

Rethinking the Private Sphere: The West German New Women's Movement Challenges to
the Gendered Order, 1968-1978.

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Abstract

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Beginning with the Action Council for the Liberation of Woman and their Store Front Daycare initiative in 1968 and then progressing through the diverse movement of the 1970s, this paper analyzes the debates over the gendered division of labor, the meanings of work, the “children’s question”— how could children be brought up in an “anti-authoritarian” manner, and the “mother question”— how could mothers balance childcare and public participation, in the West German New Women’s Movement. Responding to structural, cultural, and social changes in the everyday lives of women in postwar society, these debates reflected the diversity of the movement and their various attempts to find a concrete theory of emancipation and feminist strategy. Without an analysis of these debates and constructions of feminist strategy and theory, we cannot begin to understand the activities and praxis of the movement, nor begin to understand the affects of the movement on West German society.

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Chapter I

Introduction

On September 13th, 1968, Sigrid Rügen hurled a tomato in protest at the then president of the *Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund* (Socialist German Student Federation or SDS) Hans-Jürgen Krahl at the national delegation conference. Rügen's action, which has been informally designated as the beginning of the New Women's Movement in West Germany,¹ was instigated by Krahl's indifferent reaction to a speech just given by *Aktionsrat der Befreiung der Frau* co-founder Helke Sander in which she had described the gender relationships within the SDS as a reflection of the gendered separation between private and public spheres prevalent in West German society.² Sander's critique stemmed from her own personal experiences of misogyny from male New Left members and her exclusion as a mother from political activities within the '68 movement beyond individual demonstrations. While Sander and the *Aktionsrat* introduced a new feminist approach to the '68 movement which focused on issues primarily related to childcare and the emancipation of mothers, the ensuing New Women's Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s engaged in a wide variety of activities protesting the social, cultural, and political situation of West Germany women.

¹ Kristina Schulz, *Der lange Atem der Provokation: Die Frauenbewegung in der Bundesrepublik und in Frankreich, 1968-1976* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2002), 85.

² Gisela Notz, "Die Auswirkung der Studentenbewegung auf die Frauenbewegung," *Metis* 8, no. 16 (1999): 106-07.

The West German New Women's Movement attempted to politicize women's issues during a time of oppositional politics and activities from a radicalized Left, starting with the '68 student protest movement in the early 1960s and continuing with the New Left in the 1970s.³ Despite increasing literature focusing on the New Left and its affects on West German society, the majority of scholars have failed to incorporate the study of gender into their work.⁴ This will change with Belinda Davis's forthcoming work which will employ gender as a category of historical analysis in the study of New Left politics and activism, but the gender has yet to be utilized in the study of the New Women's Movement.⁵ The studies which do exist on the topic of the New Women's Movement are either uncritical texts focusing on experience authored by former members of the movement, such as the journalist Ute Kätzel's volume of edited interviews with former female '68 participants *Die 68erinnen*,⁶ or women's histories, such as the articles by Gisela Notz and the monograph *Der*

³ See Gerd Langguth, *Protestbewegung: Entwicklung, Niedergang, Renaissance: die Neue Linke seit 1968*, *Bibliothek Wissenschaft und Politik* ; Bd. 30 (Köln: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1983).

⁴ Works which reflect on the effects of the '68 movement include Lothar Baier, *Die Früchte der Revolte: über die Veränderung der politischen Kultur durch die Studentenbewegung*, Originalausg. ed. (Berlin: K. Wagenbach, 1988), Wolfgang Kraushaar, *1968 als Mythos, Chiffre und Zäsur* (Hamburg: Hamburg Edition, 2000). Rob Burns and Wilfried van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany: Extra-parliamentary Opposition and the Democratic Agenda* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988). Karl-Heinz Heinemann and Thomas Jaitner, *Ein langer Marsch: 1968 und die Folgen: Gespräche mit Lutz von Werder, Thomas Ziehe, Kurt Holl, Rolf Trommershäuser*, *Neue kleine Bibliothek* ; 36 (Köln: PapyRossa, 1993).

⁵ Belinda Davis's forthcoming monograph *The Internal Life of Politics: The New Left in West Germany, 1962-1983*. See also Belinda Davis "'Women's Strength Against their Crazy Male Power.' Gendered Language in the West German Peace Movement of the 1980s" in Jennifer A. Davy et al., *Frieden, Gewalt, Geschlecht: Friedens- und Konfliktforschung als Geschlechterforschung*, 1. Aufl. ed., *Frieden und Krieg, Beiträge zur historischen Friedensforschung* ; Bd. 5 (Essen: Klartext, 2005).

⁶ Florence Hervé and Lottemi Doormann, *Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, *Neue kleine Bibliothek* ; 6 (Köln: PapyRossa, 1990), Ute Kätzel, *Die 68erinnen: Porträt einer rebellischen Frauengeneration*, 1. Aufl. ed. (Berlin: Rowohlt Berlin, 2002). Renate Wiggershaus, *Geschichte der Frauen und der Frauenbewegung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik nach 1945* (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1979)

Lange Atem der Provokation by Kristina Schulz, which focus solely on women's activities.⁷

Without the inclusion of a gender analysis of the New Women's Movement, we cannot fully understand the cultural, social, political, and even economic affects of the political protest of the 1960s and 1970s on West German society. As the historian Nick Thomas explains:

For some it [New Women's Movement] was perhaps the most enduring and valuable legacy of both the protest movements and the new freedoms in daily life made possible in the 1960s. For others, both men and women, it meant the destruction of cherished values and a concomitant confusion about acceptable behavior.⁸

While my long term research will analyze the affects of the New Women's Movement on the gender order and gender relations in West German society, due to the availability of sources, this paper will focus on the New Women's Movement's *perceptions* of the gender order through the lens of the theoretical discussions and debates concerning the gendered division of labor. Two major questions frame my analysis. First, how did the movement conceptualize the gendered division of labor? Secondly, how did their understanding of the gendered division of labor affect their discussion of feminist theory and strategies? Because of my own interest in motherhood and childcare in a historical perspective, I will explore these questions by focusing specifically on feminist activists who placed questions exploring motherhood, childcare, and housework at the center of their feminist theory and strategy using theoretical texts published and circulated within the movement. The majority of these texts stem from the Women's Movement in West Berlin.

⁷ Gisela Notz, "Die autonomen Frauenbewegungen der Siebzigerjahre," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 44 (2004), Notz, "Die Auswirkung." Schulz, *Lange Atem*, Kristina Schulz, "Macht und Mythos von 1968: Zur Bedeutung der 68er Protestbewegung für die Formierung der neue Frauenbewegung in Frankreich und Deutschland," in *1968 - Von Ereignis zum Gegenstand der Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

⁸ Nick Thomas *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and Democracy* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 221.

Because of the city's isolation in the Soviet-back German Democratic Republic and the exemption from military service for any male resident, West Berlin in the 1960s and 1970s was a hot bed of anti-authoritarian protest and feminist activities. While West Berlin was certainly not the only cities with wide spread activism, West Berlin was often seen as the center of activities.

The theoretical discussions carried out in pamphlets, records of meetings, magazines, essays and published reports were extremely important to the development of the movement. Beyond Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* there existed few texts which discussed feminist theories of emancipation and collective women's activism. While analysis of theoretical texts allow historians to analyze goals and strategy, they do not illuminate the lived experience which informed their discussion of theory nor give us insight into the experience of protest and activism. Experience is an important element to any study of protest movements, but we must also analyze the discursive formulation of the West German New Women's Movement to understand the rhetoric which framed both their activities and experience of protesting.⁹ As Joan Scott has argued, "Treating the emergence of a new identity as a discursive event is not to introduce a new form of linguistic determinism, nor to deprive subjects of agency. It is to refuse a separation between "experience" and language and to insist instead on the productive quality of discourse."¹⁰

⁹ In addition to the methodological reasons why I do not include lived experience in this paper, an analysis of lived experience cannot be achieved with the current published source base and with the documentation contained in archives. This will change for my dissertation, which will use oral histories with former members of the movement in order to understand both the motivations for becoming active and the experience of activism. In addition, contact with former members is likely to bring about new sources which they have not donated to archives.

¹⁰ Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 793.

The gendered division of labor was an important discursive site for the formulation of the New Women's Movement. Scholars define the gendered division of labor, an essential category of analysis in this paper, as the separate tasks performed by women and men, whether in the work force or in the family.¹¹ Harriet Bradley explains that while these specific tasks vary according to time period and place, in the separation of men's and women's work there persists "ideas of the suitability of some work for women, whatever the particular nature of the tasks involved."¹² But the gendered division of labor is more than just a practical division of responsibilities. Scholars argue the "natural" assignment of men and women to certain tasks reflect power relations between the sexes, by which men's work holds more worth.¹³ These associations, in turn, affect the social realities of men and women, including types of employment, wages, education, and housework.¹⁴

With the growth of industrialization in the nineteenth century in Europe and the United States, the division of labor became associated with separate "spheres," with women's work relegated to the 'private' sphere of the home and with men's work connected to the public sphere of paid work and politics.¹⁵ While most working class women have always

¹¹ It is of no coincidence that the gendered division of labor was both a political point in the Women's Movements of the 1960s and 1970s and also a topic of scholarly discussion as early as the late 1970s. Many female scholars attribute their interest in studying the gendered division of labor to the activism of the feminism movements.

¹² Harriet Bradley, *Men's Work, Women's Work: A Sociological History of the Sexual Division of Labour in Employment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 1.

¹³ Barbara and Karin Hausen Duden, "Gesellschaftliche Arbeit - geschlechtsspezifische Arbeitsteilung," in *Frauen in der Geschichte*, ed. Annette and Gerhard Schneider Kuhn (Duesseldorf: Schwann, 1979), 11. Ava Baron, *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 25-26.

¹⁴ Karin Hausen "Einleitung" in Karin Hausen, *Geschlechterhierarchie und Arbeitsteilung: zur Geschichte ungleicher Erwerbschancen von Männern und Frauen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 9.

¹⁵ Pat Hudson and W.R. Lee "Introduction" in Pat Hudson and W. Robert Lee, *Women's Work and the Family Economy in Historical Perspective* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 4.

worked, and most scholars also consider the domestic work of women productive, this cultural and physical division between public and private led to varying perspectives on the appropriateness for wives and mothers to work outside the home and the dependent status of married women on their husbands, for example through state employment regulation and legislation concerning property rights for women.¹⁶ This division created a social and economic dependency of women on their families. As Louise Tilly and Joan Scott argue “the mode of production and the structure of the family shape the productive and reproductive activities of women.”¹⁷

In post-1945 West Germany, politicizing the gendered division of labor meant countering the male-breadwinner/female-homemaker (and sometimes part-time earner) family model that dominated the political, cultural, and social discourses from the late 1940s to the 1970s. The movement related the gendered division of labor to two main overarching questions: first, the “women’s question” and secondly, the “children’s question.” The “women’s question” focused on the emancipation of women. In the West German context, the women’s movement argued that emancipation could only come through increased participation of women in the public sphere, whether through political activities or paid employment. Intrinsicly related to the “women’s question” was the “mother question” – how could mothers balance increased public participation with childcare duties.

Secondly, the “children’s question” asked how children could be raised and educated in an anti-authoritarian manner. The ’68 movement attempted to hold the West German government and society accountable for its National Socialist past. The ‘68ers feared that

¹⁶ Louise Tilly and Joan Scott “Introduction” in Louise Tilly and Joan Wallach Scott, *Women, Work, and Family* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

without political protest, West Germany faced the potential of returning to an authoritarian society.¹⁸ For a theory of action, the '68 movement turned to the Frankfurt School philosophers, who argued that state institutions, including schools, as well as the family propagated a violent and obedient authoritarian character.¹⁹ Therefore, whatever childcare solutions they supported had to exist independent of the West German state. Together, the women's and children's questions challenged basic societal assumptions concerning the duties of women, that of a mother, wife, and caretaker of the home.

To explore the Women's Movement's debates over the gendered division of labor, this paper will be divided into three sections. First, I will relate the conditions which gave rise to the New Women's Movement in West Germany, focusing on the contradictions between in the post-1945 cultural constructions and actual social situation of women. This section will also look at the limited feminist strategies which existed in the postwar period prior to the emergence of the New Women's Movement. Secondly, I will analyze the emergence of the debates concerning the relationship between the gendered division of labor and feminist politics in the New Women's Movement by focusing on the theoretical development of the *Aktionsrat der Befreiung der Frau*. Also within this section is a case

¹⁸Michael Schmidtke, "The German New Left and National Socialism," in *Coping with the Nazi Past: West German Debates on Nazism and Generational Conflict, 1955-1975*, ed. Phillipp Gassert and Alan E. Steinweis (New York: Berghahn, 2006), 181.

¹⁹ Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (London: Heinemann, 1973), 124-35. Jay gives an excellent overview of the Frankfurt School's study on authority and family. The Frankfurt School was a school of thought and an actual school, the Frankfurt School of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. The philosopher Max Horkheimer became the institute's director in 1930, creating a new form of sociology, one that combined social philosophy and empirical social science. The new critical sociology or critical theory as it was later called was heavily influenced by Marx and Freud. While the students of the 1960s were heavily influenced by their works, such as Marcuse's "Great Refusal," Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, and Jürgen Habermas had a much more contentious relationship with the students protestors. Adorno and Horkheimer did not see the students as subjects of radical historical change. Habermas even went so far as to call the movement a form of left-wing fascism at a student conference in 1967.¹⁹

study on the emergence of the *Kinderläden* movement, which was an attempt by the *Aktionsrat* to combine questions of female emancipation, the practical childcare needs of women, and theories of anti-authoritarian upbringing into a childcare initiative. Lastly, my focus will move to debates over the mother and child question which reemerged in the late 1970s, in addition to debates over work and housework as they related to a theory of emancipation for women.

Chapter 2

West German Society and the Women's Question in the 1950s and 1960s

The Situation of Women in Post World War Two West Germany

In order to understand why the gendered division of labor and definitions of work would become an important political issue for the New Women's Movement in the late 1960s and 1970s requires an understanding of the postwar political culture and its reinforcement of the male-breadwinner/female-housewife gender roles. While in 1949, article three of the Basic Law codified the equality between the sexes, the Civil Code and political rhetoric of the time emphasized specific gender roles for women and men, with women perceived almost exclusively as wives and mothers. For instance, §1356 of the Civil Code read "The woman runs the household in her own responsibility. She is entitled to take on paid employment, as far as this can be combined with her duties in marriage and family."²⁰

Welfare legislation offers a poignant example of the strong connection between legislation and the social conception of the gendered division of labor. Scholarship on gender and the European welfare regimes emphasize the role cultural and societal notions of gender roles and the family has play in the creation of welfare policy, which in turn creates the

²⁰ Kolinsky, *Women in West Germany*, 49.

general conditions for the legal and social practices of parents and children.²¹ Welfare states usually include, for example, childcare and educational institutions, pensions, welfare support for the needy and unemployed, and child payments. The model most often proscribed to the West German setting is the “male-breadwinner/female-housewife” model.²² These welfare states construct legislation which is influenced by and reinforces the father’s responsibility to provide for his family and the wife’s dependent status.²³

Robert Moeller argues that postwar debates over family policy in West Germany actually “defined the social and political status of women.”²⁴ The politically dominant Christian Democratic conservative coalition, connected to the Catholic Church concerning family policy through the Minister for the Family Question Franz-Josef Würmeling, attempted to preserve an “ahistorical” notion of the family which consisted of a married mother, father, and children.²⁵ In addition to the Catholic Church, the Cold War, a notion of devastation of the family caused by the Second World War in Germany, and the memory of Nazi family politics, brought more saliency to the CDU/CSU coalition’s family politics and allowed them to posit themselves as the rejuvenator and defender of the family.

²¹ See the introduction to Julia S. O'Connor, Ann Shola Orloff, and Sheila Shaver, *States, Markets, Families: Gender, Liberalism, and Social Policy in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 9-13.

²² See Karen Hagemann, "Between Ideology and Economy: The "Time Politics" of Child Care and Public Education in the Two Germanys," *Social Politics* 13, no. 2 (2006): 218.

²³ Jane Lewis, "Gender and the Development of Welfare Regimes," *Journal of European Social Policy* 2, no. 3 (1992): 159-172.

²⁴ Robert G. Moeller, "Reconstructing the Family in Reconstruction Germany: Women and Social Policy in the Federal Republic, 1949-1955," *Feminist Studies* 15, no. 1 (1989): 137. For additional information on the debates, see Robert G. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

²⁵ Lukas Rölli-Alkemper, *Familie im Wiederaufbau: Katholizismus und bürgerliches Familienideal in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945-1965* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000), 473-76. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 101-03.

The simultaneous development of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), backed by the Soviet Union, and the Federal Republic of Germany empowered the conservative agenda of the Christian Democratic Party in West Germany, bringing “a conservative tenor to German society under the Federal Republic, especially in the realm of gender and family relations, a tenor carefully cultivated by the Christian Democratic government.”²⁶ More specifically, the GDR image of the working mother helped frame the family rhetoric of the CDU. The GDR mobilization of women into the work force supported the traditional view of mother as housewife since, in the opinions of the conservative coalition, this policy destroyed families.²⁷ The CDU also invoked the memory of the National Socialist family policy and the instability of the “rubble years” of the war’s immediate aftermath to support their call for the rehabilitation of tradition family and gender roles. One of the earliest postwar statements of the CDU’s political stance declared, “A nation is worth only as much as the value it places on the family . . . National Socialism had much to say about the German family, but in reality, it did everything possible to tear it apart.”²⁸ In essence, the Christian Democrats viewed their family policies as the future hope and stability of West German society.²⁹

The *Kindergeld* or “child money” payment offers one example of the affects of their understanding of the gendered division of labor on welfare policy. Although in reality, postwar society contained many different family structures, including many with female

²⁶ Eric D. Weitz, “The Ever-Present Other: Communism in the Making of West Germany,” in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 219.

²⁷ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 78.

²⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 65.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

heads of household and primary breadwinner,³⁰ the child money payment measure that passed in excluded most single mothers because it was only given to families with three or more children (single mothers tended to have fewer children) and even within families, the government distributed money through the father's paycheck.³¹

The Social Democratic opposition to the Christian Democrats did little to challenge the conceptions of the family propagated by the CDU majority. While the SPD continuously upheld the equality of women and women's right to work, they did so in a way that did not challenge the traditional role of mothers and wives in the family. In conjunction with the West German unions, the SPD advocated a raise in the male wage to allow mothers to stay home instead of working. These policies were not just supported by male SPD members; female party members such as Käthe Strobel supported the "separate but equal" doctrine of the SPD as well.³²

The family policies of the political parties, however, did not reflect the increased desire to work among married women, the rise in the percentage of married women on the job market (mostly due to the increase in part-time work), nor the increased acceptance of married women working outside the home. Ute Frevert, in determining the continuities and changes in gender relations in the 1950s and 1960s, argues that by the 1960s, "women

³⁰ Elizabeth D. Heineman, *What Difference does a Husband Make?: Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 108-10.

³¹ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 79.

³² Hanna Schissler, "Social Democratic Gender Policies, the Working-Class Milieu, and the Culture of Domesticity in West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s," in *Between Reform and Revolution: German Socialism and Communism from 1840 to 1990*, ed. David E and Eric D. Weitz Barclay (Providence: Berghahn, 1998), 511-12.

accepted employment as a form of living that was at least compatible with their family.”³³ This new desire to work can be seen in the employment statistics. In 1950, only 25 percent of all married women worked. By 1961, this increased to 33 percent, although the growth stagnated by 1970 at 35 percent.³⁴ This growth in the presence of married women in the job market went hand in hand with an overall growth in percentage of working women. By 1975, close to 50 percent of all women aged 20-50 were employed, with the age cohort of 20-25 participating at 62 percent. This was a growth of almost 10 percent in each age group from 1965.³⁵

Christiane von Oertzen has shown that this increased employment of married women stemmed mostly from their mobilization into part-time work. The debates over women’s part time work which began in the 1950s demonstrated a change in societal opinions about wives and mothers working outside the home.³⁶ Government officials and confessional groups viewed part-time work as a means of accommodating the wants of married women without compromising their role in the family.³⁷ As a consequence, however, Von Oertzen points out that this greater acceptance of part-time work of women further prevented government acceptance of full time work for married women. Most tellingly, government officials did not

³³ Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (Oxford: Berg, 1989), 645-46.

³⁴ Merith Niehuss, *Familie, Frau und Gesellschaft: Studien zur Strukturgeschichte der Familie in Westdeutschland 1945-1960* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 222.

³⁵ Andrea Hellmich, *Frauen zwischen Familie und Beruf: eine Untersuchung über Voraussetzungen und Nutzen einer Berufskontaktpflege von Frauen in der Familienphase, Schriftenreihe des Bundesministers für Jugend, Familie, Frauen und Gesundheit ; Bd. 184* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1986), 12. Gisela Helwig, *Frau und Familie in beiden deutschen Staaten*, 2nd ed. (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1987), 40.

³⁶ Christine von Oertzen, *Teilzeitarbeit und die Lust am Zuverdienen: Geschlechterpolitik und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Westdeutschland 1948-1969* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 12.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 99.

see the need to extend the half-day educational system to full day and an increase in the number of daycare spots did not increase until the 1970s.³⁸

In a social and political context which emphasized women's roles as mother and wife, the Women's Movement's debates over the definition of work and the gendered division of labor must be seen as a challenge to the social, political, and cultural institutions which failed to respond to changes in the everyday lives of mothers and wives in the 1950s and 1960s. The Women's Movement of the 1960s and 1970s responded to this contradiction between everyday life and politics by arguing that in order for society to accommodate more women leading lives not entirely connected to the home required a rethinking of traditional notions of childcare and the work of women in the home. The mother and wife's desire to lead a life not entirely connected to the private sphere required new solutions to childcare and the work of women in the home.

Feminist Strategies in the Postwar Period: Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan

Despite the desire to challenge traditional conceptions of women in West German society, very few feminist theoretical texts and strategies existed in the postwar period. Before 1933, Social Democratic feminists such as Clara Zetkin and then Social Democratic feminists in the Weimer Republic advocated a new socialist theory of emancipation which took into consideration the social and economic situation of women, but the rise to power of the National Socialists in 1933 successfully quashed this new development.³⁹ In the postwar

³⁸ Hagemann, "Between," 236. Christiane von Oertzen, "Women, Work, and the State: lobbying for 'Gleichberechtigung' and Part-Time Work in the West German Civil Service, 1958-1969," in *State Policy and Gender System in the Two German States and Sweden, 1945-1989*, ed. Rolf and Christina Florin Torstendahl (Uppsala: Department of History Uppsala University, 1999).

³⁹ Hagemann, "Between Ideology," 528-51.

period, two new texts, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, first published in 1949 and translated into German in 1951, and the American Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, which was first published in 1964 and appeared in German in 1966, offered a new direction for feminist thinking in the postwar era, although their ideas had already been articulated before 1933.⁴⁰ Both books became vital for the New Women's Movement. What did these new texts have to offer?

First and foremost, they both challenged the predominate conceptions of women as mother and housewife. In *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir asked "what is a woman?"⁴¹ Through her analysis of science, history, and the present situation of women, de Beauvoir came to two conclusions. First, in what was the most important argument for the New Women's Movement, de Beauvoir asserted that biology did not determine the gendered division of labor, but rather social forces, in this case a society dominated by men.⁴² The realization that gender roles were only constructions gave women leeway to define their own place in society. Secondly, since the beginning of patriarchy, which de Beauvoir argued was brought about because of women's need for protection and food during reproductive cycles,⁴³ women have been regarded as the "Other" in relationship to men.⁴⁴ De Beauvoir maintained, "[S]he

⁴⁰ No research has been done as to the knowledge within the New Women's Movement of the pre-war women's movements, although it is safe to say not much.

⁴¹ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Modern Library, 1968), xv.

⁴² *Ibid*, 37.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 62.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, xvi.

is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other.”⁴⁵

Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* looked less philosophically at women and instead turned to sociology and psychology to show the effects of conventional ideals on women. Friedan defined the “feminine mystique” as the image of women to which all women try to conform.⁴⁶ Through her interviews with over eighty women in different stages in their lives, in addition to consultation with experts, she analyzed the life cycles of women and how attempts to live up to the image of the ideal woman lead to depression, sadness, and lack of fulfillment in most women.

To change the conditions of women, both de Beauvoir and Friedan argued for more independence for women, mostly through gainful employment. De Beauvoir, taking a more economic approach to women’s emancipation, posited, “It is through gainful employment that women has traversed most of the distance that separated her from the male; and nothing else can guarantee her liberty in practice.”⁴⁷ Believing that the main dependence of women on men is economic, de Beauvoir called upon women to forge their own economic independence in order to crumble the patriarchal system. For Friedan, the first step for women was to “unequivocally say ‘no’ to the housewife image.”⁴⁸ She proposed that once women consciously rejected housework as a career and saw what marriage really was by

⁴⁵ Ibid, xvi.

⁴⁶ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York: Norton, 1974), 11.

⁴⁷ De Beauvoir, 679.

⁴⁸ Friedan, 342.

denouncing its glorified status, women should to take up employment in “work that is of real value to society.”⁴⁹

While these works did not openly call for a large scale women’s movement, they did offer individual females a new articulation of women’s place in society and a plan of action, both of which rejected maternalist arguments and advocated a conception of women not inherently connected to motherhood. From the onset of the New Women’s Movement in West Germany and into the 1970s and 1980s, these two texts would continue to play a very important role in the theoretical foundations of the movement. For instance, the *Aktionsrat* placed Friedan and de Beauvoir on their reading list for their working group in emancipation theory in 1968.⁵⁰ Alice Schwarzer, a feminist journalist and initiator of the pro-abortion campaign in the early 1970s, described de Beauvoir in 1983 as “a symbol of the possibility, despite everything, of living one’s life the way one wants to, for oneself, free from conventions and prejudices, even as a woman.”⁵¹

The Origin and Development of the New Women’s Movement in West Germany

While few intellectual foundations for a feminist movement may have existed for West German women, their own experiences certainly acted as a catalyst to politicize women’s issues, most importantly among female ’68 activists. Division of labor in relationships became one of the sites of paradoxical experience for female New Left activists. While theoretically, equal opportunities existed for women and men to participate in the

⁴⁹ Friedan, 346,342.

⁵⁰ FFBIZ Archiv/Berlin/A/Rep. 400/20. Aktionsrat(1)/Berlin/Folder 1/ “Literaturehinweise zur Emanzipation”

⁵¹ Alice Schwarzer and Simone de Beauvoir, *Simone de Beauvoir Today: Conversations, 1972-1982* (London: Hogarth Press, 1984), 13.

movement, many female activists recalled that children limited the activities of those with children. The activist Karin Adrian's story is a clear example of the tensions created between active participation and familial and household duties. Adrian became pregnant soon after beginning her studies in costume and set design in the winter of 1967. She and her boyfriend moved in together and wished to get married. The marriage never took place, however, because Adrian's parents did not consent and both partners at the time had to be 21 to get married without parental permission. With the baby and the maintenance of the apartment, Karin lost a whole semester of study. Her boyfriend never even thought of helping her. Looking back on this time in her life, Karin reflected, "An alternative model didn't exist, so my mother was like most women. In following . . . [I] did everything like I had learned at home. . . Eventually, everything began to get on my nerves."⁵²

In addition to the propagation of the West German gendered division of labor in relationships among the New Left, many women experienced misogynistic personalities from the men when they tried to take on more authority within the movement. Gretchen Dutschke, wife of one of the more important SDS leaders Rudi Dutschke, observed "The guys from the SDS, with whom Rudi primarily associated, treated their girlfriends and wives not like partners, but like show pieces, especially when they were with pretty women."⁵³ If women managed to participate in the movement, they faced possible objectification from the men in the movement, especially if they entered into relationships with other male activists.

By 1968, women within the student protest movement organized discussion groups and activity groups around women's issues, such as the *Frankfurter Weiberrat*, the

⁵² Karin Adrian in Kätzel, *Die 68erinnen*, 243.

⁵³ Gretchen Dutschke-Klotz, Kätzel, *Die 68erinnen*, 284.

Arbeitskreis Emazipation in Bonn, and the *Aktionsrat der Befreiung der Frau* in West Berlin. These groups attempted to find a feminist consciousness and theory of emancipation through the discussion of texts in which the women's question played a central role, such as Friedan, de Beauvoir, and August Bebel's *Women in Socialism*. In addition, the *Aktionsrat* concentrated their activities on childcare issues through the initiation of the *Kinderläden* movement.⁵⁴ The increased theoretical discussion on the women's question combined with the experiences of women within the New Left culminated with Sander's September 1968 speech condemning the hierarchical gender relations within the movement. While these women's groups considered themselves still to be a part of the New Left, the critical reaction to the politicization of women's issues brought about a questioning of the uses of initiating a women's movement within the wider protest movement. As the 1960s ended, the dominant position among the feminists supported an autonomous politicization of women's issues by and for women.⁵⁵

This new feminist consciousness remained fragmented until the development of the anti-§218 campaign which sought to abolish the anti-abortion laws of West Germany. The campaign was initiated by the journalist Alice Schwarzer and others, who while working in France from 1969 to 1974, witnessed the French women's movement campaign to end abortion restrictions.⁵⁶ Through widespread media attention and mass demonstrations, such as the demonstration in Bonn on September 21, 1975 attended by 25,000 people, the

⁵⁴ Schulz, *Lange Atem*, 85.

⁵⁵ Notz, "Die Auswirkung," 110.

⁵⁶ Schulz, *Lange Atem*, 145.

movement successfully pushed for a reevaluation of the law. The result was the *Fristenlösung*: women could now have an abortion until the third month of pregnancy.⁵⁷

Without the continuation of a universal goal after the *Fristenlösung*, the movement again divided into smaller groups.⁵⁸ However, the diversity of the movement after 1975 allowed for the politicization of many women with different needs. For instance, the newly established *Frauenzentrum* became a place where women could receive information concerning women's health and body, in addition to becoming a place of organization of these diverse groups. In addition, groups such as *Brot & Rosen* in West Berlin advocated for less harmful birth control and more understanding towards women's health on the part of doctors.⁵⁹ At the universities, female students and professors organized women's groups and in 1977 organized the first Summer University for Women. Lastly, feminist thought found its way into the media through various journals and magazines, the most popular being the magazine *Emma* created by Schwarzer and the West Berlin based magazine *Courage*.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 161.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 180.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 161-62.

Chapter 3

“Mothers are Political People”: The *Aktionsrat der Befreiung der Frau* and the Origins of the *Kinderläden* Movement

As the social and political situation of women in the post-1945 period showed, mothers and wives faced perhaps the most structural changes among women in the 1950s and 1960s, but without allowing for more flexibility in their roles as mothers and wives. It is perhaps no surprise that issues relating to childcare, motherhood, and housework permeated the theoretical discussions of the first manifestations of the New Women’s Movement starting in 1968. In the *Aktionsrat der Befreiung der Frau* of West Berlin, their own lived experiences with the hierarchical gendered division of labor and the roles of housewife and caretaker in the home became a key basis of theoretical discussion and strategy which advocated a feminist politic based on the mother and children’s questions.

The Right to Political Activity

In January 1968, a flier appeared in the halls of the Free University in West Berlin declaring, “We have grown envious and sad . . . because our individual attempts to bring together study, love, and kids have wasted away. . . .”⁶⁰ This first flier of the *Aktionsrat der Befreiung der Frauen* announced the collective politicization of women within the ’68 movement in West Berlin. A large contingent in the new group consisted of mothers who felt unhappy with their inability to participate in social and political action of the ’68 movement

⁶⁰ FFBIZ Archiv/Berlin/A/Rep. 400/20. Aktionsrat(2)/Berlin/Folder Handapp. Träger I/4

beyond demonstrations because of their time commitments as mothers. Because of the lack of theoretical texts, especially those which dealt with the mother and child questions, theoretical debate focused on understanding the situation of women in West German society. Their critique of gender relations in West German society were framed by a strong anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist ideology (influenced by such philosophers as the Frankfurt School, Wilhelm Reich, Karl Marx, and Frederick Engels) originating in the '68 movement.

The theoretical discussion quickly pointed to a correlation between the traditional roles of women in the home and their secondary status in society. Because of this realization and their own status as mothers, the question of how mothers could balance public and private lives, i.e. career and political action with childcare, became the central question in the creation of their feminist theory, thereby placing women's relegated roles in the gendered division of labor at the center of their political agenda.⁶¹ While I am not arguing that single, childless women would not be concerned with this issue (their attack on societal gender constructions which are always directly related to the gendered division of labor was just as important), the everyday experience of mothers trying to balance public and private lives acted as a strong catalyst for politicizing the issue of gender roles in the family. The *Aktionsrat* therefore attempted to recast the dominant image of mothers whose sole concern was the household and children in favor of an image of a mother who could have both a public and private life.

The *Aktionsrat* began as an informal group of mothers involved in the '68 movement interested in finding childcare solutions so they could attend classes, work, and/or become

⁶¹ Herve, 156-58. Notz, "Die Auswirkung," 108. Schulz, *Lange Atem*, 79-81.

involved in political activities.⁶² As the *Aktionsrat* developed and a diversity of women with different questions and interests joined, members created several different smaller groups, including those devoted to finding and discussing a theory of emancipation and those concerned with the *Kinderläden* or store-front daycare initiative.⁶³ While two different factions eventually developed within the group (those devoted to the mother question and those concerned more with the mobilization of female workers), the main theoretical discussion concerned the gendered division of labor in the home and the implications for mothers when they attempted to conform to the dominate image and remain the caretaker of the family and the home.⁶⁴

Based on their involvement in the '68 movement, discussion of the question concerning woman's place in West German society was heavily steeped in a Marxist-inspired critique of capitalist societies, as well as a strong anti-authoritarian mindset supported by the writings of the Frankfurt School. A reading list for the *Aktionsrat* cited the Frankfurt School's writings about the relationship between family and authoritarianism, Wilhelm Reich's *The Invasion of Compulsory Sex-Morality*, Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, and de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Because of their intellectual background, the women of this group connected the problems of women directly to the capitalist system.⁶⁵

Their critique of capitalism stemmed resulted in their realization that a person's economic independence was dependent on one's employment. As Helke Sander argued in a

⁶² Helke Sander, "Mütter sind politische Personen," *Courage* 1978, 38-9.

⁶³ FFBIZ-Archiv/Berlin/A/Rep. 400/ 20. Aktionsrat (1)/ "Die Arbeitsreise des Aktionsrates."

⁶⁴ Schulz, *Lange Atem*, 95.

⁶⁵ FFBIZ-Archiv Berlin/A/ Rep. 400 Berlin/20 Aktionsrat (2)/ Folder Handapp. Träger I/AK Bericht für (die Sitzung) das AR Chaos im Sept. 68 von Annemarie Träger

February 1968 pamphlet circulated among *Aktionsrat* members, capitalist societies hindered women's economic independence because of the unequal wages of women in comparison to men and the types of job women could find.⁶⁶ Showing the importance of personal experience in articulating gendered critiques, Sander related how her own inability to find adequate employment and childcare forced her to marry after becoming pregnant, leading her to temporarily suspend her studies to care for her child.⁶⁷ Her personal experience led her to the realization that fundamental changes needed to take place in the relationship between men and women with the childcare question at the center of this renegotiation of gender roles and division of labor. In order to further develop and act on a theory of emancipation based on the connection between childcare and women's emancipation, Sander pointed to four interconnected issues that needed to be explored and discussed: the relationship between men and women, anti-authoritarian upbringing, the economic situation and escalation of the conflict of the double role of women, and lastly, the failure of previous revolutionary attempts.⁶⁸ Members of the *Aktionsrat* would go on to explore these ideas in order to understand particularly the perceived economic oppression of women in West German society and the consequences of that economic oppression on the lives of women.

Further discussions within the *Aktionsrat* led to a belief in the politicization of the private and public situation of women. Strongly influenced by de Beauvoir, Friedan, and psychoanalysis, Barbara Witt argued in June 1968 essay "Emotional Problems of Woman – Political Problems," "There can be no liberation of mankind without the social, emotional, as

⁶⁶ FFBIZ Archiv/Berlin/A/Rep. 400/20. Aktionsrat(2)/Berlin/Folder Handapp. Träger I/7, 1.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 1.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 3.

well as the economic independence and equal standing between men and women.”⁶⁹ Linking a belief in the emotional problems of women with economics, Witt posited that the discovery of women’s role in “late-capitalist society” could lead to a politicization of women’s “emotional conflicts” and the private sphere usually relegated to women.⁷⁰ To show the relationship between society, gender roles, and emotional problems for women, Witt turned to examples of the socialization of children, such as the toys children play with or what kinds of clothes boys are girls are supposed to wear, all of which reinforced the mother as the caretaker of the children and the home and the father as the primary breadwinner.

But Witt did not portray a happy mother and wife who embraced her given role in society. Turning to psychoanalysis and Freud, Witt attempted to show how society enforced women’s relegation to the private sphere through psychological dependencies. Witt argued that women became fixated on men through their connection of sex with emotion. The continued exploitation of men as workers on the job market further reinforced their emotional exploitation because women were needed for emotional support, thus “women are convinced to hold on to her natural acquired tendency toward motherliness.”⁷¹ To break down this cycle of, Witt concluded women must change the sexual practices and societal images which reinforce those gender roles. In order to better understand how this change could come about, Witt contended further political action should be directed towards: first, dispelling the idea that gender roles are fixed and “natural,” secondly, clarifying the function of marriage and the family as it pertains to women, thirdly, researching the situation of

⁶⁹ FFBIZ Archiv/Berlin/A/Rep. 400/20. Aktionsrat(2)/Berlin/Folder Handapp. Träger I/28, 1.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 1.

⁷¹ Ibid, 2.

women in West German society (such as their economic dependency, career chances, etc), fourthly, understanding the “public exploitation of women” through their “idealization” in the media, and lastly, bringing together all of this information in order to agitate for better conditions.⁷²

The texts by Sander and Witt indicated a desire for a course of action which would aid in the end to the economic and emotional dependencies of women on the family and husband. Their critique and goals of emancipation pointed to a desire to recast the image of mothers as independent women who happened to be mothers, free to follow their own pursuits. To change the predominant conception of mothers the *Aktionsrat* developed a theory and strategy of emancipation which inherently connected the children question and the women’s question. The importance of this connection could be seen in the Kindergarten teacher strike initiative. Since the inception of the *Aktionsrat*, a strong contingent of Kindergarten teachers interested in the women’s question and new forms of anti-authoritarian education formed a discussion group within the *Aktionsrat*.⁷³ In 1969, 500 Kindergarten teachers, both members and non-members of the *Aktionsrat*, decided to strike in June of that year based on a platform which included smaller class sizes and more spots for children through the hiring of more kindergarten teachers. In West Germany, a severe deficit existed between the number of preschool aged children and the number of daycare spots. In 1965 state run Kindergartens provided spots for only 33% of all preschool aged children and by 1970, the figure had increased only by 5%. In addition, most child care facilities in the

⁷² Ibid, 4.

⁷³ FFBIZ-Archiv/Berlin/A/Rep. 400/ 20. Aktionsrat (1)/ “Die Arbeitskreise des Aktionsrates”

Federal Republic remained open only for half the day.⁷⁴ The goal of the strike was not only to advocate for better conditions within the Kindergartens, but to also raise awareness concerning the situation of women in capitalist societies, which they felt was connected to a critique on the state-run education system.⁷⁵

The connection between wider issues of the gendered division of labor and the Kindergarten teacher strike could be seen in their advertisements for a First of May demonstration leading up to the strike. In one particular advertisement, styled in the manner of a cartoon, the headline read “Capitalism hurts men and women . . . but women more.”⁷⁶ The cartoon, emphasizing the effects of capitalism on the family, began by showing the husband earning more for the same work than his wife. The cartoon then moved into the private sphere to show the double work of women and the effect on the kids. The cartoonist contrasted images of the father reading the newspaper and watching sexualized, idyllic images of women on the television with images of the mother performing housework with crying and fighting children at her side. The different roles of the father and mother created tension in their relationship in the last two cells⁷⁷ The father finds his wife undesirable in comparison to the image of women on T.V. and his exhausted wife breaks down, declaring she can’t do this anymore and that something must change her situation. The last two images attempted to incite political action through attendance of the demonstration, portraying women protesting with their children and declaring their will to organize as women in order

⁷⁴ Hagemann, “Between,” 235.

⁷⁵ Sander, “Mütter sind,” 41.

⁷⁶ FFBIZ Archiv/Berlin/A/Rep. 400/20. Aktionsrat(2)/Berlin/Kopien Kinderläden aus dem Ehemaligan Handapparat Annemarie Träger, APO-Archiv

⁷⁷ Ibid, 2.

to create a society “in which we can have children without becoming emotionally and physically tired . . . and in which men, women, and children can be people.”⁷⁸

The fact that this particular advertisement does not mention the actual terms of the strike points to the fact that the Kindergarten teachers strike gave the *Aktionsrat* the opportunity to publicize and politicize a large group of women around issues central to their theory of emancipation: anti-authoritarian childcare and a critique on the experience of the double burden of women caused by the gendered division of labor in the home. While they directed their activities towards childcare, they believed a change in the childcare system would also alter that gendered division of labor and society’s conceptualization of mothers. By taking some of the childcare burdens off themselves, they could lead lives beyond their family.

Case Study – The Beginnings of the Kinderläden Movement

August 1968 proved to be a fateful month for the *Aktionsrat* and their *Kinderläden* initiative. After the *Aktionsrat* had spent the past six months organizing and discussing their childcare initiatives, the *Kinderläden* movement as a whole founded a governing body called the *Zentralrat sozialistischer Kinderläden West Berlin* or the Central Council of Socialist Kinderläden West Berlin. The organizational change exacerbated theoretical conflict within the movement between members of the *Aktionsrat* and the New Left over what constituted the priority political function of the Kinderläden. On the one hand, the *Aktionsrat* conceived the Kinderläden as a site of *both* experimentation in anti-authoritarian education and a means

⁷⁸ Ibid, 2.

towards their own emancipation as women, while non-*Aktionsrat* members emphasized almost exclusively anti-authoritarian education.

The *Kinderläden* movement has recently become a site of historical inquiry in Dagmar Herzog's *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany*.⁷⁹ Herzog's account of the *Kinderläden* focuses solely on the anti-authoritarian educational theories and praxis of the movement, most specifically focusing on the movement's support of sexuality in children as a means of understanding the New Left's "complexly mediated relationship with the Nazi past."⁸⁰ The practices of the *Kinderläden* movement, Herzog relates, "transformed not only preschool but also elementary education in West Germany" and the *Kinderläden* "emerged as one of the West German New Left's major concrete accomplishments."⁸¹ Despite their revolutionary strides in the area of child education, by analyzing the movement from the perspective of the *Aktionsrat*, we witness an entirely different narrative, one that described the failure of the *Kinderläden* as a tool of women's emancipation. The unwillingness of the movement as a whole to take the demands of the *Aktionsrat* led to a suppression of their emancipatory aims.

The Foundation of the Kinderläden Movement

By May 1968, three *Kinderläden* existed in the West Berlin sections of Charlottenburg, Neukölln and Schöneberg (with the number increasing to eleven by early

⁷⁹ Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*, 162-174.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 165.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 163.

1969), each containing about 8-12 children with age ranges of one to four years old.⁸² While one cannot rule out the theoretical motivations behind the *Kinderläden*, the childcare initiative also pointed to the problems for parents in West Berlin and the entirety of the Federal Republic at that time in finding adequate childcare for the youngest aged children. More children existed than Kindergarten spots at state run childcare institutions. Participants on the movement noted that parents who may not have subscribed to the theoretical underpinnings of the movement nonetheless joined the parent groups out of necessity.⁸³ Finding childcare solutions for the youngest members of the population proved an important goal for a movement which advocated political activities in the public sphere, and especially for women who most of the time faced the burden of caring for their children and missing out on wider political activity within the New Left.

When the *Aktionsrat* formed in January of 1968, they did so to find a solution to the problem of balancing political activities and their commitments as mothers.⁸⁴ Motivated by the success of an impromptu *Kinderläden* set up for the International Vietnam Congress at the Technical University in West Berlin on February 17th and 18th, 1968, the women decided to establish permanent *Kinderläden*. The conference proved to be an important event for the women of the New Left. Between 3,000 and 4,000 people attended the conference from around the world. On the last day of the conference, a crowd of 15,000 marched in solidarity against the war in Vietnam.⁸⁵ Instead of missing the important statement against the Vietnam

⁸² Ibid, 162.

⁸³ Jille Jan Breitenreicher, Rolf Mauff, Manfred Trieb und dem Autorenkollektiv Lankwitz, *Kinderläden: Revolution der Erziehung oder Erziehung zur Revolution?* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1971), 39.

⁸⁴ FFBIZ Archiv/Berlin/A/Rep. 400/20. Aktionsrat(2)/Berlin/Folder Handapp. Träger I/4

⁸⁵ Thomas, *Protest Movements*, 156-159

War, female New Lefters simply brought their children with them. The 40 children in attendance played together in the hallway, drew signs, and “played demonstration.”⁸⁶

The Vietnam Congress posed the possibilities of combining political initiatives and practical childcare solutions. These two themes acted as the impetus for the two goals of the *Aktionsrat*'s Kinderläden project: to give women with children the time and opportunity to reflect on their own situation as women and participate in the public sphere while creating opportunities for anti-authoritarian childcare. The first goal, the notion that the Kinderläden could aid in the end of the isolation of women with children, especially mothers, grew out of the initial theoretical discussions of the movement. Theoretical reflection within the *Aktionsrat* on the role of women in West German society pointed to the economic dependencies of women on male-breadwinners, especially women with children, the isolation of women in the private sphere and its detrimental psychological effects, and the double burden of mothers who worked outside the home. In addition to allowing more independence for women in order to pursue a career or to study, the *Aktionsrat* believed that through work with children, they could further reflect on their situation in society and politicize themselves.⁸⁷ This realization would act as “a *modus vivendi* to find herself” and lead to “a deeper awareness of the situation of women in capitalist society.”⁸⁸

The second goal of anti-authoritarian upbringing aimed to prevent the perpetuation of the “disciplined, uncritical, assimilated, and brutal person” perceived to be encouraged by the West German school system at that time by ending the isolation of children in their families

⁸⁶ Breiteneicher, *Kinderläden*, 28.

⁸⁷ FFBIZ Archiv/Berlin/A/Rep. 400/20. Aktionsrat(1)/Berlin/Folder I/ “Arbeitspapier,” 1.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 1.

through collective education.⁸⁹ The theoretical impetus for this initiative originated with Wilhelm Reich, a very important influence on the New Left's theories of sexual emancipation. Reich, a peripheral member of the Frankfurt School and a Marxist psychologist, suggested in *The Sexual Revolution* that collective education of children (as he witnessed in the early days of the Soviet Union) could lead to a less sexually repressed and thereby less authoritarian society by educating and socializing children in a different manner than in capitalist society.⁹⁰

The *Aktionsrat*, however, believed in the interconnectedness of the women's and children question. In an article which appeared in the *Rote Presse Korrespondenz* in September 1969, a media organ of the New Left movement, Helke Sander's critique of a new initiative in West Berlin to create kindergartens attached to factories to allow more mothers to work points to the definition of emancipatory and pedagogical goals of the *Kinderläden* as conceived by the *Aktionsrat*.⁹¹ For Sander, it was not enough to simply create kindergartens with the sole goal of allowing mothers to work; Sander argued, "Because the reservoir [for more workers] primarily stems from married women, one must liberate mothers from their children."⁹² Therefore, Sander believed that childcare solutions required the politicization

⁸⁹ Ibid, 1.

⁹⁰ Wilhelm Reich, *The Sexual Revolution; Toward a Self-Regulating Character Structure* (New York: Farrar, 1974), 261. What is interesting through the theoretical texts from both the *Aktionsrat* and the ZSK is how little time they spend talking about the effects the *Kinderläden* would and did have on the children. As Dagmar Herzog wrote "The *Kinderläden* literature, in short, was not just about children, but about the parents as well. The stories the activists chose to publish show how obsessed the parent were with demonstrating their lack of sexual hang-ups – even as they revealed precisely the existence of such hang-ups." Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 170. I think the same applies to the *Aktionsrat* and their discussions of their *Kinderläden* initiative. They showed concern for their children, but they were also, if not even more concerned with their own goals in the creation of the *Kinderläden*.

⁹¹ FFBIZ Archiv/Berlin/A/Rep. 400/20. Aktionsrat(2)/Berlin/Folder Verschiedene, page 21/ "Projekt Betriebskindergärten" in *Rote Presse Korrespondenz* Nr. 27/28 8/29/69

⁹² Ibid, 20.

and emancipation of women through the promotion of women's independence from their children. In addition, the factory kindergartens only perpetuated the connection between child and mother since they were directly attached to women's place of work; mothers would still visit their children during breaks and they would have no free time after work to run errands if the children were on site.⁹³

Sander not only critiqued the proposed factory Kindergartens on structural grounds, but also because they failed to promote the reflection of women's place in society. On one hand, Sander agreed with the initiative to improve working conditions for women, stating that "Women in general do the stupidest work," but for Sander, the correct initiative should take into account women's conditions in the home. She argued that a successful women's movement would "give women a glimpse of a change in their conditions outside the factory."⁹⁴ Sander recognized that the greatest problem for women with children was the double burden of balancing paid and unpaid work in the home. Without equal change in the conditions of women in the home, mothers would not have time for labor politics.⁹⁵ The lack of time for mothers for political action points directly to Sander's belief that emancipation could only come through the understanding that the children and women's questions were one in the same.

Thus, the *Aktionrat* conceived the *Kinderläden* as site of rupturing the dependencies of children on mothers, and visa versa. Only by disrupting the mother-child bond through anti-authoritarian education and politicizing the work of women in the *Kinderläden* could

⁹³ Ibid, 20.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 22.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 21.

emancipation be achieved. While the *Kinderläden* on one hand served as a practical solution to childcare, the *Aktionsrat* placed more meaning in the *Kinderläden* as an instrument towards emancipation and changes in the gendered division of labor.

Goals of the Kinderläden Movement

In contrast to original intension, the *Kinderläden* quickly became a *parent* initiative. Excited that the fathers of their children showed interest in the education of their children, the *Aktionsrat* promoted the formation of parent groups in the already established *Kinderläden* within a few months of their foundation in early 1968, and many more parents formed groups to establish additional *Kinderläden* together.⁹⁶ The widening of the participation base fostered two ideological camps as to the movement's goals: first, the *Aktionsrat* desiring a dual focus on feminist consciousness and anti-authoritarian education, and secondly the wider group which invested their sole interest in developing a means of anti-authoritarian upbringing and education. The second faction eventually dominated the discussion and activities of the *Kinderläden* movement.

In August 1968, parents and participants from the various *Kinderläden* in West Berlin formed the *Zentralrat der sozialistischen Kinderläden West Berlin* (ZSK) or the Central Council of Socialist *Kinderläden* of West Berlin.⁹⁷ The organizers of the ZSK hoped to organize and disseminate the pedagogical and theoretical information being used in the individual *Kinderläden* to all *Kinderläden* groups, in addition to organizing information for

⁹⁶ FFBIZ Archiv/Berlin/A/Rep. 400/20. Aktionsrat(1)/Berlin/Folder I/ "Arbeitspapier," 3.

⁹⁷ Breitenneicher, *Kinderläden*, 36.

the wider public.⁹⁸ Within their publications, one finds a greater concern for the socialization of children, which profoundly affected the acceptance of the *Aktionsrat*'s goals within the wider *Kinderläden* movement.

Published in September 1969, *Kinder im Kollektiv* pin pointed the origins of the movement in a critique of the bourgeois family (instead of with goals of the *Aktionsrat*) which had acted as the site of socialization of society for so long.⁹⁹ The *Zentralrat*'s reasons for challenging the bourgeois family model did not focus on gender roles within the family, but their belief that the private sphere of the family propagated the authoritarian tendencies found in West German society.¹⁰⁰ By ending the isolation of the family in the private sphere through collective work in the *Kinderläden*, the *Zentralrat* hoped to stem the tide of authoritarianism found in West German society. Therefore, the writings of the *Zentralrat* show that they intended their work in the *Kinderläden* to act as a means of emancipation for parents (not just mothers) from the isolation of the private sphere.

The 1970 published *Berliner Kinderläden: Antiautoritäre Erziehung und sozialistischer Kampf* furthered the meaning and goals of anti-authoritarian education. The members of the *Kinderläden* movement argued that in the current state-run education system:

The children are trained from the first year of life through their education emphasizing obedience, orderliness, and cleanliness for the middle class capitalist social order and through this education, they are indoctrinated so strongly and successfully that the greater portion of the populace never notices.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ *Berliner Kinderläden: Antiautoritäre Erziehung und sozialistischer Kampf*, (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1970), 141.

⁹⁹ *Zentralrat der sozialistischen Kinderläden, Kinder im Kollektiv* (Berlin: Autorenkollektiv im sozialistischen Kinderladen Charlottenberg I, 1969), 2-3.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 3-4.

¹⁰¹ *Berliner Kinderläden*, 123.

To counter this, the movement set out to create an educational system which taught critical understanding to children.¹⁰² To create this critical distance from society and stem the tide of the propagation of bourgeois values, the parents agreed that change could only occur by ending the fixation (i.e. dependency) of children on parents.¹⁰³ Different *Kinderläden* parent groups brainstormed different solutions to the problem of parent-child fixation, all which centered on the question of the presence of parents in the *Kinderläden* during the school day.

Specific *Kinderläden* in West Berlin came to different conclusions as to the role of parents in the actual education of the children. The cases of the two Schöneberg *Kinderläden* and the Charlottenberg *Kinderladen* illustrate this fact. While the Charlottenberg *Kinderladen* believed instruction facilitated by one Kindergarten teacher ended the fixation of children, Schöneberg I and II decided that the involvement of parents was necessary on a day to day basis, both for the sake of the children, but also the parents.¹⁰⁴ Schöneberg I chose a combination of Kindergarten instructor and the participation of parents. In March 1969, the parents of Schöneberg I declared the reasons for their decision, stating “In socialist *Kinderläden*, the emancipatory strivings of all (both men and women) is promoted through the collective direction of practical-political work.”¹⁰⁵ In addition to believing in the political importance of their presence, the parents argued their work helped promote the collective solidarity of parents, but also solidarity between children and parents, in contrast to the

¹⁰² Ibid, 123.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 123.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 119.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 119.

isolation of the private sphere of the family.¹⁰⁶ Lastly, the parents believed that the presence of many different adults prevented the emergence of a single authoritarian figure in the *Kinderladen*. As the group later explained in a publication which appeared in 1971, if the wishes of children could be fulfilled by many people, the child's thought process and conception of reality would no longer be connected to one single person, thus promoting a more critical thought process in children.¹⁰⁷ While the changing presence of parents fulfilled the pedagogical goals of the *Kinderläden* movement and benefited the children, this strategical decision was made without taking into account the goals of the *Aktionsrat*.

The *Aktionsrat* promoted a similar strategy which included mothers working in the *Kinderläden*, but in this case the mother's work functioned as a vital tool in the reflection and understanding of the situation of women and mothers in society. The other Schöneberg *Kinderladen* illustrates this point. Like the wider movement, the mothers of Schöneberg II showed intense concern for the close relationship between mother and child. By working in the *Kinderläden*, the Schöneberg II group believed they could emancipate the children from their mothers when they realized many mothers were capable of giving them the same attention.¹⁰⁸

It is important to point out that despite the *Aktionsrat*'s theoretical reasons for this decision, the Schöneberg II *Kinderladen* report also alluded to two practical reasons why the mothers worked one day a week in the *Kinderläden*. First, the report again references the shortage of Kindergarten spots in West Berlin and the decisions mothers made to

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 119.

¹⁰⁷ Breitenreicher, *Kinderläden*, 69.

¹⁰⁸ FFBIZ Archiv/Berlin/A/Rep. 400/20. Aktionsrat(2)/Folder Handapp. Träger I/1.

accommodate the raising of their children. Basically, “Mothers often have to give up their work and studies in order to raise their child.”¹⁰⁹ The two year wait for spots, in addition to their disapproval of the system propagated in the state run daycare centers, points to their pressing need of childcare solutions. An additional problem, however, seemed to arise from the question of payment of Kindergarten teachers. The cost of hiring a Kindergarten teacher seemed to be too expensive in this case.

Despite these practical reasons, with so much emphasis placed in the movement as whole on the education of children, the additional goals of the *Aktionsrat* were pushed to the side. But why did the movement as a whole not discuss a system which included both the recognition of the needs and goals of the *Aktionsrat* and the anti-authoritarian education of children? The critique of the ZSK concerning the goals of the *Aktionsrat* points to the continued disapproval of women’s issues within the New Left.

The wider movement’s critique of the *Aktionsrat* stemmed from a belief that the *Kinderläden* movement was part of the wider New Left/socialist movement in West Germany. Typically, the New Left criticized women’s issues because of a belief in the need for wider social revolution which would bring about a system which alleviate women’s conditions in a capitalist society. They therefore viewed the goals of the *Aktionsrat* as oppositional and contradictory to the overall goals of *Kinderläden* movement as a vehicle for social change. In many ways, the ZSK saw the theoretical development of the *Aktionsrat* as the main source of its problems; the ZSK argued that “the first experiences in the *Kinderläden* and the Kindergarten at the Vietnam Congress did not suffice in the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 1

conceptualization of the further development of collective organization.”¹¹⁰ In addition to their theoretical infancy, the ZSK believed the problems of the *Aktionsrat* “can be sought in the false theoretical approach” which placed the conflict between the New Left and the *Aktionsrat* at the level “of the conflict of the middle class career woman, who is all over the illustrated magazines as the example for ‘emancipated behavior.’”¹¹¹

The failure of the *Kinderläden* as a tool of feminist emancipation became clearer to the *Aktionsrat* by October of 1968. The *Aktionsrat* believed the origin of their conceptualization and organizational problems in the movement stemmed from the participation of the fathers in the *Kinderläden* and to their own theoretical infancy. The presence of the men, the *Aktionsrat* realized, hindered their own political and theoretical development vis a vis the *Kinderläden*.¹¹² The first problem with the participation of men came from some the female participants themselves; because their boyfriends/husbands participated in the *Kinderläden* or helped out with housework, they didn’t see the wider oppression of women in society.¹¹³ Secondly, by not demanding that men do the equal share of childrearing work in the *Kinderläden*, the women found that they ended up doing most of the work with the actual children. The presence of the men without stipulations, the *Aktionsrat* realized to their dismay, in the end reproduced the gender roles and hierarchies “which we wanted to abolish through the *Kinderläden*.”¹¹⁴ The *Aktionsrat* felt that the men

¹¹⁰ *Berliner Kinderläden*, 143

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 144.

¹¹² FFBIZ Archiv/Berlin/A/Rep. 400/20. Aktionsrat(1)/Berlin/Folder I/ “Arbeitspapier,” 5.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 3.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 5.

discussed childcare theoretically, while women facilitated most of the actual childcare work.¹¹⁵

The *Aktionsrat* blamed the men's ability to take over their initiative on their own theoretical underdevelopment. Even though they came to these realizations in October 1968, this was still only ten months after the foundation of the *Aktionsrat*. Because of this lack of development, they realized the difficulties in attempting to connect their own political interests with those of the New Left.¹¹⁶ Success in the wider movement required the evidence to convince men that "the child problem is identical to the women's problem."¹¹⁷

Conclusion – A Disappointing Success?

The conflict over the political role of the *Kinderläden* resulted in the suppression of the *Aktionsrat*'s vision of the *Kinderläden* as both an emancipatory and pedagogical project. With their relationship to the New Left, members of the *Aktionsrat* confronted continued rejection of issues of emancipation for women, although it cannot be denied that developing anti-authoritarian education was an important goal to all involved. The *Aktionsrat* cited theoretical underdevelopment and structural contradictions as the reason for the disappointing results of the initiative. While in the end the *Kinderläden* did provide some relief for mothers from childcare duties, the disappointed tone in the documents cannot be ignored; their active attempts to combine childcare with feminist theory and the building of a feminist consciousness fell short. The experience with the *Kinderläden* movement showed the West German feminists that more theoretical discussion was needed as to how to enact a

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 3.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 2.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 4.

feminist theory based on questions of childcare. This discussion would reemerge in the 1970s.

Chapter 5

The Question for Every Woman: Discourses and Debates Concerning the Gendered Division of Labor, 1976-1978

Gunild Feigenwinter's "Manifesto of Mothers"

The growth of the New Women's Movement in the 1970s, mostly due to the anti-paragraph 218 campaign, included a large influx of young, single women from diverse backgrounds. Surveys of the readers of the feminist magazines *Emma* and *Courage* in 1979 revealed that around 75% of all their readers were under the age of thirty.¹¹⁸ While many members of the *Aktionsrat* were mothers, the women's movement of the 1970s consisted largely of childless women, mostly due to an increased usage of the pill among young women in West Germany.¹¹⁹ The strong presence of single, childless women in the movement shifted the focus away from a theory of emancipation which included the question of children to issues concerning women's control of her reproductive capacity and health.

By the late 1970s, Alice Schwarzer emerged as the unofficial spokeswoman for the New Women's Movement due to her media popularity, but her open rejection of motherhood as a hindrance to women who wanted to pursue a career was not without criticism from within.¹²⁰ In 1976 Gunild Feigenwinter, a German national living in Switzerland and editor

¹¹⁸ Schulz, *Lange Atem*, 29.

¹¹⁹ Herzog, "Between Coitus," 274.

¹²⁰ Alice Schwarzer "Warum ich kein Kind habe" *Emma* November 1977.

of the journal *Hexenpresse*, voiced her disapproval of the wider movement's failure to support political action centered on mothers, children, and the connected issue of the gendered division of labor. Feigenwinter's "Manifest der Mütter" or "Manifesto of Mothers," published in *Hexenpresse*, heralded a return to the mother question within the movement, which could also be seen at the Summer University for Women in West Berlin in 1978.¹²¹ This reassertion of a feminist politic based on mothers again placed the practical issues concerning the gendered division of labor at the center of discussion, but this time as a means to attack the dominate positions concerning motherhood, marriage, and divorce in the women's movement. While she was writing out of Basel, Switzerland, Feigenwinter directly addressed her fellow feminists in West Germany, especially those who supported the journalist Alice Schwarzer. Her attack demonstrates not only the tension which existed in the movement over the mother question, but also the way this tension helped further define the positions of those who advocated the mother question.

Feigenwinter's document, first and foremost, attempted to dispel what she called the "myth of the women's collective."¹²² Not happy with the direction of the women's movement, Feigenwinter set out to attack what she believed to be the ostracization of women with children from the initiatives of a movement believed to incorporate the issues of all women. But Feigenwinter didn't just call for the acceptance of the mother and children questions in the movement; she believed that the movement could be characterized as regressive without the integration of these issues.¹²³

¹²¹ Gunild Feigenwinter, "Manifest der Mütter," *Die Hexenpresse* 1976, 1-51.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 1.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

Feigenwinter invoked the experience of motherhood as her authority against non-mothers. She argued that by not politicizing motherhood, they reduced motherhood to an ideology instead of a real situation for many women ¹²⁴ Feigenwinter most specifically attacked the movement's understanding of the mother-child bond as a construction which unnaturally binds mothers to their children, resulting in the "enslavement" of women in their home.¹²⁵ Although Feigenwinter did not completely disagree with this idea, she nonetheless posited that complete rejection of the notion of the mother-child bond meant "mothers must take shame in their better instincts."¹²⁶ Placing emphasis on the experience of motherhood in the creation of feminist politics, Feigenwinter questioned the ability of women without children to define the relationship between mother and child without having experienced motherhood themselves.

In Feigenwinter's opinion, this lack of experience as mothers also affected the movement's understanding of marriage and work, especially the unpaid work of mothers. Children became the central issue. Feigenwinter agreed that marriage as an institution needed to be reformed or ended, but she pointed to the special circumstances of mothers, mainly their financial status, arguing that "we must understand what the societal alternatives should look like for mothers and children in addition to their governmental and social protection."¹²⁷ Feigenwinter argued the affects of divorce were the double burden of paid and unpaid work for mothers. Feigenwinter asked "Why not instead of double work and exoneration of the

¹²⁴ Ibid, 2.

¹²⁵ Alice Schwarzer "Mutterliebe" *Emma* May 1978, 5.

¹²⁶ Feigenwinter, "Manifest," 18.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 16.

father emphasize a divorce with the father obligated to pay the full room and board of the children? But no, double work and employment from women outside of the house is easier: it obligates the man to nothing.”¹²⁸

Because the mainstream New Women’s Movement failed to take up issues relating to the practical needs of mothers and children, such as the issue of the double work of mothers, Feigenwinter called the New Women’s Movement a conservative movement, playing into the hands of men and patriarchy. Success for Feigenwinter meant an end to patriarchy or the dominance of men over women in every social, political, and cultural sphere. This goal could only be achieved through the recognition of the rights of mothers and children and the politicization of all women around women’s issues as a unified group separate from male dominated political parties and unions. Only issues related to motherhood, in the opinion of Feigenwinter, acted as purely feminist political topics. Feigenwinter wrote, “Patriarchy will not be reduced through such emancipation from the children question . . . Oddly enough this way of emancipation has its absolute biological boundary at the helplessness of a small child, but such small differences do not come to the fore with a flat, undifferentiated ideology of our emancipation.”¹²⁹

Feigenwinter’s diatribe against the feminist politics of the New Women’s Movement based on her emphasis on the mother question points not only to the relationship between the mother question and questions of the gendered division of labor, but also the diversity of opinions on the proper politics of the New Women’s Movement and what constitutes emancipation and feminism. Feigenwinter’s essay heralded a return in the New Women’s

¹²⁸ Ibid, 16.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 20.

Movement to questions concerning the “mother question,” exemplified by the third Summer University for Women at the Free University in West Berlin in 1978. The Summer Universities began in the summer of 1976 as an initiative of the students and teachers at the Free University. In 1977, they decided to take up the issue “Women and Mothers” because the organizers believed “the taboo and ignorance of the mother question in the large part of the women’s movement seemed to us to be no longer acceptable.”¹³⁰

Feigenwinter’s text incited a reemergence of the question of motherhood and children in the Women’s Movement, but this time as a challenge to the women’s movement itself. Her connection of the New Women’s Movement with West German society’s conception of mothers points to a feeling of isolation among mothers who also advocated feminist action; not quite accepted by the women’s movement, but also against the prevalent societal conception of women, they attempted to formulate their own theory of emancipation within the wider movement.

(House)work Becomes Political – Debates over the definition of work and female emancipation

In 1977, women from every part of the New Women’s Movement came together at the second Summer University for Women at the Free University in West Berlin. The yearly event, organized by female students and teachers at the Free University, chose as its topic “Women as the Paid and Unpaid Workforce,” a topic they argued which “applied to *all* women.”¹³¹ The subject brought to the fore the question of how to combat the “low opinion

¹³⁰ 3. Sommeruniversität für Frauen. Dokumentations-gruppe., *Frauen und Mütter: Beiträge zur 3. Sommeruniversität für Frauen* (West Berlin: Basis Verlag, 1978), 9.

¹³¹ Sommeruniversität für Frauen. Dokumentations-gruppe., *Frauen als bezahlte und unbezahlte Arbeitskräfte: Beiträge zur Berliner Sommeruniversität für Frauen, Oktober 1977*, 1. Aufl. ed. (Berlin: Frauenbuchvertrieb, 1978), 3.

of women both as housewives and as capable employment.”¹³² While members of the movement had been discussing the question women and work since the very beginning of the movement, the Summer University brought together those who advocated two different strategies to combating the lesser worth of women’s work, the *Lohn für Hausarbeit* or Wages for Housework Movement and those who advocated qualified jobs for women. The Wages for Housework campaign proved very controversial; with its support of state funded wages for wives and mothers, the initiative seemed to validate the male-breadwinner/female-homemaker gendered division of labor, in addition to supporting women’s isolation in the private sphere. At the heart of this structural paradox, however, was a desire to improve the worth of women’s unpaid work in the home. While the Wages for Housework Campaign did not gain much support in West Berlin nor achieve its aims, they did succeed in changing the Women’s Movement’s perspective of housework. Most could no longer deny that housework was indeed productive work.

The Wages for Housework Movement emerged around the same time as the Summer University of 1977. An idea which originated in the Italian Women’s Movement, the advocacy for the payment of housework created a following in West Berlin as well and there were hopes that this movement would be the next unifying campaign of the Women’s Movement, just like the anti-§218 campaign.¹³³ The Wages for Housework campaign also challenged the movement’s support of women working outside the home as a means for emancipation, as propagated by the socialist emancipation theory, while countering an overall critique of housework and housewives.

¹³² Ibid., 4.

¹³³ Conversation with Gisela Bock in August 2006.

Central to their critique of a feminist strategy based on paid labor was a criticism of Karl Marx's theory of emancipation through work. A paper presented by Hannelore Schröder exemplified the questioning of the socialist emancipation theory as it applied to women.¹³⁴ In her paper, Schröder argued that the Women's Movement needed to put forth a new political program which included a new political economy of the household, one that took into account the labor of women.¹³⁵ In the opinion of Schröder, Marx ignored women's work when he created his philosophy and that "the limit of his political economy is where the analysis of the forms of exploitation of female labor begins."¹³⁶ Schröder contended that in the house economy, the most important means of production for society took place: the birthing and upbringing of children, important for the reproduction of future producers, work almost entirely carried out by women.¹³⁷ By naming this reproduction instead of production, Schröder believed Marx downplayed the important role of women in society. By differentiating between reproduction and production and then giving more worth to production, Marx attached specific tasks to men and women. Schröder turned this maxim around, arguing that the worth of the different means of production, whether working for wages or birthing children, should be based on the worth of that role for society.¹³⁸

Because she argued the work of reproduction by women was the most important job in society, Schröder placed the household at the center of any new notion of political

¹³⁴ Hannelore Schröder "Unbezahlte Hausarbeit, Leichtlohnarbeit, Doppelarbeit. Zusammenhänge und Folgen" in Summeruniversität für Frauen, *Frauen als bezahlte*, 108-118.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 108.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 111.

¹³⁷ Schröder, "Unbezahlte," 108.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 108-109.

economy of society, positing that the sex-based division of labor in the household profoundly affected women's ability to work outside the home, both for the double-burden this division places on women, but also because the association of women with the household affected the kinds of work and the wages of women outside the home.¹³⁹ Men, Schröder pointed out, had the benefit of the housework of women to aid in their production in the public sphere. Women, however, had to support themselves, taking on both the role of housewife and wage laborer. To change this system, Schröder argued that one cannot just question capitalism, but the real culprit, the creation Family-Father-System and its influence on the labor and property relationships in the home and within a marriage.¹⁴⁰

Schröder's paper exemplified the theoretical questioning of Marxism which acted as a theoretical base for the Wage for Housework campaign. In addition to these theoretical foundations, a desire for more support and value given to the housework of women, the experience of the gendered division of labor, and lastly the double burden of working outside and in the home served as the other motivations for the movement.¹⁴¹ Therefore, the movement was not just concerned with validating the work of housewives, but the work of all women in the home, whether they worked outside the home or not. The controversy arose over their strategy for attaining that worth: payment for housework. They believed that women receiving wages for housework would give women more power of choice in the creation of gender relations and division of labor in the home. Wages for Housework, they believed, also held the potential for relieving the double burden of women who worked both

¹³⁹ Ibid, 109.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 114.

¹⁴¹ "Flugblatt der internationalen Lohn-für-Hausarbeit-Kampagne" in Lottemi Doormann, *Keiner schiebt uns weg: Zwischenbilanz d. Frauenbewegung in d. Bundesrepublik* (Weinheim: Beltz, 1979), 145.

outside and in the home since employment could now be an option instead of a necessity for women. Lastly, the power of wages would also allow women to decide when they would like to have children.¹⁴²

By politicizing the private sphere, the campaign advocated a new feminist strategy related to work not necessarily based in advocating better working conditions for women on the labor market, but in the home. Gisela Bock (a German historian whose work currently focuses on the Nazi sterilization projects of women) became active in the movement and wrote many essays in the late 1970s in support of the campaign. At the summer university, Bock presented a paper entitled “Wages for Housework – Women’s Fights and Feminist Strategies.”¹⁴³ Bock’s article criticized the New Women’s Movement’s definition of housework as “special work” for which only women were qualified, work by which the notion of femininity was defined.¹⁴⁴ Similar to Feigenwinter’s critique that the aims of the Women’s Movement didn’t take into consideration the realities of mothers, Bock also criticized the definition of housework as unrealistic, arguing that millions of women depended on the very work that the women’s movement attempted to free women from.¹⁴⁵ Bock’s statement implied a belief that the women’s movement critique of housework excluded homemakers from political action. The Wages for Housework movement,

¹⁴² Ibid, 145.

¹⁴³ Gisela Bock “Lohn für Hausarbeit – Frauenkämpfe und feministische Strategie” in Sommeruniversität für Frauen. Dokumentations-gruppe., *Frauen als bezahlte*, 206-214.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 207.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 208.

according to Bock, solved this problem by politicizing the “working situation that is basically determined for all women” and the invisibility of women’s work in society.¹⁴⁶

Bock’s “reality argument” carried over to a pessimistic critique of the possibilities of advocating women’s work outside the home and improving working conditions as an emancipatory strategy. First, Bock argued that the “glorification” of qualified work positions did not look at the reality of the situation: men would and still dominated the workforce and women’s reproductive capacities would prevent them from promotion. In addition, Bock posited that fighting for equal work opportunities for women did not encompass the needs of every woman.¹⁴⁷ The women Bock referenced here became clearer in a later article. The Wages for Housework Movement wanted their wages to come as a subsidy from the government through an increase in already existing welfare programs.¹⁴⁸ But this could only happen through changes in the presuppositions of the welfare system. Bock argued that the state, by only focusing on the restructuring of the job market to include women (in response to the demands of the women’s movement) ignored basic inequalities in the welfare state, such as the fact that child money or *Kindergeld* was at the time tied to the father’s wages. The result guaranteed “a vicious circle of dependency,” “poverty for single mothers, poverty and discrimination for Lesbians, overworking of the double burdened . . . in essence: new dependencies, new housework.”¹⁴⁹ By focusing the state’s attention to the work of women in

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 208.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 212-13.

¹⁴⁸ Gisela Bock “Berliner Gruppe ‘Frauen für Lohn für Hausarbeit’ in Doorman, *Keiner scheidt*, 140.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 140-141.

the home, the Wages for Housework Movement hoped for a restructuring of state welfare practices that would no longer discriminate against women, especially single mothers.

Gisela Bock and the Wages for Housework Campaign seemed to discount or ignore the other goals in the advocacy of women's employment outside the home, mainly the goals to reverse the perceived psychological effects of isolation and to promote the ability for women to collectively work together for social change. Two papers presented at the Summer University explained the feminist strategy of qualified jobs for women in response to the Wages for Housework movement. Roswitha Burgard took on the issue of the effects of housework on women, pulling heavily from the arguments made by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*.¹⁵⁰ Her main thesis contended that the pressure to have children and the isolation of housewives promoted serious psychological and psychosomatic sicknesses in women. Burgard argued that housewives were incapable of becoming good mothers because they had “no real acknowledgment, no adequate discussion, stimulus, and have no perspective.”¹⁵¹ They instead sought self-valuation and access to society through their children, which lead to disappointment when they discovered themselves to be poor mothers. Citing psychological studies concerning isolation, Burgard connected isolation from society to the appearance of fear, hallucinations and other psychic disorders.¹⁵² For Burgard, the Wages for Housework campaign did not take into account the affects of housework on women, an effect independent of the worth of housework in society.

¹⁵⁰ Roswitha Burgard “Lohn für Hausarbeit” in Sommeruniversität für Frauen, *Frauen als bezahlte*, 218.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 220.

¹⁵² Ibid, 222.

In addition to the psychological stance against the Wages for Housework movement, the *Sozialistische Frauen Bund* (SFB) believed that revolutionary change, and thereby the complete emancipation of women, could only occur through the societal incorporation of and the ensuing collectivization of women in the work force.¹⁵³ The SFB, opposing any traditional forms of marriage and motherhood, asked how the Wages for Housewife movement included and benefited single women.¹⁵⁴ In addition, calling the Wages for Housework movement very reactionary, they concluded that “When everyone who cares for others receives wages, it applies to wives with and without children and single mothers with children. Wages for Housework means then the concrete coercion [for women] to marry and have children.”¹⁵⁵ By supporting the benefits for housework and then having the government pay for the initiative, the SFB argued that the male-breadwinner/female-homemaker model would stay intact without any further discussion as to its end, as well as encouraging a continued sex-specific socialization of children.

The SFB not only argued that Wages for Housework solidified the gender order, but also that the promotion of woman’s isolation in the home would prevent women from discovering the personal development and emancipatory aspects of work, a personal development that could only occur with cooperative relationships and production.¹⁵⁶ Countering the Wages for Housework’s argument that the mere receipt of wages would allow for more independence of women, the women of the SFB posited that the present economic

¹⁵³ Sozialistisch Frauenbund “Wir wollen keinen Lohn für die Hausarbeit” in Sommeruniversität für Frauen, *Frauen als bezahlte*, 129-140.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 130.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 130.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 136.

condition of a late-capitalist society created dependency of everyone on each other, no matter their situation. The SFB believed at least working outside the home allowed for collective work towards a common goal, which would be the end of capitalism.¹⁵⁷ By encouraging housework, the Wages for Housework movement prevented the politicization of women which could only happen collectively in the public sphere.

Despite the critical reaction of the Wages for Housework Movement in the New Women's Movement, the Wages for Housework movement succeeded in convincing the movement that raising children and housework had more worth than previously believed. This shift could be seen in an editorial by Alice Schwarzer in *Emma*.¹⁵⁸ Schwarzer was not without criticisms of the movement herself. She believed the movement isolated women in the private sphere, writing "The housewives wages would not liberate women, but add to their enslavement!"¹⁵⁹ For Schwarzer, payment from the state would only reinforce the West German gendered division of labor further. Women who support this campaign, she argued, were no better than male politicians who would keep women in their traditional place in the private sphere. By receiving payment for housework, women who worked at home would be even more compelled to remain isolated in their "House wife ghetto," especially from the public sphere and political activism.¹⁶⁰ Schwarzer also took to task the movement's propagation of the traditional notion that women were fitter for housework and raising children.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 136.

¹⁵⁸ Alice Schwarzer, "Hausfraulohn?," *Emma* May 1977, 3.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 3.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 3.

Despite these criticisms, Schwarzer agreed “The campaign was triggered by the very true thought that the raising of children and the maintenance of the workforce in the home has worth.”¹⁶¹ But beyond this point she believed “the question of money is not the only question and such a flat economic analysis doesn’t solve the problem.”¹⁶² In lieu of the Wages for Housework Movement, Schwarzer advocated a platform which stated that the double burden of women should come through other means, namely the “refusal of the self-evident competency of women for house and children,” men taking over half of the housework and child care, society taking over house and child duties through initiatives such as full day schools, and a change in the nature of housework. For instance, instead of women performing household duties themselves, Schwarzer suggested the creation of clubs where women could clean their houses together.¹⁶³

As this debate shows, several different opinions about the role of paid work in the path to female emancipation existed within the New Women’s Movement. Despite structurally reinforcing the mother as homemaker gender role, the *Lohn für Hausarbeit* movement challenged some basic and fundamental beliefs of housework as a symbol of women’s oppression, instead convincing the New Women’s Movement that housework and childrearing were vital elements of the workforce.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 3.

¹⁶² Ibid, 3.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 3.

Conclusion

The debates in the New Women's Movement over the gendered division of labor pointed to the diversity of the movement after 1975. While the movement against §218 created a unified front against a common cause, the New Women's Movement encompassed the needs and opinions of women no matter how controversial, through the diversity of their activities. The popularity of *Emma* and the wider media presence of Schwarzer, however, created a feeling of exclusion among those who supported the mother and child questions. Feigenwinter's call for initiatives which also took into account the realities of the gendered division of labor in the home, the double burden of paid and unpaid work, childcare, etc, acted as a strong critique of the dominate voice in the movement.

The Wages for Housework campaign, while structurally problematic in their aim of a wage for all wives and mothers, put the question of the worth of housework into feminist discussion in West Berlin. Instead of a symbol of women's relegation to the private sphere, feminist viewed housework with more respect and worth. While it would be impossible at this point to gauge the effect of these debates on the situation of women as a whole in West German society, these women challenged head on both the dominate image of women as housewives and mothers and the codified duty of mothers to their family.

Chapter 5

Conclusion – Towards an Understanding of the Affects of the New Women’s Movement

“The woman runs the household in her own responsibility. She is entitled to take on paid employment, as far as this can be combined with her duties in marriage in family.”¹⁶⁴ These two sentences written into the Civil Code of West Germany expressed both the postwar political and social discourses’ equivocation of women with mothers and housewives, but also the perception that mothers’ and wives’ sole duties were with her family. But the entrance of housewives and mothers into the workforce in larger numbers coupled with the greater desire to work contested the image of the ideal mother and housewife.

While the New Women’s Movement as a whole attempted to change the predominate image of women in West German society, those in the movement who attempted to politicize motherhood, childcare, and housework believed that only by creating a feminist agenda which took into consideration the practical implications and lived reality of these three duties which were considered “typically” feminine could mothers successfully enter public life. This need for concrete changes drove the *Aktionsrat* to create their own childcare solutions, but a solution which could simultaneously emancipate themselves and their children. The story of the *Kinderläden* movement demonstrates, however, the complicated nature of

¹⁶⁴ Kolinsky, *Women in West Germany*, 49.

finding the most effective strategy for enacting theory, especially in the case of mothers. Members of the *Aktionsrat* wanted to have careers and become politically active, but financial constraints and an equal desire to raise their children in an anti-authoritarian manner prevented the full realization of a strategy which took into consideration the development of an emancipatory theory and the question of women's work and the double burden. Relieving mother of childcare responsibilities four days a week was an accomplishment, but a disappointment for the *Aktionsrat* as well.

The postwar gender order affected the lives of both single and married women, mothers and non-mothers, but attempts by the women's movement to change the gender order and conditions for women was not without internal debate over the proper questions and theory which would form the foundation of an effective feminist politic. The anti-§218 campaign united female activists in West Germany, but a universal cause did not emerge there after. While the diversity created a movement which could incorporate the needs of such a broadly defined category as "women," the public image of the movement created a feeling of exclusion, as experienced by those who felt the mother and children question should be incorporated into the agenda of the wider movement. In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir asked "What is a woman?" As the debates in the New Women's Movement showed, there were many answers to that question.

After reconstructing the theoretical debates concerning the gendered division of labor in the New Women's Movement, a debate which asked the question in how far a feminist theory could incorporate the needs of mothers at the center of discussion, and analyzing the *Kinderläden* as a feminist initiative, one question remains: did the New Women's Movement's challenge to society's conception of the gendered division of labor actually

succeed in reconstructing gender relations in West German society? The historian Wiebke Kolbe has argued for a connection between the Women's Movement and a change in political discourse in the 1970s surrounding the family from one which believed the well-being of a child could only be fulfilled by the mother to one which included fathers as well. She writes:

Feminists claimed that it was not alone the role of mothers to take care of children, but that children needed their fathers as well. Psychologists, pedagogues, and social scientists defined fathers as persons capable of taking care of small children and important persons to whom children could relate emotionally. Actually, more and more men accompanied their wives to birth preparation classes, attended the delivery, engaged in baby care and began to reflect about their role as fathers. These ideas and practices of fatherhood were something new in modern European history, and they had a revolutionary potential, destroying old norms of the male breadwinner family and of complimentary gender roles.¹⁶⁵

Kolbe's argument points to changes in the gender order, at least discursively, which occurring in the 1970s, a change she attributes to the feminist movement. But did the Women's Movement fulfill its own goals? For whom was there more changes: single women or married women or mothers? By analyzing the goals and strategies of the Women's Movement, we can begin to search for the affects of the Women's Movement on the wider society.

¹⁶⁵ Wiebke Kolbe, "Gender and Parenthood in West German Family Politics from the 1960s to the 1980s," in *State Policy and Gender System in the Two German States and Sweden 1945-1989*, ed. Rolf Torstendahl (Uppsala: Bloms i Lund Tryckeri, 1999), 152.

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