On one hand, the emancipation of women and women's labor from the domain of the family was an essential prerequisite for establishing the legitimacy of the socialist intervention in history, and it therefore remained a pillar of party ideology throughout the postwar, cold war, and glasnost periods. On the other hand, the socialist ideal of gender relations, like all socialist ideals, was open to constant reformulation as long as the conflict with the western class enemy persisted. Party leaderships across Eastern Europe defined and redefined their ideal models of women's work, and, as such, these "ideals" became quite heterogeneous, reflecting the parties' efforts to balance Marxist-Leninist doctrine against the biopolitical exigencies of reproducing "real-existing" socialism through motherhood and industrial labor. Moreover, as Gal and Kligman rightly observe, socialism's consistent emphasis on labor and public social engagement as the most important indices of feminine emancipation exhibited a particular paternalism that "was in concert with liberal thought in seeing production (public) as the main site of historical and revolutionary change, with much less attention paid to those activities not ordinarily called 'work' in that period, such as tasks surrounding reproduction."<sup>6</sup>

This was certainly the case in the German Democratic Republic between 1949 and 1989. In an extensive study of the GDR's official gender politics, Heike Trappe outlines the complexities of the historical evolution of the governing Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands' (SED'; Socialist Unity Party of Germany) policies toward women and how these policies always centered on women's labor and social duties.<sup>7</sup> Trappe describes in particular how the socialist ideology of the emancipation of women's labor from the domain of the family ebbed and flowed

5. Karl Marx, *Frühe Schriften*, Band II (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftlicher Buchgesellschaft, 1975), 35.

6. Gal and Kligman, *Politics of Gender*, 45.

according to the reproductive necessities of the state. In the post-war reconstruction period from 1949 until the late 1950s, for example, women comprised from 53 to 55 percent of the population of the GDR, and the SED state immediately emphasized the integration of women into the industrial workforce to rebuild societal infrastructure.<sup>8</sup>

By the early 1960s, SED leaders were additionally calling for greater educational opportunities for girls and women (especially in technical education) and also, for the first time, steering media discussions toward the relative demands upon women as mothers and workers. As in the 1950s, however, these discussions failed to produce significant changes in institutional arrangements for services like child care, maternity leave, and so on.<sup>9</sup> At the VII Party Congress of the SED in 1967, a new *Familienpolitik* began to take shape in response to this trend that focused on expanding state “support for families with more than one child, especially families with several children, the expansion of child care institutions,<sup>10</sup> as well as the reduction of domestic work through expanding the service sector and the accelerated production of modern appliances.”<sup>11</sup> At the VIII Party

7. Heike Trappe, *Emanzipation oder Zwang? Frauen in der DDR zwischen Beruf, Familie und Sozialpolitik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), esp. 35-77.

8. The Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands' (SED's; Socialist Unity Part of Germany) initial so-called *Frauenpolitik* was limited largely to questions of securing and equalizing employment opportunities for women in fields like the electrical and optical industries, construction, and skilled mechanics. Party leaders promised that equal access to industrial employment would stimulate social emancipation more generally. However, no large-scale institutional reforms were implemented to guarantee either actual work equality in the workplace or within families.

9. Sabine Schenk shows that the SED were successful in their objectives to the extent that they raised women's participation in the labor force from 45 percent in 1950 to 66 percent in 1970 during a period where, in the FRG, women's workforce participation rate hovered almost steadily between 45 and 50 percent; see Sabine Schenk, “Re-construction of Gender Stratification. About Men, Women, and Families in Changing Employment Structures—The Case of East Germany,” in Gabriele Jähnert et al., eds., *Gender in Transition in Eastern and Central Europe Proceedings* (Berlin: Trafo Verlag, 2001), 217. Yet extensive institutional reform did not begin until party leaders became increasingly concerned about the reproductive future of the GDR when, beginning in the mid-1960s, average childbirth rates began to drop steeply from about 2.5 children/woman in 1965 to closer to 1.5 children/woman in 1975; Trappe, *Emanzipation*, 66.

10. Indeed, between 1970 and 1975 alone, the availability of spaces in kindergartens and pre-school child care increased from 60 to more than 80 percent and from 25 to almost 50 percent of potential demand respectively; Trappe, *Emanzipation*, 57.

11. *Ibid.*, 64; see also John Borneman, *Belonging in the Two Berlins: Kin, State, Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 95-98.

Congress in 1971, the party leadership announced that *Frauenpolitik* and *Familienpolitik* would henceforth be unified and developed an image of women's work and social duties in the GDR that balanced professional activities with motherhood.<sup>12</sup> Critics of the SED's understanding of "balance" noted, however, that *Frauenpolitik* now seemed entirely oriented to *Mutterpolitik*,<sup>13</sup> thus legislating a new normativity for women no less restrictive to some than previous policies had been.<sup>14</sup>

The IX Party Congress discussed this problem openly, and the social welfare package of 1976 was generally regarded to have constituted a progressive response in its institution of a forty-hour work week for mothers in addition to new vacation possibilities and the very popular year of paid leave with guaranteed reinstatement after childbirth (the so-called *Babyjahr*). At the same time, however, job opportunities for women in industry declined and were replaced increasingly by jobs in fields like data processing and operations support.<sup>15</sup> This shift reflected, in part, the beginning of a wider trend of deindustrialization across Europe but also a new gendered division of labor in the GDR in the 1980s as jobs in the shrinking industrial sector were reserved largely to men while the state gradually relocated women into the expanding service sector.

In retrospect, opinions among former GDR citizens differ as to whether the GDR's *Frauenpolitik* actually succeeded in realizing the socialist ideal of emancipating women from the property relations of "natural" patriarchal society as the state continued to

12. Comparatively, see Gal and Kligman, *Politics of Gender*, 48-49.

13. Anne Hampele, "The Organized Women's Movement in the Collapse of the GDR: The Independent Women's Association (UFV)," in Funk and Mueller, *Gender Politics*, 181.

14. Homosexuality, among women as among men, for example, remained entirely taboo in GDR political culture not least because it appeared to challenge the state's biopolitical imagination of population growth and "progress." At the same time, however, the state emphasized a masculinist commitment to work as the basis for state policy, thus continuing to encourage women to return to professional work soon after children were born even though many women in the GDR complained that these multiple commitments increased rather than decreased pressure on their time and energy; see Christina Schenk, "Lesbians and Their Emancipation in the Former German Democratic Republic: Past and Future," in Funk and Mueller, *Gender Politics*, 73.

15. Hildegard Maria Nickel, "Women in the German Democratic Republic and in the New Federal States: Looking Backward and Forward (Five Theses)," in Funk and Mueller, *Gender Politics*.

claim until the end.<sup>16</sup> In the tense climate of German-German relations of the mid-1990s, I spoke with many eastern German women who praised the GDR's dual-career family model, the range and depth of state support available to working mothers in the GDR, and their sense of wider employment horizons for women in the GDR. Such sentiments gathered particularly around contrasts to the gender norms of unified Germany, which were singled out for criticism, even if not a few women appreciated freedom from state-socialist surveillance of their working and family lives. One journalist explained to me, "You see, the basic difference between now and then is that it was *expected* that women work in the GDR. That doesn't mean that you are exactly treated prejudicially nowadays, but it was a different mentality then."

Even for those women who recalled GDR *Frauenpolitik* in positive terms, their feelings were relativized by the recognition that the GDR remained, in essence, a patriarchy that acted "on behalf" of women, rather than in dialogue with them. Daphne Berdahl also describes how some of the eastern German women with whom she worked expressed concerns that transferring child care duties from families and mothers to the state had had negative consequences for children. This is a position also long promoted in the FRG to naturalize the institutional norm of the patriarchal household and its strong distinction of the public life of men from the domestic life of women.<sup>17</sup> Hildegard Nickel concludes, "While there is no doubt that GDR family and social policy was immeasurably better disposed toward women, at least on the rudimentary level, than the current legislation of united Germany, it was based on paternalistic and patriarchal premises. Father State 'made moms happy' primarily by ensuring that women could give birth in security and combine motherhood

16. See Dinah Dodds and Pam Allen-Thompson, eds., *The Wall in My Backyard: East German Women in Transition* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994); Barbara Rocksloh-Papendieck, *Verlust der kollektiven Bindung: Frauenalltag in der Wende* (Pfaffenweiler, Germany: Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1995); and Ingrid Sandole-Staroste, *Women in Transition: Between Socialism and Capitalism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002).

17. Daphne Berdahl, *Where the World Ended: Re-unification and Identity in the German Borderland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 194-96.



with employment. In the context of this loudly proclaimed gender equality it was possible for men to ignore the social inequalities and power relations arising from their adherence to the traditional division of labor between men and women.”<sup>18</sup>

### The location of gender in GDR journalism

Journalism was a special kind of labor in the GDR, a labor largely conceived by the SED state as a pedagogical medium for educating the East German *Volk* (people) in the scientific truths of Marxism-Leninism, truths that the party adjudicated on behalf of the people.<sup>19</sup> The *Handbook of GDR Journalism* defines the work of the socialist journalist in grand terms: “To be a herald of the party, a standard-bearer of the republic and the nation, a mouthpiece of the *Volk*, a messenger and a zealous sponsor of socialism, peace and freedom—that is the mission of journalism in the GDR. If he is masterful, the journalist becomes two things: the educator of people and the co-former of history (*Erfüllt er sie mit Meisterschaft, dann wird er beides: Bildner des Menschen und Mitgestalter der Geschichte*).”<sup>20</sup> As eminent GDR media theorist Hermann Budzislawski framed it, “The journalistic personality in a revolutionary class is the executor of its trove of ideas, its voice and its organizer.”<sup>21</sup>

For our purposes, what is most significant about the Leninist model of the press and journalism instituted in the GDR in 1959 is that it was treated as an exclusively ideational enterprise. This is to say that the business of socialist journalism was the calibration, evaluation, and dissemination of the ideas and knowledge of the party elite, ideas and knowledge that were taken by the party elite as utterly coterminous with the true spirit and cultural cre-

18. Nickel, “Women in the GDR,” 141-42.

19. See Dominic Boyer, “Censorship as a Vocation: The Rituals, Institutions and Cultural Logic of Media Control in the German Democratic Republic,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45:3(2003): 511-45; Dominic Boyer, *Spirit and System: Media, Intellectuals and the Dialectic in Modern German Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); and Gunter Holzweissig, *Massenmedien in der DDR* (Berlin: Verlag Gebr. Holzapfel, 1983).

20. *Journalistisches Handbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Leipzig, Germany: VEB Verlag für Buch- und Bibliothekswesen, 1960), 20.

21. Hermann Budzislawski, *Sozialistische Journalistik: Eine wissenschaftliche Einführung* (Leipzig, Germany: VEB Bibliographisches Institut, 1966), 18.

activity of the *Volk* itself. The manifest objective of socialist journalism in its entirety was to cultivate a socialist consciousness within the *Volk*, transforming them from “the masses” misinformed and preyed upon by the capitalism-imperialism of the western class enemy into a socialist public capable of achieving the revolutionary transformation of society schematized by Marxism-Leninism.<sup>22</sup> The SED’s brand of socialist journalism, according to its own self-evaluation, was genderless. Not unlike the Anglo-American ideal of journalism as objective representation and the Habermasian model of the critical public sphere,<sup>23</sup> it aspired to a state of objective communication that transcended and reconciled not only gender difference but every other index of materiality and individual-collective tension in the world as well.

It is striking, but not entirely unexpected, given this profile for journalism, that one can read through the rather vast literature the SED generated defining socialist journalism and encounter very little explicit thematization of gender relations either within the GDR media or in GDR society as a whole. Where gender is a theme, it emerges in testimonial portraits concerning the work of the socialist journalist to help educate GDR women to the importance of their new roles in the workforce and to celebrate their productive socialist achievements.<sup>24</sup> But otherwise, gender scarcely makes an appearance in any of the major SED documents concerning socialist journalism, including the transcripts of its press conferences, the *Handbook of GDR Journalism*, and the major study of the “foundational theoretical questions” of socialist journalism undertaken at the Journalism School at the University of Leipzig in the early 1980s.<sup>25</sup> There was evidently no special gender bias for or against hiring and training women as journalists in the GDR. Likewise, the SED undertook no special

22. See Boyer, “Censorship,” 519-21.

23. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991); and Mark Allen Peterson, “Getting to the Story: Unwriteable Discourse and Interpretive Practice in American Journalism,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 74 (2001): 201-11.

24. For example, *Die Presse—kollektiver Organisator der sozialistischen Umgestaltung* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1959), 101-2.

25. Hans Poerschke et al., *Theoretischen Grundfragen des sozialistischen Journalismus* (Leipzig, Germany: Karl-Marx-Universität Sektion Journalistik, 1983).

discussion of what women would bring to the pedagogical mission of socialist journalism let alone how the implicit masculinism of the socialist emphases upon labor and publics might refract the character of this mission and the society it sought to perfect.

Even as journalism itself was meant to be genderless in terms of its vocational profile and professional practices, the SED did enjoin journalists with the task of publicizing the various phases of its *Frauenpolitik*. In keeping with its principle of monopolized media outlets for particular social themes, the SED established a flagship women's magazine *Für Dich* (For You) in December 1962. The intimacy of its titular address signaled that the weekly magazine was to be the "one periodical for all women."<sup>26</sup> Its representation of women and its thematization of women's issues were inevitably limited by this generality, by the dominant *Frauenpolitik*, and by its forty-eight pages as well. Moreover, the centralization of *Frauenpolitik* in a single periodical signaled, however unintentionally, as did the institution of the "women's page" in western newspapers in the 1970s, that public culture was otherwise masculine and that women were one kind of "interest group" among others within it. Indeed, the SED continued to allow its public culture to be strongly gender differentiated despite its rhetoric of gender equality. A study by Petra Hartmann-Laugs and A. John Goss, for example, revealed that no less than 78 percent of actors appearing on GDR prime time television were men.<sup>27</sup> Within this media environment, *Für Dich* became instantly recognizable for its femininity and, as such, became a locus for the negotiation and dissemination of sanctioned gender identifications. A former journalist at the magazine, Gislinde Schwarz, writes retrospectively,

Week after week, *Für Dich* painted the guiding image (*Leitbild*) of the GDR woman for its readers: fully professionally active, highly qualified, with at least two children, in a happy relationship, socially

26. Gislinde Schwarz, "Im Dienste der Frauen? Kühnheit und Anschmiegsamkeit der Frauenzeitschrift FÜR DICH," in Edith Spielhagen, ed., *So durften wir glauben zu kämpfen . . . Erfahrungen mit DDR-Medien* (Berlin: VISTAS Verlag, 1993), 196.

27. Petra A. Hartmann-Laugs and A. John Goss, *Unterhaltung und Politik im Abendprogramm des DDR-Fernsehens* (Köln, Germany: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1982), 51.

engaged. SHE was held to emancipated when she accomplished masculine achievements and was yet a good mother. More individualized images of women's lives fell largely under the table. And the question as to what extent this society calling itself socialism was also patriarchally structured? This question was unimaginable for *Für Dich*. The realities of *Für Dich* were simple. Too simple.<sup>28</sup>

The magazine's monopolization of "women's issues" and its high readership (930,000 copies a week were printed and promptly sold out) guaranteed that its articles became the communicative substance of everyday conversation and identity-construction. In the 1960s, *Für Dich* actively thematized issues such as the new division of domestic responsibilities between men and women, the inadequate creation of educational opportunities for women in some communities, exposés of companies with inadequate social services: "the criticism is hard and concrete—and always with names and addresses attached."<sup>29</sup> In this respect, the SED utilized *Für Dich* as it did other periodicals like its satire magazine *Eulenspiegel*<sup>30</sup> for surveillance and negative flak that kept individual operations in line with party objectives yet that never questioned the party's own legitimacy to govern or the methods and science of its governance. By the 1970s, Schwarz writes, *Für Dich*'s discussions of the issues facing young women softened in their critical focus but continued to resonate strongly. Despite its failings, Schwarz recalls fondly her intimate relationship to *Für Dich* as a young woman: "*Für Dich* gave me courage and advice, it was an important confidant. It helped me to seek the contact of other women, it helped me, at least sometimes, to boost myself up. It became so important to me that I eventually wanted to work there myself!"<sup>31</sup>

The SED attracted several thousand other young women into professional journalism from the 1960s through the 1980s. At the end of 1989, there were 9,114 journalists in the GDR registered

28. Schwarz, "Im Dienste," 196; also Irene Dölling, " 'But the Pictures Stay the Same?' The Image of Women in the Journal *Für Dich* before and after the 'Turning Point,' " in Funk and Mueller, *Gender Politics*; and Gal and Kligman, *Politics of Gender*, 53.

29. Schwarz, "Im Dienste," 193.

30. Sylvia Klötzer, "Öffentlichkeit in der DDR? Die soziale Wirklichkeit im 'Eulenspiegel,'" *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 46 (1993): 28-37.

31. Schwarz, "Im Dienste," 194.

with the journalist's union, 3,283 (or 36 percent) of whom were women.<sup>32</sup> Comparative figures for West Germany are difficult to establish given the tens of thousands of freelance and part-time journalists working in the FRG. In the GDR, by contrast, the vast majority of journalistic positions were held by fixed contract, full-time, union-registered professionals. Media researchers Beate Schneider, Klaus Schönbach, and Klaus Stürzebecher undertook a comparative study of gender balance in eastern and western German journalism in 1992 and arrived at the estimate that only about 25 percent of western German journalists were women.<sup>33</sup>

The SED state also did a better job of retaining women in journalism as their careers advanced. Looking at western journalists with less than four years of professional experience, Schneider and her colleagues found that 40 percent were women (173). But among journalists with nine to thirteen years of professional experience, only 22 percent were women; and among journalists with more than twenty-four years of experience, only 12 percent were women. Meanwhile, in eastern Germany, they identified no comparable trend toward drop-off or increase in the proportion of female journalists over the course of their career (with the proportion vacillating between 30 and 40 percent). The drop-off rate among western German female journalists confirms testimony that I heard from journalists during my field research that very few women are able to reach the highest echelons of editorial positions in the West, whereas they still occupied as many as 28 percent of the highest editorial positions in eastern Germany in 1992.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, where gender emerged as a theme in the interviews and more informal conversations I pursued with former GDR journalists about work in the GDR,<sup>35</sup> it most often appeared to bolster discussions of post-unification East-West difference within journalism. Neither male nor female journalists were apt

32. Frank Böckelmann, Claudia Mast, and Beate Schneider, eds., *Journalismus in den neuen Ländern: Ein Berufsstand zwischen Aufbruch und Abwicklung* (Konstanz, Germany: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1994), 43.

33. *Ibid.*, 173.

34. *Ibid.*, 174.

35. In 1996 and 1997, I completed more than 120 interviews with former GDR journalists and their western German colleagues concerning their professional transition after 1989.

to analyze their professional lives as journalists in the GDR in the frame of gender. Gender roles, divisions of labor, and so on were indeed an important feature of representations of life in the GDR, but rarely treated as an important feature of *professional life*. Male-female distinctions appeared on the margins of interviews in oblique references to personal relationships or to family relationships, in remarks, for example, about how marriage or children had inflected career trajectories before 1989. But for the most part, when former GDR journalists discussed socialist journalism, they discussed it in terms of their limits and opportunities to function as journalists within the Leninist model, of how party journalism constrained or even perverted what most felt to be the important core values of socialist journalism (closeness to the people, a pedagogical mission, an attempt to improve the actual conditions of society, and so on). So much of my interviewees' attention and energy was devoted to describing and deciphering this problematic for me that many other issues (among them gender) drifted to the sidelines of their attention, except when I nudged it back to the forefront by asking them directly about whether gender differences were a significant dimension of professional journalistic life in the GDR. Here, I quickly received the indication that this was not an avenue of inquiry that my interlocutors found fruitful. The range of responses (from men and women) varied from "No, not at all" to "No, certainly not in comparison to journalism nowadays" to one woman who rolled her eyes and remarked, "Some things you can assume never will change." In most cases, in the curt responses and somewhat awkward moments of silence that followed this question, I had the feeling that gender was not perceived as a germane analytic through which to engage professional life. It was as though I were guilty of conflating private or familial business with a professional mode of inquiry (an interview) on a professional subject (the practice of journalism in transition). Even in the microcosm of conversation, the "fractal" character of public/private distinctions held fast.<sup>36</sup>

There was a recurrent and telling exception to these silences in my interviews with former foreign correspondents, a field of

36. Gal and Kligman, *Politics of Gender*, 41.

journalism where the state itself had already conjoined familial relations with professional practice. The SED developed an extensive selection process for GDR foreign correspondents that not only privileged journalistic talent but also political reliability (since it was not rare that foreign correspondents were enjoined to do espionage work on behalf of the state). Among the criteria for selection was a stable marriage, and journalists were often sent abroad as married couples both to offer images of the harmony of the socialist family and to reduce the chance of forming intimate relations with agents of the class enemy. One woman explained, "You absolutely had to be married for this work and one was even asked if the marriage was stable. They sent someone around to check on you! They were very concerned about presenting an acceptable image to the outside world." Another couple told me that they had decided to get married precisely to accept a foreign correspondent posting in Africa: "They [the party] thought you were *nicht moralisch sauber* [not morally clean] if you weren't married. They didn't want anyone looking for a husband or wife outside the GDR." A man who had worked as a foreign correspondent in Western Europe explained that the party's differential treatment of men and women became more acute in foreign correspondent work: "It was the case sometimes that wives would essentially be treated as secretaries for their husbands regardless of what talent they brought to the paper." The SED was also willing to disrupt family relations as a disciplinary measure if they did not like the work that correspondents were doing or the associations that they were making. A former correspondent in South Asia recalled these measures with considerable anger fifteen years later:

To be honest, if I'd had my way, I'd have never gone back to the GDR, I'd have stayed a foreign correspondent the rest of my life. But a couple of things came in between. They [the party] weren't happy with me because of the friends I'd made among the western foreign correspondents. Afghanistan was just beginning and everything was extraordinarily sensitive. And then I had let my wife become very independent, I had let her do a lot of reporting on her own. You see, the wives were always set up as kind of glorified secretaries for their husbands but I didn't supervise my wife's work and they really didn't



approve of that. But the decisive moment was when I was contacted by an agent of the state-security service there and he asked me if I would be interested in helping them by supplying them some information. I asked him if this would include information on personal acquaintances and he said, "naturally," but I didn't want to do anything like that so I turned them down. And from then on it was clear I was on my way out since I wasn't considered to be loyal enough. The first thing they did was mandate that my son had to return to the GDR to complete his schooling. And then we received permission for only one of us to return to the GDR to visit him and we chose, for a variety of reasons, that my wife would return to visit him. Because of the mother-child relationship, yes, but also because it was logical to have the head of the office stay. But then, after that, I received word that for some mysterious reason my wife wouldn't be permitted to travel back again. So that was it. I had the choice between abandoning my family and starting a new life elsewhere or going back. So I went back in 1981 but I never saw things the same way again.

I was quite surprised that journalists, especially female journalists, did not comment more often or at greater length upon the "dual pressures" they faced in their public (professional) and private (familial) commitments in the GDR. And I was struck that they almost never mentioned the kind of structural gender inequities that seem to be implied by the way that the state managed foreign correspondent couples. Three observations are warranted. The first is the methodological problem noted above that formal interview techniques tended to strengthen the emphasis of dialogue on issues that my interlocutors considered public, formal, and professional. Political issues, for example, were always a matter of great interest and attention in my interviews but, comparatively, themes that were classified as private or para-professional like family relationships tended to be regarded as "not really relevant to journalism" in the words of many of my interviewees. It is worth noting, too, that the many informal conversations I had with eastern and western German journalists similarly produced a strong distinction between a rich centered domain of professional knowledge and a flattened peripheral domain of nonprofessional knowledge,<sup>37</sup> even though friendship

37. For a more general discussion of this phenomenon in knowledge, see Dominic Boyer, "Visiting Knowledge in Anthropology: An Introduction," *Ethnos* 70:2(2005): 141-48.



and beer did occasionally push the limits of narratives of professionalism and erode private/public distinctions.

The second point is that social knowledge of East-West differences was typically very strong among eastern German professionals in the mid- to late 1990s and exerted its own solvency over other principles of social distinction like gender. As we see below, gender is often recruited to critical reflections on East-West difference and on the hard edge of market-capitalism, associations that subtly trivialize the paternalism of the GDR in comparison with more immediate perceptions of tension, struggle, or crisis in unified Germany. Third, it was the case that, as compared with journalism in unified Germany, GDR journalism was indeed a fairly low-pressure occupation, one with many *Freiräume* (free spaces) in the routines of everyday praxis if not in the composition of texts and images where professional demands and surveillance were highly precise (more precise, I might add, than in the West). Yet by western standards, media organizations were heavily overstaffed in the GDR, and as much as 80 percent of a day's news might come verbatim from ADN (Allgemeine Deutsche Nachrichtendienst), the GDR's central news service. This left a great deal of time for conviviality in the workplace, for long lunches and early departures for home or to the pub providing that one had the right relationship with one's superiors. After 1989, the shift to the more time- and labor-intense mode of western journalism was accompanied by crises of unemployment and underemployment, by intensified conflicts between family and professional responsibilities, and by intensified gender inequities, all of which tended to blend gender relations in GDR professionalism in memory into a vague but also vaguely better state of affairs.

### **Evidence and silence of gender in the transformation of eastern German journalism, 1989-1994**

Given space and thematic considerations, I will not attempt a full description of the complex historical processes involved in the unification of the two German media systems after 1990. Fortunately, an abundant secondary literature on this history already

exists.<sup>38</sup> I will concentrate instead on the gendering of eastern professionalism and on the semiopolitics of *Belastung* (literally, of “burden”) after 1989 that followed in the wake of political decisions to privatize the eastern German print media and to incorporate former GDR state television and radio in the ARD (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten Deutschlands) public broadcasting network of the FRG. Understanding how the transformation of journalism mirrored in some respects general trends in eastern Germany and yet diverged from them in others helps to explain where gender did and did not emerge as a key analytic of social transformation in the conversations I had with journalists in the mid- to late 1990s.

As elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the *Wende* (turn, change) of 1989 devastated the labor markets of the former GDR. Overall, the employment figure dropped from 9.61 million in 1989 to 6.259 million in 1993.<sup>39</sup> The official unemployment rate reached 1.175 million in 1993 with the conditions of millions of others masked through make-work programs, part-time employment, training programs, and early retirement incentives. According to Sabine Schenk, East German women were especially hard hit in the transition as they were incorporated into the West German gender politics of work that continued to emphasize to a much greater extent a single (usually male) wage earner model of family support. In 1997, still only 65 percent of western German women were considered in the labor force as compared with

38. See Boyer, *Spirit and System*; Maryellen Boyle, “Capturing Journalism: Press and Politics in East Germany, 1945-1991” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 1992); Peter J. Humphreys, *Media and Media Policy in Germany* (Providence, RI: Berg, 1994); Hermann Meyn, *Massenmedien in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Berlin: Edition Colloquium, 1994); John Sandford, “The German Media,” in Derek Lewis and John R. P. McKenzie, eds., *The New Germany: Social, Political, and Cultural Challenges of Unification* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1995); and Edith Spielhagen, ed., *So durften wir glauben zu kämpfen . . . Erfahrungen mit DDR-Medien* (Berlin: VISTAS Verlag, 1993). On post-1989 media transformations in Eastern Europe more generally, see Colin Sparks, *Communism, Capitalism and the Media* (London: Sage, 1998); and Slavko Splichal, *Media beyond Socialism: Theory and Practice in East-Central Europe* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994).

39. Burkhart Lutz and Holle Grünert, “Beschäftigung und Arbeitsmarkt,” in Hans Bertram and Raj Kollmorgen, eds., *Die Transformation Ostdeutschlands: Berichte zum sozialen und politischen Wandel in den neuen Bundesländern* (Opladen, Germany: Leske + Budrich, 2001), 139-41.

81.3 percent of eastern German women. But, at the same time, 23.2 percent of eastern German women were unemployed as compared with 15.8 percent of eastern German men (the western German figures were 9.1 and 9.2 percent, respectively).<sup>40</sup>

Journalists did depart from this overall trend insofar as they were spared the disastrous effects of deindustrialization. But as in other professional labor markets in the East, eastern German professionals both male and female had to contend with the arrival of competition from overflowing professional markets in the West and with the appearance of western managers and experts dispatched East by new western owners to advise and to “reeducate” (*umerziehen*) former GDR professionals in the values and standards of a “free, democratic society.” The delegitimation of eastern professionalism was acute in the first years of transition,<sup>41</sup> paving the way for new hierarchies within eastern German media organizations where senior managerial positions continue to be almost exclusively occupied by western Germans. The signaling of East German professional deficiency and alterity was accomplished in large part through the “reeducation” programs themselves and through their classificatory assumption that eastern Germans needed special care to function let alone thrive in the new media system. If eastern journalists generally welcomed assistance in learning the standards and mechanisms of western media, many bristled at the idea that they needed to be somehow “cleansed” or “reeducated” as journalists to work in unified Germany.

Yet such signals and assumptions quickly became a social fact of professional life in the early 1990s, especially in the more aggressively “westernized” environment of print media. Prevalent East-West relations cultivated a new public/private distinction between the universal character of western expertise and the regional character of eastern expertise in journalism. Western journalists tended to be privileged with higher-status positions and assignments like international and national reportage and commentary, whereas eastern journalists tended to be treated as regional specialists with a limited capacity to represent or to com-

40. Schenk, “Re-construction,” 214-15, 223.

41. Boyer, “On the Sedimentation,” 470-73.

ment upon events unfolding outside the East. As I have noted elsewhere, gender stereotypes were also mapped across East-West distinctions such that figurations of active aggressive masculine westerners were routinely opposed to passive, withdrawn feminine easterners in everyday processes of communication and knowledge-making.<sup>42</sup>

This apparent passivity on the part of former GDR journalists must be understood within the context of a managerial politics of retention that were highly opaque and anxiety-inducing. When I interviewed western chief editors and assistant chief editors who had been involved in the transition process, most explained that their primary criteria for retaining former GDR journalists were talent, performance, and willingness to adjust to the new system. They did not hesitate, however, to tell me that they also felt entirely justified in removing *die roten Socken* (the true reds, literally “the red socks”) from *die Öffentlichkeit* (the public sphere). These were ideologists not journalists, they said. Having served a corrupt and criminal regime in the GDR, they had no right to participate in the formation of public opinion for a new Germany.

The key term was *belastet* (burdened). A journalist could be deemed *belastet* by his or her GDR career on several grounds: (1) age—the vast majority of journalists working in the eastern German media over the age of fifty were laid off or sent into early retirement, a de facto guideline that swiftly unemployed an entire generation of former GDR journalists; (2) a vocal lack of enthusiasm for the process of media reform; (3) a contentious relationship with new management; (4) a lack of competitive or independent “spirit”; or (5) an unwillingness to commit oneself to learn new skills and techniques.

Age-based retention decisions were largely justified through intuitive characterizations of older GDR journalists as “too deep in the old *System*” or as having the GDR *System* “inside their heads.” For younger journalists, however, the shading of criteria (2), (3), and (4) placed them into an uncomfortable bind. To follow obediently the directives of the new management could easily result in being classified either as suspiciously “cagey” or as

42. Ibid., 463-64.

possessing a lack of independent spirit. On the other hand, to voice concerns or criticism in the newsroom could be construed as a lack of conviction in the new “democratic” orientation of the media or even as nostalgia for GDR journalism.<sup>43</sup> By all reports, the occasionally contradictory criteria by which one could prove oneself *unbelastet* (unburdened) created a highly stressful environment that encouraged some journalists to resign and seek either freelance work or new careers altogether. One man who had been an ADN foreign correspondent retired and started his own business editing technical manuals for cars: “In terms of journalism, let’s just say that I didn’t want to learn everything all over again.” Another friend told me, while deeply mired in professional uncertainty in 1997, “I have to say, Dominic, that I don’t know how much longer I want to do this. I get sick of being treated like a school-boy or a beggar.”

In the final analysis, according to the best available labor statistics,<sup>44</sup> the size of the journalistic labor market in eastern Germany only dropped from 8,500 to 7,950 full-time positions from 1989 to 1992. But this relatively small decrease masks the large numbers of former GDR journalists who exited the workforce during these three years. At least 1,520 former GDR journalists over the age of fifty-five were sent into early retirement between 1990 and 1992. Meanwhile, at least 1,620 journalistic positions (20.4 percent) were occupied by eastern Germans with no professional experience in the GDR media system and 1,050 positions (13.2 percent) were taken by West Germans. These figures suggest that no more than slightly over half of the journalists working in the GDR in 1989 (4,810) had full-time employment as journalists three years later.

Still, the role of gender in the transformation of the journalistic labor market is difficult to define. None of the managers with whom I spoke explicitly mentioned gender as a factor in retention decisions. Rather, their attention was oriented to their perception of the “overabundance” of journalists in their organizations and, more pointedly, to the overabundance of *belastete*

43. Dominic Boyer, “*Ostalgie* and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany,” *Public Culture* (forthcoming).

44. Böckelmann et al., *Journalismus*, 41-47, 127.

journalists under their command. On the statistical face of things, moreover, the percentage of female journalists in the eastern German media held steady at about 36 percent from 1989 to 1993. These figures suggest that professional opportunities for women in eastern German journalism neither significantly increased or declined in the transition. And indeed, my interviews with former GDR journalists turned up no mention of encounters with management that explicitly contradicted the statistics.

Yet the way that gender did emerge in narratives of transition raises questions about the evidently “genderless” character of the professional transition. Several of the journalists with whom I spoke made a point of describing how their social expectations and horizons as women had changed since 1989. This typically occurred in interviews as we were packing up to leave or speaking informally after the tape recorder had been shut off. One magazine journalist patiently answered my questions regarding her experience of the transformation of journalism and then announced apologetically that she had to leave to pick up her child from day care. As she stood up, she pointed to my notebook and said, “But make sure you mention this in your research. How this has been a huge change for women since the *Wende*. In the GDR it was very common for women to have normal lives and to work as well and to balance both sets of responsibilities. But now one feels forced to choose. My West German colleagues have mostly had to give up on having children for that reason.” A newspaper journalist in Berlin echoed these sentiments, pausing to reflect on what she found most different between the GDR and the FRG:

One does feel different in this system as a woman. It's not necessarily being treated differently by your colleagues or the sense that as a woman you shouldn't be a professional, but say when I look at my western colleagues, even though I think quite a few women work here as journalists, I notice that most of them don't have children for example. There's no notion of having children and having a career here and then you do begin to see how women are encouraged to stay at home to raise families, that it's either one or the other, and as you know in the GDR it was completely different, it was completely

normal to have children and a job and the system was set up in such a way as to make that possible whereas now the system is set up for one person to have to stay home. . . . There's no provision for a working woman having a baby. It's just assumed that she would leave work to take care of the child. And if the couple were two journalists [pauses gravely] I don't think anyone would expect the man to quit *his* job to take care of the baby!

Discussions of East-West difference reciprocally invoked testimony of a sense of shifting gender expectations and roles. Whereas my male interlocutors also frequently identified and criticized the increased pressure of work life in a capitalist society, they did not see that their gender roles had shifted all that much. The few who did mention their relationship to their families usually did so in the context of describing their ongoing duty to support spouses, children, and parents. Women, meanwhile, more often reported the feeling that they were being asked to give up participation in the workforce to have children and a “normal” family life. Another newspaper journalist described how she came to terms with pressure to prioritize her job over her family:

When I started here it was my first job in journalism so I had a lot to learn and that was stressful. I was also working under a man who had great ideas but who was difficult to work for because *he* only worked for his job and expected everyone else to have that kind of commitment too. I have two children, you know, and one of them was still quite young then and I want to go home sometimes too. [Laughs] But he would even call me at home in the evenings, telling me to come back to the office to work on this or that. So, I secretly began to give the day a certain structure, so by a certain time each day I had specific tasks completed. He was nice but chaotic and that burdened me as well.

Reproduction proved a key index of the intersection of westernness, gender, and professionalism in my interviews with eastern journalists. My eastern female interlocutors often characterized their West German female colleagues as incomplete or “not normal” women in that they had been forced to sacrifice bearing children in order to become professionals, a sacrifice that was said to feed their bitterness and envy toward eastern women:

I'd actually say that the biggest difference since the *Wende* is the difference between East German and West German women. I actually get along very well with the West German men who have come over here. But, and maybe this is just because I am a woman, but when I look at or compare East and West German male journalists I don't really see them as being that different. But the women I see as being very different. I feel like it has something to do with what you said earlier that many West German women have had to give up families for their careers or that at least they've put their careers ahead of their families. So there's something missing with them, something that isn't there, I don't know [pauses, thinking]. For me, you know, what comes to me will come to me. I don't have any particular ambition to become department head and then assistant chief editor and then chief editor, but these West German women really do have this ambition always to achieve something or to prove themselves.

Even when western colleagues had successfully managed to both produce and reproduce they were still described in terms of a more passive, less secure femininity. One radio journalist, several months pregnant told me,

Something I get tired of with western women is all the talk about liberation and freedom and equal rights. It's all talk though. I find that we eastern women actually just go out and do that and don't make so much noise about it. For example, with pregnancy. There's also one of our western colleagues who's pregnant, and, boy, she suddenly wants all this attention, wants everyone to pamper her, whereas I'm pregnant too, but I'm just going about my work normally. And then I'll have the baby and then try to go back to work again as soon as I can. But she's pregnant now and she has to go outside for walks at certain times and basically everyone has to know she's pregnant all the time. . . . I've read studies that children actually get along better with their mothers in the East than in the West, because their mothers are active, have jobs and other interests and just don't sit at home all day tending to them. They have more things in their life than just the children so they give them more room to develop. Ultimately, I think the children appreciate that, it's much more healthy and normal than if the mothers sit at home all day and fuss about them.

The assertion of normality was a powerful rhetorical strategy of identification and for resistance to what eastern women experienced as the assertion of a new model of femininity across their public and private lives. It also offered a way for them to discuss



their sense of being doubly resocialized after 1989 as East Germans and as women. Interestingly, however, my interlocutors continued to tell me that gender was something that had very little to do with journalism, that is, with their profession. This was a profound tension in the interviews: on one hand, a normal femininity was defined through the balance or reconciliation of productive and reproductive, public, and private commitments. On the other hand, professional practices, knowledges, and identities were still treated as incommensurable with nonprofessional practices, knowledges, and identities. To understand where this tension originates, we need to consider more carefully the social character of professionalism itself.

### **Recovering gender from the solvency of professionalism**

In my interviews with eastern journalists, regardless of whether we were discussing GDR-era or contemporary situations and relations, gendered knowledge had little traction on knowledge of journalism. As we have heard, however, gendered knowledge was never fully silenced either. It instead appeared on the margins of conversation, sometimes when the “real” business of professional themes had been transacted, sometimes when reflection took an unexpected turn. In such moments, reproduction, relations to spouses and children, and the stress of dual commitments all asserted themselves against norms of professional communication that tended to silence them.<sup>45</sup> And yet, just as quickly, these discursive detours would be rerouted back into discussions of newsroom politics or of the economic context of the media business. The question remains: why is this so? Where does the epistemic solvency of professionalism originate?

If gendered knowledge has little traction in professional discourse, it is interesting to note that it has just as little traction in theoretical knowledge of professionalism. Indeed, many of the most brilliant theoretical discussions of professionalism scarcely

45. See Dominic Boyer, “The Corporeality of Expertise,” *Ethnos* 70:2(2005): 243-66.

mention gender at all.<sup>46</sup> Although feminist studies of professions and professionals have made important inroads,<sup>47</sup> stubborn resistance to a theoretical conceptualization of the intersection of professionalism and gender remains. I would emphasize that this is neither a failure of individual theorists nor even necessarily a failure of theory in the abstract. It is rather an identifiable effect of what I have termed the “phenomenology of expertise”<sup>48</sup> characteristic of how professional intellectuals like journalists and academics tend to experience “knowledge” in the first place. My argument is that intellectual professionalism cultivates a particular attention to the formal properties and values of semiosis, a special regard for the thing-like character of “knowledge” as a series of de-corporealized forms or relations alienable from the complexities and contexts of epistemic activity as tokens of pure knowledge or “expertise.” Put more simply, the phenomenology of expertise centers subjective attention to the formal and ideational dimensions of knowledge while trivializing the processual and social dimensions of knowing. The phenomenol-

46. Andrew Abbott, for example, raises the issue of gender (in a footnote!) only to discard its substantial relevance to a theory of professionalism: “Some might argue that the very notion of ‘profession,’ both as real-world label and as social-science concept, is gender- or class-based, and that consequently gender and/or class have been the central determinants of professional development since the Industrial Revolution. I disagree. That professions pursue status is obvious. That this may include class or gender alliance is unquestionable. That these alliances determine the major aspects of professional development is simply wrong. They reinforce, perhaps, but they do not cause.” Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 352. For Abbott, the central determinant of professionalism is a social relationship of jurisdiction organized into a system of professions, and he resists an argument of the inherent masculinity of professionalism and by extension of professional knowledges. In Magali Larson’s Marxian analysis, professionalism’s center is similarly defined through the extension of markets of standardized, codified expert knowledge, markets that depend essentially on socializing, reproductive practices of professionalization, and professionalism to guarantee that actors function as productive subjects within these rationalized and rationalistic economies of expertise; see Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 14, 40–47. Both theorists are able to accomplish the marginalization of gender through their theoretical emphasis on the sociology of expertise. In other words, once expert, formal knowledge is defined as the essence of professionalism, much as we have seen in the East German case, other dimensions of professional life, including *other modes of knowing and knowledge* involved in professional experience, are trivialized relative to the center.

47. See, for example, Janelle S. Taylor, “Of Sonograms and Baby Prams: Prenatal Diagnosis, Pregnancy and Consumption,” *Feminist Studies* 26:2(2000): 391–418; and Katherine Young, *Presence in the Flesh: The Body in Medicine* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

48. Boyer, *Spirit and System*, 43–45.

ogy of expertise finds its linguistic counterpart in what Mikhail Bakhtin once defined as the generic traits of “professional language.”<sup>49</sup> Bakhtin observed that although all communication is context-sensitive to some extent, professional language communities cultivate a heavy emphasis on formality and denotationality to produce the sense of epistemic fixity required by a claim of “expert knowledge.” The eliteness of professional language is thus guaranteed precisely by its denial of attention to the kinds of contextual cues that occupy most speakers. These sociolinguistic norms act to insulate the kind of jurisdictional sphere at the center of professionalism and also make it awkwardly suited to bridging intuitive or nonformal dimensions of knowledge with the more formal epistemic attentions of professional communication. This is precisely the phenomenon we have encountered in my interview data above. Professional discourse appears to dissolve or to subsume modes of knowing that are not oriented to epistemic priorities of professionalism.

Gendered knowledge is thus often muted in settings of professional communication, inviting the moments of awkwardness and elision noted above when I posed more direct questions about gender. And, yet, as Gal and Kligman predicted, our own specialized focus on gendered knowledge is precisely what has allowed us to glimpse the social logic of professionalism in action.<sup>50</sup> To borrow a term from psychoanalytic theory, gender is one kind of “surplus” within professionalism that is never fully assimilable to discursive economies of professional identity and knowledge even though it is trivialized for its allegedly extraprofessional and extraepistemic character. The tension lines in my interviewees’ descriptions of their professional experience after 1989 suggest not only that gendered knowledge resists, sometimes quite urgently, this “extraepistemic” classification, but also that the phenomenological and communicative tendencies of professionalism do not actually produce perfected subjects and attentions of the kinds that they valorize. This situation, as I see it, opens wonderful critical and analytical opportunities for the eth-

49. M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 289.

50. Gal and Kligman, *Politics of Gender*.

nography of professions not only to recover gendered knowledge but also to show the universalist pretensions of professionalism for the equivalently social and historical relations and practices of knowledge that they are. This article has been a modest contribution to that project.