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**“Neither ruthless militants nor tentative coffee party”? – A comparative analysis of  
the aims, activities and accomplishments of the Irish Women Graduates’  
Associations (IWGAs) and the German Federation of University Women (DAB) during  
the 1950s and 1960s**

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**30 August 2013**



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## Summary

This thesis is a comparative analysis of the activities, aims and accomplishments of the German Federation of University Women (“Deutscher Akademikerinnenbund”, DAB) and the Irish Women Graduates’ Associations (IWGAs) during the 1950s and the 1960s. The main research objective has been to establish whether these two women graduates’ organizations contributed to continuing an active women’s movement at a time when the political, social and cultural environment of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Ireland was largely impervious to women’s demands for de jure and de facto equality.

Research on women’s organized activism during the middle decades of the twentieth century has so far been very limited. Instead, women’s historians have mainly focused on the first and second wave feminist movements which emerged across the Western world throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and during the early 1970s, respectively. Only few scholars have examined the activities of women’s organizations in the years between these movements. Their research, however, has suggested that the women’s movement should be understood as a movement which has both peak and slack periods, but is, nevertheless, marked by continuity.

By providing an in-depth analysis of the DAB’s and the IWGAs’ activities and achievements throughout the 1950s and 1960s, this thesis supports the hypothesis of a continuous women’s movement. It argues that these two women’s organizations indeed contributed to maintaining a women’s movement in Germany and in Ireland, despite lacking support from the public and political domain. The comparative, cross-cultural approach of this thesis, moreover, reveals the often shared experiences of women while demonstrating the diverging ways in which they viewed and confronted their status and rights in society.

Focusing on three particular areas of interest for the two organizations with regard to women, namely education, employment and equal representation in public and political life, the study demonstrates that the DAB and the IWGAs continuously challenged the dominant notion that women’s primary role was in the private sphere, as a mother and wife, and that they should thus eschew public life. By maintaining an

active network with other women's groups and fostering a feminist culture and identity among its members (many of whom had a long association with the women's movement), it is shown that the organizations provided not only the foundation for increased public protest but also a blue-print for several of the reforms extending women's rights and status in both Ireland and Germany during the 1970s. Although both the DAB and the IWGAs struggled to achieve immediate successes at the time, due to a lack of support from the public, this study argues that the continuous activism of the organizations during the 1950s and 1960s was, nonetheless, crucial in the context of the women's movement and in facilitating the emergence of second wave feminism in the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Ireland.

## Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to express my great appreciation and gratitude to my supervisors, Dr Maryann Valiulis and Prof Alan Kramer. Their guidance, support and constructive criticism have been invaluable for the development and completion of this thesis. Dr Valiulis' encouragement was an important factor in my initial decision to apply for a PhD and I am deeply grateful for her continuing commitment to and support of my project. I am equally thankful to Prof Kramer for his willingness to co-supervise me and lending me his expertise. I have greatly benefited from his advice and support.

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Like many researchers I am also indebted to the staff in the various archives. I am very appreciative of the help and support granted in the National Archives of Ireland, the Federal Archive in Koblenz and of the university archives in Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin and Queen's University Belfast.

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Last but not least, I wish to thank my partner Mark and my entire family. Their continuous and unconfined support throughout these last years has been an



indispensable source of motivation and emotional strength and I could not have done it without them.

## List of Abbreviations

ADF	Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein (General German Women's Association)
BDF	Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine (Federation of German Women's Associations)
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union)
CSU	Christlich Soziale Union (Christian Social Union)
DAB	Deutscher Akademikerinnenbund (German Federation of University Women)
DUWGA	Dublin University Women Graduates' Association
EEC	European Economic Community
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei (Free Democratic Party)
IAWGCG	Irish Association of Women Graduates and Candidate Graduates
IFUW	International Federation of University Women
IHA	Irish Housewives Association
IrFUW	Irish Federation of University Women
IWGAs	Irish Women Graduates' Associations
JCWSSW	Joint Committee of Women Societies and Social Workers
NUWGA	National University of Ireland Women Graduates' Association
QWGA	Queen's University Women Graduates' Association
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei (Social Democratic Party)
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
UCD	University College Dublin

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# Introduction: Context and Theories

## 1. Introduction and aim

So far, only few historical studies have examined women's political activism and feminism in Ireland or Germany in the years between the 1940s and late 1960s, when the new women's movement emerged in both states. Instead, many studies focusing on these decades in the past have examined women in the domain of the private sphere, namely in their roles as mothers and wives. Yet the image of the domesticated woman as the historical norm for the 1950s and early 1960s elides class-differences among women - a factor which certainly influenced women's decision to take up employment since many women simply could not afford to stay at home. It also disregards those women, married or single, mothers or not, who did not have to work out of economic necessity, but who chose to take up a career and work outside the home. As Christine von Oertzen stresses, the scholarly use of the Western ideology of domesticity as a historical fact for the middle decades of the twentieth century, has a "tendency to paralyze women" historically.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the rigid depiction of women's roles in most Western societies throughout the 1950s and 1960s represents precisely what has been criticised by Joan Hoff and other women's historians as "patriarchal writing of history" - a history which is measured predominantly by the exercise of public power and silences those who were not part of this echelon of social hierarchy.<sup>2</sup>

In order to provide a more comprehensive and historically accurate picture of women's role in mid-twentieth century Western societies, attention needs to be moved away from the centres of political power, i.e. parliaments, political parties, religious or industrial boards. Traditionally, women have been significantly under-represented in such areas of society and thus, as Silke Lesemann points out, are seldom to be found in the records and documents of these institutions. This absence in the official (and usually well-documented) sources further solidifies the illusion of the

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<sup>1</sup> Christine von Oertzen, *The Pleasure of the Surplus Income. Part-Time Work, Gender Politics, and Social Change in West Germany, 1955-1969* (New York/Oxford, 2007), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Joan Hoff, 'The Impact and Implications of Women's History', in Maryann Valiulis and Mary O'Dowd, eds., *Women & Irish History* (Dublin, 1997), p. 24.



historically powerless and oppressed woman.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the focus needs to be on women's broader experiences within the political, social and cultural setting, as well as on the question of how they themselves perceived and debated the policies and ideologies imposed on them from the centres of power.

In recent years, private collections and archives on women's history and women's political activism have become more available and an increasing number of scholars have started to uncover the history of those women who challenged the ideology of a gendered separation of the private and the public sphere in the 1950s and 1960s. Scholars like Linda Connolly<sup>4</sup>, Ute Gerhard<sup>5</sup>, Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp<sup>6</sup> or Diarmaid Ferriter<sup>7</sup> have demonstrated that the activities and political initiatives of some women's organizations throughout the 1950s and 1960s were vital for the continuation of a women's movement and thus for the re-emergence of second wave feminism. As these authors have shown, by organizing themselves around issues concerning mainly their lives and rights, many women were, in fact, continuously involved with politics and women's rights throughout these years. In the several women's organizations which existed during the middle decades of the twentieth century, women came together to maintain a unified activism for women's interests and rights.

This evolving group of scholars has, therefore, come to criticize the claim of the 'newness' of the emerging feminist consciousness in the late 1960s and early 1970s as an effect of social, economic and cultural modernization - an assumption that neglects women's continuous efforts to improve their lives and status in the previous decades. As Connolly states, "[T]he innovation of women's organisations in the 1950s is underestimated if viewed through an inflated view of the progressiveness of the 1960s [...]".<sup>8</sup> The German historian Ute Frevert comes to a similar conclusion. She stresses that the more the social, political and cultural conditions throughout the 1950s and

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<sup>3</sup> Silke Lesemann, 'Weibliche Spuren. Archivalische Quellen zur historischen Frauenforschung', *WerkstattGeschichte*, 5 (1993), p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Linda Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement: From Revolution to Devolution* (Dublin, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Ute Gerhard, 'Die Frauenbewegung', in Roland Roth and Dieter Rucht, eds., *Die sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945. Ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt am Main, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp, *Survival in the Doldrums. The American Women's Right Movement, 1945 to the 1960s* (Oxford, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Diarmaid Ferriter, 'Women and Political Change in Ireland since 1960', *Éire – Ireland*, 43 (2008), pp. 178-204.

<sup>8</sup> Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement*, p. 72.



early 1960s are depicted as claustrophobic and dull, the fresher and more impressive the dynamic of the 1970s appears.<sup>9</sup> Rather, these efforts need to be evaluated against the social, political and cultural obstacles women faced in their struggle, but without overemphasizing the impact of peripheral factors and structures such as cultural, economic and social modernization processes on women's activism. As Irish historian Mary Cullen argues, "[T]here is a danger of being anachronistic and ahistorical if the demands and campaigns are not seen in the context of their own time and place."<sup>10</sup>

Despite these already existing and important contributions to women's history and the history of the women's movement, women's organized activism during the 1950s and 1960s continues to present a field which requires more research, as many women's organizations have only recently started to preserve their history.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, there is still a wealth of material that needs to be documented and which can cast light on how and whether women negotiated their rights and status in the context of their time.

This thesis examines two relatively unexplored women's organizations: the German Federation of University Women ("Deutscher Akademikerinnenbund", DAB) and the Irish Women Graduates' Associations (IWGAs), in the 1950s and 1960s. Part of the documents and files for the research on the Irish organization were sourced directly from the associations themselves, as well as from individual members, since a significant amount of the material had neither been documented nor collectively stored or archived. Both the DAB and the IWGAs were constituted by university women graduates. Their modest goals were to give graduate women the opportunity to stay in touch with one another. However, these organizations also aimed to represent women graduates' interests in their careers and to further their opportunities, for example, by distributing research scholarships for women or by protesting against discrimination in the hiring process and salary scales. The research, therefore, focuses primarily on middle-class women, many of whom deviated from the

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<sup>9</sup> Ute Frevert, quoted in Annegret Braun, *Frauenalltag und Emanzipation. Der Frauenfunk des Bayerischen Rundfunks in kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive (1945-1968)* (Münster, 2005), p. 36.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Cullen, 'Towards a New Ireland: Women, Feminism & Peace Process', in Valiulis and O'Dowd, eds., *Women & Irish History*, p. 270.

<sup>11</sup> Linda Connolly and Tina O'Toole, *Documenting Irish Feminisms. The Second Wave* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 4-5.

housewife and mother norm in that they neither necessarily embodied this norm nor advocated it.

The research underlying this thesis is situated in the argument of continuity within the women's movement and the link between women's activism during the 1950s and 1960s and first and second wave feminism in both Ireland and Germany. While acknowledging the differences in attitudes and approaches between the women activists represented in the DAB and the IWAGs and those of second wave feminists, this thesis suggests that the activities of these organizations were crucial for the new public and political discussions of women's status and role in society in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which facilitated the emergence of second wave feminism.

This dissertation's objective is, therefore, to contribute to the growing body of literature which has recognized the importance of women's organizations' activities throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century to the continuation of the women's movement in the years between first and second wave feminism in Ireland and Germany. The aim is not to contest the fact that this movement lacked public and political support or that the organizations, which continued to push for women's rights, usually struggled to achieve immediate changes during these years. Rather, the basic argument is that women in both countries throughout this time did not simply sit back and retreat into the private sphere. Some women sought to improve women's rights, whether in employment, in the family, or in other aspects of society.

With a focus on graduate women, many of whom were pursuing careers, this research will demonstrate that women did not always conform to the ideologies and roles ascribed to their gender by the state and by society. Some women did seek a life outside the home and family, whether through a career or simply by being involved in a women's organization which had their interests at heart. Those women played an important role in keeping the demand for women's equal rights and equal social status alive and thereby contributed to maintaining a feminist activism both in Ireland and in the Federal Republic of Germany throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Through a comparative approach, this study further aims to provide an insight into the cultural similarities and differences of Irish and German women during the 1950s and 1960s and to reveal how they influenced the DAB's and the IWAGs'



activities and their aims. The decision to compare a women's organization in the Federal Republic of Germany with an organization in the Republic of Ireland was based on the two states' unique similarities in the consolidation of traditional gender ideologies and in the importance that was attributed to women's role in society at the beginning of the 1950s. In both the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Ireland the construction of gender relations and ideologies were primarily shaped by the nations' own recent pasts: the experiences of war, partition, and the process of nation-building and defining a unique national identity. As discussed in more detail in chapter II, a renewed emphasis on women's 'natural' role within the home as mother and wife, evident in both Ireland and West Germany, served a "re-masculinization" of both societies through the enforcement of a gendered status quo and the solidification of male power following years of social upheaval, war and - in the German case - also defeat. Moreover, women became boundary markers for an Irish and a West German identity as the ideological emphasis on motherhood and housewifery as women's primary social role served as an imperative demarcation from Northern Ireland and Britain for the Irish Free State and from East Germany and the Soviet Union for the Federal Republic. The evolutionary history of both states, therefore, particularly impacted women through the construction and enforcement of traditional, Christian and conservative gender ideologies that accompanied the consolidation of new power structures. Despite the constitutional concession of equal rights to women in both West Germany and Ireland, conservative family policies and ideologies which confirmed the gendered division of the public and private spheres ensured that women's social and legal status in both states had a very different quality to men's.

This being said, the similarities in Irish and West German gender ideologies are contrasted by the different realities of women's lives in the two states throughout the 1950s and 1960s. These differences were, above all, reflected in the diverging economic and cultural developments of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Ireland and in how they influenced women's status in society. Since the mid-1950s West Germans experienced an economic boom, after years of arduously rebuilding Germany and its economy from the rubbles and destructions of the Second World War. This economic boom had a significant impact on German society as it opened new occupational and qualification opportunities not only for men but,



increasingly, also for women (including married women), and facilitated new state funding in education and thus greater accessibility of secondary and higher education. In particular, the increasing employment of women in order to meet the demands of the economic boom resulted in the fact that gender ideologies often found little reflection in the reality of West German women's lives from the late 1950s onwards. While many women certainly worked in order to support their families, the recovery and growth of the West German economy also offered women new opportunities to break away from the norms and values and pursue a career or, at least, gain some financial independence.

Irish women, on the contrary, had little prospect of employment or financial independence as the Republic's economy stagnated for the most part of the 1950s and only gradually showed signs of improvement since the mid-1960s. Here, women who sought employment or a life less dictated by conservative gender ideologies and the Catholic Church were often forced to leave Irish shores and emigrate to Britain which, similar to West Germany, was experiencing a period of economic growth. Both employment opportunities and wages were much more favourable in Britain than in Ireland where unemployment figures continued to rise throughout the 1950s, reaching a peak high in the mid-1950s. As a result, approximately half a million people left Ireland for Britain between the 1940s and 1960s, nearly half of whom were women.<sup>12</sup> It was not until the mid-1960s that a change in economic policies, which had been implemented since the late 1950s, began to take root in the Republic of Ireland, gradually improving the standard of living, creating new employment opportunities and widening the access to secondary and third level education for the population at home.

Both the similarities and differences for Irish and German women during the 1950s and 1960s provide a compelling basis for comparison. It not only give rise to the question of how and to what extent the DAB and the IWGAs challenged dominant gender ideologies and aimed to improve women's status and their rights, but also raises the question of how their goals and activities developed and differed with the changing political, social and economic environment of the two states during the

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Enda Delaney, 'Transnationalism, Networks and Emigration from Post-War Ireland', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 23 (2005), p. 426.

1950s and 1960s. In doing so, the comparison of an Irish and a German women's organization during these decades elucidates some of the shared experiences of women in many Western countries in the middle decades of the twentieth century, while at the same time outlining how the cultural and economic differences of the two states influenced the tactics and objectives of the DAB and the IWGAs.

## **2. Research questions**

The key research questions underpinning this thesis focus on how the German Federation of University Women (DAB) and the Irish Women Graduates' Associations (IWGAs) defined their activities and objectives in the social, cultural and political framework of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s and how they should be understood within the context of the Irish and German women's movement. The aim is to establish whether these organizations contributed to maintaining an active women's movement in their respective countries in a time when there was little public and political support for such activism and when women were primarily expected to eschew the public sphere. To this end, the following research questions in relation to the DAB and the IWGAs were developed:

- What were the main aims and objectives of the DAB and the IWGAs during the 1950s and 1960s?
- How did they communicate these aims and which methods did they use to achieve and gain support for them?
- What differences or similarities existed between the DAB and the IWGAs and what social, cultural and political differences and similarities did they encounter in their respective countries?
- Did the DAB and the IWGAs challenge existing gender ideologies, particularly the assumption that women should stay in the home once they got married and had a family?
- Did their goals change over time?



- How effective were the two organizations in conveying their demands and protests into the public and political arena?
- How representative were the organizations in terms of age demographic?
- Was there collaboration between the organizations and other women's groups in attempting to achieve their goals?
- What were their achievements/failures?
- How did their activities and objectives throughout the 1950s and 1960s relate to the aims of the first wave and second wave feminism<sup>13</sup>?
- And finally, in what ways, if at all, did the activities of the two organizations during the 1950s and 1960s impact or create the right conditions for the renewed public and political discussion of women's rights and the emergence of second wave feminism in Ireland and Germany in the early 1970s?

### **3. Methodology**

The thesis was completed for the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies and is thus an interdisciplinary study which draws on history, sociology and is informed by feminist theory. It is designed as an empirical and comparative study based on qualitative analysis. The main sources for the analysis are the documents of the DAB and the IWGAs, i.e. minute books, correspondence and annual reports. These sources illustrate the individual aims and objectives of both organizations. They also highlight the methods that they used to achieve their goals in the 1950s and 1960s. An evaluation of the organizations' documents also indicates the DAB's and the IWGAs' levels of activity in regard to improving women's (and particularly women graduates') status in West German and Irish society at that time. The analysis of the primary material will be complemented by a critical assessment of the social, cultural and

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<sup>13</sup> The term "first wave feminism" is commonly used to describe women's activism which emerged across the Western world during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and focused primarily on issues concerning women's legal rights, such as women's equal access to education and their right to vote. "Second wave feminism" describes women's activism which surfaced towards the late 1960s and which, apart from demanding women's equal legal rights, also addressed issues of sexuality, women's reproductive rights or domestic violence against women.



political context, facilitated through a review of secondary source material, underpinned by social movement theory, which focuses primarily on movements in abeyance.

Primary material for this dissertation was sourced through extensive archival research in both Ireland and Germany. The majority of the files of the DAB are held in the Federal Archive in Koblenz, Germany. The collection is extensive and provides a comprehensive overview of the organization's activities during the years of interest here. In addition, the archive holds the private collections of two of the DAB's chairwomen, Marie-Elisabeth Lüders and Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt. As the DAB's files are exclusively in German, all quotations from the records of the DAB have been translated by me.

The main sources of information relevant for the discussion of the DAB are the minutes of executive committee meetings, as well as the minutes of the biennial general meetings. With its re-establishment after World War II, the DAB was organized into local branches, which were regulated by a centralized executive committee. This committee, which usually came together twice a year, as well as at the general meetings, took the vital part in framing and implementing the organization's official aims and mission statement. Some of the members of the committee were, furthermore, assigned to task-oriented subcommittees which presented their reports at the executive committee meetings. Minutes of the committee meetings are, therefore, a valuable source of information for this research and shed light on the organization's activities and goals, as well as on the aims and work of the subcommittees throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

In addition to the committee meeting minutes, the files of the DAB's general meetings are also of great significance for this study. The general meetings were held every two years and were open to all registered members. At these gatherings, the local branches and the subcommittees all presented reports of their past and planned activities. Furthermore, the general meetings were usually organized under a working-title, which was in line with the current or anticipated objectives of the organization. Many of the resolutions and memoranda forwarded to government institutions by the DAB in the 1950s and 1960s were articulated and voted on at the general meetings. The majority of the general meetings' files include reports of the committee and of

local branches, press cuttings and correspondence on attendance and feedback. Also included in these files are copies of some of the talks given at the meetings, as well as the resolutions and statements of the organization. These files provide an important insight into the organization's activities and objectives, including an indication of how these goals were articulated and who was lobbied in attempts to achieve them.

Owing to its unusual history and structure, the situation of the IWGAs' records is more complex, since the files are only partly and incoherently archived. The Irish organization was formed in 1902 as the "Irish Association for Women Graduates and Candidate Graduates" (IAWGCG) with branches in Dublin, Belfast, Derry, Galway and Cork. All of these branches worked for the same goal: women's equal access to Irish universities. In 1913 the IAWGCG dissolved and separate associations of women graduates were gradually established at each university, thus forming the National University Women Graduates' Association (NUWGA) with branches in Dublin, Galway and Cork, the Dublin University Women Graduates' Association (DUWGA) at Trinity College Dublin and the Queen's University Women Graduates' Association (QWGA) in Belfast.<sup>14</sup> In 1925 the three associations came together to form the Irish Federation of University Women (IrFUW) which functioned as an all-Ireland umbrella group for the women graduates' associations. However, the DUWGA, NUWGA and QWGA all maintained their individual status and remained separate entities.<sup>15</sup>

It needs to be pointed out here that the term "Irish Women Graduates' Associations" is not the official name. The associations all used their own abbreviations representing their alumni-institutes (DUWGA, NUWGA, QWGA). Thus there is no shared name to describe all three associations, despite the fact that they had originated from one organization and later joined again into a federation. In order to simplify the matter, I have decided to use the term "Irish Women Graduates' Associations" (or just IWGAs) for those statements and arguments, which refer to all three associations. However, I clearly distinguish the individual associations and their work in the analytical part of my thesis and will treat them separately when discussing their activities.

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<sup>14</sup> The establishment of the NUWGA, DUWGA and QWGA is discussed in more detail in chapter IV.1.

<sup>15</sup> Mary J. Hogan, 'University College Dublin Women Graduates' Association 1902-1982', in *University College Dublin Women Graduates' Association*, ed., (Dublin, 1982), pp. 19-20.



As a consequence of the dissolution of the IAWGCG in 1913 and the establishment of the individual associations, there are four different sets of files for the IWGAs: those of the NUWGA, the DUWGA, the QWGA and the IrFUW. The NUWGA had, at times, three offices: one in University College Dublin, one in University College Galway and later also in University College Cork. Each NUWGA branch administered its own files. The documents of the Irish Federation of University Women are distributed among the associations, according to the years and locations of office-holders in the IrFUW.

Over the years, the NUWGA and the QWGA handed their material to their respective university archives. However, neither of the collections is complete. The Queen's archive is in possession of most of the material related to the IrFUW throughout the 1950s and 1960s, including its minute books for the entire period, as well as files on some of the IrFUW conferences in the 1960s and some of the annual reports. The material of the QWGA for the two decades includes the annual reports, account books, and committee minute books, which, however, only date from 1923 to 1948 and again from 1966 to 1992.

The majority of the NUWGA files are stored in the University College Dublin (UCD) archive, but these files only comprise the Dublin branch of the NUWGA. This collection includes, among other material, the committee minute books, correspondence and annual reports, as well as some IrFUW documents. The documents of the Cork and Galway branches of the NUWGA, on the other hand, have never been archived by the branches. I contacted the current presidents of the individual branches in order to locate some of the missing material and they called on their members to look for any documents relating to the associations. In the case of Cork and Galway these attempts were not successful. The Galway branch explained that the documents of the 1950s and 1960s had been lost over the years, since the material was never stored in one place but rather distributed among the various office-holders throughout the years. The Cork branch informed me that their files had been given to a researcher twenty-five years ago and had never been returned. Efforts to get the researcher's name and get into touch with him or her were unsuccessful. Therefore, if not otherwise stated in the text, the abbreviation "NUWGA" is mainly used to describe the activities and aims of the association's Dublin branch. In matters



applying to the branches in Cork and Galway they are clearly referred to as the “NUWGA branch in Cork/Galway”.

Since this project is mainly concerned with women graduates in the Republic of Ireland throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the incomplete files for the QWGA, however, should not affect the quality and validity of this research. The activities and objectives of the Belfast-based QWGA take a smaller role in the research because this association worked in different political and social structures to the associations in the Republic. Nonetheless, these files are consulted as the QWGA was part of the IrFUW and originated from the same organization as the other two associations. In the case of the incomplete NUWGA files, it needs to be stated that the UCD branch of this association was by far the biggest within the NUWGA. With an average membership between 200 and 300, in comparison to Cork and Galway where the membership averaged around forty to fifty, there is little question which of the branches not only carried most weight in defining the NUWGA’s goals and objectives, but also which branch was most active in representing the NUWGA.

The Dublin University association (DUWGA) has handed some of its documents to the Trinity College Manuscripts and Archives Research Library, but the branch is still in possession of most of its files. When I got in touch with the DUWGA during my first year of research, this material had neither been archived nor stored properly and some of the material, similar to the Galway branch, was in the private possession of past office-holders. My call for old files and documents met with more success than with the Cork and Galway branches. Within a couple of months, several boxes of loose documents and papers were handed over to the DUWGA’s then acting secretary, Ann Budd, with whom I was in close contact. With the DUWGA’s authorization I sorted and indexed the existing documents, and established an archive at the association’s premises in Dublin. The material archived includes the complete set of committee minute books, some correspondence and annual reports, as well as files relating to the IrFUW and the International Federation of Women Graduates’ (IFUW) to which the IrFUW has been affiliated since 1925.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> In some of the early files of the associations the IrFUW is referred to as the IFUW. My decision to use ‘IrFUW’ is based on the fact that the International Federation of University Women is generally abbreviated as the IFUW. Inserting the “r” will clarify that I am referring to the Irish Federation and not the International Federation.

As with the files of the DAB, the committee minute books, together with conference material and resolutions, will represent my main source of information when examining the IWGAs' objectives and activities throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The minute books and other related material of the IrFUW are also consulted, as these files illustrate the co-operation and joint efforts, as well as differences, among the three individual associations.

Both the DAB and the IWGAs were also members of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), which, with over thirty affiliated women graduates' organizations at the time, aimed primarily at connecting academically educated women all over the world and thereby contribute to the international understanding of women graduates. The archive of the IFUW is administered by the Aletta Institute for Women's History in the Netherlands. However, due to the limitation in scope and length, this thesis focuses chiefly on the DAB's and the IWGAs' national work, rather than on their involvement within the IFUW. The international work of these two organizations through the IFUW could be a subject for further study. Christine von Oertzen has recently made a start in revealing the history of the IFUW, as well as the DAB's involvement in this international federation, in her book *Strategie Verständigung: Zur transnationalen Vernetzung von Akademikerinnen 1917-1955*.<sup>17</sup>

This thesis will draw on what Sherry Katz has termed the "researching around the subject method". Apart from excavating and using the actual collections of the research subject, i.e. the documents and papers of the Irish and the German organizations, this method also involves locating related sources.<sup>18</sup> The "researching around the subject method" is particularly useful when researching subjects or organizations whose historic documents and files have never been archived. Particularly in women's history, this is a widely used and important method since, as previously mentioned, many records which tell the history of women are only at the outset of being archived. Much material is still scattered, lost, or in private possession. Even where such files have been catalogued, the collection is often incomplete and fragmented, as with the files of the IWGAs. Thus, newspaper articles, government files

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<sup>17</sup> See Christine von Oertzen, *Strategie Verständigung: Zur transnationalen Vernetzung von Akademikerinnen 1917-1955* (Göttingen, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Sherry J. Katz, "Researching Around Our Subjects": Excavating Radical Women', *Journal of Women's History*, 20 (2008), pp. 168-86.



and documents of associated organizations are integrated into the analysis and this additional material adds new information on the research subject. Moreover, it also furthers the understanding of the subject's overall significance and impact.

The consultation of files of other women's organizations will, therefore, help to illustrate the extent of co-operation between the DAB and the IWGAs and other women's groups during the 1950s and 1960s. This additional material thus reveals whether an active network of women's organizations existed throughout these years in the Federal Republic of Germany and in the Republic of Ireland. It also demonstrates the level of importance of such a network for the work and achievements of individual women's organizations.

Government files and newspaper reports further elucidate whether the organizations succeeded in reaching a political and public audience with their campaigns and efforts. The files of the Department of the Taoiseach held by the National Archive of Ireland and the files of the German Department of Internal Affairs, stored in the Federal Archive in Koblenz, are valuable sources for the evaluation of the organizations' work throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century. Newspaper reports from the period illustrate the extent of publicity the organizations managed to obtain for their work and demands, or whether these demands were effectively communicated to the public.

#### ***4. Theoretical discourse on women's organized activism in the 1950s and 1960s***

In the past decades and years numerous studies on women's history have shown that the depiction of women as historically oppressed subjects and passive bystanders is an inaccurate and insufficient view. Women have, in fact, throughout history, been actively negotiating their rights and needs in society. They challenged existing laws and definitions of citizenship by demanding, for instance, property rights for married women, the right to vote, equal access to education throughout the nineteenth and the early twentieth century and reproductive rights in the later decades of the century. In addition, as recent research on women's role in the private



sphere has shown, women also exercised considerable influence on political and public debates through their roles as consumers and housewives. Mary E. Daly's study on Irish women and their struggle for obtaining running water and electricity in rural Ireland in the mid-twentieth century<sup>19</sup> and Katherine Pence's article on women's role as consumers in 1950s West Germany<sup>20</sup> are testament to this conclusion. Yet, as Maryann Valiulis and Mary O'Dowd point out, much work still remains to be done in order to transform the historical narrative into one which integrates women and their various experiences into history, rather than treating them as a marginalized and passive group.<sup>21</sup> Linda Connolly concurs. She argues that despite the overall increased incorporation of historical studies on women into mainstream history, the traditional depiction of women as passive bystanders continues to be a dominant theme, which remains largely unchallenged in the analyses of various socio-historical changes.<sup>22</sup>

Connolly's argument is particularly valid when critically examining past historical interpretations of the social evolution during the mid-twentieth century in both Irish and German history, which led to significant social and political changes in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In her book, *The Irish Women's Movement: From Revolution to Devolution*, Connolly claims that most historical accounts of the 1950s and 1960s in the past have largely focused on the institutional alterations and the modernization process which many Western societies experienced in these years. She argues that in studies that concentrate on the influences of modernization, advances in women's rights have usually been treated as products of these influences. Hence, when it comes to women and women's rights, the question posed in these historical analyses has been: how various processes such as economic expansion, the proliferation of television and increasing secularization affected women's rights, rather than which role women themselves played and to what extent they took the initiative in changing their rights and status in society.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Mary E. Daly, "'Turn the Tap': The State, Irish Women and Running Water", in Valiulis and O'Dowd, eds., *Women & Irish History*, pp. 206-19.

<sup>20</sup> Katherine Pence, 'Labours of consumption: gendered consumers in post-war East and West German reconstruction', in Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey, eds., *Gender Relations in German History. Power, agency and experience from the sixteenth to the twentieth century* (London, 1996).

<sup>21</sup> Maryann Valiulis and Mary O'Dowd, 'Introduction', in idem, eds., *Women & Irish History*, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement*, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

Richard B. Finnegan's article on 'The Governing of Ireland since the 1960s', for instance, exemplifies Connolly's criticism. He states that

[T]he changes in the economy and in education were to have an important impact on the status of women in Ireland. Heretofore, women had held a traditional place in Irish society, reinforced by the church and the predominantly rural life of the Irish. In economic and legal terms, they were second-class citizens, while in social terms they were victims of sexism and excluded from the corridors of political power. Women did not begin to demand equal treatment until the late 1960s [...].<sup>24</sup>

While economic expansion, with its effects on employment and educational opportunities were, without question, significant for women, Finnegan's evaluation denies them any voice in political and social matters before these transformations. Moreover, he argues that Irish women did not challenge their subordinated status as female citizens until institutional changes had provided the foundation for protest. Connolly disagrees with this. As she points out, institutional and structural changes in the 1960s were certainly important for women and stimulated women's activism in Ireland, but the impact should not be exaggerated. Instead, Connolly argues that the assumptions that women did not challenge the restraints imposed on their rights and that they did not struggle for the implementation of de facto equality until the late 1960s, is not only incorrect but also puts significant limitations on the historical accounts of women's struggles for emancipation.<sup>25</sup>

An assessment, like Finnegan's, of the history of women before the late 1960s has neither been confined to Irish historical studies nor to mainstream history. It has also been left uncontested by some scholars of women's history who have focused on the period from the 1940s onwards. Eva Kolinsky, for example, has made a similar argument to Finnegan in her analysis of women in West German society after World War II. In her concluding chapter Kolinsky states that it was not until a new generation of women grew of age in the late 1960s - a generation which had benefited from better training, qualification and education opportunities - that social norms and women's inequality in society were questioned. According to Kolinsky, this new generation "[...] did not share the view of their mothers and grandmothers that women's political specialism was to proliferate atmosphere, hold coffee mornings, and

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<sup>24</sup> Richard B. Finnegan, 'Forums, Courts, Cabinets, and Tribunals: The Governing of Ireland since the 1960s', *Éire – Ireland*, 43 (2008), p. 131.

<sup>25</sup> Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement*, pp. 8-9.



contribute to the future by instilling the relevant values and ideologies into their own children."<sup>26</sup> With this statement Kolinsky asserts that West German women in the decades preceding the late 1960s and early 1970s had no impact on political or social matters, but instead lived according to the dominant values and norms which defined women's role in society as homemakers and mothers, and left these unchallenged.

Accounts like Finnegan's and Kolinsky's have examined women's role in society under the hypothesis that women's lives in those years were strongly dominated by external influences and structures and, hence, that they quietly conformed to the gender ideologies and norms of that particular time. For the German women's historians, Claire Duchen and Irene Bandhauer-Schöffmann, such condescending statements and repeated depiction of women as tangential subjects in both politics and society reflect the overall historical image of women during the 1950s and early 1960s. The authors argue that this image has portrayed women, not only in West Germany but in other Western societies as well, nearly exclusively as housewives and mothers. In that way, political ideology has often been uncritically applied as historical fact.<sup>27</sup> As Connolly, Bandhauer-Schöffmann and Duchen emphasize, by stressing the impact of outside structures, such as economic growth and education reforms, on women's lives and, particularly, on women's rights, the tradition of depicting women as passive and oppressed subjects has been continued. Within this interpretation, as the authors state, the advancement in women's rights since the late 1960s has often been treated as a symptom of the modernization process which spread across most Western societies throughout the 1950s and 1960s and resulted in increasing affluence and new opportunities. Thus, as Connolly points out, women and women's activism have often not been considered as active agents of change in the social evolution which culminated in the various protest movements in the late 1960s and 1970s, including the new women's movement. Thereby "[...] the plausibility of women constructing or articulating politics in a multitude of arenas [...], both before and during this period, is disregarded."<sup>28</sup> Focusing on the evolution of the Irish women's movement, Connolly, instead, argues that the women's movement has been

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<sup>26</sup> Eva Kolinsky, *Women in West Germany* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 267-8.

<sup>27</sup> Claire Duchen and Irene Bandhauer-Schöffmann, 'Introduction', in idem, eds., *When the War Was Over. Women, War and Peace in Europe, 1945-1956* (New York, 2000), p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement*, p. 9.



characterized by continuity and that women in the middle decades of the twentieth century, despite a feminist-hostile environment, continued to struggle for women's rights and interests in Irish society. According to her, these struggles are intrinsically related to the emergence of the second wave feminist movement.<sup>29</sup>

This claim of continuity in the women's movement has found support among an increasing group of scholars. Along Connolly, historians such as Diarmaid Ferriter<sup>30</sup> or Ute Gerhard<sup>31</sup> have also argued for a re-consideration of the women's movement as movement which has both peak and slack periods, but is, nevertheless, marked by continuity rather than by breaks and ruptures. As these scholars suggest, women's activism during the 1950s and 1960s, in fact, needs to be considered within the context of a continuing women's movement. To support their argument they primarily draw on theories of social movement continuity and survival, citing particularly Verta Taylor's theory of abeyance, which identifies the process by which social movements can maintain continuity between different cycles of peak activity. The term "abeyance" illustrates a holding process by which movements can sustain themselves in a non-receptive political and social environment without dissolving completely. Taylor suggests that by adapting abeyance structures, groups and organizations of activists manage to survive in times of minimized public and political support and, hence, continue the movement.<sup>32</sup> Taylor identifies both external and internal factors which contribute to holding a movement in abeyance. The external factors characteristically are changes which take place outside the movement structures. These factors include changes in opportunity structures, such as lack of political access or changed ideological settings - for instance, a sudden accentuation of the gendered division of the public and the private spheres. Other external factors can be social forces which contribute to marginalizing a certain group in society - for example, the amplified denunciation of childless and professional women as a measure to counteract the demographic shift in the mid-twentieth century. The internal factors are usually on the

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<sup>29</sup> Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement*, p. 69.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Diarmaid Ferriter, 'Women and Political Change in Ireland since 1960', *Eire – Ireland*, 43 (2008), p. 181.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Ute Gerhard, 'Die Frauenbewegung', in Roland Roth und Dieter Rucht, eds., *Die sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945. Ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt am Main, 2008).

<sup>32</sup> Verta Taylor, 'Social Movement Continuity: The Women's Movement in Abeyance', *American Sociological Review*, 54 (1989), p. 762.

organizational level of the movement and, according to Taylor, represent the five characteristics of abeyance structures. She classifies them as: temporality, which in this case refers to an organization's ability to keep its members; a high commitment to the cause, which maintains the activism and also keeps members from joining other organizations; exclusiveness in membership; a centralization of power to ensure organizational stability; and last but not least, the culture of an organization, which helps to maintain a collective identity and to provide an alternative cultural framework. In this way, abeyance organizations, as Taylor argues, provide a base and a niche for activists in an environment which is hostile to the movement and its ideals.

According to Taylor, the actions carried out by abeyance organizations often have only little impact at the time, due to the external and internal constraints imposed on the movement and the individual organizations.<sup>33</sup> As she states, however, "[...] the significance of abeyance lies in its linkages between one upsurge in activism and another"<sup>34</sup> rather than in the achievements of organizations and individuals throughout the time of abeyance. Moreover, abeyance organizations not only maintain continuity of a movement, but by doing so are active agents of change.

Verta Taylor applies the abeyance model to the American women's movement in the period between the late 1940s and 1960s. Her study shows that a selected group of women, who had been involved in the women's movement during the 1920s and 1930s, later found themselves marginalized in a society in which the political and social climate had changed and traditional gender roles had been reinforced. Nonetheless, they continued to be committed to the movement's cause. By adopting abeyance structures, i.e. promoting the endurance of activist networks and a collective identity, as well as maintaining a repertoire of strategies and aims, Taylor argues that the activities of this group of women throughout this time linked the two peak periods of activism in the US women's movement. Taylor stresses that within this context, the often considered "birth" of a social movement can in fact rather be a breakthrough or a turning point within an already existing movement. Accordingly, the common assumption that the women's movement terminated in the 1930s and that a new

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<sup>33</sup> Taylor, 'Social Movement Continuity', pp. 764-9.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 762.



women's movement suddenly emerged in the late 1960s becomes debatable and calls for a reconsideration of the history of women's political activism and mobilization.<sup>35</sup>

Since the publication of Taylor's theory, several other studies on social movement continuity and survival have been published which build upon her theory of abeyance. While Taylor concentrates on one particular organization, which primarily contributed to the continuation of the women's movement by nurturing and maintaining a collective identity and feminist ideology among its members during abeyance, Traci M. Sawyers and David Meyer identify an alternative form of abeyance behaviour. As the two authors argue, in addition to marginalizing oneself and disengaging with policy struggles during abeyance, as suggested by Taylor, some organizations continue to engage in policy debates. All the while they adapt more conventional methods and concentrate on smaller and more achievable goals within the given policy structures without looking for fundamental reforms. This behaviour is described by Sawyers and Meyer as "co-optation".<sup>36</sup>

Similar to Sawyers and Meyer, Debra Minkoff also argues that social movement continuity and organizational survival during abeyance phases can take varying shapes. In her study on the survival of women's and other activist organizations during the period 1955 to 1985, Minkoff suggests that organizations can adopt four main strategies in order to survive: first, social protest using non-routine means, such as public demonstrations or rallies; secondly, institutional advocacy, which challenges elites through routine channels (e.g. by lobbying politicians and decision-makers through petitions or delegations); thirdly, service provision, which concentrates on providing services or benefits to a constituency without seeking a change in policy, as, for instance, philanthropic activities; and, last but not least, cultural production, which contributes to the distribution of ideas and ideals through the use of media, arts, humanities or social sciences. Yet Minkoff also concludes that the most successful strategies of organizations in abeyance include institutional advocacy and social service provision and thus the two strategies which correspond with the behavioural patterns determined by Sawyers and Meyer as co-optation and marginalization.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Taylor, 'Social Movement Continuity', pp. 761-3.

<sup>36</sup> Traci M. Sawyers and David S. Meyer, 'Missed Opportunities: Social Movement Abeyance and Public Policy', *Social Problems*, 46 (1999), p. 193.

<sup>37</sup> Debra C. Minkoff, 'The Organization of Survival: Women's and Racial-Ethnic Voluntarist and Activist



Social movement abeyance theories, such as those published by Taylor, Sawyers and Meyer or Minkoff, suggest an alternative approach to examining women's movements and women's political activism. As they emphasize, a social movement, such as the women's movement, can, indeed, be continued in periods of low public and political support if organizations and activists adopt certain strategies and aims. In doing so, these theories provide the basis for what Reinhart Koselleck has described as a "[...] methodologically reflected rewriting of previously given historical reports [...]".<sup>38</sup> Theories of abeyance organizations allow a re-consideration and a new interpretation of the activities and actions of women's groups during times in which the women's movement had no public and political support. They thus open up the possibility for the rewriting of the history of the women's movement and women's political activism.

In her study on the German women's movement in the immediate post-WWII years, Ute Gerhard argues along the same lines as Taylor and her colleagues in order to analyse breaks and continuities in the movement. The author proposes that the break in the German women's movement through the rise of National Socialism resulted in the movement being historically understood as two separate movements: the old and the new women's movement. Borrowing from the Anglo-Saxon terminology that uses the image of waves in relation to the women's movement, Gerhard argues for a reconsideration of the German movement in the form of long waves. She suggests that the women's movement in Germany had both peak and slack periods but, nevertheless, was marked by historic continuity. She further states that some of the activities and networks of those established women's organizations active after the Second World War prepared the ground for future protest and thus were crucial for the emergence of the second wave women's movement.<sup>39</sup> Gerhard's research, however, mainly concentrates on the period between 1945 and the early 1950s, providing no information on the following years. It, therefore, does not yet offer a comprehensive discussion of women's activism in West Germany between the two upsurges of the women's movement.<sup>40</sup>

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Organizations, 1955-1985', *Social Forces*, 71 (1993), pp. 888-900.

<sup>38</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History. Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford, 2002), p. 67.

<sup>39</sup> Gerhard, 'Die Frauenbewegung', pp. 188-200.

<sup>40</sup> Ute Gerhard, "'Anything but a suffragette!'" Women's Politics in Germany after 1945', in Duchon and Bandhauer-Schöffmann, eds., *When the War Was Over*, pp. 169-71.

The assessment of continuity in the women's movement requires a re-evaluation not only of the peak periods but also of the years between these peaks. As Annegret Braun states, the majority of historical studies on the German women's movement in the past have jumped straight from the suffrage movement to the 1970s liberation movement, with maybe one or two paragraphs on women's organizations in the years in between.<sup>41</sup> Rosemarie Nave-Herz' account of the German women's movement is one such example. She dedicates only two pages to women's organizations between 1949 and 1968, without critically examining their activities and accomplishments throughout these years, a shortcoming the author herself acknowledges in her introduction.<sup>42</sup> Renate Wiggershaus' history of the German women's movement takes a similar course, even though she provides a detailed list of all the women's organizations which re-emerged and were newly founded after the Second World War. Like Nave-Herz, Wiggershaus, too, fails to analyse the actions and goals of the organizations and simply recites their mission statements without any further assessment of their actions.<sup>43</sup> Both authors, despite mentioning the existence of German women's groups after the Second World War, mainly concentrate on the peak times of women's activism.

Similar accounts of women's activism can also be found within Irish women's history, as Diarmaid Ferriter points out when he criticizes "[...] the inadequacy of historical assessment of the women's movement that leaps straight from the suffrage campaign to the condom train."<sup>44</sup> Like Connolly and Gerhard, Ferriter agrees with Verta Taylor that the 1960s should not simply be regarded as the starting-point of women's opposition, but that women in the years and decades before continuously questioned their role in society.<sup>45</sup> Both Ferriter and Linda Connolly offer a slightly different perspective on Taylor's model. Taylor and Gerhard have focused mainly on women who regarded themselves as feminists or on women's organizations which had an obvious feminist agenda, such as the struggle for women's equality and full citizenship. Connolly and Ferriter, in contrast, emphasize the fact that the women's movement

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<sup>41</sup> Braun, *Frauenalltag und Emanzipation*, p. 34.

<sup>42</sup> Rosemarie Nave-Herz, *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland* (Hannover, 1997), p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Renate Wiggershaus, *Geschichte der Frauen und Frauenbewegung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik nach 1945* (Wuppertal, 1979), pp. 96-108.

<sup>44</sup> Ferriter, 'Women and Political Change in Ireland since 1960', p. 181.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 179.



was composed of more than just women who clearly identified themselves as feminists, a fact which is not limited to the Irish women's movement. They include these 'moderate' women and women's groups which have significantly differing opinions on feminism, by examining, in Connolly's case, the Irish Housewives Association (IHA)<sup>46</sup> and, in Ferriter's case, the Irish Countrywomen Association (ICA).<sup>47</sup> As these authors point out, the strategies and activities of these women's organizations have often been historically overlooked or dismissed. Yet, these women and groups contributed as much to the Irish women's movement and to its continuance as those with a more clearly-articulated feminist aim.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, as Karen Offen highlights, the term 'feminism', deriving from the French word 'féminisme', is historically a relatively new term which has only been in circulation since the 1890s and has since been a controversial term due to its often exclusive association with the struggle for individualistic equality of the sexes. As Offen stresses, such narrow definitions of feminism are insufficient for describing the objectives and activities of the women's movements in various countries, which had often much more diverse goals than just aiming for full equality.<sup>49</sup> Instead she suggests a more useful definition, stating that

"[F]eminism opposes women's subordination to men in the family and society, along with men's claims to define what is best for women [...]; it thereby offers a frontal challenge to patriarchal thought, social organization, and control mechanisms. It seeks to destroy masculinist hierarchy but not sexual dualism."<sup>50</sup>

Women's organizations, such as the ICA or the IHA, which did not primarily strive for women's full equality but rather centred their work on women's roles as mothers and housewives and, therefore, on the normative role of women during the middle decades of the twentieth century, thus cannot simply be dismissed as non-feminist and insignificant or conservative for the women's movement. They, too, challenged the political and social status quo, as well as women's exclusion from the public sphere, by

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<sup>46</sup> See Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement*.

<sup>47</sup> See Diarmaid Ferriter, *Mothers, maidens and myths, a history of the Irish Countrywomen's Association* (Dublin, 1995).

<sup>48</sup> Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement*, pp. 25-6.

<sup>49</sup> Karen Offen, 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', *Signs*, 14 (1988), pp. 122-6.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.



re-negotiating, for example, children's or consumer rights, albeit without appointing themselves as 'feminists'.<sup>51</sup>

Maria Luddy argues in similar terms advocating an alternative approach to examining women's role and activism in public and political life by re-defining politics as:

[...] any kind of action by an individual or group, in a formal or informal way, intended to affect or alter either the policy of government, or the behaviour or beliefs of individuals or groups within the local community, for the apparent benefit of a particular group or community.<sup>52</sup>

As Maryann Valiulis and Mary O'Dowd point out, this novel definition of politics allows historians, and especially women's historians, to examine women's political activity and involvement from a new perspective, a perspective in which women and women's groups, formerly dismissed as non-political, now become political.<sup>53</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

Studies like those of Taylor, Connolly, Ferriter or Gerhard thus fundamentally challenge the traditional historical narrative of the women's movement and the history of feminism. They do this by re-defining basic definitions and assumptions and by offering new approaches to examining women's role and political activism. In other words, they confront what Connolly describes as the

[...] dual challenge currently facing women's history [...] to maintain a separate analytical focus on a plurality of groups of women and, in the process, find new ways of re-defining and transforming the parameters of historical knowledge as a whole.<sup>54</sup>

Yet, despite the already existing pool of recent research that has focused on traditional women's organizations after the Second World War, some of which has been outlined here, there is still an apparent need to further expand this approach to post-war women's history and the history of the women's movement, generally. With respect to Irish and German women's organizations, the scholarship in this area is still limited. To

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<sup>51</sup> Heather Ingman, *Twentieth-Century Fiction by Irish Women. Nation and Gender* (London, 2007), pp. 16-7.

<sup>52</sup> Maria Luddy, quoted in Valiulis and O'Dowd, 'Introduction', in idem, eds., *Women & Irish History*, p. 12.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement*, p. 24.

date, the existence and activities of established German women's groups have been mainly researched in the context of the bourgeois women's movement<sup>55</sup> or of the immediate post-war period.<sup>56</sup> Whereas research into Irish women's organizations between first and second wave feminism appears to be somewhat more advanced, the scholarly focus has mainly been directed towards two women's organizations and their activities and agendas, i.e. the Irish Housewives Association (IHA) and the Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA).<sup>57</sup> The concentration on these specific organizations might have been a consequence of the conservation of women's organizations' records. These particular women's groups have preserved a comparatively well-documented history archived in the collections of the National Archive of Ireland (IHA) and of the National Library of Ireland (ICA). In order to contribute to closing the gaps within the history of the women's movement and the history of feminism, researchers, therefore, have to continue to recover new material. As Linda Connolly and Tina O'Toole point out, "[F]eminist research [...] has reached a critical stage in the important task of recovery work."<sup>58</sup>

By examining and collating the DAB's and the IWGAs' activities and aims this thesis hopes to add new information and analysis to the growing body of research on women's organized activism during the 1950s and 1960s. By comparing a German and an Irish organization it particularly aims to offer a new perspective to the existing studies in this field. It highlights both the differences and similarities these women's organizations faced in their political, cultural and social environment and illustrates the various ways women negotiated their rights and status over the years. The thesis thus intends to contribute to a broader and more inclusive understanding of women's activism during the middle decades of the twentieth century and of its importance for the continuance of a women's movement, not just in a national but in a cross-national context.

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<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Wiggershaus, *Geschichte der Frauen und Frauenbewegung*, or Ute Gerhard, *Unerhört - Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Hamburg, 1996).

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Gerhard, 'Die Frauenbewegung', or Frevert, *Women in German History*.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement*; Hilda Tweedy, *A Link in the Chain: the story of the Irish Housewives Association 1942-1992* (Dublin, 1992); Diarmaid Ferriter, *Mothers, Maidens and Myths: a history of the Irish Countrywomen's Association* (Dublin, 1995) or Ferriter, 'Women and Political Change in Ireland since 1960', pp. 178-204.

<sup>58</sup> Connolly and O'Toole, *Documenting Irish Feminisms*, p. 4.

The dissertation will draw on some of the social movement theories, and, more precisely, on the theories of abeyance to examine whether the organizations continued the German and the Irish women's movement at a time when they lacked both political and public support. Notwithstanding the dissertation's focus on women graduates' organizations in the Republic of Ireland and the Federal Republic of Germany, the intent of this study is to draw broad conclusions to extend the analysis of women's activism in general in the years between the two main feminists' upsurges in the twentieth century. The findings of this study will show how arguments and goals of female activists in Germany and Ireland developed and changed throughout the last century. More importantly, it will illustrate that social and political changes for women in the 1970s did not appear out of a vacuum, but rather evolved from the groundwork and the activities of women's organizations over many years before.



## Chapter I: Historical background: Women's activism in Germany and Ireland

### *Introduction*

As outlined in the introduction few historical studies have examined women's political activism and feminism in Ireland or Germany in the years between the 1940s and the late 1960s. Linda Connolly explains this scholarly gap by arguing that there are two common assumptions dominating the historical assessment of women in the 1950s and 1960s. The first assumption is that feminism and women's political activism were suppressed by a politically and socially conservative climate - in other words, that there was no women's activism throughout these years. The alternative version acknowledges that there were women who were actively involved in political issues, but suggests that their activities were too 'conservative' and did not challenge conventional gender ideologies. The latter, as Connolly argues, is an assumption often found in women's history studies. Here scholars tend to overemphasize periods in which the women's movement mobilized broad-based and visible support, e.g. during the strive for suffrage in the early twentieth century or the women's liberation movement in the 1970s.<sup>59</sup>

Despite her broad definition of feminism in an earlier article, summarized in the introduction, Karen Offen's study on the history of European feminism exemplifies Connolly's criticism. When discussing Irish feminism, Offen states that the campaign of feminist activists for the improved status of women was subdued following the adoption of the Irish constitution in 1937 and that "[...] it was only in the 1970s that agitation to ameliorate women's status in Ireland was rekindled."<sup>60</sup> The author thus argues that Irish women left their social status unchallenged for over thirty years, which implies that the activities of women's organizations which existed throughout the decades preceding the 1970s were insignificant in the context of a women's movement. In her final statement on German feminism, on the other hand, Offen asserts that "[...] women's organizations had replaced the (feminist) women's

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<sup>59</sup> Linda Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement: From Revolution to Devolution* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 58-9.

<sup>60</sup> Karen Offen, *European Feminism 1700-1950. A Political History* (Stanford, 2000), p. 320.

movement".<sup>61</sup> This assertion both disregards the fact that most of these organizations had been part of the women's movement and were, indeed, the remainders of it. Moreover, it suggests that these organizations had abandoned the objective of women's emancipation, therefore, dismissing their activities as insignificant.

Arguments such as Offen's highlight the need to re-assess why women's organizations, active throughout the 1940s, 50s and 60s in both the Republic of Ireland and the Federal Republic of Germany, are frequently depicted in scholarly studies as conservative or irrelevant to the women's movement. If women's organizations hypothetically replaced the German women's movement after the Second World War, then what had established the movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century and how did their goals and methods differ? Correspondingly, if efforts to improve women's status and rights in Irish society diminished after 1937, how do the activities and aims of the women's organizations which continued to exist beyond the 1930s need to be evaluated? To give some insight into these questions, the origins and evolution of the Irish and German women's movements need to be examined, in order to provide a point of reference for women's organizations' activities and goals throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, some of the terminology used to describe different strands of women's activism has to be re-evaluated - in particular, terms such as 'conservative', 'radical' or 'moderate'.

### ***1.1 Problems in classifying the women's movement***

The difficulty about terms like 'conservative', 'moderate' or 'radical' when describing different strands and standpoints within the women's movement is that they are fluid and interchangeable, as they are linked to the historical and political context. What may have seemed radical in past times might not be considered radical some decades later. Or, as Rosemarie Nave-Herz states, some earlier actions or attitudes among women, in terms of how to achieve emancipation, might nowadays

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<sup>61</sup> Offen, *European Feminism 1700-1950. A Political History*, p. 389.



be considered 'conservative' but may have been judged as radical or challenging in the climate of their times.<sup>62</sup>

The dilemma that such classification produces is, for instance, reflected in Richard J. Evans' account of the German women's movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>63</sup> Evans distinguishes between a 'radical' and a 'moderate' or 'conservative' phase within this movement. The author differentiates between 'moderate' and 'radical' activists primarily on the grounds that the latter were mainly concerned with political matters, such as women's rights in the Civil Code, their right to vote, and sexual morality. Earlier issues, which had concerned women during the nineteenth century, such as education, married women's property rights, philanthropy, and, in particular, the emphasis on the difference between the sexes and women's qualities (above all women's "maternalism"<sup>64</sup>) are branded by Evans as 'moderate' or 'conservative' demands. With this assessment, Evans dismisses non-radical women's activism as insignificant thus creating a negative and constricted image of the moderate women's movement in Germany. Furthermore, the classification of 'radical' and 'moderate' in terms of aims, as suggested by Evans, proves problematic since many of the issues and goals of the various groups and activists within the women's movement frequently overlapped and can, therefore, not be separated easily. Thus Evans' definitions oversimplify the differentiation of strands within the women's movement.

The women's historian, Ann Taylor Allen, claims that most terminology labelling different strata of women's activism in which moderate activities tend to be seen as non-progressive and conservative, as seen in Evans' account, often derives from a second wave feminist perspective, the time when women's history first emerged. She argues that contemporary women's historians frequently exhibit a certain uneasiness towards maternalist approaches to women's emancipation, as observed among nineteenth-century feminists. According to Taylor Allen, this uneasiness is partly a result of the impact of the women's liberation movement, which had emerged in the

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<sup>62</sup> Rosemarie Nave-Herz, *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland* (Hannover, 1997), p. 11.

<sup>63</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Feminists. Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America and Australia 1840-1920* (New York, 1977), pp. 106-7.

<sup>64</sup> The term "maternalism" is used here to describe the emphasis on women's motherly qualities and role as the foundation of women's claim to dignity, equality or an extended sphere of action in both the private and the public sphere.

early 1970s and had placed domesticity and motherhood in opposition to women's liberation. Within this context, the maternalist approach and the politics of difference were initially branded as 'backward' and 'conservative'.<sup>65</sup> Yet, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the author points out, "[...] such ideas represented less a retreat into conservatism than an exploration of some new possibilities; for the theory that the moral responsibility for child-rearing lay with mothers was not old but new during this era."<sup>66</sup> Mary Cullen comes to a similar conclusion, stressing that determining the recognition of the roles of mothers and housewives as "[...] necessarily conservative and non-radical may be too limited an analysis."<sup>67</sup>

Definitions of the terms 'radical' and 'moderate' (as well as the often synonymous use of the latter with 'conservative') as Evans suggests are, however, also difficult to maintain when examining other women's movements. Writing from an Irish perspective, Cullen, too, questions Evans' segmentation of the early women's movement. She argues that "[C]lassification along a scale from moderate to radical runs into the risk of pushing feminist movements into artificially separate compartments."<sup>68</sup> In particular, she points out, the assumption that the campaign for suffrage was more radical than, for instance, women's access to employment and improved education, does not hold up in the context of a patriarchal society. Neither was this form of 'radicalism' progressive in terms of class boundaries, since property qualifications, as the basis for the right to vote, were not always questioned.<sup>69</sup> Thus the application of terms such as 'radical', 'moderate' or 'conservative' poses some difficulties, as their definitions are far from static and need to be seen in the context of time and space. As Stefana Lefko stresses, "[...] the nature and meaning of 'emancipation' is time and place-specific."<sup>70</sup>

Nevertheless, classifications of different approaches and attitudes can be helpful, in particular, for comparative studies which examine the changes and

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<sup>65</sup> Ann Taylor Allen, 'Feminism and Motherhood in Germany and in International Perspective 1800-1914', in Patricia Herminghouse and Magda Mueller, eds., *Gender and Germanness. Cultural Productions of Nation* (Providence/Oxford, 1997), pp. 113-4.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>67</sup> Mary Cullen, 'How radical was Irish feminism between 1860 and 1920?', in P. J. Corish, ed., *Radicals, Rebels and Establishment* (Belfast, 1985), p. 199.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>70</sup> Stefana Lefko, "'Truly Womanly" and "Truly German": Women's Rights and National Identity in *Die Frau*', in Herminghouse and Mueller, eds., *Gender and Germanness*, p. 130.



continuities within a movement; but these classifications need to be flexible and conferrable. In this regard, Tara Keenan-Thomson offers a useful definition for the term 'radical' in the context of the women's movement. She defines radicalism as a "[...] push for a comprehensive restructuring of the state."<sup>71</sup> Kathleen J. Fitzgerald and Diane M. Rodgers offer a specific model, in accordance with this broad definition, which distinguishes between radical and moderate organizations within a social movement, based on several characteristics. The authors suggest that, in contrast to their moderate counterparts, radical organizations tend to have a non-hierarchical internal structure and emphasize the need for structural change, instead of being content with the overall social structure. Moreover, the tactics applied by radical organizations usually rely less on legal actions and more on direct mass actions, such as strikes or demonstrations.<sup>72</sup> Nave-Herz uses a similar approach to clarify between 'moderate' and 'radical' women, by stating that moderate activism is based on the aim to achieve reforms in favour of women's emancipation within an existing system, without challenging the existing structures and institutions within. Radical claims and activism, on the other hand, she points out, seek structural changes within society and the state, rather than being reform orientated.<sup>73</sup>

Within this context, the differentiation between a moderate and a radical wing in the bourgeois women's movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century becomes more difficult and complex. Neither of these wings sought a comprehensive restructuring of society throughout this period, which would have included the elimination of class inequalities and differences. In Ireland, for instance, as Mary Cullen points out, the early bourgeois women's movement demanded voting rights on the same terms as men, which still implied the ownership of property as qualification. The Irish suffrage campaign in its first decades was thus mainly concerned with rights of middle-class and upper-class women, a fact that was strongly criticized by socialist feminists.<sup>74</sup> In Germany, the aims of both the bourgeois women's movement and the proletarian women's movement did at times overlap such as, for example, in demands

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<sup>71</sup> Tara Keenan-Thomson, *Irish Women and Street Politics 1956-1973* (Dublin/Portland, 2010), p. 5.

<sup>72</sup> Kathleen J. Fitzgerald and Diane M. Rodgers, 'Radical Social Movement Organizations: A Theoretical Model', *The Sociological Quarterly*, 41 (2000), p. 578.

<sup>73</sup> Nave-Herz, *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, p. 76.

<sup>74</sup> Mary Cullen, 'Women, emancipation, and politics, 1860-1984', in J. R. Hill, ed., *A New History of Ireland. Volume VII: Ireland, 1921-1984* (Oxford, 2003), p. 855.

for the right to vote or equal access to education.<sup>75</sup> However, Gerhard highlights that there was an eminent reluctance of German middle-class women to transcend class boundaries when their own privileges were endangered, as could be seen in the absence of solidarity from bourgeois women's groups in support of the protest movement of female domestic servants during the 1890s.<sup>76</sup>

In this sense, the Irish and German bourgeois women's movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth century should both be considered as movements which mainly sought reforms within the existing social and cultural structures and would thus fall into the category of a 'moderate' movement. The radical women's movement, as Cullen<sup>77</sup> and Nave-Herz<sup>78</sup> argue, was a phenomenon that emerged as part of the new women's movement in the 1970s in which the socially constructed gender roles stood at the core of these women's criticism. Yet neither the German nor the Irish women's movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was homogenous or unified on the question of how, and through which means, emancipation should be achieved. Karen Offen suggests a useful alternative approach to categorizing the different strands and groups within a women's movement. Rather than putting women's activism into the compartments of 'radical', 'moderate' or 'conservative', her approach distinguishes between two modes of feminist arguments: the 'relational' and 'individualist' arguments. According to Offen, 'relational' arguments propose "[...] a gender-based but egalitarian vision of social organization [...]" featuring "[...] a companionate, non-hierarchical, male-female couple as the basis of the unit of society [...]"<sup>79</sup> This mode of argumentation highlights the difference between the sexes, stressing the contribution and qualities of women, in particular, their maternal and nurturing role and capacities. 'Individualist' arguments, on the other hand, emphasize the individual, without distinction between sex or gender as the foundation of society. 'Individualist' arguments diminish sexual difference and women's reproductive role, as well as its affixed qualities. Instead, this mode stresses

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<sup>75</sup> Nave-Herz, *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, p. 29

<sup>76</sup> Ute Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Hamburg, 1996), pp. 241-243.

<sup>77</sup> Mary Cullen, 'Towards a New Ireland: Women, Feminism & the Peace Process', in Maryann Valiulis and Mary O'Dowd, eds., *Women & Irish History* (Dublin, 1997), p. 267.

<sup>78</sup> Nave-Herz, *Die Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, p. 76.

<sup>79</sup> Karen Offen, 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', *Signs*, 14 (1988), p. 135.



women's equality as a right of the individual human.<sup>80</sup> As Offen underlines, these two argumentative modes

[...] reflect profound differences of opinion that have long existed within Western discourse about basic structural questions of social organization and, specifically, about the relationship of individuals and family groups to society and the state. Both modes must be accounted for if one is to understand feminism historically.<sup>81</sup>

## ***1.2 Evaluating the Irish and German bourgeois women's movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth century***

The German and the Irish women's movements first emerged as organized movements in the 1860s. Whereas Offen states that in the nineteenth century 'relational' arguments dominated European women's movements,<sup>82</sup> both Irish and German women also argued for women's emancipation in 'individualist' terms; increasingly so, since the final decades of the nineteenth century.

The German women's movement has its roots in the time leading up to the revolution of 1848/49, the German "Vormärz", which marked the beginning of the democratic and liberal movement in Germany.<sup>83</sup> Similar to French and American women during their countries' respective revolutions, the mounting demands for civil liberties and the fact that basic rights, as demanded by male revolutionaries, only implied rights for men over twenty-five, made German women increasingly aware of their own social and cultural subordination.<sup>84</sup> However, Ute Gerhard stresses that, despite the revolutionary context and in contrast to the French and American women's movements, which had both displayed early collective efforts (such as the march to Versailles by the French or the Declaration of Seneca Falls by American women), the German movement began gradually and rather gently.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Offen, 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', p. 136.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p. 137.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 135.

<sup>83</sup> At that time Germany was a confederation of thirty-nine states held together through repressive ruling by the two great powers of Austria and Prussia. German revolutionaries' main demands were a united German state and civil liberties guaranteed through a constitution.

<sup>84</sup> Renate Wiggershaus, *Geschichte der Frauen und Frauenbewegung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik nach 1945* (Wuppertal, 1979), pp. 9-10.

<sup>85</sup> Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, pp. 14-6.

Louise Otto-Peters is generally considered the pioneer of the women's movement in Germany. The publication of her women's newspaper, *Frauen-Zeitung*, which was in print since 1849, initiated the mobilization of women's groups and organizations on issues raised by the paper. Democratic women's groups advocating women's equal legal status, women's education clubs, lobbying for improved education standards for women, and female labour organizations, which were mainly concerned with long working hours, sprang up across the German states throughout the revolutionary struggles. With the defeat of the revolution of 1848/49 and with the reactionary counter-revolutions that followed throughout most German states, these early beginnings of a women's movement were quickly repressed by the implementation of restrictive laws on political organizations, as well as on the press. In particular the passing of the law prohibiting women, adolescents and apprentices from joining political organizations in 1850, which was operative in most German states until 1908, significantly constrained the mobilization of a German women's movement after 1849. It was not until 1865 when a change in government initiated a partial liberalization in Prussia that formerly active women decided to make a new attempt at mobilizing their peers.<sup>86</sup>

Ireland, too, experienced a political rebellion in the period around the turn of the eighteenth century as, influenced by the French and American Revolutions, the United Irishmen, a republican organization, attempted to end Britain's rule over Ireland. Similar to Germany, the revolutionary struggles were not successful and were defeated in 1798. There is no historical evidence of a widespread or organized claim for women's citizenship rights as part of the rebellion. However, a few individual women, such as Mary Ann McCracken, did criticize their limited rights and inferior status in Irish society. Nevertheless, these voices of Irish women were still isolated and scattered until approximately the 1860s when women in Ireland began to organize joint actions in response to several issues directly concerning women's rights and status in Irish society at that time.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ute Gerhard, 'Die Frauenbewegung', in Roland Roth and Dieter Rucht, eds., *Die sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945. Ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt am Main, 2008), pp. 192-3.

<sup>87</sup> Mary Cullen, "'Rational Creatures and Free Citizens': Republicanism, Feminism and the Writing of History', *The Republican. A Journal of Contemporary and Historical Debate*, 1 (2000), p. 63.



German and Irish women in the nineteenth and early twentieth century mobilized around similar issues, such as education, employment opportunities, social purity, married women's property rights and political rights. Women in Western societies by and large faced similar regulations and restrictions of their rights, which explains the similarities in issues raised amongst various national women's movements.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, as both Linda Connolly<sup>89</sup> and Elisabeth Meyer-Renschhausen<sup>90</sup> describe, in Ireland and in Germany the pioneers in the women's movement came from similar social backgrounds: namely, they were primarily Protestant, middle- and upper-class women who experienced corresponding restrictions on their authority in both societies. Most of these early activists were unmarried, with some exceptions such as Anna Haslam in Ireland or Louise Otto-Peters in Germany, whose husbands were supportive of their cause.<sup>91</sup> With regard to the social backgrounds of most of the pioneering women, one of the first issues raised in both countries was the standard of women's and girls' education and access to employment. Middle-class women were excluded from virtually any form of employment outside the home. Yet technical progress and industrialization had changed the value of housework, which affected many unmarried middle-class women who had made their contribution by working in the household.<sup>92</sup> The demand for the right to work and a better education, which would ultimately open new employment opportunities, was, therefore, a response to the real needs of many unmarried women of the bourgeoisie, as well as the desire of many middle- and upper-class women to gain financial independence from their husbands.

Irish women activists played a central role in regard to education and employment opportunities in the early 1860s with the opening of several training and education facilities for women and girls, which mirrored initiatives by American and English women. One of the first institutions to open was Belfast High School for Girls in 1859 and the Queen's Institute for the Training and Employment of Educated Women

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<sup>88</sup> Cullen, 'Women, emancipation, and politics, 1860-1984', p. 826.

<sup>89</sup> Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement*, p. 60.

<sup>90</sup> Elisabeth Meyer-Renschhausen, 'Hauptströmungen in der älteren und neueren Frauenbewegung', *Zeitschrift für Sozialökonomie*, 35 (1998), p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, Cullen, 'Towards a New Ireland: Women, Feminism & the Peace Process', p. 269 and Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>92</sup> Nave-Herz, *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, pp. 8-9.

in Dublin in 1861. In 1867, the Dublin-based Alexandra College for Higher Education of Women and the Ladies' Institute in Belfast followed. All these facilities aimed to improve girls' secondary education and to bring it to an equal level with boys' education.<sup>93</sup>

An important legislative milestone for the Irish women's movement's efforts to improve education and employment opportunities was the passing of the Intermediate Education Act in 1878 and the Royal University Act in 1879. The first act introduced annual competitive examinations, in which pupils and their schools were awarded prizes and money for subjects passed in the examinations. Much due to the pressure of Irish women activists, particularly Isabella Tod, girls were included in the new provisions of the legislations. This gave them the opportunity to be tested against boys with the option of winning prize money paid to the relevant school, which in turn, created an incentive for schools to raise their educational standard for girls and enter them for these examinations.<sup>94</sup>

The Royal Education Act was a significant moment in women's struggle for access to higher education in Ireland. This act introduced the Royal University of Ireland (RUI) as a non-denominational examining and degree-awarding body. With its establishment women students were now also allowed to sit the exams. However, they were at first not admitted to lectures at the colleges or able to become Senior Fellows and, therefore, could not teach at the universities. Instead, girls had to attend private institutions established and run by women, such as the Protestant Alexandra College, or the Dominican College Eccles Street, which opened its doors in 1882. Boys, in the meantime, attended the Fellows' lectures at the Queen's Colleges, Trinity College or University College Dublin.<sup>95</sup> The Queen's Colleges gradually admitted women to their lectures, with Belfast making the start in 1882 by admitting them to Arts lectures, and extending these rights to all faculties in 1896. Both Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin, however, remained closed to women until 1904 and 1908 respectively.<sup>96</sup> It was during this campaign for women's full equality in higher education that the Irish Association of Women Graduates and Candidate Graduates

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<sup>93</sup> Cullen, 'How radical was Irish feminism between 1860 and 1920?', p. 189.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Margaret Ó Hógartaigh, *Quiet Revolutionaries. Irish Women in Education, Medicine and Sport, 1861-1964* (Dublin, 2011), pp. 17-22.

<sup>96</sup> Cullen, 'Women, emancipation, and politics, 1860-1984', pp. 837-8.



(from which the Irish Women Graduates' Associations later emerged) was founded. This is discussed in more detail in chapter IV.1.

In Germany, education and employment opportunities were first put on the agenda of the General German Women's Association ("Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein", ADF), which had been established in 1865 at the first German women's conference organized by Louise Otto-Peters. According to Gerhard, the foundation of the ADF marked the beginning of an organized women's movement in Germany.<sup>97</sup> The primary goals of this association, and also of other bourgeois women's groups which were subsequently founded, was to advocate advanced education for women and their right to paid employment. The first initiatives arising out of these goals included the establishment of Sunday schools for women and the provision of libraries and lectures series, to which female workers were also invited.<sup>98</sup> Unlike in Ireland, England and the United States, where women's colleges and schools had sprung up since the 1860s, however, German women were not able to qualify for the *Abitur* (the secondary school diploma required for university admission) until 1893.<sup>99</sup> In this year the German women activist, Helene Lange, established special preparation courses which aimed at providing girls with an education equivalent to boys' secondary education and which would prepare and qualify them for university.<sup>100</sup> After the completion of Lange's courses girls were then able to take the exams for the *Abitur* externally at boys' grammar schools. It was only in 1908 that, as part of a comprehensive restructuring of the German education system, orderly grammar schools had been established as a formal option for girls following standard secondary schooling.<sup>101</sup>

In their pursuit of better education and university access, the arguments and approaches of Irish and German women activists differed significantly. Irish women had since the early years pressed for an equal secondary and higher education for girls and boys, therefore, had followed the 'individualist' mode of argumentation. The various women's colleges established in Ireland since the 1860s were intended as

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<sup>97</sup> Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, pp. 76-9.

<sup>98</sup> Nave-Herz, *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, pp. 12-3.

<sup>99</sup> Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, pp. 140-1.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, p. 155.

<sup>101</sup> Ute Frevert, *Women in German History. From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 121-2.

temporary solutions, offering women a higher education and improved employment opportunities while the universities remained closed to them. Although this temporary character of the women's colleges was disputed by some women activists when Irish universities eventually opened their doors to women, as discussed later in chapter IV.1, the united efforts by Irish women activists for equal education, prior to this point, had ensured that women were able to gain a university degree in Ireland as early as 1879.

In Germany, on the other hand, the women's movement divided over the type and content of women's education. While some women, such as Helene Lange, took the 'relational' stance pressing for an improved and higher education which was specific to women and their 'qualities' and interests, others demanded the equal education of the sexes. Unlike Irish activists, however, this latter group rejected the idea of establishing women's colleges in Germany as they regarded the education offered by these institutions as second-class to that of universities. For these women co-education was the only way to secure equal education of the sexes and they argued that women's colleges would, in the long run, harm the claim for equal education as opponents of co-education could deny women the ability for "real" scholarship. This opposition to women's colleges, as well as the split among relational and individualist women activists, as Christine von Oertzen argues, resulted in the fact that German women had to wait much longer to become eligible for a higher degree and thus for the professions than their counterparts in Ireland, Britain or the United States (all of which had established women's colleges).<sup>102</sup> It was not until 1900 that the first university, in the German *Land* Baden, was opened to women. Several other universities gradually followed and in 1908, women were officially admitted to universities in Prussia and eventually, in the entire German Empire.<sup>103</sup>

Despite the differences in the campaigns, improved education and access to universities, as well as employment, were key issue concerning both Irish and German women activists during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Women in both countries were, however, also involved in other campaigns. One of the first issues which initiated organized protest among Irish women was the protection of married

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<sup>102</sup> Christine von Oertzen, *Strategie Verständigung: Zur transnationalen Vernetzung von Akademikerinnen 1917-1955* (Göttingen, 2012), pp. 148-56.

<sup>103</sup> Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, p. 157.



women's property. Women, such as Anna Haslam and Isabella Tod, pushed for adequate legislation on the issue through petitions and reports to a select committee. The central concern of these women was to give married women control over their inheritance and property earned through employment, which was a matter affecting women across the classes. Through continuous campaigning and lobbying, Irish women, in conjunction with English activists, achieved gradual successes with the passing of the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870, 1874, 1882 and finally 1907 when the separation of spouses' properties was guaranteed.<sup>104</sup>

Another important campaign of the Irish women's movement in the nineteenth century was embedded in the social purity movement, instigated by the British activist Josephine Butler and aimed at the repeal of the contagious diseases acts, passed by the British parliament during the 1860s. These acts ordered the compulsory registration, medical examination, and treatment of prostitutes for venereal diseases in particular areas where the British army and navy were stationed. The criticism raised by organized Irish and British women aimed primarily at the state regulation of prostitution and the double standard promoted by the acts through limiting the examinations and treatments only to the women, thus treating them "[...] as commodities to be periodically cleansed and recycled [...]." <sup>105</sup> The campaign against the contagious diseases acts was ground-breaking in that women, for the first time publicly, addressed issues of sexuality. However, as Cullen states, the small number of activists involved reveals that the majority of Irish women were unwilling to break such taboos. The nearly twenty-year long struggle until the acts were finally repealed in 1886, furthermore shows, how difficult it must have been to win support for this campaign.<sup>106</sup>

In Germany, both the issue of married women's property and state regulation of prostitution also raised the attention of the bourgeois women's movement, albeit at different times and in a different context. The campaign for the protection of married women's property was here integrated into the protest that was organized by several women's organizations against the draft of the German Civil Code which was eventually approved by the *Reichstag* in 1896. The organizations' criticism targeted the

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<sup>104</sup> Cullen, 'Women, emancipation, and politics, 1860-1984', pp. 833-4.

<sup>105</sup> Cullen, 'How radical was Irish feminism between 1860 and 1920?', p. 191.

<sup>106</sup> Cullen, 'Women, emancipation, and politics, 1860-1984', p. 835.

husband's right to final decisions, the denial of women's right to control her property, paternal authority (instead of parental authority), the legal status of children born out of wedlock (which determined that the child was officially not related to the father) and the limitations in divorce legislation. Despite a short but powerful protest against it, the Civil Code was essentially left unchanged when it came into effect in 1900 and remained this way until the 1950s.<sup>107</sup> Yet the protest reflected the opposition of some German bourgeois women against certain patriarchal values within the family.

The second parallel issue to the Irish women's movement, the campaign against a regulation of prostitution by the state, was, as per the Irish movement, influenced by Josephine Butler's social purity movement in England. By law, prostitution was illegal in the German Empire, yet it was considered a necessary evil, which could only be monitored by preventing the spread of sexual diseases. Thus if prostitutes voluntarily underwent a medical examination, they were given a license and her procurer or the respective brothel owner could not be charged for a criminal offence. Yet, as in Ireland, the police were also authorized to arrest "suspicious" women and force them to be examined for venereal diseases. These forced treatments only applied to women and not to the men who resorted to prostitutes and brothels. The German activist Gertrud Guillaume-Schack was the first woman to articulate criticism against the regulation of prostitution in the German Empire in the 1880s; however, she was quickly arrested and her German branch of Josephine Butler's International Abolitionist Federation was shut down under the terms of the 1850 law which prohibited women's participation in organizations with a political purpose.<sup>108</sup> The issue gained prominence within the German bourgeois women's movement again, when the Federation of German Women's Association ("Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine", BDF), supported a petition to the German *Reichstag* against state regulation of prostitution in 1895.<sup>109</sup>

The BDF had been founded as an umbrella organization for German women's groups in the previous year, and was modelled after the International Council of Women. Within a few years the organization already had approximately 70,000 members and numerous associated women's groups. Its size was, as Nave-Herz states,

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<sup>107</sup> Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, pp. 231-3.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 131-4.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, p. 244.



a sign of the increasing self-consciousness of German women at the end of the nineteenth century, but the huge numbers also resulted in continuous conflicts among members and ultimately led to a political strategy which, to the discontent of many, settled for the lowest common denominator.<sup>110</sup> Disagreement among BDF members soon surfaced after supporting the petition against the regulation of prostitution by the state. Whereas members agreed on the necessity to eliminate prostitution, opinions differed over the way to achieve this aim. Some demanded the abolition of prostitution, as well as the criminal prosecution of prostitutes, others insisted on the prosecution of the men involved with prostitution.<sup>111</sup> It was only in 1902, that the majority of the BDF membership associated itself with the latter strand and continued to push for the abolition of prostitution and brothels, as well as the elimination of the law which allowed arrests made on suspicion (including forced medical examinations and treatments).<sup>112</sup> Despite these efforts, the law combating venereal diseases was not abolished until 1927, more than forty years after the British law was repealed in Ireland.<sup>113</sup>

Opinions among members of the BDF also split on the suffrage question. The majority of women activists believed that girls' and women's education was the key issue for the women's movement. As Nave-Herz states, the overriding attitude was that only an improved education would enable women to gain new rights. In this regard, the right to vote was seen by most women as a long-term goal which would be gradually achieved.<sup>114</sup> Only a small minority of the 'individualist' strand made early claims for universal suffrage, which were articulated at the first public national assembly of bourgeois women's organizations on a political subject in 1894. No suffrage organizations were formed yet, which Gerhard attributes to the 1850 law prohibiting women's political involvement. Instead, small groups of women organized a series of lectures to inform other women's associations and to build support in the following years. In late 1901, Anita Augsborg, who had been at the forefront in organizing the bourgeois suffrage movement in Germany, found a loophole in the law of 1850 when she discovered that the state law of the city state Hamburg did not

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<sup>110</sup> Nave-Herz, *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, pp. 23-4.

<sup>111</sup> Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, pp. 244-7.

<sup>112</sup> Meyer-Renschhausen, 'Hauptströmungen in der älteren und neueren Frauenbewegung', p. 7.

<sup>113</sup> Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, p. 261.

<sup>114</sup> Nave-Herz, *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, p. 15.

explicitly confirm the prohibition of women's political organizations. Consequently, the first German women's suffrage association was formed in Hamburg on 1 January 1902, aiming to achieve women's full political equality. Through the association's campaigns, the suffrage cause gained support within the following years and, due to the pressure exerted by the individualist wing in the BDF, the umbrella organization, in 1907, finally also included the demand for women's right to vote in its programme.<sup>115</sup>

However, despite this concession to the suffragists represented in the BDF, the matter remained controversial within the umbrella organization and it took another ten years for it to gain support among the majority of BDF members. Instead, it was primarily the Social Democratic women's movement, which increasingly pushed for women's right to vote. With the abolition of the law prohibiting women's political organizations, which had also denied women the right to become members of a political party, in 1908 this latter movement gained in momentum. Supported by the Social Democratic Party, which had championed women's right to vote since the 1890s,<sup>116</sup> these women were at the forefront of the German suffrage movement.<sup>117</sup> Within the bourgeois women's movement new suffrage associations also sprang up across the German Empire following the abolition of the 1850 law. Yet opinions on the desired form of the franchise differed substantially between these organizations, as some favoured universal suffrage, while others demanded an adaptation of the existing political rights of men, which, in the federal states, was based on class.<sup>118</sup>

The First World War, as Raffael Scheck points out, had both a stalling and a stimulating effect on the cause of suffrage. On the one hand, the war further impeded a joint mobilization for the campaign as many women chose to delay the pursuit of women's political rights in order to support the national cause. In particular, within the BDF, a majority of women emphasized the need to put their issues aside for the sake of national unity and welfare, which weakened the support for the suffrage campaign

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<sup>115</sup> Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, pp. 223-4.

<sup>116</sup> Already in 1879 the Social Democrat August Bebel had advocated women's suffrage in his pamphlet "Die Frau und der Sozialismus" (The Woman and Socialism). Twelve years later, in 1891, the Social Democratic Party officially adopted the claim to its party program and introduced a bill demanding women's right to vote to the German Reichstag in 1895, which was, however, rejected – see, for example, Raphael Magin, *Die Geringere Hälfte. Erscheinungsformen, Entwicklungen und Ursachen der Unterrepräsentation von Frauen in deutschen Parlamenten* (Berlin, 2011), p.94.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 94-5.

<sup>118</sup> Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, pp. 288-92.



considerably. On the other hand, women's war efforts and merits enhanced their demand for political equality towards the end of the war. The renewal of the claim for women's right to vote was further spurred by the Emperor's promise in April 1917 to reform the Prussian class-based suffrage system.<sup>119</sup> Following this declaration, the BDF, at last, unreservedly aligned itself with the suffrage cause when it published a pamphlet on the "situation of the woman in the political and social transformation of Germany", which underlined women's equal political rights as a substantial part of this reform. Two months later, in December 1917, the various suffrage organizations that had been founded in pre-war Germany by Social Democratic and by bourgeois women also submitted a declaration in which they now jointly demanded the abolition of a class-based franchise and women's full political equality.<sup>120</sup> In October 1918, in view of the impending overthrow of the monarchy and in an attempt to prevent a revolution, Kaiser Wilhelm II, among other reforms, vowed to grant women the vote. Despite this pledge for democratic reforms, a revolution took place. On 9 November 1918, a German Republic was declared, which was quickly followed by the abdication of Wilhelm II. The new government promised women's equal political rights.<sup>121</sup> This promise was later adopted in the Weimar constitution, but with a modification, as article 109 stated that "men and women have *fundamentally* the same rights and duties" - a wording which thus conceded the possibilities of exceptions.<sup>122</sup>

The first Irish suffrage organizations were established in 1871, in Belfast and in 1876, in Dublin. The organizations had been set up in response to growing activism on the issue, which had arisen after the British Members of Parliament John Stuart Mill and Henry Fawcett had presented a petition in favour of women's inclusion into the reform act of 1867, which granted the vote to all male property owners. It was again Anna Haslam in Dublin, and Isabella Tod in Belfast, who first promoted women's franchise on the same terms as men. First successes came in 1896 when women with

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<sup>119</sup> Raffael Scheck, 'German Conservatism and Female Political Activism in the Early Weimar Republic', *German History*, 15 (1997), pp. 37-8.

<sup>120</sup> Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, p. 322.

<sup>121</sup> Scheck, 'German Conservatism and Female Political Activism in the Early Weimar Republic', pp. 39-40.

<sup>122</sup> Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, p. 341.

property became eligible to vote and stand for election as Poor Law Guardians<sup>123</sup>, and in 1898 when they were granted the right to vote in municipal elections. However, women were still denied full franchise.

In 1908, dissatisfied by the slow progress of the Irish suffrage campaign, which, unlike the German movement, had no backing from the political ranks, and inspired by the new militant English Women's Social and Political Union, some members of the existing organizations founded the Irish Women's Franchise League (IWFL). As Maria Luddy states, the importance of the IWFL was primarily due to the fact that it "[...] extended the range of protests to include militant activity, the possibility of imprisonment and hunger strikes to advance their cause. It brought new force to the suffrage activism, the physical body of women, to fight the cause."<sup>124</sup> The formation of other suffrage organizations followed and the campaign for women's vote gained in momentum. The immediate concern of the movement was the inclusion of women's right to vote in the Home Rule Bill of 1912 on the same terms as men. When the demand was denied, women activists from across Ireland organized a mass meeting in Dublin to protest against the decision. The protest and the resolution sent to the Irish Members of Parliament, as well as to the British Cabinet, were again ignored and, consequently, the IWFL resorted to militant actions by breaking the windows of several public buildings. The IWFL's militancy, however, gained little support, either from the public or within the suffrage movement, and several of its members were imprisoned for their actions.<sup>125</sup>

While the Home Rule Bill had initially created an opportunity for Irish suffragists, it caused a split in the movement in the following years. Between 1912 and 1914<sup>126</sup> many Irish activists subordinated their suffrage cause for fear of endangering the passing of the Home Rule Bill in the British Parliament and thus placed their

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<sup>123</sup> Poor Law Guardians were primarily responsible to run workhouses for the poor and to collect a poor rate in the form of taxes within a certain area in order to maintain these workhouses and support the poor.

<sup>124</sup> Maria Luddy, 'Introduction: An overview of the suffrage movement', in Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward, eds., *Irish Women and the Vote. Becoming Citizens* (Dublin, 2007), p. xiii.

<sup>125</sup> Margaret Ward, "'Suffrage First, Above All Else!'" An Account of the Irish Suffrage Movement', *Feminist Review*, 10 (1982), pp. 27-8.

<sup>126</sup> The Home Rule Bill intended to establish an Irish parliament under British sovereignty. It was introduced in the British parliament in 1912 but did not become law until September 1914 and was almost immediately shelved due to the outbreak of World War I.



political beliefs before their feminist ambitions.<sup>127</sup> The outbreak of World War I further increased the split among the formerly united women in the suffrage campaign. As in Germany, a small group of activists remained committed to the suffrage cause. The majority, however, decided to set the campaign aside for the duration of the war.

In Ireland, the question of whether to maintain the suffrage cause was further complicated by the split between unionist women, who dedicated themselves to war relief work in order to support the British cause, and nationalist women, who believed that the First World War presented an opportunity for Irish nationalism. This latter group of women believed that their franchise would naturally follow the foundation of an Irish nation state and criticized women of the 'suffrage first' stance for not postponing the suffrage campaign.

Cullen argues that it was fundamentally due to the women who continued the campaign for women's votes, that the 1916 Easter Proclamation of the Irish revolutionaries acknowledged women's equal citizenship, a promise which was eventually implemented in the 1922 constitution.<sup>128</sup> Within the six-day revolution during Easter 1916, Irish republicans, exploiting Britain's involvement in the First World War, attempted to end British rule over Ireland and to establish an Irish Republic. The Easter Rising was defeated; but with the end of the First World War in 1918, the British Parliament granted the vote to British and Irish women property owners over thirty. Contrary to Cullen, Maryann Valiulis stresses the contribution of nationalist women to the feminist cause in Ireland and ultimately to gaining equal citizenship. As Valiulis states, some groups of women, particularly *Inghinidhe na hÉireann* (the daughters of Éireann), maintained a high level of feminism whilst at the same time supporting the nationalist cause. For these women, according to her, the two causes went hand in hand, and they argued that only in a free Ireland could women also be free. Their belief was that, unlike the English, Irish men would not deny women equal rights in an independent Ireland. However, as Valiulis also stresses, this assumption proved retrospectively to be wishful thinking.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Rosemary Cullen-Owens, *Smashing Times. A History of the Irish Women's Suffrage Movement 1889-1922* (Dublin, 1984), pp. 105-9.

<sup>128</sup> Cullen, 'How radical was Irish feminism between 1860 and 1920?', pp. 194-5.

<sup>129</sup> Maryann Valiulis, 'Free Women in a Free Nation': Nationalist Feminist Expectations for Independence', in Brian Farrell, ed., *The Creation of the Dáil. A Volume of Essays from the Thomas Davis Lectures* (Dublin, 1994), pp. 76-8.

When Ireland eventually gained independence in 1922 following the Irish War of Independence, all women over twenty-one were granted the vote through the new Irish constitution. This fundamental concession was primarily due to women's continuous campaigning and lobbying for universal suffrage after 1918, which had stressed women's efforts and support throughout the Easter Rising, as well as the War of Independence.<sup>130</sup> Accordingly, similar to the German suffrage campaign, the war had put constraints on the Irish women's suffrage movement, but had ultimately facilitated the success of the campaign. Nevertheless, the winning of the vote neither increased women's profile in the Irish public sphere, nor did it ensure their equal status within society as their rights were gradually curtailed within the new Irish Free State.<sup>131</sup>

Despite some contrary statements and portrayals in past historical studies,<sup>132</sup> the women's movement in Ireland and Germany did not disappear following the winning of the vote. Within Irish women's history authors like Maryann Valiulis<sup>133</sup>, Caitríona Beaumont<sup>134</sup> or Rosemary Cullen Owens<sup>135</sup> have shown that Irish women continued their struggle for full citizenship and against discriminatory legislation in the years after the vote had been won. Their research has shown that women's participation on juries, the civil service marriage bar and the 1937 constitution were issues of particular concern for Irish women and feminists throughout the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. As Cullen argues, "[O]rganised Irish feminism had not disappeared by 1922. But it was reduced in numbers [...]".<sup>136</sup> Organizations such as the newly established National Council of Women, the Irish Women Graduates' Associations, the

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<sup>130</sup> Luddy, 'Introduction: An overview of the suffrage movement', p. xxi.

<sup>131</sup> Cullen, 'How radical was Irish feminism between 1860 and 1920?', p. 195 and Luddy, 'Introduction: An overview of the suffrage movement', p. xxi.

<sup>132</sup> See for, example, Maurice Manning's statement that the 1920s witnessed the "death" of feminist activity in Ireland (Maurice Manning, 'Women in Irish National and Local Politics 1922-77', in Margaret Mac Curtain and Donnacha Ó Corráin, eds., *Women in Irish Society: the Historical Dimension* (Dublin, 1978), p. 93) or Rosemary Nave-Herz' account of the German women's movement which ends with the year 1918, when the vote was won and moves straight on to German women's history under the National Socialist regime between 1933 and 1945 (Nave-Herz, *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, pp. 26-31).

<sup>133</sup> Maryann Valiulis, 'Engendering Citizenship: Women's Relationship to the State in Ireland and the United States in the Post Suffrage Period', in Valiulis and O'Dowd, eds., *Women & Irish History*, pp. 159-72.

<sup>134</sup> Caitríona Beaumont, 'Gender, Citizenship and the State in Ireland, 1922-1990', in Scott Brewster, Virginia Crossman, Fiona Becket and David Alderson, eds., *Ireland in Proximity. History, Gender, Space* (London/New York, 1999), pp. 94-108.

<sup>135</sup> Rosemary Cullen Owens, *A Social History of Women in Ireland 1870 – 1970* (Dublin, 2005).

<sup>136</sup> Cullen, 'How radical was Irish feminism between 1860 and 1920?', p. 195.



Irish Women's Citizen and Local Government Association, as well as the Joint Committee of Women's Societies and Social Workers (founded in 1935) represented the core of remaining activism in the Irish Free State. These women's groups protested against the 1924 and 1927 Juries Acts, resisted the 1925 Civil Service Amendment Act, criticized the civil service marriage bar introduced in 1932 and objected to the 1934 Criminal Law Amendment Act, as well as the Conditions of Employment Act of the following year. They also opposed the 1937 constitution in the biggest Irish feminist campaign after suffrage.<sup>137</sup> The opposition of Irish women activists to these acts is further discussed in chapter IV.1.

German women's historians have also repeatedly shown that the women's movement did not dissolve throughout the years of the Weimar Republic. Within the bourgeois women's movement the divide between women of the 'relational' and the 'individualist' standpoints, which had separated German women activists long before World War I, remained - as did the split between the proletarian and the bourgeois women's movement. Elizabeth Harvey's study on the German bourgeois women's movement during the Weimar Republic is one example which illustrates that women's political activism did not decrease after the suffrage movement. Instead, women continued to challenge their legal position in the family and to press for their rights in employment, education and social policy. However, as the author points out, the movement often struggled to attract the young generation of women.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, the growing membership of the BDF, which grew to nearly one million members by the end of the 1920s, had an increasingly stultifying effect on the organization's ability to take a stand on polarizing issues such as abortion or contraception.<sup>139</sup> Instead, such issues were rather addressed by women's organizations with no affiliation to the umbrella organization, like the League for the Protection of Mothers, or the primarily left-wing and male-led Weimar sex reform movement<sup>140</sup>.<sup>141</sup> The BDF rather maintained

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<sup>137</sup> Caitriona Beaumont, 'Women & the Politics of Equality: The Irish Women's Movement 1930-1943', in Valiulis and O'Dowd, eds., *Women & Irish History*, pp. 175-8.

<sup>138</sup> Elizabeth Harvey, 'The Failure of Feminism? Young Women and the Bourgeois Feminist Movement in Weimar Germany 1918-1933', *Central European History*, 28 (1995), pp. 14-8.

<sup>139</sup> Gerhard, 'Die Frauenbewegung', p. 198.

<sup>140</sup> For more information on the sex reform movement during the Weimar Republic see, for example, Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex. The German Movement for Birth Control & Abortion Reform 1920-1950* (Oxford 1995).

<sup>141</sup> Lefko, "'Truly Womanly" and "Truly German"', p. 133

its maternalist policies and most of its pre-war agenda as it principally focused on the reform of family law aiming to improve the legal status of illegitimate children, married women's property rights and to allow divorces.<sup>142</sup> On the other hand, various new women's organizations were formed during the 1920s in response to the increasing conservatism in the Weimar Republic, including several professional women's groups. One the primary concerns of these organizations were the diminishing career prospects for women in the Weimar Republic and the decreasing interest in feminist ideas among the young generation of women. In 1926 several of these professional women's groups were absorbed by the newly established German Federation of University Women (DAB) which aimed to unite women graduates in their struggle to maintain and advance their rights.<sup>143</sup> The establishment of the DAB is discussed in greater detail in chapter III.1.

The women's movement in Germany, however, eventually did come to a sudden halt with the rise of National Socialism in 1933. Under Hitler's regime women's groups were either forced to dissolve or they were integrated into the "Deutsches Frauenwerk", an organization which promoted the Nazis' vision of the perfect Aryan woman.<sup>144</sup> This forced *Gleichschaltung* of German women's organizations did not imply that all women who had been previously involved in the German women's movement opposed the incorporation of their organizations into the Frauenwerk. Several women activists of the bourgeois women's movement embraced the National Socialists' ideology of racial hygiene and attempted to continue their organizations' work following the exclusion of their non-Aryan members.<sup>145</sup> Yet the *Gleichschaltung* certainly set an end to the feminist movement in Germany. Many women who had been involved in the bourgeois, the Social Democrat or the proletarian women's movement were persecuted or forced into exile, based on their ethnic, religious or political background. Others either resigned from their memberships or dissolved their organizations.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, p. 343.

<sup>143</sup> von Oertzen, *Strategie Verständigung*, pp. 158-163.

<sup>144</sup> Offen, *European Feminism 1700-1950. A Political History*, p. 300.

<sup>145</sup> Several members of the DAB, for example, supported the National Socialist Party (e.g. Ilse Szagunn, founding member of the DAB) and attempted to continue the DAB's work in accordance with the new regime's policies and ideologies - for more details see chapter III.1.

<sup>146</sup> See, for example, von Oertzen, *Strategie Verständigung*, pp. 181-93.



Many of these latter women activists re-united after the Second World War and re-established their former organizations, including Marie-Elisabeth Lüders and Agnes von Zahn-Harnack who re-founded the DAB. Yet, by this time, opportunity structures in both Germany and Ireland had changed significantly for the women's movement as the political and social climate of both states had become increasingly non-receptive towards feminists' demands. How the conditions had changed for women activists and women's organizations in the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Ireland is the subject of the following chapter.

## Chapter II: The construction of gender relations and ideologies in post-war Ireland and West Germany

### *Introduction*

Following the Second World War, many nations found their societies in complete disarray. Both the power relations between the sexes, as well as between nations, had been mostly inverted or overturned and many European states found themselves confronted with the difficult task of reconstituting national and social order and stability. Restoring this stability was ultimately defined through establishing a sense of security among the European nations, both in the political arena, as well as in society. Politically, stability was first and foremost to be achieved through the prevention of another world war by establishing a stable Western European community, which was primarily linked through economic treaties and the shared economic ideology of a free-market system. Moreover, with increasing tensions between the West and the East, a Western European union would also function as a unifying factor against the spread of Communism. Socially, security was intended to be reinforced among each country's population through the restoration of 'normality', considered to be primarily achieved through the reconstitution of traditional family structures and gender roles, which envisioned the man as the provider of the family income and the woman as the guardian of the house and children.<sup>147</sup>

This definition of normality and the reconstruction of traditional gender categories was a common characteristic of post-war societies and had already been a formative trend in post-World War I Europe.<sup>148</sup> The political embrace of these ideologies was, therefore, not a novelty but rather a common experience across most post-war Western societies, including Ireland and Germany. Yet, as Valiulis and Abrams and Harvey state, in Ireland and Germany the reconstitution of traditional gender roles and family structures was driven by strong political motivations which were distinctive

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<sup>147</sup> Tara Keenan-Thomson, *Irish Women and Street Politics 1956-1973* (Dublin/Portland, 2010), pp. 19-21.

<sup>148</sup> Caitríona Beaumont, 'Gender, citizenship and the state in Ireland, 1922-1990', in Scott Brewster, Virginia Crossman, Fiona Becket and David Alderson, eds., *Ireland in Proximity. History, Gender, Space* (London/New York, 1999), p. 94.



to each state and closely linked to the recent histories of the two countries and the subsequent partitions of the states. Within this context, the distribution of power between the sexes became of central importance. In particular, women's role in society formed the basis for defining a social order in the newly founded states and for shaping a national identity that would contribute to an international recognition of the two nations.<sup>149</sup>

This chapter discusses the existing historiography on the construction of gender roles and their effects on women's lives in Ireland and Germany, thus setting the contextual framework for the dissertation's research questions. It provides a brief outline of the social, cultural and political context and demonstrates both the similarities and differences between the Republic of Ireland and West Germany, with particular regard to women and gender ideology.

## ***II.1 The Federal Republic of Germany***

The Second World War had left the German state and its society in chaos. Due to the great number of war victims and imprisonment of German soldiers after surrender, the nation faced a significant demographic imbalance with a so called 'surplus' of approximately five million women in relation to men. Robert Moeller points out that as a result of this unequal gender ratio, German women experienced "an emancipation out of necessity"<sup>150</sup> during the immediate post-war period, as they were pushed into the position of the family's provider and protector. Women participated in the labour force, which included the jobs that had usually been held by men, they bartered on the black-market, struggled with the allied bureaucracy in order to receive larger food rations and organized housing for their families.<sup>151</sup> Elizabeth D.

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<sup>149</sup> Maryann Valiulis, 'Power, Gender, and Identity in the Irish Free State', *Journal of Women's History*, 6/7 (1995), p. 124; Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey, 'Introduction: gender and gender relations in German history', in idem, eds., *Gender Relations in German History: Power, Agency and Experience from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (London, 1996), pp. 25-6.

<sup>150</sup> This term was originally coined by the German sociologist Helmut Schelsky in his 1953 analysis of the change in German families.

<sup>151</sup> Robert Moeller, 'Reconstructing the Family in Reconstruction Germany: Women and Social Policy in the Federal Republic, 1949-1955', *Feminist Studies*, 15 (1989), p. 147.

Heinemann refers to this post-war phenomenon of reversed gender roles as the “hour of the woman”,<sup>152</sup> acknowledging the hardships women were confronted with after the Second World War. Yet their new responsibilities and ability to cope with these exceptional situations also resulted in a feeling of independence and pride among German women, which in turn frequently caused problems in marriages after their husbands had returned. Women’s acquired sense of self-reliance and familiarity with procedures in post-war society left many returning men ignorant of everyday processes and dependent on their wives.

Hence, power dynamics within German families had shifted as a consequence of the war. In addition, husbands who came back from war or prison camps did not return as heroes but rather as broken men. Having believed in and supported the wrong cause, which had ultimately led to painful defeat, German men often developed strong feelings of self-doubt and guilt after their return to a country which had significantly changed during their absence. These feelings of defeated manhood and the realization of having been in the wrong, in combination with women’s new independence and self-confidence, brought into question the concept of male superiority and the traditional order of gender relations within the family and marriage.<sup>153</sup> These fundamental transformations of norms and values in war-torn German society coincided with an increased sexual liberty among West German women through ‘fraternization’<sup>154</sup> with American and British soldiers in the Western zones, as well as through increased prostitution. According to Heinemann, both of these post-war phenomena often simultaneously led to a further alienation of German women and men in marriages and families.<sup>155</sup>

The gender-specific experiences in the turbulent post-war years strongly contributed to the political shift towards a Christian conservatism and to the government’s efforts to restore traditional gender roles in the new Federal Republic of

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<sup>152</sup> Elizabeth D. Heinemann, ‘The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany’s “Crisis Years” and West German National Identity’, *The American Historical Review*, 101 (1996), p. 356.

<sup>153</sup> Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 262-3.

<sup>154</sup> The term ‘fraternization’ is here used to describe the romantic relationships of German women with occupying soldiers in the immediate post-World War II years and is to be distinguished from prostitution. However, at the time, for many Germans, who met their country’s occupation and the influence of foreign cultures with much hostility, prostitution and fraternization were synonymous – see, for example, Heinemann, ‘The Hour of the Woman’, pp. 380-1.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*



Germany.<sup>156</sup> With this shift the Catholic Church, in particular, gained a new and, so far, unprecedented status in German politics and society.

The influence of the Christian Church in post-war Germany was already strengthened through American and British allied forces during occupation. The Western occupiers, according to Armin Boyens, not only allowed both churches the continuance of their work but also supported their organizational restoration. The military government of the American Zone, for instance, fostered the first conference of Protestant leaders in Treysa in August 1945 in order to get the re-organization of the Protestant Church started.<sup>157</sup> Moreover, state support for the church in the form of taxes and denominational schools, was re-introduced. This instantaneous support in reconstituting the Christian Church was largely due to the fact that it had shown some opposition to the National Socialist regime, in particular, throughout the early months of Hitler's political takeover. After the war, British and American Allies, therefore, classified the Protestant and Catholic Church as among of the few anti-fascist institutions which could contribute to building a democratic German state.<sup>158</sup> Werner Faulstich criticizes that the unchallenged re-emerging influence of the Christian Church in Germany after the Second World War failed to acknowledge the church's incapacity to stand up against the crimes committed by the Nazis during the Third Reich.<sup>159</sup> Yet, as Christoph Kleßmann states, in the turmoil of the immediate post-war years the church once again became an important support structure, not only for the rebuilding of the state, but also for the population at large through offering spiritual support. After the experiences of war, defeat and occupation, Christian teaching symbolized for many Germans both the hope for overcoming the past and for a brighter and more stable future. Religion and the church hence served the function of filling the "spiritual vacuum" left by National Socialism.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Heinemann, 'The Hour of the Woman', pp. 387-8.

<sup>157</sup> Armin Boyens, 'Die Kirchenpolitik der amerikanischen Besatzungsmacht in Deutschland von 1944 bis 1946', in Armin Boyens, Martin Greschat, Rudolf von Thadden and Paolo Pombeni, eds., *Kirchen in der Nachkriegszeit. Vier zeitgeschichtliche Beiträge* (Göttingen, 1979), pp. 34-7.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-5.

<sup>159</sup> Werner Faulstich, "'Der Teufel und der Liebe Gott'. Zur Bedeutung von Philosophie, Religion und Kirche im zeitgenössischem Wertesystem', in idem, ed., *Die Kultur der fünfziger Jahre* (Munich, 2002), p. 27.

<sup>160</sup> Christoph Kleßmann, 'Kontinuität und Veränderung im Protestantischen Milieu', in Axel Schildt and Arnold Sywottek, eds., *Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau. Die Deutsche Gesellschaft der 50er Jahre* (Bonn, 1993), pp. 404-6.

The Catholic Church with its affiliated politicians and institutions particularly benefited from the new order in post-war Germany as it spearheaded the so called re-Christianization, as part of the de-Nazification process, by reinforcing Christian morals and ideals in German society and legislation. Klaus-Jörg Ruhl attributes the increased influence of the Catholic Church primarily to the early denunciation of the National Socialists' ideology by the Catholic hierarchy during the 1930s which, he argues, enhanced the Church's prestige and credibility even among non-Catholic Germans after the war.<sup>161</sup> The fact that the Catholic Church was able to assert considerable influence in society and state during the first decade of the new Federal Republic was, however, owing to two further reasons. The first relates to the demographic shift in religious denominations. The partition of Germany had separated a considerable percentage of Protestants into East Germany, which created a near parity between German Catholics and Protestants in West Germany. The second reason was the foundation of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) as a political home for German Catholicism. Despite functioning as a coalition between Protestants and Catholics, the CDU particularly provided a new political base for Catholic conservatives. The establishment of this party with its leader, Konrad Adenauer - a devout Catholic - as Karl Gabriel argues, softened the Catholic Church's traditional stance on the separation of church and state and brought it closer to German politics and the new government.<sup>162</sup>

The success of the CDU in the first West German elections and the appointment of Adenauer as the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic significantly facilitated the increased weight of the Catholic teaching and Church on German politics and society.<sup>163</sup> This new influence of Catholic conservatives and the Catholic Church was particularly noticeable in West German debates on the family and family legislation. This quickly became a key issue on the agenda of the newly founded or re-established political parties after the war and was to significantly shape gender ideologies and women's role in society for the coming years.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Klaus-Jörg Ruhl, ed., *Frauen in der Nachkriegszeit 1945-1963* (Munich, 1988), p. 107.

<sup>162</sup> Karl Gabriel, 'Die Katholiken in den 50er Jahren: Restauration, Modernisierung und beginnende Auflösung eines konfessionellen Milieus', in Schildt and Sywottek, eds., *Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau*, pp. 426-8.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 418.

<sup>164</sup> Ruhl, *Frauen in der Nachkriegszeit*, pp. 107-9.



Political discussions on the family in the late 1940s and early 1950s reflected the way in which state officials envisioned the social order in the new state. The reversal of gender roles that German society had witnessed in the immediate post-war years had caused many Germans, both conservatives and liberals, to believe that the institution of the family had experienced a 'crisis' which needed to be overcome by reconstituting conventional gender norms.<sup>165</sup> There is consensus among historians that this crisis of the family was foremost a crisis in the masculinity of German men who had returned after the war and had found their wives, mothers or sisters in the role of the provider and thus in the man's role within traditional family structures. The restoration of the nuclear family was, therefore, primarily an attempt to re-masculinize German society, politics and culture after years of women shaping the German social landscape.<sup>166</sup> The political proclamations to strengthen and protect the family were thus measures to protect the patriarchal order of society by ensuring that women would return to the role of housewife and mother.<sup>167</sup>

The drafting of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic, which was adopted in 1949, and the associated debates over women's rights in the new state, mostly reflected the preoccupation with restoring traditional gender roles within the family. As Ute Frevert points out, despite women's enormous efforts in providing for their families, their participation in the work force and in rebuilding Germany after the war, the Parliamentary Council, which had been instructed to formulate a constitution, was at first not willing to grant women full equality.<sup>168</sup> Instead, the majority of the sixty-five representatives on the council, of whom only four were women, were in favour of re-instituting the Weimar paragraph which had stated that women and men have *fundamentally* the same rights. The word 'fundamentally' had thereby presented the loophole for the implementation of restrictive legislation on women's rights throughout the Weimar Republic.

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<sup>165</sup> Merith Niehuss, 'Kontinuität und Wandel der Familie in den 50er Jahren', in Schildt and Sywottek, eds., *Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau*, pp. 322-3.

<sup>166</sup> Ute Gerhard, '50 Jahre Gleichberechtigung - eine Springprozeession', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 24-25 (2008), pp. 3-4.

<sup>167</sup> See Moeller, 'Reconstructing the Family in Reconstruction Germany', pp. 137-138; Angela Vogel, 'Familie', in Wolfgang Benz, ed., *Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Band 2: Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), p. 108.

<sup>168</sup> Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 278.

In particular, the CDU and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), opposed the idea of establishing the principle of unconditional equality between the sexes. Their proposal stated that men and women were equal before the law, yet that “[...] different things should also be treated differently.”<sup>169</sup> Granting unconditional equality required that any law which contradicted the principle would have to be amended. This included the Civil Code, which had legally ensured the patriarchal family model in Germany since 1900 as it appointed the authority in decision-making within the family to the man, including husbands’ right to bar their wives from work outside the home. Conservative forces, in particular both churches and the CDU, feared the possible consequences of integrating the equality principle in the Basic Law for the institution of the family. It was argued that with unconditional equality between the sexes, the family itself could be in danger as its ‘natural order’ would be shattered if the authority of the man in the family was to be revoked.<sup>170</sup>

Due to the strong opposition, the proposal for full equality between the sexes, which had been put forward by the Social Democrat Elisabeth Selbert, was rejected twice by the Parliamentary Council. It was only owing to increasing public pressure from women and women’s organizations that full equality between the sexes was eventually incorporated into the Basic Law and that the Civil Code was ordered to be revised by 1 April 1953.<sup>171</sup> However, this decision did not mark the end of German women’s struggle for full equality.<sup>172</sup> In particular, the opposition of the Catholic Church and the judiciary led the government to stall the passing of the equality bill in Parliament until October 1952. This delay determined that the deadline to revise the Civil Code in order to bring family legislation into line with the equality principle could not possibly have been met.<sup>173</sup> In fact, its revision was not completed until 1957, four years after the initial deadline. Moreover, the new Civil Code continued to uphold the concept of the housewife marriage, stating that women were only to seek employment outside the home if it was compatible with their household duties. It also,

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<sup>169</sup> Angela Vogel, 'Frauen und Frauenbewegung', in Benz, ed., *Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Band 2: Gesellschaft*, p. 68.

<sup>170</sup> Ruhl, *Frauen in der Nachkriegszeit*, pp. 154-5.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> The struggle for women’s full legal equality by women’s organizations will be discussed in more detail in chapter III.4.2.

<sup>173</sup> Erica Carter, *How German is She? Post-war West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman* (Michigan, 1997), pp. 32- 3.



at first, reinforced the authority of the husband in decisions over the upbringing of the children.<sup>174</sup>

Maintaining the authority of the father and women's domestic duty in the revised Civil Code and thus leaving the principle of a gendered division of labour unchallenged, was justified through article 6 of the West German Basic Law. This article had put the family and marriage under the special protection of the state. Its inclusion in the Basic Law had been a direct result of the political concerns over these two social institutions during the immediate post-war years.<sup>175</sup> Particularly for the CDU/CSU faction and Catholic clerics strengthening and protecting the family and marriage equalled stressing women's primary role as a wife and mother.<sup>176</sup> Article 6 of the Basic Law thus formed the legitimate backbone for the conservative family legislation and gender ideologies of the Christian Democratic administration. The newly established Department of Family Affairs, under the direction of the Catholic conservative Franz-Josef Würmeling, was to oversee this protection and the strengthening of family and marriage. With strong support of family organizations founded by the Protestant and the Catholic Churches, the Department served as the official body to advance the government's vision of a society based on stable, nuclear families and traditional gender concepts. Würmeling's political incentives included child welfare payments, tax concessions for families and mothers' convalescent homes. All of these were intended to foster the stabilization of the crisis-rocked German families and to facilitate women's return into the domestic sphere.<sup>177</sup>

In addition to restoring stability and normality in West German society, based on Christian morals, the constitutional pledge to protect the family and the efforts to return women to the domestic sphere and to their roles as mothers and wives were also key ideologies for defining a national identity. This identity was intended to clearly demarcate the young Federal Republic of Germany from its fascist past, as well as from the Communist regime established in the Eastern part of the country, the German Democratic Republic (GDR).<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Frevert, *Women in German History*, pp. 281-2.

<sup>175</sup> K.M.N. Carpenter, "'For Mothers Only': Mothers' Convalescent Homes and Modernizing Maternal Ideology in 1950s West Germany", *Journal of Social History*, 34 (2001), p. 867.

<sup>176</sup> Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, p. 89.

<sup>177</sup> Moeller, 'Reconstructing the Family in Reconstruction Germany', pp. 152-3.

<sup>178</sup> Carter, *How German is She?*, pp. 34-5.

The partition of Germany into two states had been a direct consequence of the demise of the Third Reich, the subsequent division of Germany into Allied occupation zones and the increasing conflict between the Soviet Union and the West. The schism between Germany's East and West, which had already loomed during the post-war years of occupation, was made final with the introduction of separate currencies in East and West Germany in 1948 and the adoption of separate constitutions in 1949.<sup>179</sup> More consequential, however, was the ideological split between the two states. Whereas Germans in the Federal Republic experienced a turn towards Christian conservatism, the political and social principles of the newly established German Democratic Republic were oriented towards the Marxist ideology of its former occupying force, the Soviet Union.

This ideological divide particularly found expression in the states' gender policies and ideals. As Marxism defined domesticity as a form of slavery for women, their participation in the work force, making women financially independent from men, was regarded to be a crucial aspect to enforce women's emancipation.<sup>180</sup> The East German government, however, followed a two-fold policy directed at women. On the one hand, it attempted to increase full-time employment among both single and married women. On the other hand, it failed to address the issue of women's emancipation in the family and the gendered division of labour within. Indeed, women in the GDR were expected to shoulder the double burden of motherhood and wage labour - an ideology which collided with traditional and West German ideals of womanhood, i.e. of motherhood and housewifery.<sup>181</sup>

Despite the fact that women's emancipation envisioned by the East German government was limited to the productive sphere, the GDR's family politics and gender ideologies provided a fundamental negative example for West German policies.<sup>182</sup> In the reasoning of the Federal Republic's government, the Communist ideology of women's emancipation through participation in the work-force considerably weakened the institution of the family. It thus appeared to be the equivalent of the National Socialists' policies, which had undermined the family through the utilization

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<sup>179</sup> Carter, *How German is She?*, p. 114.

<sup>180</sup> Elizabeth D. Heinemann, *What Difference does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Post-war Germany* (Berkeley 1999), p. 176.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 176-7.



of women as reproductive labourers in the name of the survival of the German *Volks*. Under both totalitarian regimes, it was argued that families had collapsed since women had become servants of the state.

Such anti-totalitarian rhetoric functioned as a powerful legitimization for the family and gender ideologies in post-war West Germany.<sup>183</sup> The institution of the family and the role of the woman were thereby awarded crucial symbolic meanings in consolidating the Federal Republic's national identity and political self-definition within the context of Germany's ideological and de facto partition.<sup>184</sup> Enabling women to retreat into the home and the family after years of enduring economic and personal hardships represented the new freedom, democracy and prosperity of the Federal Republic. The Communists' policy of promoting women's emancipation through the participation in the work-force was conversely portrayed as a continuation of these hardships.<sup>185</sup> The traditional model of family life and women's role in society thus provided a clear distinction between the democratic and capitalist West German state, and the totalitarian, communist East Germany.

Hence, despite granting full equality to German women in the new Basic Law, the government's Christian conservative family and gender ideology ensured that women would experience their equality in the new German state very differently to men.<sup>186</sup> By constituting the traditional family and women's primary and 'natural' function as mothers and wives as signifiers of a conscious ideological differentiation from totalitarian regimes in the past and present, the West German government laid the foundation for a national identity and morality in the young Federal Republic.

## ***II.2 The Republic of Ireland***

The Republic of Ireland experienced the Second World War and its consequences differently to the rest of Europe due to its neutrality.<sup>187</sup> This had

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<sup>183</sup> Moeller, 'Reconstructing the Family in Reconstruction Germany', pp. 162-3.

<sup>184</sup> Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>185</sup> Vogel, 'Familie', in Benz, ed., *Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Band 2: Gesellschaft*, p. 101.

<sup>186</sup> Moeller, 'Reconstructing the Family in Reconstruction Germany', pp. 163-4.

<sup>187</sup> Keenan-Thomson, *Irish Women and Street Politics 1956-1973*, p. 24.

important effects on the state's economy as imports and shipments of the Allied forces had come to a halt, which had caused severe shortages in goods, such as food and fuel. Here the years between 1939 and 1946 are known, significantly, as "The Emergency". The cost of living shot up and an increasing part of the Irish population faced great poverty and hardship. Taoiseach Eamon de Valera had met these problems by giving the government the power to regulate the economy through rationing and price control. He had also enforced a strict censorship of the press in order to extinguish social tensions, caused by the conditions, and to maintain the policy of neutrality.<sup>188</sup>

Ireland's political neutrality, though sparing the South of Ireland from air raids, as experienced by most other European states, eventually resulted in the fact that the Republic "[...] fell out of step with the rest of Europe as continental governments began to rebuild their economic and social systems."<sup>189</sup> Thus in the years following the Second World War the Republic of Ireland did not experience an economic upsurge. Missing out on post-war reconstruction ultimately left Southern Ireland socially and economically not only behind other European states, but also behind Northern Ireland, which through its affiliation to Britain had been part of the war effort and was now experiencing a transition to a welfare state.<sup>190</sup>

Yet, in terms of gender ideologies and relations, Ireland bore close similarities to most Western countries in the post-World War II years as it had undergone a similar restructuring of society and gender roles two decades earlier, in accordance with an international trend marking a return to conservative gender politics in the aftermath of World War I.<sup>191</sup> However, international influences had only been part of the reason for a clear shift towards re-emphasizing women's primary role in the home and family. As in the Federal Republic, the construction of Irish gender relations and ideologies were central to the shaping of a national identity, as well as establishing social order within a new and partitioned state.<sup>192</sup>

The Republic of Ireland originally evolved from the Irish Free State, which had been formally founded in December 1922 as a direct result of the Irish War of

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<sup>188</sup> Bryce Evans, 'The IHA and the Introduction of Rationing in Ireland', in Alan Hayes, ed., *Hilda Tweedy and the Irish Housewives Association: Links in the Chain ...* (Dublin, 2011), pp. 95-7.

<sup>189</sup> Keenan-Thomson, *Irish Women and Street Politics 1956-1973*, p. 24.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>191</sup> Beaumont, 'Gender, citizenship and the state in Ireland, 1922-1990', pp. 94-5.

<sup>192</sup> See Valiulis, 'Power, Gender, and Identity in the Irish Free State', pp. 127-8.



Independence and the end of British rule. The formation of the Irish Free State established a self-governing, but divided Ireland comprising twenty-six counties, since Northern Ireland (comprising the remaining six counties) had opted out of the Free State. Yet the Anglo-Irish treaty, which had concluded the Irish War of Independence, established that the new Irish Free State remained linked to the British Crown through a Governor-General, who continued to represent the British King in Ireland, and the government's oath of loyalty to the Crown.<sup>193</sup> These constitutional arrangements, in particular, the matter of the oath, led yet to more violence and social disruption. In a short, but bloody Civil War, which lasted from June 1922 until May 1923, the forces supporting the Anglo-Irish treaty fought those opposing it. Eventually, the supporters of the treaty claimed victory, but the new Irish government was confronted with the difficult task of consolidating the nation within an environment of violence and opposition among the population.<sup>194</sup>

In this situation, as Maryann Valiulis argues, the new government “[...] compensated for its inability to control much of what was happening around it by asserting its power *vis à vis* restrictions against women. In this, the government's response was typical of postrevolutionary societies [...]”.<sup>195</sup> As in post-World War II Germany, the ideological strengthening of traditional gender categories was considered to be the initial step towards a stable society and to restoring order in the new Irish state.<sup>196</sup>

As outlined in chapter I, in the decades preceding the foundation of the Irish Free State, women had achieved a noticeable expansion of their rights in areas of education, property, employment and politics, including the right to vote and to hold public office. Article 3 of the Free State constitution of 1922 had confirmed women's equal status by granting “every person, without distinction of sex” full and equal citizenship and it had extended women's franchise to the age of twenty-one, thereby matching men's political rights.<sup>197</sup> Despite this political concession, public debates on the role of women recorded a renewed emphasis on femininity and motherhood and

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<sup>193</sup> Bill Kissane, 'Éamon de Valera and the Survival of Democracy in Inter-War Ireland', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42 (2007), pp. 212-3.

<sup>194</sup> Myrtle Hill, *Women in Ireland: A Century of Change* (Belfast, 2003), pp. 84-8.

<sup>195</sup> Valiulis, 'Power, Gender, and Identity in the Irish Free State', p. 127.

<sup>196</sup> Beaumont, 'Gender, citizenship and the state in Ireland, 1922-1990', p. 94.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

these debates, Eileen Connolly stresses, reflected “[...] the limits of the [previously] renegotiated gender regime.”<sup>198</sup> The promise of equal rights through the constitution thus did not equal a reflection of the public and political consensus on women’s role in the Irish Free State.<sup>199</sup> Article 3 served rather as an acknowledgement of women’s participation in the Irish nationalist struggle and their contribution to society, than as an ideological assurance. Contemporary political debates exposed a clear desire for women’s return from public duties to their ‘natural’ role as mothers and wives.

The re-constitution of traditional gender roles was, as in the Federal Republic of Germany, partly justified by the attempt to reinstate normality and stability in a war-torn society. Both the Irish War of Independence and, particularly, the Civil War were perceived as a “[...] ‘moral crisis’ which shook the foundations of civilized life [...]”.<sup>200</sup> And as in post-WWII West Germany, the backing of the church was considered crucial in order to restore stability and morale among the Irish populace in the new independent Irish state.<sup>201</sup>

The impact of the Catholic Church and Catholic teaching on shaping and constructing the ideology that determined Irish women’s role in society needs to be viewed in the context of the country’s history. As Emmet Larkin argues, “[...] the Church does not exist independently of the Irish political system, but is one of the basic elements in that system.”<sup>202</sup> Consequently, as the author suggests, the establishment and consolidation of an independent Irish state would not have been possible without the support of the Catholic clergy in Ireland. Indeed, the Catholic Church had played a central role in the Irish nationalist movement, which had begun to take roots under Daniel O’Connell at the beginning of the nineteenth century. O’Connell had successfully included the Catholic clergy to lend authority and strength to his struggle for Catholic Emancipation,<sup>203</sup> which was ultimately won in 1829 and in

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<sup>198</sup> Eileen Connolly, 'Durability and Change in State Gender Systems: Ireland in the 1950s', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 10 (2003), p. 68.

<sup>199</sup> Valiulis, 'Power, Gender, and Identity in the Irish Free State', p. 120.

<sup>200</sup> Kissane, 'Éamon de Valera and the Survival of Democracy in Inter-War Ireland', p. 218.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Emmet Larkin, 'Church, State, and Nation in Modern Ireland', *The American Historical Review*, 80 (1975), p. 1244.

<sup>203</sup> Catholic Emancipation removed several of the previously imposed restrictions on Roman Catholics in Ireland and Great Britain through the Act of Uniformity, the Test Acts and the Penal Laws which had been introduced by British parliament since the sixteenth century and which ultimately attempted to force Catholics and Protestant dissenters to accept the denomination of the Anglican Church. Among



turn, as Larkin states, “deepened the national consciousness” of the Irish clergy and, therefore, provided the basis for future cooperation between Irish nationalists and the Catholic Church.<sup>204</sup> Within the years and decades following Catholic Emancipation this national consciousness among the clergy had gradually developed as, particularly, the clergy’s discontent with the national school and university system had grown, which had put the education system under control of the Protestant government in Britain.<sup>205</sup> The long-lasting struggle surrounding the education system had benefited Charles Stewart Parnell. Since the late 1870s Parnell had rapidly established himself as the new leader of the Irish nationalist movement through the formation of the Land League (later “Irish National League”) and the Irish Parliamentary Party. By assuring the church control over the education system in a self-governing Ireland in return for the clergy’s backing in the political strive for Home Rule, Parnell had formed a powerful alliance between the Irish nationalists and the Catholic Church.<sup>206</sup> This alliance survived Parnell, who had died in 1891, as the Catholic clergy had continued to support the Irish nationalist movement and, therefore, had ultimately provided the foundation for the formation of the new Irish Free State following the Irish War of Independence.

The Catholic clergy was an imperative element in the newly formed Irish Free State, as the government was in need of the Catholic Church’s support in order to assert itself and to gain support for the acceptance of the Anglo-Irish treaty. Already in October 1922 the Catholic hierarchy thus excommunicated those opposing the Anglo-Irish treaty and the new provisional government in the Free State. This interference of the church and the clear message it sent, Bill Kissane suggests, highlighted the extent to which the government depended on the authority and standing of the church in the early months of its existence.<sup>207</sup> Yet most politicians of the young Irish Free State, who had emerged from the nationalist movement in Ireland, which had brought about Ireland’s independence, and indeed the majority of the Irish population, had been

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these restrictions were, for example, religious tests for public officials, effectively excluding Catholics from holding any public office.

<sup>204</sup> Larkin, ‘Church, State, and Nation in modern Ireland’, pp. 1248-56.

<sup>205</sup> See also chapter IV.1 for further details on the Irish education dispute between the Catholic Church and the British government.

<sup>206</sup> Larkin, ‘Church, State, and Nation in modern Ireland’, pp. 1263-66.

<sup>207</sup> Kissane, ‘Éamon de Valera and the Survival of Democracy in Inter-War Ireland’, p. 218.

raised in a strict Catholic tradition.<sup>208</sup> Therefore, there were few critical voices towards a continuing alliance between the Catholic Church and the new Irish government.<sup>209</sup>

This alliance between the Catholic Church and the Irish government, first under W.T. Cosgrave and later under Eamon de Valera, was further consolidated through the joint efforts of restoring stability and order in the new state. The education system, which was now put entirely under church control in the Irish Free State, was regarded as the most effective means to reinstate public morality and re-constitute traditional values. By providing the young generation with a stern religious education, it was hoped that they would be protected from immoral and modern influences such as film or modern literature. Furthermore, the concern about a decline in morality and traditional values, as claimed by the Catholic hierarchy and political leaders, underpinned government's legislation, such as the 1929 Censorship of Publication Act or the Public Dancehall Act of 1935, which required the licensing of dancehalls. In addition, women's rights were gradually curtailed in order to strengthen the ideology of motherhood and marriage as the natural and primary existence of women and to further solidify the gendered division of the private and the public. The reinforcement of this ideology was deeply rooted in Catholic teaching and as Beaumont emphasizes "[...] in a country where the bulk of the population were devout Catholics the Church's interpretation of the role of women was hugely influential."<sup>210</sup>

During the first two decades following the foundation of the Irish Free State a number of legislative reforms were passed which mirrored the political and public consensus of the time and which aimed at returning women to the domestic sphere. They included the 1924 and 1927 Juries Acts, the 1925 Civil Service Amendment Bill, the civil service marriage bar in 1932, and the Conditions of Employment Bill of 1935. The Juries Acts gradually removed women from juries and forced them to apply to keep their name on the rolls, thus essentially depriving women of a public office.<sup>211</sup> The Civil Service Amendment Bill granted the government the right to limit civil service

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<sup>208</sup> Yvonne Galligan, 'Women and National Identity in the Republic of Ireland or The Plight of the "Poor Dinnerless Husband"', *Scottish Affairs*, 18 (1997), p. 46.

<sup>209</sup> Richard B. Finnegan, 'Forums, Courts, Cabinets, and Tribunals: The Governing of Ireland since the 1960s', *Éire – Ireland*, 43 (2008), pp. 126-9.

<sup>210</sup> Caitriona Beaumont, 'Women, Citizenship and Catholicism in the Irish Free State, 1922-1948', *Women's History Review*, 6 (1997), p. 564.

<sup>211</sup> Valiulis, 'Power, Gender, and Identity in the Irish Free State', pp. 120-1.



entrance examinations on the basis of sex and further enabled it to prevent competitive examinations. Such examinations had been one of the catalysts for opening new employment opportunities for women, as these exams allowed them to prove their equal qualification and education to men's.<sup>212</sup> Although the Civil Service Amendment Bill was eventually suspended, as it failed to pass in the Free State's Seanad, it clearly exposed the Irish government's position towards women's role in the society of the new independent Ireland.<sup>213</sup> Several years later, this position was confirmed with the passing of the marriage bar, determining women's dismissal from positions in the civil service on the event of marriage, and the Conditions of Employment Bill, which allowed the Minister for Industry and Commerce to limit the number of women employed in certain industries.<sup>214</sup>

According to Beaumont, these reforms particularly "[...] revealed that women were clearly not viewed by the state as being equal citizens [...]"<sup>215</sup> Mary E. Daly, on the other hand, contends that the implementation of restrictive legislation on women's rights and a reinforcement of traditional gender categories in the Irish Free State were mainly due to economic reasons. She states that "[G]overnment policy was less interested in pushing women back into the home [...] than in ensuring that the majority of newly created jobs would be filled by men."<sup>216</sup> Beaumont agrees that unemployment certainly influenced pieces of legislation, such as the Civil Service Amendment Bill, the Conditions of Employment Bill or the Marriage Bar. Yet she rightly points out that economic factors are not sufficient to explain legislation such as the removal of women from juries through the 1924 and 1927 Juries Acts or the particular emphasis in the drafting of the 1937 constitution.<sup>217</sup>

In 1937, the Irish Free State became 'Éire' or 'Ireland' as the oath to the British crown was abolished, the Governor-General was replaced by a President, and the

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<sup>212</sup> Mary Cullen, 'Women, emancipation, and politics, 1860-1984', in J.R. Hill, ed., *A New History of Ireland. Volume VII: Ireland, 1921-1984* (Oxford, 2003), p. 837.

<sup>213</sup> Caitriona Beaumont, 'Women & the Politics of Equality: The Irish Women's Movement 1930-1943', in Valiulis and O'Dowd, eds., *Women & Irish History*, p. 175.

<sup>214</sup> Beaumont, 'Gender, citizenship and the state in Ireland, 1922-1990', pp. 97-8.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>216</sup> Mary E. Daly, 'Women in the Irish Free State. The Interaction between Economics and Ideology', *Journal of Women's History*, 6/7 (1995), p. 110.

<sup>217</sup> Beaumont, 'Gender, citizenship and the state in Ireland, 1922-1990', p. 101.

office of the Taoiseach<sup>218</sup> was formed. The state, however, still remained part of the British Commonwealth, a status which was only abolished in 1948 when Ireland formally became a republic. With the abolition of the remaining ties to the British crown through the establishment of Éire, it had become necessary to frame a new constitution. This new constitution, passed in July 1937, re-affirmed the government's stance on women's role in society.<sup>219</sup> The document clearly stated that women's primary place was in the home and that women, therefore, were not compelled to seek employment outside the home. It also claimed that the state had to ensure that the "inadequate strength of women" should not be exploited and that they should not be forced to work in "avocations unsuited to their sex, age or strength".<sup>220</sup> The new constitution, consequently, enshrined women's primary function as a wife and mother as a legal principle.<sup>221</sup> In doing so, it limited women's equality to political equality. Considering the restrictive legislation already in place by 1937, the constitution, which allowed for a limitation of women's role and rights in an Irish state, should be regarded as a continuation of an already evident political strategy.<sup>222</sup>

The restrictive legislation passed in the Irish Free State and the government's stance on women's status in Irish society, as reflected in the 1937 constitution, however, cannot simply be traced to the influence of the Catholic Church and to concerns about public morality and social stability.<sup>223</sup> Similar to post-World War II Germany, debates on womanhood and the limitation of women's rights in the Irish state should also be understood in the context of nation-building and the shaping of a national identity.<sup>224</sup> The alliance of nationalists and the Catholic hierarchy formed a consensus on an ideology which was distinct for women in the Irish Free State and which aimed to set it apart from Northern Ireland and ultimately Britain.<sup>225</sup> As Gerardine Meany argues "[I]n post-colonial Southern Ireland a particular construction

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<sup>218</sup> The Taoiseach is the Irish Prime Minister.

<sup>219</sup> Yvonne Scannell, 'The Constitution and the Role of Women', in Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, eds., *The Irish Women's History Reader* (London, 2001), pp. 71-3.

<sup>220</sup> Beaumont, 'Gender, citizenship and the state in Ireland, 1922-1990', p. 100.

<sup>221</sup> See chapter IV.1 for a more detailed discussion of the 1937 constitution and, in particular, of the resistance by Irish women's organizations against several of the articles published in the 1937 draft constitution.

<sup>222</sup> Beaumont, 'Women, Citizenship and Catholicism in the Irish Free State, 1922-1948', pp. 578-9.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 571.

<sup>224</sup> Louise Ryan, 'Negotiating modernity and tradition: Newspaper debates on the 'modern girl' in the Irish Free State', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 7 (1998), p. 190.

<sup>225</sup> Galligan, 'Women and National Identity in the Republic of Ireland', pp. 46-7.



of sexual and familial roles became the very substance of what it meant to be Irish.”<sup>226</sup> This Irishness was reflected in the constitution of 1937, which portrayed the ideal woman as a devoted mother and wife, who did not work but rather contributed to the common good by guarding the home and raising her children in a nationalist and Catholic tradition.<sup>227</sup> As Valiulis states,

[...] the government of the Free State used this gender ideology to demonstrate moral superiority. Removing women from public life, when countries such as Britain had given women access, however limited, to the public sphere would supposedly demonstrate that the Irish lived a higher set of morals and embraced a higher moral code.<sup>228</sup>

Ryan concurs, as she stresses that efforts to create an Irish identity based on respectability, virtue and purity (all of which were embodied by the ideal Irish woman) have to be interpreted in the context of colonization and Ireland’s long history as being the oppressed. The cultural identity which was construed in the Irish Free State primarily served to counteract the negative images used by the English to describe the Irish. In this colonial imagery, the Irish were portrayed as uncivilized, childish and passive - characteristics usually utilized to describe the female sex.<sup>229</sup> By returning women into the domestic sphere and into their traditional roles as mothers and wives, political leaders aimed to demonstrate the respectability and virtue of the Irish Free State, qualities the British had seemingly lost by granting women increased access to the public sphere. At the same time such measures were intended to highlight the capability of Irish men to take control and to govern. In this way, Irish women became “the other” in the new Free State, those in need of control and protection. As Valiulis concludes, “[J]ust as the British had used the Irish as “Other” to define themselves, Irish government leaders utilized images of women to define themselves politically.”<sup>230</sup>

Summing up, the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Irish Free State, which later became the Republic of Ireland, were important milestones not only in the states’ histories but also in regard to the implications on women. Gender grew into a central political category within the process of the restoration and

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<sup>226</sup> Gerardine Meany, quoted in Mireia Aragay, 'Reading Dermot Bolger's *The Holy Ground: National Identity, Gender and Sexuality in Post-Colonial Ireland*', *Links & Letters*, 4 (1997), p. 53.

<sup>227</sup> Aragay, 'Reading Dermot Bolger's *The Holy Ground*', p. 54.

<sup>228</sup> Valiulis, 'Power, Gender, and Identity in the Irish Free State', p. 129.

<sup>229</sup> Ryan, 'Negotiating modernity and tradition', p. 184.

<sup>230</sup> Valiulis, 'Power, Gender, and Identity in the Irish Free State', p. 124.

rebuilding of Irish and West German post-war societies. Neither society fostered women's participation in the public sphere throughout the following decades and, as Myrtle Hill and Ute Frevert stress, a great percentage of women in both states willingly responded to the ideology of housewifery and motherhood without viewing it as repressive.<sup>231</sup> Moreover, as Carpenter emphasizes, "[A]s a socially constructed concept, gender was affected by numerous social, cultural, political and economic factors. The apparent continuity of traditional gender roles was therefore changing [...]."<sup>232</sup>

Several factors were responsible for the fact that gender ideologies in the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Ireland often remained incomplete and unfulfilled throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In West Germany, as Kathleen Canning points out, much of the change in gender roles and norms was related to the steady increase in the employment of women, in particular in part-time jobs, throughout the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>233</sup> Following years of hardship and reconstruction, West Germans experienced a rapid economic expansion since the mid-1950s following extensive injections of American capital, which consequently led to a growing demand in the workforce and increasing affluence, which, in turn, opened new opportunities. While many women had opted to stay at home and take care of the family at the beginning of the 1950s, a choice that had been encouraged by government policies and public ideologies and was naturally dependent on their financial circumstances, more and more women entered the workforce from the late 1950s onwards. Particularly married women, who were actively recruited by companies and employers since the late 1950s in order to meet the economic demands, took up employment often not for financial reasons, but rather to raise their own standard of living and to gain some financial independency.<sup>234</sup> Between 1950 and 1970 the number of married women in employment in the Federal Republic, consequently, nearly doubled as it rose from 26.4 per cent to 40.9 per cent.<sup>235</sup> Similar new opportunities opened up with the expansion of the West German secondary and higher education system since the early

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<sup>231</sup> Myrtle Hill, *Women in Ireland: A Century of Change* (Belfast, 2003), pp. 107-8 and Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 266.

<sup>232</sup> Carpenter, "For Mothers Only", p., 865.

<sup>233</sup> Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice. Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class & Citizenship* (Ithaca/London, 2006), p. 58.

<sup>234</sup> Frevert, *Women in German History*, pp. 267-72.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid*, p. 333.



1960s, which benefited primarily children from lower social classes, as well as women and girls and ultimately led to a gradual equalization of girls' and boys' education.<sup>236</sup> Accordingly, while only 8.9 per cent of seventeen-year old girls had attended grammar school (taking the *Abitur*, i.e. the degree necessary to qualify for university access in Germany) in 1960, opposed to 13.4 per cent of boys, nearly twenty years later these numbers had changed to twenty and 20.8 per cent respectively. Among third level students the percentage of women also increased significantly during these years, rising from 19.6 percent in 1952,<sup>237</sup> to 23.9 per cent in 1960 and to 36.7 per cent in 1980<sup>238</sup>.<sup>239</sup> These new education and employment opportunities for women since the late 1950s, facilitated by the Federal Republic's economic boom, often resulted in the fact that, from the early 1960s onwards, gender roles in West Germany often did not correspond to the official ideologies anymore and that, instead, women were increasingly taking advantage of the new opportunities open to them.

In the Republic of Ireland gender roles were also changing throughout the 1950s and 1960s, despite continued emphasis on women's natural role as a mother and housewife within society. As in the Federal Republic, economic developments often inflicted on this ideology, however, these developments were of a very different nature than in West Germany. Since the early 1930s, the Irish Free State had maintained a protectionist economic policy that had been introduced as a response to the economic depression at the time and to the fact that the Free State had lost most of its industrialized region to Northern Ireland following the partition and thus had to create a manufacturing sector largely from the ground up. This protectionist policy had remained in place during and after the Second World War. Yet Ireland's failure to create a competitive manufacturing sector, which was partly due to the size of the country and its lack in natural resources and goods, and its continued dependency on British imports meant that Irish protectionism was ultimately one of the main reasons why the Republic of Ireland had fallen out of step with other European countries by

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<sup>236</sup> See here also chapter III.2 and III.3.

<sup>237</sup> Ota Konrád, 'Die Modernisierung der westdeutschen Univeristäten nach 1945', *Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Studia Territorialia*, XIV (2008), p. 114.

<sup>238</sup> Within these years, the number of third level students overall in the Federal Republic of Germany more than quadruplet from just under 200,000 to more than 850,000 students – see David Childs and Jeffrey Johnson, *West Germany: Politics and society* (London, 1981), p. 184.

<sup>239</sup> Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 274.

the early 1950s.<sup>240</sup> Instead of experiencing an economic boom during this decade, the Republic was plagued by increasing unemployment figures and emigration. Evident since the mid-1930s, emigration had rapidly increased during the Second World War as, particularly, young Irish men and women continued to leave their homes to live and work in Britain. By the early 1950s, emigration rates had risen to more than 400,000, which was nearly a sixth of the population, half of whom were young women. As Enda Delaney argues, there were generally three reasons for emigration during these years: Ireland's own economic problems and the uncertainty of employment, the increasing demand in Britain's labour force during the post-war reconstruction period and, finally, rising expectations for a higher standard of living and a growing sense of opportunity among the young Irish.

Young women, in particular, often chose to move to Britain not just in search of employment, which in large parts of Ireland was virtually impossible to obtain, but also in the hope of finding a better life and escaping the depressing and often repressing social and cultural environment of the Republic of Ireland during the 1950s.<sup>241</sup> Indeed, as Keenan-Thomson points out, many Irish women increasingly grew disgruntled with their attributed roles in society and their legal status, a dissatisfaction which was reflected in rising emigration rates among Irish women, as well as rural women's move to the cities in search of employment.<sup>242</sup> Caitríona Clear concurs with this observation, stating that both the increasing emigration rates and a noticeable change in employment patterns among Irish women during the 1950s, which were shifting from agricultural and domestic work to white-collar jobs and even the professions, signified the gradual change within Irish society and, above all, women's own aspirations. The increasing expectations of the younger generation and the possibilities of a better life in England, as Clear argues, also affected gender relations at home as young women often seemed to be less willing to marry for economic reasons and to settle for a

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<sup>240</sup> John Bradley, 'Changing the Rules: Why Failures of the 1950s Forced a Transition in Economic Policy-making', in Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O'Shea and Carmel Quinlan, eds., *The Lost Decade: Ireland in the 1950s* (Cork, 2004), pp. 105-11.

<sup>241</sup> Enda Delaney, 'The Vanishing Irish? The exodus from Ireland in the 1950s', in Keogh, O'Shea and Quinlan, eds., *The Lost Decade*, pp. 81-3.

<sup>242</sup> Keenan-Thomson, *Irish Women and Street Politics 1956-1973*, p. 55.



lifestyle that they might not have envisioned for themselves and as marriage rates continued to decline throughout the 1950s.<sup>243</sup>

These gradual socio-economic changes within the Republic of Ireland during the 1950s eventually found expression in some alterations of public policy towards the end of this decade which were further influenced by a change in the country's economic policy and a new emphasis on investing into Ireland's infrastructure and its population. On one hand, women's legal position, in particular within marriage, was reviewed as a consequence of the slowly shifting gender roles. The Married Women's Status Act, passed in 1957, for instance, was an imperative change for women in Ireland, as the act finally gave wives a separate legal identity from their husbands by enabling women to hold and attain property, as well as to sue their spouses and eject them from their shared homes. Other important legal changes for women in Ireland since the late 1950s and early 1960s included the dropping of the marriage bar in primary teaching and the establishment of a women police force (both passed in 1958 and discussed in more detail in chapter IV),<sup>244</sup> as well as the Guardianship of Infants Act (1964) and the Succession Act of 1965. The first of the latter two granted women and men equal guardianship and custody rights over their children, while the Succession Act guaranteed wives a fixed share of their husbands' inheritance and entitled all children, sons and daughters, to their parents' estate, thereby lifting the traditional inheritance custom which had usually appointed the eldest son as the sole successor of his parents' property.<sup>245</sup>

Simultaneous to these social and legal changes and, in many respects, an interlinked development, alterations were also made in the Republic's economic policy. The First Economic Program (followed by the Second and Third Program a few years later), enacted under the new Taoiseach Seán Lemass, who had succeeded de Valera in 1959, and envisioned by T. K. Whitaker, set off a new phase for the Irish population in economic respects as it ended protectionism and advocated the principle of Free Trade thus inviting new foreign investments to the Republic. Although a

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<sup>243</sup> Caitríona Clear, "'Too Fond of Going': Female Emigration and Change for Women in Ireland, 1946-1961', in Keogh, O'Shea and Quinlan, eds., *The Lost Decade*, pp.135-45.

<sup>244</sup> Connolly, 'Durability and Change', pp. 71-9.

<sup>245</sup> Eileen Connolly, 'The Republic of Ireland's Equality Contract: Women and Public Policy', in Yvonne Galligan, Eilís Ward and Rick Wilford, eds., *Contesting Politics. Women in Ireland, North and South* (Boulder/Oxford, 1999), pp. 74-9.

gradual development, the introduction of the three economic programs meant that employment figures, training and qualification opportunities and standard of living noticeably increased in the Republic of Ireland throughout the 1960s, which in turn significantly lowered emigration rates. The new phase of Economic Development also incorporated an increase in public spending in areas such as education, for example by finally introducing free secondary education in 1967 and expanding access to higher education. As seen in the Federal Republic of Germany, these investments into education particularly benefitted Irish girls and women, as well as children from lower social classes. While women had only made up about a quarter of the total university student body before 1960,<sup>246</sup> their number increased to thirty-three per cent at the beginning of the 1970s and to forty-four per cent in 1980<sup>247</sup>.<sup>248</sup> Yet, despite these improved education opportunities, and in contrast to West Germany, women's employment figures remained comparably low in the Republic throughout the following years and, in fact, decreased from approximately 30.6 per cent in 1951 to 27.1 per cent in 1970.<sup>249</sup>

The changes introduced in Ireland as part of the new Economic Development, as well as the legislative changes passed since the late 1950s, undoubtedly meant that, as in West Germany, opportunity structures for women in the Republic of Ireland were gradually improving towards the end of the 1960s. Yet, neither in Germany nor in Ireland did this shift in opportunity structures for women and the slow change in gender relations since the late 1950s go without criticism from the public, church leaders and policy makers. In the Federal Republic, working mothers were often publicly accused of neglecting their children and the term "latch-key children" was coined as a signifier of the decaying family values. Moreover, a severe shortage in kindergarten and crèche places further inhibited West German women's ability to work full-time meaning that they often had fewer chances of a high paid job and fewer opportunities of promotion. Continuing traditional gender ideologies, as shown in

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<sup>246</sup> John Coolahan, *Irish Education. History and Structure* (Dublin, 1981), pp. 125-6.

<sup>247</sup> As in West Germany, though not to the same extent, enrolment in Irish universities significantly increased overall between 1950 and 1970 rising from approximately 8,000 to 25,000 students – see, for example, Adrian Redmond, ed., 'That was then. This is now. Change in Ireland 1949-1999 – A publication to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Central Statistics Office' (Dublin, 2000), pp. 49-51.

<sup>248</sup> See 'Department of Education Statistical Report 1972/3-1973/4 and 1979/80', published on [www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Report](http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Report), accessed 12 January 2014.

<sup>249</sup> Finola Kennedy, *Family, Economy and Government in Ireland* (Dublin, 1989), pp. 48-9.



chapter III, further inflicted on their opportunities within employment, particularly when it came to the higher echelons of the professions.<sup>250</sup> In Ireland, too, the social and economic changes of the late 1950s and 1960s in some parts of society progressed slower than in others. Particularly married women continued to stay at home throughout the 1960s as only five per cent of these women were in employment by 1970 and the majority of Irish men and women maintained the view that married women and mothers should not work.<sup>251</sup>

Thus, while gender ideologies and norms advocated by the West German and Irish governments certainly influenced women's rights and experiences throughout the 1950s and 1960s, this does not imply that women in either state necessarily conformed to these ideologies. Even before gender norms and values started to change in Ireland and West Germany, some women opposed the roles that the state had dictated for their sex. Entering employment and emigration were only some of the ways in which Irish and West German women challenged the gender policies of their countries. As Abrams and Harvey stress, "[...] gender is a useful conceptual category which, while uncovering the structures and ideologies influencing the position and experience of men and women and the power relations between them, need not conceal or play down the agency of individuals."<sup>252</sup> The following two chapters examine in which way and to which extent the DAB and the IWGAs negotiated and challenged the dominant ideologies and whether their activities and aims throughout the 1950s and 1960s ultimately contributed to bringing about a change in social norms and values.

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<sup>250</sup> See also Frevert, *Women in German History*, pp. 269-78.

<sup>251</sup> Finola Kennedy, *Family, Economy and Government in Ireland* (Dublin, 1989), pp. 48-9.

<sup>252</sup> Abrams and Harvey, 'Introduction: gender and gender relations in German history', in idem, eds. *Gender Relations in German History*, p. 27.

## Chapter III: The German Federation of University Women (DAB)

### *Introduction*

The following chapter analyses the activities and agenda of the German Federation of University Women (“Deutscher Akademikerinnenbund”, DAB) during the 1950s and 1960s. The aim of this in-depth analysis of the DAB’s activities during these two decades is to establish whether the organization should be categorized as an abeyance organization which, through its activities and objectives, sustained the German women’s movement despite the minimized public and political support for the movement throughout the mid-twentieth century.

As outlined in the introduction, the term ‘abeyance’ describes a holding process within a social movement by which one upsurge of activism is linked to another and by which it provides continuity to the movement within a non-receptive environment. Key to holding a movement in abeyance is the continued activism of organizations and individuals by both maintaining the objectives and the culture of the movement.<sup>253</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, the social and political climate of the newly founded Federal Republic of Germany was in many respects conservative and regressive in regard to women’s status in society. Reflected in the struggle surrounding women’s rights, as defined by the new Basic Law and the Civil Code, many of the gains and demands of the nineteenth and early twentieth century women’s movement before the Second World War were by no means guaranteed in the new democratic West German state. Instead, the majority of West Germans, men and women alike, supported the strengthening of traditional gender roles as promoted by most political parties and, particularly, by the newly elected Christian Democratic Union and its party leader, and first Chancellor of the Federal Republic, Konrad Adenauer. Within this conservative political and social climate the organized women’s movement, as it had existed in pre-war Germany, and which had been joined by millions of German women,<sup>254</sup> did not re-emerge as it lacked both public and political

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<sup>253</sup> See Verta Taylor, ‘Social Movement Continuity: The Women’s Movement in Abeyance’, *American Sociological Review*, 54 (1989), p. 761.

<sup>254</sup> The number of members of the main representative body of the German women’s movement during the Weimar Republic, the Federation of German Women’s Associations (Bund deutscher Frauenvereine,



support. Nonetheless, several women's organizations re-formed and emerged after 1945 to push for women's de jure and de facto equality in the new German state. Among these was the DAB, which had previously existed during the Weimar Republic and was re-founded in 1949 with the aim to represent the interest of women graduates in particular.

The question that this thesis aims to answer is whether these re-emerging organizations, and specifically the DAB, continued the women's movement in a period of abeyance and thus ultimately linked the women's movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century to the second wave movement which emerged in the late 1960s when opportunity structures for women in the Federal Republic were gradually changing. For this purpose, the chapter is divided into four sections. The first subchapter provides an outline of the history of the DAB, outlining its roots within the women's movement of the Weimar Republic, as well as its re-foundation after the war. It examines the circumstances of the organization's founding and its early activities and goals within the historical context of Germany at the time. Since the DAB was dissolved in the early years of the National Socialist regime, this section comprises two parts. Part one focuses on the foundation of the organization in 1926 and its existence until the mid-1930s, the second part discusses its re-establishment in 1949.

The following three sections of this chapter focus on what my research for this dissertation has identified as the three key issues within the work of the DAB during the 1950s and 1960s. Section two examines the DAB's efforts to promote women's interests in education, as well as its attempts to advocate the goals of the women's movement among the young generation of German women. Such efforts included establishing a relationship with female students, as well as attempts to improve living and studying conditions for women at universities. Moreover, the organization endeavoured to influence reforms of the education system by seeking the representation of women in the decision-making process and by commissioning studies on the existing education system.

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BDF) has been estimated to have accounted to nearly two million members in the early 1930s – see, for example, Irene Stoehr, 'Agnes von Zahn-Harnack', in Renate Genth, Reingard Jäkl, Rita Pawlowski, Ingrid Schmidt-Harzbach and Irene Stoehr, eds., *Frauenpolitik und politisches Wirken von Frauen im Berlin der Nachkriegszeit 1945-1949* (Berlin, 1996), p. 352.

The focal point of section three is the organization's objective to represent the professional interests of German women graduates. In light of the formal equality of women and men in the Federal Republic of Germany, one of the primary concerns of the DAB after the Second World War was that women should have both equal occupational opportunities and a voice in employment matters. The combination of career and family was a particular concern for the DAB, as West German family politics and official ideology continued to situate women in the home as mothers and wives, rather than as part of the professional workforce. Thus an important aspect of the organization's activities was aimed at advancing and monitoring employment opportunities for women graduates and at facilitating the combination of a career and a family.

The final part of this chapter, section four, discusses the DAB's involvement in West German public life, especially in relation to women's rights. The organization was concerned both with placing more women in political office to increase the representation of women's interests in politics, and with pushing for reforms of the family law and for the advancement of women's status in society. In order to achieve its goals, the DAB collaborated on several occasions with other women's organizations. These relationships and the existing network of active German women in the Federal Republic were crucial to some of the successes and struggles during the 1950s and 1960s and are therefore also part of the discussion of this subchapter.

### ***III.1 History and composition of the DAB***

#### **III.1.1 The foundation of the DAB and its early years**

The DAB was formally established on 11 May 1926. The decision to found the organization, as a federation of existing professional women's groups, was initiated by Marie-Elisabeth Lüders. The first appointed chairwoman was Agnes von Zahn-Harnack and Ilse Szagunn took on the role of deputy chairwoman.

At the time the three women came together to set up the DAB, many important achievements for women's rights had already been made by the German



women's movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>255</sup> In fact, Lüders, Zahn-Harnack and Szagunn had been among the first generation of women to benefit from the new rights gained within the field of education and women's employment which had been vital achievements of the German bourgeois women's movement. Yet other demands of the movement were far from being achieved. This became particularly evident throughout the years of the Weimar Republic.

With the establishment of a German republic in 1919, women over the age of twenty had been granted the right to vote on the same terms as men. In the first national election, the female voting turn-out was at nearly ninety per cent and thirty-seven of the candidates (9.6 per cent) elected to the new National Assembly were, in fact, women. However, none of the political parties nominated their female representatives for positions of high political significance and both women's representation and electoral turnout declined steadily throughout the 1920s.<sup>256</sup>

Similar dissatisfaction among women's activists soon also began to take root in the realms of social and economic equality. In spite of women's *fundamental* political equality, the Civil Code was left unchanged throughout the Weimar Republic and patriarchal family structures were firmly kept in place. The unchallenged gender system, in particular, affected women's employment and career prospects, despite the improved education and qualification opportunities for women. The percentage of women at universities showed a steady increase throughout the 1920s, reaching a high of 18.7 per cent in 1931<sup>257</sup> - a development which can be attributed to the improved secondary education system for girls in the first decade of the new century.<sup>258</sup> Despite this, few of these women entered the professions or were employed in a position adequate to their degree, even though an increasing number of women were moving into white collar employment. Their jobs, however, were generally subordinate positions, as women primarily worked as secretaries, clerks or sales assistants with a salary averaging around twenty to twenty-five per cent lower than that of their male

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<sup>255</sup> See chapter I.

<sup>256</sup> Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 169-171.

<sup>257</sup> Before 1923 the number of women in German higher education had oscillated between nine and ten per cent.

<sup>258</sup> Jill Stephenson, 'Girls' Higher Education in Germany in the 1930s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 10 (1975), p. 43.

colleagues.<sup>259</sup> Women in professions such as medicine, law, higher education or the civil service made up only a very small fraction of employed women throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

With increasing unemployment rates in the years of economic depression, opportunities for women graduates to succeed in competition for professional employment were further reduced.<sup>260</sup> Married women were especially affected by cutbacks in the labour market, as well as by the ideology that women naturally belonged in the home and the family. These traditional gender ideologies were accompanied by a growing concern about the economic downturn and increasing unemployment figures. In this context, debates on so called dual-income earners ("Doppelverdiener"), the term used to describe women earning a wage or salary in addition to their husbands', took centre stage in economic politics in the late 1920s. Already in 1918 the Prussian government had passed a decree stating that women who had an employed husband should be the first to be made redundant in order to open up jobs for the returning soldiers of the First World War.<sup>261</sup> This decree was abandoned in 1922 when employment temporarily found itself on a rise, but married women continued to be the first group of women to be dismissed throughout the decade.<sup>262</sup>

Although the majority of Germans, women included, shared the notion that women should not be employed once they got married and had children, the prospect of only working a short period of time in their lives was, for some women either financially not an option or something they did not desire. In particular, women who had enjoyed a lengthy education and had graduated from university with the aim of working in one of the professions were not as easily convinced that marriage and family should put an end to their employment.<sup>263</sup> Among these women were Marie-Elisabeth Lüders, Ilse Szagunn and Agnes von Zahn-Harnack, who, consequently, founded the DAB to protect the interests of women graduates in German society.

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<sup>259</sup> Frevert, *Women in German History*, pp. 177-9.

<sup>260</sup> Stephenson, 'Girls' Higher Education in Germany in the 1930s', p. 43.

<sup>261</sup> Susanne Rouette, 'Mothers and Citizens: Gender and Social Policy in Germany after the First World War', *Central European History*, 30 (1997), p. 54.

<sup>262</sup> Frevert, *Women in German History*, pp. 197-8.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 196-7.



Each of the DAB's founding members were already prominent figures in German public and political life. They had all received a third level degree and had been involved in the bourgeois women's movement through their membership in the Federation of German Women's Associations (BDF) - Zahn-Harnack in fact, later became chairwoman of the organization. Both Lüders and Zahn-Harnack, in particular, shared a similar background. Having been friends since their time at university, Zahn-Harnack had succeeded Lüders as the head of the German women's department of the Central War Office in 1916, one of the highest positions awarded to women during the First World War.<sup>264</sup> After the war and following the granting of women's right to vote and take a political office, both women had joined the German Democratic Party (DDP) which Lüders had represented in the National Assembly and later in the German *Reichstag*.<sup>265</sup> Another unifying factor for all three of the DAB's founding members was the fact that they were all mothers<sup>266</sup> who, though not all employed, did not resign themselves to housework and marriage as most middle-class women with children did in these years. While Lüders was a successful politician and Szagunn a doctor, Zahn-Harnack had been forced to retire from her position as a teacher when she married, due to the then existing marriage bar for female civil servants in Prussia. However, she continued to work by writing articles and books, and one of her main works was *The Working Woman*, which was published in 1924 and soon became a frequently cited work.<sup>267</sup>

As working mothers of the middle-class and public figures, neither of three founding members of the DAB fitted the ideological gender categories. It was, in all probability, because of their personal experiences that one of the chief aims of the organization was to represent the professional interests of graduate women. This

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<sup>264</sup> Stoehr, 'Agnes von Zahn-Harnack', p. 351.

<sup>265</sup> Ursula Huffmann, Dorothea Frandsen and Annette Kuhn, eds., *Frauen in der Wissenschaft und Politik* (Düsseldorf, 1987), p. 39.

<sup>266</sup> Both Szagunn and Zahn-Harnack were married and had two children. Lüders had one son, who was born after a brief affair with a politician, but she was never married – for more information on the three women's background see Louisa Sach, "'Gedenke, daß du eine deutsche Frau bist!'" Die Ärztin und Bevölkerungspolitikerin Ilse Szagunn (1887-1971) in der Weimarer Republik und im Nationalsozialismus' (Doctoral thesis, Berlin, 2006); Huffmann, Frandsen and Kuhn, eds., *Frauen in der Wissenschaft und Politik*; Bärbel Kuhn, *Familienstand Ledig. Ehelose Frauen und Männer im Büregertum (1850-1914)* (Cologne, 2002).

<sup>267</sup> William M. Calder III and Robert Kirstein, 'Agnes von Zahn-Harnack's Forgotten Essay on Mommsen', *The Classical World*, 9 (2000), p. 41.

included, according to Zahn-Harnack, organizing protest against the roll-back policy for married women in occupations.<sup>268</sup>

The DAB was designed as a non-denominational and non-partisan umbrella group for women graduates of all educational and professional backgrounds. As such, the DAB took a novel approach to the organization of German women graduates, who had so far joined associations that had been organized by the professions and thus had often had differing agenda and interests.<sup>269</sup> Several of these already existing women's associations were merged in the DAB. Among them were the Association of German Women Philologists ("Deutscher Philologinnenverband"), the German Women Lawyers' Society ("Deutscher Juristinnenverein"), the League of German Women Doctors ("Bund Deutscher Ärztinnen"), the Association of Women Lecturers ("Verein Deutscher Hochschuldozentinnen"), the Association of Women Economists ("Vereinigung der Nationalökonominnen Deutschlands") and the Alliance of German Female Student Associations ("Verband der Studentinnenvereine Deutschlands").<sup>270</sup> According to Agnes von Zahn-Harnack, combining these already established women's organizations in the DAB had the obvious advantage of having a relatively large membership from the very beginning<sup>271</sup>. The disadvantage, however, was that many members were more interested in issues concerning their individual professions rather than in those issues which affected female graduates in Germany as a whole.<sup>272</sup> Yet, as Lüders later claimed, it was the growing disillusionment with the Weimar social and economic policies in regard to women, as well as a resulting sense of stagnation within the bourgeois women's movement, which initiated and ultimately facilitated the establishment and early activities of the DAB.

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<sup>268</sup> BArch B 232/28, "Geschichte des Deutschen Akademikerinnenbundes (DAB) 1926-1933" by Agnes von Zahn-Harnack.

<sup>269</sup> See Christine von Oertzen, *Strategie Verständigung: Zur transnationalen Vernetzung von Akademikerinnen 1917-1955* (Göttingen, 2012), p. 140.

<sup>270</sup> BArch NL 151/281, "Was ist der Deutsche Akademikerinnenbund?", undated pamphlet.

<sup>271</sup> In 1927, one year after its establishment, the DAB counted 3815 members in total - see BArch B 232/28, "Geschichte des Deutschen Akademikerinnenbundes (DAB) 1926-1933" by Agnes von Zahn-Harnack.

<sup>272</sup> BArch B 232/28, "Geschichte des Deutschen Akademikerinnenbundes (DAB) 1926-1933" by Agnes von Zahn-Harnack.



As an organization aiming to represent all women graduates in Germany, the DAB was intended to function as a “driving force”<sup>273</sup> for the protection of the rights that had been won, particularly in the area of women’s education and employment.<sup>274</sup> Accordingly, the main goal of the organization was “to unite German women graduates to secure the influence and the importance of academically educated women in cultural affairs, for their intellectual and scholarly advancement and for the representation of their professional interests”.<sup>275</sup>

Within its early years of existence, a substantial part of the DAB’s activity concentrated on the professional interests of women graduates in Germany. In particular, by joining the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) in July 1926, the DAB was able to offer its members various advantages, such as international teachers’ exchanges. Such exchanges offered women teachers the opportunity to stay and teach in schools abroad for a period of one year. Until the early 1930s, at least five German women were chosen to work at English and American schools.<sup>276</sup> In addition, the affiliated organizations of the IFUW regularly issued teaching and research scholarships at universities and thereby fostered international networking among female academics. Most of these scholarships came from the American Federation, which (with a membership of nearly 12,000) was by far the biggest association within the IFUW and had the largest funds at its disposal.<sup>277</sup> Until 1933 seven of these scholarships went to German candidates.<sup>278</sup>

The membership in the IFUW thus facilitated many of the DAB’s efforts to advance the professional interests of women graduates in Germany and abroad. Within its own ranks, the organization also sought scholarly and intellectual advancements through series of lectures and talks, which were primarily organized on a regional basis in the local branches of the DAB. While everyday business was handled

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<sup>273</sup> Marie-Elisabeth Lüders in BArch NL 151/281, “Warum heute noch Akademikerinnen?“, speech given by Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt and Marie-Elisabeth Lüders at the inaugural meeting of the DAB local branch in Bonn (ca. 1952), p. 7.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> BArch B 232/28, “Geschichte des Deutschen Akademikerinnenbundes (DAB) 1926-1933” by Agnes von Zahn-Harnack.

<sup>276</sup> BArch NL 151/281, “Was ist der Deutsche Akademikerinnenbund?“, undated pamphlet.

<sup>277</sup> Christine von Oertzen, ‘Networks of an Academic World Community: The Exodus of German-Speaking Women Scientists and the Refugee Aid Program of the American Association of University Women’, *German Historical Institute Bulletin Washington DC* (2000).

<sup>278</sup> BArch B 232/28, “Geschichte des Deutschen Akademikerinnenbundes (DAB) 1926-1933” by Agnes von Zahn-Harnack.

by the DAB's centralized executive committee, the local branches were intended to function as the "vital cells"<sup>279</sup> of the organization where members could meet, debate and become active in matters concerning the life of women graduates.<sup>280</sup> They also aimed to be platforms for married women, who had left the professions, to get back in touch with other women graduates, and where the members of the DAB could establish relationships with female students and young graduates.<sup>281</sup>

Creating a link with young women and graduates to be was considered crucial for the future of the DAB, as well as for its goal to strengthen the influence of women graduates in Germany.<sup>282</sup> The 1920s had witnessed a diminishing interest among young women in the women's movement and most organizations had difficulties in recruiting from the younger generation.<sup>283</sup> The generation of female students at universities during the late 1920s, in particular, was one which had grown up in a state where most rights seemed to have been accomplished. Women, by this time, were fully entitled to an equal education and had *fundamental* equal political rights. This generation thus grew up enjoying many of the privileges that most women who were still involved in the women's movement during the 1920s had not had throughout their youth.<sup>284</sup> For the founders of the DAB it was, therefore, an important goal to establish a relationship with young female students and to create awareness for the importance of a women's movement. This awareness was primarily intended to be achieved through educating young female graduates, in particular, on the history of the women's movement, its aims and its achievements. Conscious of the fact that there was little information available, the DAB had begun to catalogue the existing literature on the women's movement.<sup>285</sup> In 1933 the organization published *Die Frauenfrage in Deutschland: Bibliographie* which offered a complete bibliography of literature on the woman's question and the women's movement published in Germany from 1790 to the present.

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<sup>279</sup> BArch NL 151/281, "Örtliche Zusammenschlüsse des D.A.B." by Ilse Szagunn, in *Die Studentin* (November, 1926), p. 69.

<sup>280</sup> BArch NL 151/281, "Was ist der Deutsche Akademikerinnenbund?", undated pamphlet.

<sup>281</sup> BArch NL 151/281, "Örtliche Zusammenschlüsse des D.A.B." by Ilse Szagunn, in *Die Studentin* (November, 1926), p. 69.

<sup>282</sup> BArch NL 151/281, "Warum „Deutscher Akademikerinnenbund“?" by Marie-Elisabeth Lüders, in *Die Studentin* (November, 1926), pp. 65-66.

<sup>283</sup> Elizabeth Harvey, 'The Failure of Feminism? Young Women in the Bourgeois Feminist Movement in Weimar Germany 1918-1933', *Central European History*, 28 (1995), pp. 1-3.

<sup>284</sup> Frevert, *Women in German History*, pp. 200-1.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*



The catalogue comprised approximately 7000 titles.<sup>286</sup> After the Second World War, the DAB continued to renew and edit the bibliography and today it is still one of the standard works of reference for German women's history.

One of the DAB's main achievements in regard to its student-related work in the years between 1926 and 1933 was the opening of a day centre for female students in Berlin, named after Helene Lange, which provided a library, space for social events and debate evenings with older female graduates and rooms where the students could rest in.<sup>287</sup> This day centre was intended to be the equivalent of the numerous fraternity houses to which only male students had access. In Marburg and Tübingen the DAB also helped to establish student accommodation for women both through its own financial support and through finding investors for the project.<sup>288</sup>

With the take-over of the National Socialist Party in 1933, the activities of the DAB, like those of most other German women's organizations, came to a sudden halt. As organizations under the National Socialist regime were faced with the decision to either integrate the so called "Arier-Paragrafen" into their constitution, which denied membership to non-Aryans, or to disperse, many women's organizations chose the latter option. Yet the case of the DAB was less straightforward. Through its non-denominational and non-partisan status, the DAB's members had often differing religious and political inclinations. Hence, despite some contrary accounts of the organizational history<sup>289</sup>, the DAB did not dissolve itself straight away. Yet the executive committee, then chaired by Marie-Elisabeth Lüders, stepped down in May 1933. Other than Ilse Szagunn, who welcomed the nationalistic approach and ideas of "racial hygiene" as practiced by the National Socialist Party, Lüders and Agnes von Zahn-Harnack did not identify themselves with the new politics. Consequently, Lüders declared that neither she nor Zahn-Harnack would be running for re-election in the DAB's executive committee.<sup>290</sup> A new committee, chaired by Johanna Willich, who was

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<sup>286</sup> BArch NL 151/281, undated pamphlet on the completion of *Die Frauenfrage in Deutschland: Bibliographie*.

<sup>287</sup> See von Oertzen, *Strategie Verständigung*, pp. 172-8.

<sup>288</sup> BArch B 232/28, "Geschichte des Deutschen Akademikerinnenbundes (DAB) 1926-1933" by Agnes von Zahn-Harnack.

<sup>289</sup> See, for example, BArch B 232/3, DAB information leaflet of 1966, which states that the organization dissolved in 1933, as it was not prepared to accept the *Arier-Paragrafen* into its constitution. The same statement was repeated in another leaflet two years later (see BArch B 232/5).

<sup>290</sup> Sach, "'Gedenke, dass du eine deutsche Frau bist!'", p. 183.

joined by Friederike Matthias and Lea Thimm, was elected which consented to continuing the work of the DAB in accordance with National Socialist ideologies and which ordered the exclusion of Jewish members from the DAB's local branches. Following Matthias' appointment as the organization's chairwoman in May 1934, the article against a non-Aryan membership was officially included in the constitution and the DAB was absorbed by the "Deutsches Frauenwerk" (DFW) - the National Socialist women's organization.<sup>291</sup> By this time the previous membership had, however, dwindled from nearly 4000 to less than 200.<sup>292</sup> Moreover, in 1934, the IFUW passed the resolution that no affiliated organization of the IFUW could deny membership on racial, political or religious grounds. Accordingly, the alliance of the DAB with its international umbrella organization was terminated.<sup>293</sup> With this step, the former character and identity of the organization was irrevocably erased.

### III.1.2 The re-establishment of the DAB after the Second World War

The DAB was re-established in the new Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. Plans to initiate a re-connection of German women graduates had been made soon after the demise of the National Socialist regime in May 1945. As Marie-Elisabeth Lüders recollected in 1964, she and another former DAB member, Dorothee van Velsen, had sent out letters to former DAB members as early as 1946, in order to investigate the interest in this re-connection. During the war, much of Germany's housing had been destroyed and thousands of people had been relocated throughout, which meant that only a few former members, whose addresses were remembered by Lüders and van Velsen, could be contacted directly. Yet, in order to reach as many women graduates as possible, duplicates were added to the letters so that they could be passed on to other graduates. The use of this snowball effect quickly facilitated the

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<sup>291</sup> See von Oertzen, *Strategie Verständigung*, pp. 372-3.

<sup>292</sup> BArch N 1177/77, "Comment on the History of the Dissolution of the DAB", 24 February 1969.

<sup>293</sup> von Oertzen, '50 Jahre Rückblick 1968: Ein Eklat ohne Folgen', pp. 15-6.



re-establishment of a small group of university women in Berlin,<sup>294</sup> but it was not until June 1949 that the DAB was re-established on a national basis.

The rather slow process of setting up the DAB as a national organization again was primarily due to some of the DAB's founding members' opposition to such a venture. Particularly Agnes von Zahn-Harnack, who had established the Wilmersdorfer Women's Association ("Wilmersdorfer Frauenbund", later "Berliner Frauenbund") as early as summer 1945, was at first firmly against a re-foundation of the DAB. As Zahn-Harnack saw it, the politics and ideologies of the National Socialist regime had caused too much damage among both the young and old generation of female graduates for her to consider the re-foundation of an organization which had previously aimed to ensure the influence of women graduates in German public, political and cultural life.<sup>295</sup> Zahn-Harnack based this attitude on her own categorization of German women in general and women graduates more specifically who she grouped into three groups which, according to her, had all been affected by National Socialism in a different way. She separated the different groups into women under twenty-five, women between twenty-five and fifty and women over fifty. As Zahn-Harnack argued, the young generation of women graduates and female students had been the real victims of National Socialism. Due to their age, women under twenty-five had been easily impressionable and vulnerable to the ideologies of the Nazis as they had not yet developed the ability to think critically and independently. Moreover, their academic education had not only been continuously disrupted because of the war, but had also been influenced by National Socialist policies. These women, in Zahn-Harnack's logic, thus had never received 'real' academic education and first had to be re-introduced to democratic thinking and to the values of higher education before they could become viable members within an organization of women graduates. The second group of academically educated women, those between twenty-five and fifty, in Zahn-Harnack's eyes, on the other hand, was split into two groups: those who had been dismissed from their positions due to political, religious or racial reasons and those women who had kept their positions as members of the National Socialist Party. As Zahn-Harnack argued, this latter group of women and their alliance with the Nazi regime, in

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<sup>294</sup> BAArch NL 151/281, "Warum heute noch Akademikerinnen?", speech given by Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt and von Marie-Elisabeth Lüders at the inaugural meeting of the DAB local branch in Bonn (ca. 1952).

<sup>295</sup> von Oertzen, *Strategie Verständigung*, pp. 338-41.

particular, made a national and intergenerational association of women graduates in Germany impossible at the time. For her, the only trustworthy and politically stable generation of women graduates were those over fifty who had formed their political beliefs before not just the Second, but also the First World War. According to Zahn-Harnack, these women now shouldered the responsibility of guiding younger women graduates back to democratic beliefs and the ideals of the German women's movement before a re-foundation of an organization which aimed at securing all women graduates influence in German public, political and cultural life.<sup>296</sup> With this attitude towards women under fifty and their responsibility in regard to National Socialism Zahn-Harnack was not alone. In fact, most women who had been active in the women's movement before 1933, including members of the DAB,<sup>297</sup> shared the belief that younger women first needed to be re-educated, which in many respects explains the dominance of women over fifty and the generational split within German women's organizations in post-war Germany.

Zahn-Harnack, however, soon changed her opinion on the matter of re-founding the DAB following an invitation by the British Federation of University Women (BFUW) to their headquarters in London in 1946. The kindness and sympathy displayed by the British graduate women at this meeting left a deep impression with Zahn-Harnack whose own feelings of guilt and embarrassment for Germany's past had prevented her from reigniting the contact to these women with whom she had previously worked with in the International Federation of University Women. Encouraged by the meeting and the interest of the BFUW in a re-establishment of a German women graduate organization, Zahn-Harnack ultimately altered her view on re-establishing the DAB. Following the meeting in London she kept in close contact with the BFUW which also issued invitations to other former members of the DAB and of the German women's movement, such as Marie Elisabeth Lüders, Dorothee von Velsen and Emmy Beckmann, in an attempt to mediate between and facilitate a

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<sup>296</sup> Irene Stoehr, 'Traditionsbewusster Neuanfang. Zur Organisation der alter Frauenbewegung in Berlin 1945-1950', in Genth, Jäkl, Pawlowski, Schmidt-Harzbach and Stoehr, eds., *Frauenpolitik und politisches Wirken von Frauen im Berlin der Nachkriegszeit 1945-1994*, pp. 214-20.

<sup>297</sup> See chapter III.2.



gradual reconciliation of German graduate women with their European neighbours.<sup>298</sup> In June 1949, the BFUW also participated in organizing a meeting to honour Agnes von Zahn-Harnack's sixty-fifth birthday in Berlin. Many former DAB members from all over Germany were invited to the event and it was, consequently, at this meeting that the national re-establishment of the DAB was decided upon.

Despite Zahn-Harnack's earlier hesitation towards re-establishing a national women graduates organization in Germany, due to the influence and mark that had been left by the National Socialists on German women graduates, the newly formed DAB was based on the principle of tolerance towards every women. At the time of the re-foundation of the DAB this position had largely evolved from the belief that in a new democratic Germany no one should be attacked for their past decisions, but that instead each member should be able to come to terms with National Socialism and her experiences within. As the German historian Christine von Oertzen states, this belief was not only shared by women who had opposed National Socialism, but also by those who had been persecuted by the Nazis.<sup>299</sup> It further eliminates why in the following years the DAB remained largely silent on Germany's past and why there was so little open and critical discussion of National Socialism and some of the organization's own members' involvement in Hitler's party.

Following the meeting in Berlin the newly appointed chairwoman of the re-established DAB, Emmy Beckmann, drafted a circular letter in July 1949 announcing the official re-foundation of the organization and calling for the formation of new local branches in other West German cities. In her letter Beckmann argued that "[T]he responsibility of the female graduate of our time is difficult and critical, both regarding the attainment and the protection of her position in the graduate professions, as well as her leadership function in public life."<sup>300</sup> Within four months, nine branches (in addition to the already existing Berlin branch) had sprung up, mainly in the larger cities such as Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Munich and Dortmund and seven more were being planned.<sup>301</sup> The organization's membership quickly increased and in 1951, the DAB was

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<sup>298</sup> For more information on the international networking of women graduates after the Second World War and the role of the BFUW and the International Federation of University Women in these efforts see von Oertzen, *Strategie Verständigung*.

<sup>299</sup> von Oertzen, *Strategie Verständigung*, pp. 338-49.

<sup>300</sup> BAArch B 232/28, DAB circular letter by Emmy Beckman, 26 July 1949.

<sup>301</sup> BAArch B 232/28, DAB circular letter by Emmy Beckmann, 18 October 1949.

also re-admitted into the IFUW.<sup>302</sup> From the mid-1950s onwards the organization maintained a more or less stable membership of approximately 1600 to 1700 members and an average of thirty local branches. Yet, in spite of the increase within the first decade of its re-foundation, the membership of the pre-war DAB, which had peaked at nearly 4000 members at times, was not reached again in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The new DAB was slightly altered in its structure. Instead of functioning as an umbrella group for professional women's organizations, as it had done in the pre-World War II years, the organization was now composed of individual members who joined the DAB directly. To qualify as an ordinary member the completion of a university degree was required. However, it was also possible to join as an extraordinary member if the particular woman was either currently studying and had completed at least two semesters or if she had studied for a minimum of five semesters but had never completed the degree.

Affiliation to the DAB's local branches offered members the possibility to meet on a regular basis close to their homes. Biennial general meetings, which were held in different locations every time, brought members from all branches together with the centralized executive committee and the extended executive committee. At these general meetings the committees presented reports on the organization's business, office-holders were appointed through a general vote and resolutions were passed. The executive committee consisted of at least four members who were in charge of the DAB's entire conduct of business.<sup>303</sup> This business included the appointment of subcommittees, articulating discussion guidelines for the local branches, formulating short-term goals, as well as deciding the strategies on how to achieve them, and determining the topics and issues for the next year. The extended executive committee comprised both the members of the executive committee, as well as the chairwomen of the local branches, who regularly reported on their branches' activities and adopted the guidelines and aims set by the executive committee.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> BArch NL 151/281, "Warum heute noch Akademikerinnen?", speech given by Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt and Marie-Elisabeth Lüders at the inaugural meeting of the DAB local branch in Bonn (ca. 1952).

<sup>303</sup> BArch B 232/21, Constitution of the DAB 1952.

<sup>304</sup> See here BArch B 232/68, minutes of the DAB executive and the extended executive committee.



In terms of its structure, the DAB therefore fulfilled the five crucial organizational dimensions of an abeyance organization, as defined by Verta Taylor. It was centralized, with the executive committee in charge of most of the DAB's official business and the determination of its agenda and objectives, thus ensuring organizational stability. It also had an exclusive and largely stable membership over the years, which guaranteed the organization's temporality, i.e. its ability to maintain a loyal base of members who were active in the DAB over a long period of time. Furthermore, while the conduction of business was kept within the hands of a small group of women, involved in the executive committee and the subcommittees and who were highly dedicated to the DAB's aims and objectives, the local branches mainly fulfilled the function of fostering friendships and promoting the culture of the organization. For this purpose, the regional DAB groups regularly hosted events, such as talks and seminars with a broad range of topics addressing different interests, whether it was political, academic or simply on topics such as women's fashion. Yet they also participated in the organization's more specific goals by drafting petitions and actively supporting the DAB's centralized committee's activities. As discussed in chapter V, this organizational structure of the DAB was a key difference to the Irish Women Graduates Associations and had a significant impact on the organization's overall level of activity, as well as on the achievement of its goals.

One of the immediate goals of the DAB following its re-establishment, which was largely in line with most other women's organizations founded in the post-war years, was to provide civic education for women.<sup>305</sup> At the time most German women activists argued that recent history had proved the failure of male politics. They ascribed the establishment of the National Socialist regime primarily to the fact that most women in those years had lacked the political education and knowledge to oppose it - an argument which failed to acknowledge that many women and women's organizations had actively and enthusiastically supported the Nationalist Socialists' ideology and regime. Nevertheless, it was generally agreed that, in order to prevent a similar human tragedy and decline in morality as experienced under the Nazis, the influence of women was fundamental in establishing a more just, peaceful and

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<sup>305</sup> Michaela Kuhnhenne, *Frauenleitbilder und Bildung in der westdeutschen Nachkriegszeit. Analyse am Beispiel der Region Bremen* (Wiesbaden, 2005), pp. 272-73.

democratic German society and state.<sup>306</sup> Within the DAB the notion of women having a crucial role in shaping the new Germany and of the need to educate them on their civic duties and responsibilities was reverberated at its first biennial general, which took place in Bielefeld in 1950. Dr Hildegard Gethmann, member of the DAB, as well as first chairwoman of the new founded German Women Lawyers' Association, presented a paper outlining women's responsibilities in politics at this meeting. According to her, in the new Germany, women once again had the opportunity to influence politics and society. As she argued, the events of the past decade had shown "the failure of men" and thus a better future would not be possible without the input of women. However, in order to gain influence and authority in German politics and society "women's full and joyous compliance of her civic duties" was required.<sup>307</sup>

Within this reasoning, the DAB gave a distinctively important responsibility to female graduates in supporting *ordinary* women to fulfil their duties as citizens and in raising their interest for German politics and public matters. Accordingly, presentations and discussions within the organization's local branches throughout the first few years after the war repeatedly raised the question on how women graduates could contribute to the political and civic education of German women. In this regard, Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, a member of the DAB, summed up the future tasks of the organization in a speech at the local branch in Bonn at the beginning of the 1950s. In her paper entitled "Why women graduates today?" Schwarzhaupt argued that different expectations for the two sexes were ultimately responsible for both women's lack of enthusiasm for politics and for their generally poor representation on decision-making boards. For her, the continuing inequalities faced by women were a result of this absence of women's voice in public matters. In such an "[...] atmosphere created by men in an overall masculine shaped world [...]"<sup>308</sup> Schwarzhaupt saw the responsibility of women's groups, in particular of the DAB, in two main areas: first, to

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<sup>306</sup> Annette Kuhn, 'Power and Powerlessness: Women after 1945, or the Continuity of the Ideology of Femininity', *German History*, 7 (1989), pp. 42-3.

<sup>307</sup> BArch B 232/33, summary of Bielefeld general meeting and Dr Gethmann's paper by Dr Katharina Freifrau von Kuenssberg (chairwoman of the Heidelberg DAB branch).

<sup>308</sup> BArch NL 151/281, "Warum heute noch Akademikerinnen?", speech given by Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt and Marie-Elisabeth Lüders at the inaugural meeting of the DAB local branch in Bonn (ca. 1952), p. 3.



increase women's participation and interest in politics and public matters and, secondly, to try and alter traditional thinking and expectations towards women.<sup>309</sup>

Within the first years of the DAB's post-war existence, several permanent subcommittees were formed, which were mainly in line with these goals.<sup>310</sup> The four main subcommittees were the youth subcommittee ("Jugendausschuss"), the pedagogical subcommittee ("Pädagogischer Ausschuss"), the university subcommittee ("Hochschulausschuss") and the legal subcommittee ("Juristischer Ausschuss"). The youth subcommittee's task was to establish a relationship with female students and it was responsible for all matters relating to the DAB's practical work with girls and young women. The pedagogical subcommittee was put in charge of all matters regarding education. This included efforts to initiate and participate in reforming the existing secondary and higher education system. The university subcommittee mainly focused on the situation of female lecturers and professors at German universities, in particular, the problem of discrimination in the recruitment of university staff. It also monitored the reforms in third level education and aimed to increase women's representation on academic boards in order to secure women's contribution in these reforms. The legal subcommittee had the task of monitoring legislative processes and decisions in the German government and to draft petitions and resolutions.

Throughout the years, however, the tasks of these subcommittees increasingly moved into the hands of the executive committee. This shift in responsibilities was primarily owing to the election of the DAB's most prominent chairwomen, Erna Scheffler, who held this office from 1964 to 1970, and Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, who first was deputy chairwoman to Scheffler and eventually succeeded her in 1970. Both women had been members of the organization for several years before being elected chairwomen, but more importantly, they were well-known public individuals, who had

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<sup>309</sup> BArch NL 151/281, "Warum heute noch Akademikerinnen?", speech given by Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt and Marie-Elisabeth Lüders at the inaugural meeting of the DAB local branch in Bonn (ca. 1952), pp. 2-3.

<sup>310</sup> Originally nine subcommittees had been established immediately after the organization's re-founding in 1949. There had been subcommittees for female prisoners of war and displaced persons, for medical issues, for cultural questions, an environmental subcommittee, a social subcommittee, as well as a subcommittee for schools and educational matters, for university reform and a subcommittee which concentrated on legal issues and legislative decisions - The files of the DAB do not mention when exactly these subcommittees were transformed into the eight subcommittees listed above. However, the minutes of the biennial general meetings suggest that the final subcommittees were established in 1954 at the latest - see BArch B 232/1, summary of the DAB's activities 1954-1956, included in the minutes of the general meeting in Kettwig, 28-30 September 1956.

influential names and important contacts in politics. While Scheffler had been the first female federal judge in West Germany between 1951 and 1963, Schwarzhaupt was the first woman to be appointed to a ministerial position when she was made Minister for Health in 1961 – a position she held for the following five years. These women's reputations and connections were significant assets for the DAB and, consequently, with their election, much of the DAB's lobbying work was handled directly by Scheffler and Schwarzhaupt.

In addition to the youth, pedagogical, university and legal subcommittees, the DAB established four additional committees. The scholarship subcommittee ("Stipendienausschuss") advertised scholarship announcements, mainly of the IFUW, and was responsible for administering the applications and finding suitable candidates. The East Germany subcommittee ("Ostauschuss") was concerned with maintaining contact with former members of the DAB who now lived in the German Democratic Republic, where the organization did not exist. Throughout the first years of the DAB's re-establishment, this subcommittee regularly invited women graduates from East Germany to meetings and events of the organization. However, these visits became increasingly difficult with the rising political tensions between the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. The activity of the East Germany subcommittee in the later years was, therefore, limited to sending parcels and books.<sup>311</sup> The advertising subcommittee ("Werbeausschuss") concentrated on the recruitment of new members for the DAB by sending out information leaflets and inviting female graduates and students to meetings. The press subcommittee ("Presseausschuss") indirectly supported the work of the advertising committee by overseeing the placement of press releases on the activities and achievements of the DAB in both the national and the regional press, as well as in the newsletters of other women's organizations. These latter subcommittees were in their function not less important than the four main ones. Yet the tasks of the legal, youth, pedagogical and university subcommittees, in connection with the initiatives steered by the DAB's executive committee, formed the backbone of the organization's activities during the

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<sup>311</sup> See BArch B 232/68, summary of the activities of the DAB's East Germany subcommittee, included in the minutes of the biennial general meeting in Lübeck, 29 Sept.- 2 Oct. 1960.



1950s and 1960s. Their work and aims are, therefore, discussed in more detail in the following subchapters.

### ***III.2 Promoting women's interests in the West German education system***

With the re-foundation of the DAB, the organization immediately resumed many of its initiatives from the pre-war years. These included building a relationship with the future generation of female graduates - not only to recruit future members, but also in line with its objective to increase women's participation and interest in politics and public matters - as well as attempts to secure women's influence in education. The following section discusses the ways in which the DAB targeted young women and how it attempted to promote and represent women's interests in the education system throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

#### **III.2.1 Collaborating with the future generation of female graduates**

The aim to establish a strong relationship with young women in higher education had been one of the original goals of the DAB and with its re-establishment in 1949 the new youth subcommittee was put in charge of accomplishing this goal. The regional branches also continued to play an important part in fostering relations with female students and young girls. The overall objective was to interest the next generation in the work of the DAB through the various initiatives and support systems offered and thereby to convey the organization's values and basic principles.

Public and political debates in the new Federal Republic of Germany, despite the constitutional promise of full equality, defined and advocated women's primary role in the home as a mother and a wife. This was not only reflected in the failure of a timely revision of the German Civil Code throughout the 1950s, but also in the contemporary discussions on 'women's nature', which incessantly emphasized

women's natural vocation of motherhood.<sup>312</sup> These social expectations and norms towards the female sex, as the DAB saw it, considerably impaired girls' perception of their future and their choices for life. As Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt stated in her speech at the inaugural meeting of the DAB's Bonn branch in 1952, young women in West Germany were raised to believe that they would have to choose between becoming a mother and wife and pursuing a career. This either-or choice, according to Schwarzhaupt, continuously caused doubts among female students and made them more likely to succumb to pressure, drop out of their courses and fall back on the alternative of marrying and having children. For her, the particular task of graduate women was to contribute to the social discourse by showing young women that they did not need to choose between having a family and having a career, but that it was possible to combine these two.<sup>313</sup>

The chairwoman of the pedagogical subcommittee, Annelise Mayer, agreed with Schwarzhaupt's evaluation that the social teaching of motherhood and marriage as the natural vocation for women significantly influenced girls in their plans for the future. Being a teacher at a secondary school, she argued that the widespread belief among the young generation was that women should not work. Mayer further pointed out that "[...] public opinion opposes the image of the independent, working woman, as we [the DAB] – in the interest of women and society – support it and that young girls reject our ideas for this reason."<sup>314</sup> To counteract this limited view on women's lives, the members of the DAB suggested that the self-esteem and self-value of girls and female students needed to be fostered and strengthened.<sup>315</sup>

The DAB thus saw its responsibility towards girls, and in particular towards female students, in mentoring and guiding them. In the eyes of the organization's members, young women needed strong examples and support structures in order to assert themselves in the predominantly male-oriented world of the universities and the professions. Such a view was supported by the young law student, Miss Gensch, who had been invited to the DAB's biennial members' meeting in Göttingen in 1952.

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<sup>312</sup> See chapter II.

<sup>313</sup> BArch NL 151/281, "Warum heute noch Akademikerinnen?", speech given by Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt and Marie-Elisabeth Lüders at the inaugural meeting of the DAB local branch in Bonn (ca. 1952), pp. 2-3.

<sup>314</sup> BArch B 232/95, "Bericht des pädagogischen Ausschusses (Zweite Fassung)", September 1956.

<sup>315</sup> BArch B 232/68, minutes of the extended executive committee meeting in Darmstadt 12-13 June 1959.



This meeting proved hugely influential in establishing the DAB's agenda for its student-related work of the following years. The subject of the meeting was "The youth of our time", with presentations on the psychology of the young generation, their occupational choices and wishes, as well as on the reforms of school and higher education. In her speech, entitled "The wishes of the young generation", Miss Gensch argued that women often felt isolated during their time at university as they lacked facilities for intellectual exchange and places where "female interests would not waste away".<sup>316</sup> The actual aim for women studying at universities, she argued, should be the development of a strong personality as required for a life in the public sphere. For this purpose, Miss Gensch suggested that the DAB should initiate the provision of facilities, such as career counselling services, and that it should participate in founding female student groups and in putting together discussion and debating events for students with women graduates.<sup>317</sup>

Many of the activities of the DAB in the following two decades were based on these suggestions. Several activities were directed at facilitating life at university for women. The organization hoped that with such initiatives, a relationship could be built between the young and the older generation, which would enable the members of the DAB to pass on their ideas and ideals and thus the aims and goals of the women's movement. For the young women, on the other hand, it was argued that collaborating with the organization would be desirable due to the members' expertise and experience. A primary benefit to the young students would come from being able to "[...] experience with which naturalness each of these women practices her profession [...] and that an occupation is not an irritating duty but a real vocation, not only for herself a satisfaction but also a service to her environment."<sup>318</sup> In other words, the organization's aim for young girls and for female students was to consider the members of the DAB as role models. Through their example, the younger generation of women would be able to learn to increase their self-confidence and self-belief to succeed in the predominantly male public sphere.

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<sup>316</sup> BArch B 232/1, "Wünsche der Jugend", speech presented by Miss Johanna Gensch at the biennial general members' meeting in Göttingen, 3-6 October 1952.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> BArch B 232/14, "Warum eigentlich Akademikerinnen? Eine Antwort auf Fragen der Studentinnen", article published in *Die Studentin* (February, 1959).

Much of the DAB's work with female students was thus based on the underlying assumption that girls and young women first needed to be prepared for a life outside the home. As the organization's members saw it, the young generation of women lacked the strength, personality and sense of responsibility which was considered a prerequisite to taking part in public life and practising a profession. The problem was to be solved principally by instilling confidence into young women in their own capabilities and by raising awareness of the responsibilities they had towards the state and society.

This stance was particularly evident in the aim, structure and topics of the conferences with female students, which were organized by the DAB on a biennial basis. The first conference, which took place in 1953, for instance, was organized under the title "Responsible participation at university and in the state".<sup>319</sup> The following conferences covered topics such as "The female student's share of the responsibility at universities"<sup>320</sup>, "Is university sufficient in preparing for employment and life?"<sup>321</sup>, "What does the female student do for the general public? / What does the general public do for the female student?"<sup>322</sup>, and finally "Career and Marriage"<sup>323</sup>.

Most of the presentations at these conferences were given by members of the DAB but depending on the topic, guest speakers were also invited. Students were encouraged to present short papers, mostly on university politics and life. The planning of the social events at the conferences was also in the hands of the students. It was argued that transferring some of the responsibility of the event's organization to the students would contribute to the civic education of the young women as it would heighten their awareness towards the way their actions could affect the greater good.<sup>324</sup> Yet keeping the main organization of the conferences in the hands of the DAB's youth subcommittee also made clear that the event was not a student initiative.

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<sup>319</sup> BArch B 232/1, report on the DAB's activities 1952-1954, included in the minutes of biennial general members' meeting in Freiburg, 1-3 October 1954.

<sup>320</sup> BArch B 232/14, "Offener Brief an die Vorsitzende des Deutschen Akademikerinnenbundes, Frau Dr. Johanna Lürssen über die Essener Studentinentagung", by Marlies Flesch-Thebesius printed in *Mädchenbildung und Frauenschaffen* (August, 1958), p. 368.

<sup>321</sup> BArch B 232/68, minutes of the extended executive committee meeting in Darmstadt, 12-13 June 1959.

<sup>322</sup> BArch B 232/68, minutes of the executive committee meeting in Heidelberg, 25-26 May, 1963.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>324</sup> BArch B 232/1, report of the youth subcommittee, included in the minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Berlin, 9-11 October 1958.



Moreover, as the choice of topics and papers presented was determined by the subcommittee, there was only limited room for the female students to address issues that might have reflected their ideas and problems more accurately. Instead, the conferences were regarded as an opportunity to educate the young generation without acknowledging the fact that circumstances and experiences might have changed. Rather than allowing the perspective of these young women to become the focus of the conferences, the subjects were discussed by people who had long left the life of a student behind.

This lack of a voice, and the fact that the conferences were not organized by the students themselves, might have contributed to the fact that the events generally failed to succeed in attracting a significant number of young women in higher education. The average number of participants was usually approximately twenty to thirty students from all over West Germany and these figures further decreased in the early 1960s.<sup>325</sup> Considering the total number of women at German universities during the 1950s, which increase from around 25,000 in 1952<sup>326</sup> to around 45,000 in 1960,<sup>327</sup> the number of attendees at the DAB's conferences for female students was diminishingly small. In an attempt to increase interest and instil some life into the events, the youth subcommittee of the DAB in 1965 suggested hosting the conferences in the universities' student residences, just before the beginning of term, rather than in the venues that had been previously chosen. It was also proposed to advertise the events in the student unions, as well as among female lecturers, who could then pass on the information to their students.<sup>328</sup>

Despite all efforts, however, the interest in the DAB's conferences continued to dwindle. The resulting discontent with the conferences' outcomes culminated in an intra-organizational dispute between the youth subcommittee and the executive committee of the DAB in 1962. In a letter to the organization's chairwoman at the time, Marga Anders, Marta Baerlecken-Hechtle expressed her frustration with the work of the youth subcommittee, stating that she could not see it making any progress

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<sup>325</sup> BArch B 232/68, minutes of the executive committee meeting in Bremen, 1-2 February 1958 or BArch B 232/68, report of the conference with female students in Heidelberg, 25-28 October 1963.

<sup>326</sup> Konrad, 'Die Modernisierung der Westdeutschen Universitäten nach 1945', p. 114.

<sup>327</sup> David Childs and Jeffrey Johnson, *West Germany: Politics and Society* (London, 1981), p. 184.

<sup>328</sup> BArch B 232/84, minutes of the executive committee meeting in Karlsruhe, 23-24 January 1965.

and thus chose to resign from her position as the subcommittee's chairwoman.<sup>329</sup> While regretting Baerlecken-Hechtle's decision, Anders in her response criticized her for failing to take any positive steps since the last conference in 1961. Anders particularly stressed the considerable amount of money that had been raised both by the organization, as well as through subsidies from the Women's Department of the Department for Internal Affairs, to finance these conferences. Moreover, she disparaged Baerlecken-Hechtle for not making any useful suggestions on how the energy of the subcommittee could be more effectively spent.<sup>330</sup> A few months after this exchange, a new youth subcommittee was appointed, chaired by Mrs Kessel, which in the following years gradually shifted its focus away from the conferences and their educational objectives to efforts aimed at facilitating the every-day life of female students at universities. In 1965 the youth subcommittee eventually decided that, as there was very "little tendency among female students to attend", it would not organize a conference for that year, a decision which eventually marked the end of these events.<sup>331</sup>

The failure to attract the young generation of women through the conferences had already been acknowledged by members of the DAB's youth subcommittee several years before these events were called off. It was pointed out that the conferences were not only unsuccessful in raising female students' interest in the organization, but that they were also not sufficient in maintaining contact with those students who had participated.<sup>332</sup> Therefore, it was suggested that the DAB should focus, instead, on the charitable side of its student related work in order to "influence female students and to appeal to their inner values."<sup>333</sup> By providing more practical support to female students in order to facilitate their studies, it was hoped that a more permanent and interactive relationship with young women could be established that would make them more receptive towards the DAB's activities and aims. This aspiration was based on some of the successful student work in several of the local branches of the DAB. Groups in Hamburg, Heidelberg and Marburg, for instance,

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<sup>329</sup> BArch B 232/95, letter from Marta Baerlecken-Hechtle to Marga Anders, 3 August 1962.

<sup>330</sup> BArch B 232/95, letter from Marga Anders to Marta Baerlecken-Hechtle, 14 August 1962.

<sup>331</sup> BArch B 232/5, minutes of the extended executive committee meeting in Mannheim, 16-17 October 1965.

<sup>332</sup> BArch B 232/95, letter from unnamed author to Mrs von Eyner, 7 June 1961.

<sup>333</sup> BArch B 232/68, minutes of the extended executive committee in Darmstadt, 12-13 June 1959, p.7.



continuously reported good co-operation and lively contact with young women.<sup>334</sup> This was particularly due to their practical work in providing student counselling and in pushing for clubrooms for women at universities.

By 1960, the DAB's local branch in Hamburg had become the shining example for successful student initiatives. This local group had started to offer individual counselling sessions in 1952 for both female and male students, which provided information and advice on matters concerning courses and career choices, as well as psychological support for the students' personal problems. The initiative had been brought into being by Toni Milch, a member of the Hamburg branch, with the support of the university, which provided the rooms and had financed the project with 100 Mark every month. Although the university's funding was withdrawn in 1957, the DAB's local branch managed, instead, to receive the far more generous grant of 12,000 Mark annually from the city-state parliament in Hamburg. With this money the counselling centre was eventually able to rent a small flat on the campus of the university, which (as Dr Ursula Lindig, who took over from Toni Milch in 1961, recounted in her report on the service in 1965) led to a sharp increase in the demand for counselling, as well as in the use of the new facilities on the premises.<sup>335</sup>

Many of the previous counselling sessions with female students, according to Milch, had highlighted the wish for a place to meet between seminars and lectures and for small events. Apart from the counselling service, the new flat, therefore, also offered a common room, a kitchen, a work room and a room to rest in. These rooms were only accessible to female students. The centre in Hamburg was thus modelled closely on the DAB's pre-war student day-centre in Berlin and, consequently, not only functioned as a counselling service in order to help students with study-related or personal problems, but also as a unique social space reserved for women students. Throughout the years, the centre offered regular afternoon and evening events chiefly of 'womanly' interests, such as cooking, tailoring, make-up courses or fashion advice. Once a week it also hosted an open evening on which female students had the chance to socialize. At these events, some of the educational elements which the student

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<sup>334</sup> See BArch B 232/68, report on the conference with female students in Heidelberg, 25-28 October 1963 or BArch B 232/68, report on the conference with female students in Heilbronn 1959, included in the minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Lübeck, 29 Sept.-2 Oct. 1960.

<sup>335</sup> BArch B 232/95, "Bericht über die Beratungsstelle für Studenten und ihre Aufgaben", November 1965.

conferences had aimed to convey were adopted. Discussion techniques were practiced in order to build students' confidence to speak up in seminars and lectures. Meetings with older women graduates, who through their experiences could provide an example for the next generation, were also organized.<sup>336</sup>

In its function as a counselling service the Hamburg initiative was neither a new nor an exclusive project. Similar services existed in different university locations and some of them were provided by other local branches of the DAB. The Heidelberg group, for instance, had organized career counselling events for female school leavers, as early as 1949.<sup>337</sup> Other branches, such as in Essen, were also co-operating with state institutions, such as the local employment office, in providing occupational support and advice to young women and men.<sup>338</sup> The Hamburg counselling service, however, was unique, in that it not only offered attached clubrooms and events for female students, but also provided a different approach to student counselling. In contrast to other services, which primarily focused on university- and career-related questions, the centre in Hamburg had a strong emphasis on psychological support and the "human needs"<sup>339</sup> of the students. The importance of this focus on the students' personal problems was pointed out by Toni Milch in her letter to Prof Curt Bondy at the University of Hamburg. In this letter, Milch argued that the recent expansion of universities to mass institutions in the early 1960s negatively affected the personal development of students.<sup>340</sup> She claimed that the increased level of anonymity between students and lecturers, resulting from the expansion of the universities, could have a serious impact on the experience of first-year students, in particular, who, coming out of the communal structured school classes, were suddenly left entirely to themselves. Due to these developments in the university infrastructure, Milch stressed

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<sup>336</sup> BArch B 232/95, "Memorandum zur Frage der Einrichtung von Beratungsstellen in Verbindung mit Clubhäusern für Studierende an den westdeutschen Hochschulen", included in a letter from Toni Milch to Prof Curt Bondy, 14 September 1962.

<sup>337</sup> See BArch B 232/30, invitation to a career counselling event by the DAB's Heidelberg branch, 7-8 March 1949.

<sup>338</sup> See BArch B 232/68, summary of the reports of the local branches, included in the minutes of the extended executive committee meeting in Darmstadt, 12-13 June 1959.

<sup>339</sup> See BArch B 232/95, letter from Prof Rudolf Sieverts (president of the West German Conference of University Rectors ("Westdeutsche Rektorenkonferenz")) to Erna Scheffler, 22 February 1965.

<sup>340</sup> BArch B 232/95, letter from Toni Milch to Prof Curt Bondy, 14 September 1962.



that there was an apparent need for similar counselling services, a fact, she argued, that was reflected in the increase in the demand<sup>341</sup> for the counselling sessions.<sup>342</sup>

The success of the Hamburg counselling centre since its move to the university campus in 1959 had a significant impact on the work of the DAB's youth subcommittee. It became a model initiative for a successful relationship between the organization and female students<sup>343</sup> and set the tone for most of the subcommittee's efforts during the 1960s. Milch's letter to Bondy marked the beginning of a campaign organized by the youth subcommittee to seek support in advocating the provision of similar counselling establishments with additional clubrooms for female students at other universities. Attached to this letter was a memorandum which outlined the purpose of the Hamburg counselling centre and the need for the clubrooms with the request to forward it to a representative of the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education ("Wissenschaftsrat") and to a member of the West German Conference of University Rectors ("Westdeutsche Rektorenkonferenz")<sup>344</sup>. Within its own ranks, the youth subcommittee appealed to the DAB's local branches to draw up proposals and plans for similar counselling centres at their respective universities.<sup>345</sup> This appeal showed effect. Within a year, the organization's branch in Marburg had helped to establish a clubroom on university premises and had opened a counselling service which was operated on a voluntary basis by a member of the Marburg branch.<sup>346</sup> The DAB's local group in Mannheim also managed to open a counselling centre in a room that was provided by the university in 1965.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> A report by the Hamburg counselling centre in 1965 estimated the number of individual counselling sessions at approximately 3000 annually – see BArch B 232/95, "Bericht über die Beratungsstelle für Studenten und ihre Aufgaben" by Dr Ursula Lindig, November 1965, p. 2.

<sup>342</sup> BArch B 232/95, "Memorandum zur Frage der Einrichtung von Beratungsstellen in Verbindung mit Clubhäusern für Studierende an den westdeutschen Hochschulen", included in a letter from Toni Milch to Prof Curt Bondy, 14 September 1962.

<sup>343</sup> See BArch B 232/68, minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Bad Godesberg, 7-11 November 1962.

<sup>344</sup> This body comprised the heads of all West German universities and co-ordinated academic and administrative policies for them in the form of non-binding recommendations – see Childs and Johnson, *West Germany: Politics and Society*, p. 122.

<sup>345</sup> BArch B 232/68, minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Bad Godesberg, 7-11 November 1962.

<sup>346</sup> BArch B 232/68, minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Regensburg, 28-31 August 1964.

<sup>347</sup> BArch B 232/3, minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Hamburg, 6-10 October 1966.

Simultaneous to the local initiatives and actions of the DAB's branches, the youth subcommittee continued to press for the establishment of counselling services and clubrooms for female students on a national level. Following the discussion of the matter at the biennial general meeting in Regensburg in 1964, it was decided to send another petition to the West German Conference of University Rectors. The petition was drawn up by the organization's new chairwoman Erna Scheffler, who had taken over the DAB's chair from Marga Anders in 1964, and was subsequently submitted to the president of the West German Conference of University Rectors, Prof Ulrich Sieverts, as well as to the universities' rectors individually.

In order to strengthen the point raised by the petition, Ursula Lindig, who had run the counselling centre in Hamburg since 1961, was also asked to put together a report on the centre's work, which was later sent to the university rectors in the hope that it would accurately highlight the particular qualities of the services offered by the Hamburg facility.<sup>348</sup> In contrast to Toni Milch's memorandum in 1962, Lindig's report, however, included no demands for clubrooms specifically for female students. Instead of arguing for facilitating the social life of women at universities and for the provision of women-only spaces, as Milch had previously done, Lindig rather emphasized the need for the psychological counselling services. According to her, students faced many diverse problems throughout their time in university. These varied from fear of failure, to financial and family problems, as well as difficulties with the unstructured course designs. The latter was particularly emphasized by Lindig as a frequently appearing problem among students who often got lost in the German university system, which was based on the principle of academic freedom and had neither restrictions in the number of courses and subjects nor a maximum length of study.<sup>349</sup> While presenting students with the liberty to choose their subjects and designing the course of their studies,<sup>350</sup> the principle of academic freedom, as Lindig pointed out, had ambiguous effects on them. According to her, many students found it difficult to structure their studies and finish them in a timely manner. Indeed, she argued, students often felt that they had wasted time and had aimlessly chosen their subjects, a realization which

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<sup>348</sup> See BArch B 232/95, letter from Mrs Kessel to Erna Scheffler, 18 November 1965.

<sup>349</sup> BArch B 232/95, "Bericht über die Beratungsstelle für Studenten und ihre Aufgaben" by Dr Ursula Lindig, November 1965, pp. 5-6.

<sup>350</sup> Childs and Johnson, *West Germany: Politics and Society*, pp. 121-2.



apparently caused many to leave university without a degree. In addition, Lindig also stressed the high drop-out rate among married students and students with children, which she mainly attributed to financial problems and the lack of child care facilities at German universities.<sup>351</sup>

Approximately six months after the report was forwarded to the universities, Scheffler sent another petition to the West German Conference of University Rectors pressing again for the establishment of counselling services similar to Hamburg's.<sup>352</sup> Yet neither the report nor the repeated petition produced much response. The only reaction came from the University of Freiburg, which promised to consider the issues addressed by Ursula Lindig and requested ten additional copies of the report.<sup>353</sup> With this last effort by Scheffler and the rather vague outcome of similar previous initiatives, the campaign for student counselling services, modelled on the DAB's initiative in Hamburg, was dropped and the youth subcommittee settled for occasionally monitoring the development of counselling services in the following years.

The youth subcommittee did not, however, entirely abandon its work. It continued its efforts to support life at universities for female students and, instead, shifted its focus to the lack of child care services at universities, which had been one of the issues outlined in Lindig's report. Arguing that the absence of such services in many universities resulted in a high drop-out rate among female students, the youth subcommittee attempted to push for the provision of such facilities. Again, letters were sent to the universities, and in Marburg, Göttingen and Bochum the local branches of the DAB managed to help establish university kindergartens through material and financial support.<sup>354</sup>

The initiative, however, never gained any actual impetus, as it was met both with opposition in the DAB's own ranks and from the students themselves. As a member of the local branch in Bochum stated, when reporting on the efforts to establish the kindergarten at the local university, "[A] complicating factor [in these

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<sup>351</sup> BArch B 232/95, "Bericht über die Beratungsstelle für Studenten und ihre Aufgaben" by Dr Ursula Lindig, November 1965, p. 5.

<sup>352</sup> BArch B 232/95, letter from Erna Scheffler to the West German Conference of University Rectors, 16 June 1966.

<sup>353</sup> BArch B 232/95, letter from the University of Freiburg to Erna Scheffler, 1 July 1966.

<sup>354</sup> See BArch B 232/61, letter from Mrs Kessel to the rectors of the universities, 10 October 1967; and BArch B 232/61, letter from Mrs Kessel to Ursula Lindig, 20 March 1968.

efforts] is the resentment of the older generation towards early marriages among students [...]”<sup>355</sup> and, particularly, against student parenthood. Apparently, several of the DAB’s members opposed the provision of kindergartens at universities on the grounds that it would encourage early parenthood<sup>356</sup> - an attitude, as the Bochum member stressed, which was rather obsolete.<sup>357</sup>

Yet outside events overtook the DAB’s efforts as support for the kindergarten project got lost in the student unrest which was spreading at West German universities in the late 1960s. Resulting from the various protest movements that had swept across West Germany, as well as other Western societies, towards the end of this decade,<sup>358</sup> student organizations since 1967 had initiated a widespread protest against the education system and its existing structure. Pushing, among other things, for the reform of the universities, as well as for an increase in public spending on education, some of the demonstrations and protests led to violent outbursts between students and authorities.<sup>359</sup> In this climate the co-operation of the DAB with female students had become an unattainable goal for the organization. While the members of the DAB criticized the students’ demands for reform of the university system, the students themselves refused any affiliation to the older generation of women graduates. For young students, both male and female, organizations such as the DAB represented the old guard, the generation from whom they were eager to distance themselves. Accordingly, as Kessel concluded with much resignation in a letter to Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt in 1970, there was little to report on the activities of the youth subcommittee in the past few years. Instead, she stated, “[W]hen it comes to female students, we as the ‘establishment’ have been rather ineffective. I notice that

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<sup>355</sup> BArch B 232/61, letter from Mrs Marquad to Erna Scheffler, 8 May 1968.

<sup>356</sup> See BArch B 232/68, demands of the pedagogical subcommittee, included in the minutes of the biennial members’ general meeting in Regensburg, 28-31 August 1964.

<sup>357</sup> Mrs Marquad, at 35, was one of the few younger members of the DAB – see BArch B 232/61, letter from Mrs Kessel to Ursula Lindig, 20 March 1968.

<sup>358</sup> There were several reasons for the political mobilization of the West German student generation during the late 1960s, many of which paralleled the student uprisings in the United States and France. The US war against Vietnam, the Federal Republic’s re-armament and the relatively high number of former National Socialist officials in positions of power were some of the reasons for the student uprising. From 1967 the protest was increasingly directed at the university system and the existing hierarchies within – see, for example, Wolff-Dietrich Webler, ‘The Sixties and Seventies: Aspects of Student Activism in West Germany’, *Higher Education*, 9 (1980), pp. 156-8.

<sup>359</sup> Childs and Johnson, *West Germany: Politics and Society*, pp. 124-5.



particularly in Mainz where our co-operation in setting up a Kindergarten, despite the offer, is not welcome."<sup>360</sup>

With this remark the chairwoman of the DAB's youth subcommittee accurately summed up the organization's relationship to female students at the end of the 1960s. Despite numerous and diverse attempts, the organization had failed to succeed in establishing a relationship with the younger generation of women, causing the youth subcommittee to eventually dissolve.

### III.2.2 The DAB and the reform of the higher education system

Many of the DAB's initiatives aimed at young women and female students were motivated by the organization's goal to promote women's interests in education and thus women's "intellectual and scholarly advancement".<sup>361</sup> One of the main concerns of the DAB was that women should have a voice in the reform processes and in the decisions made in relation to the education system.

With the end of the Second World War and the subsequent re-opening of universities, suggestions to reform the German higher education system were soon brought forth by the occupying forces in the Western part of Germany, pushing for a democratization of the universities.<sup>362</sup> In 1948 the British military government commissioned the Blue Report ("Blaues Gutachten") which made specific reform suggestions for the German university system. These included an alteration of the teaching hierarchy, the opening of universities to the lower classes and a formation of

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<sup>360</sup> BArch B 232/61, letter from Mrs Kessel to Erna Scheffler, 19 May 1970.

<sup>361</sup> See here the DAB's mission statement which stated that the organization's overall objective was "to unite German women graduates to secure the influence and the importance of academically educated women in German culture, for the intellectual and scholarly advancement and for the representation of their professional interests" - BArch B 232/28, "Geschichte des Deutschen Akademikerinnenbundes (DAB) 1926-1933" by Agnes von Zahn-Harnack.

<sup>362</sup> Sylvia Paletschek, 'Die deutsche Universität im und nach dem Krieg. Die Wiederentdeckung des Abendlandes', in Bernd Martin, ed., *Der Zweite Weltkrieg und seine Folgen: Ereignisse - Auswirkungen - Reflexionen* (Freiburg/Berlin, 2006), pp. 243-4.

advisory councils consisting of both university staff and public figures to function as a bridge between the universities and society.<sup>363</sup>

Most of the reform suggestions made by the Blue Report were, however, dismissed by leading German academics and by the individual state governments, which had resumed authority in 1947 in all educational matters. In fact, the majority of university heads, professors and other prominent individuals in the education sector favoured a return to the humanistic approach of the nineteenth and early twentieth century and, in particular, to the ideals and tradition of the "Humboldtian University". This university model was based on the ideas of Wilhelm von Humboldt, a nineteenth century Prussian philosopher, whose central thought was the principle of academic freedom. This meant, on the one hand, that lecturers and professors were free to teach without the need of a set syllabus. The student, on the other hand, as mentioned before, was free to choose his or her subjects of interest without having to follow a predetermined course outline, as well as to take exams at a self-chosen point of time. The aim of Humboldt's form of academic study was not the transmission of specific knowledge - students were supposed to acquire that in their free time through self-study - but to introduce them to scholarship as a whole.<sup>364</sup> As such, the Humboldtian ideal was considered to represent a clear ideological break from the purpose-orientated function of higher education under the National Socialist regime, which had followed the idea of applied science and knowledge.<sup>365</sup> This argument and the seamless resumption of pre-war traditions within academia, as Bernd Weisbrod has stated, further served the cause of rehabilitating many German academics of their own Nazi past. Moreover, it restricted access to higher education by re-introducing the requirement of a humanistic school education thus counter-balancing the gradual opening to the of the universities during Weimar Republic, which was often depicted by contemporary academics as one of the reasons for the emergence of the National Socialist German Students' League and the Nazification of German universities. It is

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<sup>363</sup> Regina Vogel, 'Bürgerliche Werte und Stuserhalt. Bildungspolitische Interessenpolitik von Hochschullehrer- und Unternehmerverbänden in der Nachkriegszeit' (Doctoral thesis, Berlin, 2005), pp. 32-3.

<sup>364</sup> Olaf Bartz, 'Wissenschaft und Hochschulplanung. Leitbildwandel und Planungsprozesse in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zwischen 1957 und 1975' (Doctoral Thesis, Cologne, 2006), pp. 29-30.

<sup>365</sup> Ota Konrád, 'Die Modernisierung der westdeutschen Universitäten nach 1945', *Acta Universitatis Carolinae - Studia Territoralia*, XIV (2008), p. 109.



also important to point out here, that most girls' higher schools at the time did not offer a humanistic education focusing primarily on modern languages. The introduction of the Humboltian ideal thus also significantly limited the number of girls able to gain a university degree and pursuing an academic career. Although the initial requirements were ultimately relaxed by acknowledging Latin as a sufficient humanistic education (a subject many higher girls' schools offered), the attempt to limit university access to those pupils with a humanistic education can also be understood as an attempt to re-marginalize women within academia.<sup>366</sup>

In these early debates on the higher education system in the Federal Republic the DAB failed to make a significant contribution in the form of specific suggestions for reform or alternative models. In particular, the unstructured course outlines and the undetermined number of semesters required for the completion of studies, as criticized later by Ursula Lindig in her report on the Hamburg counselling centre,<sup>367</sup> were left unchallenged at the time. In fact, the DAB seemed to be quite unaware of the on-going reform discussions. The organization's members, for instance, only learned about a conference on the reform of the university system, organized by the West German Conference of University Rectors and the German Association of University Professors and Lecturers ("Deutscher Hochschulverband" ) in Hinterzarten in August 1952, after the event had taken place. Approximately 150 participants from the academic sector, including university lecturers and professors, had been invited, yet not a single woman had been among them.<sup>368</sup>

On learning that the conference had been held without the participation of any women, the DAB began to push for women's representation on events which focused on the higher education system and for their inclusion in the decision-making process. Subsequent to its biennial general meeting in Göttingen in October 1952, which had focused on the interests of female students, and in this context also on the reform of the universities, the DAB formulated a resolution that was sent to Prof Gerd

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<sup>366</sup> Bernd Weisbrod, 'Dem wandelbaren Geist. Akademisches Ideal und wissenschaftliche Transformation in der Nachkriegszeit', in idem est, ed., *Akademische Vergangenheitspolitik. Beiträge zur Wissenschaftskultur der Nachkriegszeit* (Göttingen, 2002), pp. 27-30.

<sup>367</sup> See chapter III.2.1.

<sup>368</sup> Stefan Paulus, *Vorbild USA? Amerikanisierung von Universität und Wissenschaft in Westdeutschland 1945-1976* (Munich, 2010), pp. 153-4.

Tellenbach, chairman of an advisory commission<sup>369</sup> for the reform of third level institutions. The resolution stressed the organization's dissatisfaction at the absence of women at the conference in Hinterzarten and demanded that women needed to be involved in future decisions in this field. The resolution, however, must have received little attention, as the university subcommittee's chairwoman, Prof Luise Berthold, sent another letter to Tellenbach in November 1952 reiterating the organization's concern about the absence of women in the discussions on the reform of the higher education system.

In this letter Berthold argued very much along the lines of the claims of post-war women's organizations which stressed that, in order to establish a truly democratic German state, the input and inclusion of women into public matters was imperative. According to Berthold, excluding women from the reform process

[...] is especially disconcerting coming from a group of people who are genuinely striving towards a modern university. [...] It is simply a stain on the image of the German university, a democratic German university (and what else would it want to be), if there are injustices against women, be it in terms of appointments [to academic offices] or "merely" at conferences [...].<sup>370</sup>

Stressing that these continuing injustices and the omission of women in the reform process were particularly "embarrassing" in an international context, Berthold felt prompted to ask: "Does anyone believe that such treatment fosters the idea of a democratic Germany?"<sup>371</sup> Berthold's blunt wording eventually attained a response by Tellenbach, in which he admitted that the conference in Hinterzarten should not have taken place without a woman attending and that the West German Conference of University Rectors would take the DAB's protest into account.

Tellenbach's reply was considered with scepticism among the organization's members and as the university subcommittee pointed out, one would have to wait and see.<sup>372</sup> This vigilance proved to be apposite. In 1955 the organization once again found out through outside sources that a conference on higher education was scheduled to

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<sup>369</sup> This commission had been formed by the West German Conference of University Rectors and the German Association of University Professors and Lecturers previous to the Hinterzarten conference – see Paulus, *Vorbild USA?*, p. 153.

<sup>370</sup> BArch B 232/92, letter from Luise Berthold to Gerd Tellenbach, 18 November 1952.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>372</sup> BArch B 232/26, report of the university subcommittee, included in the report by Käthe von Kuenssberg on the extended executive committee meeting in Bad Honnef, 3 April 1953 - Tellenbach's reply is not included in the organization's files. Its content is recounted, however, in the report of the university subcommittee at the extended executive committee meeting.



take place in Bad Honnef in October of the same year. Berthold instantly wrote to Tellenbach again reminding him of her letter from 1952 and urging him to invite women this time.<sup>373</sup> The repeated demand had an impact as Berthold herself, together with Prof Liesel Beckmann, was subsequently invited to the conference in Bad Honnef,<sup>374</sup> at which, among other things, the foundation for the first government aid to West German students was laid.<sup>375</sup> In her account of the conference, Berthold later based Beckmann's and her own invitation on Tellenbach's "sense of justice"<sup>376</sup>, an assessment which seems rather euphemistic considering the struggles she herself had gone through to get just two women invited. Nevertheless, through Berthold's continuous pressure, the DAB had certainly accomplished an important first step on the stony path of pushing for women's representation and participation in the reform process for higher education in West Germany.

This success, however, was short-lived and without lasting effects, as the subsequent foundation of the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education showed. This council was established in 1957, just two years after the Bad Honnef conference, with the purpose of providing a link between the universities and the German state governments. Its aim was to co-ordinate academia and politics in view of the growing importance of research throughout the 1950s - in particular, in the field of applied science and technology. For this purpose, the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education was composed of representatives from both politics and academia in order to create a balance between the two interest groups. The Council's main task was to work out recommendations on an extension of the university system in order to master the increasing numbers of students. This included an expansion of already existing universities, as well as the construction of new universities. Both were processes that ultimately facilitated some of the reforms in the mid-1960s, as existing structures and traditions of German universities were reviewed in the course of the

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<sup>373</sup> BArch B 232/92, report on the university subcommittee's activities 1954-1956 by Luise Berthold, 14 September 1956

<sup>374</sup> The DAB's contribution to the conference in Bad Honnef will be discussed in more detail in chapter III.3.2.

<sup>375</sup> The so called "Honnefer Modell" provided financial help to gifted students, as well as to students of lesser means. Its implementation in 1957 was significant as it marked the first step in opening German universities to the lower classes – see Paletschek, 'Die deutsche Universität im und nach dem Krieg', p. 246.

<sup>376</sup> BArch B 232/92, report on the university subcommittee's activities 1954-1956 by Luise Berthold, 14 September 1956.

expansion.<sup>377</sup> Out of its thirty-nine members, of whom twenty-two were appointed by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany and seventeen by the state governments, no woman was appointed. Again, the DAB protested against the exclusion of women and lobbied for their appointment. Yet similar to the early reform debates at the beginning of the 1950s, the DAB lagged behind the developments in progress. It was not until in October 1962, five years after the council had been established, that the organization's interest in the matter was sparked at the biennial general meeting in Bad Godesberg, which centred on the situation of female academics.<sup>378</sup>

Following this meeting, the new chairwoman of the university subcommittee, Asta Hampe, sent a letter to Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, member of the DAB and Minister for Health at the time, inquiring about the representation of women on the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education. Hampe's request was made in relation to the impending appointment of eight new members to the Council in January 1963. Since she had written to Schwarzhaupt in October, less than four months before the official appointments, Schwarzhaupt thought these most likely to be decided already. Nonetheless, in her subsequent letter to the DAB's chairwoman Marga Anders, Schwarzhaupt advised to write to the Advisory Council's secretary-general for further information and also offered to mediate between the DAB and the West German President, Heinrich Lübke.<sup>379</sup> Despite Schwarzhaupt's offer to utilize her political connections, Anders took the matter into her own hands. In a petition sent to both Lübke and to the Advisory Council's secretary-general, Prof Ludwig Raiser, Anders pointed out that currently twenty-six women in the Federal Republic held a university chair and argued that at least one of these women should be appointed to the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education. She particularly stressed that due to the increasing number of female students and university teachers, women had to be represented on bodies such as the Advisory Council.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Konrád, 'Die Modernisierung der westdeutschen Universitäten nach 1945', pp. 115-7.

<sup>378</sup> See BArch B 232/68, report on the second members' meeting, included in the minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Bad Godesberg, 7-11 October 1962.

<sup>379</sup> BArch B 232/92, letter from Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt to Marga Anders, 17 October 1962.

<sup>380</sup> BArch B 232/92, letter from Marga Anders to the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Heinrich Lübke, 18 October 1962.



The response to Anders' petition was rather meagre. While it did not seem to have caused any reaction from President Lübke,<sup>381</sup> Anders' demand did get a reply from Prof Raiser. In his letter, however, he countered the DAB's claim by arguing that the percentage of women in the total number of lecturers and professors was "unfortunately still very low" and that these women had also only rarely "the experience in questions regarding higher education policy".<sup>382</sup> In a letter to Marga Anders, Doris Schachner (one of the few female professors<sup>383</sup>) rightly claimed that this reply by the Advisory Council's secretary-general clearly demonstrated that there was no intention on his side to suggest a woman for appointment in the near future.<sup>384</sup> Accordingly, the DAB's executive committee subsequently agreed on sending another letter to Raiser, in which he should be made aware that there were, in fact, some women professors who had sufficient experience with higher education policy. It was also decided to further lobby the universities, recommending women for an appointment to the Council.<sup>385</sup>

In the end, the DAB's efforts to get a woman appointed to the Advisory Council in 1963 were unsuccessful, which was certainly due to the DAB's timing and the expiration of the appointment period. Yet two years later a woman, Prof Elisabeth Liefmann-Keil, finally took a seat on the Advisory Council, thus marking an important success in the DAB's previous lobbying efforts.<sup>386</sup>

In 1964, the organization made one last attempt to contribute to the reform process, when universities were undergoing some significant changes as part of the extension of the university infrastructure. At the biennial general meeting in Regensburg in August 1964 the pedagogical subcommittee presented a list of reform proposals for higher education in the Federal Republic. It suggested four main changes for the university system. First, to limit the time until completion of a degree to five

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<sup>381</sup> At least there is no mention of a reply from Lübke in any of the DAB's files.

<sup>382</sup> The original letter from Raiser is not included in the records. It is, however, cited in another letter to the DAB's chairwoman and referred to in the minutes of an executive committee meeting - see BArch B 232/92, letter from Prof Schachner to Marga Anders, 12 November 1962 and BArch B 232/68, minutes of the executive committee meeting in Frankfurt am Main, 4-6 January 1963.

<sup>383</sup> Schachner was not a member of the DAB, but as a female professor she shared the interest in the appointment of a woman to the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education.

<sup>384</sup> BArch B 232/92, letter from Prof Schachner to Marga Anders, 12 November 1962.

<sup>385</sup> See BArch B 232/68, minutes of the executive committee meeting in Frankfurt am Main, 4-6 January 1963.

<sup>386</sup> See BArch B 232/66, letter from Erna Scheffler to the news agency *dpa*, 21 July 1965.

years, secondly, to regulate the course syllabi, thirdly, to structure courses clearly and finally to standardize the number of subjects.<sup>387</sup> In essence, these demands contested the traditions and doctrines of the Humboldtian model. Yet, despite these specific proposals, the DAB was slow in forwarding them to the appropriate decision-making bodies. Following the general meeting in Regensburg the pedagogical subcommittee's list of demands was, instead, first put up for discussion among the local branches of the DAB before they were eventually included into a petition which was drawn up at the next biennial general meeting in Hamburg in 1966. By then the four original demands of reforming higher education were, however, trimmed down to the simple claim "to condense university education with the aim of an earliest possible career entry".<sup>388</sup> This demand was thus far removed from the specific reform proposals presented by the pedagogical subcommittee two years earlier. Furthermore, the demand to restructure university education in order to shorten the length of studies only reiterated suggestions already brought forth by the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education, as the Department of Internal Affairs pointed out in response to the organization's petition.<sup>389</sup>

As the 1960s drew to a close and new attempts to reform the higher education system were increasingly shaken by student revolts, the DAB seemed to be even more at a loss on how to situate itself within and contribute to the on-going reform debates. As one of the organization's members, Prof Braun, stated in 1968, "[T]he DAB's statement [made in 1966] in respect to the higher education system seemed necessary back then – or at least desirable. By now the situation has changed very much, without any female contributions."<sup>390</sup> This sense of resignation expressed by Braun was also reflected in the DAB's inability to find a new chairwoman for the university subcommittee since the late 1960s, resulting in the fact that its work was suspended for several years. It was not until 1975 that the subcommittee was revived when its former chairwoman, Asta Hampe, once again took the chair. Accordingly, the DAB had

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<sup>387</sup> BArch B 232/68, demands of the pedagogical subcommittee, included in the minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Regensburg, 28-31 August 1964.

<sup>388</sup> See BArch B 232/3, "Vier Forderungen des Deutschen Akademikerinnenbundes", resolution passed at the DAB's biennial general members' meeting in Hamburg, 9 October 1966.

<sup>389</sup> See BArch B 232/3, letter from the Department of Internal Affairs to Erna Scheffler in response to the demands made by the DAB, 17 February 1967.

<sup>390</sup> BArch B 232/92, letter from Prof Braun to Erna Scheffler, 6 December 1968.



no input in the crucial reforms of the higher education system which were implemented in the Federal Republic during the early 1970s.

### III.2.3 The DAB and girls' secondary education

Similar to the university system, secondary education in West Germany first came under inspection after the Second World War during occupation and again, the impetus for reform of the existing system came from the military governments of the British, French and American Allied Forces, rather than through a German initiative.

Since the 1840s, the German school system had been divided into three branches, the *Volksschule*, *Mittelschule*, and *Höhere Schule*, which differed from each other in syllabi, in the number of years of education and, accordingly, in the qualification each school provided.<sup>391</sup> In its function, the *Volksschule* provided a basic academic education with an emphasis on practical skills, in order to prepare pupils for an apprenticeship in crafts and skilled trades, or for jobs in the low levels of the civil service. The *Mittelschule* took an intermediate place between the *Volksschule* and the *Höhere Schule*, providing a broad academic education in combination with practical skills for a career in white collar occupations and skilled jobs. The *Höhere Schule*, a term which incorporated several different school types, among them the *Gymnasium*, was the highest form of secondary schooling. It offered an extensive academic education, qualifying its pupils for third level education through the *Abitur*, the qualification required to enrol at universities.<sup>392</sup>

After the Second World War, the American military government, in particular, aimed at abolishing this three-fold system. Criticizing the hierarchal and socially unjust nature of the *Volksschule*, *Mittelschule* and *Höhere Schule*, it was proposed to replace the existing system with comprehensive schools thus offering an equal education to everyone. Yet, as seen with the attempts to reform the higher education system,

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<sup>391</sup> Peter Drewke, 'Die Entwicklung des Bildungssystems in den Westzonen und in der Bundesrepublik von 1945/49 bis 1990. Strukturelle Kontinuität und Reformen, Bildungsexpansion und Systemprobleme', in Detlef K. Müller, ed., *Pädagogik, Erziehungswissenschaft, Bildung. Eine Einführung in das Studium* (Cologne, 1994), pp. 237-8.

<sup>392</sup> Childs and Johnson, *West Germany: Politics and Society*, pp. 119-20.

suggestions to restructure secondary schooling were complicated both through the quick re-opening of schools after the war, as well as through the opposition of the German state governments, which regained control over the education sector in 1947.<sup>393</sup> Most of the traditional structures of the German education system were thus reconstituted, including the gendered separation of schools, which had been a primary concern of German Catholic and conservative spokesmen in the reform debates.<sup>394</sup>

In the DAB the restoration of the pre-war school system in the new Federal Republic of Germany was not a matter of discussion. This might seem surprising since the vertical split of the three branches in secondary education did not only create a disadvantage for working-class pupils but also significantly affected girls. Most girls were sent to the *Volksschule*, rather than to the *Mittelschule* or the *Höhere Schule*, since many parents considered an extensive school education for their daughters less important, based on the assumption that they would marry and become housewives. Accordingly only twenty-five per cent of fourteen-year-old girls attended the *Mittelschule* or the *Höhere Schule* in 1960. Moreover, only 8.7 per cent of girls attended a higher school at the age of seventeen studying for the *Abitur*, as opposed to 13.4 per cent of boys.<sup>395</sup> Yet the DAB's focus was rather directed at the essence and aims of girls' secondary education. The emphasis was put particularly on the special qualities of girls' education and, hence, the need to provide a separate education for them. Consequently, the pedagogical subcommittee, which headed these debates, repeatedly stressed the differences in the nature of girls and boys, and argued that equality between the sexes should not be equated with egalitarianism ("Gleichmacherei").<sup>396</sup> In fact, as the subcommittee's chairwoman Annelise Mayer stated in 1956, young girls needed to be made aware of their specifically female circumstances and the tensions that existed between marriage and a career. According to her, equality implied the equal value of the sexes ("Gleichwertigkeit") but not sameness ("Gleichartigkeit"), a fact that needed to be accounted for in the education

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<sup>393</sup> Drewek, 'Die Entwicklung des Bildungssystems in den Westzonen und in der Bundesrepublik von 1945/49 bis 1990', pp. 239-41.

<sup>394</sup> Vogel, 'Bürgerliche Werte und Statuserhalt', p. 29.

<sup>395</sup> See Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 274.

<sup>396</sup> See BArch B 232/95, circular letter from the pedagogical subcommittee's chairwoman, Mrs Sauerbier, to members of the subcommittee, February 1958.



of boys and girls.<sup>397</sup> A similar argument was made two years later by the new chairwoman of the pedagogical subcommittee, Mrs Sauerbier, who again stressed the importance of a separate and gender-specific education which would strengthen the “intuitive and the emotional capacities” of girls.<sup>398</sup>

In this respect the pedagogical subcommittee argued in similar terms as the youth subcommittee had in urging for the creation of women-only spaces at universities and offering character-building conferences for female students throughout the mid-1950s. In both matters the members of the DAB stressed that girls should be provided with separate spaces and a separate education in order to develop their personality and their “womanly” qualities.

Such arguments clearly reiterated pre-war feminist claims of equality but difference between the sexes. Considering the demographic of the DAB’s membership at that time, most of who had already been involved in the women’s movement during the 1920s, this linkage of pre- and post-World War II arguments is not surprising. Besides, this view on the separate education of the sexes was certainly not an uncommon stance. A widespread opinion in West German public debates on secondary education throughout the 1950s was that in co-educational schools the different course and speed of girls’ and boys’ personal developments throughout puberty would not get due recognition and that an early encounter would distract them from their studies. Another concern of the advocates of separate girls’ schools was that co-educational schools would simply adopt the curricula of boys’ schools and that too little attention would be paid to the different interests and needs of girls.<sup>399</sup>

Yet, in the context of some considerable differences between curricula in girls’ and boys’ schools in the Federal Republic throughout the 1950s, which greatly corresponded to the gender ideologies propagated by the Christian conservative government, the argument of the need for a separate education based on sexual difference was problematic. In particular, in the *Volksschule* and the *Mittelschule*, the syllabus at girls’ schools reserved a significant number of hours for ‘women-specific’ subjects, such as home economics and needlework, whereas boys at the same level

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<sup>397</sup> BArch B 232/95, report of the pedagogical subcommittee by Annelise Mayer, September 1956.

<sup>398</sup> BArch B 232/95, circular letter from the pedagogical subcommittee’s chairwoman, Mrs Sauerbier, to members of the subcommittee, February 1958.

<sup>399</sup> Kuhnhenne, *Frauenleitbilder und Bildung in der westdeutschen Nachkriegszeit*, pp. 278-9.

were taught mathematics and science.<sup>400</sup> At the *Höhere Schule* for girls the situation was not much different, as they often offered an education which had a far lower standard than that of boys, prompting the use of the term “Puddingabitur” (pudding A-levels) as an expression describing the lower value of the *Abitur* gained at some girls’ schools.<sup>401</sup> In arguing for a separate secondary education for girls, the DAB certainly did not intend to support the idea of an education that was of a lower standard for girls than that for boys. As in its approach to the relationship between the sexes, the organization rather propagated an education which was different, but equal. This position had to be altered, however, as discussion about the reform of the secondary education system began to surface at the beginning of the 1960s.

The trigger for the revived debate on secondary education had come from an official report issued by the German Committee for Education and the Education Sector (“Deutscher Ausschuss für das Erziehungs- und Bildungswesen”) in 1959. This report had made several recommendations on the restructuring and unification of the school system. At the centre of the report’s plans was the introduction of a transition stage of two years after primary school in which pupils would be assessed on their qualifications for any of the three secondary school branches. Replacing the system of testing pupils at the age of ten through examinations, this transition stage, it was argued, would give them a better chance to show their aptitudes and to be appropriately evaluated. In addition, the report recommended a restructuring and a standardization of secondary schools, by extending the duration of the *Volksschule* by two more years until the end of year ten, as well as of the *Mittelschule* (now *Realschule*) by one more year until year eleven. For the higher schools the report suggested a standardization of the name *Gymnasium*, which would be divided into a linguistic and a scientific branch and which pupils would attend from year seven until year thirteen, after which they sat the *Abitur*.<sup>402</sup> The chief concern of the 1959 report was thus not to replace the three-fold secondary school system but to implement a more just arrangement of selection, as well as a convergence of the three qualifications gained at each school.

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<sup>400</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 291-4.

<sup>401</sup> Bärbel Maul, *Akademikerinnen in der Nachkriegszeit. Ein Vergleich zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der DDR* (Frankfurt am Main, 2002), p. 27.

<sup>402</sup> Drewek, ‘Die Entwicklung des Bildungssystems in den Westzonen und in der Bundesrepublik von 1945/49 bis 1990’, p. 246.



Although most of the recommendations made in the 1959 report took several years to be introduced (the transition stage was not introduced until the 1970s, for instance) or were not implemented at all, the report had recharged the education debate. In the following years, additional reports were published on the same subject, such as the Bremer Plan of 1960, and new examining and reporting committees were formed.

During this revival of the secondary education debate, the DAB took a more active stance than it had all throughout the previous decade. Following the publication of the 1959 report on the school system, the document was discussed in the pedagogical subcommittee. The report's recommendation to delay the selection for the three types of secondary schools had raised questions in the subcommittee concerning the way girls were affected by the selection process and whether they took advantage of the opportunity to qualify for the *Höhere Schule*. The pedagogical subcommittee, therefore, compiled a survey to enquire about current standards in the education of girls, with a specific focus on whether they made adequate use of their academic capabilities and whether they were encouraged to attend advanced secondary schools, i.e. the *Höhere Schule* or the *Mittelschule*. The survey was carried out in the federal state of Hessen and found that, despite being awarded higher grades on average than boys, girls tended to attend the *Volksschule* and thus the lowest school form. It also established that girls who left school prematurely had usually a better grade average than boys. Hence, in spite of often fulfilling the prerequisites, the majority of girls chose not to go to the *Höhere Schule* or decided to leave early<sup>403</sup>.<sup>404</sup>

Since none of these points had been considered by the report of the German Committee for Education and the Education Sector, the pedagogical subcommittee proposed that the DAB should commission a national study which would explore the reasons behind girls' tendency to disregard their potential at school. It was hoped that, based on the findings of this report, recommendations could be made to the authorities and officials in charge.<sup>405</sup> Six months later, in June 1962, the DAB's pedagogical subcommittee was in talks with the Department of Social Sciences at the

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<sup>403</sup> Many pupils, in particular, girls left the *Höhere Schule* after year ten, and thus had the same qualification as awarded by the *Mittelschule*.

<sup>404</sup> BArch B 232/95, report of the pedagogical subcommittee, 8 April 1961.

<sup>405</sup> BArch B 232/68, report of the pedagogical subcommittee, included in the minutes of the extended executive committee meeting in Marburg, 5-8 October 1961.

University of Hamburg<sup>406</sup>, which shortly thereafter submitted a research proposal in conjunction with an application for funding to the German Research Council.<sup>407</sup> Additional funding for the study was also raised by the pedagogical subcommittee in the form of a 2000 Mark government grant from the Women's Department of the Department of Internal Affairs.<sup>408</sup>

The study commenced in 1963. Its central research objective was to establish the reasons for the high number of girls leaving the *Höhere Schule* after year ten, i.e. which personal motives they might have had and how outside influences, such as school organization or parents' intentions for their daughters' education, impacted this decision. The study thus focused on the *Höhere Schule* in order to establish whether fewer girls than boys tended to receive an education which matched their academic potential. The findings were based on a survey carried out at a total of sixty-nine higher schools in the Federal Republic which had questioned 900 girls and boys in year ten, and 800 girls and 1100 boys in their final year. In addition, school statistics on final year pupils, who had sat the *Abitur* in 1954, were also consulted, in order to provide insight into the development of the numbers and the grades of girls and boys throughout the course of their advanced education at the *Höhere Schule*.

One of the main findings of the study was that in total, girls from all social classes were leaving schools in much higher numbers than boys with the same backgrounds. In particular, girls from the lower middle-class were found to be much more likely to drop out after year ten than boys from similar families. Assuming that the completion of the *Höhere Schule* and the taking of the *Abitur* had two main motives, i.e. either access to the professions, as well as other qualified jobs, or the gaining of educational prestige, the gender discrepancy was explained by the fact that girls tended to be under less pressure to complete their education. The study argued that girls were more likely to leave school early, because the expectations towards

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<sup>406</sup> BArch B 232/68, minutes of the executive committee meeting, 1-3 June 1962.

<sup>407</sup> BArch B 232/68, report of the pedagogical subcommittee, included in the minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Bad Godesberg, 7-11 October 1962.

<sup>408</sup> BArch B 232/66, letter from the Department of Internal Affairs, 12 July 1962.



them, as well as their own ambitions to have a well-paid job, were far lower than in the case of boys, who were expected to be the future providers of families.<sup>409</sup>

In its conclusion, however, the study failed to critically question these gendered expectations. It simply suggested that if the attendance of the *Höhere Schule* was to be made more attractive for girls, then the educational value of this school form, independent of value for future occupation, needed to be emphasized to a much greater extent. In particular, subjects that were often considered to be less important for girls, such as the natural sciences, needed to be re-evaluated in terms of the general value of education, rather than in relation to the future occupations of women.<sup>410</sup>

This latter argument tied in with the most significant result of the study, which stated that girls who attended mixed schools made up a much smaller number in the total of early female school-leavers, in comparison to those who had gone to a girls-only school. Moreover, of girls leaving a single-sex school, most of them had made their decision to leave regardless of their grades.<sup>411</sup> This finding suggested that in West Germany, higher schools for girls were less likely to encourage their pupils to finish their education, a fact which called into question the effectiveness of separate schools, which the DAB, among many other advocates, had promoted throughout the 1950s. Instead of facilitating the individual development of girls in the absence of boys, as the pedagogical subcommittee's chairwoman Mrs Sauerbier had argued in 1958, girls'-only schools, according to the study, rather seemed to limit their personal expectations towards their future occupation. Indeed, the study found that a significant number of the girls who left the *Höhere Schule* continued on to a commercial school ("Handelsschule").<sup>412</sup> It, therefore, concluded that in effect, higher girls' schools unconsciously educated girls with a more practical orientation, similar to the *Mittelschule*.<sup>413</sup> Thus it seemed that girls at higher girls' schools were, indeed, less likely

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<sup>409</sup> A summary of the study's results was printed in the monthly journal published by the Women's Information Service - BArch Zsg. 1-312/1, "Ursachen des vorzeitigen Schulabgangs von Oberschülerinnen", *Informationen für die Frau* 18 (1969) 7/8, pp. 20-1.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>411</sup> BArch Zsg. 1-312/1, "Ursachen des vorzeitigen Schulabgangs von Oberschülerinnen", *Informationen für die Frau* 18 (1969) 7/8, pp. 18-9.

<sup>412</sup> This school is a continuative vocational school. Its particular focus is on trade and business.

<sup>413</sup> BArch Zsg. 1-312/1, "Ursachen des vorzeitigen Schulabgangs von Oberschülerinnen", *Informationen für die Frau* 18 (1969) 7/8, p. 22.

to receive an education matching their abilities and that co-education was, in fact, a stimulant for their personal development.

The final report on the research project was published in 1969, in the midst of the political discussion on the reform of the West German education system. These discussions were led by the German Education Council ("Deutscher Bildungsrat"), which had been founded in 1965 as the successor of the German Committee for Education and the Education Sector. In its function the German Education Council was the equivalent of the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education (established in 1957), but for reforming the school system rather than the higher education system. It was also designed to function as a link between politics and the education sector and it was expected to develop an education reform in line with the political and economic developments of the Federal Republic.<sup>414</sup>

In contrast to the founding of the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education, the DAB reacted immediately in order to ensure the nomination of at least two women to the new Education Council. It was particularly due to the initiative of Erna Scheffler that the DAB did not miss the opportunity to influence the appointments to the newly formed council. As soon as Scheffler heard about its formation she wrote to various government officials, including the state Ministers for Education for Hessen and Baden-Württemberg and the premier of Bavaria, stressing the importance of ensuring women's representation on the Council of Education. Stating that although it was probably premature, she considered it imperative to urge the Ministers to nominate women to the Council now, since previous experience, i.e. the appointments to the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education, had taught her that women were frequently "forgotten".<sup>415</sup>

Having discussed the issue in the DAB's executive committee as well, it was decided in July 1965 to send an official petition to the President of the Federal Republic of Germany and to the federal government, the individual state governments, and all female members of parliament. This appeal stressed again the importance of appointing women to the new Council of Education, as women and girls made up a

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<sup>414</sup> Achim Leschinsky, 'Vom Bildungsrat (nach) zu PISA. Eine zeitgeschichtliche Studie zur deutschen Bildungspolitik', *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik*, 51 (2005), pp. 823-5.

<sup>415</sup> BArch B 232/66, letter from Erna Scheffler to Dr Nevermann (Mayor of Hamburg), Prof Dr Schütte (State Minister for Education for Hessen), Prof Hahn (State Minister for Education for Baden-Württemberg) and Alfons Goppel (Premier of Bavaria), 19 December 1964.



substantial part of both pupils and teachers and were, therefore, as affected by reforms to the education sector as their male counterparts. It argued that in the interest of the whole of society, women's specific knowledge and point of view was required. In the final paragraph, the DAB offered to suggest possible candidates.<sup>416</sup> To increase the public pressure on the nominating bodies, Scheffler also informed the German Press Agency, *dpa*,<sup>417</sup> the Women's Information Service ("Informationsdienst für Frauenfragen e.V."),<sup>418</sup> various newspapers,<sup>419</sup> as well as the editor of the women's programme of the North West German Broadcasting ("NWDR"),<sup>420</sup> about the petition submitted by the DAB.

A few weeks after the petition had been sent the state premier of Baden-Württemberg requested the list of possible candidates and suggested that the DAB should also forward it to other federal state governments, which were in charge of nominating fourteen out of the eighteen members<sup>421</sup> to the German Council of Education.<sup>422</sup> Following this suggestion, the organization sent its list of six names to all federal state governments in August 1965.<sup>423</sup>

In the end, the unremitting efforts, particularly of the DAB's chairwoman, were rewarded with success. In early 1966 two women were appointed to the German Council of Education, Prof Emilie Stahl and Prof Helge Pross, of whom the latter had been suggested by the DAB. Yet, in February of the same year, Pross stepped down from her nomination due to work commitments, a decision which left Scheffler astounded and worried for the future appointments of women. In her letter to Pross, Scheffler denounced her decision arguing, "[W]hat harm this will do for women in general: because what kind of impression will this late decline [...] make. I fear that

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<sup>416</sup> BArch Zsg.1-312/1, "Berufung von Frauen in den Bildungsrat", appeal reprinted in *Informationen für die Frau* 14 (1965) 7/8, p. 6.

<sup>417</sup> BArch B 232/66, letter from Erna Scheffler to German Press Agency, *dpa*, 21 July 1965.

<sup>418</sup> BArch B 232/66, letter from Erna Scheffler to Mrs Glaser ("Informationsdienst für Frauenfragen e.V.") and to Mrs Frandsen (Women's Department of the Department of Internal Affairs), 20 July 1965.

<sup>419</sup> See BArch B 232/66, "Die Gleichberechtigung auch wahrnehmen. Akademikerinnenbund fordert Beiteiligung an Bildungskommission", newspaper article printed in the *Badische Volksnachrichten*, 23 July 1965.

<sup>420</sup> BArch B 232/66, letter from Erna Scheffler to Dr Helga Prollius (editor of the "NWDR Frauenfunk", a women's program on one of the main radio stations in West Germany), 20 July 1965.

<sup>421</sup> The remaining four members were appointed by the federal government.

<sup>422</sup> BArch B 232/66, letter from Erna Scheffler to the office of the state premier of Baden-Württemberg, 29 July 1965.

<sup>423</sup> See, for example, BArch B 232/66, letter from Erna Scheffler to the president of Hamburg senate, 4 August 1965.

they will not decide to nominate a woman for a second time. Our efforts in this matter have also been for nothing.”<sup>424</sup> Despite Scheffler’s concerns about the impact of Pross’ decision, the final selection of members to the German Council of Education included a second woman in addition to Prof Emilie Stahl. And it was again due to the DAB’s chairwoman’s endeavours that this second woman, Prof Renate Mayntz, had been suggested by the organization.<sup>425</sup> Thus, as the German Council of Education began its work on a reform of the primary and secondary education system, the presence and representation of two women in the process was certainly, by and large, the result of the relentless lobbying and the pressure exerted by the DAB.

The reform recommendations that followed also incorporated some of the points that had been raised by the study on girls’ secondary education commissioned by the DAB and conducted by the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Hamburg, in particular the difference in standard of education offered at German secondary schools. It included the alignment of the syllabus taught in the three branches of secondary schools. In 1972 the distinction between the various forms of the *Höhere Schule*, which had previously been differentiated through their emphasis on modern languages, sciences or classics, was also abolished on the recommendation of the Council. Instead, its proposal of mandatory and optional subjects for the last three years of the *Höhere Schule* was accepted. This facilitated the increase of the subjects offered at girls’ schools, thereby moving them into line with boys’ schools, at first and eventually, evoked the gradual replacement of the single-sex school system by co-educational schools.<sup>426</sup>

It is difficult, in retrospect, to judge to what degree the study initiated by the DAB functioned as a blueprint for some of the Council’s recommendations. However, its findings undoubtedly corresponded with the suggestions and the reforms that were implemented in the education system since the late 1960s and even more so during the first years of the 1970s. Moreover, some of the findings of the DAB’s study on girls’ education were also included in the Report on the Situation of Women in Employment,

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<sup>424</sup> BArch B 232/66, letter from Erna Scheffler to Helge Pross, 19 February 1966.

<sup>425</sup> See BArch B 232/66, letter from Erna Scheffler to the “Deutsche Gemeindetag” suggesting to nominate Prof Mayntz for the position originally appointed to Helge Pross, 15 March 1966.

<sup>426</sup> Drewek, ‘Die Entwicklung des Bildungssystems in den Westzonen und in der Bundesrepublik von 1945/49 bis 1990’, pp. 249-50.



Family and Society,<sup>427</sup> which had been commissioned by the government in 1964. This indicates that the study had managed to draw the attention of some of the reform-recommending and decision-making bodies and that it had successfully challenged some of the issues in girls' education.<sup>428</sup> The DAB had thus shown great foresight in commissioning the study, as early as 1963, which provided an important source on girls' education.

### III.2.4 Conclusion

In its efforts to promote women's interests in education throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the DAB had chosen a two-fold approach: first, by trying to influence and contribute to on-going reform discussions, mainly through advocating women's inclusion in the process, and, secondly, by collaborating with female students in order to help them through their studies and prepare them for a role in the public sphere.

The overall objective of the desired alliance between the older generation of women graduates (represented in the DAB) and the young generation was to convey the values and aims of the organization. It was hoped that, despite the dominating ideology in the Federal Republic which envisioned the woman staying at home and raising the children, young women would be inspired by the positive examples set by the DAB's members. Many of these members were mothers and wives, in addition to having a successful career, and thus represented an alternative to the 'normative' woman as advocated in the state throughout the 1950s and 1960s. By promoting the ideal of an academically educated working mother and wife, the organization thus challenged the existing norms and values of a gendered separation of labour. Yet the organization's members also firmly believed that women's ability to participate in the public sphere, i.e. in politics and in the professions, was not a matter of course. Instead, it was argued that women first had to learn the required proficiencies, such as

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<sup>427</sup> See chapter III.4.3 for a more detailed discussion of the Report on the Situation of Women in Employment, Family and Society.

<sup>428</sup> See BArch B 232/95, letter from Erna Scheffler to Mrs Strasbourger (pedagogical subcommittee) forwarding the request made by the Department for Women of the Department of Internal Affairs for a copy of the study, 13 April 1965.

debating skills, an “assured manner” and the “necessary self-belief”. Women were then not considered to possess these qualities naturally, unlike men, and, therefore, needed to be adequately trained to participate in public life. For the DAB, this training was viewed as its chief responsibility towards young women, as well as to ensure their scholarly and intellectual advancement.

Overall, despite some local achievements, the DAB’s attempts to collaborate with young women in the Federal Republic were marked by constant disappointment and the matter caused much frustration among members, as the various initiatives were mostly met with apathy on the students’ part. Although the organization and its youth subcommittee tried to respond to the changing times and to the altered problems of female students - as seen in the attempts to provide kindergartens at universities, in spite of some members’ reluctance to support early parenthood – it ultimately had to declare that its aim of developing a productive relationship with the future generation of women graduates had failed.

The reasons for this failure were aptly summed up by the student, Christel Lörcher, in 1966. Responding to a letter from Erna Scheffler, in which the DAB’s chairwoman had inquired about possible causes for the gap between the organization and the young generation of women, Lörcher attempted to explain the discrepancy between the organization’s goals and the actual desires of female students. She argued that young women did not seek contact with and advice from the older women graduates gathered in the DAB, because they mostly felt fully integrated in university life and in the student body. Above all, the present-day woman studying at a university, according to Lörcher, did not want to be seen as being different. Instead, she considered herself as an equal to her male fellow students and thus did not desire separate spaces, such as clubrooms or conferences, or different treatment based on her sex. As Lörcher stated, “I am probably many more other things than a female student.”<sup>429</sup>

The DAB had failed to recognize that young women in the late 1960s had internalized the principle of full equality between the sexes, as promised in the Federal Republic’s Basic Law. The comprehension that this legal equality was not tantamount to social equality and that women’s status in society remained different to men’s on

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<sup>429</sup> BArch B 232/95, letter from Christel Lörcher to Erna Scheffler, 25 March 1966.



the grounds of women's reproductive qualities, as Scheffler pointed out in her reply to Lörcher,<sup>430</sup> was something that only gradually began to sink in among the young generation of women at the very end of the 1960s. It was only in the midst of the anti-authoritarian student movement at the end of this decade that female students and young women realized that their male counterparts did not necessarily share their notion of sexual equality, as the student movement initially showed no departure from the patriarchal structures of West German society.<sup>431</sup>

Its second approach to ensure women's interests in education, by trying to influence reforms of higher and secondary education, also achieved rather mixed results. A significant achievement was the publication of the report on girls' secondary education. This study provided important data on the differences in girls' and boys' education in the Federal Republic and, in particular, on how gender norms and ideologies affected young women's own expectations for their life and, consequently, their choices in education. The DAB, however, was less successful in making significant contributions to the reform of the higher education system, as it failed to articulate constructive or original proposals for reform. This inability was mainly due to the lack of knowledge of the reform process and proposals, which ultimately blocked the way for an active involvement of the DAB in the debates from the beginning. However, this lack of knowledge resulted mainly from the fact that women were largely shut out of the decision-making processes in the Federal Republic, meaning that the women graduates of the DAB were always a step behind their male counterparts. The organization had identified this problem during the early 1950s and since then had tried to ensure women's representation and their inclusion in the reform process of the education system.

In some instances, the subcommittees and the organization as a whole, lagged behind official developments and processes. Both Berthold's objection to the

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<sup>430</sup> BArch B 232/95, letter from Erna Scheffler to Christel Lörcher, 29 March 1966.

<sup>431</sup> In 1968 the SDS, the Socialist German Students' Association ("Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund") denied Helke Sanders, a representative of the "Aktionsrat zur Befreiung der Frauen" (Action Circle for the Liberation of Women) a seat on the all-male committee of the SDS. Following this rejection a member of the Action Circle famously threw a tomato at one of the SDS committee members. This act and the dispute beforehand caused the establishment of separate women's student groups at universities (so called "Weiberräte" (Women's Councils)) which ultimately paved the way for the formation of the women's liberation movement in West Germany. – see Ute Gerhard, 'Die Frauenbewegung', in Roland Roth and Dieter Rucht, eds., *Die sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945. Ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt am Main, 2008), pp. 201-2.

“forgetfulness” of the Conference of West German University Rector for having failed to invite a woman to the Hinterzarten conference on higher education in 1952, and Marga Anders’ attempt to lobby for the appointment of a woman to the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education in 1963, came too late. In the first instance, the DAB had not even been aware that the conference was taking place, which was ultimately partly rectified by Berthold through her timely intervention for the following conference in Bad Honnef three years later. In the second event, a similar unawareness of on-going reform processes came again to light, as neither the university subcommittee nor the executive committee seemed to be conscious of the establishment of the Advisory Council in 1957. Instead, it took the organization six years, and two appointment cycles, to realize that not one of the Council’s thirty-nine members was a woman. Even then, the organization’s objections were made only after the new nominations for appointments had already been made. The fact that two years after the DAB’s lobbying attempts a woman was finally appointed to the Advisory Council, however, suggests that the organization’s efforts had indeed left a mark.

The new chairwoman, Erna Scheffler, who succeeded Marga Anders in 1964, was determined not to make the same mistakes as her predecessors and, therefore, reacted instantly to the announcement of the formation of a Council for Education. She successfully lobbied for the appointment of two women, one of whom had been recommended by the DAB. Despite the decision of the organization’s first candidate, Helge Pross, to decline her appointment to the Council just shortly before it went into session, and despite Scheffler’s unease about this decision, the chairwoman’s persistence in the matter ultimately resulted in another appointment of a woman candidate. The chairwoman’s apprehension on the impact of Pross’ foregoing decline for the future appointment of women, however, was also a legitimate concern. As the nominations to the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education had shown, it was by no means normal and self-evident that women be appointed to decision-making boards or that they were included in reform processes without the pressure of women’s groups. Scheffler thus feared that Pross’ late decision could have been seen as confirming men’s reasons for not including women, i.e. that they were too busy with home life or that they lacked the confidence to participate. In this context, the



nomination of two women to the Council of Education, one of whom was suggested by the DAB, can be considered as a success for the organization. Although it was a small success, which had certainly not yet shaken up the existing structures in the public and political sphere of the Federal Republic, the DAB's endeavours to increase women's inclusion in decision-making processes were important first steps in challenging the state's gender status quo.

### ***III.3 Representing the professional interests of women graduates***

The inability of the DAB to notably influence the reform process of the education system, in particular of the higher education system, was thus in some respect attributable to the unaltered gender hierarchy in the education sector. The DAB's persistence demonstrated in the matter of education and the reform process, although not leading to fundamental reforms or successes at the time, nevertheless, sowed the seeds for future protest and mobilization on the subject. It particularly highlighted two continuing issues, i.e. the gendered nature of education and women's absence in decision-making roles. The education reform discussions were mainly led and dictated by the higher echelons of the school and university systems, i.e. principals, deans and rectors, and only very few women in the Federal Republic of Germany were part of this professional stratum during the 1950s and 1960s. For this reason, the DAB took a special interest in women's employment opportunities in the civil service and in higher education, as it attempted to represent the professional interests of women graduates during the 1950s and early 1960s. From the mid-1960s onward a considerable part of the DAB's activities also increasingly focused on facilitating the combination of a career and a family for married women.

This subchapter discusses how the DAB approached some of the barriers German women had to face in their professions and how the organization attempted to represent the interests of women graduates in their work life. It further determines whether the DAB's activities in this respect met with success and if it managed to

advance and facilitate the career prospects of women graduates throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

### **III.3.1 Advancing women graduates' employment opportunities in the civil service**

In 1954 the DAB's future chairwoman, Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, stated that the responsibility of women graduates in today's society was "[...] to point out the problems and hardships, the misunderstandings and misrepresentations [of women in the professions] and to press for remedial action."<sup>432</sup> For her, one of the most important and most vigorous struggles of the German women's movement had been for women's equal rights in education and in the professions - a struggle which had eventually been successful. However, winning these rights, as Schwarzhaupt emphasized, had not meant that academically educated woman had gained an equal social status in Germany. Instead, these women continued to face more obstacles in their professional lives than men with the same qualifications, which Schwarzhaupt put down to the unremitting prejudices towards women in the professions and society's notion of women's seemingly natural role within the home.<sup>433</sup>

Schwarzhaupt's observation followed on the heels of the passing of a new Civil Service Law in the previous year and the public and political debates on the rights of married female civil servants which had preceded the passing of the bill. These debates had focused primarily on the inclusion of a marriage bar for women in the new civil service law, which had to be drawn up by 31 March 1953. This date marked the deadline for the revision of the Federal Republic's legislation in accordance with the Basic Law's equality principle. Until the passing of a new law, the Christian Democratic government under Konrad Adenauer proposed in November 1949 an interim law regulating the civil service, i.e. the provisional Federal Personnel Law ("Bundespersonalgesetz").

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<sup>432</sup> BArch B 232/1, "Aufgaben und Stellung der Akademikerinnen in der heutigen Gesellschaft" by Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, *Mädchenbildung und Frauenschaffen* 4 (1954) 12, p. 546.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid.



The proposed provisional law, in essence, suggested the renewal of the Reich Law of Female Civil Servants ("Gesetz über die Rechtsstellung der weiblichen Beamten"), passed in May 1932. This law had allowed for the dismissal of married female civil servants from the administration of the German Reich if they were financially secured by their husbands' income. The passing of this law was partly in response to the high unemployment rates of the early 1930s, as well as to the conservative backlash against the small, but significant advances in female emancipation in the Weimar Republic. In 1933, the National Socialist Party further extended the law by making the dismissal of married female civil servants mandatory at all levels of the civil service. Four years later this regulation was incorporated, as section 63, into the German Civil Service Law. Although this directive was relaxed during the war, when women were required to fill in for the men who had been drafted into the army or who had been dismissed or gone into exile based on racial, political or religious grounds, it was quickly reintroduced in most West German states during the immediate post-war years, despite the Western Allies' pressure to review the German Civil Service Law and to abandon section 63.<sup>434</sup>

The provisional Federal Personnel Law, as proposed by Adenauer's government in 1949, showed little deviation from the German civil service law of the late Weimar Republic and the National Socialist regime. Although in a slightly attenuated version, it upheld the clause allowing the dismissal of married women in the civil service. It also maintained other discriminatory measures, such as the regulation that women could only gain the status of a civil servant at the age of thirty-five, while it was twenty-seven for men. The proposal further discriminated by suggesting that women receive a lower percentage of the usual bonuses for civil servants, such as rent allowance.<sup>435</sup>

By upholding the marriage bar, the proposed provisional law aimed at facilitating former civil servants to resume their old jobs. This policy corresponded to article 131 of the Basic Law which ordered the parliament to regulate the legal status of persons who had been employed in the civil service before 8 May 1945 and who were not yet reinstated in their former positions. This regulation facilitated returning

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<sup>434</sup> Curt Garner, 'Public Service Personnel in West Germany in the 1950s: Controversial Policy Decisions and their Effects on Social Composition, Gender Structure, and the Role of Former Nazis', *Journal of Social History*, 29 (1995), pp. 53-4.

<sup>435</sup> Deutscher Juristinnenbund, ed., *Juristinnen in Deutschland: Eine Dokumentation*, p. 99.

soldiers, former Prussian and Reich civil servants, as well as civil servants employed under the Nazi regime, who had lost their jobs during the Allied-led de-Nazification process of the immediate post-war years. Many of these jobs had been filled by women who were often promoted as they stood in for men serving at the front. The re-introduction of the marriage bar, through the provisional Federal Personnel Law thus served the purpose of freeing the positions held by women for the men covered by the category defined by article 131.<sup>436</sup>

Immediately after the announcement of the draft for the provisional Federal Personnel Law in November 1949 several women's groups, among them the DAB, raised considerable protest against the proposed legislation. The DAB issued a statement which was sent to the political parties and to the female representatives in parliament. In this statement the organization protested against the law's violation of article 3.2 of the German Basic Law, which ensured all citizens full equal rights, and it condemned, in particular, the upholding of the marriage bar by the draft provisional law. In its protest, the DAB was supported by the Association for Civil Rights in Frankfurt, which (according to the DAB's chairwoman at the time, Emmy Beckmann) would threaten to file a constitutional complaint if the proposed law was adopted.<sup>437</sup>

Despite this protest, the provisional Federal Personnel Law was approved by the Allied High Commission in early 1950 under the condition that the law would only be temporary. Following this approval the DAB joined forces with the German Women Lawyers' Association and sent a letter to the Upper House of Parliament ("Bundesrat"), again protesting against the preservation of the right to dismiss married women in the new provisional law. In addition, the DAB's chairwoman circulated a letter to the organization's members calling for their support for the public demonstrations rallied by various women's groups against the law. Moreover, she requested that if the law should be adopted as a permanent federal law, the option of submitting a formal complaint to the Federal Court on the unconstitutionality of the bill should be discussed among the local branches.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> Garner, 'Public Service Personnel in West Germany in the 1950s', pp. 32-9.

<sup>437</sup> BArch B 232/33, circular letter from Emmy Beckmann on the DAB's activities in regard to the new Civil Service Law, 15 March 1950.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*



Ultimately it did not come this far, since the Federal Civil Service Law (“Bundesbeamtengesetz”), which was passed on 13 May 1953 and replaced the provisional Federal Personnel Law, no longer included a marriage bar. However, as a consequence of the provisional law, many married women had been dismissed by the time the new law came into effect. Women who had been holding so called ‘men’s jobs’ at the end of the war and during the post-war years, had also been relegated again to positions requiring lower qualifications and receiving lower salaries. Moreover, the preceding political and public debates before the final law’s adoption in 1953 also reflected how sharply opinions differed on the matter. Actually, they highlighted the fact that in order to free the jobs and to reconstitute traditional gender roles in the family, many Germans, both men and women, had been in favour of the dismissal of married women in the civil service.<sup>439</sup> The Association of Catholic German Women Teachers, alongside female conservative politicians, such as Helene Weber of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), for instance, had lobbied for the upholding of a marriage bar. Their arguments, as those of the male advocates of this regulation, had primarily been based on the constitutional promise to protect marriage and the family, as stated in article 6 of the Basic Law. On the one hand, they had claimed that, presuming women would have children once they got married, the employment of married women would endanger the upbringing of the children and, hence, the institution of the family as a whole. On the other hand, they claimed that married women would be less reliable and productive assuming that they would take more sick-days due to their additional responsibilities at home.<sup>440</sup>

The DAB, by contrast, argued that social expectations towards women in the new Federal Republic of Germany, i.e. that they would eventually get married and have children, in fact, affected all women, including those who did not intend to marry, and that they were thus significantly inhibiting factors in women’s careers.<sup>441</sup> This was particularly true for women working in the public sector, as the debates on the Civil Service Law had made very clear. In the years following the adoption of the new law in 1953, the DAB, therefore, focused on ensuring that the dominant gender ideologies

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<sup>439</sup> Garner, ‘Public Service Personnel in West Germany in the 1950s’, pp. 59-63.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid, pp. 56-8.

<sup>441</sup> BAArch B 232/1, “Aufgaben und Stellung der Akademikerinnen in der heutigen Gesellschaft” by Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, *Mädchenbildung und Frauenschaffen* 4 (1954) 12, p. 538.

and stereotypes would not hamper women's career opportunities. The main concern of the organization was that, although a large number of women worked as lawyers, teachers or lecturers, few of them were judges, principals, or professors.<sup>442</sup> Hence, there seemed to be an evident barrier for women to reach the higher echelons of their professions in the Federal Republic.

For this reason, the DAB continuously attempted to ensure that women would be equally considered for promotion to the higher ranks of the professions. Many of these efforts were undertaken by the regional branches of the organization which closely monitored local openings of leading positions. The Heidelberg branch was particularly active in this respect. This group frequently lobbied for the appointment of women as principals of specific schools, such as in the case of a *Höhere Schule* in Heidelberg in 1952<sup>443</sup> and in Karlsruhe in 1955.<sup>444</sup> It also sent several petitions to the state Minister for Education in Baden-Württemberg pointing out that, despite growing numbers of female pupils and teachers in higher schools, women continued to be under-represented on both the appointing bodies and as headmasters of these schools.<sup>445</sup> Other local groups such as Bremen and Cologne followed a similar approach protesting against the discrimination of women in the appointment of school principals<sup>446</sup> and lobbying for their promotion<sup>447</sup>. By surveying individual job openings for leading positions, particularly in the public sector, the DAB's local branches played an important role in the organization's efforts to promote women's professional interests. To further foster the success of these initiatives, the DAB established a list with the names of women qualified to fill some of these openings.<sup>448</sup> This enabled the local groups to make specific suggestions of suitable candidates for the job. As in the case of the appointment of a female judge to a state social court, or of a woman as

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<sup>442</sup> See, for example, BArch B 232/68, minutes of the extended executive committee meeting in Marburg, 5-8 October 1961.

<sup>443</sup> BArch B 232/29, agenda for the meeting of the DAB's local branch in Heidelberg, 12 September 1952.

<sup>444</sup> BArch B 232/25, report of the DAB's local branch in Heidelberg 1955-1956.

<sup>445</sup> BArch B 232/17, letter from the DAB's local branch in Heidelberg to the Minister for Education for Baden-Württemberg, July 1957 and 16 September 1959.

<sup>446</sup> BArch B 232/84, report on the activities of the DAB's local branches 1968/69, included in Erna Scheffler's annual report at the extended executive committee meeting in Hannover, 18 October 1969.

<sup>447</sup> BArch, B 232/3, report of the DAB's local branch in Bremen, included in the minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Hamburg, 6-10 October 1966.

<sup>448</sup> BArch B 232/26, report on the executive committee meeting in Bad Honnef, 3 April 1953.



headmaster of a higher secondary school in Karlsruhe, this approach proved successful.<sup>449</sup>

Yet, while being effective in some cases, the scattered local initiatives were rather small drops in the ocean and did not remedy women's disproportionate representation in the professions. For this reason, since the late 1950s, the organization increasingly attempted to create a broader public awareness for the continuing barriers women were facing in some of their graduate careers. The main emphasis in the DAB's efforts in this respect was put on women's professional opportunities in higher education.

### III.3.2 "The constant education of public opinion": women in academia

The special concern about the situation of female lecturers and professors originated from a study by Prof Charlotte Lorenz on the "Development and Situation of Female Lecturers at German Universities", which the DAB had co-published together with the Women's Information Service in 1953.<sup>450</sup> In this publication Lorenz had outlined the problems of women pursuing a career in academia. According to this study, German women only made up 3.2 per cent of the teaching staff at universities, with only three women among the full-ranked professors. These numbers showed that the Federal Republic of Germany was one of the countries with the lowest percentage of women lecturers and professors in the world.<sup>451</sup>

Reasons for the unequal ratio of women and men teaching at the universities during the 1950s, predominantly originated in the traditional structures and hierarchies of the German higher education system, as well as in the historical developments of the previous decades. A career in German academia was marked by two main factors which had important effects on women's representation, particularly in the higher ranks: first, by the lengthy process to qualify for a professorship and,

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<sup>449</sup> BArch B 232/1, summary of the DAB's activities 1952-1954, included in the minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Freiburg, 1-3 October 1954.

<sup>450</sup> BArch B 232/1, report on the activities of the DAB 1952-1954, included in the minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Freiburg, 1-3 October 1954.

<sup>451</sup> Ilse Costas, 'Women in Science in Germany', *Science in Context*, 15 (2002), p. 568.

secondly, by the complicated system of professional advancement which was closely linked to the hierarchal structure of German universities. This structure distinguished between the *Ordinarius*, the *Extraordinarius* and the *Nichtordinarius*. The *Ordinarius* was the highest ranking professor at the university and chair of a specific discipline. He or she was in charge of all the decisions concerning this discipline, including appointments. The *Extraordinarius* was, as for the *Ordinarius*, a tenured professor with a fixed and regular salary, but had much less power in administrative decisions. The third group of *Nichtordinaria* comprised both associate professors (“Ausserplanmässige Professoren”) and private lecturers (“Privatdozenten”).

To qualify as a private lecturer and thus for the lowest rank in the hierarchy, candidates had to complete a second dissertation, the so called *Habilitation*. This postdoctoral qualification was completed approximately ten to twelve years after the PhD, a time which was usually bridged by the candidates as research assistants. After another five to six years, the private lecturer was usually appointed to associate professor, which was little more than a title, as neither the associate professor nor the private lecturer had a tenured status, fixed income or a secured pension. Instead, until a *Nichtordinarius* was appointed to *Ordinarius* - not always a natural progression, as only a very limited number of *Ordinarius* positions existed at each university - his or her position at the universities was rather insecure.<sup>452</sup> Moreover, vacant positions were not advertised, thus there was no application process. Instead, private lecturers and associate professors had to be appointed by an *Ordinarius*, who was also in charge of awarding doctoral and postdoctoral positions.

Much of the career progression within the German university system was, therefore, dependent on the goodwill and support of the superior professors.<sup>453</sup> This dependency for career advancement on the professor's support had a significantly adverse impact on the career prospects of women, as only very few were invited into the higher ranks of the university hierarchy. Helge Pross' response to Scheffler's criticism of her decision to withdraw from the appointment to the Council of Education in 1966 reflected just how obstinate these hierarchies were. As a female lecturer at the

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<sup>452</sup> Michael Grüttner, 'Nationalwissenschaftliche Wissenschaftler: ein Kollektivporträt', in Michael Grüttner, Rüdiger Hachtmann, Konrad H. Jarausch, Jürgen John and Matthias Middell, eds., *Gebrochene Wissenschaftskulturen. Universität und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2010), pp. 153-4.

<sup>453</sup> Bartz, 'Wissenschaft und Hochschulplanung', pp. 31-2.



University of Giessen, Pross argued that “[...] if I were to retreat from my responsibilities here, then the accusation ‘typical woman’ would all the more come on the part of the faculty and the dean.”<sup>454</sup> As this response shows, professional opportunities for women, particularly in academia, were frequently hampered by prejudices towards the female sex and by gender stereotyping.

German women had only gained the right to conduct postdoctoral studies and hence, to become eligible for a career in higher education in 1918, against much opposition from the male professorship. Evolving from traditional notions of a gendered separation of the private and the public sphere and from sexual stereotypes, it had still been a common preconception in Weimar Germany that women were not made for an academic career. Accordingly, only one woman had been appointed as *Ordinaria* before the takeover of the National Socialist Party in 1933 and she had been immediately barred from this position by the new political regime. The decree passed by the Nazis in 1937 and incorporated in the Civil Service Law, which had made the dismissal of married women on all levels of the civil service mandatory, including higher education, had further hindered women’s chances to establish themselves in the universities’ hierarchal system.<sup>455</sup> Although, similarly to some female civil servants, the war also benefited a few women lecturers at German universities, as they filled the positions of their absent male colleagues,<sup>456</sup> their temporary professional advancement was quickly rescinded through the gradual return of men after the war.<sup>457</sup>

Only a few German women had, therefore, been able to climb the steps on the academic career ladder before the 1950s, as traditional university structures, as well as political developments, inhibited women’s professional opportunities in academia. In this context, the findings of Charlotte Lorenz’ study, although alarming in the eyes of professional women’s organizations like the DAB, were not particularly surprising. Following the publication of this study, the DAB’s university subcommittee attempted to increasingly monitor and promote the professional opportunities of women at

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<sup>454</sup> BArch B 232/66, letter from Helge Pross to Erna Scheffler, 1 March 1966.

<sup>455</sup> Costas, ‘Women in Science in Germany’, pp. 568-9.

<sup>456</sup> The lecturer Edith Ennen, for example, headed the historical department at the University of Bonn between 1940 and 1945.

<sup>457</sup> Gunilla-Friederike Budde, ‘Paradefrauen. Akademikerinnen in Ost- und Westdeutschland’, in idem, ed., *Frauen arbeiten. Weibliche Erwerbstätigkeit in Ost- und Westdeutschland nach 1945* (Göttingen, 1997), pp. 185-6.

universities. For this reason the subcommittee aimed primarily to gain the support of academic boards, such as the West German Conference of University Rectors, in order to lobby university professors and rectors to increase the appointment of women as professors and chairs in their respective universities.

This support was first sought by the university subcommittee's chairwoman Prof Luise Berthold at the second reform conference of the West German Conference of University Rectors and the German Association of University Professors and Lecturers in Bad Honnef in 1955.<sup>458</sup> For Berthold, the matter had a personal significance. Having herself completed a *Habilitation* in German Literature in 1923 and thus having qualified for a future appointment to *Ordinaria*, Berthold had to wait until 1952, four years prior to her retirement, only to be appointed to the much lower-ranked *Extraordinaria*.<sup>459</sup> She had, therefore, experienced at first hand the discriminatory practices in the promotion of women at universities.

At the conference in Bad Honnef Berthold presented the findings of Lorenz' study to her male colleagues. She argued that, in view of the small numbers of women lecturers and, in particular, of the extremely low percentage of women in the highest echelons of the professional hierarchy, there was an evident reluctance within the universities to appoint women. This injustice, as the university subcommittee's chairwoman stressed, needed to be abolished. Berthold's criticism of the unequal professional opportunities for women at universities led to the incorporation of the following sentence in the conference's recommendations: "If there are suitable female lecturers available, the faculties should consider them for the appointment to vacant chairs."<sup>460</sup> Despite this small concession, Berthold rightfully remained sceptical of the recommendation's impact for women at universities. According to her, the situation of female lecturers in the Federal Republic was overall, and especially in an international perspective, substandard - a fact which she put down to the peculiarity of the appointment system at the universities. For Berthold, the only way to counteract the obvious neglect of women in this process would be through continuously displaying

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<sup>458</sup> See also chapter III.2.2.

<sup>459</sup> Maul, *Akademkerinnen in der Nachkriegszeit*, p. 127.

<sup>460</sup> BArch B 232/92, report on the university subcommittee's activities 1954-1956 by Luise Berthold, 14 September 1956.



women's accomplishments, through patience and through "the constant education of public opinion".<sup>461</sup>

In 1956 Berthold resigned as chairwoman of the DAB's university subcommittee in order to make room for a younger colleague.<sup>462</sup> Ideally, her successor was to be a woman lecturer who was familiar with the current problems at the universities.<sup>463</sup> Finding a replacement for Berthold with these qualities, however, seemingly created some difficulties for the organization, as the position remained vacant for nearly two years. It was not until October 1958 that Dr Asta Hampe, lecturer at the University of Hamburg, took over as chair of the university subcommittee.

Although Hampe, at fifty-one years of age in 1958, could not be considered as a particularly young woman, she was a worthy successor to Berthold. Having studied engineering in the late 1920s, Hampe had worked for a brief period as a physicist in a hospital in Hamburg until 1933 when she had been dismissed. Hampe had continued working, however, first in an export company and later throughout the war as a physicist in the laboratories of the German Navy in Kiel. In 1943 Hampe had returned to university to study economics. After the completion of her PhD in the subject, she had worked as a research assistant to the chair of the Department of Statistics at the University of Hamburg, where she had finished her *Habilitation* in 1957, one year prior to her taking on the chair of the DAB's university subcommittee.<sup>464</sup>

Through her own professional engagement at the University of Hamburg and having herself only recently qualified for a teaching position in higher education, Hampe had a keen interest in the situation of female lecturers. As a trained engineer and lecturer in economics she was also more than aware of the fact that in most disciplines women were still repeatedly overlooked in appointments to professorships. Her initial action as the new chairwoman of the university subcommittee was to gain a preliminary overview of the current situation of women teaching at universities. For this purpose, Hampe surveyed a number of women lecturers on their experiences in

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<sup>461</sup> BArch B 232/92, report on the university subcommittee's activities 1954-1956 by Luise Berthold, 14 September 1956.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>463</sup> BArch B 232/92, note on finding a replacement for the chairwoman of the university subcommittee, July 1957.

<sup>464</sup> Birgit Zich, 'Mit einem Radio fing alles an: Prof. Asta Hampe - Diplom-Ingenieurin und -Volkswirtin', in Deutscher Akademikerinnen Bund e.V., ed., *Biographien von Naturwissenschaftlerinnen des Deutschen Akademikerinnen Bundes e.V. - Festschrift des DAB zum 75-jährigen Jubiläum* (2001), pp. 63-5.

academia. From these interviews Hampe drew a similar conclusion as Charlotte Lorenz had done six years before, namely, that there was a continuing failure on the part of the faculties to objectively and impartially assess women's professional abilities and that men were still systematically chosen over women. Rather sardonically, Hampe concluded that this prevalent "comradeship among men"<sup>465</sup> at universities was not upheld for "malicious reasons"<sup>466</sup>, but that such behaviour should rather be attributed to the social norms. These norms, as Hampe further claimed, were, however, slowly changing towards the better.<sup>467</sup>

This somewhat optimistic assessment by the new university subcommittee's chairwoman quickly proved to be quite inaccurate. Just shortly after Hampe's preliminary report, the university subcommittee carried out a more detailed survey to get new numbers for women teaching at universities. The results of this survey were documented in a report which was completed in August 1960 and which presented a similarly gloomy picture as Lorenz' study of 1953 had done.

With the compilation of this new report on women in the academic profession, the DAB intended to fill part of the gap in the existing data on the employment of women, in particular, of graduate women. Already in 1954 the organization had tried to press the German Federal Bureau of Statistics ("Statistisches Bundesamt") to include questions on academic education in order to raise the public's attention to the fact that in most professions women were significantly under-represented.<sup>468</sup> The point was again brought forth by the organization in 1959, two years before the publication of a new national census.<sup>469</sup> The findings of this census ultimately incorporated information on academic education, including figures on women teaching at universities (which had been determined through a micro census), which thus marked an important success in the organization's efforts to obtain and provide more official data on women graduates' employment. Until then, however, the DAB's statistics

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<sup>465</sup> BArch B 232/92, report of the university subcommittee's chairwoman (Asta Hampe), 10 June 1959, p. 2.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>468</sup> BArch B232/1, minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Freiburg, 1-3 October 1954.

<sup>469</sup> BArch B 232/68, minutes of the executive committee meeting in Frankfurt am Main, 3-4 January 1959.



compiled by Lorenz and Hampe provided the only numerical data on the employment of women in academia.

The findings of Hampe's report were based on questionnaires, which had been sent out to all women who were currently employed as private lecturers, associate professors and tenured professors. According to Hampe, the 119 returned questionnaires covered approximately eighty-five per cent of the total number of women with a postdoctoral degree at the time. The purpose of this new survey was to demonstrate whether the professional situation of women employed in the higher education system had improved since the publication of Charlotte Lorenz' study seven years earlier.

The results of the new survey showed that women's proportion among university teachers was still at only two per cent. Most of these women were employed as lecturers and associate professors, i.e. in the status of the *Nichtordinarius*. The report recorded a total number of 597 *Extraordinaria* and 2328 *Ordinaria* posts at universities at the time. Yet only six women, less than one per cent, were *Extraordinaria* and just ten had been appointed to *Ordinaria* (0.4%).<sup>470</sup> The survey also established that the bulk of the women teaching in higher education were employed in the humanities faculties (forty-five), the scientific and mathematical faculties (thirty-two) and in medicine (twenty-four). It thus found that there was a continuing gendered segmentation in the various subjects, with disciplines such as law and theology performing the worst, with just two women employed in law and none in theology.<sup>471</sup> Furthermore, the survey determined that eighty-eight of the 119 women had completed their *Habilitation* after 1945. Hampe attributed this relatively high increase to the backlog of women unable to gain this degree under the National Socialist regime. For the same reason she explained that most of the women questioned by the university subcommittee had on average been four years older than their male colleagues when they finished their *Habilitation*.<sup>472</sup>

Compared to the results of the study by Charlotte Lorenz, the total numbers of women teaching at universities and qualifying for a lecturing position had increased since 1953. Whereas Lorenz had identified eighty-three women who had finished their

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<sup>470</sup> BArch B 232/92, "Frauen an den deutschen Hochschulen" by Asta Hampe, August 1960, pp. 1-2.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

*Habilitations*, of whom three had been appointed as *Ordinaria* and nine as *Extraordinaria*, these numbers had changed to 119, ten and six respectively by 1959. Bearing in mind that nearly fifteen percent of the questionnaires for Hampe's survey had not been answered, the actual number of women with a postdoctoral degree might have been slightly higher. Yet, in view of the overall increase in *Habilitations* and in *Ordinaria* and *Extraordinaria* positions, the ratio of women had remained nearly unchanged since the publication of Lorenz' study. In spite of the pledge made at the Bad Honnef conference for equal consideration of female appointments within the universities, women still only made up only 0.6% of the *Ordinarius* and *Extraordinarius* positions and, moreover, gained just four per cent of all *Habilitations*. Hence the situation of women teaching at universities had hardly changed at the time Asta Hampe established this second survey.

The completion of the university subcommittee's report in 1960 and its rather depressing results of the current situation of women employed in higher education, initiated an increase in the DAB's lobbying efforts to improve women's professional opportunities in this sector. For this purpose, the organization chose a twofold approach, by continuing to lobby academic boards while also pressing the individual universities themselves to appoint more women. The difficulty with this approach was that the DAB lacked support among the female lecture- and professorship. From the interviews for her initial survey of 1959, Hampe had concluded that the DAB, as an organization for women graduates, was far from popular among most of the women lecturers questioned. According to her, the majority of these women, in fact, considered the organization as a "lovable relic of the women's movement's pioneering times"<sup>473</sup> and, therefore, had little intention of joining it. Hampe explained this lack of interest among female lecturers as due to their lack of time and possibly their membership in other professional organizations and associations. Consequently, Hampe urged the DAB not to have any illusions about its attractiveness to the younger generation of women teaching at universities.<sup>474</sup>

Indeed, several of the DAB's local branches had previously invited women teaching at the respective universities, but without much success. The specially

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<sup>473</sup> BArch B 232/92, report of the university subcommittee's chairwoman (Asta Hampe), 10 June 1959, p.

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<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*



arranged meetings by the groups in both Bonn and Munich, for example, had failed to achieve the desired effect as only very few non-members had attended their meetings. Another attempt by the Heidelberg branch in January 1957 to get together with the women employed in the local and neighbouring universities, including research assistants, lecturers and professors, had further highlighted the lack of interest among existing female teaching staff. Of the nearly eighty women invited to the meeting not a single one had turned up.<sup>475</sup>

As part of her preliminary survey, Hampe had tried to establish the number of DAB members who were teaching at universities, but had been unable to get the necessary information from the individual local branches. In fact, none of the DAB's files provide details on its members' occupations during the 1950s and 1960s and it is, therefore, difficult to even give an estimate of the number of female lecturers who were members of the organization. Yet Hampe's conclusion that very few women employed in academia were interested in joining the DAB was evidently accurate, as proven by the number of failed attempts by the organization to invite women lecturers to their meetings.

Reasons for this eminent disinterest and unwillingness among female lecturers and professors to join the organization can probably be found in the fact that the DAB's aims and methods failed to attract the younger generation of women, as already established in the chapter III.2.1 and also expressed by Asta Hampe in her 1959 report, as well as in these women's reluctance to affiliate themselves with women's groups in general. Many female lecturers and assistants, dependent on their (usually male) professors' goodwill and support, may have shied away from publicly lobbying for women's appointments and criticizing the male hierarchy within the universities. This lack of support within the ranks of the universities meant, however, that most of the DAB's attempts to represent the professional interests of women in academia were often solitary efforts with little assistance from the outside. At the time, none of the other existing women's groups assigned the same importance to the employment opportunities of women at universities. In fact, until the late 1970s the DAB was the

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<sup>475</sup> BArch B 232/25, invitation to women lecturers by the DAB's local branch in Heidelberg, 27 January 1957, and undated note after the meeting had taken place.

only organization which focused on the interests of women lecturers and professors in the Federal Republic.<sup>476</sup>

In January 1961, a few months after Hampe's report had been finished, Marga Anders, the organization's chairwoman, drew up a memorandum based on the report's findings. It was addressed to the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education and was also forwarded to the West German Conference of University Rectors, to the individual universities, as well as to several politicians. In this memorandum Anders reminded of the recommendation made at the conference in Bad Honnef in 1955, which had established that faculties should also consider women for the appointments of *Ordinaria*. She stressed that despite this pledge, the situation of women lecturers at universities had hardly changed, as shown by the new statistic compiled by Hampe. Citing some of the findings of Hampe's report, Anders further stressed that in comparison to other Western European countries the Federal Republic continued to have one of the lowest percentages of women teaching at universities. Women's representation among tenured professors, i.e. among the *Ordinaria* and *Extraordinaria*, was particularly low. According to Anders, this suggested that women academics not only experienced an "undeserved discrimination", as Charlotte Lorenz had argued in her publication of 1953, but rather an "undeserved permanent discrimination".<sup>477</sup> These dire professional prospects for women at universities, as Anders stressed, had two long-lasting effects. First, academically gifted young women often decided against a career in this field, which meant that the number of women in academia would continue to stagnate in the future. Secondly, according to the DAB's chairwoman, German women lecturers increasingly chose to emigrate to find a more dignified living and professional environment.<sup>478</sup>

With this argument of emigrating female academics and the extinction of young female professionals, Anders situated the DAB's efforts to improve women's professional opportunities at universities in the contemporary political and public

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<sup>476</sup> Christine von Oertzen, "'Was ist Diskriminierung?' – Professorinnen ringen um ein hochschulpolitisches Konzept (1949-1989)", in Julia Paulus, Eva-Maria Silies and Kerstin Wolff, eds., *Zeitgeschichte als Geschlechtergeschichte. Neue Perspektiven auf die Bundesrepublik* (Frankfurt am Main, 2012), p. 104.

<sup>477</sup> BArch B 232/92, memorandum by Marga Anders to the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education, January 1961, p. 3.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4.



debates on reforming the higher education system at the beginning of the 1960s. These debates revolved primarily around the planned expansion of the universities and especially around the associated problem of a scarcity of lecturers and professors. Between 1950 and 1960 the total number of students in higher education had nearly doubled and most universities had not been able to keep up with the quickly increasing student numbers through a corresponding enlargement of the teaching staff. Consequently, universities like Bonn, Kiel or Tübingen had a student-professor ratio of approximately sixty-five to one in 1960. Thus, particularly in view of the planned expansion of the higher education system and the intended creation of new lectureships, departments and chairs in the universities, the Federal Republic was facing a significant shortage in university teachers at the beginning of the 1960s.<sup>479</sup>

In this context, Anders' argument of an exodus of talented female academics to countries like Britain and America appealed to the concerns of contemporary university reformers and academics. In an article published in the national newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in 1960, for instance, the lecturer Dr Lotte Fester had first addressed the problem of female academics choosing to emigrate because they were continuously overlooked in appointments to professorships. As the basis of her article, Fester referred to the DAB's report compiled by Hampe when criticizing the "reactionary attitude"<sup>480</sup> within higher education in the Federal Republic. Despite the acute shortage in university teachers, she argued, women's professional opportunities in academia seemed to remain bleak and they still had an unequal and inferior status compared to their male colleagues.<sup>481</sup>

A similar point had been raised by Prof Wolfgang Clemen in 1959 in a series of articles published in the national newspaper, *Die Zeit*. In this series Clemen, the *Ordinarius* of the English department at the University of Munich, commented on the planned expansion of the higher education system and, in particular, on the shortage of lecturers and professors. He attributed the scarcity of qualified teaching staff to the static hierarchal structures at the universities, which relied heavily on research

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<sup>479</sup> Vogel, 'Bürgerliche Werte und Stuserhalt', pp. 57-8.

<sup>480</sup> Lotte Fester, 'Dozentinnen an deutschen Hochschulen. Nur acht ordentliche Professorinnen in der Bundesrepublik', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, "Die Frau", 27 August 1960, (no page numbers in this section).

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*

assistants. Even though there was no “express cure”<sup>482</sup> for the shortage, Clemen stressed that there was a large number of qualified women, who seemed to be stuck in these assistant positions. Just like Fester, he argued that, particularly in contrast to American and British third level institutions, universities in the Federal Republic still demonstrated an obvious reluctance towards promoting women, due to the widespread opinion that it was not a “women’s calling to chair a department”.<sup>483</sup> As Clemen highlighted, it was essential not only to appoint more women to the vacant positions within the universities, but also to encourage them to complete a postdoctoral degree and thereby to escape the position of the permanent teaching assistant.<sup>484</sup>

The DAB identified these public debates and the imminent university expansion as a chance to underpin its efforts to push for improving women’s professional opportunities in higher education. Accordingly, Anders referred directly to these on-going discussions on the appointment of women at universities in the memorandum sent to the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education. In the following years the DAB tried to uphold the momentum that the issue had gained in the public at the beginning of the 1960s. Throughout the implementation of the university expansion, the organization continued to exercise pressure on government and university officials and to further the awareness for women’s on-going discrimination in the academic profession. In 1963 the organization managed to get four speeches published in the periodical of the German Association of University Professors and Lecturers. These speeches had been presented at the DAB’s biennial general meeting in Bad Godesberg in 1962 on the subject of women lecturers at universities. Among these was also Asta Hampe’s talk on “Women in academic teaching positions”, which was based on the findings of her 1960 report.<sup>485</sup> With the publication of the speeches in the periodical the DAB succeeded in addressing a broader readership – among it, members of the West German Conference of University Rectors, the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education and individual professors and lecturers. Hampe later commented in

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<sup>482</sup> Wolfgang Clemen, ‘Nicht jeder Universitätslehrer muß Professor sein’, *Die Zeit*, 5 June 1959, p. 5.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>485</sup> See Asta Hampe, “Frauen im akademischen Lehramt” - Sonderdruck aus: Zur Situation der weiblichen Hochschullehrer: Vorträge auf der Tagung des Deutschen Akademikerinnenbundes vom 7. bis 11. Oktober 1962 in Bad Godesberg’, *Schriften des Hochschulverbandes*, 13 (1963).



relation to the publication of the speeches: “[T]his is exactly the place to put the whole matter where it belongs.”<sup>486</sup>

As it turned out, Hampe was not entirely wrong with this assessment, as the matter also gained the attention of a few politicians. In February 1965, the German parliament’s official publication of legislative decisions and parliamentary debates, *Deutscher Bundestag: Drucksache*, included a section in which the State Secretary for Academic Research, Dr Wolfgang Cartellieri, was forced to answer a parliamentary question raised by both female and male representatives of the Free Democratic Party (FDP). This question focused on women’s representation among the overall teaching staff in comparison to other countries and on whether they were discriminated against in the appointment procedure at universities. Although Cartellieri merely quoted statistical numbers, among them those provided by the DAB, and highlighted that the universities were responsible for the appointments of lecturers and professors, not the government, the inquiry showed that the discussion had, at least to some degree, left the academic circle and entered the political arena.<sup>487</sup>

In addition to trying to further highlight the issue of the enduring favouritism of men over women in higher education, the DAB also lobbied the individual universities to appoint more women. Anders’ memorandum from 1961 was sent both to state politicians and the planning commissions of the new universities founded in Bochum,<sup>488</sup> Bremen, Konstanz, Regensburg and Ulm<sup>489</sup> between 1962 and 1971. In the accompanying letters, Anders, and later also her successor, Erna Scheffler, reissued the demand to consider more women for the appointments at the new universities. Both chairwomen referred back, particularly, to the formal plans of opening the universities in a “new style”<sup>490</sup> and with “new ideas”.<sup>491</sup> These “new ideas” envisioned several changes in the traditional German university structure, such as the elimination of the

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<sup>486</sup> BArch B 232/92, letter from Asta Hampe to Marga Anders, 9 November 1962.

<sup>487</sup> BArch B 232/92, “Frauen an Hochschulen: Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Frau Dr. Diemer-Nicolaus, Frau Funke, Dr. Heilige, Moersch und Genossen”, in *Deutscher Bundestag, 4. Wahlperiode, Drucksache IV/3093*, 17 February 1965.

<sup>488</sup> BArch B 232/92, letter from Marga Anders to the Minister for Education of North-Rhine Westphalia, Werner Schütz, 15 May 1962.

<sup>489</sup> BArch B 232/92, letter from Erna Scheffler to the planning commissions in Ulm, Bremen, Bochum, Regensburg and Konstanz, 11 December 1964.

<sup>490</sup> BArch B 232/92, letter from Marga Anders to the Minister for Education of North-Rhine Westphalia Werner Schütz, 15 May 1962.

<sup>491</sup> BArch B 232/92, draft memorandum by Prof Cornelia Harte to the planning commissions of the new universities, included in a letter to Erna Scheffler, 24 November 1964.

strict division of philosophical and technical universities or the adoption of the campus university.<sup>492</sup> In this context, both Anders and Scheffler stressed that it was fundamental to ensure that women were part of this structural and ideological change of the university system by being equally considered in the appointments of lecturers and professors.

Overall, however, the universities showed little enthusiasm for the organization's demand, despite the somewhat fair amount of attention the matter had received from the national press and some academics. Their response to the DAB's petitions amounted to more or less the same generic assertion that appointments were never based on the candidates' sex. Instead, it was mainly argued that the unequal proportion of women, in particular, in *Ordinaria* and *Extraordinaria* positions was due to an apparent lack of qualified female contenders. Moreover, as the founding rector of the University of Regensburg, Prof Götz von Pölnitz put it, "[...] for a sole female colleague the situation in the faculty or in a senate is - to put it with the outmost politeness - a little bit difficult."<sup>493</sup> This statement aptly described the way women's participation in the academic profession was viewed among most of the male professorship. The majority continued to consider women teaching at universities and, in particular, chairing a department, as outsiders who, if by themselves, failed to gain the required recognition from their male colleagues. Yet, at the same time, as Asta Hampe's survey of 1960 and her updated numbers of 1966<sup>494</sup> had shown, hardly any of the universities seemed to be willing to employ more than one woman as *Ordinaria* and *Extraordinaria*.<sup>495</sup>

Thus while many young lecturers and aspiring university teachers benefited from the university expansion of the early 1960s,<sup>496</sup> women continued to be significantly under-represented among the academic staff of the Federal Republic. This was particularly evident in the numerical extension of faculty chairs within the new and the existing universities. With the creation of 1091 new *Ordinarius* positions

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<sup>492</sup> For more information on the reform ideas of the new universities see, for example, Hans Stallmann, 'Am Anfang war Bochum. Die Gründung der Ruhr-Universität im Kontext der sechziger Jahre', *Die Hochschule. Journal für Wissenschaft und Bildung*, 1 (2004), pp. 171-84.

<sup>493</sup> BArch B 232/92, letter from Prof Poelnitz (University of Regensburg) to Erna Scheffler, January 1965.

<sup>494</sup> BArch B 232/92, letter from Asta Hampe to Ursula Frandsen (Women's Department of the Department of Internal Affairs), 21 April 1966.

<sup>495</sup> BArch B 232/92, "Frauen an den deutschen Hochschulen" by Asta Hampe, August 1960, p. 6.

<sup>496</sup> See, for example, 'Dusche für den Geist' (no author), *Der Spiegel* (49), 1965, p. 61.



between 1961 and 1964, the overall number of this academic rank was expanded by nearly fifty per cent.<sup>497</sup> Yet only fifteen of the 1091 new chairs had been awarded to female lecturers and professors between these years, raising the number of female *Ordinaria* to thirty-three in 1966.<sup>498</sup> Women were thus evidently not among the beneficiaries of the university expansion in the Federal Republic of Germany. Instead, the low representation of women among *Ordinaria* and *Extraordinaria* throughout the 1950s and 1960s continued to have negative effects on the professional advancement of women in universities in general. As the completion of a PhD and of a *Habilitation* required the support and mentoring of the (still overwhelmingly male) chairs of the individual departments, women were less likely to be found among the candidates for a career in higher education.

This dilemma was summed up by Hampe in a letter to the Women's Department of the Department of Internal Affairs in 1966, in which she expressed her resignation and frustration on the matter. According to her, the slight increase of female *Ordinaria*, resulting from the university expansion, was a "drop in the ocean"<sup>499</sup> compared to the overall increase in the number of these positions. Adding to the systematic under-representation of women among the tenured professors was, as Hampe stated, the "unsatisfactory"<sup>500</sup> situation of the future generation of female academics, which was mirrored in the fact that less than ten women had completed a postdoctoral degree in the two years between 1964 and 1966.<sup>501</sup> Hence, if women continued to occupy only a fraction of the *Ordinarius* positions in universities, the number of aspiring young female lecturers was also likely to remain limited.

The DAB had recognized this problem in the early 1950s and had since repeatedly attempted to get more women appointed to the higher ranks of university teachers, as well as to create awareness for the gendered imbalance of the academic profession. Through the publication of Lorenz' study in 1953 and the compilation of Asta Hampe's report in 1960, which was continually updated throughout the following

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<sup>497</sup> Bartz, *Wissenschaftsrat und Hochschulplanung*, p. 92

<sup>498</sup> BArch B 232/92, letter from Asta Hampe to Ursula Frandsen (Women's Department of the Department of Internal Affairs), 21 April 1966.

<sup>499</sup> BArch B 232/92, letter from Asta Hampe to Ursula Frandsen (Women's Department of the Department of Internal Affairs), 21 April 1966.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*

years, the organization provided the first statistical evidence of women's discrimination in the academic profession. The provision of this important, and so far non-existent, data on women's representation highlighted some of the obvious problems that women were facing in this occupational field. Yet the DAB struggled to find an effective tool to increase the pressure on the universities to meet its demands for appointing more women to professorships and chairs. With the universities continuing to be nearly entirely in male hands and relatively immune to reform suggestions, the organization's approach of petitioning for the appointments of women failed to have the desired effect.

In fact, neither the DAB's efforts, nor early attempts to reform higher education (starting with the expansion of the system in the early 1960s), nor the more radical reforms of the following decade, which were mainly triggered by the student revolts, had a significant effect on women's professional representation in German academia. The percentage of women in the highest professional rank at the universities,<sup>502</sup> which had, according to Hampe's study, been at less than one per cent in 1960, has since then only slowly moved up to 2.3% in 1985, 4.8% in 1995 and to 9.7% in 2005.<sup>503</sup> Accordingly, Germany still has one of the lowest percentages of women teaching at universities in an international context. Thus, despite a gradual increase since the mid-1960s, women in academic careers in Germany continue to remain in the clear minority.

### **III.3.3 Supporting a national part-time model for female civil servants and judges**

Towards the mid-1960s the realization that women's professional opportunities were not significantly improving in the Federal Republic's higher education system, began to settle in among the DAB and, particularly, among the university subcommittee. There were no further genuine attempts made by the

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<sup>502</sup> The titles *Ordinarius* and *Extraordinarius* were abolished in the 1970s and replaced by the salary scale C4, which was again replaced in 2005 by the W3 rank.

<sup>503</sup> Annette Zimmer, Holger Krimmer and Freia Stallmann, 'Winners and Losers: Zur Feminisierung der deutschen Universitäten', *Beiträge zur Hochschulforschung*, 4 (2006), p. 35.



organization in this respect from 1966 onwards and the university subcommittee gradually ceased to exist. It was only in 1975 that it was resuscitated by Asta Hampe, who resumed her role as chairwoman of the subcommittee following her retirement from the University of Marburg.<sup>504</sup>

The dwindling activity in lobbying for women's appointments at the universities between the mid-1960s and 1970s did not mean, however, that the DAB had abandoned its overall aim to represent women's professional interests - on the contrary. In 1964, with the election of the retired federal judge, Erna Scheffler, as the organization's chairwoman, the DAB embarked on a new and extensive campaign to improve the employment opportunities of married women graduates in the Federal Republic, by pressing for the passing of a national part-time law for female civil servants and judges.

The new focus on the professional rights and interests of married female graduates was very much influenced by Scheffler and her vision for the future task of the organization. For her, the implementation of a nation-wide part-time regulation was an important step to ensure women's equal status in society and thus an essential goal for the DAB. As Scheffler saw it, women's legal equality had been practically achieved in the Federal Republic of Germany through article 3.2 of the Basic Law and the subsequent adjustment of the Civil Code. Yet, as Scheffler outlined, women were still facing prejudices and had fewer opportunities in the public sphere and, in particular, in employment. The chairwoman attributed this lasting social inequality of women primarily to their roles within the family. She argued that since most women dedicated a great part of their energy to the family, they had usually little time left for a career, which is why women had generally fewer professional opportunities than men. For this reason, she argued, the next task following the legislative reforms of the 1950s had to be the implementation of a fundamental reform of family values which would guarantee that women were not absorbed by their duties in the home and, instead, would be allowed to combine a family with a career.

A national part-time model for the civil service and for female judges, as Scheffler stated, was an essential element of this reform, giving women graduates the

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<sup>504</sup> von Oertzen, 'Was ist Diskriminierung?', in Paulus, Silies and Wolff, eds., *Zeitgeschichte als Geschlechtergeschichte*, pp. 106-9.

option to maintain their jobs when starting a family. By reducing the working hours and enabling women to return fully once the children were grown, a part-time model would prevent women having to choose between a career and a family. It would also greatly improve their professional prospects, which were otherwise generally limited when a woman left employment to raise her children and only returned after an average period of ten to fifteen years. Consequently, a national part-time model would contribute to the notion that a woman's role in society would no longer be perceived solely as that of a mother and wife - a perception which had led to social and professional disadvantages for women and which, according to the chairwoman, was rather "antiquated".<sup>505</sup>

With its demand for a part-time model in the civil service and the judiciary, the DAB positioned itself in the gradually changing public and political discourse on women's employment that had emerged in the Federal Republic since the late 1950s. Since then, part-time positions had been gradually introduced in industries and offices for blue- and white-collar female employees. Theoretically, the wages and salaries of most men had reached a level at which it was, for the first time, actually possible to cover the costs of living of an average family at the end of the 1950s. Yet, due to the growing shortage in the labour force caused by the economic boom that the Federal Republic was experiencing since the mid-1950s, companies and offices had increasingly resorted to hiring the so called "silent reserve" of the labour force, i.e. married housewives. By offering part-time positions, which were propagated as the new and modern form of work reflecting the changing role of the woman in Western industrial societies, these businesses intended to make employment more attractive to married women and mothers who did not necessarily need to work.

In their promotion of part-time employment of married women, employers were supported by the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which had cast off its conservative family policy of the 1950s. During that decade, in view of the growing tensions of the Cold War, the SPD had had to abandon its traditional standpoint that employment, and the financial independence that came with it, was essential for women's emancipation. In fear of being labelled communist and resembling too much

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<sup>505</sup> BArch B 232/68, summary of the press conference given at the biennial general members' meeting in Regensburg, 28 August 1964.



the neighbouring totalitarian regime of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) in the German Democratic Republic, the SPD's family policy throughout the 1950s had, instead, followed in many respects the conservative approach of the Christian Democratic government.<sup>506</sup> However, after suffering its biggest defeat to date by the Christian Democratic Union in the parliamentary elections in 1957, the SPD changed its political program in 1959 with the aim to broaden its electorate by modifying its status as a working-class orientated party to a people's party. In this context, the SPD also shifted its policy towards women from the conservative stance it had represented during the 1950s back to its original policy of emancipation. By supporting part-time employment and women's right to work, the party intended to attract more women voters, a majority of whom had previously voted for the CDU.<sup>507</sup>

Accordingly, it was the SPD-governed federal state of Lower-Saxony which was the first state to pass a part-time law for its civil service in 1960. The primary motive of this regulation was to counteract the increasing shortage of school teachers in the state.<sup>508</sup> The law was, therefore, initially a pragmatic solution to an urgent problem at the time and did not necessarily intend a long-term overhaul of the public service, a fact that was further underlined by the temporary character of the law, which limited the model until 1965.<sup>509</sup> Nonetheless, the introduction of part-time work for female civil servants in Lower-Saxony had kick-started a change in the legislation of the civil service, as two years later the state of Baden-Württemberg passed a similar law. The two federal laws, however, differed in their regulations. The Baden-Württemberg law allowed all married female civil servants, regardless if they had children, to work part-time for a period up to fifteen years. It further opened the part-time model to unmarried female civil servants with a child under eighteen or a dependent person to care for. In Lower Saxony, part-time was restricted to mothers-only, who had at least one child under eight, two under fourteen years of age or a sick child to care for. The

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<sup>506</sup> Christine von Oertzen and Almut Rietzschel, 'Das "Kuckucksei" Teilzeitarbeit. Die Politik der Gewerkschaften im deutsch-deutschen Vergleich', in Budde, ed., *Frauen arbeiten*, pp. 219-22.

<sup>507</sup> Christoph Kleßmann, *Zwei Staaten, eine Nation. Deutsche Geschichte 1955-1970* (Bonn 1988), pp. 115-8.

<sup>508</sup> Christine von Oertzen, *The Pleasure of a Surplus Income. Part-Time Work, Gender Politics, and Social Change in West Germany, 1955-1969* (New York/Oxford, 2007), pp. 73-5.

<sup>509</sup> BArch B 232/66, letter from the DAB's local branch in Hannover to Erna Scheffler informing her on the law in Lower Saxony, 10 November 1964.

length of the part-time model in Lower-Saxony was to be determined by the district courts.<sup>510</sup>

Part-time positions for married women and mothers, therefore, already existed in 1964 when the DAB put the issue on its agenda. Apart from the laws in Lower Saxony and Baden-Württemberg, so far existing positions, however, did not target highly qualified and academically educated women, but rather women working in industry and office work. In addition, existing schemes were mostly individual initiatives by employers, whereas the state-regulated public service, with the two exceptions of Lower Saxony and Baden-Württemberg, had as yet, no similar initiatives.

Following her appointment as chairwoman at the Regensburg biennial members' meeting, Scheffler sent a survey to the Departments of Internal Affairs of Lower Saxony and Baden-Württemberg inquiring about the details of the part-time legislation and on the demand in the positions since the introduction of the laws. In their reply both states cited relatively low numbers of current female civil servants working part-time, compared to the overall number of women employed in this sector. Nevertheless, they also highlighted a rising demand for such positions, particularly among female teachers, and predicted that this trend would continue, based on the increasing numbers of girls studying at universities and choosing this profession as a career. In Baden-Württemberg, for instance, 154 out of 16,514 female civil servants overall had been working part-time in 1963. Yet only one year later, the number had nearly doubled to 272 women in part-time positions in the state's civil service.<sup>511</sup>

The DAB based most of its early lobbying efforts on these two examples of existing part-time laws to underpin its call for a similar regulation for female civil servants and judges on a national level. By demanding a model which would allow all women, both with and without children, to reduce their working hours for a certain period of time, the organization particularly favoured the example of the Baden-Württemberg law. This demand was first put forward in a petition to the federal and the state governments, in July 1965. In the several pages long document, Erna Scheffler, on behalf of the DAB, argued skilfully for the introduction and the need for a

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<sup>510</sup> BArch Zsg. 1-312/1, Erna Scheffler, 'Teilzeitarbeit für Beamtinnen mit Familienpflichten', *Informationen für die Frau* 14 (1965) 7/8, pp. 8-9.

<sup>511</sup> BArch B 232/66, letter from the Department of Internal Affairs Baden Württemberg to Erna Scheffler, 30 September 1964.



national part-time law in these two areas of employment. While referring to the positive experiences of Lower-Saxony and Baden-Württemberg, as well as of other countries like Denmark, the organization's chairwoman also responded in great detail to the arguments brought forth by the opponents of a national part-time model in the public sector.<sup>512</sup> These arguments revolved around two articles of the Basic Law: first, article 33.5 which provided the legal principles of the civil service and, secondly, article 3.2 which determined full equality between men and women. The general argument was that part-time work contradicted the civil service principles of unconditional loyalty to the state and full dedication to the profession. As working part-time would entail that women split their time between their work place and their family, it was reasoned that a part-time model would infringe on both these doctrines. Adversaries of the model further stressed that a regulation which granted the right to work part-time solely to women, violated the equality principle and that it was, therefore, unconstitutional.<sup>513</sup>

Both of these legal reservations were effectively refuted in the DAB's petition. Arguments of a violation of the civil service principles were countered by Scheffler with a recent decision of the Federal Administrative Court which had established the incompatibility of such doctrines with present day lifestyle. Scheffler further highlighted the fact that these principles had been established long before women had even become eligible as civil servants, which meant that they were overall outdated. In addition, she emphasized the legal option to adjust article 33.5, in accordance to social change. With regard to the equality principle argument against a national part-time model, Scheffler referred to article 6 of the Basic Law, which put the woman and the family under special protection of the state. She argued that the inclusion of this article in the Federal Republic's constitution had determined that differentiations between the sexes could be made based on biological and functional differences. This differentiation between men and women and their diverging responsibilities had, as the chairwoman pointed out, been further echoed in article 1361 of the Civil Code which had established that women's primary duties were in the family. Consequently, as Scheffler outlined, the equality principle would not be violated by a part-time model

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<sup>512</sup> BArch Zsg. 1-312/1, Erna Scheffler, 'Teilzeitarbeit für Beamtinnen mit Familienpflichten', *Informationen für die Frau* 14 (1965) 7/8, pp. 8-9.

<sup>513</sup> von Oertzen, *The Pleasure of a Surplus Income*, pp. 75-6.

for female civil servants and judges, as article 6 of the Basic Law and article 1361 of the Civil Code had established a different allocation of responsibilities in the family. Thus, by providing an alternative to the either-or-choice that female civil servants and judges faced when starting a family, i.e. being forced to either continue working full time or to retire and lose the hard-earned status of a civil servant, part-time would, in fact, enable women to work without neglecting their duties within the home. In view of the persistent shortage, particularly of teachers, and the immediate needs of the young generation of women, a national part-time model for female civil servants and judges with family duties was, therefore, the DAB's chairwoman stated, both within the law, as well as being indispensable and inevitable.<sup>514</sup>

Scheffler's legal knowledge certainly came to an advantage in the formulation of the DAB's petition, as she skilfully turned laws that had originally intended to keep women in the home and in the private sphere into an argument for part-time work. However, her line of argumentation also made very clear that the organization did not refute the assumption that it was women's responsibility to care for the home and the children. Instead of lobbying for a radical change in the traditional gendered division of labour and of the private and the public sphere, the organization rather demanded a softening of these boundaries while at the same time staying within the legal and constitutional framework of the Federal Republic. A similar attitude towards existing gender roles was echoed in the public and political debates on part-time models at the time. Neither the SPD nor private employers and the unions questioned women's responsibilities in the home. After all, part-time models aimed at enabling women to still fulfil these duties, yet without confining them to the role of the housewife and mother.

The DAB further expressed this view at its biennial general meeting in Hamburg in 1966, which focused on the "double role of the woman" and on the question how the modern woman could cope with working in- and outside the home. Although it was acknowledged that men should certainly be involved in raising a family and taking care of the household, the DAB generally agreed that this was an ideal which was yet far from reality and which would take time to realize. In fact, as one speaker, Dr Hedda

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<sup>514</sup> BArch Zsg. 1-312/1, Erna Scheffler, 'Teilzeitarbeit für Beamtinnen mit Familienpflichten', *Informationen für die Frau* 14 (1965) 7/8, pp. 9-10.



Heuser, stated, the man would have to learn the double role one day, but it would be a matter of time and could certainly be encouraged but not forced.<sup>515</sup> In the view of the DAB's members, married women's emancipation in the family and in the professions was a gradual process that had to develop in due course. As Elisabeth Pfeil highlighted in her paper on the need for new family models in industrial society, the old bourgeois women's movement had successfully struggled for women's access to employment and to the professions. Yet back then, these privileges had been regarded as exclusively reserved for unmarried women. For the pioneering women activists, the combination of work outside the home and having a family had been unthinkable and undesirable. Following their past successes, Pfeil stressed, it was now the responsibility of the new generation within the women's movement to broaden the role of married women and provide them with opportunities to pursue a career or employment alongside to their duties within the family.<sup>516</sup>

The papers presented at the general meeting thus accurately highlighted how the members of the DAB understood their role within the women's movement. In their eyes, they represented a new guard which not only struggled for the advancement of unmarried women's rights in the professions but also for married women's rights. By promoting the ideal of having a family and a career, they were taking the next step on the long road to achieving women's full equality within society. A part-time work model for female civil servants and judges, benefiting primarily women who often did not have to work out of economic necessity, was considered an ideal measure to facilitate this process. Yet the organization's members also believed that in order to achieve the ultimate goal of full social and practical equality, women had to be patient, proceed carefully and not press too hard for change. Rather than seeking a radical social transformation immediately it was agreed that the public needed to be gradually accustomed to the shifting gender roles and to the alignment of men's and women's responsibilities and roles. Accordingly, the DAB considered it the responsibility of the

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<sup>515</sup> BArch B 232/3, "Die Doppelrolle der Frau, strukturelle Voraussetzungen ihrer Bewältigung im Bereich des sozialen Lebens", speech presented by Dr Hedda Heuser at the DAB's biennial general members' meeting in Hamburg, 6-9 October 1966, p. 2.

<sup>516</sup> BArch B 232/3, "Die Doppelrolle der Frau und die Notwendigkeit neuer Familienmodelle in der industriellen Gesellschaft", speech presented by Elisabeth Pfeil at the DAB's biennial general members' meeting in Hamburg, 6-9 October 1966, pp. 1-3.

following generation of women to challenge the remaining inequalities, including the conventional roles of men and women within the family.

The organization's lobbying efforts to enable female civil servants and judges to work part-time received wide coverage in the print media and were discussed by most of the main national newspapers, such as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*<sup>517</sup>, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*<sup>518</sup> and *Die Zeit*.<sup>519</sup> As a result of this subsequent publicity for the organization's efforts, other women's groups soon also took interest in a part-time model for the civil service and for female judges. The DAB particularly found an ally in the German Women Lawyers' Association, which adopted the issue to its own agenda in 1966.

The matter also gained political attention, in particular, by the Free Democratic Party (FDP). The changing role of the woman in society and family was a topic which was increasingly discussed in parliament, in connection with the commissioned Report on the Situation of Women in Employment, Family and Society which had been in process since 1964.<sup>520</sup> In this context, the political parties took a renewed interest in the employment of women, and especially of married women. While it was generally acknowledged that there was an increasing trend towards the employment of married women, the individual political parties disagreed on how to address this change.

The CDU continued to advocate the three-phase-model of a woman's life, as it had been propagated by the party since the late 1950s. According to this model, the first phase marked a woman's entry into the labour force followed by a few years of employment until she married and started a family. At this second stage, the family phase began, which envisioned the woman retiring from work to raise children and take care of the household. The third phase described the return of the woman into the workplace around the time the last child had finished school. This propagated ideal, however, had proven difficult when put into practice, as most women

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<sup>517</sup> See, for example, Arianna Giachi, 'Die „Doppelrolle“, akademisch gesehen. Wie die Gesellschaft berufstätigen Müttern helfen kann / Der Akademikerinnenbund wünscht eine Ergänzung der Frauenenquete', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22 October 1966, (no page numbers in this section).

<sup>518</sup> See, for example, Barbara Roth, 'Teilzeit - auch für Beamtinnen?', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, "Die Frau", 24 November 1965, (no page numbers in this section).

<sup>519</sup> See, for example, Heinz Bergner, 'Beamtin für einen halben Tag. Ein Vorstoß in Bonn und in den Bundesländern', *Die Zeit*, 8 October 1965, p. 57 and Elisabeth Pfeil, 'Die Frau will keine Doppelrolle spielen. Sie braucht bessere Hilfe', *Die Zeit*, 9 December 1966, p. 55.

<sup>520</sup> See chapter III.4.3 for a more detailed discussion of the Report on the Situation of Women in Employment, Family and Society.



encountered many difficulties in trying to get hired again and return to a job from which they had been absent for approximately ten to fifteen years. For this reason, the CDU proposed several measures intended to ease and ensure women's re-integration into the workplace at a later stage by offering further education, career counselling centres and training programs.<sup>521</sup>

In contrast, both the SPD and, particularly, the FDP argued that apart from additional measures to support women's return to employment, a national part-time model should also be introduced. As Liselotte Funcke, a member of the FDP and of the DAB, argued in response to the CDU proposal, a part-time option for women would be much more effective in facilitating their return to fulltime work as it would avoid the general difficulties faced by women who left employment entirely in order to raise their children. Funcke especially pointed out the need for a national part-time model in the civil service, as it already existed in the states of Lower Saxony and Baden-Württemberg.<sup>522</sup>

One year later, on 4 November 1966, Funcke's party colleague, Emmi Diemer-Nicolaus (who was also a member of the German Women Lawyers' Association) proposed a bill on part-time employment in the public service in parliament. It suggested a possible fifteen years of part-time work for women in the civil service or for female judges who had at least one child under the age of six or two children under the age of ten. The draft bill also provided for the option of a ten-year long leave of absence for mothers who intended to take a break from work while raising their children without the loss of the civil servant status.<sup>523</sup>

Although welcoming the submission of the draft proposal and the subsequent political debate on a part-time regulation for female civil servants and judges, the DAB criticized some of the limitations proposed by the bill in a letter to the SPD representative, Dr Annemarie Renger. Renger was one of the strong supporters of a national part-time model in parliament. For her, the Basic Law's promise of full equality between the sexes provided the foundation for such a model, as it ensured women's equal opportunities in their professional lives. Since the formation of the

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<sup>521</sup> Maul, *Akademikerinnen in der Nachkriegszeit*, pp. 179-80.

<sup>522</sup> BArch B 232/51, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 4. Wahlperiode, *Stenographische Berichte*, 177. Sitzung, 2 April 1965.

<sup>523</sup> Deutscher Juristinnenbund, ed., *Juristinnen in Deutschland: Eine Dokumentation*, pp. 99-100.

grand coalition in 1966, which had put the SPD into government for the first time after 1949, Renger was also a member of the German Parliamentary Committee of Internal Affairs ("Innenausschuss des deutschen Bundestages"). This Committee was in charge of examining the FDP proposal in 1966 and Renger, therefore, had a significant voice in the shaping of a possible part-time law.<sup>524</sup> In the letter to Renger, Scheffler stressed that the DAB regarded the limitation of fifteen years for part-time, as proposed by the bill, or, in fact, any time limitation as possibly "fatal" to the family as it did not consider whether a child was still in school and, therefore, required continuous care. Instead, Scheffler suggested, a part-time law for female civil servants and judges should allow women the option to work half their hours as long as they still had children under the age of sixteen or still in school. The organization's chairwoman further urged Renger to change the current rationale for the introduction of a part-time model as offered by the draft law. Rather than simply stressing the state's duty to care for the female (and also male) civil servants, as determined by article 33.5 of the Basic Law, the draft law, Scheffler argued, should also emphasize the need for a healthy family policy. This way, the proposal would signal change in the patterns of married women's employment and, in the long run, alleviate the current problem of recruiting young female professionals.<sup>525</sup>

A few months after she had sent the letter to Renger, Scheffler was given the opportunity to formally voice some of her previous remarks on the implementation of a national part-time model for female civil servants and judges. In November 1967, the DAB's chairwoman was approached by the Parliamentary Committee of Internal Affairs, of which Renger was a member, and asked to comment on the FDP proposal. Although Scheffler's opinion was sought due to her previous function as a federal judge, her involvement also offered a valuable opportunity for the DAB to reissue its demands and concerns. Accordingly, the Parliamentary Committee received two separate documents with detailed comments and suggestions, in December 1967 – one was sent by Scheffler as the former federal judge, and the other as the DAB's chairwoman. In these statements, Scheffler once more argued against the legal

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<sup>524</sup> Christine von Oertzen, 'Women, Work, and the State: Lobbying for Part Time Work and "Practical Equality" in the West German Civil Service, 1958-1969', *Fifty Years of the Federal Republic of Germany through a gendered lens* (University of North Carolina, 1999), p. 7.

<sup>525</sup> BAArch N 1177/77, letter from Erna Scheffler to Annemarie Renger, 6 March 1967.



reservations which had again been brought forth in September 1967 by the Minister for Internal Affairs, Paul Lücke, as an argument against a part-time model for the civil service and for female judge. She also highlighted the advantages that such a model would have for women's integration into the workplace and thereby for the integration of the family into a modern and industrial society.<sup>526</sup>

A few months later, the DAB's long campaign for the national part-time model, which had found the support of several women parliamentarians over the years, experienced an important change. In April 1968, Lücke stepped down as Minister for Internal Affairs and he was replaced by Ernst Benda. Benda, like his predecessor, was a Christian Democrat, but in contrast to Lücke he supported the introduction of a national part-time model. This opened the door to a new discussion within parliament and the government parties.<sup>527</sup> Consequently, just two months after Benda had taken office, a new bill for part-time work in the civil service and for female judges was introduced by Annemarie Renger, together with Elisabeth Enseling and Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt of the CDU. This bill was adopted in October 1968 and came into effect on 31 March 1969 - some five years after Erna Scheffler first addressed the issue at the DAB's biennial general meeting in Regensburg.

In some respects the final law differed quite substantially from the FDP proposal of 1966. Instead of a possible ten year leave of absence for mothers, as suggested in the previous bill, the new law granted women only three years if they had a child of less than six years or at least two children under the age of ten. However, the new law also gave the option of an extension of this leave of absence. Moreover, part-time positions were available to mothers who had at least one child below the age of sixteen.<sup>528</sup> This regulation satisfied the demand brought forth by the DAB in 1967, when it had urged to abandon the proposed time limitation on part-time and instead introduce an age limitation of the child.<sup>529</sup> Although earlier demands by the organization (such as to extend the part-time regulation also to women without

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<sup>526</sup> BArch B 211/20, letter from Erna Scheffler to Anneliese Glaser (editor of the publication *Informationsdienst für Frauenfragen e.V.*) in which she informs Glaser about the two official statements made by Scheffler herself and the DAB to the Parliamentary Committee of Internal Affairs in relation to a part-time law for female judges and civil servants, 18 February 1968.

<sup>527</sup> von Oertzen, 'Women, Work, and the State', p.7.

<sup>528</sup> "Sechstes Gesetz zur Änderung beamtenrechtlicher und besoldungsrechtlicher Vorschriften vom 31. März 1969", *Bundesgesetzblatt* (27), 1 April 1969.

<sup>529</sup> BArch N 1177/77, letter from Erna Scheffler to Annemarie Renger, 6 March 1967.

children) were not met, the passing of the law was certainly one of the main achievements in the DAB's lobbying efforts of the 1950s and 1960s. Considering the outcome and the role that Erna Scheffler had played in pressing for such a law, the success also suggests that the organization benefited significantly from the position and reputation of its new chairwoman. Scheffler not only had the legal expertise but also the relevant connections and contacts within the German parliament, which ultimately made the passing of the law possible.

Even the contemporary press attributed the credit for passing this law mainly to the unremitting pressure of women's organizations, with the DAB at the forefront, and female parliamentarians. The efforts of the organization and of Erna Scheffler were, in particular, acknowledged in an article published in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* which reported that the impetus for the passing of the law had come from the organization in 1965. Since then, the article reported, it had taken several years and the "exemplary" co-operation of women's organizations and female political representatives to overcome a strong opposition and claims of unconstitutionality.<sup>530</sup> Another article in *Die Zeit* stressed the credibility and legal insight of the DAB's chairwoman in the matter, as it discussed the organization's petition of July 1965. Noting that the DAB's claim for a national part-time model had been prepared by someone who "[...] in every aspect seems competent, Dr Erna Scheffler"<sup>531</sup>, the author acknowledged the petition's validity and thus the importance of the organization's demand. With the introduction of the national part-time law for female civil servants and judges, the DAB, in co-operation with female parliamentarians and other women's organizations had, therefore, certainly achieved a significant step towards women's full practical equality in the Federal Republic.

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<sup>530</sup> Barbara Roth, 'Ein Gesetz gegen das schlechte Gewissen', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, "Die Frau", 4 & 5 June 1969, (no page numbers in this section).

<sup>531</sup> Heinz Bergner, 'Beamtin für einen halben Tag. Ein Vorstoß in Bonn und in den Bundesländern', *Die Zeit*, 8 October 1965, p. 57.



### III.3.4 Conclusion

The objective to promote the professional interests of academically educated women in Germany had been one of the original goals of the DAB even before the Second World War. While most pre-war initiatives concerning the advancement of women in employment had been in the form of distributing research grants and arranging professional exchange programs sponsored by the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), the re-established DAB took a different and more active approach after the war. Although the organization continued to advertise IFUW scholarships<sup>532</sup> and also offer some itself,<sup>533</sup> they were not the focal point in the DAB's efforts to advance women's professional opportunities. Most of the activities carried out throughout the 1950s and 1960s centred on what Schwarzhaupt had outlined in her speech in 1954, as one of organization's main responsibilities, namely "[...] to point out the problems and hardships, the misunderstandings and misrepresentations [of women in the professions] and to press for remedial action."<sup>534</sup> In this respect, the organization increasingly concentrated on lobbying for the employment of women graduates, both through local initiatives and through the repeated submission of petitions and memoranda to state and federal institutions. In addition, it monitored the employment prospects of women graduates by compiling statistical data on women's representation in academic occupations, which aimed at highlighting the discrepancies between women's and men's professional opportunities in the Federal Republic of Germany.

In some cases, the activities to advance women's interests in the professions lacked a clear direction and aim. This was particularly evident throughout the early 1950s when most of the organization's efforts confined themselves to some scattered local initiatives led by the regional branches of the DAB and aimed at individual job openings. It was not until the late 1950s that the organization's activities to advance

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<sup>532</sup> Between 1949 and 1960 twenty-four of these scholarships were awarded to German women graduates – see BArch B 232/68, report of the scholarship subcommittee, included in the minutes of the biennial general meeting in Lübeck, 29 Sept.-2 Oct. 1960.

<sup>533</sup> See for example BArch B 232/1, report on DAB's activities 1956-1958, included in the minutes of the biennial general members' meeting Berlin, 9-11 October 1958.

<sup>534</sup> BArch B 232/1, "Aufgaben und Stellung der Akademikerinnen in der heutigen Gesellschaft" by Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, *Mädchenbildung und Frauenschaffen* 4 (1954) 12, p. 546.

the employment opportunities of women graduates became more structured and purposeful - a development which was primarily due to the work of a few individuals.

Between 1959 and 1968 the DAB concentrated on two particular issues which mainly aimed at increasing women's representation in the public sphere and ensuring the possibility of having a dual role, both in and outside the home. The first issue focused on the appointment of women at universities, an initiative based mainly on the activities of the university subcommittee and its chairwoman Asta Hampe. The second issue was the introduction of a national part-time model for female civil servants and judges, primarily promoted through the organization's chairwoman at the time, Erna Scheffler.

The DAB's campaign to press for the appointment of more women to lecture- and professorships was based chiefly on the report compiled by Asta Hampe in 1960. This report provided statistical information on women's representation among this occupational group. The results of the research formed the foundation for several petitions and memoranda issued by the organization between 1960 and 1965. Since the early 1960s, these lobbying efforts were facilitated by the shortage of teaching personnel at universities and the planned expansion of the higher education system. Both developments provided a context for the organization's demand to appoint more women and gave it actuality.

Nevertheless, the professional prospects and status of women teaching at universities remained more or less the same over the years. There were several reasons for the DAB's inability to influence the hiring process of women at universities, despite various efforts. One of them was undoubtedly the static hierarchal structures within higher education which were often founded on gendered stereotypes and the "male comradeship" among the professorship, as Hampe had phrased it in her report. However, the organization's failure, to attract the support of women lecturers and professors was certainly also an inhibiting factor in the struggle to promote the appointment of women. Resulting from this failure the organization lacked advocates for its cause within academia itself. Instead, the majority of women lecturers and professors distanced themselves from the organization or simply had no interest in the DAB's campaign.



Yet, in spite of the inability to notably increase the number of women teaching at universities, the DAB managed to shed some light on the fact that women continued to be overlooked in academic appointments. With the co-publication of Charlotte Lorenz' study in 1953 and the compilation of the report by Asta Hampe some years later, the organization provided the first statistical information on women's representation among lecturers and professors. This information was crucial in creating a public awareness of the matter. Moreover, in its attempts to "educate the public" on women's situation in the higher education system, supported by the continual revision of their numerical representation, the DAB, at times, succeeded in reaching both professional and political platforms of discussion. Although necessary actions were held off, the organization thus, at least partially, managed to put the focus on some of the obvious disadvantages women were still facing in their employment opportunities within higher education.

Overall, the DAB's struggle to improve women's opportunities in the professions was largely representative of an abeyance organization. As previously seen with the achievement in getting two women appointed to the Council of Education in 1966 and again in the organization's successes in pushing for the promotion of individual women on a local basis, the DAB was indeed able to bring about change. Yet, in most cases this meant that it had to focus on smaller and more achievable goals, and thus co-opt their methods and protest in an environment which was largely unsupportive of women's equal representation in the professions and, in fact, employment in general. More fundamental reforms and demands, as seen in its struggle to increase women's representation in academia, remained largely unsuccessful for the DAB due to the lacking support from the public and the political arena at the time.

One notable and important exception to this rule was the organization's struggle for an introduction of a national part-time law for female civil servants and judges. Following years of petitioning and the co-operation of other women's organizations and female parliamentarians, this law was finally passed in 1968. Its passing was by far the most measurable and internally celebrated success of the DAB in relation to the advancement of professional opportunities of women graduates and shows that women's organizations were, in fact, able to make a fundamental

difference during the years in which the German women's movement found itself largely in abeyance.

The DAB's chairwoman and former federal judge, Erna Scheffler, was the driving force behind the organization's campaign for the part-time law. From the day of her election as chairwoman, Scheffler had emphasized her interest in the matter and had put it on top of the organization's agenda. As she stated in a letter to Annemarie Renger in 1967, "[P]art-time is very close to my heart. If we can just achieve this, then we are really doing something for the next generation [...]".<sup>535</sup> The dominance of the chairwoman's opinion and her input to the DAB's campaign for a national part-time model were unquestionable. Unlike in previous attempts to represent the professional interests of women graduates, most of the initiatives in the campaign for part-time were steered by the experienced hands of Erna Scheffler and the executive committee, rather than by the subcommittees. This approach paid off in terms of gaining the attention of the media and, in doing so, the public's ear for the DAB's demand. The chairwoman's past status as a judge in the Federal Court and her political connections certainly worked in favour of the DAB. Her personal involvement in the matter meant, however, that the standpoint of the organization and of its chairwoman was inextricably intertwined, allowing little opposition or alternative views, if they existed, within the DAB itself. Although there is little indication in the DAB's files that individual members held opposing views on the need for a part-time model, some might perhaps have disagreed either with the idea that married women should work outside the home or with the unchallenged notion that it was, in fact, a woman's duty to take care of the household and the children.

In the end, Scheffler's prediction on the importance of the law for the next generations of women was correct. In the first twenty years following the implementation of the law, which formally came into force in 1969, more female civil servants and judges took advantage of the regulation than women employed in any other sector.<sup>536</sup> Viewed in this context, the DAB had indeed contributed a great extent to the softening of the ideological boundaries between work and the family and

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<sup>535</sup> BAArch B 232/66, letter from Erna Scheffler to Annemarie Renger, 19 December 1967.

<sup>536</sup> Walter Dittrich, Gerhard Fuchs, Margarete Landenberger and Dieter Rucht, 'Staatliche Teilzeitförderung in der privaten Wirtschaft und im öffentlichem Dienst: Regelungen, Interessen, Wirkungen', *Mitteilungen aus der Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung*, 22 (1989), p. 282.



between the public and the private spheres through its campaign. By pushing for an introduction of part-time in the civil service and for female judges, the organization had, in particular, softened these boundaries for women with an academic qualification and had thereby guaranteed that these women would have the same rights as women working in blue and white collar jobs. The DAB had thus achieved its goal of providing women with the option of combining a career with a family. However, it had done so without really questioning existing social norms regarding woman's primary role and the limitations associated with it, which were ultimately maintained in the professional opportunities of women compared to those of men in the Federal Republic of Germany.

### ***III.4 Securing women's influence in public life***

As illustrated in the previous subchapters, the majority of the DAB's activities during the 1950s and 1960s primarily targeted women graduates and thus a minority of women in the Federal Republic of Germany. The focus on the interests and opportunities of this rather privileged group of women in society seems unsurprising as the issues often evolved out of the organization's members' own experiences and concerns. Nonetheless, the DAB also engaged in lobbying for women's rights and interests in general. Its activities within this field were diverse and addressed issues as widespread as legislation on food processing and distribution, the national identity of women in mixed marriages, and the legal regulation of voluntary sterilization.

This subchapter focuses on the DAB's involvement in three specific matters which were of particular importance for women's legal, political and social status in the Federal Republic throughout the 1950s and 1960s. During these two decades the organization was primarily concerned with pressing for legislative change and reform of family law. It also attempted to increase the representation of women in political offices and thereby secure the influence of women (graduates) in the public and political sphere and ensure the constitutional promise of full equality between the

sexes. In many of these struggles the co-operation between the DAB and other women's organizations active in West Germany was crucial to the campaigns.

Following its re-establishment, the DAB quickly connected with other women's groups which had either been re-established after the war or newly founded in the following years. Some of the DAB's links to other organizations originated from the women's movement of the early twentieth century, such as its connection to the Alliance for Girls' and Women's Education ("Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Mädchen- und Frauenbildung").<sup>537</sup> Others had evolved with the newly established organization the German Women Lawyers' Association<sup>538</sup>, founded in 1948,<sup>539</sup> and the German Women's Information Service ("Informationsdienst für Frauenfragen e.V.", later German Women's Council),<sup>540</sup> an umbrella group formed in 1949. Most of the connections to these women's groups were sustained through affiliation, as well as through frequent overlap of members. In particular, the DAB's chairwomen were often involved in other women's groups and, at times, even simultaneously chaired two organizations. Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, for example, while chairwoman of the DAB also headed the German Women's Council ("Deutscher Frauenrat")<sup>541</sup> which, according to the DAB's files, significantly contributed to an increased co-operation between the two organizations.<sup>542</sup> Other women who fostered the DAB's relations to different women's groups were Emmy Beckmann, the DAB's first chairwoman after its re-establishment in 1949 and co-founder of the Alliance for Girls' and Women's Education,<sup>543</sup> and Erna Scheffler. The latter maintained close ties, particularly, with the German Women Lawyers' Association, in which both she and Schwarzhaupt were also members, and thereby instigated several shared initiatives of the DAB with the organization.<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Formerly known as "Allgemeiner Deutscher Lehrerinnenverein" (General German Women Teachers' Association) before its dissolution in 1933.

<sup>538</sup> The German Women Lawyers' Association, though newly established in 1948, was the successor of the German Women Lawyers' Society, which had been affiliated to the DAB before World War II.

<sup>539</sup> Deutscher Juristinnenbund, ed., *Juristinnen in Deutschland: Eine Dokumentation (1900-1989)* (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), p. 22.

<sup>540</sup> This organization was renamed in 1958 to "Informationsdienst und Aktionskreis deutscher Frauenverbände und Frauengruppen gemischter Verbände e.V." and again in 1969 to "Deutscher Frauenrat" (German Women's Council).

<sup>541</sup> The former Women's Information Service.

<sup>542</sup> See BArch B 232/84, Summary of the DAB's activities, included in the minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Cologne, 21 October 1972.

<sup>543</sup> Bärbel Maul, *Akademikerinnen in der Nachkriegszeit. Ein Vergleich zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der DDR* (Frankfurt am Main, 2002), p. 42.

<sup>544</sup> See, for example, Deutscher Juristinnenbund, ed., *Juristinnen in Deutschland: Eine Dokumentation*



Overall, the DAB had well established contacts to other women's organizations throughout the 1950s and 1960s and its members regularly attended other women's groups' conferences, thereby facilitating the exchange of views and objectives between the DAB and these organizations.<sup>545</sup> Its affiliation to the Women's Information Service, which the DAB had co-founded in 1951, further provided the DAB with important opportunities to collaborate with the numerous women's groups represented in this umbrella organization. As such, the Women's Information Service was particularly significant, as it not only comprised middle-class organizations, such as the DAB, but also working-class women's organizations like the women's sections of the German Trade Union Federation ("Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund") and the German Employees' Union ("Deutsche Angestellten-Gewerkschaft"). Its monthly publication, *Informationen für die Frau*, regularly published articles on the various activities of the women's groups and printed petitions and memoranda submitted to the government, including the DAB's. This publication was, therefore, a valuable platform for individual women's groups to convey their objectives and demands and, in doing so, it provided an important tool for communication and networking among the individual organizations.<sup>546</sup>

Throughout the years, the DAB retained particularly close links to other women's groups represented on the Women's Information Service with which it shared similar interests and aims and. These organizations often helped each other to promote and advance each other's goals and activities and this collaboration facilitated some important gains in the rights of West German women throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The German Women Lawyers' Association was one of the main allies of the DAB in its activities and aims. The DAB had first joined forces with the association in the protest against the provisional Federal Personnel Law in 1950, which had allowed the dismissal of married female civil servants.<sup>547</sup> Following this protests, both organizations continued their collaboration and supported each other on several other occasions, such as in the struggle against the family law, as discussed in chapter

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(1900-1989) (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), pp. 98-100.

<sup>545</sup> See, for example, BArch B 232/1, minutes of the extended executive committee meeting in Würzburg, 27-29 September 1957.

<sup>546</sup> Ute Gerhard, 'Die Frauenbewegung', in Roland Roth and Dieter Rucht, eds., *Die sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945. Ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt am Main, 2008), p. 200.

<sup>547</sup> See chapter III.3.1.

III.V.3, and by drawing up joint statements on issues like the rights of illegitimate children<sup>548</sup> or the reform of the electoral law.<sup>549</sup> Moreover, as seen in the previous subchapter, the German Women Lawyers' Association had joined the DAB in 1966 in its demand for a national part-time model in the civil service and for female judges, a step which boosted the DAB's campaign and broadened public support.<sup>550</sup>

The links of the DAB to other women's groups were further fostered by collaborations on a local level. The DAB's branch in Heidelberg, for instance, regularly drew up joint petitions and demands in correlation with other local branches of the various women's organization. One of these joint initiatives included the protest against the absence of women in the higher echelons of the education system, which was communicated in a letter from the branches of the DAB, the German Housewives Association, and the German Business and Professional Women, to the Department of Education in 1957.<sup>551</sup>

The contact between the various women's groups, both on a local and on a national level, was primarily maintained through the chairwomen and the committees, who regularly informed each other of recent and planned activities and shared their concerns on particular issues. Although joint protests and demands by German women's organizations were no guarantee of success, in some instances the collaboration of the various groups proved vital. Just how vital these connections were to the DAB's goals in regard to women's rights and status in society becomes evident in the following sections.

#### **III.4.1 The representation of women political parties and offices**

As seen in the case of the national part-time model for female civil servants and judges, the co-operation and connections of the DAB with other women's organizations, such as the German Women Lawyers' Association, had been crucial to

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<sup>548</sup> BArch B 232/5, minutes of the DAB's extended executive committee meeting in Celle, 14-15 October 1967.

<sup>549</sup> BArch B 232/84, minutes of the DAB's executive committee meeting in Karlsruhe, 28 January 1967.

<sup>550</sup> See chapter III.3.3.

<sup>551</sup> BArch B 232/17, letter from the DAB branch in Heidelberg to the Minister for Education of Baden-Württemberg, July 1957.



promoting the issue more prominently within the public. Equally important had been the DAB's connections to female parliamentarians who had played an imperative role in mobilizing support for the demands of the DAB. Since its foundation in 1926, the organization had links to the various political parties through members who were also active in German political life. In fact, two of the founding members, Agnes von Zahn-Harnack and Marie-Elisabeth Lüders had been involved in political life during the Weimar Republic, through their membership in the German Democratic Party (DDP). Moreover, with Lüders, who had been a representative on the National Assembly during these years - a function she later resumed through her party-membership of the FDP and her representation in the Federal Republic's parliament - the DAB had a continuous direct link to German national politics. Following its re-establishment in 1949, other prominent political women had joined the DAB, such as Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, CDU (who became the first female minister in West Germany in 1961), Elisabeth Selbert, SPD, who had successfully pushed for the adoption of the equality principle in the Basic Law, as well as Liselotte Funcke and Heidi Flitz, both members of parliament for the FDP.

Thus, despite its non-partisan orientation, the DAB had always had connections to political parties. These connections often proved beneficial not only to the organization and its aims, but also to the women politicians, as they regularly received the support of the organization. The importance of this mutual support between female parliamentarians and women's groups had, for instance, become evident in the struggle for the adoption of the equality principle, which Elisabeth Selbert only succeeded in pushing through the Parliamentary Council as a result of the public pressure organized by women's organizations at the time. For the DAB, this support for female politicians was coherent with its objective to secure women's influence in German public and political life in order to represent women's interests. To achieve this goal, the organization lobbied for the nomination of women by the political parties in the elections, as well as for their appointment to ministries. Most of the DAB's initiatives were directed at the individual parties and took the form of a general demand to run more women candidates in elections<sup>552</sup> or to nominate at least one

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<sup>552</sup> See, for example, BArch B 232/25, report of the activities of the DAB's local branch in Heidelberg 1955-1956.

woman as a minister.<sup>553</sup> However, the organization also made specific suggestions of qualified women for political offices and supported individual candidates in their nomination and election campaigns.

This approach was taken by Marga Anders in the run-up to the general election in 1961. The DAB's efforts to increase the number of women in political offices during these elections had, in fact, resulted from an appeal made by the Women's Information Service to protest against the government's repeated neglect of women in its ministerial appointments following the general elections in 1957.<sup>554</sup> As an affiliated organization of the Women's Information Service, the DAB had joined this protest and had subsequently included the issue on its own agenda. Consequently, prior to the next general elections in 1961, it was one of the DAB's priorities, as the organization lobbied the individual parties to ensure their women candidates a seat in parliament and even compiled a list with specific suggestions of various women qualified for ministerial positions.<sup>555</sup>

Within this context, the DAB's then chairwoman, Marga Anders, sent a letter to the federal chairman of the FDP, Erich Mende, during the months preceding the elections urging him to guarantee Marie-Elisabeth Lüders a safe spot on the candidate list of the FDP, in order to ensure her a seat in the new parliament.<sup>556</sup> Anders' concern about the re-election of Lüders in 1961 had resulted from a considerably weakened position of the FDP in Berlin and, consequently, in parliament. After the war, the Allied Control Council had established a specific rule for the partitioned Berlin which determined that the city could not be directly governed by the Federal Republic. As a result, legislative decisions made in West Germany's capital in Bonn did not apply to Berlin. Instead, the federal parliament of Berlin had to vote separately for the implementation of the legislative changes drawn up by the parliament in Bonn. For this purpose, the Berlin parliament elected twenty-two of its members who were sent to the capital. The remaining members of the Federal Republic's parliament were elected through a combination of the majority vote system and personalized proportional

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<sup>553</sup> See, for example, BArch B 232 /83, letter from Erna Scheffler to the executives of the Social Democratic Party and of the Christian Democratic Union, 4 August 1965.

<sup>554</sup> BArch B 232/1, minutes of the DAB's biennial general members' meeting in Berlin, 9-11 October 1958.

<sup>555</sup> See chapter III.4.1.

<sup>556</sup> BArch NL 151/280, letter from Marga Anders to Erich Mende, 10 February 1961.



representation, as established by the electoral law of 1949. This system guaranteed every voter two votes, one for a representative in the constituency who was elected by majority rule, and one for a regional-state level candidate on a list pre-determined by the individual parties.<sup>557</sup> While the majority vote allocated mandates only to those candidates who had gained a relative majority in his or her constituency, the proportional representation vote assigned mandates in relation to the total votes cast in the election. This meant that if a party had gained a certain percentage of votes in the elections, it won an equal percentage of the remaining seats in parliament. These seats were then attributed by the parties to the strongest candidates on the lists. This dual system aimed at giving smaller parties the chance of being represented in government through the mandates won by the proportional representation votes and thus the opportunity to form a coalition with the larger parties.<sup>558</sup>

Between 1953 and 1961 Lüders had been among those members of parliament sent by the Berlin state parliament. However, in the general election year of 1961 Lüders could no longer count on her seat, since the FDP was no longer represented in the Berlin parliament.<sup>559</sup> For this reason, as Anders argued in her letter to the FDP's federal chairman, Lüders should either be guaranteed a secure spot on the party's candidate list, which could ensure her a seat through the representational vote, or she should be appointed to run in a 'safe-seat' area, such as in North-Rhine Westphalia, where she would have a chance of winning the majority vote.<sup>560</sup> What Anders or the DAB had not anticipated when issuing the appeal to Mende was that the 83-year-old former chairwoman and original founder of the organization had, more or less voluntarily<sup>561</sup>, chosen to leave active politics in the same year.

With Lüders' retirement, one of the most prominent women in parliament and member of the DAB had left national politics. It was, therefore, all the more important for the organization to press for the nomination of women to a political office during the 1961 elections. A few months after Anders' rather futile letter to Mende, the DAB

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<sup>557</sup> Bernhard Vogel, Dieter Nohlen and Rainer-Olaf Schultze, *Wahlen in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1971), pp. 190-6.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>559</sup> 'Adel verzichtet' (no author), *Der Spiegel* (30), 1961, p. 13.

<sup>560</sup> BArch NL 151/280, letter from Marga Anders to Erich Mende, 10 February 1961.

<sup>561</sup> An article in *Der Spiegel* reported that Lüders had only "resentfully" resigned in 1961 - see 'Adel verzichtet' (no author), *Der Spiegel* (30), 1961, p. 13.

decided to make another attempt to support the nomination of specific women for a political office, by suggesting female candidates for different ministerial positions to the parties. For this purpose, the DAB had compiled a list of women from various political parties, irrespective of their membership in the organization. For the CDU, Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt was proposed for the post of Minister for Justice and Luise Rehling or Aenne Brauksiepe for Minister for Family Affairs. The DAB also suggested Elinor Hubert, Marta Schanzenbach or Lucie Beyer, all members of the SPD, or alternatively Liselotte Funcke or Lotte Friese-Korn, both FDP, as Minister for Labour and Social Services.<sup>562</sup>

Indeed, of the suggestions brought forth by the DAB, one of its candidates, Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, was eventually appointed by the re-elected Christian Democratic government as the first female minister in the Federal Republic. However, she was not appointed to the post that the DAB had suggested and which would have most suited Schwarzhaupt's qualification, i.e. Minister for Justice, but instead to the newly established Department of Health. Nonetheless, her appointment, which had also been supported by Schwarzhaupt's party-colleague, Helene Weber,<sup>563</sup> was not only a milestone for women politicians in West Germany at the time, but was an important gain for the DAB, in which Schwarzhaupt had been an active member since the early days of its re-establishment and of which she would become first deputy and later executive chairwoman.

Accordingly, the organization was greatly alarmed when, only two years after Schwarzhaupt had been appointed Minister for Health, a rumour circulated among the DAB's members that the CDU's coalition partner, the FDP, had proposed to reduce the number of government departments and specifically, to dispose of the Department of Health. Following an extended executive committee meeting at which the matter was discussed, Marga Anders issued a letter to Vice Chancellor Ludwig Erhard in August 1963. In this letter Anders asked for confirmation that the Department of Health would be maintained and that Schwarzhaupt would remain in her post. Continuing on, Anders stated that she assumed and hoped that, instead of removing the only woman

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<sup>562</sup> BA1ch B 232/68, minutes of the DAB executive committee meeting in Frankfurt am Main, 3-4 June 1961.

<sup>563</sup> Deutscher Juristinnenbund, *Juristinnen in Deutschland*, p. 141.



from the cabinet, the government would do everything possible to pave the way for more qualified female politicians to take office.<sup>564</sup>

A few months later, the DAB received a rather irritated reply from the federal chairman of the FDP, Erich Mende, stating that the claim that his party had demanded the dismissal of Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt as Minister for Health had been entirely fabricated.<sup>565</sup> The letter sent by the executive committee of the DAB had also aggravated several of its members, in particular, those who were also members of the FDP. Just days after Mende's reply Marga Anders received letters from Heidi Flitz, Liselotte Funcke and Marie-Elisabeth Lüders, who all expressed their resentment towards the organization's accusation levelled at the FDP. As Liselotte Funcke highlighted in her letter to Anders: "[T]he FDP has been trying to establish a good relationship with women's organizations for years and, therefore, did not deserve the decision of the DAB's executive committee [to write to Erhard] without being consulted first."<sup>566</sup> Funcke was especially disconcerted by Schwarzhaupt's presence at the extended executive meeting, which Funcke criticized as a reflection of "very disagreeable"<sup>567</sup> behaviour among colleagues. Marie-Elisabeth Lüders was even more horrified by the "embarrassing incident".<sup>568</sup> Having been informed by Heidi Flitz about the letter sent by Anders and the executive committee, she wondered: "[S]ince when do women's associations pursue big politics and interfere in this already difficult situation with personnel questions?"<sup>569</sup> Despite the DAB's earlier attempt to secure her own place on the candidate list of the FDP, Lüders clearly did not consider it the responsibility of a women's organization to get tangled up in internal party matters and government appointments. Rather than helping the cause of women in politics, she feared that the involvement of women's groups would, in fact, damage their reputation and status - in particular, if the organization based their demands on false assumptions, as the DAB had done in that case.

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<sup>564</sup> BArch B 232/5, letter from Marga Anders to Ludwig Erhard, 21 August 1963.

<sup>565</sup> BArch B 232/68, minutes of the DAB's extended executive committee meeting in Bremen, 4-5 October 1963.

<sup>566</sup> BArch NL 151/280, letter from Liselotte Funcke to Marga Anders, 9 October 1963.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> BArch NL 151/280, letter from Marie-Elisabeth Lüders to Marga Anders, 22 October 1963.

<sup>569</sup> BArch NL 151/280, letter from Marie-Elisabeth Lüders to Heidi Flitz, 15 October 1963.

This controversy within the organization clearly reflected the problematic nature of the DAB's efforts to push for better representation of women in politics. With its non-partisan orientation the support for individual women in parliament was difficult to maintain without appearing politically biased. Naming individual women for political offices and lobbying for their appointment was a balancing act which was only possible if women candidates from all parties received the support of the organization. For this reason the DAB steered clear of naming specific women for political offices in the subsequent general elections and reduced its lobbying efforts to demanding that each party in government would appoint at least one woman as a minister.<sup>570</sup> This particular incident, however, also showed that the DAB, at times, lacked the necessary knowledge and information to effectively lobby for women's nominations to political offices. In both cases where the organization's executive committee attempted to influence appointments of the individual political parties, it acted without having all the information necessary to make a well-founded claim.

It was not until 1967, four years after the Schwarzhaupt incident, that the DAB made one last attempt to secure women's representation in the political sphere of the Federal Republic. In the previous year, the coalition of the CDU and the FDP, which had been formed in 1965, had collapsed over a dispute between the two parties over an increase in taxation, which the FDP had opposed. In order to stay in government, the CDU had been forced to join a grand coalition with the SPD, the second biggest party in West Germany. This rather undesired scenario of governmental rule from both parties' perspective, had initiated a plan to reform the electoral law, in order to avert the necessity of entering grand coalitions in future. The reform aimed at significantly strengthening the majority vote system which would help to prevent not only the need for grand coalitions, but the need for coalitions in general. While the majority vote system was initially favoured by the CDU, as well as by the SPD, the FDP, being among the smallest parties in parliament, vehemently opposed the reform intentions of the grand coalition.<sup>571</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> See, for example, BArch B 232/83, letter from Erna Scheffler to the federal boards of the SPD and of the CDU, 4 August 1965.

<sup>571</sup> Wolfgang Götde, *Anpassung an Trends oder Einleitung des Wandels? Reformbegriff und Reformpolitik der Großen Koalition 1966-1969* (Berlin, 2010), pp. 237-8.



Within the DAB the subject of electoral law reform was first raised at an executive committee meeting in January 1967. At this meeting, the lawyer and now former Minister for Health, Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, urged the organization to draft a memorandum against the reform suggestions. In her opinion, the involvement of women's groups was crucial to the reform debates to further secure women's representation in parliament.<sup>572</sup> Despite her membership in the CDU, Schwarzhaupt opposed the planned reform. According to her, a sole or strengthened majority vote system would put political minorities at a disadvantage and, hence, restrain political pluralism in parliament. More importantly, however, it would have significant negative consequences for female candidates in the elections, as most women in parliament had won their seat through party-lists rather than through their constituencies.<sup>573</sup> Consequently, for Schwarzhaupt, it was imperative to discuss the reform plans from "a women's perspective"<sup>574</sup> and with women's interests in mind.

It was, particularly, the DAB's local branch in the capital Bonn which engaged with the campaign against the reform of the electoral system in the following year. The fact that it was one of the regional branches which took the lead in the matter probably resulted from the inner-organizational resistances which, once again, had surfaced in relation to partisanship. As Erna Scheffler stated in a letter to Schwarzhaupt, her attempts to put the electoral reform on the organization's agenda had in several groups been "misunderstood as propaganda for the FDP".<sup>575</sup> It thus seemed that, contrary to Schwarzhaupt, who regarded the issue from a women's rather than from a party-political point of view, many members of the DAB were unwilling to support a memorandum against the majority vote system, due to their political affiliation.

The organization's branch in Bonn did not seem to share these views as it drafted a memorandum which was sent to the Federal Republic's Chancellor Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, the Vice Chancellor, Willy Brandt, as well as to the federal chairmen of the FDP, SPD and CDU, in February 1968. In this document the DAB's branch outlined that the planned electoral reform would significantly hinder women's chances

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<sup>572</sup> BArch B 232/84, minutes of the DAB executive committee meeting in Karlsruhe, 28 January 1967.

<sup>573</sup> BArch B 232/67, letter from Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt to Erna Scheffler, 11 September 1967.

<sup>574</sup> BArch B 232/84, minutes of the DAB executive committee meeting in Karlsruhe, 28 January 1967

<sup>575</sup> BArch N 1177/77, letter from Erna Scheffler to Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt, 5 August 1967.

to take a seat in parliament. It highlighted that in past elections only eight women had won their mandate from the majority vote, whereas twenty-five women had gained their seats from proportional representative votes. These figures, the branch stressed, suggested that, if the planned electoral law reform was passed, the number of women in parliament would be even further reduced.<sup>576</sup> Two months later the Bonn branch received a reply by the Department of Internal Affairs assuring them that the reservations of the DAB against a sole majority vote system would be taken into account and that the Advisory Council for the Electorate Reform ("Beirat für Fragen der Wahlrechtsreform") had also raised the same concerns.<sup>577</sup>

The fears of some of the DAB's members with regard to the reform of the electoral law turned out to be unwarranted, as neither the CDU nor the SPD eventually proved willing to implement the reform. This reluctance, however, was most likely not due to concerns about women's representation in parliament, but was rather rooted in the political consequences that the approval of such a reform could have had in the next elections of 1969. As the new law would not have been passed and implemented before the elections, both parties must have apprehended the possibility of having to form another coalition with the FDP in order to stay in government.<sup>578</sup>

The reform of the electoral law thus never went ahead. Yet the DAB had raised an important point in the political discussions by declaring the matter a women's issue and regarding it solely from a women's point of view. However, as seen before, party-affiliation of individual DAB members had prevented it from becoming an issue supported by the entire organization. Instead, it had been mainly on account of Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt and the local branch in Bonn, that the reform of the electoral law was given any importance in the organization's efforts to represent women's interests in politics. This objective, as it seemed, was much more difficult to achieve than expected as the non-partisan orientation of the DAB repeatedly prevented a united effort by the organization's members to lobby for the appointment of more women into parliament and achieve a better representation of women's issues and interests in politics.

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<sup>576</sup> BArch B 232/67, memorandum sent by Barbara Schütz-Sevin and Antonia von Süßkind to Chancellor Kiesinger, 6 February 1968.

<sup>577</sup> BArch B 232/67, letter from Dr Hartman (Department of Internal Affairs) to Barbara Schütz-Sevin, 22 April 1968.

<sup>578</sup> See Gödde, *Anpassung an Trends oder Einleitung des Wandels?*, pp. 243-4.



### III.4.2 The implementation of equality in family law

Despite the obvious difficulties to find a common ground for its political lobby work and the disparities among the members of the DAB on party-related matters, the organization succeeded in forming a continuous front in pressing for the adoption of several pieces of legislation by the German parliament. These efforts to influence public policy and legislative changes, centred primarily on the implementation of equality in family law.

Full equality between the sexes had been established as a legal principle in article 3.2 of the new Basic Law, which had been drafted by the Parliamentary Council in spring 1949. It had come into effect on 23 May of the same year, just one month before the DAB was re-established. The organization, hence, had not been among the women's groups which had demonstrated publicly in support of full equality, as proposed by the Social Democrat, Elisabeth Selbert, before the clause's eventual acceptance by the Council.<sup>579</sup> Nevertheless, throughout the following years the DAB continuously worked towards ensuring that the equality principle would not only be implemented, but that it would also be done in a timely manner.

The adoption of article 3.2 entailed a full revision of German legislation, including private and family law incorporated in the German Civil Code. For this purpose, parliament had been given a four-year deadline in order to bring the Federal Republic's law into line with the constitutional pledge of full equality between men and women.<sup>580</sup> However, in order to make the necessary changes in the existing laws, legislators had to agree first on how the term "equality" should be defined by the law.<sup>581</sup>

Two diverging views existed on this matter, which had a long tradition in German public discourse and had also been a subject of debate for the women's movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These views were recapitulated in a circular letter by the DAB's executive committee to its local branches in 1951. As the letter conveyed, the two understandings of equality differed on the

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<sup>579</sup> Birgit Meyer, 'Much Ado about Nothing? Political Representation Policies and the Influence of Women Parliamentarians in Germany', *Review of Policy Research*, 20 (2003), p. 412.

<sup>580</sup> Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 278.

<sup>581</sup> See, for example, Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 'Über das Problem der rechtlichen Gleichstellung von Mann und Frau nach der Bonner Bundesverfassung', *Juristische Rundschau* 14 (1950), p. 417.

issue of the biological differences of the sexes. Whereas one view argued that these differences should not matter to the legal rights of men and women and demanded the complete equality of the sexes, the alternative view acknowledged the biological differences and allowed a distinction based on women's and men's differences in some issues.

The DAB's executive committee put these opposing understandings of equality up for discussion among its local branches and urged them to take a stand on the issue. It also stressed that the committee's opinion on the matter fell in line with the latter view. As the members of the executive committee saw it, the term equality did not mean "sameness" but rather signified the "equal value" of the sexes.<sup>582</sup> This stance was again endorsed in an official statement released by the DAB in July 1951, indicating that the majority of local branches had aligned themselves with the second interpretation of equality, as suggested by the executive subcommittee.<sup>583</sup> By taking this stance the DAB clearly positioned itself in the tradition of the relational mode of argumentation which had been expressed by the majority of German women activists during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. This mode highlighted an egalitarian, but gender-based relationship between men and women, acknowledging the biological differences of the two sexes and the resulting different functions and qualities of men and women in society.<sup>584</sup> It thus provided for certain gender-specific legislative pieces, such as maternity leave or men's military service, without ideologically impairing on article 3.2 of the German Basic Law.

In the meantime, the Department of Justice, under the lead of Dr Maria Hagemeyer, had been officially commissioned by the parliament to formulate a memorandum with suggestions for the reform of the family law. This memorandum was published in 1951 in three volumes, aiming to bring existing legislation into line with the equality principle. Many of Hagemeyer's suggestions were based on the recommendations made by the 38<sup>th</sup> biennial meeting of the German Legal Association ("Deutscher Juristentag"), released in the previous year. At this meeting the Legal Association's member, Erna Scheffler, who at the time was a still a judge at the

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<sup>582</sup> BArch B 232/33, circular letter from Emmy Beckmann to the DAB's local branch in Heidelberg, May 1951.

<sup>583</sup> BArch B 232/27, 'Stellungnahme des D.A.B. zur Frage der Gleichberechtigung', *Die Frau in Beruf und Staat. Nachrichten aus der Frauenarbeit* (1951), pp. 3-4.

<sup>584</sup> See also chapter I.1.



administrative court in Düsseldorf, had called for the full implementation of equality within marriage and the family, including the abolition of the prerogative of the husband and the father. Instead, Scheffler suggested that a court should be given the authority to decide in cases in which the spouses were unable to agree.<sup>585</sup>

The traditional right of the man's prerogative in the family and marriage, determined by articles 1354 and 1634 of the German Civil Code, had provided the corner stones of the patriarchal family structure in Germany since 1900. The proposed deletion of these articles was, therefore, vehemently opposed by many Germans, with the Catholic clergy at the forefront, who argued that the abolition of these articles would ultimately endanger the natural family order. Scheffler's proposition to hand marital and family conflicts over to the courts was, moreover, regarded as an invasion of the private by the public. Such interference of the state was seen as reminiscent of totalitarian methods and, therefore, an infringement on the constitutional promise to protect the institution of marriage and the family.<sup>586</sup>

Opinions on the removal of articles 1354 and 1634 varied significantly among political and religious stakeholders, as well as among women's groups. The Catholic Church was supported in its opposition to the abolition of the two articles by both the CDU and Catholic women's organizations. The SPD and FDP, supported by women's organizations such as the German Women's Circle and Protestant Women in Germany, in contrast, were all in favour of the abolition of articles 1354 and 1634 and, therefore, in support of Scheffler's proposal. The Protestant Church, on the other hand, sought a middle ground, by suggesting the removal of the husband's prerogative, but maintaining the final say of the father in decisions concerning the children.<sup>587</sup>

Despite widespread opposition in the government and among conservative groups, Hagemeyer's memorandum in 1951 matched to great extent Erna Scheffler's recommendations and the demands of the majority of women's organizations. Her memorandum, too, proposed the abolition of the husband's and father's prerogative

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<sup>585</sup> Christine Franzius, *Bonner Grundgesetze und Familienrecht. Die Diskussion um die Gleichberechtigung von Mann und Frau in der westdeutsche Zivilrechtslehre der Nachkriegszeit (1945-1957)* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005), pp. 58-60.

<sup>586</sup> Till van Rahden, 'Demokratie und väterliche Autorität: Das Karlsruher „Stichentscheid“-Urteil von 1959 in der politischen Kultur der frühen Bundesrepublik', *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History, Online-Ausgabe* (2005), p. 2.

<sup>587</sup> 'Ist die Ehe die Hauptaufgabe der Frau? Der Gesetzentwurf über die Gleichberechtigung von Mann und Frau ist fertiggestellt – Erschwerung der Ehescheidung' (no author), *Die Zeit*, 17 July 1952, p. 10.

from the new Civil Code. However, while it concurred with Scheffler's disputed proposal to transfer to a court the ultimate authority in decisions over the upbringing of the children, Hagemeyer proposed the establishment of marriage counselling institutions in order to assist spouses to resolve their differences. Only where counselling proved unsuccessful, should a judge have the final say in the marital dispute.

Following its publication, Hagemeyer's proposal was forwarded to the newly established commission of the Department of Justice, which had been ordered to draft a new Civil Code based on suggestions made.<sup>588</sup> The DAB quickly expressed its general support for Hagemeyer's memorandum. It suggested, however, a few changes which were set out in a comprehensive statement prepared by the organization's legal subcommittee.<sup>589</sup> This statement was released on 31 March 1952, exactly one year before the expiration of the official deadline to revise the Civil Code. The DAB supported both the abolition of the husband's and father's prerogative, as well as the proposition to entrust the courts to make final decisions in arguments concerning the children. It rejected, however, the idea of compulsory marriage counselling, as suggested by Hagemeyer, arguing that marital problems should be solved without having to involve a third person. The statement compiled by the legal subcommittee of the DAB further demanded the reform of guardianship rights, giving women the same rights over their children in the event of the spouse's death. Up to then both partners were assigned guardianship of the children in case of the other's death, but only the widower kept these rights when re-marrying while the widow had to transfer guardianship of her children to her new husband. In addition, the DAB stressed that equality in marriage should also include the freedom by either spouse to choose the family name, i.e. that a man could also take his wife's name.<sup>590</sup>

While the DAB was clearly in favour of equal rights between husbands and wives in marital and parental questions, the organization did not question the distribution of work within the family. It neither demanded the deletion of article 1356 (which determined that it was a woman's duty to run the household) nor challenged

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<sup>588</sup> Franzius, *Bonner Grundgesetze und Familienrecht*, pp. 60-1.

<sup>589</sup> BArch B 232/30, minutes of the DAB's extended executive committee meeting in Berlin, 27 March 1952.

<sup>590</sup> BArch Zsg. 1-312/1, 'Deutscher Akademikerinnenbund e.V., Stellungnahme vom 31. März 1952', *Informationen für die Frau* 1 (1952) 2, p. 4.



the presumption that women usually contributed to the family through their responsibilities in the home. Rather than formally acknowledging this contribution by incorporating a sentence into the marital maintenance law, as suggested by Hagemeyer, the organization, in fact, rejected a special recognition of women's housework, stating that the inclusion of such an additional clause seemed "unnecessary because self-evident".<sup>591</sup> With this line of argumentation, the DAB remained true to its stance that equality did not amount to sameness but expressed the equal value of women's and men's different qualities that they brought to a marriage and family.

The various recommendations and memoranda, among them the statement released by the DAB in 1952, as well as similar claims brought forth by other women's groups, were widely discussed in the media. Major weekly newspapers, like *Die Zeit*,<sup>592</sup> political magazines, such as *Der Spiegel*,<sup>593</sup> as well as professional periodicals, like the *Juristische Rundschau*,<sup>594</sup> all reported the individual claims made by the various interest groups and discussed the often diverse standpoints. Yet, despite these diverging opinions and the strong opposition by most women's organizations, as well as by the SPD and FDP, against the husband's and father's prerogative, the Christian Democratic government drafted a new family law upholding both principles, in June 1952. While implementing equality in matters such as marital and family maintenance, as well as the choice in location of the family home, the draft refrained from challenging the authority of the husband and father. In the CDU's draft article 1354 was left unchanged and, although article 1634 had been dropped, the prerogative of the father was maintained through a new regulation in article 1628.<sup>595</sup>

Following the publication of the government's draft law, the DAB sent several petitions protesting against it. The organization also joined forces with several other

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<sup>591</sup> BArch Zsg. 1-312/1, 'Deutscher Akademikerinnenbund e.V., Stellungnahme vom 31. März 1952', *Informationen für die Frau* 1 (1952) 2, p. 3.

<sup>592</sup> See, for example, 'Ist die Ehe die Hauptaufgabe der Frau? Der Gesetzentwurf über die Gleichberechtigung von Mann und Frau ist fertiggestellt – Erschwerung der Ehescheidung' (no author), *Die Zeit*, 17 July 1952, p. 10.

<sup>593</sup> See, for example, 'Eherecht – Bettelei ums Haushaltsgeld' (no author), *Der Spiegel* (1), 1952, pp. 28-30.

<sup>594</sup> See, for example, Berliner Frauenverein, Deutscher Evangelischer Frauenbund, Deutscher Akademikerinnenbund, Katholischer Deutscher Frauenbund, Verband Berliner Hausfrauen and Berliner Klub für Berufstätige, 'Zur Reform des Güterrechts', *Juristische Rundschau* (1952), p. 268.

<sup>595</sup> Else Kofka, 'Zum Gesetzentwurf der Bundesregierung über die „Gleichberechtigung von Mann und Frau“', *Juristische Rundschau* (1953), p. 3.

women's organizations with which it shared its position on the family law and, in particular, on questions concerning the husband's and father's authority within the family. Together with the German Women's Circle and the German Women Lawyers' Association it organized several public rallies against the proposed law, with the aim to gain more public support in its opposition.<sup>596</sup> In August 1952 the DAB again published a statement in support of the abolition of articles 1354 and (now) 1628. It argued that women should have an equal say in decisions concerning the children, as they were the primary carer and, therefore, would be best suited to represent children's interests. The statement further emphasized that the husband's prerogative in marital disputes was outdated, as it originated from a time in which women had had little education and hardly any experience of professional and public life. This situation, as the DAB stressed, no longer applied due to the radical changes in women's lives and rights since the formulation of the Civil Code in 1900.<sup>597</sup>

In view of the vastly diverging opinions expressed in the public and political sphere the government's draft was, somewhat predictably, rejected by the Upper House of Parliament in September 1952 and again by the Lower House ("Bundestag") in November 1952. With only a few months left before the expiration of the deadline to revise the Civil Code, the government, supported by the FDP, applied for an extension of the deadline by another two years. Both the DAB and the German Women Lawyers' Association again joined forces and submitted several protest letters against the extension of the deadline to revise the law.<sup>598</sup> In this protest the women's organization were supported by the SPD, which vehemently opposed the extension of the deadline and demanded the immediate effect of article 3.2 and, the proposal was consequently rejected by parliament. This rejection, however, meant that, until the parliamentary parties were able to agree on a new Civil Code, all future decisions concerning marriage and family disputes had to be decided by the courts. It was not until 1957 that a compromise was reached when a new draft Civil Code was proposed

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<sup>596</sup> BArch B 232/30, report of the DAB's extended executive committee meeting in Berlin, 27 March 1952.

<sup>597</sup> See 'Stellungnahme des Deutschen Akademikerinnenbundes zum Entwurf eines Gleichberechtigungsgesetzes', August 1952, printed in Ruhl, Klaus-Jörg, ed., *Frauen in der Nachkriegszeit 1945-1963* (Munich, 1988), pp. 163-4.

<sup>598</sup> BArch B 232/1, report of the DAB's activities 1952-1954, included in the minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Freiburg, 1-3 October 1954.



to parliament. According to the revised bill, husbands and wives now had equal rights in decisions concerning their marriage, as article 1354 had been removed. However, article 1628 and, thus the authority of the man in the family, was maintained.<sup>599</sup>

The decision to keep article 1628 immediately caused another wave of protest by women's organizations, including the DAB. Again, it collaborated mainly with the German Women Lawyers' Association submitting another joint letter against the renewed proposal to uphold the father's prerogative, in 1957.<sup>600</sup> The DAB also sent letters to all female representatives in parliament, to the Committee of Judiciary and Constitutional Law ("Ausschuss für Rechtswesen und Verfassungsrecht"), as well as to the individual political parties asking them to oppose the bill. While welcoming the abolition of article 1354 the organization again stressed its opposition to the upholding of the father's prerogative, as determined by article 1628. It argued that keeping this article would infringe on the 1953 ruling of the Federal Constitutional Court, which had confirmed that full equality between men and women had to be adopted in family law. It further stated that the majority of the courts' decisions since the adoption of the equality principle had been in support of the equal rights of men and women in family matters and against the father's overall authority. Accordingly, the organization cautioned that based on these prior rulings a formal complaint against the constitutionality of article 1628, if maintained in the new Civil Code, would be inevitable.

Despite the repeated protests against the upholding of the father's prerogative in the revised family law, the new draft Civil Code was left unchanged and was passed by parliament on 3 May 1957. The DAB, consequently, decided to follow through with its threat and to challenge the new law's constitutionality in collaboration with the German Women Lawyers' Association. With the financial support of the DAB, the German Women Lawyers' Association commissioned legal expertise which was subsequently submitted to the Federal Court in support of the abolition of the father's prerogative.<sup>601</sup> In addition, the DAB sent several petitions to the individual state governments, which had the authority of filing a complaint at the Federal

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<sup>599</sup> Ruhl, *Frauen in der Nachkriegszeit 1945-1963*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>600</sup> BACh B 232/1, minutes of the DAB's biennial general members' meeting in Berlin, 9-11 October 1958.

<sup>601</sup> BACh B 232/5, minutes of the extended executive committee meeting in Darmstadt, 12-13 June 1959.

Constitutional Court, lobbying them to pursue a formal complaint against article 1628.<sup>602</sup> After several years of combined efforts, the struggle of the DAB, the German Women Lawyers' Association and numerous other women's groups was eventually crowned with success. On 29 July 1959, the Federal Constitutional Court declared the unconstitutionality of article 1628. The decision was announced by federal judge, and DAB member, Erna Scheffler.<sup>603</sup>

The importance of this success and of the network of women's organizations which had ultimately made it happen is a significant factor in analyzing the German women's movement and its organizations within in a period of abeyance. Based on this significant achievement for women's rights in Germany during the 1950s I would argue that the function of abeyance organizations should certainly not be limited to simply linking two upsurges within a movement, as has been suggested by Verta Taylor. Rather, as shown in this instance, abeyance organizations have indeed the ability from time to time and, most importantly, when combining their efforts to bring about fundamental reforms.

### **III.4.3 The Report on the Situation of Women in Employment, Family and Society**

While the focus of the DAB in terms of pressing for women's rights had been on the implementation of the equality principle in the family law during the 1950s, the organization's activities in the following decade centred primarily on the employment of married women and women with children, as well as on the related legislative changes. Several of the organization's initiatives in relation to this issue have already been discussed in the previous subchapters, including the objective to restructure and shorten the time of university studies, the establishment of kindergartens and crèches at universities, as well as the struggle for a national part-time model for female civil servants and judges.

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<sup>602</sup> BArch B 232/68, minutes of the DAB's executive committee meeting in Bremen, 1-2 February 1958.

<sup>603</sup> van Rahden, 'Demokratie und väterliche Autorität: Das Karlsruher „Stichentscheid“-Urteil von 1959 in der politischen Kultur der frühen Bundesrepublik', pp. 1-2.



Most of these initiatives were, in fact, motivated by and evolved from the commissioning of the Report on the Status of Women in Employment, Family and Society which had been ordered by the Federal Republic's parliament in 1964. This report was designed as a comprehensive study, aiming to investigate the situation of women in the public and private spheres, mirroring studies already carried out by the United Nations and by the United States. The proposal to commission a report on the situation of women in the Federal Republic was first introduced by the SPD in December 1962, reflecting the party's ideological return to its political roots as an advocate of women's emancipation and equality.<sup>604</sup> Acknowledging the gradually changing role of women in society due to their increasing participation in the labour force, the proposed study was designed to highlight the still existing disadvantages and prejudices faced by women in society and to determine the necessary measures to eliminate these inequalities. The SPD proposal, along with an amendment submitted by the CDU/CSU, was handed over to the Committee for Family and Youth Matters ("Ausschuss für Familien- und Jugendfragen") in April 1963, where it was reviewed and redrafted to be presented to parliament in November 1964.

During its deliberations, the Committee consulted various experts, as well as women's organizations, in order to establish the method and the objectives of the planned report.<sup>605</sup> Among the women's organizations consulted was the DAB, which submitted a memorandum to the Committee for Family and Youth Matters on 2 November 1964.<sup>606</sup> In this memorandum the DAB set out its vision for the report's tasks and purpose, namely to recognize the problems of women in society and to translate the ensuing conclusions into specific legislation counteracting these problems. As the organization argued, the current proposal lacked a real determination to examine women's position and the obstacles they faced in areas such as employment and the family. This argument was primarily based on the fact that the proposed study did not intend to commission new studies and gather new data but,

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<sup>604</sup> See chapter III.3.3, which outlines the shift in the SPD's party programme since the late 1950s and in its policy towards women.

<sup>605</sup> BArch B 232/51, 'Schriftlicher Bericht des Ausschusses für Familien- und Jugendfragen über den Antrag der Fraktion der SPD und den Änderungsantrag der Fraktion der CDU/CSU betr. Enquete über die Situation der Frau in Beruf, Familie und Gesellschaft', *Deutscher Bundestag, 4. Wahlperiode, Drucksache IV/2771*, 12 November 1964, pp. 1-2.

<sup>606</sup> BArch B 232/184, circular letter by Erna Scheffler to the chairwomen of the subcommittees and the local branches of the DAB, 15 December 1964.

instead, aimed to only use already existing information and material. In the view of the DAB this approach was flawed since many areas of women's lives had not yet been researched and there was thus often no relevant or recent data available. This lack in studies applied particularly to the increasing discrepancy between married women's employment and the existing social structures facilitating them to work outside the home. As the DAB argued in its memorandum, the shortage of kindergartens, crèches and day-schools, in particular, affected women's employment and career opportunities. For this reason, it pointed out, one of the report's main aims should be to establish and evaluate the need for child care facilities and to ensure that specific measures were taken by the legislative bodies.<sup>607</sup>

Ten days after the DAB had sent the memorandum, the Committee for Family and Youth Matters presented its draft to parliament. According to the Committee's suggestions, the Report on the Situation of Women in Employment, Family and Society should focus specifically on eleven aspects concerning women's situation in society. These included the extent and type of women's employment, especially concerning their position, salary, as well as mothers' employment and the amount of available part-time work. It further recommended investigating how women were prepared for their role in the family and home, for a career and how they were facilitated to resume their work in later life. Under point six of its recommendations the Committee also suggested the evaluation of external child care services in the Federal Republic.

Instead of setting up a commission of experts to examine these issues, the Committee suggested that the report should be conducted by the government and thus ultimately a biased body. Furthermore, against the DAB's recommendation, it was to be compiled using existing material only. There was no mention of whether or how the results of the report or any following studies should be translated into possible reforms and legislative changes. Instead, as suggested by the amendment previously submitted by the CDU, the report's primary objective was to outline the measures which were already in place to facilitate improving women's situation in society, family and employment and to expand them.<sup>608</sup> These instructions already indicated the

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<sup>607</sup> BArch B 232/184, memorandum by the DAB to the Committee of Family and Youth Matters, 2 November 1964.

<sup>608</sup> BArch B 232/51, 'Schriftlicher Bericht des Ausschusses für Familien- und Jugendfragen über den Antrag der Fraktion der SPD und den Änderungsantrag der Fraktion der CDU/CSU betr. Enquete über die



limitations that the Report on the Situation of Women in Employment, Family and Society would ultimately have. Rather than commissioning a critical study of women's actual status and situation in society, employment and the family, it was designed as a review by the government of its own achievements and accomplishments.

The final report, published in September 1966 and comprising over 600 pages, was, consequently, shunned by the majority of women's groups, as well as by the media. The main criticism was that, instead of offering constructive recommendations and an objective evaluation of women's status in society, the report was rather an account of information and statistics, which were neither critically analyzed nor put into wider context. As the DAB's executive committee member, Marianne Grewe-Partsch, argued, the report was a collection of facts, resembling "Schmeils-Tierkunde" (a zoology school book published in 1949) and lacked an understanding of the actual problems.<sup>609</sup>

The sociologist, Helge Pross, published a particularly scathing article on the failings of the report. Pross' main criticism was directed at the fact that the report had been carried out by the Christian Democratic government rather than by independent experts. This decision, as she stressed, had both prevented an informed and objective analysis of the material and had led to the fact that important issues, such as abortion, prostitution or the rights of unmarried mothers and their children, were either entirely ignored or only briefly mentioned. Then again, other aspects were, according to Pross, presented only in the form of "half-truths",<sup>610</sup> like the assumption that women and men had the same equal rights, despite the fact that women were still required to give up their maiden names on marriage and were, by law, expected to care for the household. The faulty and incomplete assessment of women's situation in employment, family and society in the report, led Pross to the conclusion that "[T]he lacking familiarity with the material; the tendency of trying to prove success; the

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Situation der Frau in Beruf, Familie und Gesellschaft', *Deutscher Bundestag*, 4. Wahlperiode, Drucksache IV/2771, 12 November 1964, p. 4.

<sup>609</sup> BArch B 232/5, commentary on the Report on the Situation of Women in Employment, Family and Society by Marianne Grewe-Partsch, presented at the DAB's extended executive committee meeting in Celle, 14-15 October 1967.

<sup>610</sup> Helge Pross, 'Koloss ohne Geist – der Bericht der Bundesregierung', *Blätter für die deutsche und Internationale Politik* 4 (1967), p. 5.

superficiality; all this is in harmony with the conservative ideology, which the authors repeatedly confess to support.”<sup>611</sup>

Pross' article was read by Erna Scheffler, who subsequently sent a letter to the author stating that she had read it “with the greatest pleasure” and that she had forwarded it on to the DAB's executive committee to draw up a similar statement.<sup>612</sup> The organization, as with many other women's groups, was disappointed with the final report by the government. Having contributed its studies on girls' secondary education and on women teaching at universities, it was particularly disheartening to see that lessons had not been learned from these studies and the various issues addressed by the organization over the last decade.

Equally disappointing as the conclusions of the report was the following parliamentary debate and the further proceedings on the report. In the run-up to this debate the DAB had tried to get it televised on national television, in a joint effort with the Women's Circle and the Women's Department of the FDP. The aim of this initiative was to ensure that the parliamentary debate on the report would reach a broad audience and to make certain that the parties would not push the report to the side. As Scheffler argued in a letter to the ARD (one of the two national channels in West Germany), airing the debate on TV would force the parties to send their most influential speakers forward, who, in turn, would have to properly familiarize themselves with the subject matter. This way, it would be guaranteed that all parties paid attention to the report and ultimately to the situation of women in society.<sup>613</sup>

Despite these efforts, the debate was not televised and the concerns that the DAB had previously voiced proved justified, as hardly any male representatives attended the parliamentary session on the findings of the report which was, consequently, held in front of many empty seats.<sup>614</sup> The session was later assessed by Scheffler as a “miserable debate”<sup>615</sup> as it signified the lack of interest, particularly among male politicians, in the situation of women in the Federal Republic of Germany. For the DAB's chairwoman, this attitude had also been displayed in the government's

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<sup>611</sup> Helge Pross, ‘Koloss ohne Geist – der Bericht der Bundesregierung’, *Blätter für die deutsche und Internationale Politik* 4 (1967), p. 6.

<sup>612</sup> BArch B 232/51, letter from Erna Scheffler to Helge Pross, 30 September 1967.

<sup>613</sup> BArch B 232/51, letter from Erna Scheffler to Mr Papenburg (ARD), 27 October 1966.

<sup>614</sup> Renate Wiggershaus, *Geschichte der Frauen und Frauenbewegung* (Wuppertal, 1979), p. 36.

<sup>615</sup> BArch B 232/83, letter from Erna Scheffler to Erika Wolff (CDU), 18 April 1967.



unwillingness to critically analyse the findings of the report and to articulate objectives to remedy existing gender stereotypes and inequalities.

Scheffler's criticism was re-iterated in an official statement on the Report on the Situation of Women in Employment, Family and Society drawn up by the DAB at its biennial general members' meeting in Hamburg in October 1966, which had been organized under the subject "Managing the double role of the woman". As the chairwoman stated in her welcoming speech, the aim of the meeting was to transcend the report of the government, which "[...] had restricted itself to an inventory [...]" of the situation of women.<sup>616</sup> The statement, which was issued following the Hamburg meeting, included four demands aiming to provide the structural requirements for women's double role in the home and the public sphere, which, in contrast to the government's report, aimed to provide specific guidelines. These guidelines sought to further facilitate women's opportunity of having a family and working outside the home. The first demand issued by the DAB was for the introduction of a national part-time model for female civil servants and judges, for which it had been lobbying since 1964. A further requirement was the nation-wide recognition of all diplomas and degrees completed in any institution other than a university. While university degrees were nationally acknowledged, the recognition of degrees completed at local colleges or advanced training facilities usually depended on the states' educational regulations. As the DAB argued, a nation-wide regulation for all degrees was particularly important for married women, as their husband's job often required them to move. These women would, therefore, be able to enter qualified employment anywhere in the Federal Republic. In addition, the organization demanded the shortening of school and university education, to allow women to complete their education or training before they had reached the average age for marriage and motherhood. The introduction of an intermediate exam should further enable women to interrupt their studies in case of a pregnancy and to return without having to repeat any courses already taken. Last but not least, the DAB again highlighted the need for more kindergartens and day-

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<sup>616</sup> BArch B 232/3, welcoming speech by Erna Scheffler, included in minutes of the DAB's biennial general members' meeting in Hamburg, 6-9 October 1966.

schools and challenged the government to conduct an international study for the basis of comparison.<sup>617</sup>

The statement was sent to the Chancellor's Office, the Department of Internal Affairs, federal state governments, as well as to individual female parliamentarians, who particularly expressed their support for the DAB's claims. The organization was also given the opportunity to bring its demands forward at several joint meetings of women's organizations with the Department of Labour and Social Affairs and the Women's Department of the Department of Internal Affairs. Following the publication of the Report on the Situation of Women in Employment, Family and Society and the wide-spread criticism of the document's lack of reform proposals, the Department of Labour and Social Affairs had invited the co-operation of women's groups to develop a catalogue of suggestions. The DAB was represented by Marianne Grewe-Partsch, who used this platform to re-address the implementation of the measures that the organization had previously demanded, which had also included new opportunities of further education for women who wanted to return to employment.<sup>618</sup>

The DAB also continued to pursue some of these objectives independently, such as the struggle for a national part-time model,<sup>619</sup> or the attempts to facilitate the provision of kindergartens at universities.<sup>620</sup> Family law was also put on the organization's agenda again, for which a separate "marriage law subcommittee" was established in 1969, under the lead of Erna Scheffler and Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt. This subcommittee reviewed existing divorce legislation, which until then had been determined by the principle of guilt. One year later it submitted a detailed statement in support of the principle of irreconcilability to the Department of Justice which was in the process of drafting a new divorce law.

In 1969 two of the claims repeatedly brought forth by the DAB were put into practice with the passing of the national part-time law for female civil servants and judges and the law for the promotion of employment. The latter stipulated the

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<sup>617</sup> BArch Zsg. 1-312/1, 'Vier Forderungen des Akademikerinnenbundes zur „Enquete“', *Informationen für die Frau* 15 (1966) 10, p. 5.

<sup>618</sup> See, for example, BArch B 232/51, report on the meeting with the Department of Labour and Social Affairs by Marianne Grewe-Partsch, 24 July 1967 or BArch B 149/23009, summary of the meeting with the women's organizations by the Department of Labour and Social Affairs, 19 June 1968.

<sup>619</sup> See here also chapter III.3.3.

<sup>620</sup> See here also chapter III.2.1.



provision of educational services and training for women who were returning to paid labour and who had either never gained a qualification before or had interrupted their training for marriage and motherhood. Both pieces of legislation were passed by the new SPD and FDP government, which had come into power earlier that year, and they demonstrated an important step for the advancement of the employment and career opportunities of women with children.

Thus, while the publication of the Report on the Situation of Women in Employment, Family and Society in 1966 had been a disappointing experience for the DAB and a missed opportunity for the government to improve women's situation at the time, it had stimulated the activity of women's groups, as well as political parties, to introduce new reforms. In 1972 a second report was published by the government, which outlined concrete reform proposals to advance women's status, rights and opportunities evolving from the public debates on the findings of the first report. Among these proposals was a review of divorce regulations and the abolition of article 1356 of the Civil Code, which determined women's duty to take care of the household.

Most of these legislative changes, which significantly improved the status of women, were instituted in the Federal Republic throughout the early 1970s and were brought into action by the SPD and FDP government. Many of the issues had been addressed by the DAB throughout the years and the organization had supported and lobbied for several of the reforms even before the publication of the government's first report on the status of women. Following the publication of this report in 1966, the organization utilized its findings to further push for measures remedying the disadvantages women frequently faced, in particular, when having a family and working outside the home. The introduction of the national part-time model for female civil servants and judges and the implementation of training and qualification courses for women entering and returning to employment after raising their children, were measures which had been addressed by the DAB throughout the 1960s and which aimed to eliminate some of these disadvantages. Their implementations were thus considered by the DAB as great achievements in its struggle to facilitate women in having both a career and a family. This struggle had been greatly assisted by the compilation of the Report on the Situation of Women in Employment, Family and

Society and by the public and political debates that had followed the report's publication.

#### III.4.4 Conclusion

In 1952 Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt outlined the post-war tasks of the DAB in her speech to the organization's local branch in Bonn. As she saw it, the responsibility of women graduates was to enable women to play an active role, both in the private as well as in the public sphere. This included increased participation of women in politics and in legislative decisions and changes that would influence women's lives in the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>621</sup>

Schwarzhaupt had held this speech at a time when West German legislation underwent a fundamental reviewing process, due to the adoption of the equality principle in article 3.2 of the state's Basic Law. The struggle that had preceded the inclusion of this principle, and had only been won due to the public pressure exercised by women parliamentarians and women's organizations, had shown the significance of the participation of women and their involvement in national politics. The DAB had, therefore, made it its goal to get actively involved in the struggle for women's rights, primarily through the lobbying of politicians and political parties, and to push for an increased participation and representation of women in political offices.

Although the DAB's attempts to support female politicians proved difficult to maintain, mainly due to members' individual political orientations and the organization's non-partisan stance, the DAB's struggle to increase the number of women in politics was important in so far as it highlighted the lack of women in politics. As the organization had realized, increasing their representation also meant that issues and demands concerning women's lives and social status would most likely be given more attention in the political discourse and would thus benefit the activities of women's organizations.

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<sup>621</sup> BArch NL 151/281, "Warum heute noch Akademikerinnen?", speech given by Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt and by Marie-Elisabeth Lüders at the inaugural meeting of the DAB's local branch in Bonn (ca. 1952), pp. 2-3.



The importance of the link between women parliamentarians and women's organizations, such as the DAB, and between the individual organizations, became evident in the following years during the public and political debates on women's rights in family law, which had to be altered in accordance with article 3.2, and during the reform discussions which followed the publication of the Report on the Situation of Women in Employment, Family and Society in 1966. In both cases, the DAB was actively involved in lobbying for women's rights and opportunities, as well as for the removal of discriminatory legislation in the Civil Code. In many instances, the organization co-operated with several other women's organizations, specifically with the German Women Lawyers' Association, as well as with female politicians, to increase pressure on the government. This approach proved particularly important in the struggle against the upholding of the husband's and the father's prerogative in family law, which stretched over several years and was only resolved through the intervention of the Federal Constitutional Court in 1959 which declared this remnant of patriarchal values in marriage and family as an infringement of the equality principle and, hence, as unconstitutional.

With this ruling, women's groups in West Germany, with the DAB and the German Women Lawyers' Association at the forefront, had achieved a crucial victory for women's rights. By relentlessly pushing for equality of men and women, they had made a significant contribution to the public discourse on women's rights and had ultimately ensured that the constitutional promise of equality of the sexes was kept by the legislators and adopted into family law. They had done so, however, without questioning the traditional gender roles in the family. By acknowledging that women usually contributed to the family's maintenance through their contribution in the home, and by remaining silent on the subject of women's duty to look after the household and children, as stated in article 1356 of the Civil Code, the traditional division of labour based on gender was not challenged by the organizations. Yet the silence on this matter was consistent with the dominant belief of most women activists at the time, that equality should not be translated as sameness but should, rather, highlight the equal value of both men and women, thus allowing a certain degree of differentiation based on their different biological and social functions.

In its campaign for equality in family and marriage, the DAB, therefore, followed in the ideological footsteps of the pre-war bourgeois women's movement, as it upheld the argument of sexual difference. Yet in contrast to conservatives and spokesmen for the Catholic Church, who interpreted the differences of men and women primarily in terms of the "natural order" of the sexes, envisioning the man as the head of the family, the DAB understood these different qualities as the basis of a gender-based but, essentially, egalitarian relationship between men and women.

The problem with this ideological strand began to surface during the 1960s when the DAB was struggling to combine its view of women's role in the family, with the increasing employment of married women and mothers. Evolving from the commissioning of the Report on the Situation of Women in Employment, Family and Society in 1964, the organization attempted to bridge the structural fissure between women's work outside and inside the home. While the combination of a career and a family had already been an aspired ideal of the DAB during the 1950s - one which it had tried to convey to young women in its student-related work - this ideal had always included the interruption of the career as soon as children were born. The DAB's concept changed in the 1960s as the organization, in view of the growing employment figures of married women, increasingly pushed for enabling women to continue employment while raising a family.

The objective was pursued through the demand for part-time positions for female civil servants and judges and through an expansion of child care facilities in the Federal Republic of Germany. Such measures certainly responded to the needs and wishes of many German women and facilitated them to continue working outside the home once they had children. Yet the advancement of these measures also showed that women's work was still not discussed among the DAB in the wider context of the ideological distribution of work within the family. Instead, the organization hung onto the principle of the different qualities and functions of men and women. However, since this principle stressed the equal value of men's and women's roles, this argument became less and less convincing, as women increasingly moved out of their traditional roles and into the workplace, whilst still expected to attend their responsibilities and duties in the home. In this context, the argument of equal value became somewhat irrelevant and outdated. The DAB failed to recognize this problem



and to re-evaluate its stance on equality. Instead, it concentrated on trying to ease women's double burden rather than to develop an alternative family model which envisioned the spouses sharing the tasks of housework and of raising children.

In addition to the lack of critical analysis of women's role in the family and the home, as well as of the effects this had on women's employment opportunities and status in society, the organization also failed to consider these issues in any framework other than that of a married woman. Just as in the political and public debates throughout 1950s and 1960s, women and their rights were discussed mainly in the context of family and marriage. It took seventeen years after the adoption of the Basic Law in 1949 for the rights of single mothers to be reviewed in relation to article 3.2. Yet even then, the DAB did not get actively involved in the reform debates, but merely supported a petition by the German Women Lawyers' Association, which demanded that the new law should ensure the mother's full parental authority over her child.<sup>622</sup>

The objectives pursued by the DAB in relation to women's rights throughout the 1950s and 1960s, therefore, benefited mainly married, middle-class and academically educated women. Reforms which would have most affected working-class or single women, such as equal pay for equal work or the rights of single mothers, were either not addressed at all, or only indirectly supported. The inactivity in these matters clearly indicated not only a lack of class-consciousness among the members of the DAB but also an inability or unwillingness to critically assess social norms and stereotypes and to really transcend the public discourse on women's role and status in society.

Nevertheless, despite these failings and limitations, the organization played an important role in pressing for women's rights, as it ensured that women's legal status in society was continually reviewed in the course of legislative reforms throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In doing so, as Erna Scheffler highlighted in 1969, the organization viewed itself as "[...] a vanguard and guardian of the situation of women for the formal implementation of equality in the law and for the advancement of factual equality in the social reality".<sup>623</sup> To a certain extent, the DAB had managed to fulfil this role

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<sup>622</sup> BArch B 232/67, letter from Erna Scheffler to Horst Ehmke (SPD parliamentarian), 30 June 1967.

<sup>623</sup> BArch B 232/5, circular letter from Erna Scheffler on the tasks and aims of the DAB in preparation for the press conference at the extended executive committee meeting in Hannover, 17-19 October 1969.

throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century. However, for the most part it had confined itself to being the guardian of middle-class, married women.



## **Chapter IV: The Irish Women Graduates' Associations (IWGAs)**

### ***Introduction***

This chapter examines the Irish Women Graduates' Associations (IWGAs) and their activities, aims and achievements in the period between the 1950s and the 1960s. As the previous chapter, this chapter has the objective to establish whether the Irish Women Graduates' Associations should be viewed within the context of continuing the women's movement in abeyance.

The social and political climate of Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s, as outlined in chapter II, was largely shaped by a sense of stagnation and backwardness. While most other countries in the Western parts of the world experienced economic growth and increasing affluence since the mid-1950s, the Republic of Ireland was plagued by high unemployment and emigration rates. For many Irish, Britain had more to offer than their home country, both in terms of employment and personal opportunities, resulting in the fact that many young women and men moved to England during these years. Opportunity structures for women in Ireland had particularly changed over the decades as conservative gender policies since the 1920s and economic stagnation since the 1930s had largely limited their position in society to the private sphere of the home.

In this environment the Irish women's movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had been reduced to a few organizations which continued to exist and to struggle for an extension of women's rights and social status, while the majority of Irish women showed little concern for political matters either because their every-day life was enough of a struggle already or because they simply did not share the notion of being oppressed or discriminated against. Among the organizations which continued their activities throughout the 1950s and 1960s were the Irish Women Graduates' Associations, which had evolved from the early twentieth century Irish women's movement with the aim to represent the interest of women graduates in Irish society, as well as to create a community and social space for like-minded women with a university background. Similar to the previous chapter, the objective of the in-depth analysis of the IWGAs is to establish whether, through their activities and

aims, they fall into the category of abeyance organizations and whether they thus contributed to continuing the Irish women's movement in the non-receptive climate of the 1950s and early 1960s, linking first and second wave feminism in Ireland.

For this purpose, and for the purpose of comparison, this chapter is structured into four sections. Chapter IV.1 provides a brief overview of the evolutionary history of the IWGAs, which originated from the Irish Association of Women Graduates and Candidate Graduates (IAWGCG), founded in 1902. It reflects on the roots of the associations in the early Irish women's movement and outlines the aims and efforts of the IAWGCG and its subsequent split into three separate associations in 1913, i.e. the National University Women Graduates' Association (NUWGA), the Dublin University Women Graduates' Association (DUWGA) and the Queen's Women Graduates' Association (QWGA).

The second part, chapter IV.2, focuses on the IWGAs' efforts to build a relationship with young women and to gain a voice in educational issues. All three associations attempted to liaise with female students and recent graduates and they regularly endeavoured to make membership in the IWGAs more worthwhile for young women. In this respect, several attempts were made to support female students and to enhance their future career opportunities. The associations also made recommendations in relation to the reform of secondary and higher education in Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s.

Chapter IV.3 discusses the associations' efforts in supporting women graduates both in their professional and their private lives. An important aspect of the IWGAs' work was the provision of grants both to women scholars, as well as to women graduates in need of financial assistance. The associations, particularly the Dublin branch of the NUWGA, also closely monitored advertised job openings to lobby for the same opportunities and salaries for women graduates as offered to men.

The final section of this chapter examines some of the efforts of the IWGAs to secure women's influence in public affairs. Among these were several attempts on behalf of the IWGAs to increase women's representation and their participation in public life and public offices. The associations also gave their support to campaigns led by other women's organizations, such as the Joint Committee of Women Societies and Social Workers (JCWSSW), and these collaborations and the network of Irish women's



organizations during the 1950s and 1960s form an important part of this analysis. Accordingly, the final section of this subchapter focuses on the associations' involvement in the formation and activities of the Ad Hoc Committee of Women's Organizations, which was established in 1968 and significantly contributed to the setting up of the Commission on the Status of Women and the subsequent reforms benefiting women's position in Irish society.

#### ***IV.1 History and composition of the Irish Women Graduates' Associations***

In March 1902 several Irish women graduates came together and founded the Irish Association of Women Graduates and Candidate Graduates (IAWGCG). These women included Mary Hayden, Alice Oldham and Agnes O'Farrelly, who joined forces in the struggle to get women admitted to Irish universities on equal terms as men.

The IAWGCG was set up in connection with the Royal Commission on University Education in Ireland, which had been established in the previous year. This Royal Commission, usually better known as the Robertson Commission (named after its chairman Baron Robertson), had been given the important task of finding a permanent solution to the Irish university question that had troubled the country's governments since the 1840s. Until the late 1870s, the university question focused primarily on the higher education of the male population in Ireland, and particularly on that of the Catholic population. The aim was to reach a compromise in the on-going conflict between the Catholic Church and the British government which centred on the church's opposition to Catholics attending non-Catholic or non-denominational institutions, such as Trinity College or the Queen's Colleges. Due to this opposition, the Catholic University was founded in Dublin in 1854. However, this university lacked a charter from the state to confer degrees to its students and thus struggled from the start to consolidate itself as a real alternative for Catholic students to the existing non-Catholic institutions.<sup>624</sup> With increasing pressure to find a solution to the Irish university question since the 1850s, efforts were made to encourage and increase the

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<sup>624</sup> Judith Harford, 'Women and the Irish University Question', in Judith Harford and Claire Rush, eds., *Have Women Made a Difference? Women in Irish Universities, 1850-2010* (Bern, 2010), pp. 8-11.

enrolment of Catholics at Trinity College Dublin (TCD). For this purpose, the university's religious tests and declarations of faith, which had already been abolished for students in 1794,<sup>625</sup> were finally also eliminated for the teaching staff, fellows and scholars in 1873. Despite this effort to further open Trinity to the Catholic population, the unyielding stance of the church's hierarchy on the education of Catholics at the university remained and was further reinforced through the 1875 decree by Pope Pius IX which stated that parents who sent their children to non-Catholic schools or universities would not receive absolution.<sup>626</sup>

It was not until 1879 that a compromise in the university question was reached between the British government and the Catholic hierarchies with the passing of the Royal University Act. This act replaced the former Queen's University Ireland (the degree awarding body of the Queen's Colleges) with the Royal University of Ireland (RUI), a new non-denominational examining and degree-awarding body. Teaching was still provided by the universities, both Protestant and Catholic, including the Catholic University, which changed its name in 1883 to University College Dublin (UCD). With this new examining body, students attending the Catholic University were finally able to gain a degree in Ireland without having to attend a non-Catholic or non-denominational institution.<sup>627</sup>

The passing of the Royal University Act was also a significant milestone for women in their struggle for access to higher education in Ireland. So far women had not been able to enrol at the universities or take the exams. However, as discussed in chapter I, separate women's colleges, which had been set up in Dublin and Belfast since the 1860s, had offered women an education similar to the universities, but without being able to award degrees to their students. Due to the pressure of women activists, the Royal University Act finally allowed women to sit university exams and be awarded a third level degree. Yet women continued to be excluded from the lectures

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<sup>625</sup> These tests and declarations had been introduced at the university during the anti-Catholic atmosphere of the years following the Jacobite Wars in Ireland in the late seventeenth century. Even though the tests were abolished for students in 1794, they remained for the staff of the university thus ensuring that the teaching and governing body had remained firmly in the hands of Anglican academics. Accordingly, the percentage of Catholic students remained minimal as most Irish Catholics, as well as the Catholic Church, disapproved of an education at Trinity College Dublin – see R.B. McDowell and D.A. Webb, *Trinity College Dublin 1592-1952. An academic history* (Dublin, 2004), pp. 246-7.

<sup>626</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 255-7.

<sup>627</sup> Harford, 'Women and the Irish University Question', pp. 9-11.



at the universities and, therefore, had to still attend private institutions, such as the Protestant Alexandra College or the Dominican College Eccles Street to prepare for the exams. The Queen's Colleges gradually admitted women to their lectures following the passing of the Royal University Act, but Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin both remained closed to women until 1904 and 1908 respectively.<sup>628</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the compromise reached through the Royal University Act of 1879 came increasingly under pressure, as dissatisfaction with the RUI model grew, due to its failure to require course attendance as a precondition for gaining a degree. Moreover, the RUI did not provide basic university facilities for students, such as a library. For this reason, the Robertson Commission was set up in 1901 to examine the effectiveness of the Royal University by collecting evidence from various interest groups. It was then that the Irish Association of Women Graduates and Candidate Graduates (IAWGCG) was founded, in order to protect the rights already gained for women in higher education and to further lobby for the admission of women, on equal terms as men, to all Irish universities.<sup>629</sup>

The initiative to establish a women graduates' association had come from the Central Association of Schoolmistresses and other Ladies Interested in Education (CAISM). One of the most hard-fought campaigns of the CAISM, since its foundation in 1882, had aimed at gaining access for women students to Trinity College Dublin. This campaign had been in process since 1892 and had been led by Alice Oldham, who later became one of the founding members of the IAWGCG. One decade later, however, the campaign had still not met with success.<sup>630</sup> The failure to realize its goal, as well as the diverging views among the members of the CAISM over which solution to the Irish university question would most benefit women, led to a proposal to establish a separate women graduates' association. Shortly after, on 14 March 1902, the IAWGCG was formed. Alice Oldham, a Protestant, became the first president and Mary Hayden, a Catholic, became vice president. The joining of Protestant and Catholic women in the newly founded IAWGCG, indicated a new departure towards a more pluralist campaign

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<sup>628</sup> Mary J. Hogan, 'University College Dublin Women Graduates' Association 1902-1982', in University College Dublin Women Graduates' Association, ed., (Dublin, 1982), pp. 5-7.

<sup>629</sup> Harford, 'Women and the Irish University Question', pp. 15-6.

<sup>630</sup> Eibhlín Breathnach, 'Charting New Waters: women's experience in higher education, 1879-1908', in Mary Cullen, ed., *Girls Don't Do Honours. Irish Women in Education in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Dublin, 1987), pp. 62-4.

in women's struggle for equal rights in education.<sup>631</sup> The non-denominational orientation of the organization was particularly significant for Catholic women, whose interests in education had, until then, been mainly represented by the Clergy and, to some extent, by Protestant women's groups.<sup>632</sup>

The IAWGCG's goal was "to promote the interest of women in any scheme of University education in Ireland and to secure that all advantages of such education shall be open to women equally with men".<sup>633</sup> In accordance with this general objective, the first initiative of the association was to lobby the Robertson Commission to introduce full equality of women and men in Irish higher education. For this purpose, the IAWGCG put together a list of eight demands, which was subsequently presented to the Commission by Agnes O'Farrelly and Annie McElderry.<sup>634</sup> These demands included that all honours and prizes, as well as all lectures and classes offered by universities, should be open equally to men and women. The association also claimed that all appointments within the university should be open to women, including posts of senior lecturers, and that universities should provide residences for their female students. The IAWGCG's demands further included the requirement for attendance at lectures to be a pre-requisite for the completion of a degree and that these lectures should only be given at the accredited general colleges.<sup>635</sup>

This latter claim of the exclusivity in awarding degrees highlighted the association's stance on university education for men and women. While acknowledging the previous accomplishments and opportunities provided by women's colleges, the members of the IAWGCG envisioned the future of higher education in the form of co-education and thus opposed the formal recognition of these separate institutions as university colleges. With this stance, the IAWGCG differed significantly from the views of some of those representing the women's colleges at the Robertson Commission, who feared for the future of their institutions. Henrietta White, headmistress of Alexandra College, Margaret Byers of Victoria College Belfast, as well

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<sup>631</sup> Harford, 'Women and the Irish University Question', p. 16 and Senia Pašeta, 'Achieving Equality: Women and the Foundation of the University', in Tom Dunne, ed., *The National University of Ireland, 1908-2008* (Dublin, 2008), p. 26.

<sup>632</sup> Senia Pašeta, 'Achieving Equality: Women and the Foundation of the University', pp. 16-7.

<sup>633</sup> See Hogan, 'University College Dublin Women Graduates' Association 1902-1982', p. 5.

<sup>634</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 13-4.

<sup>635</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 1/3, IAWGCG Resolution to the Governing body of UCD, which includes the list of demands issued to the Royal Commission of University Education in Ireland, 16 April 1910.



as James Macken who spoke on behalf of Loreto College, for example, all argued for the continuation of separate women's institutions as fully recognized university colleges. Yet the main concern of the advocates of co-education was that if a separate higher education was maintained, women's degrees would be in danger of being considered less valuable and subordinate to the degrees earned by male students, at the general universities.<sup>636</sup>

The final report published by the Robertson Commission in 1904 ultimately agreed with the arguments put forward by the IAWGCG and other advocates of co-education at Irish universities. Moreover, it adopted into its reform suggestions the full list of demands issued by the organization acknowledging that the case presented to the Commission on behalf of women could not "[...] be stated more clearly or more succinctly than in the recommendations of the IAWG".<sup>637</sup>

The report's recommendations, however, were superseded by events when Trinity College, which had been excluded from the Royal Commission's investigation, opened its doors to women in 1904, around the same time the Robertson report was published. The university's decision had been made following the receipt of a letter from the British Crown sanctioning the admittance of women to degrees and allowing them to teach in Arts and Medical courses. Various regulations were, however, simultaneously implemented by Trinity College Dublin aiming to keep women separate, such as the requirement that women had to leave campus by 6pm, as well as the establishment of separate common and cloak rooms for female students and staff.<sup>638</sup>

The admission of women at Trinity College Dublin further accentuated the continuing disadvantages of Catholic women students. With all colleges, apart from University College Dublin, now open to women students, the former Catholic University came under increasing pressure to follow suit. The IAWGCG recognized this opportunity and reinforced its demand for the admission of women to UCD on equal terms as men. The association thus promptly sent a petition to the university's governing body and its senate pushing it to follow the example of Trinity College and

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<sup>636</sup> Harford, 'Women and the Irish University Question', pp. 26-7.

<sup>637</sup> Hogan, 'University College Dublin Women Graduates' Association 1902-1982', p. 14.

<sup>638</sup> Harford, 'Women and the Irish University Question', pp. 18-20.

finally admit women on equal terms as men.<sup>639</sup> In its request, the IAWGCG was supported by the university's registrar, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington - husband of the feminist campaigner and IAWGCG member, Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington. In an effort to press for women's right to enrol and attend lectures at UCD, he had gathered several signatures from colleagues who were in favour of women's admission. In spite of this support, the IAWGCG's claim was denied, on grounds of lack of accommodation for women and of the necessary funds to provide them.<sup>640</sup>

It was not until 1908 that a final solution to the Irish university question was found with the passing of the University Act and the subsequent establishment of two new non-denominational universities, Queen's University Belfast and the National University of Ireland (comprising the former Queen's Colleges in Cork and Galway, as well as a re-organized University College Dublin). Despite its non-denominational status, the National University of Ireland became the preferred institution of Irish Catholics, while the Queen's University in Belfast and Trinity College, which remained independent and unchanged in structure, catered primarily for Protestants.<sup>641</sup> The 1908 University Act also granted women full and equal access to the new universities (including UCD) and determined that women were to be admitted to teaching positions and all other university appointments. Both Mary Hayden and Alice Oldham were among the first women to be appointed to professorships and to be nominated for the senate of the National University and for the governing body of UCD.<sup>642</sup>

Despite these important gains for women through the University Act in 1908, the question of co-education was still not completely resolved. Several of the Catholic women's colleges were seeking affiliation status to the new National University, thus upholding the possibility of separate education. In response to these applications, the IAWGCG re-submitted petitions to the governing body of UCD and to the senate of the National University, opposing the recognition of women's colleges.<sup>643</sup> The petitions had little success with the governing body of UCD, which admitted the applications of both St. Mary's and Loreto College in 1911. However, this decision was quickly reversed by

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<sup>639</sup> See IE UCDA NUWGA 1/3, letter from the IAWGCG to Sir Anthony MacDonnell which refers to the previous petitions sent, 26 February 1907.

<sup>640</sup> Pašeta, 'Achieving Equality: Women and the Foundation of the University', pp. 28-9.

<sup>641</sup> Harford, 'Women and the Irish University Question', pp. 20-3.

<sup>642</sup> Pašeta, 'Achieving Equality: Women and the Foundation of the University', pp. 29-31.

<sup>643</sup> E UCDA NUWGA 1/3, IAWGCG resolution to the governing body of UCD, 16 April 1910.



the NUI senate, which concurred with the claims made by the IAWGCG that a separate education would endanger the value of women's degrees. The rejection of the women's colleges' applications through the NUI senate, at last, put an end to the long debate on a joint versus a separate education for men and women at Irish universities and, therefore, to the campaign for women's admission to Irish universities on equal terms as men.<sup>644</sup>

With the admission of women to all Irish universities finally secured and the assurance that women would get the same higher education as men, many of the IAWGCG's members considered the aims of the association achieved and, hence, saw no further need for the association. This issue was discussed at the organization's general meeting on 13 December 1913. By the end of this year, the IAWGCG's affiliation to the British Federation of University Women, which it had joined in 1909, expired, and many members regarded this as a fitting point to conclude all business and dissolve the organization. Other members, among them the founding members, Mary Hayden and Alice Oldham, disagreed with this notion. For them the responsibilities of a women graduates' association needed to be understood and defined in a broader sense. As these women saw it, now that women's access to higher education on equal terms had been accomplished, the focus should be shifted to securing the equal position of women graduates in all aspects of society. This included, particularly, ensuring that women would have the same opportunities in their postgraduate careers as men.

The differences in opinion on the role and tasks of a women graduates' association ultimately led to the decision to dissolve the organization. The remaining members, who wanted to continue the work, formed the National University of Ireland Women Graduates' Association (NUWGA), with planned branches in Dublin, Cork and Galway. However, neither Cork nor Galway continued their work and were only, much later, re-established and re-integrated into the NUWGA.<sup>645</sup> The Dublin branch of the National University, therefore, remained the only active group for several years, with Mary Hayden chairing as its president. It was not until 1922 and 1923 respectively that

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<sup>644</sup> Pašeta, 'Achieving Equality: Women and the Foundation of the University', p. 30.

<sup>645</sup> While Galway was re-founded in 1937, the NUWGA branch in Cork was not established until 1952.

women graduates of the other two Irish universities, i.e. Queen's University Belfast and Dublin University (Trinity College), formed into similar associations.<sup>646</sup>

Following its establishment in 1914, the NUWGA particularly focused on the employment opportunities of women graduates in Ireland. The association pressed, for example, for the appointment of women inspectors on Intermediate Education Boards for both secondary and primary education, as well as for women's appointment to the Commission of National Education.<sup>647</sup> Most of the NUWGA's initiatives in the early years were, however, without success<sup>648</sup> and despite its initial activism after the split of the IAWGCG, no further entries were made in the association's minute books for several years after 1917.

Mary Hogan attributes the break in the association's meetings to the difficult political and economic times, first caused by the outbreak of World War I and superseded by the nationalist struggles in Ireland.<sup>649</sup> This explanation seems plausible, as the end of these tensions also marked the foundation of the women graduates' associations at the remaining two Irish universities. The Dublin University Women Graduates' Association (DUWGA) was established in March 1922, just several months after the end of the Irish War of Independence and before the outbreak of the Civil War, in June 1922.<sup>650</sup> The Queen's University Women Graduates' Association (QWGA) was formed shortly after the end of the Civil War in 1923. Based on the founding dates of both the DUWGA and QWGA, which were closely linked to the political developments in Ireland at the time, the suggestion seems likely that the nationalist struggle had an inhibiting effect on the activities of the women graduates.

With the formation of the two new associations at Trinity College and Queen's University, women graduates from all Irish universities had, once again, the opportunity to join a women graduates' organization. Although the NUWGA, DUWGA and QWGA remained independent associations, they quickly united in the Irish Federation of University Women (IrFUW). This umbrella group, founded in 1925 on the

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<sup>646</sup> Hogan, 'University College Dublin Women Graduates' Association 1902-1982', pp. 19-20.

<sup>647</sup> See, for example, IE UCDA NUWGA 2/15, letter from the NUWGA to the Commissioners of National Education for Ireland, 29 May 1916.

<sup>648</sup> See, for example, IE UCDA NUWGA 2/15, response letter from the Secretary of the Commission of National Education in Ireland, 1 December 1916.

<sup>649</sup> Hogan, 'University College Dublin Women Graduates' Association 1902-1982', p. 20.

<sup>650</sup> See DUWGA archive, DUWGA Report, Statement of Accounts and List of Members 1922, p. 1.



initiative of the DUWGA and the QWGA, was intended as an all-Ireland organization for women graduates. The offices within the IrFUW were set to rotate between members of the three IWGAs and they were appointed at the triennial IrFUW conferences hosted alternately by the associations.<sup>651</sup> The IrFUW's main purpose was to link the DUWGA, the NUWGA and the QWGA to the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), which at the time had affiliations in twenty countries around the world.<sup>652</sup>

While the three associations joined in the IrFUW, the IWGAs were not centralized and maintained their status as separate entities. Each of the associations had their own executive committee which usually comprised approximately 5-7 members of the respective association and was in charge of its entire business. Unlike the DAB, none of the IWGAs had permanent subcommittees, apart from a social committee responsible for organizing the various events and meetings held for the members, which were an important part of all three associations' activities. This absence of more specialized subcommittees meant that the executive committees determined both the agenda and the objectives, which were voted on at the annual general meetings, and subsequently carried them out. Within the NUWGA, which had three branches, one in Dublin, one in Galway and one in Cork, each branch had its own executive committee with only limited contact between each of these committees.

In terms of the IWGAs' structure, and in contrast to the DAB, the Irish associations therefore do not fully fit into Verta Taylor's definition of an abeyance organization as they lacked a centralized organization. Yet, as the DAB, the associations fulfilled the remaining internal factors, as defined by Taylor.<sup>653</sup> Throughout the decades they each maintained a rather stable membership, with many long-term and committed members, all of whom were women graduates, thus ensuring the associations' temporality and exclusivity. Regular meetings, social events and activities further encouraged participation of members and offered an alternative cultural framework where women graduates could meet, debate, educate themselves through the various talks and lectures offered and exchange their views on political and cultural

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<sup>651</sup> QUB/E/8/2, "History and Aims of the Irish Federation of University Women", included in IrFUW minute book 1953-1967.

<sup>652</sup> Hogan, 'University College Dublin Women Graduates' Association 1902-1982', p. 27.

<sup>653</sup> See Verta Taylor, 'Social Movement Continuity: The Women's Movement in Abeyance', *Sociological review*, 54 (1989), pp. 765-70.

matters. With the exception of the structure, the IWGAs thus largely complied with the definition and function of an abeyance organization by offering their members a niche in society and by promoting a collective identity, which was influenced and shaped by the ideas and ideals of the women's movement.<sup>654</sup> However, as seen later in this chapter and as discussed, in more detail, in chapter V, the absence of a centralized structure had an important effect on the associations' level of activity and on the effectiveness of their actions.

In line with their status as separate entities, the individual Irish Women Graduates' Associations all had their own constitutions and sets of goals. Both the QWGA's<sup>655</sup> and the DUWGA's<sup>656</sup> constitution named the aim "to keep members in touch with their universities and one another" as their primary objective. For this purpose, regular social gatherings, such as annual dinners, talks and outings were organized for the associations' members. The QWGA's constitution also included a paragraph that stated that the association would, at times, further the interests of women graduates and women undergraduates - only, however, in matters arising at the university. By contrast, the NUWGA's constitution, although also having the aim to keep its members in touch, comprised the second objective "[T]o promote the interests of university women and to secure for them equality of opportunity with men in their post-graduate career."<sup>657</sup> In 1954, this aim by the NUWGA was further extended through the integration of the following paragraph into its constitution:

To promote the cultural, social and economic interests of university women; to encourage them to exert their influence in public affairs; to promote the interests of women in University education in Ireland and to provide means for university women to maintain contact with university life.<sup>658</sup>

Although the DUWGA's, and also to a much lesser extent the QWGA's, activities in the following decades were at times similar to these latter aims stated in the NUWGA's statute, the two associations never included a similar section into their own constitutions, despite several revisions. This indicates that the women graduates' associations of Dublin and Queen's University never really envisioned themselves as

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<sup>654</sup> Taylor, 'Social Movement Continuity', p. 762.

<sup>655</sup> TCD MUN SOC WGA Box 1/file 6, DUWGA constitution 1927.

<sup>656</sup> QUB E/8/2 Box 17, Queen's University Women Graduates' Association: Report, Personal and College News, List of Members, etc. 1924, p. 3.

<sup>657</sup> See TCD MUN SOC WGA Box 1/file 6, memorandum of the Joint Committee of Vocationalism, which included the constitutions of its affiliated organizations, 15 November 1940.

<sup>658</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 3/25 & 26, NUWGA draft constitution 1954.



lobby groups, representing the interests of women graduates in the public domain. The NUWGA, on the other hand, continued to view its role and responsibilities in a way that extended beyond the university campus. These differences in the constitutions and definitions of tasks are crucial for the analysis of the activities and agenda of the IWGAs.

Despite the different mission statements, the DUWGA, soon after its formation, joined the NUWGA in the protest against some of the restrictive legislation that was gradually introduced in the Irish Free State since the early 1920s.<sup>659</sup> The two associations, for instance, both opposed the 1925 Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill. This bill sought to limit positions in the civil service on the grounds of sex, by giving the Minister for Finance the power to confine competitive examinations for some posts in the civil service to people of a certain “age, sex, health, character, and ability”.<sup>660</sup> The NUWGA and the DUWGA lobbied both members of the Dáil and of Seanad Éireann to oppose the bill.<sup>661</sup> Having passed in the Dáil, the bill was eventually defeated in the Seanad, thus averting the legal exclusion of women on the grounds of sex from higher positions in the civil service.

Nonetheless, other measures aiming to limit women’s employment opportunities and to prevent them from advancing too far up the occupational ranks were introduced only a few years later. Among these measures was a marriage bar, which banned women from working in the public service after they had gotten married, and the Conditions of Employment Bill.<sup>662</sup> There is no evidence that the IWGAs protested against the introduction of the marriage bar. In fact, very few women, particularly single women, opposed this ban on the employment of married women, as they shared the view that women, once married, should stay at home.<sup>663</sup> As shown later in chapter IV.3, this stance was still prevalent within the IWGAs throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The NUWGA and the DUWGA did, however, in 1935 protest against the proposed Conditions of Employment Act which further endangered women’s employment rights. Section 12 of this act planned to give the Minister for Industry and

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<sup>659</sup> See also chapter II.2.

<sup>660</sup> DUWGA archive, copy of the “Saorstát Éireann. Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 1925”.

<sup>661</sup> Hogan, ‘University College Dublin Women Graduates’ Association 1902-1982’, p. 32.

<sup>662</sup> Rosemary Cullen Owens, *A Social History of Women in Ireland 1870-1970* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 253-264.

<sup>663</sup> Caitríona Beaumont, ‘Women & the Politics of Equality: The Irish Women’s Movement 1930-1943’, in Maryann Valiulis and Mary O’Dowd, eds., *Women & Irish History* (Dublin, 1997), p. 180.

Commerce the right to exclude women workers from certain branches of industry and to limit their number in these industries. In granting these rights to the Minister, the aim was to counteract the increasing tendencies in certain manufacturing branches to replace male workers with lower-paid women workers, thereby preventing the further rise in male unemployment.<sup>664</sup> Both the NUWGA and the DUWGA joined with other women's groups to oppose the proposed bill. Representatives of the two Dublin-based women graduates' associations, as well as additional representatives of their umbrella organization, the IrFUW,<sup>665</sup> attended the public meeting at Dublin Mansion House in 1935 against section 12 of the Conditions and Employment Act, organized by the Irish Women Workers' Union (IWWU).<sup>666</sup> However, in spite of successfully mobilizing support, particularly among members of Seanad Éireann, the organized protest by the women's organizations was futile and the act, including section 12, was passed in both houses of parliament.

Following on the collaboration against the adoption of the Conditions of Employment Act, the NUWGA formed a standing committee with the National Council of Women in Ireland (NCWI), the Joint Committee of Women Societies and Social Workers (JCWSSW) and the IWWU, to monitor any further legislation restricting women's rights in the Irish Free State. Many of the women activists were concerned about the increasing legislation curtailing women's rights. As Mary Kettle, a NUWGA member, emphasized at one of the association's meetings, Irish women should be very cautious about the constitutional promise of equal rights between the sexes.

This warning soon proved to be well-founded, as just one year after the adoption of the Employment Act President de Valera announced a revision of the 1922 constitution. In the process of this review, several significant changes in regard to women's rights were proposed in a draft in May 1937.<sup>667</sup> In the following months, various women's groups organized a wave of protest against the draft constitution, which was spearheaded by the women graduates of the NUWGA. The association called for a special meeting of all women graduates to take place on 10 May 1937, just days after the publication of the draft constitution. The purpose of the meeting was to

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<sup>664</sup> Beaumont, 'Women & the Politics of Equality', in Valiulis and O'Dowd, eds., *Women & Irish History*, pp. 130-1.

<sup>665</sup> QUB E/8/2 Box 1B, Irish Federation of University Women. Third Report 1937, p. 4.

<sup>666</sup> Cúlen Owens, *A Social History of Women in Ireland 1870-1970*, pp. 266-9.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 269-71.



discuss five articles that posed a particular threat to women's status in Irish society, i.e. articles 9, 16, 40.1, 41.2 and article 45.4.2. In articles 9 and 16, which dealt with Irish nationality and citizenship and with the voting rights of Irish citizens, the words "without distinction of sex" had been dropped. Article 40.1 stated that while all citizens should be equal before the law, the state shall consider "differences of capacity, physical and moral, and of social function". The fourth article, article 41.2, determined that women's primary place was in the home and that they should not be compelled to seek employment outside the home. Finally, article 45.4.2 stated that the state should ensure that the "inadequate strength of women and the tender age of children" should not be exploited and that they should not be forced to work in "avocations unsuited to their sex, age or strength".<sup>668</sup>

These articles and their implications for women's position in society and before the law were the focus of the NUWGA's special meeting on 10 May. It was decided to set up an emergency committee, equipped with a "fighting fund", in order to draw the public's attention to the possible consequences for women's rights if the draft constitution was passed. The committee also sent a delegation to President de Valera to discuss the above articles. Following this meeting with de Valera, the phrase "without distinction of sex" was reinserted into articles 9 and 16. The Free State's President had, however, been unmovable on the remaining three articles.<sup>669</sup>

The NUWGA's members subsequently drew up a resolution which was to be circulated to all women graduates to gain their support. Fearing that some women could be put off in participating in the protest due to partisanship, the letter particularly highlighted the non-political character of the campaign but also emphasized that "[...] legislation based on these articles might very seriously threaten the status of women". To prevent this from happening, the support of every woman graduate - through financial contributions, volunteer work or petitions to Dáil members - was crucial. Every graduate was also asked to contact non-graduate women and to convince them to participate in the protest.<sup>670</sup> A second memorandum was also sent to de Valera, reiterating the NUWGA's concern about the remaining articles and

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<sup>668</sup> Beaumont, 'Women & the Politics of Equality', in Valiulis and O'Dowd, eds., *Women & Irish History*, pp. 175-8.

<sup>669</sup> Hogan, 'University College Dublin Women Graduates' Association 1902-1982', pp. 35-6.

<sup>670</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 1/51, circular letter by the NUWGA to all women graduates, May 1937.

demanding either their removal or re-phrasing to protect women's equal status and rights in the Irish Free State.<sup>671</sup> The fighting fund was also utilized in the following weeks to produce pamphlets, post cards and press releases warning women of the threat imposed on women's rights by the draft constitution. It was, furthermore, used to host a public meeting in Dublin Mansion House on 21 June 1937, to which the NUWGA had invited all women interested in the matter. 1500 women attended the meeting, where participants were informed about the content of the proposed articles and were asked to vote against the constitution in the referendum scheduled for 1 July 1937.<sup>672</sup>

Ultimately all efforts and initiatives organized by the NUWGA were to no avail, as the new constitution, including articles 40.1, 41.2 and 45.4.2 left intact, was passed by a margin of 158,160 votes.<sup>673</sup> The support that the NUWGA had managed to mobilize in the very short time between the publication of the draft constitution and the referendum, however, was remarkable and it was undoubtedly one of the most public campaigns by Irish women at the time. It is also worth noting that there is no evidence of support for the NUWGA's campaign from either the DUWGA or the women graduates' umbrella organization, the IrFUW, although some of their members might have attended the meetings or been individually active. The fact that the QWGA did not participate in the protest seems reasonable given its geographically- and politically-removed status. The absence of the DUWGA's support for the NUWGA's campaign is, however, significant, as the association was located in Dublin where the protest was based and had previously opposed government reforms limiting women's rights in the Free State. It is possible that the DUWGA was simply reluctant to openly lend its name to such a politically- and, considering the Catholic ethos of the contested articles, also religiously-charged protest. Nonetheless, the absence of support indicates, once again, that the DUWGA and the QWGA primarily considered themselves alumni organizations for women graduates rather than lobby groups for women's rights.

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<sup>671</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 1/51, NUWGA memorandum to the President of the Irish Free State, Eamon de Valera, and the Executive Council, 23 May 1937.

<sup>672</sup> Cullen Owens, *A Social History of Women in Ireland 1870-1970*, p. 274.

<sup>673</sup> Hegan, 'University College Dublin Women Graduates' Association 1902-1982', p. 38.



The following subchapters examine whether the different approaches and aims of the three associations shifted throughout the following decades and how each association defined the tasks and the responsibilities of a women graduates' association. It highlights, particularly, whether and to what extent the three associations got involved in public discussions about education, women's employment and their rights in society.

#### ***IV.2 Advancing women's interests in education***

As outlined in the previous section, the IWGAs had evolved from the Irish Association of Women Graduates and Candidate Graduates (IAWGCG), which had dissolved following the opening of all Irish universities to women students and women lecturers, on the same terms as men. Many of the members that later joined the separate associations had been part of the struggle for women's access to higher education and had thus experienced the difficulties and disadvantages that women then faced in gaining an education equal to men's. Yet once the goal of the IAWGCG had been achieved few of the women graduates had questioned whether women's de jure equality also entailed their de facto equality in education. In fact, very little attention was paid by the associations to female students and to educational matters during the early years of the NUWGA's, DUWGA's, and the QWGA's existence. However, since the early 1940s, all three associations increasingly tried to connect more with the young generation of women studying at the universities hoping to interest them in the work of the associations. Both the NUWGA and the DUWAG also contributed to the debates on reforming the education system in the Republic of Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s. The following subchapter discusses the associations' involvement in educational matters and evaluates whether they succeeded in building a relationship with the next generation of women graduates.

#### IV.2.1 Liaising with young women graduates and female students

Most of the IWGAs' attempts to liaise with female students and recent women graduates were driven by the objective to recruit new and younger members. As already mentioned, throughout the years the associations had rather stable and solid memberships. The NUWGA's average membership accounted to around 300, of which approximately 200 were enlisted in the UCD branch, while the DUWGA had around 300 members (excluding the DUWGA's London branch, which had approximately another 200 members) and the QWGA, as the largest of the associations, had an average of 600 members. This meant that the usual membership of the IrFUW, the umbrella organization of the three associations, was about 1200. Compared to the number of enlisted members in the DAB, which remained more or less at 1700 throughout the decades, the IWGAs had a proportionally far greater membership, when the demographic difference between West Germany and Ireland is taken into account. Yet all three Irish associations faced the same problem that the DAB continually attempted to solve: the failure to appeal to young women graduates. Although an increasing numbers of girls enrolled in Irish higher education between the 1950s and early 1970s (with their numbers rising from approximately 2,000 to 8,200 - or twenty-five percent to thirty-three per cent during these years),<sup>674</sup> this development was not reflected in the age demographic of the IWGAs' members, who were usually between fifty and sixty years old. For this reason, the associations repeatedly tried to find ways to attract the attention of female students and newly conferred women to their activities and aims by regularly inviting them to events, as well as by trying to provide practical support to them in their studies and career choices.

The DUWGA, for instance, hosted two events every year for recently conferred female students. By inviting them for tea on the first Friday after their commencement, it was hoped that it would give members the opportunities to mingle with the new generation of women graduates and tell them about the association's aims and functions, as well as about the second DUWGA branch that existed in

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<sup>674</sup> See, for example, Adrian Redmond, ed., 'That was Then. This is Now. Change in Ireland, 1949-1999 - A publication to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Central Statistics Office' (Dublin, 2000), pp. 49-51.



London.<sup>675</sup> This branch, which functioned as an expatriate association for TCD women graduates in England, regularly reported a good turn-out of new graduates at their meetings. The attendance of young women at the events of this branch was understandable given the increasing numbers of Irish women graduates who emigrated to the UK, mainly for employment reasons, between the 1940s and the 1960s. The DUWGA in London was thus a good meeting point for these women.<sup>676</sup> Yet, at home, the DUWGA's tea parties for recent graduates were less successful, despite the association's attempts to increase the events' advertisement during the 1950s. Leaflets were displayed in the university's administration office and were also distributed on graduation day.<sup>677</sup> In addition, the DUWGA regularly co-operated with the Elizabethan Society, the first society for female students at Trinity College Dublin. Its members were usually invited to the commencement teas<sup>678</sup> and they assisted in advertising the DUWGA by also displaying the association's posters and leaflets in the society's rooms. Yet none of these efforts had the desired effect and attendance at the commencement parties remained low throughout the years.<sup>679</sup>

Similar problems with raising the interest of young women graduates were also reported by the NUWGA. The association also hosted regular commencement tea parties for newly conferred women graduates, but as with the DUWGA's events, attendance was usually reported as poor and the association's members were often at a loss on how to recruit new and younger members.<sup>680</sup> In 1961, the NUWGA's committee, therefore, decided to co-opt two additional members specifically to represent the interests of young graduates. These two committee members were supposed to give a fresh impetus to the association's work in order to attract young women.<sup>681</sup> However, the fact that neither the minutes nor the association's annual reports mention any new events or initiatives organized by the NUWGA's committee in

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<sup>675</sup> See, for example, TCD MUN SOC Box 3/VI-8, DUWGA Annual Report 1962-63: Secretary's Report 1963, p. 2.

<sup>676</sup> See, for example, TCD MUN SOC WGA BOX 3/VI-8, DUWGA Annual Report 1950-1951: Report of the London Committee 1950.

<sup>677</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 22 January 1954, included in DUWGA minute book 1934-1955.

<sup>678</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 17 May 1963, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

<sup>679</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 31 January 1964, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

<sup>680</sup> See, for example, IE UCDA NUWGA 2/31&32, NUWGA's Secretary's report 1954-55.

<sup>681</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 1/25, NUWGA's Secretary's Report 1961/1962.

this respect during the following years indicates that this measure remained just as ineffective as the commencement tea parties.

The QWGA took a slightly different approach to the NUWGA's and the DUWGA's. While also regularly inviting women students and newly conferred graduates to some of its social events, it also kept in touch with the committees of the women students' residences at Queen's University, including Women Students' Hall, Riddle Hall and Aquinas Hall. The Belfast association regularly invited their committees<sup>682</sup> and also occasionally provided practical support to the residences by organizing fundraisers, such as for the library in Women's Students Hall in 1954,<sup>683</sup> and by helping the students to furnish the residences' rooms.<sup>684</sup> Yet this involvement in the students' lives only seemed to have had limited success in attracting new younger members. While the QWGA reported on several occasions throughout the 1960s that a large number of women students and recent graduates had attended its commencement coffee parties, it also noted that very few of these women became registered members. Accordingly, it was decided in 1970 to stop inviting new women graduates to the regular autumn meetings. Information for students on the QWGA was now to be merely provided by the secretary of the university.<sup>685</sup>

Overall the QWGA was much less concerned about recruiting new members and young graduates than its affiliated associations in the South. With a relatively steady membership of approximately 600 members throughout the 1950s and 1960s, it was by far the biggest of the IWGAs and, therefore, had little cause for concern in terms of the association's future. In contrast, both the NUWGA and the DUWGA were much more eager to build a relationship with young women graduates and secure their interest in the associations. In addition to the usually rather unsuccessful coffee and tea parties, the DUWGA and the NUWGA thus both tried to appeal to young women and future graduates by offering guidance and support to these women through career counselling.

Already during the late 1920s, the NUWGA had been involved in setting up an employment bureau at University College Dublin which offered career guidance to all

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<sup>682</sup> See, for example, QUB/E/8/2 Box 17, QWGA Annual Report 1951: Secretary's Report.

<sup>683</sup> QUB/E/8/2 Box 17, QWGA Annual Report 1954: Secretary's Report.

<sup>684</sup> See, for example, QUB/E/8/2 Box 17, QWGA Annual Report 1955: Secretary's Report.

<sup>685</sup> QUB/E/8/2 Box 16, QWGA Annual Report 1970: Secretary's Report.



students. This service had later been extended to the other constituent universities of the National University of Ireland, but without a specific focus on women's careers and without the involvement of women graduates.<sup>686</sup> Trinity College Dublin, on the other hand, did not have an employment office on campus until 1953.<sup>687</sup> In 1940 the DUWGA attempted to fill this gap in the university's student services by hosting career talks and seminars for female students once during every college term. These talks were presented by DUWGA members who spoke about their own professions and experiences.<sup>688</sup> This way, the association's members were to provide practical support to young women for the decisions about their future profession and set a positive example to them.

With this objective, the DUWGA chose a similar approach to the German DAB in its student related work throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. By offering the professional expertise and knowledge of the association's members, it was hoped that young women would see the ways in which they might benefit from forming a relationship with older and more experienced women graduates if they joined the association. However, the DUWGA had a much less idealistic and educationalist motivation than the German organization for its decision to offer career guidance. The DAB not only wanted to attract young women to the organization but also aimed to provide them with the means "to assert themselves" in the male-dominated public sphere, including the professions.<sup>689</sup> The impetus for the DUWGA's career talks came mainly from the incentive to increase membership and to make membership of the association seem more worthwhile for young women graduates.<sup>690</sup>

This lack of idealistic motivation of the DUWGA was reflected in the subjects of its talks and in their content, which certainly did not carry the message of gender equality or tried to encourage young women to assert themselves in professions dominated by men. In fact, the talks focused specifically on 'womanly' careers, such as

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<sup>686</sup> Hogan, 'University College Dublin Women Graduates' Association 1902-1982', p. 34.

<sup>687</sup> Susan M. Parkes, ed., *A Danger to the Men? A History of Women in Trinity College Dublin 1904-2004* (Dublin, 2004), p. 176.

<sup>688</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 8 February 1940, included in DUWGA minute book 1934-1955.

<sup>689</sup> See chapter III.2.1.

<sup>690</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 18 January 1940, included in DUWGA minute book 1934-1955.

teaching, occupations in social and civil services,<sup>691</sup> as well as secretarial work.<sup>692</sup> These rather conservative and traditional choices of subjects for the talks, stood in contrast to the often diverse occupational backgrounds of some of the DUWGA's members. For instance, Geraldine Temple-Lang, who was the DUWGA's president at the time, had graduated in law and had worked as a solicitor until her marriage.<sup>693</sup> Another member with a law background was Averil Deverell, one of Ireland's first women lawyers and first secretary of the DUWGA after its foundation in 1922.<sup>694</sup> Again, other members were employed as lecturers and professors at Trinity College, such as Frances Moran, Professor of Law, or Blanche Weekes, assistant lecturer of human anatomy at the time.<sup>695</sup> Yet, rather than inspiring young women to challenge the gendered segmentation of some occupations by including talks on careers less common among women, the DUWGA stayed very much within the framework of what was believed to be a suitable career for women in Ireland during the middle decade of the twentieth century.

It is difficult to establish whether the restricted programme for the career talks contributed to the suspension of the DUWGA's initiative after approximately two years.<sup>696</sup> However, by confining them to these occupational fields, the association's talks certainly did not provide much novel information on women's employment opportunities than the information already available at the time. This limited usefulness for women graduates was, in all likelihood, one of the reasons why the project was, overall, not very successful and, therefore, rather short-lived.

Despite the failure of the DUWGA's project, the NUWGA attempted a similar approach in order to attract more young women to the association. In 1953 it was proposed to establish a career guidance service exclusively for women graduates in addition to the one already offered by the university. Due to the continuing lack of success in recruiting new women graduates through coffee and tea parties at

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<sup>691</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 17 November 1940, included in DUWGA minute book 1934-1955.

<sup>692</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 28 January 1941, included in DUWGA minute book 1934-1955.

<sup>693</sup> Parkes, ed., *A Danger to the Men?*, p. 101.

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>696</sup> There is no mentioning of the career talks in the DUWGA's minutes since late 1942, which suggests that the events were withdrawn from the association's agenda in this year.



commencement, it was hoped that the new initiative would convince more young women to join the NUWGA. As with the DUWGA's career talks, the career guidance was supposed to be provided by the association's own members. However, rather than hosting regular talks, the NUWGA's intention was to set up a permanent advisory board of members which would not only assist young women with their career choices but would also establish a register of all women graduates of the National University of Ireland and of their postgraduate careers. In having such a register, the association hoped to be able to notify women of available grants and bursaries regularly offered to women graduates by the NUWGA, the Irish Federation and the International Federation of University Women.<sup>697</sup> The NUWGA's career service was thus, not only designed to help women with the initial choice of an occupation, but also to possibly further and support their career at a later stage.

The NUWGA's proposal to set up the advisory board for Irish women graduates' careers was made in correlation with the greater plan to establish permanent headquarters in Dublin. In 1953 the NUWGA had decided that it would be beneficial for the association and its aim to increase membership if it had its own clubhouse.<sup>698</sup> So far, the association held its regular meetings and events in rooms provided by the university, but it did not own a permanent space that could have been used in between committee meetings and social events.<sup>699</sup> In addition to having permanent rooms, it was hoped that the establishment of headquarters would offer the opportunity to broaden the association's services and, hence, increase its appeal to younger women graduates. Accordingly, the plan for the headquarters not only included the setting up of the career advisory board, which would be housed in one of the potential offices, but also the provision of accommodation for postgraduate students at UCD throughout the academic year and for visiting graduates during the summer.<sup>700</sup>

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<sup>697</sup> The distribution of research grants and bursaries through the Irish Women Graduates' Associations will be discussed in more detail in chapter IV.3.1.

<sup>698</sup> NAI TAOIS/97/9/1314, "Memorandum concerning the establishment of a Headquarter for the Cumann Bancéimite Ollscoile na hEireann", sent by the NUWGA to Miss O'Connell, Private Secretary to An Taoiseach, 13 January 1954.

<sup>699</sup> Hogan, 'University College Dublin Women Graduates' Association 1902-1982', pp. 21-22.

<sup>700</sup> NAI TAOIS/97/9/1314, "Memorandum concerning the establishment of a Headquarter for the Cumann Bancéimite Ollscoile na hEireann", sent by the NUWGA to Miss O'Connell, Private Secretary to An Taoiseach, 13 January 1954.

To finance the acquisition and the maintenance of headquarters, the NUWGA applied to the university senate of the National University of Ireland for an annual grant of £150.<sup>701</sup> The specially designated subcommittee, which was in charge of all matters concerning the headquarters, was further instructed to write to Dr John McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin, in a plea for financial assistance. While the request to the university senate was denied, the letter to McQuaid elicited more success as he agreed to support the NUWGA and also advised them to approach religious orders for donations and new membership subscriptions.<sup>702</sup>

The decision to involve and lobby the Catholic Clergy for the funding of the planned NUWGA headquarters was not entirely undisputed within the association. When asked if she would represent the NUWGA in the bid to the convents, the member Maureen Beaumont, for instance, declined based on her belief that the association should not seek support of the Church for its objectives. As she argued, the NUWGA was “[...] an association of lay women and thus should be completely independent”.<sup>703</sup> Beaumont’s stance, however, seemed to have been rather isolated in the NUWGA, which was (in accordance with its alma mater) catering primarily for Catholic women. Her criticism was thus given no further notice by the NUWGA’s committee, which followed the Archbishop’s advice by sending several representatives to the nuns’ teachers’ conference in Cabra in June 1954. However, the association’s delegation had little success as only one nun signed up as a member and no considerable donations were made.<sup>704</sup>

The NUWGA’s idea to open headquarters and thereby appeal to a broader and younger base of women graduates was eventually never put into practice as the association failed to gain the necessary financial support for such an undertaking. As a result, the association’s plan to provide more practical support to female students and recent graduates in the form of career advice and accommodation for postgraduate students, as an incentive to join the association, never materialized. Instead, the NUWGA returned to the tried and tested, yet mostly ineffective method, of recruiting

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<sup>701</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/31 & 32, NUWGA Annual Report: Secretary’s Report 1954-55.

<sup>702</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 25 January 1954, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>703</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/43, letter from Maureen Beaumont to Carmel Humphries (President of the NUWGA), 8 June 1954.

<sup>704</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/31 & 32, NUWGA Annual Report: Secretary’s Report 1954-55.



young members through regular tea parties and invitations to its social events. Like the DUWGA and the QWGA, the National University women graduates found themselves mostly at a loss when it came to finding ways to attract young women to join the association. A clubhouse with postgraduate residences and a career service would have possibly helped to boost the NUWGA's prominence among female students and recent graduates. However, whether it would have been sufficient in making membership more appealing to recent women graduates seems questionable, seeing that the DAB had successfully established such a space for women at the University of Hamburg and, nevertheless, still experienced the same problems as the Irish associations in recruiting young women.<sup>705</sup>

#### **IV.2.2 Lobbying for the introduction of a new university course**

The IWGAs' efforts to liaise with recently conferred women graduates and female students were thus largely unsuccessful and often lacked dedication and imagination. Accordingly, when it came to women's interests in educational matters, the associations were usually short of the input of those women who had most recent experience of the Irish education system. Nonetheless, in 1955 the NUWGA launched a campaign which aimed to expand the university syllabus with particular regard to women's interests in education and ultimately their employment opportunities through the introduction of a university course in child care at UCD.

The subject of introducing this course was first discussed among NUWGA members at a committee meeting on 20 June 1955.<sup>706</sup> The incentive had been provided by a letter of the Catholic Women's Federation of Secondary School Unions which had highlighted the need for more child care officers in Ireland.<sup>707</sup> At the time the suggestion was made, the only option for Irish students who wished to pursue a career in child care was to study for this qualification in England through the University of Liverpool or the London School of Economics.

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<sup>705</sup> See chapters III.2.1 and III.2.4.

<sup>706</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 20 June 1955, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>707</sup> Hogan, 'University College Dublin Women Graduates' Association 1902-1982', p. 39.

The reason that no course in child care had been established yet in Ireland was primarily a result of the country's traditional approach to social work, which included the work of child care officers. Having evolved from early philanthropic services to the poor and needy by predominantly denominational organizations during the nineteenth century, most branches of social work in Ireland had remained in the hands of religious groups, such as the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland. In the United Kingdom, in contrast, social services had been gradually incorporated by the state, throughout the early period of the twentieth century. This led to a professionalization of most social service positions, such as almoners, probation officers and child care officers, in England.<sup>708</sup>

The prevailing dominance of religious organizations in Irish social services was rooted in the dominant notion that the state should not intervene in private and family matters.<sup>709</sup> This strict division of the family and the state found its most resolute manifestation in the debate on the Mother-and-Child Scheme as proposed in 1951 by the Minister for Health, Noel Browne, during the first inter-party government of Fine Gael, the Labour Party, Clann na Poblachta, Clann na Talmhan and the National Labour Party. This scheme envisioned free maternity care, as well as free medical care for all children under the age of sixteen, but was rejected due to the strong opposition of the Catholic Church against what it saw as the ensuing state intervention into personal and family matters through the scheme.<sup>710</sup>

Browne's scheme had, in fact, evolved partly from an act proposed by his predecessor, Jim Ryan, who, similar to Browne, had suggested the introduction of free medical care without a means test for mothers and children under the age of sixteen in 1947. When Fianna Fáil returned to government following the general elections in 1951, Ryan also returned as Minister for Health. Following his re-appointment, Ryan drafted a new health bill which was passed in 1953. This new Health Act significantly increased the percentage of people eligible for free health care from thirty to eighty-five per cent. However, in contrast to the previous proposals and in order to prevent a renewed clash with the Catholic hierarchies, the new act included a means test and

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<sup>708</sup> Caroline Skehill, 'An Examination of the Transition From Philanthropy to Professional Social Work in Ireland', *Research on Social Work Practice*, 10 (2000), pp. 689-92.

<sup>709</sup> J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985. Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 277-83.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 315-8.



limited the age of children to six rather than sixteen years.<sup>711</sup> As a compensation for these significant concessions from the earlier schemes, the Health Act of 1953 offered more assistance to bodies which “[...] provided a similar service or ancillary service which the health authority may provide [...]”.<sup>712</sup> By offering new funding opportunities to charities for their social work, the Health Act thus aimed to assist the extension of social services in the Republic of Ireland, however, by maintaining the state’s marginal involvement.

With the new means made available by the 1953 Health Act voluntary organizations were able to hire professional social workers to help their cause, which in turn brought about the need for more qualified candidates. Further employment opportunities for social welfare officers in Ireland were also brought about by the Health Act’s ‘Boarding Out’ Regulations and by the Adoption Act of 1952. Both of these legislative pieces had, indeed, ensured some degree of state control over children’s welfare and had, therefore, defied the opposition of the Catholic hierarchy in these matters. The Adoption Act legalized adoptions in Ireland. By establishing an Adoption Board to review and process the applications, the act had put the matter of adoption into the hands of the state. Moreover, the ‘Boarding Out’ Regulations of the 1953 Health Act empowered the health authorities to put children into foster care if, in the case of legitimate children, the mother and the father had died and, in the case of illegitimate children, if the mother had died. A Health Board was established to carry out regular inspections of foster homes. With the establishment of these supervisory bodies, the Adoption Act and the ‘Boarding Out’ Regulations had thus opened further opportunities for employment of Irish social workers and, particularly, child care officers, who would oversee the implementation of the guidelines.<sup>713</sup>

The NUWGA’s proposal in 1955 to establish a course in child care at UCD as part of its social science degree was made in response to these gradually changing employment opportunities in social welfare. It also corresponded to the association’s overall objective as adopted one year earlier in the NUWGA’s new constitution,

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<sup>711</sup> Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp. 314-21.

<sup>712</sup> See Health Act, 1953, Part V, Section 65, <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1953/en/act/pub/0026/sec0065.html#sec65>, 5 February 2013.

<sup>713</sup> Skehill, ‘An Examination of the Transition From Philanthropy to Professional Social Work in Ireland’, pp. 698-700.

namely “to promote the interests of women in University education in Ireland”.<sup>714</sup> As mentioned before, students aiming for a degree in child care still had to attend an English university, which had a well-established dual system of academic education and practical training, provided by the British Children’s Department in conjunction with foster homes and nurseries. Following its committee meeting in June 1955, the NUWGA sent a letter to the President of UCD, Dr Michael Tierney, proposing the introduction of a diploma in child care qualifying participants for the position of a child care officer, both in Ireland and abroad. The course was thus intended as an alternative to the courses offered by English third level institutions.<sup>715</sup> Dr Tierney replied some weeks later, stating that he would consider setting up such a course and offering to discuss the matter further.<sup>716</sup>

Subsequent to this response, the NUWGA set up a subcommittee which represented the association throughout the following months at meetings with various bodies (including the Department of Social Sciences) interested in introducing a child care course at UCD.<sup>717</sup> One of the main concerns expressed at these meetings centred on whether there would, in fact, be sufficient positions in child care in the Republic of Ireland.<sup>718</sup> To investigate this issue, the NUWGA’s subcommittee commissioned the compilation of a report on the likelihood of successfully establishing the course in the Republic of Ireland. This report was completed in June 1956. Its findings were based on several interviews, primarily with authorities and individuals involved in the English children’s welfare system, including the Home Office, the Central Training Council in Child Care, as well as with social workers and child care officers. Based on the English example, it gave a detailed breakdown of the structural and practical requirements for the provision of a course and on the employment opportunities for qualified child care officers in Ireland.

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<sup>714</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 3/25 & 26, NUWGA draft constitution 1954.

<sup>715</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 20 June 1955, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>716</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 18 July 1955, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>717</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/21, NUWGA Annual Report 1955-1956, included in NUWGA minute book 1935-1957.

<sup>718</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 18 July 1955, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.



Regardless of the recent increase in child care positions in the Republic of Ireland, the report's findings were rather bleak in relation to the overall prospect for vacancies in this sector. Compared to the opportunities granted to English child care graduates, positions in the Republic, according to the report, were not only few but also mainly temporary and badly paid, with little or no prospects for promotion in the future. The cited average pay for a child care officer in Ireland at the time was £370 per year. Annual salaries for such posts in Britain, in contrast, started at £500, with the possibility of an increase to £2000 per year, in a position within the Children's Department.

These significant salary differentials were a result of the predominantly charity-centred system which, despite the increased state supervision, continued to provide most child care services in Ireland. Even with the new funding available to these organizations through the 1953 Health Act, the remuneration paid by these organizations could never have matched the salaries paid by the British state departments. For the same reasons, most of the child care vacancies in Ireland were temporary rather than permanent and offered hardly any promotional opportunities. As the report stated, even the few child care officers employed by Irish local authorities, who regularly inspected the mainly religiously-run residential homes for children, usually faced the same austere occupational prospects. Furthermore, in terms of structural requirements for the practical training of child care officers, the report concluded that these could be provided for, however, not without difficulties. In order for the Irish diploma to be recognized in England, students would have to complete a three months placement in the Children's Department during the summer which would still have to be completed in England, as there was no similar department in the Republic.<sup>719</sup>

Despite the problematic professional outlook in Ireland, as well as the foreseeable difficulties in the provision of practical training, as outlined in the report, the NUWGA committee concluded that the introduction of a course in child care at an Irish university was still desirable and necessary. This decision was primarily based on the fact that although vacancies in Ireland were rare and badly paid, there were plenty

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<sup>719</sup> IE UCDA NUGWA 2/22, "Course in Child Care", report read at NUWGA committee meeting 26 June 1956, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

of opportunities for Irish students in the UK.<sup>720</sup> In fact, as the report had highlighted, open positions in the English Children's Department exceeded the number of graduates.<sup>721</sup> By introducing the course at UCD, the NUWGA reasoned, Irish students could qualify for a position in England without having to study there as well. Apparently the UCD's president and the Social Science Department agreed, as the course originally proposed by the association in 1955 was included in the university syllabus for the academic year of 1957/1958. The NUWGA was involved in the entire planning process of the course.<sup>722</sup>

The adoption of the child care course, demonstrates how the NUWGA successfully promoted the interests of Irish women in higher education. By providing the academic foundation for a position in this occupational field, the NUWGA's initiative aimed particularly at increasing young women's future employment opportunities. Moreover, the establishment of the course was a response to the social changes in Ireland in the 1950s, which saw an increasing number of young Irish women emigrating to the UK in search of employment. This was reflected in the considerable number of women who went to England to train as nurses or child care officers.<sup>723</sup> The diploma in child care, as provided by UCD, was designed to support these women as it aimed to provide them with the same qualifications as English child care officers. The initiative to establish the course thus needs to be considered in the context of the Irish emigration problem, which was first and foremost regarded as a female emigration problem, during the 1950s. Within this context, the NUWGA attempted to meet some of the needs and aspirations of young Irish women by extending their training and qualification opportunities at home and thereby to open up employment opportunities to women in both the Republic of Ireland and abroad.

Unfortunately, all these efforts had little or no avail as social work, including child care, in Ireland continued to be firmly in the hands of voluntary organizations and religious orders during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Accordingly, employment

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<sup>720</sup> IE UCDA NUGWA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 26 June 1956, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>721</sup> IE UCDA NUGWA 2/22, "Course in Child Care", report read at NUWGA committee meeting 26 June 1956, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>722</sup> See IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, report on college meeting about the introduction of the child care course on 2 July 1957, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>723</sup> See, for example, Myrtle Hill, *Women in Ireland: A Century of Change* (Belfast, 2003), pp. 132-3.



prospects in child care remained scarce and unrewarding in regard to payment as long as the Irish state remained only marginally involved in this sector. Moreover, women interested in pursuing a career in child care most likely found it more practical to pursue their studies in England where they would most likely be employed. As a result, the child care course only ran for a few years at UCD when it was eventually taken off the syllabus due to insufficient student applications.<sup>724</sup>

It, therefore, seems as if the NUWGA's proposal to establish a child care course in Ireland was too early for its time. It was not until the 1980s that the Irish government regulated child welfare in the Republic of Ireland with the passing of the Child Care Bill in 1985. This bill was subsequently incorporated in the 1991 Child Care Act, the first legislation on child protection and care since the 1908 Children Act. Until then the demand for professional child carers and social workers in the Republic of Ireland remained small and so did the interest in the training for these occupations.<sup>725</sup>

#### **IV.2.3 The IWGAs and the reform of secondary and higher education**

In the same year that the NUWGA had first proposed setting up a course in child care at UCD, both the NUWGA and the DUWGA got involved in another educational issue, after they had been approached by the Council of Education in Spring 1955. This Council had been appointed five years earlier by the Minister for Education, Richard Mulcahy, and was intended as a permanent body to review the education system and advise the Minister on all matters relating to education which fell within the responsibility of state.<sup>726</sup>

Since the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922, the education system had been largely controlled by the Catholic Church, while the state, similar to the social service system, maintained only a marginal role. The state's involvement in education primarily revolved around regular inspections of the privately-run schools, the

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<sup>724</sup> See Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools System Report', in Department of Education, ed., (Dublin, 1970), p. 14.

<sup>725</sup> Caroline Skehill, 'Child Protection and Child Care in the Republic of Ireland: Continuities and Discontinuities between the Past and the Present', in Noreen Kearney and Caroline Skehill, eds., *Social Work in Ireland: historical perspectives* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 127-9.

<sup>726</sup> Áine Hyland and Kenneth Milne, eds., *Irish Educational Documents Vol. II* (Dublin, 1992), pp. 23-4.

provision of financial aid, as well as the determination of curriculum guidelines for the schools.<sup>727</sup> The purpose of the newly established Council of Education was not to review the denominational orientation of schools or the role of the church in running them, but to offer practical suggestions on how to better prepare the Irish youth for “economic and social” life after school.<sup>728</sup>

The secondary school system in Ireland had undergone only minor changes since 1922, despite some reform suggestions. In 1947 a report compiled by a committee of the Department of Education had, for instance, suggested the abolition of school fees, as well as the raising of the school leaving age for pupils from twelve to sixteen years, thereby making post-primary education compulsory and sending pupils either to vocational or to secondary schools. Similar reforms had been introduced in England through the Butler Act in 1944 and in Northern Ireland through the Education Act in 1947, but the Republic’s economic problems during the 1940s and 1950s had largely prevented such overhauling reforms.<sup>729</sup> At the time the Council of Education was commissioned with reviewing the secondary education system, little had, therefore, changed since the 1920s due to the limitations in public spending on Irish education, as well as to the state’s marginal role in these matters. Secondary schools continued to be private, single-sex institutions run primarily by religious orders. Moreover, secondary education was regarded as a privilege accessible only to certain classes, a belief that found its expression in the tuition fees charged by each school. The curriculum had also remained mostly unchanged and was based on the humanist grammar-school principle, which concentrated on the teaching of classical languages and literature rather than science or mathematics.<sup>730</sup>

For the compilation of its report, the Council of Education consulted several independent bodies in order to gather input on the aim and structure of secondary education. For this purpose, in spring of 1955, it had sent out questionnaires to various organizations and individuals. Among these organizations were the NUWGA, including the Cork and Galway branches, and the DUWGA. Since the education system of Northern Ireland did not fall into the Council’s responsibilities, the QWGA was not

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<sup>727</sup> John Coolahan, *Irish Education: Its History and Structure* (Dublin, 1981), pp. 73-4.

<sup>728</sup> Minister Richard Mulcahy’s speech on establishing a Council of Education, April 1950, quoted in Hyland and Milne, eds., *Irish Educational Documents Vol. II*, pp. 25-6.

<sup>729</sup> Coolahan, *Irish Education: Its History and Structure*, pp. 73-9.

<sup>730</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 78-9.



included in the list of organizations consulted, nor did it get involved in the efforts of its sister associations in the South.

The Council's questionnaire invited the associations' opinion and recommendations on several issues: on the general function of secondary education, the suitability of the existing syllabus, suggestions for both mandatory and optional courses, on the extent of home-work and on secondary school examinations.<sup>731</sup> Both the DUWGA and the NUWGA appointed subcommittees to deal with the questionnaire and to draw up a memorandum to be sent to the Council. Most of the women on the subcommittees were either teachers or parents and thus members who had an immediate interest in education.

Despite the suggestion by the DUWGA's subcommittee to send a joint report with the NUWGA, each association submitted their own memorandum.<sup>732</sup> Before making their final submission to the Council of Education, however, the associations exchanged their views and recommendations. Accordingly, the two memoranda addressed several of the same issues within secondary education. Both the DUWGA and the NUWGA highlighted the need for oral examinations in languages, particularly, in Irish. In addition, it was suggested that the variety in texts taught in these courses should be broadened<sup>733</sup> and that traditional teaching methods in languages, such as the translation of old texts, should be combined with alternative methods, for instance, through the introduction of courses in drama or debate.<sup>734</sup> Both associations also stressed that the science course taught at Irish secondary schools needed to include a practical laboratory section. Moreover, the NUWGA and the DUWGA criticized the existence of the elementary course in mathematics - a course only open to girls - and argued that it should be abolished. Instead, it was suggested that a distinction of lower and higher maths should only be made in the examinations by offering two papers, a pass and an honours paper, between which pupils could themselves choose, depending on their ability. This way the teaching of mathematics

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<sup>731</sup> DUWAG archive, copy of the questionnaire sent out by the Council of Education in relation to secondary education, 1955.

<sup>732</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 5 July 1955, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

<sup>733</sup> See, for example, DUWGA archive, DUWGA memorandum to the Council of Education, September 1955.

<sup>734</sup> See, for example, DUWGA archive, copy of NUWGA memorandum to the Council of Education, no date.

would be the same for both sexes but with the option of sitting an easier or a more advanced exam later.<sup>735</sup>

In spite of the similarities, the two memoranda submitted by the DUWGA and the NUWGA differed quite significantly on other issues. These differences might explain why the associations did not hand in a joint report but rather chose to make separate recommendations to the Council of Education. Opinions parted, particularly, on the general function of education, which was the first point on the questionnaire.

For the NUWGA, secondary education primarily served the purpose of the moral and religious upbringing of the child. As its memorandum stated in the opening paragraph, "[T]he function of education is to make the child a good Christian and citizen. Education should embody a moral, a mental and a physical training to equip the child to take his place in the community [...]".<sup>736</sup> This definition of education's overall objective was nearly identical to the Council of Education's report on primary education, which had been published one year earlier and had determined that the primary purpose of education was "[...] the religious and moral training of the child [...] through the teaching of good habits, through the instruction in duties of citizenship and in his obligation to his parents and the community."<sup>737</sup> A similar sentiment had also been echoed by the Minister for Education in 1950 when he had emphasized that "[...] the foundation and the crown of the youth's entire training is religion."<sup>738</sup>

This emphasis on the importance of religion in education and the moral and Christian upbringing of children, both in primary and in secondary schools, had been the key feature in Irish education since the state's attainment of independence. It justified the dominance of the Catholic Church, as well as the subsidiary role of the state in the provision of education. The NUWGA's memorandum was in concordance with these political and cultural beliefs and left no question about the association's standing in regard to maintaining this religious focus in education. With its predominantly Catholic membership, particularly within the UCD branch, the NUWGA posed no challenge to the existing system, as the majority of its members, in all probability, agreed with the general principles. Consequently, its suggestions to the

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<sup>735</sup> DUWGA archive, copy of NUWGA memorandum to the Council of Education, no date.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid.

<sup>737</sup> See Denis O'Sullivan, *Cultural Politics and Irish Education Since the 1950s* (Dublin, 2005), p. 109.

<sup>738</sup> Minister Richard Mulcahy's speech on establishing a Council of Education, April 1950, quoted in Hyland and Milne, eds., *Irish Educational Documents Vol. II*, p. 25.



Council of Education primarily related to the syllabus, school facilities and teaching methods and even these recommendations carefully avoided any overt criticism.

The DUWGA, on the other hand, took a much more practical stance on the function of education by stating that the aim should be “[...] to bring the pupil from the primary school to the threshold of university education or vocational training.”<sup>739</sup> The association’s understanding of the purpose of secondary education was thus kept free of any religious ethos and rather emphasized the responsibility of preparing pupils for future employment, not only in the professions, but also for manual and skilled occupations. The DUWGA also stressed that the curriculum in secondary schools should not be designed simply in order to comply with the universities’ programmes but suggested rather that the subjects should be “[...] sufficient in themselves, seeing that most secondary schoolchildren do not proceed to the university.”<sup>740</sup> In fact, the association criticized that the intellectual aims within Irish secondary schools were “overstressed”,<sup>741</sup> as subjects such as classics and literature had little value to pupils who continued to vocational training.

Moreover, the DUWGA called for a more “liberal”<sup>742</sup> approach in secondary education. This referred both to the list of subjects approved by the state, as well as to the content of some courses. In this latter context, the DUWGA primarily demanded the revision of the biology section taught in science courses, which it considered as “evasive and prudish”<sup>743</sup>. Although there was no further clarification of this point it can be assumed that the association aimed this criticism at the Catholic Church’s anticipation to keep the biology section in schools to a minimum, in order to avoid any form of sexual education.<sup>744</sup> The association also expressed its opposition to obligatory courses. While it objected to compulsory subjects in general, the association, particularly, criticized the mandatory teaching of Irish in secondary schools. Instead, it argued that having regard to many schools’ practical restrictions, the choice of subjects should be left to each individual institution. Finally, the DUWGA’s memorandum

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<sup>739</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA memorandum to the Council of Education, September 1955.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid.

<sup>741</sup> Ibid.

<sup>742</sup> Ibid.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid.

<sup>744</sup> See, for example, Diarmaid Ferriter, *Occasions of Sin. Sex & Society in Modern Ireland* (London, 2009), pp. 319-20.

stressed that secondary education should be free up to the age of sixteen.<sup>745</sup> The reason for this last demand was not stated, however, it is clear that free education would have provided more equal opportunities in education. This applied both to children of the lower classes, who were usually unable to afford the fees, as well as to the further education of girls, for whom secondary education was typically regarded as unnecessary.

Thus, while the NUWGA's perspective on Irish secondary education was essentially in conformity with publicly embraced Catholic ideals and principles, having raised only minor issues in its memorandum to the Council of Education, the DUWGA's understanding of the aim, format and substance of secondary education was more removed from such ideals. Although it did not openly criticize the control of the secondary school system by the Catholic Church in the Republic of Ireland, some of the recommendations and wording of its memorandum suggested that the DUWGA favoured a system which focused more on equal educational and occupational opportunities and was less concerned with the religious upbringing and character development of a child.

The final report of the Council of Education (which was not completed until 1960 and only published in 1962) was, however, ultimately consistent with the existing system and ethos of Irish secondary education as it reaffirmed the religious, moral and intellectual development of the child as the primary task of secondary education. As the report stated:

[T]he school is the instrument which society uses for the preservation and transmission of culture [...]. Our schools are the heirs of great tradition and it is universally recognized that their purpose is, in short, to prepare their pupils to be God-fearing and responsible citizens. The school is seen as [...] subsidiary and complementary to the family and the Church.<sup>746</sup>

Considering the composition of the Council's members, nearly half of whom were clerics,<sup>747</sup> this upholding of the religious doctrines was not unexpected. The DUWGA, which as a Trinity College alumni organization had a predominantly Protestant membership, in all likelihood, viewed the Catholic Church's authority in Irish secondary

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<sup>745</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA memorandum to the Council of Education, September 1955.

<sup>746</sup> Section 164 of the *Report of the Council of Education on the Curriculum of the Secondary School, 1962*, quoted in Hyland and Milne, eds., *Irish Educational Documents Vol. II*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>747</sup> Composed of twenty-nine members in total, eleven of the Council's members belonged to the clergy and only four members did not have a university degree in humanities – see O'Sullivan, *Cultural Politics and Irish Education Since the 1950s*, p. 136.



education as problematic. Hence, it naturally argued for a less religiously influenced approach and for more inclusiveness in the education system. Such reform suggestions found no response in the rather conservative report of the Council of Education. Not only did it confirm the religious and humanist ethos of education, but it also declared free secondary education as “utopian” and thereby maintained the exclusiveness of secondary education.<sup>748</sup>

The impact of the *Report of the Council of Education on the Curriculum of the Secondary School* was, however, limited. At the time the report was finished most of the recommendations made by the Council were outmoded and no longer corresponded to existing government policies. During the six years of the Council’s investigation and the additional two years that it took to get the report published, the government had introduced a new policy of economic planning, which had a significant impact on Irish educational policies. With the publication of the government’s First Programme for Economic Expansion in 1958, which ended the so called protectionist policy of the Republic of Ireland and embraced the concept of free-trade and foreign investment, education was increasingly viewed in terms of economic growth and the mobilization of a talented and educated workforce. Although neither the First Programme of Economic Expansion nor the Second Programme, which was introduced in 1963, contained many direct references to education,<sup>749</sup> the change in the state’s economic policy, introduced under the new Taoiseach Sean Lemass, brought about a greater involvement of the state in educational matters.<sup>750</sup> Public spending on education was rapidly increased throughout the 1960s, which provided initially for the extension of scholarship schemes, and later for the introduction of free secondary education, as well as the expansion of secondary schools and the university system.<sup>751</sup> Due to this political shift, the traditional understanding of education’s primary function, as stressed in both the NUWGA’s memorandum and in the Council’s report, was gradually replaced with a more market orientated approach. In this context, the emphasis on the moral, civic and religious education of the child through schools

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<sup>748</sup> Section 428 of the *Report of the Council of Education on the Curriculum of the Secondary School, 1962*, quoted in Hyland and Milne, eds., *Irish Educational Documents Vol. II*, pp. 204-5.

<sup>749</sup> Education was, in fact, only mentioned in one chapter of the second programme.

<sup>750</sup> Tony White, *Investing in People: Higher Education in Ireland from 1960 to 2000* (Dublin, 2004), pp. 25-9.

<sup>751</sup> O’Sullivan, *Cultural Politics and Irish Education Since the 1950s*, pp. 131-8.

became less and less the focal point of educational policy. Unlike the NUWGA, the DUWGA had already recognized this reciprocal effect of education and economic participation in its memorandum to the Council of Education in 1955 and had, consequently, shown considerable foresight in calling for reform of the Irish education system.

The economic changes in the Republic of Ireland throughout the early 1960s and their effects on educational politics were also reflected in the setting up of a Commission on Higher Education through the Minister for Education, Patrick Hillery, in 1960. The terms of reference for the inquiry of the Commission comprised the general organization, nature and extent of higher education, the administration and appointment system, as well as the provision of courses in Irish.<sup>752</sup> Equipped with this rather broad task the Commission's approach to making recommendations was to some extent similar to the earlier Council of Education's method, i.e. inviting oral and written submissions on the above issues. However, it also travelled to other countries for consultation on their higher education system.<sup>753</sup> Based on these sources of information the Commission compiled an extensive report which was published, after quite a delay, in 1967.<sup>754</sup>

As with the Council of Education six years earlier, the NUWGA and the DUWGA were among the organizations invited to submit their views on the higher education system in the Republic of Ireland. Again, both associations established subcommittees to consider the issue and to compile a memorandum. The question of submitting a joint report was discussed, but it was once more dismissed on the grounds that it would be "impracticable".<sup>755</sup>

Within the committee of the Irish Federation of University Women, this decision raised considerable criticism. At its annual council meeting in March 1961, the then IrFUW's president and former president of the NUWGA, Dr Carmel Humphries, stressed that, since its foundation, the IrFUW had made very little practical

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<sup>752</sup> NAI TAOIS S/16803a, Memorandum on the Proposed Commission on Higher Education, 12 August 1960.

<sup>753</sup> NAI TAOIS 97/6/272, letter from the chairman of the Commission on Higher Education, Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, to Taoiseach Sean Lemass, 12 July 1966.

<sup>754</sup> See White, *Investing in People: Higher Education in Ireland from 1960 to 2000*, pp. 42-3.

<sup>755</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 23 February 1961, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.



contribution to Irish society. With the associations' decision to send in separate recommendations, she argued, the IrFUW would miss a valuable opportunity to change this. Nonetheless, when asked whether they would reconsider submitting a joint statement, only the NUWGA's Cork branch responded favourably. In fact, both the Dublin branch of the NUWGA and the DUWGA had already sent their own memoranda; the QWGA, as before, due to the different education system in the Northern Ireland, refrained from getting involved.<sup>756</sup>

Eventually, three separate memoranda were handed in to the Commission on Higher Education, one by the DUWGA, one by the UCD branch of the NUWGA and one by the NUWGA in Galway. None of the submissions referred directly to women's issues in education, but remained very general in their recommendations. Accordingly, neither of the memoranda questioned the fact that boys still tended to enter universities in far greater numbers than girls. Out of the nearly 9000 students enrolled at Irish universities at the time, girls represented only approximately thirty per cent of the total student body.<sup>757</sup> Nor did the associations challenge the diminishingly low percentage of women academics – an issue that was repeatedly raised by the DAB throughout the 1950s and the 1960s. As in the Federal Republic of Germany, women in high-ranking academic positions were especially scarce. At University College Cork, for instance, only four out of an overall forty professors employed during the late 1940s were women.<sup>758</sup> The number of female professors at Trinity College was even lower, with just two women having been appointed to the overall fifty-seven chairs in 1957.<sup>759</sup> Five years later, the same two women were still the only female professors at the university, despite an increase to a total of sixty-three in these positions.<sup>760</sup> At Queen's University Belfast, on the other hand, not a single woman was appointed as professor until 1964.<sup>761</sup> Yet neither the NUWGA nor the DUWGA addressed these discrepancies

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<sup>756</sup> QUB E/8/2 Box 8B, IrFUW council meeting 25 March 1961, included in IrFUW minute book 1953-1967.

<sup>757</sup> Coolahan, *Irish Education. History and Structure*, pp. 125-6.

<sup>758</sup> Margaret MacCurtain, 'The 1940s: Women Academics at University College Cork', in Harford and Rush, eds., *Have Women Made a Difference?*, pp. 129-31.

<sup>759</sup> See list of university officers and academic staff in *Dublin University Calendar 1957-8* (Dublin, 1957), pp. 23-42.

<sup>760</sup> See list of university officers and academic staff in *Dublin University Calendar 1962-3* (Dublin, 1962), pp. 21-43.

<sup>761</sup> Martina McKnight and Myrtle Hill, "'Doing academia" in Queen's University Belfast', in Harford and Rush, eds., *Have Women Made a Difference?*, pp. 189-90.

in their memoranda, which thus failed to question the difference between women's de jure equality in third level education and their de facto participation in this sector.

Overall, the three submissions to the Commission on Higher Education had very little in common, apart from the recommendation to improve the training of primary and secondary school teachers through the affiliation of the training colleges to the universities, and that courses in Irish should be offered at the individual universities. Instead, the three documents focused on rather different aspects of higher education, which was certainly a result of the broad terms of references to which the Commission had invited the associations' views.

The memorandum of the NUWGA's Dublin branch was the shortest, addressing only four points: the appointment system, for which it recommended the establishment of an expert panel, improved teacher training, courses in Irish and the need for matriculation examinations. All in all, it offered few new ideas for the reform of the Irish higher education system.<sup>762</sup> The Galway NUWGA's memorandum included several other points, which were primarily concerned with the extension of facilities, such as libraries and student accommodation. It was also suggested to establish a technological institute at each university and to provide more grants to students of technical schools who wished to proceed to these institutes.<sup>763</sup> By emphasizing the need for advanced training in technologies, the recommendations made by the Galway branch responded to the increasing demands for trained technicians and technologists in the Republic of Ireland resulting from growing industrial requirements and economic expansion.<sup>764</sup> For the same purpose the Galway branch also proposed the provision of refresher and postgraduate courses, particularly for graduates in engineering and science, to ensure the competitiveness and advancement of Irish graduates in these expanding areas.<sup>765</sup>

The DUWGA's recommendations for the reform of higher education similarly aimed to respond to the changing economy of the Republic of Ireland. Overall, the

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<sup>762</sup> NAI ED/22/2006/83/64, Commission on Higher Education: submissions of The National University Women Graduates' Association, Dublin branch, 1961.

<sup>763</sup> NAI ED/22/2006/83/64, Commission on Higher Education: submissions by The National University Women Graduates' Association, Galway branch, 1961.

<sup>764</sup> White, *Investing in People: Higher Education in Ireland from 1960 to 2000*, pp. 26-7.

<sup>765</sup> NAI ED/22/2006/83/64, Commission on Higher Education: submissions by The National University Women Graduates' Association, Galway branch, 1961.



association's memorandum echoed the sentiments of the internationally shifting perception of education's value and purpose, which increasingly came to understand that investing in people and in education would stimulate economic growth.<sup>766</sup> As it argued, "[M]oney spent on education is well invested [...]" particularly since the need for highly-trained people in the Republic was greater than ever due to the growth in modern industries. Therefore, the DUWGA stressed, the government needed to increase its spending on education and, particularly, on higher education, as the "[...] most highly educated citizens are those who contribute the most to the country's wealth and prestige."<sup>767</sup> As the memorandum proposed, some of this money was to be invested in scholarships and grants to enable more children to attend secondary schools and to offer more pupils the opportunity to pursue a higher degree. The association further suggested the establishment of technological colleges, which were to be affiliated to the universities. With this affiliation, the DUWGA argued, traditional social barriers that had been upheld through the strict division of philosophical and technical subjects would be broken down. Moreover, in order for the universities to further "[...] play their part in the industrial development [...]" the memorandum recommended that scientific and scholarly research should be sufficiently facilitated and that special courses, designed in co-operation with leaders of different branches of industry, should be introduced. This, the association suggested, would advance the link between academic education and professional requirements of Ireland's economy.<sup>768</sup>

All in all, the DUWGA's memorandum highlighted primarily the need for increased public spending on the higher education system. It also proposed a reform of traditional university structures by bringing their courses more into line with the economic developments and by making them more accessible to people of different social and educational backgrounds. However, the diverging experiences of men and women in higher education, reflected in the much lower numbers of female students and women lecturers and professors at Irish universities, was not at all mentioned by the DUWGA. Despite the association's argument for increased equal opportunity in

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<sup>766</sup> White, *Investing in People: Higher Education in Ireland from 1960 to 2000*, pp. 26-30.

<sup>767</sup> NAI ED/22/2006/83/64, Commission on Higher Education: submissions by The Dublin University Women Graduates' Association, 1961.

<sup>768</sup> *Ibid.*

education, none of its recommendations to the Commission on Higher Education were discussed in a gendered context. The same was true for the memoranda of the NUWGA's UCD and Galway branches, as well as for the previous statements sent by the associations to the Council of Education in 1955, none of which, apart from the elementary maths course, contained any critical assessment of the differences in girls' and boys' education.

By submitting recommendations both to the Council of Education and to the Commission on Higher Education, the women graduates had taken it upon themselves to make an active contribution to the reform process of Irish education. However, they had done so without any critical examination of the different educational opportunities for women and men. This failure on the part of the associations to put a gendered perspective into the reform debates of the Irish education system, certainly suggests that there was either very little awareness about remaining inequalities, both in the access to secondary and higher education and in academic teaching, or that there was no desire on behalf of the associations' members to publicly negotiate these. In this light, Carmel Humphries' earlier criticism of the lack of valuable contribution to Irish society by Irish women graduates was true not just for the IrFUW, but also applied to the missed opportunity by the individual associations to discuss education from a women's point of view and to thereby effectively promote women's interests in the education reform.

#### **IV.2.4 Conclusion**

Prior to the 1940s the IWGAs had shown little interest in education and in the young generation of women pursuing a higher degree, despite the associations' historic link to the Irish Association of Women Graduates and Candidate Graduates (IAWGCG), which had been one of the most adamant organizations in the struggle for women's equal access to education in Ireland. This lack of interest in the young generation of women graduates gradually began to change as concerns over recruiting new graduates grew, particularly, within the DUWGA and the NUWGA. Although none of the IWGAs had difficulties in maintaining a more or less stable membership



throughout the decades, hardly any of the women who joined the associations were young or recently conferred. All three associations, therefore, regularly invited new graduates and female students to their functions and, increasingly, advertised their activities and aims to them in the hope that they would join. For the same purpose, the DUWGA and the NUWGA also attempted to increase their prominence among female students and recent graduates through the provision of career guidance. However, while the DUWGA's career talks ran only for approximately two years before they were taken off the agenda, the NUWGA's plan to open a clubhouse with an integrated career guidance centre and accommodation for postgraduate students was, in fact, never put into practice as the association failed to raise the necessary funding for the project.

Despite the various attempts to raise awareness among female students and to attract more young women graduates, the associations' efforts were largely unsuccessful as they failed to appeal to the young generation of women graduates. In this respect, the IWGAs shared the same problems as the DAB in Germany, despite the latter's much more extensive efforts in trying to connect with female students and recent graduates. Young women in Ireland, North and South, as well as in the Federal Republic of Germany, had very little interest in the existing women's organizations and essentially in women graduates' associations, and the organizations' methods and projects certainly did nothing to improve this situation. This was particularly true for the IWGAs, which were rather oblivious to what appealed to young women and female students. The overall increase of the number of women studying at Irish universities throughout the years, which rose from twenty-five per cent in 1950 to thirty-three per cent in 1970,<sup>769</sup> was therefore not reflected in the IWGAs' memberships, which continued to consist of largely middle-aged to elderly women graduates. There was clearly no interest on part of young women in the associations' coffee parties, as was repeatedly reflected in the low attendance at these events. Despite this, there were very few alternative ideas among the members of the associations in how to resolve the problem of increasing the membership of young women, resulting in the fact that the age demographic of all three associations remained consistently high throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century.

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<sup>769</sup> See, for example, Redmond, ed., 'That was Then. This is Now', pp. 49-51.

With hardly any young members, the IWGAs struggled to represent women's interests in education, as they generally seemed to lack the understanding of women's experiences within the Irish education system at the time. The NUWGA's efforts to establish a child care course in UCD was indicative of this because, although the course was, in fact, introduced in the university's syllabus, it failed to attract a significant number of students. The occupation of a child care officer in Ireland was hardly attractive to young women at the time, due to the low pay and the scarce employment opportunities. With scholarships, offered by the British Home Office to Irish students, and better job opportunities in England it was more practical for Irish women interested in such a career to go there.

The same lack of understanding of the needs and the problems faced by women and girls in the Irish education system was further displayed by the women graduates in their attempts to influence the education reform discussions of the time. Unlike the DAB, the NUWGA and the DUWGA were, in fact, invited by the respective bodies charged with educational review to contribute and present their recommendations. Yet, despite this opportunity, none of them actually used it to represent women's interests in the discussions. In their recommendations to the Council of Education in 1955, neither of the two associations really addressed gender issues in Irish secondary education, in spite of the often quite drastic differences in quality and content of subjects taught at girls' and boys' schools at the time. The silence on these issues suggests that the associations did not wish to challenge the traditional gender roles that were actively promoted through the diverging curricula such as, for instance, through courses like domestic science for girls. Even though the DUWGA called for more equal opportunity in both secondary and higher education, this was not in any way specified to women's and girls' opportunities.

An equally uncritical approach on the part of the DUWGA and the NUWGA in failing to highlight some of the deficiencies in girls' education and educational opportunities was also reflected in their memoranda to the Commission on Higher Education six years later. Despite the NUWGA's pledge "to promote the interests of women in University education in Ireland", there was no discussion of the discrepancies between the representation of men and women in academic teaching, as well as among the student ratio. Instead, the content and the recommendations of



the NUWGA's and DUWGA's memoranda on the education reform stayed clear of gender issues and rather focused on course structures, the provision of grants and scholarships or reforms of the system in terms of the changing economic and industrial requirements of the Republic. Moreover, following the submission of the recommendations to the Council, as well as to the Commission, the associations showed no further interest in educational matters. Neither the DUGWA nor the NUWGA discussed the reforms again at any of the associations' meetings, not even when the final reports of the Council of Education and the Commission on Higher Education were published in 1962 and 1967, respectively.

In both the issue of addressing gender and maintaining a certain level of activity within educational matters, the Irish women graduates' differed significantly from the DAB. While the latter had struggled to have a voice in the West German reform debates, it had continuously attempted to gender the debate by specifically focusing on and lobbying for women's interests in education. Although many of these attempts had had little effect on the official reform debates at the time - a predicament that the Irish and the German organizations certainly shared - the DAB had not failed to utilize the opportunities available to press for women's equal opportunities in the education system. The IWGAs, however, did not show the same awareness for women's issues in educational matters. Nor did they recognize the opportunity for communicating their recommendations in a more effective way by presenting their memoranda on behalf of all women graduates represented in the Irish Federation of University Women. Instead of drafting a joint memorandum, as had been suggested by the IrFUW, the NUWGA and the DUWGA preferred to send in their own statements, while the QWGA decided (for reasons outlined above) to stay out of the matter entirely.

In fact, the debate in the IrFUW on the submission of a joint memorandum to the Commission on Higher Education in 1961 accurately reflected the degree of interaction between each of the associations, which on the whole, was very limited. The two Dublin-based associations, the DUWGA and the UCD branch of the NUWGA, co-operated to a certain extent on national issues, yet usually only in the form of consultation, rather than through joint activities. Within the NUWGA itself, the UCD branch generally took the lead, with Cork and Galway sometimes following its example. But due to the small membership of the latter two, their level of activity was

considerably smaller than among the NUWGA branch in UCD. The QWGA, on the other hand, repeatedly and deliberately preserved its separate status among the IWGAs, which it usually substantiated in its politically and geographically removed location. This limited interaction between the individual associations, which largely resulted from the de-centralized structure of the IWGAs, raises the question whether some of the activities would have been more successful if the associations had recognized the benefits of joint activity. This point will be further discussed in chapter V.

### ***IV.3 Supporting women graduates and promoting their professional opportunities***

While it appears that the IWGAs shared little concern for representing women's interests in education, considerably more attention was paid to women's opportunities and lives after they had graduated. As already mentioned in chapter IV.1, the NUWGA had, in fact, included a section in its constitution promising to promote women's postgraduate opportunities and had highlighted this part of its work as one of the association's primary aims. Although the DUWGA's and the QWGA's constitutions lacked a comparable clause, both associations to some extent worked towards the same goal, as they provided grants to women graduates and, on a few occasions, lobbied for women's employment rights. In this context, all three associations aimed to support women graduates, both in their professional and their private lives. Their initiatives with regard to accomplishing this objective are discussed in the following subchapter.

#### **IV.3.1 Providing grants and funding to women graduates**

Since the formations of the IWGAs, fundraising had been an important part on all three associations' agenda. Most of these funds were obtained at the various social events, such as Bridge and card drives, that the NUWGA, the DUWGA and the QWGA



hosted throughout each year, as well as through members' donations. With the conclusion of the Second World War, the associations' fundraising initiatives were increasingly directed at relief work and the support of university women in particular. In 1948, the NUWGA sent several parcels with clothes and blankets to German students who were put up in a hostel in Münster after their accommodation had been destroyed during the war.<sup>770</sup> All three associations also provided, on several occasions, both financial and material support to women graduates who had been exiled or had fled their country during the war and were now staying in displaced persons' camps. For this purpose, the DUWGA and the NUWGA established a joint fund in 1951 to raise money in support of displaced women graduates in German and Austrian camps. The fund reached nearly £300 and was allocated among several women graduates.<sup>771</sup> A similar donation was made by the DUWGA, in January 1958, to a Hungarian female student who had fled her country during the Revolution of 1956 and was now studying in Vienna.<sup>772</sup> The QWGA also regularly raised money in support of refugee work, which it usually forwarded to the relief committee of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) or to humanitarian organizations, such as the Red Cross. Between 1956 and 1959 the association contributed nearly £700 in aid of such projects.

Apart from the provision of funding for women graduates outside Ireland, the NUWGA, and particularly the DUWGA, also supported women graduates at home. Both associations frequently made small contributions of approximately £25 to women graduates in ill health or in financial need.<sup>773</sup> In 1959, the DUWGA made this kind of support work for women graduates a regular feature on its agenda when it took over the Trinity Sociological Bursary Fund. This fund had been run in previous years by the student Sociological Society, but due to its constantly changing membership, the

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<sup>770</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/21, NUWGA committee meeting 19 March 1948, included in NUWGA minute book 1935-1957.

<sup>771</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/21, NUWGA committee meeting 5 May 1952, included in NUWGA minute book 1935-1957.

<sup>772</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 31 January 1958, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

<sup>773</sup> See, for example, IE UCDA NUWGA 2/31 & 32, NUWGA annual report 1954-55 and 1955-56, Secretary's Report.

society had suggested that the DUWGA should take over the bursary, which aimed at supporting elderly women graduates through small donations and grants.<sup>774</sup>

When the DUWGA eventually took over from the Sociological Society, there was only one bursary holder, a graduate of 1907, who received an annual donation of £20. Hence, the extent of the fund and the support provided by it had been rather limited. In an effort to improve both the fund's financial situation and to increase the number of beneficiaries, the DUWGA in March 1960 circulated appeals for new donations and suggestions of additional candidates for the bursary fund. The appeal was sent to subscribers and, in an attempt to gain new subscriptions, was also forwarded to the wives of senior members of the college staff, as well as to members of the teaching and secretarial staff in Trinity College.<sup>775</sup> The appeal was successful as the bursary's funds increased from £40, which had been in the account in 1959,<sup>776</sup> to more than £130 in 1963.<sup>777</sup>

Yet, while the financial situation of the bursary fund improved quickly, the applications for the grants remained scarce for several years. At one point, the fund had no bursary holder, as the previous recipient had died. Instead, the funds were allocated to an old ladies' home. In an effort to find new bursary holders, the DUWGA broadened its advertisement for the bursary by sending information leaflets to elderly people's homes and appealed to subscribers to promote the existence of the fund to their friends and to suggest possible candidates. The association's efforts ultimately met with success. In the following years the bursary fund became more widely known and the DUWGA received more applications by needy graduates, so that by 1966 more than £150 was paid out to women graduates.<sup>778</sup>

The considerable effort spent on fundraising by the IWGAs throughout the 1950s and 1960s, was a large part of the associations' goal to contribute to society and to the needs and interests of women graduates. Most of the grants paid went to widows and thus usually to women graduates who had had little or no income of their

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<sup>774</sup> TCD MUN SOC WGA Box 3 Scrapbook/1-68, leaflet announcing that the DUWGA had taken over the Trinity Sociological Bursary Fund which had been re-named to Dublin University Women's Bursary Fund, March 1960.

<sup>775</sup> DUWGA archive, Bursary Fund Subcommittee Report 1959-1960, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

<sup>776</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>777</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA annual report 1962-63, Bursary Fund Subcommittee Report.

<sup>778</sup> TCD MUN SOC WGA Box 3/VI-8, DUWGA annual report 1964-65, Bursary Fund Subcommittee Report.



own since they had married. As most Irish women, throughout these decades, resigned from their employment on the event of marriage and were, thereupon, entirely dependent on their husbands' income, they often faced great financial difficulties when their husbands died. In many cases, they were left with hardly any income at all, as widows often received only a fraction of their husbands' pensions. Based on the regulations of the Widows' and Orphans' Act of 1935, the pension system was divided into two schemes in the Republic of Ireland. The contributory pension scheme covered all widows, regardless whether they had children or not, if the husband had paid his share of insurance contribution before his death. If this was not the case, the second scheme, the non-contributory pension scheme, covered mothers with children under the age of fourteen (or sixteen if they were still in school). However, with the non-contributory scheme widows with either no children, or children above the age limit, did not receive their husbands' pensions and had to return to employment or rely entirely on the scarce social benefits paid to widows throughout these years.<sup>779</sup> By supporting some of these women through grants and small payments, the IWGAs thus took an active role in advancing the lives and the well-being of women graduates at the time.

While a great portion of the money raised by the associations was donated to women graduates, both in Ireland and abroad, who were in need in their private lives, the remaining part of the raised funds were invested in grants which aimed to support women graduates in their professional lives. Most of these grants were awarded through the IFUW. Unlike the DAB, which had decreased its activity in this area, compared to its efforts before the Second World War, the IWGAs assigned much importance to this part of their work during the 1950s and 1960s.

The largest fund raised on behalf of the associations to further women's research and their postgraduate education, was the Frances E. Moran Bursary Fund. The money for this grant was collected in joint co-operation by the IWGAs between 1951 and 1953. Prof Frances Moran, member of the DUWGA and former president of the Irish Federation of University Women (IrFUW), had been elected president of the IFUW in 1950. To commemorate this appointment it was decided to establish a

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<sup>779</sup> Lindsey Earner-Byrne, 'Reinforcing the family: The role of gender, morality and sexuality in Irish welfare policy, 1922-1944', *The History of the Family*, 13 (2008), pp. 365-6.

bursary fund which would subsequently be offered to the IFUW for distribution.<sup>780</sup> The aim was to raise £500 by 1953 (the year Moran's term of presidency ended) and to award this money to a non-Irish graduate for one year of research at a university in Ireland. For two years all three associations regularly hosted fundraisers to collect the money for the bursary.<sup>781</sup> The associations also determined a list of suitable subjects for research in Ireland, which was forwarded to the IFUW, and contacted the heads of the respective departments at the universities, in order to gain their support for the grant.<sup>782</sup> The £500 mark was finally achieved in April 1953, and the fund was presented to the IFUW shortly after at its triennial conference in London.<sup>783</sup> It took several years to find a suitable scholar, but in 1958 the grant raised by the IWGAs was awarded to a female English literature scholar from Sweden.<sup>784</sup>

Although the Frances E. Moran fund was the largest grant offered by the Irish associations, several smaller grants and contributions were made both to IFUW scholarships and through the associations themselves. In 1951 the IrFUW awarded £150 to a music student for her postgraduate studies.<sup>785</sup> Again, the money had been raised by all three associations.<sup>786</sup> In addition, small contributions were made to individual researchers who had approached the associations,<sup>787</sup> as well as to the grants offered by the IFUW, such as the Winifred Cullis Grant, which supported women graduates in completing specialised training, research, or a postgraduate degree.<sup>788</sup>

In turn, members of the IWGAs also benefited from the funding available through the membership of their associations in the IFUW. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, at least three Irish women were awarded grants that had all been issued by the American Association of University Women (AAUW).<sup>789</sup> Compared to the AAUW's scholarships (of which usually several were offered at once, due to the American

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<sup>780</sup> QUB/E/8/2 Box 8B, IrFUW council meeting 28 April 1951, included in IrFUW minute book 1933-1953.

<sup>781</sup> See, for example, DUWGA archive, DUWGA annual report 1952-53, Committee's Report 1952.

<sup>782</sup> QUB E/8/2 Box 8B, IrFUW council meeting 15 January 1955, included in IrFUW minute book 1948-1972.

<sup>783</sup> QUB E/8/2 Box 8B, IrFUW council meeting 11 April 1953, included in IrFUW minute book 1948-1972.

<sup>784</sup> QUB E/8/2 Box 8B, IrFUW council meeting 4 April 1959, included in IrFUW minute book 1948-1972.

<sup>785</sup> TCD MUN SOC WGA Box 3/VI-8, DUWGA annual report 1950-51, Committee's Report 1951.

<sup>786</sup> TCD MUN SOC WGA Box 3/VI-8, DUWGA annual report 1950-51, Committee's Report 1950.

<sup>787</sup> See, for example, DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 31 January 1956, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

<sup>788</sup> QUB E/8/2 Box 8B, IrFUW council meeting 30 April 1960, included in IrFUW minute book 1948-1972.

<sup>789</sup> See, for example, IE UCDA NUWGA 1/30, Honorary Secretary's Report 1966.



Association's huge membership<sup>790</sup> and its accordingly strong financial situation)<sup>791</sup> the Irish contributions and grants seemed minimal. Yet, considering the rather small overall membership of the IWGAs, as opposed to the AAUW's, and the demanding economic situation in Ireland, particularly during the 1950s, the provision of the funding offered by the Irish associations involved a great extent of initiative and activism. By raising the money for these grants and bursaries, the IWGAs thus contributed both to women graduates' opportunities in their private lives, as well as to their professional advancement.

### **IV.3.2 Advancing and monitoring women's employment opportunities**

The fundraising activities and the provision of research grants were, however, not the only way in which the IWGAs aimed to improve and promote women graduates' interests. With the gradual restriction of women's employment rights in the Republic of Ireland during the 1920s and 1930s, many women graduates had become increasingly concerned about their professional opportunities. In particular, the NUWGA, consistent with the aim cited in its constitution, took the role of protecting women's rights in their postgraduate careers in Irish society seriously. In this respect, the NUWGA, and at times also the QWGA and the DUWGA, regularly monitored job advertisements with regard to discrimination against women.

This form of activity by the IWGAs had gradually increased following numerous attempts by the Free State government since the 1920s to curtail women's employment. Such attempts had included the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill of 1925 (a bill passed by the Dáil but which had ultimately been defeated in Seanad Éireann), the introduction of the marriage bar in 1932 and the Conditions of Employment Act of 1935. In view of these increasing restrictions, both the NUWGA

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<sup>790</sup> By the end of the 1950s the membership of the AAUW accounted for more than 144,000 members, which explains the financial liquidity of the American association in regard to scholarships and grants – See Sarah V. Barnes, 'American Association of University Women', in Linda Eisenmann, ed., *Historical Dictionary of Women's Education in the United States* (Westport, CT, 1998), p. 17.

<sup>791</sup> Christine von Oertzen, 'Networks of an Academic World Community: The Exodus of German-Speaking Women Scientists and the Refugee Aid Program of the American Association of University Women', *German Historical Institute Bulletin Washington DC* (2000), p. 2.

and the DUWGA had already protested against several discriminatory job advertisements during the late 1930s. Such protests had, for instance, been made against an announcement for the position as assistant to the Inspector of Fisheries, which had been advertised exclusively to male candidates,<sup>792</sup> or against a position as assistant architect which had offered different salary scales to male and female candidates.<sup>793</sup> In both cases, letters of protest had been sent to government ministers and in the latter event, the protest had been carried out in collaboration with other women's groups.<sup>794</sup>

These attempts by the associations to protect women's occupational opportunities and the equal remuneration of their work, increased between the late 1940s and the 1950s. As the Republic of Ireland was experiencing an economic crisis during this period, unemployment rates were constantly on the rise. In the mid-1950s they reached a peak in the Republic, with more than 100,000 Irish men and women out of work. The few available jobs were, usually, given to men prompting thousands of Irish women to emigrate to England in search of employment during those decades. This preferential treatment of Irish men was primarily based on the notion that men had to support a family, while women were generally expected to have fewer responsibilities in this respect. Indeed, the universal stance towards women's employment during the 1950s was that it was acceptable for women to work until they got married, or where their economic situation forced them to take up an occupation outside the home. Women's career ambitions were not generally considered or encouraged, which was particularly obvious in the hiring process within the public service. By maintaining a marriage bar in the civil service and limiting some positions by gender or age, as well as by hiring women in usually lower positions with few promotional opportunities and with an inferior salary, the policy of keeping women at home and out of employment was reinforced.<sup>795</sup>

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<sup>792</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 27 May 1936, included in DUWGA minute book 1934-1955.

<sup>793</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 15 December 1937, included in DUWGA minute book 1934-1955.

<sup>794</sup> In the case of the different salary scales for the assistant architect position, the DUWGA had been approached by the Women's Social and Political (later "Progressive") League which had urged the women graduates to send a letter to the Minister for Finance opposing the different salaries offered.

<sup>795</sup> Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* (London, 2005), pp. 491-6.



Most of the IWGAs' protests with regard to women's professional opportunities were directed at these discriminating measures in the civil service, as they often affected women with a university degree. A letter sent by the NUWGA to the Secretary General to the Government in 1949 and copied to the President of UCD and the Royal Institute of Architects openly criticized the injustice towards women graduates in the civil service. The protest centred on the advertisement for a post for architects, which offered a substantially lower salary to female than to male applicants. As the NUWGA's honorary secretary argued in the letter "[W]omen candidates from our [UCD's] School of Architecture are in all respects as highly qualified as men and such discrimination, suggesting a lower standard of merit and attainments, is a reflection on them which my association resents." The letter concluded that "[S]uch conditions of employment are both unjust and undemocratic and should not exist in the public service."<sup>796</sup> Similar letters in opposition to different salary scales offered to women in the public service were sent by the NUWGA in December 1955,<sup>797</sup> September 1958,<sup>798</sup> March 1962,<sup>799</sup> November 1963,<sup>800</sup> March 1964<sup>801</sup> and September 1967.<sup>802</sup>

Gender-based salary differentials in the civil service were justified by two main arguments. First, they were founded on the assumption that women would eventually get married, at which point they would be forced to resign from their post. This assumed early retirement and women's inevitably short service was opposed to men's typical duration of employment until the age of sixty-five. This difference in the length of service and experience officially justified the lower salaries for female employees in the public sector. The second argument in defence of salary differentials was based on the claim that women took far more sick leave than men, due to their duties at home.

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<sup>796</sup> NAI TAOIS S/6834 A, letter from May Davoren (Honorary Secretary of the NUWGA) to the Secretary General to the Government, 11 July 1949.

<sup>797</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 12 December 1955, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>798</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 26 September 1958, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>799</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 3/1, NUWGA committee meeting 5 March 1962, included in NUWGA minute book 1961-1980.

<sup>800</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 3/1, NUWGA committee meeting 5 November 1963, included in NUWGA minute book 1961-1980.

<sup>801</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 3/1, NUWGA committee meeting 16 March 1964, included in NUWGA minute book 1961-1980.

<sup>802</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 3/1, NUWGA committee meeting 22 September 1967, included in NUWGA minute book 1961-1980.

According to a memorandum drawn up in 1934 by the then Minister for Finance, Seán MacEntee, this was a fact “[...] ascertained beyond question by official records”.<sup>803</sup>

MacEntee’s memorandum, although written in the 1930s, still accurately reflected the government’s stance on equal pay during the following decades. The general fear was that an abolition of pay differentials for men and women in the civil service would have much more far-reaching effects on the overall system of remuneration in the public sector. As the memorandum stressed, costs would increase considerably if women were to be paid on the same terms as men, especially in areas where women constituted a high percentage of the workforce, such as, for example, among post office assistants. Moreover, it was expected that the introduction of equal pay would ultimately trigger demands for equal remuneration on behalf of single men, who were generally paid less than married men in the same position. Thus, as MacEntee concluded, based on the serious financial consequences for the state, the introduction of equal pay could not be supported by the government.<sup>804</sup>

Although not phrased as candidly, the same reasons which were cited in the memorandum of 1934 underpinned the refusal of the various appeals made by the NUWGA during the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the association’s protests were largely ignored and dismissed, as in the case of the different salary scales advertised for the post of Keeper of the Natural History Section in the National Museum. Here the Minister for Education, whom the association had addressed on the issue, merely replied that there were already “[...] ample machineries for discussion of matters relating to civil service salary scales [...]”<sup>805</sup> and a meeting with him to discuss the issue would, therefore, not be “feasible”.<sup>806</sup>

Usually the NUWGA’s protest against different salary scales was made unilaterally, without the support of the DUWGA or the QWGA. Sometimes, however, the association co-operated with other professional organizations, such as the Irish Medical Association, which strongly disagreed with pay differentials for men and

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<sup>803</sup> VAI TAOIS S/6834 A, memorandum by the Minister for Finance to the Executive Council on Pay of Men and Women in the Civil Service, 7 November 1934.

<sup>804</sup> VAI TAOIS S/6834 A, memorandum by the Minister for Finance to the Executive Council on Pay of Men and Women in the Civil Service, 7 November 1934.

<sup>805</sup> E UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 7 May 1956, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>806</sup> *ibid.*



women in the medical sector. This association informed the NUWGA in 1962 about an advertised medical post in the Department of Health which offered different salaries to male and female doctors, and appealed for the NUWGA's support in the protest.

Indeed, the strong antagonism of the Irish Medical Association to salary scales based on sex, led to a review of the remuneration system in the civil service by the Minister for Health in 1964. Ironically enough, this Minister was the former Minister for Finance, Seán MacEntee, who had written the above memorandum on equal pay. In 1964, the post of Chief Medical Advisor for the Department of Health had become vacant. As MacEntee stated in a new memorandum to the government, the openly expressed opposition by the Medical Association had caused significant hindrance to the advertising of medical posts which were based on different salary scales in the past. For this reason, he advised publicizing the newly vacant post without a differentiation of pay for female and male applicants. Yet he also added that no consequences should be feared "[...] because he [the Minister for Health] is satisfied that there is no female doctor on these islands who possesses the requisite qualifications [...]."<sup>807</sup>

Despite this assurance, MacEntee's proposal was quickly shot down by the new Minister for Finance, Charles Haughey, who rehearsed MacEntee's own arguments when he had still been Minister for Finance. As Haughey stressed, such an exception to the rule would endanger the entire pay structure in the civil service and thus could not be accepted.<sup>808</sup> The argument on the matter between the two Ministers lasted for nearly six months and was only resolved when MacEntee conceded and advertised the post of Chief Medical Advisor with different salary scales.<sup>809</sup> Yet the incident reflected how unmovable the Irish government's stance still was on the issue of equal pay during the 1960s. Despite growing criticism of sex-differentiated salaries, voiced by professional organizations, such as the Irish Medical Association, and women's organizations<sup>810</sup>, including the NUWGA, there was little willingness on behalf of the

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<sup>807</sup> NAI TAOIS S/6834 B/95, memorandum by the Minister for Health for the Government on the Post of Chief Medical Advisor, 16 July 1964.

<sup>808</sup> NAI TAOIS S/6834 B/95, memorandum by the Minister for Finance for the Government on the Post of Chief Medical Advisor, 20 July 1964.

<sup>809</sup> NAI TAOIS S/6834 B/95, letter from the Minister for Health to the Taoiseach, 30 November 1964.

<sup>810</sup> See also chapter IV.4.3.

government and, particularly, of the Minister for Finance to change this long established practice.

The same rigid sentiment was expressed in a letter by the Department of Labour in response to a resolution sent by the DUWGA in 1968. In this resolution the association pressed the Irish government to ratify the recommendations on equal pay for work of equal value as adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1951. As the Department's reply stated, salaries in the public service were generally paid on the basis of marriage, i.e. women and single men were paid the same, but less than a married man. As women had to resign on marriage anyway, this regulation was, according to the Minister for Labour, Patrick Hillery, equivalent to equal pay. Wage rates of workers, on the other hand, were determined by negotiations between employers, workers and the trade unions. As there was, according to the Minister, no general demands made by Irish trade unions in this matter, it was "[...] not considered appropriate [...]" to ratify the recommendations of equal pay for equal work at this stage.<sup>811</sup>

Despite this reply to the DUWGA's demand, the government's stance was, in fact, gradually faltering on the issue of equal pay for equal work, as public and international pressure to adopt the principle in the Republic of Ireland was increasing considerably towards the late 1960s. This turn in policy and the pressure exerted on the government during these years are discussed in more detail in chapter IV.4.3. Nonetheless, it still took until 1976 for legislation on equal pay for equal work to be introduced in the Republic and then only as a result of a directive by the European Economic Community (EEC), which Ireland had joined in 1973, making equal pay a binding principle for its member states. Even then, the Irish government tried to delay the implementation of the legislation, based on the state's economic recession, but without success.<sup>812</sup>

During the 1950s and 1960s, however, most of the NUWGA's protest letters, as well as the DUWGA's demand for equal pay for equal work, were without effect. Yet some of the associations' efforts in monitoring job advertisements, with a view to

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<sup>811</sup> NAI TAOIS S/6834 B/95, letter from the Minister for Health to the Taoiseach, 30 November 1964.

<sup>812</sup> June Levine, ed, 'The Women's Movement in the Republic of Ireland, 1968-1980', in Angela Bourke, Sióthán Kilfeather, Maria Luddy, Margaret Mac Curtain, Gerardine Meaney, Mairín Ní Dhonnchadha, Mary O'Dowd and Clair Wills, eds., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, Volume V, Irish Women's Writings and Traditions* (Cork, 2002), .pp. 184-5.



women's employment opportunities, had a more positive outcome. In December 1956 the NUWGA, for instance, protested against the dismissal of two female almoners at a hospital in County Meath. The introduction of the Health Act in 1953, which had expanded the free medical care system in the Republic, had resulted in a considerable increase in clerical work for the hospitals. Many of these had, subsequently, assigned a great part of the new administrative responsibilities to their almoners, who were traditionally responsible for deciding whether patients qualified as indigent. Most almoners at the time disputed these extra duties and numerous hospitals had responded to this resistance by forcing their almoners to resign, while other hospitals had stopped filling almoners positions altogether.<sup>813</sup> Although no official reason was stated for the dismissal of the two female almoners, both of whom were graduates of the National University of Ireland, the NUWGA suspected that the decision was based on the women's refusal to take on clerical work.<sup>814</sup> Accordingly, the NUWGA sent a strong letter of protest to the hospital board. This letter referred to the fact that in recent years there had been "[...] an ever increasing demand for the services of professional social workers - a demand which, outside Ireland, far exceeds the supply."<sup>815</sup> Compared to other countries, the NUWGA argued, the employment opportunities of Irish graduates, however, were still slight, causing many Irish social workers to leave the country in search of employment. Therefore, the association emphasized "[...] we [the NUWGA] feel that your decision to dispense with the services of your almoners [...] may have more wide reaching effects than just the closing of a Department."<sup>816</sup>

The letter's references to the overall professional opportunities for Irish social workers, as an argument against the dismissal of the two almoners, related directly to the NUWGA's initiative of establishing a course in child care at UCD at the same time the letter was sent. The association thus attempted to situate the particular case of the two almoners into the wider context of the Republic's emigration problem during the

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<sup>813</sup> Skehill, 'An Examination of the Transition From Philanthropy to Professional Social Work in Ireland', pp. 698-9.

<sup>814</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 26 November 1956, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>815</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, draft letter from the NUWGA to the Chairman of the Joint Committee of Meath Hospital, December 1956.

<sup>816</sup> Ibid.

1950s. Whether or not the NUWGA's letter caused the hospital board to reconsider the dismissal of its almoners is debatable. Nevertheless, it probably contributed to the hospital's decision to continue the employment of one of the almoners, which the NUWGA considered a small success in its attempts to advance the professional opportunities of women graduates in Ireland.<sup>817</sup>

The DUWGA also managed to achieve a positive outcome in an effort to further women graduates' occupational interests, in a campaign to improve their status on the secretarial staff of Trinity College in 1954. This year marked the fiftieth anniversary of women's admission to the university and to commemorate this event, the DUWGA had established a jubilee fund, which was to be donated to the Trinity Endowment Fund. The association sent out appeals for contributions to its members and to female staff in Trinity College. Attached to this appeal was a questionnaire from the Endowment Fund, enquiring about how a degree from Trinity had advanced graduates' employment opportunities and their salaries. Following the distribution of the questionnaire, the women graduates employed on Trinity College's secretarial staff sent a letter to the DUWGA calling the association's attention to the fact that for the secretarial staff the college itself made no distinction between graduates and non-graduates, in terms of salary or employment opportunities.<sup>818</sup>

Shortly after the receipt of this letter, the DUWGA set up a subcommittee to investigate the matter and to meet with the graduate representatives of the secretarial staff.<sup>819</sup> At this meeting the representatives pointed out that they had previously presented demands to the College Board for preferential treatment in the hiring process and for a higher remuneration than non-graduates. However, these demands had been denied, based on the fact that there was no difference in the work carried out by graduate and non-graduate members of the staff.<sup>820</sup> The DUWGA subsequently compiled a list of demands on behalf of the women graduate members

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<sup>817</sup> E UCDA NUWGA 2/21, NUWGA annual report 1956-1957, included in NUWGA minute book 1935-1957.

<sup>818</sup> DUWGA archive, letter from Selma M. Burrows, Winifred Matthews, Aileen M. Campbell, Betty Pode, Sybil Davis, Helen Watson, Rosemary Furlong and Patricia Woodworth to the DUWGA, 11 October 1954.

<sup>819</sup> DUWGA archive, letter from the Honorary Secretary of the DUWGA to Helen Watson, 27 October 1954.

<sup>820</sup> DUWGA archive, report of the DUWGA subcommittee's meeting with the representatives of women graduate members of the secretarial staff, 22 November 1954.



of the secretarial staff which was sent to the Provost, Albert J. McConnell. As the DUWGA emphasized in the accompanying letter, the matter was particularly important “[...] in view of the fact that opportunities of employment for women graduates in Ireland are extremely limited.”<sup>821</sup> The association clearly supported the claim issued by the women graduates on the secretarial staff that they should receive preferential treatment in the employment process. With regard to the salary of graduate members of the staff, the DUWGA recommended that a graduate should receive the same salary on appointment as a non-graduate member who had been employed for four years on the staff. Furthermore, the DUWGA requested to be notified in future of all vacancies occurring on the secretarial staff.<sup>822</sup>

The DUWGA’s letter to the Provost was met with success as the association received a reply from the Provost one month later stating that he had brought the list of demands issued by the association to the College Board, which had ultimately settled on new guidelines for the employment of women graduates to the secretarial staff. These new guidelines met all points raised by the DUWGA. The only difference from the DUWGA’s demands was that the starting salary paid to a graduate was set on three increments rather than four.<sup>823</sup> Both the DUWGA and the women graduate members of the secretarial staff were satisfied with the outcome of the protest and the matter was dropped.

In this instance, the DUWGA had realized the potential effectiveness of a lobby group for women graduates in the Republic of Ireland, as it had eventually achieved an outcome that individual women graduates had previously struggled for but had been unable to achieve. Overall, however, the DUWGA, as well as the QWGA, proved to be less invested in protecting women graduates’ professional rights and interests and both associations only occasionally interfered. The NUWGA, on the other hand, attempted to maintain its objective to protect and promote women’s postgraduate opportunities by regularly monitoring job advertisements for discrimination in the hiring of women and women graduates, in particular. Yet all three associations shared

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<sup>821</sup> DUWGA archive, letter from the president of the DUWGA to the Provost of Trinity College Dublin, January 1955.

<sup>822</sup> DUWGA archive, letter from the president of the DUWGA to the Provost of Trinity College Dublin, January 1955.

<sup>823</sup> DUWGA archive, letter from the Provost of Trinity College Dublin to the president of the DUWGA, Miss Joyce Power Steele, 9 February 1955.

the characteristic of doing little more to push for further action when the initial protest failed to have the desired effect or when meeting with resistance. For instance, a letter sent in 1948 by the QWGA to a local hospital board against the discontinuation of part-time positions for women doctors remained an isolated attempt as the association decided that nothing more could be done in the matter, after receiving a reply which promised little success for the association's objection.<sup>824</sup> The same lack of resilience and consequential action was often displayed by the NUWGA during the 1950s and 1960s, despite some efforts to mobilize support of other professional (women's) organizations. Such co-operation was shown by the association, for example, in the case of the post of Keeper of the Natural History section in the National Museum, when the NUWGA notified the Association for Higher Civil Servants of the advertised salary differentials and the age limitation for the position. Yet, in the same instance, the NUWGA also decided that it could do nothing more than the letter it had already sent to the Minister for Education and, therefore, decided to leave the matter in the hands of the Association for Higher Civil Servants.<sup>825</sup>

Moreover, in their efforts to promote the opportunities of women graduates in employment, all three associations made sure that they stayed completely clear of addressing married women's right to work. In none of the protest letters sent in regard to posts in the civil service and, particularly, with respect to the different salaries paid for these positions - both based on sex and marriage status - did the associations address the fact that women were forced to retire on marriage. Nor did they criticize the limitations in women's career opportunities, resulting from employers' expectations that women would be leaving their job after getting married. Opposition to the marriage bar in the civil service was only once signalled between the 1950s and 1960s, when the NUWGA included a paragraph in its annual report of 1958 in which it congratulated the Minister for Education for lifting the bar in primary teaching.<sup>826</sup> However, the negative reaction that the inclusion of the paragraph caused among several of the NUWGA's members, who strongly disapproved of even this minor statement, indicates why none of the associations touched upon the issue of married

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<sup>824</sup> QUB E/8/2 Box 15, QWGA committee meeting 9 February 1949, included in QWGA minute book 1941-1950.

<sup>825</sup> [E UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 26 June 1956, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>826</sup> [E UCDA NUWGA 2/33, 34 & 35, NUWGA annual report 1957-1958, Secretary's Report 1958.



women's work.<sup>827</sup> Since the marriage bar in primary teaching was lifted due to a significant shortage of teachers,<sup>828</sup> it is fair to assume that the resistance of some of the association's members did not stem from a fear about single women's employment opportunities. This concern had motivated many women, not just in Ireland but elsewhere, to support the marriage bar during the years of economic depression in the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>829</sup> The antagonism expressed, however, by the NUWGA members at its committee meeting in 1958 rather suggests that these women were generally opposed to the idea of married women working per se outside the home. While there is no reference in the association's files as to whether this notion that married women should stay at home was shared by the majority of members, it can be assumed that the subject of married women's work and their rights to employment, was deliberately avoided by all three associations in order to prevent resentment and anger among their members. This unwillingness to address sensitive topics meant, however, that the activities of the IWGAs for most of the 1950s and 1960s remained somewhat limited in regard to promoting women's professional opportunities and their rights in employment.

### IV.3.3 Conclusion

The objective of advancing and supporting women graduates in their personal and professional lives was, in many respects, at the heart of most of the activities of the IWGAs between the 1950s and 1960s. The difficult economic times in the Republic of Ireland during the first decade of this period and the gradual restriction of women's employment since the foundation of the Irish Free State, both provided the foundation for the associations' increased initiatives in this area. In order to achieve their aims, the associations largely employed what Debra Minkoff has defined as the most

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<sup>827</sup> See IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 20 June 1958, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>828</sup> Eileen Connolly, 'Durability and Change in State Gender Systems: Ireland in the 1950s', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 10 (2003), p. 79.

<sup>829</sup> See, for example, Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (Oxford, 1989), p. 198.

common strategies of abeyance organizations, i.e. service provision and institutional advocacy.

A significant part of the work carried out by the IWGAs in regard to supporting women graduates and representing their interests in society was through fundraising. These funds went to Irish women graduates, as well as to non-Irish graduates, and were allocated either as a donation to the women's private needs or as grants for women's postgraduate research and studies. The associations' fundraising activities in support of women graduates increased particularly after World War II, which had left many women graduates in Europe in dire economic circumstances and a significant portion of the money raised by the IWGAs, therefore, went towards relief work.

However, as the Republic of Ireland found itself in a state of Emergency during the 1940s and had to contend with problems arising from the slow growth of the economy (by comparison to other European countries) funds were donated, increasingly, to Irish women graduates in need. Most of these bursaries were given to widowed women graduates and thus to a group of women often left in grim financial need owing to the state's welfare and pension system at that time. By helping these women through small monetary donations the IWGAs and, in particular, the DUWGA contributed to society by meeting some of the very real needs of Irish women and women graduates. As such, the fundraising initiatives were a form of non-political activity and, therefore, would often not be considered within the context of women's political activism. Yet, in essence, the IWGAs' fundraising activity provided social services, which were not otherwise available. The associations' efforts, therefore, need to be understood as a form of socio-political advocacy for women graduates' interests, specifically.

In addition, the IWGAs also aimed at facilitating women's opportunities in their professional lives by providing research grants, which were awarded both by the associations themselves, as well as by the International Federation of University Women, and by monitoring women's employment opportunities in Ireland. In this respect, a considerable proportion of the funds raised by the associations were allocated in the form of the Frances Moran Bursary Fund, the Geraldine Temple-Lang Fund or the IFUW's Winifred Cullis Fund. The aim of these funds was to facilitate women's postgraduate studies and thereby advance their career prospects. All three



associations contributed in this way to women graduates' professional opportunities. Moreover, the regular scrutiny of job advertisements with regard to discrimination against women, an activity which was primarily undertaken by the NUWGA, was employed as a measure to further represent women's occupational interests. The discrimination of women in employment was particularly visible in the public service, where a marriage bar, salary differentials between men and women and job limitations based on sex and age, all contributed to the fact that women's opportunities within this sector remained minimal. By writing numerous letters of protest against these measures, the NUWGA repeatedly criticized the government's policy towards women's employment.

However, in their efforts to abolish these discriminatory measures, the associations never addressed the issue of married women's work and thus never confronted the fundamental limitations of the dominant notion that women should not work outside the home after marriage - a notion which was cemented in the civil service marriage bar. In fact, this conviction was also shared by several of the associations' own members which made any discussion of this issue obviously difficult. Yet the preservation of this policy had a limiting effect overall on women's professional opportunities. As they were not expected to stay within the service for more than a couple of years, women in general were offered far fewer opportunities for training and promotion, whether they eventually got married or not.

By failing to address this issue and to challenge dominant norms of women's role in society, the associations' activities in respect to promoting women's professional opportunities were somewhat limited in scope and in consequences. In fact, their efforts in advancing women's interests in employment were restricted to the promotion of the interests of women who were not married (yet). The associations also did not address the lack of women in the upper echelons of employment as a direct result of women's expected retirement in the event of marriage. In this respect the IWGAs differed significantly from the DAB, which not only lobbied for women's admission to the higher ranks of employment, but also, increasingly, pressed for advancing the employment opportunities of married women, particularly, in the civil service. Although the DAB did not really critically assess gender roles in this context, it did seek to find a middle ground in which women would be able to combine both a

career and family. Such an ideal was entirely alien to the Irish women graduates, who could not even agree whether a marriage bar should be upheld or not.

However, although the actions of the IWGAs were limited in regard to women's interests in employment they addressed important issues in terms of the recognition of women's work. By repeatedly criticizing salary differentials in the civil service, particularly for women who held a university degree, the associations, and primarily the NUWGA, were unswerving advocates of equal pay for equal work throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Although this advocacy also had its limitations at times, as it was principally directed at removing the discrepancies between men's and women's pay, while demanding a higher remuneration of women graduates over non-graduates (as seen in the DUWGA's struggle to increase the salary of women graduates on Trinity's secretarial staff), the continuing criticism of the gendered salary differentials was an important issue and was to become a central demand of the Irish women's movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The principle of equal pay for equal work was eventually adopted as a demand of the women's Ad Hoc Committee, which was formed in 1968, on which both the NUWGA and the DUWGA were represented and which later helped to set up the Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>830</sup> This Commission's first influential recommendations published in its Interim Report in 1971, primarily addressed to the need to introduce the principle of equal pay, particularly in the public sector.<sup>831</sup> With this reference to the events of the late 1960s and the 1970s, the efforts of the IWGAs, therefore, need to be considered as a historical continuum of women's activism for the equal opportunities of women in employment and in their professional lives in Ireland between the 1950s and the 1960s.

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<sup>830</sup> for the discussion of the role played by the Irish Women Graduates' Associations on the Ad Hoc Committee and in setting up the Commission on the Status of Women see chapter IV.4.3.

<sup>831</sup> levine, ed., 'The Women's Movement in the Republic of Ireland, 1968-1980', in Bourke, Kilfeather, Ludly, Mac Curtain, Meaney, Ní Dhonnchadha, O'Dowd and Wills, eds., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, Volume V*, pp. 178-9.



#### ***IV.4 Securing women's influence in public life***

Many of the activities of the IWGAs throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century, as outlined in the previous two subchapters, were primarily concerned with the interests of women graduates. As in the case of the DAB, the concentration on issues affecting this particular group of women in Irish society has to be attributed to the fact that the IWGAs consisted exclusively of women graduates and thus focused on matters which often related to their members' lives and personal experiences. Yet, despite this emphasis on women graduates' interests, some of the associations' objectives aimed at a more general representation of women in Irish society by encouraging women's participation and ensuring their influence in public life. The following subchapter discusses the IWGAs' efforts in this respect, which included endeavours to support women's election to public office, such as to university senates or Seanad Éireann. It further examines the role of the IWGAs in maintaining a network of Irish women's organizations and in setting up the Ad Hoc Committee. This committee subsequently led to the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1970 and, consequently, initiated several reforms improving women's status and rights in the Republic of Ireland.

##### **IV.4.1 Women's representation in public offices and their participation in public life**

Women in Ireland had won the right to vote and take office in 1918. Initially, this right was restricted to women over thirty who met certain property requirements, but in 1922 it was extended to all women over twenty-one in the Irish Free State. The United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, followed six years later by granting women the same voting rights as men and thus reducing the voting age of women to twenty-one. Despite this ground-breaking gain for women's access to and participation in the public sphere, very few Irish women held a political office or were represented on governing bodies, between the 1920s and the early 1950s. In fact, only sixteen women had been elected to the Dáil, the Lower House of the Irish parliament

(Oireachtas), before 1954. Women's representation in Seanad Éireann, the Upper House of the Oireachtas, during the same period, was equally low, with only twelve female senators elected between 1922 and 1951.<sup>832</sup> A similar, if not worse, situation was recorded in Northern Ireland, where only six women had been elected as MPs to the Northern Irish Parliament between 1921 and 1950, the year which also marked the election of the first female senator.<sup>833</sup>

Restrictive legislation introduced after the foundation of the Irish Free State, which was still in force throughout the 1950s and 1960s, had further sought to limit women's participation in public affairs. Both the 1924 and 1927 Juries Acts had served this purpose. The first of these acts had given women the right to seek exemption from jury service, thereby practically excusing women from their duties as citizens, on the grounds of sex. The second act had forced women even further out of participating in this area of public life, as it excluded women from jury service altogether. Those women who wanted to perform their civic duties now had to apply for the right to sit on juries.<sup>834</sup>

The under-representation of women in public offices and the restriction of women's participation in public life were addressed within the IWGAs on several occasions throughout the 1950s. The NUWGA, in particular, considered the problem and in 1954 even adopted a new phrase into its constitution stating the association's objective to encourage women "to exert influence in public affairs".<sup>835</sup> This aim was approached in two different ways: first, by pushing for women's election to public offices, such as university senates, as well as by promoting women's participation in the voting process and, secondly, by attempting to gain a voice in the nomination process for members of Seanad Éireann, thereby securing women's influence in public life.

Seats on the university senates were not political offices as such, since these bodies were primarily concerned with matters relating to university life and regulations such as the appointment of staff or the awarding of degrees. Yet, just like

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<sup>832</sup> Frances Gardiner, 'Political Interest and Participation of Irish Women 1922-1992: The Unfinished Revolution', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 18 (1992), pp. 17-8.

<sup>833</sup> Dick Wilford, 'Women and Politics in Northern Ireland', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 49 (1996), p. 44.

<sup>834</sup> Maryann Valiulis, 'Defining Their Role in the New State: Irishwomen's Protest against the Juries Act of 1927', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 18 (1992), pp. 43-4.

<sup>835</sup> E UCDA NUWGA 3/25, NUWGA draft constitution 1954.



offices in the Irish Parliament, some of the seats on university senates were appointed through a regular election process. Candidates had to campaign for votes and were elected for a fixed term by an electorate, which in the case of the university senate elections, comprised the graduates of the respective universities. The NUWGA, therefore, considered women's appointment to the governing bodies of Irish third level institutions as a stepping-stone for women into public life and, potentially, into political offices. In this context, the association's attempts to secure the appointment of women to the university senate were part of its objective to increase women's representation in public offices.

The focus of the NUWGA on the election of women to the senates, both the university senate and Seanad Éireann, rather than to seats in the Dáil, can be attributed to the fact that these elections lay within its particular purview as an association for National University women graduates. In both elections NUI graduates had a special voting right through their membership of the university's Convocation. As the statutory representative body for NUI graduates, the Convocation elected eight members to the university senate, as well as three members to Seanad Éireann.<sup>836</sup> Through these voting privileges as members of the Convocation, university graduates, therefore, had an important voice in determining the representatives for the university governing body and for the Upper House of the Oireachtas.<sup>837</sup>

To protect these voting privileges of university graduates, the NUWGA in 1953 strongly protested against a statute proposed by the university senate and passed by the Committee of Convocation, which intended to alter the electoral process in the university senate elections. Instead of sending voting papers out to every registered graduate, as had been the custom in the past, the new statute determined that members of the Convocation now had to apply for voting papers in order to take part in the elections.<sup>838</sup> Fearing that this new regulation would negatively affect overall participation in the election, the NUWGA sent several letters to the Clerk of Convocation and to the university's registrar in the summer of 1953 questioning the

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<sup>836</sup> The Seanad Electoral (University Members) Act of 1937 had determined that the National University of Ireland and the University of Dublin would each be represented on Seanad Éireann by three members elected by registered university graduates.

<sup>837</sup> Linda O'Shea Farren, 'The Role of Convocation', in Dunne, ed., *The National University of Ireland, 1908-2008*, pp. 238-44.

<sup>838</sup> *Ibid*, p. 229.

legality of the decision to pass the statute without calling a general meeting of Convocation on the matter.<sup>839</sup>

The main concern of the NUWGA in regard to the altered electoral process was that members of the Convocation would no longer make use of their voting rights. As the association pointed out, “[...] by putting an onus on each member of Convocation of applying for a voting paper [...] voters are inconvenienced and candidates nominated for the election are placed at a disadvantage.”<sup>840</sup> As the association stressed, the new electoral process would endanger the democratic nature of the election and, in all likelihood, would result in the fact that the eight members elected to the university senate would not be representative of the Convocation.<sup>841</sup> These concerns were expressed in a resolution sent by the NUWGA to the Clerk of Convocation, in October 1953. The same document was forwarded to the daily newspapers and printed in *The Irish Times*,<sup>842</sup> raising public awareness to the change in the Convocation’s voting privileges and drawing attention to the effects the new system would have on the composition of the university senate.<sup>843</sup>

Although the matter was not officially discussed within a gendered context, it can be assumed that the NUWGA was particularly apprehensive about the new regulation’s effects on women’s turnout in the elections for the university senate and, consequently, also on the chances for the election of women candidates. As discussed in chapter II, the gender ideologies, as promulgated by the Catholic Church and the Irish government since the foundation of the independent Irish state, had continuously served the separation of the private and the public sphere. The dominant notion was that women should eschew public life in order to dedicate themselves to the home and the family. During the first four decades of the independent Irish state most women lived in accordance with these traditional norms. Correspondingly, the general interest of women in Irish politics was comparatively low throughout these years, which was reflected both in an overall decreasing turnout of women voters in the

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<sup>839</sup> See, for example, IE UCDA NUWGA 2/54, letter from Carmel Humphries (NUWGA president) to the registrar of University College Dublin, 17 July 1953.

<sup>840</sup> E UCDA NUWGA 2/54, NUWGA resolution, included in a letter from Carmel Humphries to the Clerk of Convocation, 24 October 1953.

<sup>841</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>842</sup> ‘Voting system for N.U.I. Senate’ (no author), *The Irish Times*, 7 November 1953, p. 9.

<sup>843</sup> E UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 2 November 1953, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.



general elections between the 1920s and the 1950s and in the low numbers of women running for public office.<sup>844</sup> The NUWGA thus probably feared that the increased initiative required by the new electoral process for the university senate elections would further inhibit women's participation in the elections. Such behaviour had been observed by women's organizations in the past, following the passing of the 1920s Juries Acts. The great effort required from women to serve on a jury in voluntary capacity after 1927, had resulted in the majority of women opting out of this civic role, thereby leaving the Irish justice system in the hands of men.<sup>845</sup> The NUWGA reasonably worried that the same could happen in the elections for the governing bodies of Irish third level institutions. This concern was highlighted in the association's cautioning against the new statute's effects on the democratic nature of the elections and the composition of the senate.<sup>846</sup>

The association's apprehension about women's willingness to undertake the effort and apply for voting papers was reflected in the association's increased involvement in the following senate elections of 1954. The NUWGA's protest against the changed electoral process for the Convocation in the previous year had ultimately been unsuccessful, as the association had failed to provide proof that the senate and the Convocation Committee had exceeded their powers in implementing the new voting system. In response to its failed campaign against the changes, the association decided to get actively involved in the following university senate elections, by putting forward a female candidate and supporting her with all necessary means throughout her campaign. The chosen candidate was Norah Stuart, a member of the NUWGA and of the Association of Secondary Teachers.<sup>847</sup> The two organizations collaborated in a campaign for the elections and for Stuart's candidature. By alerting members of the Convocation and mobilizing them to apply for the voting papers, it was hoped to counteract the expected decrease in votes following the new regulations and that Stuart would be elected to the senate.

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<sup>844</sup> Michael O'Kelly, 'Gender and Voter Appeal in Irish Elections, 1948-1997', *The Economic and Social Review*, 31 (2000), pp. 249-51.

<sup>845</sup> See Valiulis, 'Defining their Role in the New State: Irishwomen's Protest against the Juries Act of 1927', p. 44.

<sup>846</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/54, NUWGA resolution, included in a letter from Carmel Humphries to the Clerk of Convocation, 24 October 1953.

<sup>847</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 9 September 1954, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

Throughout the following months the NUWGA supported Stuart's campaign with financial contributions and an active publicity campaign. Due to the association's efforts *The Irish Times*<sup>848</sup> and *The Irish Independent*<sup>849</sup> printed articles outlining Stuart's nomination as the official candidate of the NUWGA and of the Association of Secondary Teachers for the 1954 NUI senate elections. Both articles also reminded members of the Convocation that they now had to apply for voting papers. This heightened publicity and the campaign support for the NUWGA candidate eventually paid off, as Norah Stuart was placed fifth and was thus among the eight members elected by the Convocation to the NUI senate. She was the only woman in these elections who was appointed by the Convocation.<sup>850</sup>

Despite the positive outcome, the NUWGA's involvement in Stuart's campaign put some strain on the association's overall commitment to promoting women's participation in public life. At the same time as Stuart's candidacy, another member of the association, Eileen MacCarvill, was running for the NUI constituency in the Seanad Éireann elections which were held in summer 1954. Unaware of the candidacy of its own member, the NUWGA's Dublin branch sent a request to a member in Galway, Sheila Kennedy, to put her name forward as a candidate for the NUI constituency. However, in contrast to Norah Stuart's campaign, the NUWGA promised no active support in the form of financial contributions or press releases. The request sent to Kennedy, as well as the association's exclusive support for Stuart, led to much frustration of the NUWGA's member, MacCarvill. After criticizing the fact that the branch had approached Kennedy,<sup>851</sup> she sought the NUWGA's support for her candidacy on the same basis as given to Norah Stuart in her (simultaneously running) campaign. However, her request was denied, because the NUWGA argued that it was unable to support all three women candidates equally. As the association's secretary stressed in her response to MacCarvill, the focus on Stuart's campaign for the NUI senate elections was based on the collaboration with the Association for Secondary

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<sup>848</sup> 'The National University of Ireland – Senate Elections' (no author), *The Irish Times*, 18 September 1954, p. 5.

<sup>849</sup> 'The National University of Ireland. Senate Elections' (no author), *The Irish Independent*, 18 September 1954, p. 1.

<sup>850</sup> See 'University Senate Elections' (no author), *The Irish Time*, 18 October 1954, p. 7.

<sup>851</sup> E UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 15 June 1954, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.



Teachers in the matter. This meant that MacCarvill or Kennedy could not be given the same amount of publicity or support during this period. The only assistance Kennedy and MacCarvill were promised by the association was the assurance that every member would be asked to vote for them in the Seanad elections.<sup>852</sup>

As it seemed, the NUWGA's campaign efforts and resources in aid of women candidates for public offices were exhausted by a single campaign. The refusal of active support to MacCarvill and Kennedy seems particularly astonishing given that the NUWGA was eager to increase the number of women in Seanad Éireann. In this respect, the association had, just a few months earlier, tried to become a member of one of the expert panels in the Seanad with the aim of gaining a voice in the nomination process. These expert panels, of which there were five altogether, were responsible for nominating forty-three out of the overall sixty seats in the Seanad, thereby playing an important role in determining the new members of the parliament's Upper House.<sup>853</sup>

The NUWGA had applied as one of the nominating bodies on the Cultural and Educational Panel of Seanad Éireann in February 1954, just in time for the election in summer of that year.<sup>854</sup> The application, however, had been denied on the grounds that the NUWGA was not "eligible for registration".<sup>855</sup> Although there was no further reasoning given, the rejection of the application was probably due to the NUWGA's failure to present a constitution valid for all three branches of the association. As neither the Galway nor the new Cork branch (which was still in the process of formation at the time) yet had a constitution,<sup>856</sup> the NUWGA had been forced to apply as separate entities. As such it failed to meet the requirements for registration as a nominating body, which determined that an organization had to be "[...] governed by articles of association, rules or other regulations [...]".<sup>857</sup> Three years later, the

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<sup>852</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 9 September 1954, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>853</sup> Jack McGowan-Smyth, 'The Irish Senate: The case for Seanad Éireann', *Representation*, 37 (2000), pp. 148-9.

<sup>854</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/43, letter from Carmel Humphries to Rita Larkin (honorary secretary of the NUWGA branch in Galway), January 1954.

<sup>855</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/53, letter from the office of the Seanad to the NUWGA, 22 February 1954.

<sup>856</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/53, letter from Carmel Humphries to Mrs Burke (president of the Galway branch), no date.

<sup>857</sup> See Seanad Electoral (Panel Members) Act, 1947, Part II, Section 8, <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1947/en/act/pub/0042/index.html>, 21 January 2013.

possibility of applying again for the nominating body of Seanad Éireann, this time as an entire body, was discussed among members of the NUWGA in Dublin, but there is no evidence that the application was ever submitted.<sup>858</sup>

With registration as one of the nominating bodies on the Cultural and Educational Panel of Seanad Éireann the NUWGA would have gained the right to suggest and vote for a candidate in the Seanad elections. This would have provided the NUWGA with a vital opportunity to influence the nomination process and to lobby more effectively for the appointment of women to public offices. Thus, in view of the effort to become one of the nominating bodies on this panel, the NUWGA's failure to actively support two female candidates running for election in the NUI constituency during the 1954 Seanad elections seems even more remarkable. Here the association clearly missed an opportunity to influence and promote women's representation in public offices. In the event, Sheila Kennedy, the Galway member of the NUWGA, was placed fifth in the initial count of the elections and was only eliminated in the second-last count of the votes.<sup>859</sup> An increase in publicity for her candidacy, as achieved by the association in Norah Stuart's campaign, might have advanced Kennedy's chances of election.

The association's inability to support more than one woman candidate at a time, as argued by the NUWGA's secretary, therefore, certainly worked against a realistic opportunity of increasing the number of women in public offices and thus against the association's self-proclaimed aim of securing women's influence in public affairs. Moreover, following the NUWGA's efforts in 1954, most attempts in this respect were more or less dropped from the association's agenda. In 1955 the idea was raised among the NUWGA committee to put women candidates forward in the local government elections. Yet, again, there is no evidence that the association actually adopted this suggestion. In fact, concerns expressed by some NUWGA members about the huge expenditure and work load involved in such an undertaking, suggests that the matter was not further pursued.<sup>860</sup> The association did again, in 1959,

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<sup>858</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 14 November 1957, included in NUWGA minute book :953-1961.

<sup>859</sup> 'Some Senate votes rejected for wrong markings' (no author), *The Irish Times*, 15 July 1954, p. 3.

<sup>860</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 24 January 1955, included in NUWGA minute book :953-1961.



support its member, Norah Stuart, when she ran for re-election to the senate of the National University,<sup>861</sup> this time, however, without success.<sup>862</sup>

The NUWGA's activities with regard to increasing women's representation in public offices and in public affairs were thus limited and only applied to appointments in which the association most fancied its chances of actually achieving something, i.e. the election of women to the university senate or to Seanad Éireann. In doing so, the association limited its goals to those achievable, a behaviour observed by Traci M. Sawyers and David Meyers as typical for abeyance organizations.<sup>863</sup> This process of co-optation worked for the NUWGA in the case of the election of Norah Stuart to the university senate in 1954, however, with the lack of support from the DUWGA and the QWGA and little collaboration even within the NUWGA itself, the election of women to more significant offices remained unattained and also an unprofessed goal. There were no real attempts, for instance, made by any of the IWGAs to elect more women to the Dáil. The only effort made in this regard was by the DUWGA, which made a donation towards women candidates put forward by the Irish Housewives Association, in the 1957 general elections.<sup>864</sup> The QWGA refrained completely from any direct support for women's appointments to public offices. As the association's committee had decided, in 1952, women "[...] should be elected on their merits [...]" and not because they were women. However, if a woman was to be nominated, it was stressed, the association would give her the "united support" of the QWGA.<sup>865</sup> Throughout the years this "support" was manifested through official announcements and congratulations in the QWGA's annual reports for its member, Elizabeth (Bessie) Maconachie, who was a member of the Northern Irish parliament between 1953 and 1969.<sup>866</sup>

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<sup>861</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA /22, NUWGA committee meeting 17 April 1959, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>862</sup> 'N.U.I. Senate elections' (no author), *Connacht Tribune*, 14 November 1959, p. 12.

<sup>863</sup> See Traci M. Sawyers and David S. Meyer, 'Missed opportunities: social Movement Abeyance and Public Policy', *Social Problems*, 46 (1999), p. 193.

<sup>864</sup> See DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 22 January 1957, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

<sup>865</sup> QUB/E/8/2 Box 17, report on the QWGA annual general meeting 16 January 1952, included in the QWGA Annual Report 1951.

<sup>866</sup> See, for example, QUB/E/8/2 Box 16, Secretary's Report 1958, included in QWGA Annual Report 1958.

Reasons for this failure to support female candidates in the general and local elections by the IWGAs can presumably be understood in terms of the amount of work and expenditure involved in such campaigns, as it had been expressed by NUWGA members in 1955. Another reason could be the IWGAs' likely unwillingness to support members of a specific party. With the non-partisan orientation of the associations, the support for individual women linked to specific political parties could have caused resentment and conflict among members - a problem which the German DAB had experienced in its efforts to lobby for women's appointments to public offices. In particular, the DUWGA and the QWGA, which focused primarily on the social objective of their associations, i.e. to enable women graduates to stay in touch with one another, would have wanted to avoid such a conflict among their members. As for the NUWGA, the initial motivation shown in regard to advancing women's influence and participation in public life largely subsided after 1954 and only sporadic attempts to support women candidates were made in the subsequent years.

It was not until the associations joined the Ad Hoc Committee and later the Council for the Status of Women that the issues of women's participation in public life and the lack of Irish women in political offices were again addressed among the IWGAs in connection with the Report of the Commission on the Status of Women.

#### **IV.4.2 Promoting women's rights in collaboration with other women's organizations**

Throughout the years the IWGAs maintained many important connections to other Irish women's organizations. Some of these links often originated from the women's movement of the early twentieth century, as in the case of the Joint Committee of Women's Societies and Social Workers (JCWSSW), while others were more recent collaborations, such as with the Irish Housewives Association which had been founded in 1941. As with the DAB, most of the connections to other women's groups were sustained through affiliation, as well as through frequent overlap of members. As the pool of politically active women, who challenged existing gender ideologies and restrictive legislation during the 1950s and 1960s, was limited in



Ireland, many women activists were members in more than one organization at a time. The DUWGA's representative on the JCWSSW, Rosaleen Mills, for instance, was not only a prominent member of the women graduates' association but also of the Irish Housewives Association, which was also affiliated to the JCWSSW. Similarly, Nora Brown, another active member in the DUWGA was also a member of the IHA, the Irish Business and Professional Women's Club and the Soroptomist Club.<sup>867</sup> By being involved in multiple organizations these women ensured the existence of a variety of women's groups, as well as the upholding of an important network between these individual groups.

Apart from these overlaps in members the IWGAs were affiliated to the main umbrella organization in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland, which aimed to unite some of the efforts of the various existing Irish women's groups. As seen with the DAB's affiliation to the German Women's Information Service, these umbrella organizations were important points of contact with other groups and fostered joint efforts of women's organizations in Ireland. The organization representing Northern Irish women activists was the Standing Conference of Women's Organizations. In the Republic of Ireland it was mainly the JCWSSW which tended to co-ordinate the efforts of women's organizations. The individual IWGAs were each represented in their respective umbrella organization, i.e. the QWGA was affiliated to the Standing Conference and the NUWGA and the DUWGA had both joined the JCWSSW.

The main objective of the JCWSSW was to protect the rights and ensure the welfare of women and children in Ireland. Some of its earliest demands had included an adequate health scheme for mothers and children, the establishment of a female police force and the campaign for the reversal of the 1927 Juries Act.<sup>868</sup> The NUWGA and the DUWGA had both participated in setting up the JCWSSW in 1935 and had co-ordinated several of their own activities with the Joint Committee during the 1930s. As outlined in chapter IV.1, in 1935 the NUWGA had formed a standing committee together with the new JCWSSW, the National Council of Women in Ireland<sup>869</sup> and the

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<sup>867</sup> See, for example, Margaret O'Callaghan, 'Women and Politics in Independent Ireland, 1921-1968', in Bourke, Angela, Siobhán Kilfeather, Maria Luddy, Margaret Mac Curtain, Gerardine Meaney, Mairín Ní Dhoonchadha, Mary O'Dowd and Clair Wills, eds., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, Volume V, Irish Women's Writings and Traditions* (Cork, 2002), p. 176.

<sup>868</sup> Connolly, 'Durability and Change in State Gender Systems: Ireland in the 1950s', p. 69.

<sup>869</sup> Not to be confused with the Council on the Status of Women.

Irish Women Workers' Union, to monitor any further attempts to restrict women's rights within the Irish Free State, following the passing of the Conditions of Employment Bill in 1935. Two years later, these organizations were at the forefront of the protest against the 1937 draft constitution.<sup>870</sup> During the succeeding decades, the link between both the NUWGA and the DUWGA with the JCWSSW was maintained. Each association was represented on the Joint Committee by one member, who reported back to their respective associations on the JCWSSW's initiatives.

The Northern Irish Standing Conference of Women's Organizations had been set up in 1943 and had similar objectives to the JCWSSW. Co-ordinating the efforts of thirty-five women's groups in Northern Ireland, it primarily focused on the improvement of working conditions for women, as well as on the welfare of women and children.<sup>871</sup> The QWGA had joined the umbrella organization soon after its formation and maintained its affiliation until 1968, when the Standing Conference was superseded by the Women's Group on Public Welfare, which the QWGA subsequently also joined.<sup>872</sup> Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Standing Conference was also concerned with women's representation in public life, as it aimed to increase the number of women in local government and public bodies, as well as with the protection of women's employment opportunities. The QWGA's letter to a local hospital in 1948, in which the association protested against the discontinuation of part-time positions for female doctors,<sup>873</sup> had, for instance, been initiated by the Standing Conference, which had sent a deputation to the Minister for Health in order to ensure that these positions would be maintained.<sup>874</sup> However, similar activities for women's participation in the public sphere gradually disappeared from the Standing Conference's agenda during the 1950s and 1960s as it shifted its focus to the rights and protection of consumers.<sup>875</sup>

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<sup>870</sup> Rosemary Cullen Owens, *A Social History of Women in Ireland 1870-1970* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 266-9.

<sup>871</sup> Roger Sawyer, *We Are But Women: Women in Ireland's History* (London, 1993), p. 154.

<sup>872</sup> See QUB E/8/2 Box 16, report of the Women's Group on Public Welfare, included in the QWGA Annual Report 1968.

<sup>873</sup> See chapter IV.3.2.

<sup>874</sup> QUB E/8/2 Box 17, report of the Standing Conference of Women's Organizations, included in the QWGA Annual Report 1949.

<sup>875</sup> See, for example, QUB E/8/2 Box 17, report of the Standing Conference of Women's Organizations, included in the QWGA Annual Report 1954.



Through the QWGA's affiliation to the Standing Conference and the NUWGA's and DUWGA's representation on the JCWSSW, the IWGAs were, at least on paper, involved in all activities of the two umbrella organizations. Petitions and deputations were usually made in the name of all member groups, in order to signify the strength of support for the individual demands or protests and thereby increase pressure on the respective bodies. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Standing Conference focused chiefly on issues concerning the cost of living, road safety, standards of hygiene in the manufacturing and selling of food products, or the content of television programmes.<sup>876</sup> For the latter issue, member organizations were asked to review programmes aired by the British TV stations BBC and UTV with regard to unnecessary violence and references to sex and alcohol. This initiative was one of the few instances that the QWGA, as an association, got actively involved in, rather than just lending its name. To this end, the QWGA carried out the research which was later evaluated by the Standing Conference.<sup>877</sup> The final results, which determined that on average ten per cent of TV programmes contained excessive references to violence, sex and alcohol, were ultimately forwarded to the respective channels with the intention of highlighting the possible threats to the morality of the youth.<sup>878</sup>

The NUWGA's and the DUWGA's co-operation with the JCWSSW was similar to the QWGA's with the Standing Conference. The main work in these umbrella organizations was undertaken by the representatives of the individual women's groups, who co-ordinated the efforts on behalf of their own organizations and reported back to these. The associations, therefore, supported the JCWSSW's campaigns primarily through affiliation. The objectives of the Joint Committee during the 1950s and 1960s covered a wide range of issues. Some of the main campaigns included reform of the Children's and the Adoption Act, raising the legal marriage age from twelve to sixteen,<sup>879</sup> making jury service obligatory for both men and women, and

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<sup>876</sup> See, for example, QUB E/8/2 Box 17, report of the Standing Conference of Women's Organizations 1953 and 1954, included in the QWGA Annual Report 1953 and in the QWGA Annual Report 1954.

<sup>877</sup> QUB E/8/2 Box 16, QWGA Annual Report 1960.

<sup>878</sup> QUB E/8/2 Box 16, report of the Standing Conference of Women's Organizations, included in the QWGA Annual Report 1961.

<sup>879</sup> NAI TAOIS S/17296 A/62, memorandum from the Minister for Health to the Government on the Proposed Amendment of the Marriage Act, in which the Minister highlights the numerous requests by various women's organizations represented on the JCWSSW (including the NUWGA and the DUWGA) to raise the legal age of marriage for girls, 25 July 1962.

establishing a female police force. Most of these issues were supported by the NUWGA and the DUWGA through the joint petitions drawn up by the JCWSSW in the name of its affiliated organizations. However, some of the JCWSSW campaigns also influenced the agenda of the associations. The NUWGA's efforts to establish a course in child care at UCD, for instance, followed upon the JCWSSW's campaign for the employment of more women on the new adoption board, which had been established by the 1952 Adoption Act. As the JCWSSW had argued, by providing more employment opportunities in this sector, women would no longer be forced to emigrate to England.<sup>880</sup> The NUWGA subsequently adopted this argument for its campaign to establish the child care course, in order to offer women the necessary education and training for such positions.<sup>881</sup>

Both the NUWGA and the DUWGA also actively co-operated with the JCWSSW in the demand for the repeal of the 1924 and 1927 Juries Acts and for the appointment of female police officers. Women's organizations had pressed for these matters for several decades. The Juries Acts had been opposed by women activists since their introduction in the 1920s, on the grounds that they further restricted women's participation in public life in the Irish Free State.<sup>882</sup> The demand for female police officers went back as far as the 1910s and was based on the argument that women were required, particularly, for dealing with victims of sexual abuse and prostitution.<sup>883</sup> Both issues had been on the JCWSSW's agenda since its foundation in 1935 and it had sent numerous petitions and delegations to the government over the years. Apart from signing these petitions,<sup>884</sup> the NUWGA was also represented at a deputation with the Joint Committee to the Dublin City Council in 1953 to lobby for the establishment of a female police force,<sup>885</sup> and both the DUWGA and the NUWGA also sent to the Department of Justice their own resolutions on women's right to sit on Juries in

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<sup>880</sup> See DUWGA archive, "Co-operation with the Joint Committee for Women's Societies and Social Workers", included in the DUWGA Annual Report 1952-1953.

<sup>881</sup> See chapter IV.2.2.

<sup>882</sup> See also chapter II.2.

<sup>883</sup> Connolly, 'Durability and Change in State Gender Systems: Ireland in the 1950s', pp. 76-77.

<sup>884</sup> See, for example, DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 23 October 1936, included in DUWGA minute book 1934-1955.

<sup>885</sup> See, for example, IE UCDA NUWGA 2/21, printed copy of the report on the NUWGA's activities for the year 1953-1954, included in NUWGA minute book 1935-1957.



support of the JCWSSW's campaign.<sup>886</sup> While the Juries Acts were not repealed until 1972, following the recommendations by the Commission on the Status of Women, the demand for a female police force was finally satisfied in 1958, as a new police act ("Garda Síochána Bill") was passed by the government permitting the employment of women as police officers. The official reason for the new act was that women officers were needed in cases which involved sex offences and children, based on the fact that women would be more suitable to handle these cases due to their 'innate' caring nature. Despite the restriction of female police officers' involvement to these cases, as well as an initial limitation of their number to twelve overall, the government's cited reason for introducing the bill reiterated the JCWSSW's demands and were therefore clearly regarded as a success within the organization.<sup>887</sup> Moreover, the bill ultimately opened the door to women in the police force and thus paved the way for re-assessment of a so-far strictly male domain.

Through their affiliation to the JCWSSW, the DUWGA and the NUWGA also remained in contact with numerous women's organizations in the Republic with which they collaborated on several occasions, outside the JCWSSW. The DUWGA's resolution to the Minister for Labour on the introduction of legislation on equal pay for equal work in 1968, for instance, was in support of the activities of the Business and Professional Women's Clubs in this matter.<sup>888</sup> The DUWGA's support for the Irish Housewives Association (IHA) in its campaign to elect women candidates in the general elections of 1957 also resulted from joint work on the JCWSSW.<sup>889</sup> The NUWGA also collaborated with other women's organizations, such as the IHA, and occasionally informed them on discriminating job advertisements and on the protest raised by the association.<sup>890</sup> By maintaining these links, the women graduate associations contributed greatly to preserving a network of Irish women's activists in a period when there was little public and political support for women's issues. This pre-existing

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<sup>886</sup> See, for example, IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 9 September 1959, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961.

<sup>887</sup> Connolly, 'Durability and Change', pp. 76-8.

<sup>888</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 25 January 1968, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

<sup>889</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 22 January 1957, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

<sup>890</sup> See, for example, IE UCDA NUWGA 2/21, NUWGA committee meeting 10 July 1950, included in NUWGA minute book 1935-1957.

network ultimately provided the foundation for the collective action by the Irish women's organizations which joined in the Ad Hoc Committee and lobbied successfully for the establishment of the influential Commission on the Status of Women in Ireland.

#### **IV.4.3 The formation of the Ad Hoc Committee and the Commission on the Status of Women**

The Commission on the Status of Women was set up by the Irish government in 1970 to investigate “[...] the status of women in Irish society and to make recommendations on the steps necessary to ensure women’s participation on equal terms with men in the political, social, cultural and economic life of the country [...]”.<sup>891</sup> By establishing this Commission, the Irish government followed several other Western countries that were in the process of undertaking, or had already completed, similar studies on women’s position in society.<sup>892</sup> Yet, despite this international trend, the initiative to set up an Irish Commission on the Status of Women did not emerge from the government, but rather, from a small Ad Hoc Committee, consisting of the representatives of several women’s organizations. Among these organizations were the NUWGA and the DUWGA.

The Ad Hoc Committee of women’s organizations was established in early 1968, following an appeal made by the UN Commission on the Status of Women. This appeal urged several international women’s groups to encourage their member organizations to press for the setting up of national commissions on women’s status in their countries. Both the Irish Housewives Association (IHA) and the Irish Business and Professional Women’s Clubs had been informed of this appeal through their respective international affiliations to the International Alliance of Women and the International Federation of Business and Professional Women. On 30 January 1968, these two

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<sup>891</sup> For the full terms of reference of the Commission on the Status of Women see Levine, ‘The Women’s Movement in the Republic of Ireland, 1968-80’, in Bourke, Kilfeather, Luddy, Mac Curtain, Meaney, Ní Dhonnchadha, O’Dowd and Wills, eds., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, Volume V*, p. 178.

<sup>892</sup> Both the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States had already published reports on the status of women during the 1960s, while other countries, such as Canada and Denmark, were in the process of producing similar reports – See Cullen Owens, *A Social History of Women in Ireland 1870-1970*, p. 310.



women's groups invited various other organizations to discuss the setting up of a Commission on the Status of Women in the Republic of Ireland. Following this first meeting of the women's groups, ten organizations joined in the Ad Hoc Committee to lobby the Irish government for a commission to examine women's status in Irish society. As such, the new Committee was intended as a temporary organization, which would dissolve on the achievement of its goal.<sup>893</sup>

Both the DUWGA and the NUWGA were represented at the initial meeting of women's organizations in January 1968 and the matter of joining the Ad Hoc Committee was subsequently discussed within the two associations. The DUWGA, in fact, had already made some inquiries concerning Commissions on the Status of Women in other countries, prior to the joint meeting in January. Being itself affiliated to the International Federation of University Women, which maintained close ties to the UN, the DUWGA's secretary, Mrs Mew, had written to the IFUW and had found out that both the UK and Canada had already set up such a commission.<sup>894</sup> With this information to hand and the decision made at the joint meeting to press for an Irish Commission on the Status of Women, the DUWGA unanimously decided to join the Ad Hoc Committee. Dr Blanche Weekes, a lecturer at Trinity College, was appointed the association's representative on the Ad Hoc Committee.<sup>895</sup>

While the members of the DUWGA did not hesitate in the decision to join the new Committee, the NUWGA was unconvinced about becoming associated with the Ad Hoc Committee. The NUWGA's qualms resulted primarily from the disapproval voiced by the Joint Committee of Women's Societies and Social Workers (JCWSSW), to which both the DUWGA and the NUWGA were affiliated, in regard to the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee. As an umbrella organization for Irish women's groups, the JCWSSW openly opposed the newly formed Ad Hoc Committee, fearing not only for its own future but also questioning the need for setting up yet another committee of women's organizations in the Republic of Ireland.<sup>896</sup> The

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<sup>893</sup> Cullen Owens, *A Social History of Women in Ireland 1870-1970*, pp. 309-10.

<sup>894</sup> DUWGA archive, letter from Elsa Turceninoff (assistant secretary of the IFUW) to Mrs Mew in which she refers to Mew's initial letter on 5 January, 24 January 1968.

<sup>895</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 12 February 1968, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

<sup>896</sup> See NAI EFP/98/17/2/5, letter from the Joint Committee of Women's Societies and Social Workers to the Irish Housewives Association, 6 December 1972.

JCWSSW's opposition to the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee was communicated to its affiliated member organizations shortly after the formation of the Ad Hoc Committee and was re-affirmed in March 1968 in the JCWSSW's formal rejection of the invitation to join the new Committee.<sup>897</sup>

Unlike the DUWGA, or the various other organizations that were represented in the JCWSSW and had opted to join the Ad Hoc Committee, the NUWGA made no definite decision. Instead, the matter was delegated to its representative in the JCWSSW, Mrs Meenan, to consult with the Joint Committee and to decide which of the two committees would be better suitable to act in the capacity of pressing for a Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>898</sup> However, Meenan's final decision, which had been in favour of the JCWSSW and against joining the Ad Hoc Committee, was obviously not communicated clearly to the NUWGA's committee members. This lack of communication ultimately resulted in the fact that the association was indeed represented on the Ad Hoc Committee throughout the following years. The NUWGA's former president, Geraldine Roche, regularly attended the Ad Hoc Committee meetings on behalf of the NUWGA. Unfortunately, the files of the association do not reveal how it came about that Roche continued to act as a representative on the Ad Hoc Committee. Yet she certainly did so without the knowledge of the NUWGA's committee, which only found out about Roche's function in late 1969, nearly two years after the Ad Hoc Committee had been founded.<sup>899</sup>

The first official meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee was held on 12 March 1968, in the DUWGA's rooms in Trinity College Dublin, which were subsequently used for most of the Committee's monthly meetings. Ten organizations had ultimately joined: the IHA, the BPW, the Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA), the Irish Widow's Associations, the Soroptomists' Club, the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO), the Association of Women Citizens, the Irish Council of Women, the DUWGA and, despite its own ignorance about it, the NUWGA (through Geraldine Roche).<sup>900</sup>

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<sup>897</sup> NAI EFP/98/17/2/5, letter from the Joint Committee of Women's Societies and Social Workers to Hilda Tweedy, 6 March 1968.

<sup>898</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 3/1, NUWGA committee meeting 8 February 1968, included in NUWGA minute book 1961-1980.

<sup>899</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 3/1, NUWGA committee meeting 5 December 1969, included in NUWGA minute book 1961-1980.

<sup>900</sup> See, for example, Hilda Tweedy, *A Link in the Chain. The Story of the Irish Housewives Association 1942-1992* (Dublin, 1992), p. 35.



Hilda Tweedy of the IHA was elected chairwoman and the DUWGA's representative, Dr Blanche Weekes, was appointed Honorary Secretary.<sup>901</sup> The first step of the Ad Hoc Committee was to draw up a survey, completed by the individual organizations, which enquired, in particular, about known cases of discrimination against women in employment, about the organizations' stance on part-time work and about views on the existing regulation of women's tax allowances.<sup>902</sup> The aim of this survey was to establish a list of women's enduring inequalities within Irish society, which would substantiate the Ad Hoc Committee's call to the government for the setting up of a Commission on the Status of Women.

The survey was presented to the DUWGA by Weekes at its next committee meeting. The association agreed that women's equality of opportunity and the demand for equal taxation of married women were the main points that needed to be examined and included in the terms of reference for a future Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>903</sup> Irish tax policy at the time was regulated according to the dominant ideology of traditional gender roles, which promoted the ideal of marriage and of a nuclear family, with the man as the breadwinner and the wife as the homemaker. In this context, the income of single persons and married women was taxed at a higher rate than that of a married man. While only £234 of a non-married employee's income and £160 of a married woman's income were tax free, married men were allowed to exempt £394 from taxation.<sup>904</sup> By granting such tax relief to married couples, the policy actively promoted the institution of marriage. Moreover, by keeping the tax free allowance of married women considerably lower than their husbands', it effectively penalized and reduced the value of married women's work, making employment outside the home for these women less attractive.<sup>905</sup>

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<sup>901</sup> TCD MUN SOC WGA Box 3/VI-8, DUWGA annual report 1969, Secretary's Report.

<sup>902</sup> DUWGA archive, list of women's issues for consideration of the organizations represented on the Ad Hoc Committee, 1968.

<sup>903</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 14 March 1968, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

<sup>904</sup> 'Minutes of meeting to propose the establishment of a Commission on the Status of Women', printed in Bourke, Kilfeather, Luddy, Mac Curtain, Meaney, Ni Dhonnchadha, O'Dowd and Wills, eds., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, Volume V*, p. 190.

<sup>905</sup> Sonia Mazey, 'The European Union and women's rights: from the Europeanization of national agendas to the nationalization of a European agenda?', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 5 (1998), pp. 135-6.

As the DUWGA saw it, the reduced tax allowance for women's work was one of the most obvious discriminatory measures against women and women's work in the Republic of Ireland. The association had, in fact, previously in 1957 issued a demand for an increase of women's tax allowance during the proceedings of the government's Commission on Income Taxation, which had been set up in February of that year.<sup>906</sup> However, that demand had had little effect and the different tax regulation for married men and women, as well as for unmarried individuals, had been maintained.

Following the feedback from its affiliated organizations, the Ad Hoc Committee drew up a memorandum to the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, outlining the various areas of discrimination and unequal opportunities for women in Irish society and demanding the establishment of a Commission on the Status of Women. It was signed in the name of all ten organizations, including the DUWGA and the NUWGA - in spite of the latter's obliviousness to its presence on the Ad Hoc Committee. As the memorandum stressed, considerable discrimination against women continued to exist in the Republic of Ireland, discrimination which was "[...] incompatible with human dignity [...]" and prevented women's "[...] participation, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country."<sup>907</sup> Particular areas of inequality, according to the memorandum, were maintained in women's participation in the labour force, both through lack of opportunities and in pay, in women's representation within politics, and in widows' allowances and married women's taxation.<sup>908</sup>

A week later, the Ad Hoc Committee received a reply from the Taoiseach promising that the memorandum would be forwarded to the concerned ministers for consideration.<sup>909</sup> Nothing further was heard for over a year and, consequently, both Hilda Tweedy and Blanche Weekes, in their position as chairwoman and honorary secretary, repeatedly wrote to Lynch asking for a meeting with him to discuss the setting up of a Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>910</sup> The Ad Hoc Committee also

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<sup>906</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 17 May 1957, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

<sup>907</sup> NAI TAOIS 96/6/184, "Memorandum on the Status of Women in Ireland", sent by the Ad Hoc Committee to Taoiseach Jack Lynch, 21 October 1968.

<sup>908</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>909</sup> NAI TAOIS 96/6/184, letter from Taoiseach Jack Lynch to Hilda Tweedy (chairwoman of the Ad Hoc Committee), 28 October 1968.

<sup>910</sup> See, for example, NAI TAOIS 96/6/184, letter from the Ad Hoc Committee to Jack Lynch, 13 March 1969.



lobbied local TDs and government representatives for the establishment of a national Commission, a request to which it got favourable replies but no definite answers.<sup>911</sup>

In the meantime, the Taoiseach gradually received responses by his ministers stating their views on setting up a Commission on the Status of Women. Statements were submitted by the Minister for Labour, the Minister for Education, the Minister for Social Welfare, the Minister for Health, the Minister for External Affairs, the Minister for Justice and, with several months delay, by the Minister for Finance. The main issue pointed out by these ministers, and causing much of the delay in the Minister for Finance's response to the proposal to establish a Commission on the Status of Women, was the problem of equal pay for equal work. The introduction of this principle was one of the Ad Hoc Committee's priorities in removing discriminatory measures against women, which was outlined in its memorandum to the Taoiseach. It had also been previously addressed by several women's organizations throughout the years, including both the NUWGA and the DUWGA.<sup>912</sup>

Since then, the outlook of the Minister for Labour, Patrick Hillery, on the issue had somewhat changed.<sup>913</sup> In his response to the Taoiseach in relation to the Ad Hoc Committee's memorandum in November 1968, Hillery indicated that he had contacted the Minister for Finance several times during the past months, suggesting consideration of the principle of equal pay for equal work in the civil service. As Hillery stated, he expected that the pressure on Ireland to introduce equal pay, both in the public and the private sector, would further increase due to the adoption of the principle by the European Economic Community (EEC) in the Treaty of Rome and in recent international conventions on human rights.<sup>914</sup>

This, still rather carefully phrased, recommendation to reconsider the government's stance on equal pay was expressed in a much firmer way by the Minister for Labour in a memorandum sent to the Taoiseach six months later. In this document Hillery explicitly advised the government to introduce equal pay for equal work in the public service. According to him, the country could not "[...] be said to have adopted a

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<sup>911</sup> See NAI EFP 98/17/13/1, minutes of the Ad Hoc Committee meeting, 5 June 1969.

<sup>912</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA memorandum to the Minister for Labour, February 1968.

<sup>913</sup> See chapter IV.3.2.

<sup>914</sup> NAI TAOIS 96/6/184, letter from the Department of Labour to the Taoiseach, 20 November 1968.

positive attitude to the removal of 'sex discrimination' [...]"<sup>915</sup> which manifested itself in the lack of opportunities for women in employment and, particularly, in the upholding of pay differentials based on sex. As Hillery argued, pressure from women's organizations and other social groups, in addition to the various international recommendations on human rights, had been increasing in the past year. For this reason, the official policy towards equal pay would no longer be defensible as the country would be "[...] increasingly embarrassed by publicity and pressure."<sup>916</sup>

As it appeared, both the pressure exercised by the Ad Hoc Committee and by individual women's groups was eventually proving effective. Adding to this increasing public pressure for equal pay was the fact that the Republic of Ireland had recently reactivated its application for membership to the EEC, after its first request had been rejected in 1963. With this application pending at the time of the Ad Hoc Committee's demand for a Commission on the Status of Women, the Minister for Labour was well aware that once Ireland joined the EEC the principle of equal pay for equal value would have to be introduced and that it was, therefore, just a matter of time.<sup>917</sup>

Following the memorandum outlining Hillery's recommendations, the Minister for Finance, Charles Haughey, finally submitted his remarks to the Taoiseach's request to examine the demand for a commission investigating discrimination against women in Irish society. Having been reminded on several occasions by the Taoiseach's office that his reply was still outstanding,<sup>918</sup> Haughey had taken his time to comment on the Ad Hoc Committee's demand and the related issue of introducing equal pay for equal work. Although still cautioning against the increase in costs in the public sector if the principle was adopted,<sup>919</sup> he now ultimately agreed with the recommendations of the Minister for Labour. As Haughey stated in his reply to the Taoiseach, "[...] the pressure for equal pay is likely to increase [...]" and he, therefore, "[...] would see considerable merit in the establishment of a Commission, such as recommended by the ad hoc

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<sup>915</sup> NAI TAOIS 96/6/184, "Draft Memorandum for the Government: Equal Pay for Equal Work for Men and Women in the Public Service, May 1969, p. 1.

<sup>916</sup> NAI TAOIS 96/6/184, "Draft Memorandum for the Government: Equal Pay for Equal Work for Men and Women in the Public Service, May 1969, p. 5.

<sup>917</sup> See Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985. Politics and Society*, pp. 461-465.

<sup>918</sup> See NAI TAOIS 96/6/184, Dáil Question addressed to the Taoiseach by Deputy Cosgrave - answer includes remark on the Minister for Finance's failure to respond to the Ad Hoc Committee's memorandum despite several reminders to do so, 15 April 1969.

<sup>919</sup> See also chapter IV.3.2.



Committee, which would obviously tackle as one of its first tasks the whole question of equal pay.”<sup>920</sup> With this suggestion, the politically and economically uncomfortable issue of equal pay for equal value was passed on to the future Commission on the Status of Women, relieving the Minister for Finance from the responsibility of himself initiating the implementation of the principle.

Following the receipt of Haughey’s reply, the Taoiseach officially announced the setting up of a Commission on the Status of Women. The Ad Hoc Committee was informed of this decision on 5 November 1969.<sup>921</sup> While welcoming the Taoiseach’s announcement, the Committee stressed that, for the successful work of this new Commission, the representation of women’s organizations, through the Ad Hoc Committee, would be essential.<sup>922</sup> This request was later put into writing to the Taoiseach.<sup>923</sup> Shortly after, two of the Ad Hoc Committee’s members, Kathleen Delap and Nora Browne, were appointed to the Commission. Thekla Beere, the first female parliamentary secretary in the Republic of Ireland, was appointed chairwoman of the Commission, which began its work on 31 March 1970.<sup>924</sup>

The Ad Hoc Committee dissolved in April 1970, having achieved its initial aim of lobbying for a Commission on the Status of Women in the Republic of Ireland.<sup>925</sup> During the months between the announcement of an Irish Commission and its establishment, the Ad Hoc Committee and its affiliated organizations had maintained pressure on the Taoiseach and the government to take legislative steps to abolish continuing inequalities in Irish law. As the Committee had argued, there was no need to wait with the introduction of legislation in areas such as women’s taxation, widow’s allowances or equal pay for equal work. In fact, it had been feared that by deferring these issues until the newly formed Commission had deliberated on them, the government

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<sup>920</sup> NAI TAOIS 96/6/184, letter from the Minister for Finance to the Taoiseach, 13 August 1969.

<sup>921</sup> NAI TAOIS 96/6/184, letter from the Taoiseach’s office to Blanche Weekes (Honorary Secretary of the Ad Hoc Committee), 5 November 1969.

<sup>922</sup> NAI TAOIS 96/6/184, statement of the Ad Hoc Committee at its press conference, 12 November 1969.

<sup>923</sup> NAI TAOIS 96/6/184, letter from Blanche Weekes to Taoiseach Jack Lynch, 12 November 1969.

<sup>924</sup> Levine, ‘The Women’s Movement in the Republic of Ireland, 1968-80’, in Bourke, Kilfeather, Luddy, Mac Curtain, Meaney, Ní Dhonnchadha, O’Dowd and Wills, eds., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, Volume V*, p. 178.

<sup>925</sup> See DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 13 April 1970, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

intended to stall the introduction of remedying measures.<sup>926</sup> The Ad Hoc Committee had, therefore, continued to write to the Taoiseach, pressing him for a meeting to discuss the matter of equal pay for equal work, which was, as it had stressed, a grievance that was within the power of the government to rectify.<sup>927</sup> In addition, several delegates, including the DUWGA and the (unofficial) NUWGA member, had been sent to Leinster House, the seat of the Oireachtas, in order to wait for the Taoiseach and personally urge him to meet with the Ad Hoc Committee.<sup>928</sup> Yet all appeals for a delegation to the Taoiseach had been declined. Instead, the Committee had been referred to the Minister for Finance, who had been appointed to oversee all matters concerning the Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>929</sup> In effect, this referral had indicated that no legislative changes were planned until the new Commission had finished its report. It had thus also signalled that, although willing to examine the status of women in Irish society, the government was in no hurry to implement costly principles such as equal pay for equal value or women's equal taxation.

The final report of the Commission on the Status of Women, published in December 1972, covered an extensive range of issues. These included the employment of women, social welfare, women's taxation, women's representation in politics and public life, women's role in the home, women's participation in education and cultural affairs, as well as the question of equal pay for equal work<sup>930</sup>. Most of its findings were based on the consultation of various bodies such as trade unions and employer organizations, government officials, as well women's organizations which had submitted oral and written evidence to the Commission. In addition, several surveys and studies were commissioned in support of the final report.<sup>931</sup>

Both the DUWGA and the NUWGA were among the women's organizations which contributed to the final report. The Commission's chairwomen, Dr Beere, had written to the two associations in spring 1971, asking them to submit information on

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<sup>926</sup> VAI EFP 98/17/13/1, minutes of the Ad Hoc Committee meeting 9 December 1969.

<sup>927</sup> NAI TAOIS 96/6/184, letter from Hilda Tweedy and Blanche Weekes (president and honorary secretary of the Ad Hoc Committee) to Taoiseach Jack Lynch, 10 December 1969.

<sup>928</sup> VAI EFP 98/17/13/1, minutes of the Ad Hoc Committee meeting 9 December 1969.

<sup>929</sup> VAI TAOIS 96/6/184, letter from the Taoiseach to Blanche Weekes, 15 December 1969.

<sup>930</sup> The issue of equal pay for equal work had already been subject of the Commission's Interim Report, published in 1971.

<sup>931</sup> See Commission on the Status of Women, 'Report to Minister for Finance' (Dublin, 1972).



the position of women graduates in Irish society.<sup>932</sup> Particular areas of interest for research concerned job opportunities for women graduates in the Republic of Ireland, their pay rates and success in securing job offers, as well as experiences of discrimination or difficulties of re-entering employment.<sup>933</sup> For this purpose, both associations formed subcommittees, which subsequently worked on compiling and evaluating questionnaires that were sent to a random sample of women graduates from Dublin University and University College Dublin.<sup>934</sup> The response rate was rather low, with an average of only twenty-five per cent of returned questionnaires.<sup>935</sup> Yet, as the NUWGA noted, although this “[...] low response rate detracts greatly from the utility of the information as a basis for firm conclusions [...] the returns may be accepted as throwing light on the questions which prompted the survey.”<sup>936</sup>

While the survey was primarily concerned with the employment of graduate women, its findings also included information on the secondary education of girls, the subject choices of female students at university and women’s career patterns. In doing so, it covered an area which had been largely ignored, not only by previous governments, but also by the IWGAs, as discussed in chapter IV.2.3. As the NUWGA’s submission to the Commission on the Status of Women in 1972 determined, the vast majority of girls refrained from taking subjects such as mathematics, physics or chemistry in secondary school, a tendency which impacted on women’s course choices at universities. According to supplementary material provided by the NUWGA’s member, Monica Nevin, approximately seventy per cent of all women students took degrees in Arts, Sociology or Commerce in the academic year of 1971/72. The accumulation of women in these subjects, as the NUWGA concluded, had a significant effect on women’s representation in some employment sectors and would help to explain the small number of women in technical fields or in the professions. As the questionnaires had shown, the majority of women graduates were, in fact, employed

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<sup>932</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 1 June 1971, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

<sup>933</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 3/1, NUWGA committee meeting 18 May 1971, included in NUWGA minute book 1961-1980.

<sup>934</sup> See, for example, IE UCDA NUWGA 3/1, NUWGA committee meeting 18 May 1971, included in NUWGA minute book 1961-1980.

<sup>935</sup> Commission on the Status of Women, 'Report to Minister for Finance', (Dublin, 1972), p. 10.

<sup>936</sup> QUB E/8/2 Box 2, Women Graduates' Association University College Dublin, 'A Survey of Women Graduates', August 1972, no page numbers.

as teachers or administrators (eighty-seven out of 125 respondents), while only a handful of the respondents were working as doctors, lawyers or scientists (twenty-one out of 125 respondents).

This last observation was explained by the fact that nearly fifty per cent of the respondents who had studied for an Arts degree had declared that they had lacked a real career objective.<sup>937</sup> This statement correlated with the fact that girls' education in the past had tended not to focus on specific careers, as women were generally expected to marry and resign after a few years in employment. As a result, women often opted for a less specified and lengthy education as required, for example, for the professions. The survey, therefore, highlighted and drew the important connection between girls' education, their later course choices in university and ultimately women's career patterns. Neither the Council of Education's report, which had been published in 1962, nor the Commission on Higher Education's, published in 1967, had made this connection between education and women's opportunities in Irish society and employment.<sup>938</sup> The NUWGA's study outlined the consequences of a gendered education in school, as well as at home, as parents often failed to encourage their daughters' own ambitions in terms of academic achievements and future employment. In doing so, the study not only pointed out the problems in education and in the employment patterns of women but, more importantly, it highlighted the social and cultural norms that ultimately restricted women's opportunities in the Republic of Ireland.

The study also offered some valuable information on women's own views on equality in employment. When asked about their employment and their experiences with discrimination in entering employment, in pay and in opportunities for advancement, the replies showed a mixed picture. The majority of women found that they had equal access to their employment sectors (105 "yes" answers to fourteen "no" answers). However, as the NUWGA stressed, most of these women were employed in positions which were mainly filled by women, such as teaching and administrative positions, and thus often faced less competition from men. There were

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<sup>937</sup> QUB E/8/2 Box 2, Women Graduates' Association University College Dublin, 'A Survey of Women Graduates', August 1972, no page numbers.

<sup>938</sup> See John Sheehan, 'Education and Society in Ireland, 1945-1970, in J.J. Lee, ed., *Ireland 1945-1970* (Dublin, 1979), pp. 63-4.



more critical voices in regard to equal pay and opportunity for advancement. Nearly half of the respondents declared that they were not paid the same salary as men. The remaining half mostly comprised women who were working in the public service, where women were paid the same as single men, while married men were paid more. According to the NUWGA, many of the respondents considered this pay structure as equivalent to equal pay. Most respondents, however, who were employed in fields with more direct competition with men and who were not forced to resign after marriage, such as in law or in science, indicated that they were paid less than men. The women lawyers replying to the questionnaires were also among those respondents, together with the administrative staff, who claimed that they had less opportunity for promotion than men. Most women, however, answered positively to equality of opportunity, but, as the NUWGA also pointed out, several of the answers also distinguished between theory and practice and between whether a woman was single or married.<sup>939</sup>

Overall, the majority of women questioned by the women graduates for the report of the Commission on the Status of Women continued to consider their status in employment as similar to men's. Moreover, the replies displayed little awareness and criticism of the discrimination of women, such as the marriage bar or the fact that very few women were found in the higher echelons of their respective sectors of employment. Yet the survey also reflected glimpses of a rising consciousness among some women, which was mirrored particularly in the answers regarding equal pay, as well as in the few women who had confirmed their discrimination in opportunities of advancement. In fact, as the study stated, "[M]uch resentment is expressed against discrimination in promotion cases, but here the protests of the ambitious few must be measured against the relative contentment of the majority."<sup>940</sup> As the survey showed, at the beginning of the 1970s these critical voices were still in the minority, as the expectations of most Irish women for life still did not centre on employment, but rather on marriage and a family and thus corresponded to the publicly advocated ideal of traditional gender roles.<sup>941</sup>

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<sup>939</sup> QUB E/8/2 Box 2, Women Graduates' Association University College Dublin, 'A Survey of Women Graduates', August 1972, no page numbers.

<sup>940</sup> Ibid.

<sup>941</sup> Ibid.

The influential nature of the dominant gender ideologies in the Republic of Ireland and their effects on girls' education and their own expectations for life was reaffirmed in the final report by the Commission on the Status of Women. According to the report, traditional gender roles, reinforced through the different upbringing of women and men, were among the main underlying factors for women's limited participation in the public sphere. Various recommendations of the report, therefore, aimed at providing women with the option of having both a career and a family, by eliminating formal and informal barriers, such as the marriage bar or inequalities in pay or taxation, as well as by providing more child care facilities and opportunities of part-time work. In addition, the report stressed that "[W]omen themselves must be educated to understand and accept that they have a further and important role to play outside the home and that the basis for this must be laid in the schools and the early years of employment."<sup>942</sup>

Overall, the Commission's final report contained forty-nine recommendations aiming to facilitate social change and to rectify the discriminatory measures which both maintained and strengthened women's limited role in society. These recommendations concerned women's employment, equal pay, paid maternity leave, improved training opportunities for women, the removal of inequities in education, as well as better social welfare benefits, the equal taxation of women's income and an improvement in women's political representation.

Shortly before the publication of the Commission's report in December 1972, the women's organizations which had been previously represented on the Ad Hoc Committee met again to discuss the resumption of the Committee's work in order to oversee the implementation of the recommendations made by the Commission on the Status of Women. It was decided to also ask other women's groups to consider joining the re-organized Ad Hoc Committee and an appeal was printed in the national newspapers inviting interested organizations to attend an open meeting where the matter would be discussed.<sup>943</sup> This plan to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee in an extended form, once again encountered a rather sour reaction by the Joint Committee of Women's Societies and Social Workers. Following the publication of the Ad Hoc

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<sup>942</sup> Commission on the Status of Women, 'Report to Minister for Finance', (Dublin, 1972), pp. 12-4.

<sup>943</sup> NAI EFP 98/17/13/1, minutes of Ad Hoc Committee meeting, 25 September 1972.



Committee's appeal in *The Irish Times*,<sup>944</sup> the JCWSSW issued its own statement in a letter to the editor of the newspaper in which it once again expressed its opposition to another committee of women's organizations in addition to the JCWSSW.<sup>945</sup>

The renewed protest of the JCWSSW on the re-organization of the former Ad Hoc Committee into a permanent "watch-dog association"<sup>946</sup> was also discussed again within the NUWGA. As with its earlier stance, the association's committee initially declared its loyalty to the JCWSSW, yet only a few weeks later it decided that Geraldine Roche should, in fact, remain on the re-organized Ad Hoc Committee, this time as the official representative of the NUWGA.<sup>947</sup> There is no clear indication as to why the association changed its stance on the Ad Hoc Committee. However, it is possible that the NUWGA had realized that the JCWSSW had, in spite of its previous importance and achievements, clearly missed a chance to play an effective role in overseeing the implementation of the recommendations made by the Commission on the Status of Women. Due to its rather petty rivalry with the Ad Hoc Committee, instead of being a part of the joint efforts by Irish women's organizations at the time, the JCWSSW had manoeuvred itself onto the side-lines in regard to the Commission on the Status of Women. As it appeared, the NUWGA, although stressing its support for the long-established Joint Committee, had finally decided that if it wanted to play a role in the forthcoming reforms the re-organized Ad Hoc Committee would be the more likely body to facilitate such a role.

Both the NUWGA and the DUWGA were, consequently, among the women's organizations represented at the meeting organized by the former Ad Hoc Committee, at which the new Council for the Status of Women was founded. The aim of this new umbrella organization for women's groups in the Republic of Ireland, which included the NUWGA and the DUWGA,<sup>948</sup> was to act as a co-ordinating body for women's

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<sup>944</sup> See 'Women's Meeting' (no author), *The Irish Times*, 28 September 1972, p. 13.

<sup>945</sup> Joint Committee of Women's Societies and Social Workers, 'Letter to the Editor: Women's Societies', *The Irish Times*, 3 October 1972, p. 11.

<sup>946</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 3/2, "Report on the Joint Committee of Women's Societies and Social Workers" by Mrs Meenan at the NUWGA committee meeting 27 October 1972.

<sup>947</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 3/1, NUWGA committee meeting 8 December 1972, included in NUWGA minute book 1961-1980.

<sup>948</sup> DUWGA archive, Council for the Status of Women: Affiliates and Representatives, no date.

organizations and the government, and to press for the implementation of the Commission's recommendation.<sup>949</sup>

Throughout the following years, several pieces of legislation were introduced in the Republic of Ireland aiming to remove the existing inequalities and to improve the status of women in Irish society. These measures included the introduction of an allowance for unmarried mothers, legislation on equal pay for equal work, paid maternity leave, the elimination of the marriage bar in the public service and several social welfare benefits for widows and deserted wives.<sup>950</sup> By lobbying for a Commission on the Status of Women, the Ad Hoc Committee and the women's organizations represented on it had opened the door for these reforms. Moreover, by maintaining pressure on state departments and politicians, the women's organizations, joined together in the Council for the Status of Women, greatly contributed to ensuring the implementation of these reforms, a process which was further facilitated by Ireland's entry into the European Economic Community in 1973 and by the emergence of second wave feminism.<sup>951</sup>

#### IV.4.4 Conclusion

Many of the changes brought about for women in Irish society throughout the 1970s, as demanded by the Ad Hoc Committee and recommended by the Commission on the Status of Women, had been addressed by the IWGAs throughout the previous two decades. Both the NUWGA and the DUWGA had attempted to tackle issues such as the discrimination of women in employment, women's lower tax allowance on their income or women's under-representation in public life. However, many of their activities in these matters often lacked a clear structure or approach and were, instead, reduced to singular acts of protests which failed to make a significant impact.

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<sup>949</sup> Cullen Owens, *A Social History of Women in Ireland 1870-1970*, pp. 312-313.

<sup>950</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>951</sup> Caitríona Beaumont, 'Gender, citizenship and the state in Ireland, 1922-1990', in Scott Brewster, Virginia Crossman, Fiona Becket and David Alderson, eds., *Ireland in Proximity. History, Gender, Space* (London/New York, 1999), pp. 104-106.



This absence of a strategy was also displayed in the NUWGA's attempts to increase women's representation in public office and their participation in public life. Despite declaring this goal as one of its main objectives in 1954, the association's efforts in this respect were rather disjointed and short-lived. The only success was achieved in the appointment of the NUWGA's candidate in the university senate elections in 1954. In this case, the association had successfully collaborated with another organization. On its own, it seemed that the NUWGA lacked the financial and human resources required to run or to support a campaign for any female candidate. Accordingly, the association was both unable and unwilling to support the two women candidates in the Seanad Éireann elections in 1954, as it was already tied up in Norah Stuart's campaign. For the same reasons, the NUWGA never appeared to have proceeded with the suggestion voiced at one of its committee meetings that the association should support women in the general and local elections. Apparently, with its aim to secure women's influence in Irish public affairs, the NUWGA had set the bar too high, as its members ultimately recoiled from the effort and expenditure required for such a goal. Compared to similar activities by other women's organizations at the time, such as the Irish Housewives Association, which ran three candidates in the 1957 general election in an effort to increase women's representation in Irish politics, the NUWGA's attempts had lacked both a genuine strategy and the commitment. Had the NUWGA co-operated more frequently with other women's organizations or with the DUWGA or the QWGA, neither of which had attempted a similar task, maybe the success experienced in the Norah Stuart campaign would have been less of a solitary achievement for the association in its aim to improve women's participation in public life.

On a positive note, in its objective to increase women's representation in public offices the NUWGA had identified and attempted to address an important issue. With the eminent shortage of female TDs, senators or other high ranking public officers, women's organizations in Ireland often lacked advocates in the political arena for issues which primarily concerned women. The importance of the link between female politicians and the work of women's organizations can be seen in the Federal Republic of Germany. Here women's groups, such as the DAB, successfully lobbied for part-time

regulation in the civil service and for a change in family law, with the help and support of female parliamentarians and politicians.<sup>952</sup>

In the Republic of Ireland the low level of women's participation in politics and public affairs<sup>953</sup> and the resulting under-representation on women's interests in society, became one of the main matters of concern for the Commission on the Status of Women. The setting up of this Commission marked a significant change for women in Ireland. It highlighted the various existing inequalities in Irish society and ultimately led to a series of reforms and legislative changes. Through the involvement with the Ad Hoc Committee of women's organizations, which was the driving force for the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women, the DUWGA, in particular, played an important role in facilitating these reforms and changes. Being among the influential ten organizations on the Ad Hoc Committee, the DUWGA's representative, Blanche Weekes, was the honorary secretary and was thus actively involved in all the Committee's business. Through her, the association was integral to all the activities of the Ad Hoc Committee. Moreover, the DUWGA also supported the Committee through the provision of its rooms at Trinity College and through individual measures to lobby the government.

The NUWGA's involvement with the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women was less straightforward since the association, for the most part of the Ad Hoc Committee's existence and work, was unaware of its own representation on the Committee. The ignorance on behalf of the NUWGA's committee clearly indicates that there was no communication between its representative, Geraldine Roche, and the association itself. As a result, and in contrast to the DUWGA, there were no discussions on or support for the initiatives or steps taken by the Ad Hoc Committee in order to press for the setting up of a Commission on the Status of Women. Hence, while the NUWGA was, in fact, represented on the Ad Hoc Committee by Roche, in reality, she was there in a personal capacity. Consequently, the association was neither actually involved in the formation of the Committee nor in its activities.

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<sup>952</sup> See chapter III.3.3 and III.4.2.

<sup>953</sup> See also chapter V.2 for more details on Irish and German women in politics at the time.



Yet the confusion and ignorance of the NUWGA about its own involvement on the Committee did not imply that the association was not in favour of setting up a Commission on the Status of Women in the Republic of Ireland. However, it favoured the Joint Committee of Women's Societies and Social Workers as the more appropriate representative body of Irish women's organizations to push for such a commission. Once it was announced that the government was setting up a national Commission on the Status of Women in December 1969, the NUWGA contacted its two branches in Cork and Galway to put forward the NUWGA's joint services to the Commission.<sup>954</sup>

In the end, the services of the IWGAs were engaged fully by the Commission on the Status of Women, when its chairwoman Dr Thekla Beere approached both the NUWGA and the DUWGA to produce a survey on the employment of women graduates in Ireland. Parts of this survey and its findings were eventually incorporated in the final report of the Commission. In particular, the NUWGA's connection between the gendered stereotypes in the Republic of Ireland, the education of girls and their opportunities later in life was an observation which was also highlighted by the Commission's report. With this survey, the NUWGA and the DUWGA not only contributed significantly to the Commission on the Status of Women, but in a way also made late amends for having missed the opportunity to address some of these issues and the inequalities in the education of boys and girls in the previous submissions to the Council of Education in 1955 and the Commission on Higher Education in 1961. Moreover, by joining the Council on the Status of Women in 1973 the DUWGA and the NUWGA helped to further the important link between Irish women's organizations and politics.

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<sup>954</sup> IE UCDA NUWGA 3/1, NUWGA committee meeting 5 December 1969, included in NUWGA minute book 1961-1980.

## **Chapter V: Comparative Analysis**

### ***Introduction***

The last two chapters of this thesis have provided a detailed outline of the activities, agenda and achievements of the German Federation of University Women (DAB) and the Irish Women Graduates' Associations (IWGAs) during the 1950s and 1960s. The following chapter is a comparative analysis of the two organizations' activities. It contrasts the DAB and the IWGAs, taking into consideration their structure, as well as the political, social and economic context of the two organizations. By comparing the overall levels of activity of the DAB and the IWGAs throughout the 1950s and 1960s, this chapter considers to what extent the two organizations maintained their activism at a time when women's role was sharply defined in the private sphere and what they accomplished with their activism. The chapter further examines the extent to which the organizations managed to raise political and public attention for their aims and their work.

### ***V.1 The level and the nature of activity of the DAB and the IWGAs***

Founded as organizations catering for women graduates, the DAB and the IWGAs were exclusive in their memberships and were largely composed of educated, middle-class women. Throughout the decades, the German organization, as well as the Irish associations, displayed only limited awareness for women from other social backgrounds, as their main concern was the protection and advancement of the interests of women graduates. The level of activity of these organizations and their approach in achieving their aims was, however, rather different.

These differences resulted primarily from their structure and their internal organization. The DAB consisted of over thirty local branches in various West German cities. Some of these local branches played important roles in advancing the DAB's aims, such as the group in Hamburg, which successfully established a student



counselling centre at the local university, or the branches in Bonn and Heidelberg, which on various occasions lobbied for improved employment opportunities for women graduates and for the representation of their interests in public affairs. However, the majority of the DAB's branches functioned, first and foremost, as a social space for women graduates.<sup>955</sup> As such, the activities and the main role of the DAB's local branches were somewhat similar to the individual IWGAs, which assigned great importance to social events hosted by all three associations on a regular basis.

This social aspect was a significant part of the DAB's and the IWGAs' existence. By hosting and organizing regular events, such as talks and lectures on various subjects, lunches or day-trips for women graduates, the DAB's local branches and the IWGAs created a cultural space where like-minded women could mingle and meet. Part of the motivation for these events was to make membership of the organizations more attractive to women who might not otherwise have joined a women's group for political purposes. Yet these events also contributed to developing a collective identity among the women graduates and a feminist culture. At a time when women were largely encouraged to eschew the public sphere, the regularly organized meetings offered women of similar interests a space where they could debate and further educate themselves through discussion groups, talks or lectures. The topics of these events ranged from lectures on literature and culture, to political subjects, such as the Treaty of Rome,<sup>956</sup> to reports by individual members on their work on the various committees of the International Federation of University Women.<sup>957</sup> Other talks dealt with more women specific and feminist topics, such as women's role and civic responsibilities in society,<sup>958</sup> divorce legislation,<sup>959</sup> the national commissions on the status of women and even abortion.<sup>960</sup> Moreover, the social events provided opportunities to commemorate important achievements for women's rights, such as

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<sup>955</sup> See, for example, BArch B 232/5, Report on the activities of the DAB's local branches 1968/69, included in Erna Scheffler's business report presented at the extended executive committee meeting in Hannover, 18 October 1969, pp. 1-4.

<sup>956</sup> See, for example, IE UCDA NUWGA 1/25, NUWGA Secretary's report 1961.

<sup>957</sup> See, for example, DUWGA archive, Committee's report 1951, included in DUWGA annual report 1950-1951.

<sup>958</sup> See, for example, DUWGA archive, Committee's report 1955, included in DUWGA annual report 1954-1955

<sup>959</sup> See, for example, IE UCDA NUWGA 1/32, Honorary Secretary's report 1968.

<sup>960</sup> See, for example, BArch B 232/3, report of the activities of the DAB's local branches 1965-1966, included in minutes of the biennial general members' meeting in Hamburg, 6-10 October 1966.

the celebration of women's access to universities,<sup>961</sup> or accomplishments by individual women. In 1969, for instance, the DUWGA celebrated the appointment of the first female fellows at Trinity College Dublin with a special dinner in their honour.<sup>962</sup> These events were thus essential to creating a sense of unity among the women graduates and cultivating women's activism, which is a fundamental feature of abeyance organizations.

The main difference between the German and the Irish organizations was that the DAB was centralized. According to Verta Taylor, the centralization of power has the advantage of ensuring organizational stability and is thus an imperative element to abeyance organizations.<sup>963</sup> Throughout the decades, the vast majority of the DAB's activities were regulated and carried out by its national executive committee and its permanent subcommittees. The advantage of the centralization of the DAB's leadership was the co-ordination of tasks and the determination of a specific agenda for the organization. It also meant that the organization's business and its activities were usually carried out by small but dedicated groups of DAB members, whose commitment ensured that the organization's larger objective of representing the interests of women graduates in education, employment and public life would be maintained. In this way, the DAB's political activism and aims were continued, despite the overwhelmingly socially-orientated work of its local branches. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, many of the tasks on the agenda of the DAB's executive committee were assigned to the organization's permanent subcommittees, which each specialized in certain areas, such as education, legal issues or membership recruitment. The subcommittees regularly made suggestions aimed at advancing the interests of women (graduates) in these respective areas. Their work, therefore, further maintained the DAB's commitment and ensured consistent and co-ordinated actions to an overall cause.

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<sup>961</sup> See, for example, BArch B 232/32, invitation to the exhibition commemorating fifty years of women at German universities, included in Käthe von Kuenssberg's files of the DAB branch in Heidelberg, May 1956.

<sup>962</sup> DUWGA archive, DUWGA committee meeting 25 February 1969, included in DUWGA minute book 1955-1972.

<sup>963</sup> Verta Taylor, 'Social Movement Continuity: The Women's Movement in Abeyance', *American Sociological Review*, 54 (1989), p. 768.



The IWGAs, in contrast, did not have a centralized committee. Although affiliated through the Irish Federation of University Women (IrFUW), each association functioned as a separate, independent entity with control of its own business and equipped with its own set of goals. The NUWGA had been founded as an association aiming to represent and advance the interests of women graduates in Irish society and public life. Like the DAB, it had an unambiguously feminist objective. Both the QWGA's and the DUWGA's mission statements, on the other hand, determined that the main goal of the associations was to enable women graduates to stay in touch with each other and with their university. Therefore, they primarily aimed to provide a social meeting space for women graduates.

The QWGA remained largely true to this goal and rarely got involved in the more political activities of the other associations. Accordingly, most of the NUWGA's, and at times, also the DUWGA's efforts to promote women's postgraduate opportunities and to secure their influence in public affairs were not supported by the QWGA. In several instances, the association justified its idleness in these matters on grounds of its politically and geographically distant status as the only Northern Irish association.<sup>964</sup> However, the QWGA's files show only very little involvement of the association in matters concerning women's rights and employment opportunities in Northern Ireland. Its inactivity in these issues, therefore, should rather be attributed to the fact that the QWGA did not consider itself a pressure group for the interests and rights of women graduates, but primarily as an association where graduate women could meet and mingle. The only real activity of the QWGA to further the interests of women graduates in society was its fundraising, which it carried out primarily in collaboration with the other two associations. However, this aspect of the associations' work was more prominent within the NUWGA and the DUWGA, as both associations regularly financed women graduates through small funds and grants, whereas the QWGA mostly just participated in the IrFUW's fundraising initiatives.

Indeed, the DUWGA's and the NUWGA's activities often overlapped, despite the fact that the NUWGA was the only association officially committed to advancing the rights of women graduates in Ireland. As with the NUWGA, the DUWGA promoted

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<sup>964</sup> The QWGA's annual report of 1968 reports that the QWGA, in fact, considered briefly separating from the two IWGAs in the South and the IrFUW due to economic and educational differences, however, this separation was never put into effect – see QUB E/8/2 Box 16, QWGA annual report 1968.

the interests of this group of women by continuously supporting them in their private and professional lives. At times it also represented the occupational interests of women graduates, as seen in its support of the women graduates on the secretarial staff in Trinity College Dublin. Both associations also contributed to the reform discussions of the Irish education system and later to the Report on the Commission on the Status of Women. Yet, despite the mutual interests, each of the two associations individually pursued their goals. This separation of the NUWGA's and the DUWGA's activities was certainly a result of the composition of membership within the associations, which differed primarily in religious orientation. Similar to their alma maters, the NUWGA catered primarily for Catholic women, while the DUWGA's members were mainly Protestant. As seen in the memoranda sent by the DUWGA and the NUWGA to the Council of Education, this religious divide indicated a decisive difference in their respective stands towards certain aspects of society. The NUWGA, in particular, seemed unable and unwilling to exclude the Catholic ethos from some of its activity, a fact which was also substantiated in its lobbying of the Catholic clergy in 1954, to raise funds for headquarters. The NUWGA's inability to maintain a non-denominational position, as criticized by one of its own members in the latter instance, fortified the differences between the two Dublin-based women graduates' associations.

In contrast, the national executive committee of the DAB made sure that religion played no role in its demands and activities throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Although denominational differences in some regions of the Federal Republic<sup>965</sup> certainly also affected the religious composition of the membership in the local branches, the existence of a centralized committee ensured that these differences would not be reflected in the DAB's work. Nevertheless, as observed in the internal disputes evolving from the efforts to promote women's political representation at the beginning of the 1960s, the organization's executive committee did not always manage to avoid sensitive topics or to maintain its neutral orientation. In fact, having one national chairwoman and committee determining the organization's agenda was not always entirely conflict-free as it led, at times, to personality clashes. In particular,

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<sup>965</sup>Federal states such as Bavaria or the Saarland, for instance, have traditionally been primarily Catholic while, for example, Lower-Saxony or the city states, e.g. Bremen or Hamburg, have been largely Protestant.



Marga Anders, who was the DAB's chairwoman between 1958 and 1964, seemed to cause dissatisfaction among several members. Apart from the conflict arising from attempts to increase women's representation in political offices in 1963, Anders also came under criticism from the youth subcommittee's chairwoman, who accused her of failing to introduce new initiatives. Having continuously attempted in vain to recruit recent graduates, the subcommittee's chairwoman argued that the DAB under Anders' leadership merely reverted to highlighting women's discrimination, without making any viable suggestions to remedy the situation.<sup>966</sup> A similar sentiment was expressed by the DAB's former chairwoman and parliamentarian, Marie-Elisabeth Lüders, who practically celebrated Anders' resignation in 1964. As Lüders stated, Erna Scheffler's plan to stand for election as the next chairwoman "[...] is a great relief to me because under present leadership [the organization] would have hopelessly decayed."<sup>967</sup>

These internal disputes and the criticism of the work of the centralized committee were, however, an exception. Generally, the DAB benefitted from a strong leadership and its often prominent national chairwomen. In particular, Erna Scheffler, a former federal judge, and her successor, the previous Minister for Health, Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt had high public profiles. Their political contacts, together with their prominence in the Federal Republic, meant that their names on the letterhead of the DAB gave credibility to the organization in the public sphere.<sup>968</sup>

The absence of a centralized committee for the IWGAs resulted in the fact that there was hardly any co-operation between the three associations, which, in turn, had a detrimental effect on the efficacy of some of their activities. Since the early 1960s this point was repeatedly lamented within the committee of the IrFUW, which increasingly felt that a joint, co-ordinated campaign by the national Federation would be more effective and carry greater weight. As it was stressed at the IrFUW's triennial conference in 1963, acting as a federation rather than as separate entities would enable Irish women graduates "[...] to exert the influence that might be expected from a body of our intellectual capabilities."<sup>969</sup> In this respect, the NUWGA's protest against

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<sup>966</sup> See BArch B 232/95, letter from Marta Baerlecken-Hechtle (chairwoman of the DAB's youth subcommittee) to Marga Anders, 3 August 1962.

<sup>967</sup> BArch NL 151/280, letter from Marie-Elisabeth Lüders to Erna Scheffler, 2 November 1964.

<sup>968</sup> See also chapter V.2.

<sup>969</sup> See, for example, QUB E/8/2 Box 8B, minutes of the IrFUW delegates meeting at the triennial conference 27 April 1963, included in the IrFUW minute book 1948-1972.

discriminatory hiring practices and salary differentials, for instance, certainly could have been more meaningful had they been articulated by the body representing women graduates from all over Ireland and not just from one specific university. Similarly, the same association's efforts to increase the number of women in public offices might not have been so readily exhausted, as the Irish Federation would have had better resources to take on such a campaign. In both cases, at least one of the other two associations had signalled an interest in the matter. Both the DUWGA and also, on a few occasions, the QWGA had opposed discrimination of women in employment and had spoken out against inequality in pay. The DUWGA had also financially supported female candidates of the Irish Housewives Associations in the 1957 general elections, which suggested that it supported the notion that more women should take public office and participate in politics. A centralized committee might have been able to establish a consensus among the associations on these issues, in spite of the differences in aims and religious orientation, and it might have thereby initiated more joint efforts by women graduates across Ireland. However, without such a committee each association was usually on its own, meaning fewer financial resources, fewer members committed enough to work on lengthy campaigns and less support for its aims in the public.

Apart from having no centralized committee and working as separate entities, another important difference to the DAB's level of activity lay in the fact that the IWGAs had no permanent subcommittees. Subcommittees were only appointed for special purposes as, for instance, in the case of the compilation of the reports to the Council of Education and the Commission on Higher Education. The temporary character of these subcommittees meant that there was usually little monitoring of political and social developments which were of potential concern to women graduates in Ireland in the meantime. In fact, in the majority of the cases where subcommittees were formed within the IWGAs, the associations had been approached by outside institutions rather than having themselves identified the issue as an area of interest for the IWGAs.

The lack of permanent specialized subcommittees also affected the determination and the intensity with which goals were pursued within the IWGAs. Accordingly, there were very few continuous campaigns of the Irish women graduates,



comparable to the campaigns of the DAB, which often lasted several years. Although not a guarantee for success, the perseverance shown by the German organization and its subcommittees, for instance, in its campaigns for women's equality in family law, or for a national part-time working model in the civil service, proved to be key to gaining public and political support and, consequently, to achieving legislative change. In most of these lengthy campaigns the permanent subcommittees contributed to a great extent to the continuation of the pressure on decision-making bodies by monitoring the situation, collecting data and formulating demands.

In contrast, the activities of the Irish women graduates were often isolated actions rarely followed up if the initial protest or claim did not get the desired response. The resulting disjointedness in the associations' activities was due to the fact that, within the IWGAs, the associations' individual committees usually handled the entire business. In the NUWGA, in particular, where there was a broad range of aims in respect to women graduates, this meant that just one small group of women was in charge of the social events, the monitoring of job advertisements, fundraising activities, writing petitions, as well as all other day-to-day dealings of the association. The committees of the IWGAs, therefore, had to split their attention between the multiple tasks and objectives, which inevitably limited the time and energy spent on individual issues.

In effect, the structural and organizational disparities of the DAB and the IWGAs made a decisive difference in the levels of activism of the organizations. By maintaining their separate status, the IWGAs acted, in fact, like local women's groups which had their own objectives and approaches. Each association provided a public space for women graduates in their area and thus fostered a feminist culture; the NUWGA, but also the DUWGA, regularly addressed issues which affected the lives and opportunities of women graduates. Yet with hardly any co-operation between each other, the associations often lacked the resources, energy and commitment required to effect change in the conservative political and social environment of Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s.

The DAB, by contrast, functioned as a national organization, held together by a centralized committee which determined and executed most of the organization's activities on behalf of its members and its local branches. As stated in chapter IV.2.1,

the DAB had a membership of approximately 1700 in the 1950s and 1960s, while the Irish Federation of University Women had nearly 1200 members during these decades. In relation to the demographic differences of the two countries, significantly more women graduates were represented in the Irish organization. Despite the similar membership of the DAB and the Irish Federation of University Women, which comprised all Irish women graduates represented in the IWGAs, due to its structure, the DAB was able to sustain an overall greater degree of activism than the IWGAs throughout the years. Moreover, by dispersing its tasks among permanent subcommittees the German organization ensured the maintenance of a certain level of continuity in its activities and its campaigns. Although the DAB's demands and protests, just like those of the Irish associations', were often ignored and usually found little support among the public or in the political arena during the middle decades of the twentieth century, the DAB consistently promoted the interests of women, and especially of women graduates, in West German society. Such unwavering commitment resulted in some legislative change, as well as in the production of important data and information on women's education and women's employment, which had not existed until then. The DAB's extensive studies on girls' education and on women teaching at the universities, for example, helped call attention to some significant deficiencies and discriminatory practices faced by women in the Federal Republic of Germany during the 1950s and 1960s. In this regard, the initiatives of the German organization were generally more effective than those of the Irish associations.

However, whereas the internal structure of the two organizations affected their levels of activity and accomplishments, it is also important to point out that the DAB benefited sooner from the changing political and social environment during the 1960s. While Ireland was only gradually showing signs of economic recovery since the early 1960s, following the new economic programmes introduced under Sean Lemass, the Federal Republic's economy had made significant leaps since the mid-1950s and was becoming at the beginning of the new decade. These economic advances generated several social changes, such as improved educational opportunities, reflected in the rise of third level students, as well as the relaxation of traditional gender roles, as seen in the increasing number of married women who were now entering the labour



market.<sup>970</sup> Inevitably, the DAB's demand for a national part-time model for female civil servants and judges was, for instance, facilitated by these external changes. As married women's work in the private sector normalized in the course of this decade, a development which was supported by the introduction of part-time work in several industries, the DAB's campaign for a similar regulation in the public sector certainly benefited from changing attitudes, as well as from the advances already made. In Ireland similar social changes were slightly delayed due to a more slowly progressing Irish economy and they only became apparent in the late 1960s.<sup>971</sup>

Nonetheless, unlike the IWGAs, the DAB had been a long-established advocate of some of the social changes which emerged in this decade. For example, it had promoted the option of combining marriage and a career for West German women, even when the majority of the public and politicians were still strongly opposed to the idea of married women's employment outside the home. Since the early 1950s, the DAB had constantly challenged the notion that women should stay at home and refrain from pursuing a career. In the Irish associations the issue of married women's work was not addressed and there was no criticism voiced by the associations towards the marriage bar, which existed in the Irish public service until 1973.

The differences between the DAB and the IWGAs, therefore, were not only manifested in the organizational structure and their level of activism, but also in their aims and in the nature of their activities. The most significant difference, in this respect, was that the DAB's objectives and its stance on certain issues changed with time. The organization had, for example, been clearly in favour of separate schools for boys and girls during the 1950s. This view was reconsidered at the beginning of the 1960s when it became increasingly obvious that separate education of the sexes often worked to the disadvantage of girls due to the different quality of education given to boys at the time.<sup>972</sup> A similar change in opinion was reflected in the organization's ideal for married women's work, which initially advocated the interruption of the woman's career for several years to raise her children. When it became clear that this interruption often had adverse effects on women's prospects of promotion and their

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<sup>970</sup> See, for example, Ute Frevert, *Women in German History. From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 268-74.

<sup>971</sup> See, for example, John Whyte, 'Church, State and Society, 1950-1970', in J.J. Lee, ed., *Ireland 1945-1970* (Dublin, 1979), pp. 76-9.

<sup>972</sup> See chapter III.2.3.

re-entry into employment, the DAB increasingly pressed for alternative models which allowed women to have children while continuing their careers.

For the most part of the 1950s and 1960s the IWGAs displayed less sensitivity towards these underlying factors which restricted women's opportunities in Ireland. This lack of awareness, but also the reluctance to address these factors, was reflected, for instance, in the NUWGA's and the DUWGA's recommendations for secondary and higher education, as well as in the associations' attempts to advance women's postgraduate careers. In none of these instances did any of the associations address the conflicting notion that women should stay in the home once they got married, a notion which affected women's opportunities in both education and employment. Unlike the DAB, the IWGAs still held on to the principle of marriage or a career, as it had been proclaimed by the women's movement of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century.<sup>973</sup> This continuation of first wave bourgeois feminists' ideals was not only prominent in the associations' stance on married women's work but also in the attempts to represent women's interests in employment. As the DUWGA's career talks and the NUWGA's efforts to promote women's employment opportunities in child care had shown, most of the endeavours to support women in their postgraduate opportunities focused on occupations considered particularly appropriate for women. The underlying presumption in this categorization was that of assumed inherent qualities of men and women, which apparently made women more suitable for certain occupations, such as teaching or child care, as well as the notion that women's natural vocation was that of a mother, who, in most cases, would only work for a few years and would not follow a career. By continuing these traditions of first wave feminism and by failing to modernize their standpoints in accordance with some of the social and economic changes during the middle decades of the twentieth century, the Irish associations' activities in regard to representing the interests of women graduates were thus ultimately more restrictive than the DAB's.

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<sup>973</sup> See, for example, Eileen Connolly, 'Durability and Change in State Gender Systems: Ireland in the 1950s', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 10 (2003), p. 68.



## ***v.2 Public and political recognition of the organizations***

Despite some of the limitations in the extent of their activities and their outcomes, the activism of both the DAB and the IWGAs was, nonetheless, significant as it repeatedly aimed to highlight and address the lasting inequalities between men and women throughout the 1950s and 1960s. With little political discussion of women's status in society, other than in the realms of the private sphere, the DAB and the Irish associations (particularly, the NUWGA and the DUWGA) continuously attempted to gain the attention of the public and of political stakeholders for some of the practices and laws which discriminated against women and hindered their equal participation in the public sphere. They did this mainly by writing petitions to the governments and individual politicians, as well as to decision-making boards and institutions.

In its attempts to promote women's appointments to professorships at the universities, for instance, the DAB lobbied the universities, the decision-making boards for higher education in West Germany,<sup>974</sup> individual politicians, such as the Minister for Education in North-Rhine Westphalia,<sup>975</sup> and even the Federal Republic's Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer.<sup>976</sup> Most of the replies to the DAB's petitions were generic in both tone and message. By and large they assured the respondents' support for women's equal treatment in the public sphere, yet they promised little help to the DAB's campaigns. In his reply to Marga Anders' memorandum of 1961, for example, Adenauer stressed that he had been a firm supporter of complete equality between men and women in the public service. However, he further pointed out that since the government had no administrative responsibility in university matters he could not do anything in the matter.<sup>977</sup> While the latter statement was accurate, Adenauer's assurance of his full support of women's equality in the civil service, considering his previous attempts to maintain a marriage bar for female civil servants, seemed little

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<sup>974</sup> See, for example, Marga Anders' memorandum of 1961, which she sent to the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education, the West German Conference of University Rectors and individual parliamentarians – BArch B 232/92, memorandum by Marga Anders to the Advisory Council on Research and Higher Education, January 1961.

<sup>975</sup> See, for example, BArch B 232/92, letter from Marga Anders to the Minister for Education of North-Rhine Westphalia, Werner Schütz, 15 May 1962.

<sup>976</sup> BArch B 136/3037, response letter from Konrad Adenauer to Marga Anders, 10 March 1961.

<sup>977</sup> *Ibid.*

more than an empty phrase.<sup>978</sup> Similar meaningless assertions of support for women's full equality were also received from the universities, which ran the selection process for the appointments, yet did little to increase the percentage of women professors in the Federal Republic throughout the following years.

The petitions of the IWGAs to government officials during the 1950s and 1960s were equally ineffective. For example, the majority of replies to the petitions sent by the NUWGA pressing for the equal treatment of women and men in the employment process, and in remuneration, usually had a similar ring to them as those received by the DAB. In most cases these petitions were merely acknowledged by the addressee<sup>979</sup> or were simply dismissed with the statement that there was already "ample machinery for the discussion of matters relating to civil service salary scales".<sup>980</sup>

As characteristic for most organizations holding a movement in abeyance, both the DAB and the IWGAs were thus usually equally unsuccessful in receiving support from male officials and decision-makers. The DAB, therefore, regularly reached out to female parliamentarians in order to gain their attention for its initiatives. Over the years the organization maintained contact with various women politicians, who often proved much more accessible than their male colleagues to the DAB's appeals. Many of these women were, in fact, members of the organization and although their party membership usually took precedence to their membership in the DAB, as discussed in chapter III.4.1, they often helped to deliver the issues raised by the organization into the political arena. Accordingly, the DAB's protest against the discrimination of women in university appointments, for instance, finally found a political audience after several female members of the Free Democratic Party (FDP) addressed the issue in parliament. One of these women, Liselotte Funcke, was a member of the DAB.<sup>981</sup> Similar support was received from female parliamentarians in the DAB's campaign for a national part-

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<sup>978</sup> See chapter III.3.1.

<sup>979</sup> See, for example, IE UCDA NUWGA 3/1, NUWGA committee meeting 26 May 1964, included in NUWGA minute book 1961-1980.

<sup>980</sup> See, for example, IE UCDA NUWGA 2/22, NUWGA committee meeting 7 May 1956, included in NUWGA minute book 1953-1961, or DUWGA archive, DUWGA memorandum to the Minister for Labour, February 1968.

<sup>981</sup> See BArch B 232/92, "Frauen an Hochschulen: Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Frau Dr. Diemer-Nicoaus, Frau Funke, Dr. Heilige, Moersch und Genossen", in *Deutscher Bundestag, 4. Wahlperiode, Drucksache IV/3093*, 17 February 1965.



time model for civil servants and judges.<sup>982</sup> Again, it was mainly female FDP members who initially pushed for the introduction of the model, but support for the legislation also came from female members of the SPD, such as Annemarie Renger, and from Elisabeth Schwarzhaupt and Elisabeth Enseling of the CDU.<sup>983</sup>

Overall, the DAB's contacts with female parliamentarians often proved an important link of the organization to West German politics. The DAB also benefited from the existence of a Women's Department, which had been established in 1949 by the Christian Democratic government as part of the Department for Internal Affairs. This Women's Department regularly provided financial support to the activities of women's organizations as, for example, to the DAB's conferences for female students.<sup>984</sup> Moreover, in its official function the Women's Department aimed to establish a connection between women's groups and other government departments and was meant to facilitate women's participation in the legislative process.<sup>985</sup> As such, it helped to ensure that women's organizations had an input in the government's Report on the Situation of Women in Employment, Family and Society, as well as in the discussions that followed the publication of the report.<sup>986</sup> Generally, however, the Women's Department had only limited influence on ensuring women's contribution to legislation and, overall, played a rather insignificant role in government as it lacked any jurisdictional power and was thus usually unable to provide actual support to the DAB's claims and demands.<sup>987</sup>

The IWGAs had no comparable connections to the political sphere as the DAB did in West Germany. The percentage of women in the West German parliament averaged between only five and ten per cent during the 1950s and 1960s, which meant that, approximately, thirty to fifty seats out of nearly 520 were taken by female representatives.<sup>988</sup> The number of women in political offices in Ireland during this

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<sup>982</sup> See BArch B 232/51, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 4. Wahlperiode, *Stenographische Berichte*, 177. Sitzung, 2 April 1965.

<sup>983</sup> See also chapter III.3.3.

<sup>984</sup> See, for example, BArch B 232/95, letter from Marga Anders to Marta Baerlecken-Hechtle, in which Anders addresses the subsidies of the Women's Departments for the conferences, 14 August 1962.

<sup>985</sup> Klaus-Jörg Ruhl, *Verordnete Unterordnung. Berufstätige Frauen zwischen Wirtschaftswachstum und konservativer Ideologie in der Nachkriegszeit (1945-1963)* (Munich, 1994), p. 226.

<sup>986</sup> See chapter III.4.3.

<sup>987</sup> Ruhl, *Verordnete Unterordnung*, p. 226

<sup>988</sup> Michael F. Feldkamp and Christa Sommer, 'Parlaments- und Wahlstatistik des Deutschen Bundestags, 1949-2002/03', in *Deutscher Bundestag: Referat Öffentlichkeitsarbeit*, ed., (Berlin, 2003), p. 16.

period, as outlined earlier, was even lower. With only approximately three to five women elected to the Republic's Dáil during each term,<sup>989</sup> and an average of three women taking a seat in the Northern Irish parliament,<sup>990</sup> women's representation in Irish politics usually accounted for less than five per cent. This meant that the DAB certainly had more female contacts in the political sphere and, unlike in Ireland, more than just one woman representative in each party. Yet, in contrast to the German organization, the Irish associations did not seem to have attempted to lobby the few women in the Dáil or in the Northern Irish parliament in order to potentially gain their support. The QWGA, for instance, never took advantage of having one of its members, Elizabeth Maconachie, an elected Member of Parliament. None of the petitions or protest letters sent out by the Irish associations during these decades were sent to female political representatives, as was done by the DAB. Instead, the IWGAs communicated exclusively with male politicians. The reasons for this lack of co-operation between the Irish associations and female parliamentarians are difficult to establish, but it certainly suggests that the associations had little faith in the power and abilities of these women, who were often in an even more isolated position in their parties than their female counterparts in West Germany, to influence any change. The failure to connect with the female parliamentarians, however, also meant that the associations instead aimed to win support of those political representatives least likely to be sympathetic or empathetic to their cause.

On the other hand, despite the lack of co-operation with female politicians, decision-making bodies in the Irish government seemed to recognize the IWGAs as a body representing the interests of a specific section in society. Thus, as seen particularly in the case of the Council of Education and the Commission on Higher Education, such bodies seemed to be willing to include the views of the associations in their investigations and, in fact, invited the NUWGA and the DUWGA to submit their recommendations for the reform of the education system in the Republic of Ireland. Although the NUWGA's and the DUWGA's submissions were among several hundred recommendations from various other bodies, these invitations presented the associations with a rare chance to communicate their objectives for the reforms. The

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<sup>989</sup> Frances Gardiner, 'Political Interest and Participation of Irish Women 1922-1992: The Unfinished Revolution', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 18 (1992), p. 18.

<sup>990</sup> Rick Wilford, 'Women and Politics in Northern Ireland', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 49 (1996), p. 44.



DAB, in contrast, struggled all throughout the 1950s and 1960s with only limited success, in order to gain a voice in the reform discussion on the German education system. There the organization had to repeatedly remind (the exclusively male) bodies to include the views of women by stressing that changes in the education system affected both sexes equally. However, as established in chapter IV.2.3, neither of the Irish associations took advantage of the opportunity they were presented with in the education reform to highlight some of the inequalities between girls' and boys' education and the consequences these differences had on women's opportunities in later life.

Apart from sending petitions and memoranda to political stakeholders and parliamentarians, the DAB and the IWGAs also exploited the print media in attempting to promote their causes and increase support. The Irish associations, in fact, received considerable press coverage in all major Irish newspapers. *The Irish Times*, *The Irish Independent* and *The Irish Press* regularly printed articles with news on the associations. However, most of these articles often concentrated on the associations' social events, such as annual dinners<sup>991</sup> or the annual general meetings of which the election results for the new officers often made the main news.<sup>992</sup> More detailed articles on some of the associations' activities were usually printed within the women's sections of these newspapers, such as *The Irish Times*' "An Irishwoman's Diary" or *The Irish Independent*'s "I Sketch your World". These sections regularly reported on the associations' affiliation to the International Federation of University Women and the various conferences and council meetings held all over the world.<sup>993</sup> They also covered their regular fundraising activities, as well as some of the lectures organized by the associations with distinguished international speakers.<sup>994</sup>

Newspaper articles were much rarer on the IWGAs' activities which aimed to represent the interests of women and women graduates. As the NUWGA was the most active association in promoting the rights and opportunities of women graduates in Ireland, it got most of the press coverage in this respect. The majority of the articles

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<sup>991</sup> See, for example, Julia Clemer, 'Deeds, not Words, is their Motto', *The Irish Independent*, 22 December 1951, p. 5.

<sup>992</sup> See, for example, 'D.U.W.G.A. Officers' (no author), *The Irish Times*, 19 July 1957, p. 4.

<sup>993</sup> See, for example, 'An Irish Woman's Diary: University Women' (no author), *The Irish Times*, 13 July 1956, p. 5.

<sup>994</sup> See, for example, Marie O'Reilly, 'I Sketch your World', *The Irish Independent*, 22 March 1957, p. 6.

were, however, rather short, often no longer than a paragraph giving brief accounts of the association's demands or protests. Such articles were published concerning the NUWGA's resolution sent to the Clerk of Convocation of the National University in 1953 in regard to the changes in the NUI senate voting system,<sup>995</sup> the NUWGA's candidate for the NUI senate elections in 1954, Norah Stuart,<sup>996</sup> and on several of its protests against discriminating job advertisements.<sup>997</sup> Yet none of these brief articles discussed the claim or protest at hand, or provided any further context or commentary on the matters. This suggests that most of these articles were press releases written by the association itself and merely printed in the newspapers.

This latter characteristic illustrates the main difference between the press coverage on the Irish associations and on the DAB. In contrast to the newspaper coverage for the IWGAs' events, the German organization's social activities were generally less publicized within the national newspapers throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Apart from articles on the DAB's biennial general members' meetings that were printed mainly in local papers, there was little coverage of the organization's regular events. Instead, articles usually concentrated on specific initiatives or demands by the DAB.<sup>998</sup> Unlike the press reports on the Irish associations' initiatives and claims, these articles on the DAB were much more extensive and detailed. Moreover, the demands and aims were usually critically assessed by the author and put into a wider context. A lengthy article on the DAB's student counselling services, for instance, not only reported on the already existing centres at the University of Hamburg and Marburg, which had both been initiated by the DAB, but further outlined the motivation for the project. As the author stated, the need for the counselling services was increasing as many students were left without any guidance and support by their lecturers and professors, due to the increasing student-teacher ratio at West German universities.

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<sup>995</sup> 'Voting System for N.U.I. Senate' (no author), *The Irish Times*, 7 November 1953, p. 9.

<sup>996</sup> 'The National University of Ireland: Senate elections' (no author), *The Irish Times*, 18 September 1954, p. 5.

<sup>997</sup> See, for example, 'Women protest at "men only" job in women's college' (no author), *Irish Press*, 4 June 1955, p. 7.

<sup>998</sup> Brigitte Beer, 'Nervöse Störungen und seelischer Druck. Der Akademikerinnen-Bund möchte einen sozialen Beratungsdienst eingerichtet wissen', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18 November 1963, p. 7.



The article, therefore, went further than just noting the demand and positively commented on the initiative in the context of its time.<sup>999</sup>

Other articles in the German press did not specifically focus on the organization's activities, but rather included them in support of a broader argument, such as an article on the numerical discrepancies between male and female professors at German universities. It quoted the findings of the study carried out by the DAB's university subcommittee in 1959 and outlined the same problems as addressed by the DAB. By discussing the issue in this way, independently of the organization's activities, it underlined the fact that women's low representation among university teachers and department chairs was not just a problem perceived by the DAB, but also by the wider public. The article, in fact, reinforced the organization's message by citing its study and also by echoing its repeated criticism on the widespread reluctance to appoint women.<sup>1000</sup>

The majority of newspaper articles covering the DAB's activities and demands were mostly standalone features, meaning that the individual initiatives were usually not picked up by more than one newspaper at a time and that there was little follow-up discussion in the publication. These sporadic reports on the DAB's initiatives thus generally did little to widely publicize its work and aims. This changed during the organization's campaign for a national part-time model for female civil servants and judges, which received considerably more media attention than any of its previous activities.

At the time the demand for a national part-time model in the civil service was first issued by the DAB, the government had recently commissioned the Report on the Status of Women in Employment, Family and Society. The initiation of this report drew public attention to issues which primarily concerned women and which historically had sparked little interest among the media. This new public interest in the status of women in West Germany significantly facilitated the DAB's demand for a part-time model, which was promoted by the former federal judge Erna Scheffler on behalf of the organization. The DAB's petition to the government in 1965, in which Scheffler

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<sup>999</sup> Brigitte Beer, 'Nervöse Störungen und seelischer Druck. Der Akademikerinnen-Bund möchte einen sozialen Beratungsdienst eingerichtet wissen', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18 November 1963, p. 7.

<sup>1000</sup> Lotte Fester, 'Dozentinnen an deutschen Hochschulen. Nur acht ordentliche Professorinnen in der Bundesrepublik', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, "Die Frau", 27 August 1960, (no page numbers in this section).

rebutted the existing legal reservations against the introduction of such a model and thus ultimately paved the way for a political discussion of the issue, was covered by all major national newspapers.<sup>1001</sup> Moreover, the following general members' meeting of the DAB in Hamburg in 1966 on "The double role of the woman", at which the demand for part-time work was reiterated to the government, also received considerable media attention. Unlike most of its other general meetings, the Hamburg event was not only covered by the local press but was also discussed in national newspapers, e.g. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*<sup>1002</sup>, *Die Zeit*<sup>1003</sup> and *Frankfurter Rundschau*,<sup>1004</sup> as well as in smaller newspapers across the country.<sup>1005</sup> Although the articles criticized the DAB's failure to address men's responsibilities in the household and the family,<sup>1006</sup> they all positively commented on the organization's demand for alternative employment models which would help women to combine both career and a family.<sup>1007</sup> Accordingly, when the legislation for a part-time regulation in the civil service was finally passed in the German *Bundestag* in 1968 much of the credit was publicly attributed to the DAB's activism.<sup>1008</sup>

Apart from this significant public attention for the DAB's campaign for the part-time model, both the DAB and the IWGAs, however, overall struggled to find a public and political audience for other issues raised by them throughout the years. Many of their initiatives found only limited support outside their organizations, as the concept of women's participation in public life did not warrant such support. In the politically and socially conservative climate of the 1950s and early 1960s, public discourse on women's status in society focused rather on their role in the private sphere. In the Federal Republic it was not until the mid-1960s that this discourse was gradually

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<sup>1001</sup> See, for example, Heinz Bergner, 'Beamtin für einen halben Tag. Ein Vorstoß in Bonn und in den Bundesländern', *Die Zeit*, 18 October 1965, p. 57.

<sup>1002</sup> Arianna Giachi, 'Die „Doppelrolle“, akademisch gesehen. Wie die Gesellschaft berufstätigen Müttern helfen könnte / Der Akademikerinnenbund wünscht eine Ergänzung der Frauenenquôte', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22 October 1966, (no page numbers in this section).

<sup>1003</sup> Elisabeth Pfeil, 'Die Frau will keine Doppelrolle spielen', *Die Zeit*, 9 December 1966, p. 55.

<sup>1004</sup> 'Tagung über die Doppelrolle der Frau' (unknown author), *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 8 October 1966, (no page number).

<sup>1005</sup> See, for example, 'Die Frau in Familie und Beruf' (unknown author), *Kieler Nachrichten*, 18 October 1966, (no page number).

<sup>1006</sup> See here chapter III.3.3.

<sup>1007</sup> See BArch B 232/3, letter from Hildegard Damrow (member of the DAB and journalist at the *Hamburger Abendblatt*) to Erna Scheffler, October 1966.

<sup>1008</sup> See, for example, Barbara Roth, 'Ein Gesetz gegen das schlechte Gewissen', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, "Die Frau", 4 & 5 June 1969, (no page numbers in this section).



altered to a more inclusive view of women's role in society. This change was primarily facilitated by the state's economic growth, which required women's participation in the labour force, the gradual shift in political power from the Christian Democratic Party to the more liberal Social Democrats, and an increasing liberation of West German society, largely resulting from the various protest movements that had been emerging since the mid-1960s. It was during these years that the DAB was most successful in promoting its demands. In the Republic of Ireland, both economic development and the shift in public opinion were a few years behind that of the Federal Republic. Here, it was not until the late 1960s, primarily as a result of international pressure prompted by the Republic's pending application to the EEC, but also due to increasing demands of a few women's groups assembled in the Ad Hoc Committee, as well as emerging protest movements, that a growing awareness for women's issues changed the public discourse on women's role in Irish society. These changes symbolized the shifting opportunity structures for women's activism and the women's movement in both Ireland and Germany towards the late 1960s as public and political interest for women's issues and rights increased. The continuous activism of women's organizations, such as the DAB and the IWGAs, in the years when the women's movement in both states found itself in a period of abeyance, however, ensured that, when these changes occurred, there was a range of issues and demands at hand ready to be re-negotiated in the public and political sphere.

## Conclusion: Link or rupture? Evaluating the DAB's and the IWGAs' impact in the context of the Irish and German women's movement

This thesis set out to examine the activities, aims and accomplishments of the German Federation of University Women (DAB) and the Irish Women Graduates' Associations (IWGAs) in the 1950s and 1960s. The aim has been to determine whether the organizations contributed to maintaining an active women's movement in both Ireland and West Germany at a time when the social, cultural and the political environment of the two states was largely impervious to women's demands for equal representation and participation in the public sphere. Theories of social movement continuity and abeyance organizations, such as published by Verta Taylor,<sup>1009</sup> Debra Minkoff<sup>1010</sup> or Traci M. Sawyers and David Meyer,<sup>1011</sup> have served as a theoretical basis for this analysis of the DAB's and the IWGAs' activities and objectives.

As outlined in the introduction of this thesis, research into women's political activism during the 1950s and 1960s has to date been very limited in both Ireland and Germany. Scholars have only recently begun to view the women's movement as a continuous, rather than as separate movements.<sup>1012</sup> Studies like those of Ute Gerhard,<sup>1013</sup> Linda Connolly<sup>1014</sup> or Verta Taylor<sup>1015</sup> have moved attention away from women's activism during first and second wave feminism and, instead, have focused on a period when the women's movement had neither public nor political support and has thus generally been considered to have disbanded. These authors have argued that several women's organizations which continued their work throughout the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, in fact, kept the women's movement and its ideals alive in both

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<sup>1009</sup> Verta Taylor, 'Social Movement Continuity: The Women's Movement in Abeyance', *American Sociological Review*, 54 (1989), pp. 761-75.

<sup>1010</sup> Debra C. Minkoff, 'The Organization of Survival: Women's and Racial-Ethnic Voluntarist and Activist Organizations, 1955-1985', *Social Forces*, 71 (1993), pp. 887-908.

<sup>1011</sup> Traci M. Sawyers and David S. Meyer, 'Missed Opportunities: Social Movement Abeyance and Public Policy', *Social Problems*, 46 (1999), pp. 187-206.

<sup>1012</sup> See, for example, Linda Connolly and Tina O'Toole, *Documenting Irish Feminisms. The Second Wave* (Dublin, 2005), p. 22.

<sup>1013</sup> See, for example, Ute Gerhard, 'Die Frauenbewegung', in Roland Roth and Dieter Rucht, eds., *Die sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945. Ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt am Main, 2008)

<sup>1014</sup> Linda Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement: From Revolution to Devolution* (Dublin, 2003).

<sup>1015</sup> Taylor, 'Social Movement Continuity', pp. 761-75.



Ireland and Germany. By maintaining an active network with other women's groups and a repertoire of aims and strategies, the activism of these organizations linked the first wave feminist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with the second wave movement of the early 1970s. As these scholars have suggested, the actions of women's organizations during the 1950s and 1960s were crucial for the emergence of second wave feminism, as their claims and their initiatives provided a foundation for many of the social and political reforms of the following decade.<sup>1016</sup> In making this argument Taylor and her colleagues have contested previous statements made by historians such as Ute Frevert, who stated in her book on German women's history that "[...] there could be no question of an active, living women's movement during the early years and decades of the Federal Republic [...]".<sup>1017</sup> Instead, these scholars have highlighted the need for a more inclusive history of the women's movement, one that also considers the activities of women's organizations which continued to exist and struggled to represent women's interests in the public sphere during the middle decades of the twentieth century. As the feminist and co-founder of the Irish Housewives Association, Hilda Tweedy, has stated in her published history of the IHA:

[S]o many people believe that the women's movement was born on some mystical date in 1970, like Aphrodite rising from the waves. It has been a long continuous battle in which many women have struggled to gain equality, each generation adding something to the achievements of the past.<sup>1018</sup>

The underlying hypothesis of this thesis has, therefore, been that the women who were actively involved in women's organizations throughout the 1950s and 1960s need to be recognized as agents of social change and that their actions and their demands throughout this period need to be viewed within the context of a continuing women's movement. By examining two women's organizations in two different countries, which, so far, have been relatively unexplored - in particular, in the period that was subject to this research - the larger objective has been to bring new evidence and contribute to the growing body of literature on women's organized activism between first and second wave feminism. By choosing the comparative bi-national

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<sup>1016</sup> See, for example, Gerhard, 'Die Frauenbewegung', p. 200.

<sup>1017</sup> Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (Oxford, 1989), p. 291.

<sup>1018</sup> Hilda Tweedy, *A Link in the Chain: The Story of the Irish Housewives Association 1942-1992* (Dublin, 1992), p. 111.

approach, this study has aimed to add a new dimension to the existing discourse. As Antoinette Sedillo-Lopez has argued, “[C]omparing women’s rights can provide important cultural insight into how women’s issues have been addressed.”<sup>1019</sup> By comparing the DAB’s and the IWGAs’ activities and aims, this dissertation has been designed to determine the differences and similarities in the arguments and approaches chosen by the Irish and the German women’s organization to articulate their demands and achieve their respective goals.

As seen in Chapter III.1 and IV.1, both the DAB and the IWGAs originated from the first wave feminist movement in Germany and Ireland. The Irish organization was established in 1902, under the name of Irish Association of Women Graduates and Candidate Graduates (IAWGCG), to press for women’s equal access to higher education. When, in 1908, this goal was finally achieved with the opening of University College Dublin (the last Irish university to have admitted women) and with the subsequent endorsement of co-education at Irish universities, the IAWGCG disbanded and was replaced by the individual Irish Women Graduates’ Associations, i.e. the NUWGA, the DUWGA and the QWGA, which were established gradually between 1914 and 1923. The German DAB, on the other hand, was founded in 1926. At this time, women in both Germany and Ireland had already been admitted on equal terms to the universities. Many of the DAB’s members had, in fact, been among the first women to enjoy equal access to higher education and to a graduate career. Yet, at the same time, they had also encountered continuing discrimination against women within employment, based primarily on the dominant gender ideologies which defined women’s place in the home and the family. The main objective of the DAB was, therefore, to ensure equal opportunities in employment and in public life for women who had gained a higher degree. The same goal was adopted by the newly established NUWGA, which was the first of the Irish associations to evolve from the IAWGCG.

Due to the national political developments in Ireland in the late 1910s and the early 1920s and in Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, both the Irish<sup>1020</sup> and the German organization had been forced to temporarily suspend their activities. Each of

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<sup>1019</sup> Antoinette Sedillo López, 'A Comparative Analysis of Women's Issues: Toward a Contextualized Methodology', *Hastings Women's Law Journal*, 10 (1999), p. 348.

<sup>1020</sup> Of the Irish associations only the NUWGA suspended its activities, as both the DUWGA and the QWGA were only formed after the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War.



these national struggles had long-lasting consequences for the two states and their populations. The Irish War of Independence (January 1919 to July 1921) put an end to British rule over Ireland, which had lasted centuries. As a result of this war and the following civil unrest, Ireland was partitioned into the independent Irish Free State and Northern Ireland, which continued to be part of the United Kingdom. Germany, on the other hand, experienced upheaval and defeat in a major world war, followed by occupation by the Allied Forces and eventually the formation of two new German states, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic.

Despite the very different nature and occurrence of their historic events, the governments of both the Irish Free State and the Federal Republic of Germany, as outlined in Chapter II, responded to the challenge of legitimizing the status of their new states by implementing a predominantly Christian conservative agenda. The restoration of traditional gender roles formed the foundation for the Irish and West German governments' attempts to stabilize society and define a new national identity for each state. While granting women equal rights, dominant gender ideologies and conservative family policy served the purpose of consolidating women's primary role in society to be in the home and in the family.<sup>1021</sup>

With the conservative backlash following periods of war and national unrest in both Ireland and in Germany, the political and public sphere had become increasingly non-receptive towards feminists' demands. Yet, as this thesis has shown, both the IWGAs and the DAB were among several women's organizations which continued to exist and struggled to represent women's interests in Ireland and Germany throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Many of the approaches and methods used by the two organizations during these decades were clearly influenced by their first wave feminist roots. As bourgeois women's organizations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the DAB and the IWGAs proceeded primarily by lobbying politicians and decision-makers through petitions and delegations.<sup>1022</sup> Moreover, the IWGAs' fundraising activity and the provision of bursaries to needy graduates both at home and abroad, followed closely in the footsteps of the philanthropic work of middle-class women activists during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The only

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<sup>1021</sup> See chapter II for a more detailed discussion of the construction and foundation of German and Irish gender roles following the national struggles of the two countries.

<sup>1022</sup> See chapter I.

difference to the philanthropy of nineteenth century feminists, which had supported mainly working-class women and families,<sup>1023</sup> was that the IWGAs' funds were donated primarily to women graduates and thus to women with a similar background as the associations' members. In fact, as the discussions in Chapter III and IV have shown, neither the DAB nor the Irish associations were particularly concerned with class issues. Their *raison d'être* was to improve the status of women graduates, who were predominantly middle-class women. The organizations thus maintained the often exclusive ethos as often displayed among the first wave bourgeois women's movement.<sup>1024</sup>

By primarily petitioning politicians and political stakeholders, as well as by providing support to individual women, the organizations used two main strategies in order to achieve their goals, i.e. institutional advocacy and service provision. The latter strategy implied that the organizations provided services to women without promoting a change in policy. The DUWGA's initiative to provide bursaries to needy graduates or the DAB's attempts to establish counselling services and club rooms for female students at the universities, for instance, fell into this strategic category. In addition, the social aspect of the DAB's local groups and the Irish associations' (in particular, the QWGA's and the DUWGA's) work was also part of the organizations' social services, as the regular events and gatherings not only raised the necessary funds for grants and bursaries but also provided the members with a unique cultural space and public meeting point.<sup>1025</sup> The social services, therefore, aimed to provide women with facilities and opportunities that had not previously been available to them, or only on a limited basis. Such initiatives by the two organizations need to be considered as a form of feminist activism as they aimed to protect and promote women's interests in society.

As Debra Minkoff has outlined in her study of women's organizations' activities, both the strategies of institutional advocacy and service provision are commonly applied by organizations which seek some modification of the existing system, without

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<sup>1023</sup> See, for example, Mary Cullen, 'Women, emancipation, and politics, 1860-1984', in J. R. Hill, ed., *A New History of Ireland. Volume VII: Ireland, 1921-1984* (Oxford, 2003), p. 828.

<sup>1024</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 853-4.

<sup>1025</sup> See chapter V.1.



challenging the status quo.<sup>1026</sup> Indeed, the aim of the IWGAs and the DAB was mainly to achieve reforms and change in support of women's emancipation and equality within the existing political and social system. This was particularly obvious in the fact that neither of the two organizations during the 1950s and 1960s challenged the assumption that it was the woman's responsibility to raise the children and take care of the household. Nonetheless, although neither of the organizations sought a drastic overturn of traditional gender roles during the 1950s and 1960s, both the DAB and the IWGAs (particularly the NUWGA and the DUWGA) clearly opposed the idea that a woman's sole vocation lay in her role as a mother and a wife. This stance was reflected, for instance, in the NUWGA's and DUWGA's active support of women graduates' private and professional lives through the raising of funds and grants or in the attempts of both the DAB and the IWGAs to improve women's employment opportunities throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

In these years the common ideal of the domesticated housewife was principally directed at middle-class, married women, who could live off their husbands' income and were not compelled by economic necessity to seek employment. This ideology, therefore, targeted the group of women which was largely represented in both the DAB and in the IWGAs. However, the very existence of these organizations and their efforts to represent women's interests in the employment sector and in the public sphere demonstrates that dedicating their life to the family and the home was not necessarily a desirable norm for many of the organizations' members. Indeed, many of these members were living examples of women who were not content with being just a mother and a housewife, as they often had successful careers.<sup>1027</sup> In particular, within Germany, where no marriage bar restricted women from working in the public service after they had married, it meant that several of the DAB's most prominent members (such as Erna Scheffler) were, in fact, wives and mothers whilst also having successful professional lives. Furthermore, by joining these organizations, German and Irish women graduates, regardless of whether they were employed or working in the home, sought to gain recognition in the public and to represent their interests in society.

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<sup>1026</sup> Minkoff, 'The Organization of Survival', pp. 894-6.

<sup>1027</sup> The DUWGA's member, Prof Frances Moran, for example, was the first female professor at Trinity College Dublin and among the first women to become a Fellow at the university.

As the analyses of the organizations' efforts to represent women graduates' interests in employment and in public affairs have shown, both the DAB and the IWGAs continued to demand equal opportunities and representation for women in all areas of public life. Among the Irish associations it was particularly the NUWGA, and at times also the DUWGA, which pressed for women's equality in employment through equal pay and equal opportunities in the hiring and promotion process. The NUWGA also attempted to increase women's participation in politics and public offices, an issue which was also high on the agenda of the DAB. In order to ensure women's influence in the public domain, the German organization was further concerned with an improved representation of women in the higher echelons of the professions, as well as on decision-making boards.<sup>1028</sup> Each of the organizations thus pushed for a reassessment of women's role in society and the state, as they argued that women's participation and influence in the public sphere was just as important as men's. The two organizations were committed to the view that women had unique qualities which complemented those of men and that these qualities were essential for a more balanced and diversified society. This line of argumentation further illustrates the strong link of the DAB's and the IWGAs' activities and aims throughout the 1950s and 1960s to the goals and ideas of first wave feminism.<sup>1029</sup>

The continuation of the methods and arguments of the bourgeois women's movement of the early twentieth century within the DAB and the IWGAs during the 1950s and 1960s partly resulted from the fact that several members had already been involved in the organizations throughout their early existence. In the case of the Irish associations, which resumed their activism during the 1920s,<sup>1030</sup> many of the women who joined in the following years were still members in the middle decades of the twentieth century. In the DAB the picture was similar, as several of the original members re-joined the organization after its re-establishment in 1949. The presence of these members and their experience, therefore, further linked the activities of the two organizations during these decades to the early German and Irish women's movement.

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<sup>1028</sup> See chapters III.3-4 and IV.3-4.

<sup>1029</sup> See Eileen Connolly, 'Durability and Change in State Gender Systems: Ireland in the 1950s', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 10 (2003), p. 68.

<sup>1030</sup> As outlined in chapter IV.1 the NUWGA was established in 1914, following the dissolution of the IAWSCG, but the association abandoned its activities between 1917 and the end of the national struggles in Ireland. The DUWGA and the QWGA were formed in 1922 and 1923 respectively.



The long association of some of the organizations' members with the women's movement certainly bore benefits for the work of the DAB and the IWGAs, in the sense that these women had a well-established repertoire of methods, and they often had links to other women activists and groups. Many of these members also regularly acted on the organizations' committees and were highly involved in its day-to-day activities and business. As both Taylor<sup>1031</sup> and Suzanne Staggenborg<sup>1032</sup> have argued in their studies on social movement continuity, such commitment by a group of individuals to a movement's goals, even if it is just a small group, is essential for organizations to survive and, most importantly, to continue their activism in a period of low public and political support. However, contrary to Taylor's observation that a high level of commitment helps to confine members to one organization and thus further ensures its existence,<sup>1033</sup> the activism by some of the DAB's and IWGAs' members frequently stretched across organizational boundaries. Yet, the overlap in members of the IWGAs and the DAB with other women's groups, in fact, facilitated their relationship with those groups, as these connections often helped to increase the dialogue and co-operation between the existing women's organizations in Ireland and Germany.

While the membership of women who had already been involved with the organizations in the 1920s and 1930s had its advantages, their presence and ties to the early twentieth century movement had also inhibiting effects on the organizations' activities during the 1950s and 1960s. As outlined in Chapter III.2.1 and chapter IV.2.1, neither the DAB nor the IWGAs were able to attract young women graduates to join the organizations throughout these decades, despite numerous attempts. This failure to rejuvenate the memberships with new, younger women was partly due to the fact that many of the organizations' members' ideals and attitudes were still strongly influenced by the ideas of first wave feminism. The ideological divide between the older and the younger generation of women graduates was summed up by the DAB's university subcommittee's chairwoman, Asta Hampe, in 1959, when she stated that most young women considered the organization a "lovable relic of the women's

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<sup>1031</sup> Taylor, 'Social Movement Continuity', pp. 766-7.

<sup>1032</sup> Suzanne Staggenborg, 'Social Movement Communities and Cycles of Protest: The Emergence and Maintenance of a Local Women's Movement', *Social Problems*, 45 (1998), pp. 183-4.

<sup>1033</sup> Taylor, 'Social Movement Continuity', p. 767.

movement's pioneering times".<sup>1034</sup> In particular, both the DAB's and the Irish associations' approaches to the equality of the sexes, which was based on the relational mode of argumentation used by many middle-class feminist campaigners during the early decades of the century, proved to be problematic for the younger generation of women. The majority of the DAB's and IWGAs' members believed that women and men were equal but had different qualities. This stance was expressed, for example, in the DAB's attempts to create women-only spaces at the universities or in the DUWGA's career talks, which focused primarily on typically 'feminine' careers. Yet, as university degrees and postgraduate careers (even if it was just for a few years before marriage) were becoming increasingly normal for German and Irish women during the late 1950s and the 1960s, the idea of equality based on difference seemed to become less and less acceptable for the younger generation of women. Even though traditional gender roles in the family and the home were still widely recognized across the generations of women at the time, many younger women rejected the idea that, when it came to matters of education and their postgraduate opportunities, they were different to their male counterparts. This view was uttered by the German student Christel Lörcher to the DAB's chairwoman, Erna Scheffler in 1966, when Lörcher argued that she did not necessarily regard herself as a "female" student, but rather, as a student. Her statement further confirmed the difference in attitude between the organization and the younger generation of women.<sup>1035</sup>

The DAB's and IWGAs' failure to recruit young women as members resulted in the fact that the organizations maintained a relatively high age demographic throughout the years and that the members were usually rather unaware of the interests and desires of young German and Irish women. Accordingly, the IWGAs' regular tea and coffee parties, just like the DAB's conferences for female students, were largely unsuccessful. At the same time, the view that women were fully equal to men in the universities, in employment and ultimately in society, as indicated by the student Lörcher, was also a misjudgement. The DAB, in particular, continuously stressed the fact that legal equality was not tantamount to social equality and that women's status in society was still very much influenced by the dominant notion that

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<sup>1034</sup> Arch B 232/92, report of the DAB's university subcommittee's chairwoman, Asta Hampe, 10 June 1955, p. 1.

<sup>1035</sup> Arch B 232/95, letter from Christel Lörcher to Erna Scheffler, 25 March 1966.



they would stop working once they got married and had children. As the DAB had already highlighted during the 1950s, even female students themselves were often more prepared to subordinate their professional aspirations to the ideal of marriage and family than were men, and this view influenced both their career choices and employment opportunities.<sup>1036</sup> A similar observation was made by the NUWGA in its findings from the survey that it had sent out to women graduates in 1972, the results of which were incorporated into the final report of the Commission on the Status of Women. These findings determined that society's norms and values, as well as women's own limited expectations for their future, had often inhibiting effects on women's chances in life.<sup>1037</sup>

The influence of dominant values and norms on women's opportunities was repeatedly addressed by the German organization throughout the 1950s and 1960s, which continued to emphasize the possibility of combining responsibilities in the private sphere with a life in the public sphere. As the organization saw it, women should continue to take care of the home and the family - an assumption which was based on women's presumed innate nurturing and caring qualities. Yet it also emphasized that, without having to neglect their 'duties' as mothers and housewives, women should be enabled to play an active part in public affairs. For the DAB, women's role in the home and family was as significant as their participation in public affairs and the organization thus continuously lobbied for women's increased representation in employment, as well as in politics and decision-making processes, as outlined in chapter III.3 and III.4. The main objective of the German organization, in particular in regard to younger women, was to stress that women's responsibilities in the private sphere did not exclude a role in the public sphere. Accordingly, the DAB argued that women's own ambitions should not be limited by their expectation to marry and have children but that they should aim to have both a career and a family.<sup>1038</sup>

By pushing for the public's acceptance of the working mother and wife, the DAB's objective was to bring about a gradual change in social norms and values. Its initiatives throughout the 1950s and 1960s to promote women's appointment to

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<sup>1036</sup> See chapter III.2.1.

<sup>1037</sup> See chapter IV.4.3.

<sup>1038</sup> See chapter III.2.1 and III.3.3.

university chairs and public offices, as well as its input to legislative and reform processes, in particular in regard to married women's rights, need to be understood in this context. In its approaches and some of its arguments the organization was, as outlined, clearly influenced by its first wave feminist roots. Yet, as was argued at the DAB's conference in 1966, the organization's departure from the bourgeois women's movement of the early twentieth century lay primarily in the fact that the DAB of the 1950s and 1960s contested the strict division of the private and the public. By lobbying primarily for married women's rights and their participation in the public sphere during these years, the organization highlighted the need to enable women to play a role in both areas of society, regardless of their marital and family status.

With this non-distinction of married and single women, the DAB's activities and aims during the middle decades of the twentieth century had clearly progressed from the objectives of first wave bourgeois feminists who had concentrated on opening the public sphere, and particularly employment, primarily to single women and women without children.<sup>1039</sup> Instead, the DAB stressed that the notion of a gendered separation of the spheres was an antiquated concept. Indeed, the softening of the gendered boundaries between the private and the public for women with a family was considered within the DAB as its own contribution to the continuing struggle for women's full emancipation and equality. The organization's activities and aims during the 1950s and 1960s, therefore, provided an ideological bridge between the claims of bourgeois feminists during the early twentieth century and the second wave women's movement, which later sought to remove the boundaries entirely when it declared the private to be political.

In comparison to the DAB, the ideals of first wave feminism were still more prevalent and dominant in the activities and aims of the IWGAs. The associations, and in particular the NUWGA and the DUWGA, shared the notion that women's representation needed to be increased in public life, but most of their activities, as outlined in chapter IV, centred primarily on supporting unmarried and widowed women (graduates). Like most bourgeois feminists at the turn of the century, the Irish associations had little intention of challenging the strict boundaries of the private and the public for married women during the 1950s and 1960s. Many of their members still

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<sup>1039</sup> Frevert, *Women in German History*, pp. 196-200.



believed that these women should stay at home and focus on their responsibilities in the family and that they should only work outside the home if their financial situation deemed it necessary. Accordingly, the associations never challenged or criticized the marriage bar in the civil service throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century. Although there were some critical voices among the IWGAs by the late 1950s seeming to oppose this regulation as they welcomed its abolition in primary teaching in 1958, there were still many members who were in favour of the marriage bar.<sup>1040</sup> Consequently, none of the associations placed the apparently controversial issue on their agenda. In contrast, the DAB had strongly opposed the marriage bar regulation when it was included in the provisional Federal Personnel Law, which was in force in the Federal Republic between 1950 and 1953.<sup>1041</sup>

In this regard, the IWGAs seemed somewhat less progressive than the DAB in their ideals concerning women's work inside and outside the home during the 1950s and 1960s. However, the lack of discussion of this subject was also closely associated with the fact that in the Republic of Ireland the percentage of married women working was still very low even during the 1970s, when the numbers rose from approximately five to seven per cent.<sup>1042</sup> In the Federal Republic of Germany, on the other hand, the percentage of married women working had always been comparatively high, despite the official ideology. In 1950 nearly twenty-seven per cent of married women were employed in Germany and this number further increased to 36.5 per cent at the beginning of the 1960s, meeting the demands of the economic boom.<sup>1043</sup> Seen in this context, the combination of marriage and employment was simply not a reality or pressing matter for most Irish middle-class women during the 1950s and 1960s and the subject was thus not an immediate concern for the Irish associations.

While the IWGAs thus continued to take a traditional view on married women's work, the idea that women should eschew public life was strongly opposed by the members of the IWGAs. Just like the DAB, the members of the Irish associations believed that women's influence in this sphere was essential and necessary for a representative and democratic society. In particular, the NUWGA and the DUWGA

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<sup>1040</sup> See chapter IV.3.2.

<sup>1041</sup> See chapter III.3.1.

<sup>1042</sup> See, for example, Finola Kennedy, *Family, Economy and Government in Ireland* (Dublin, 1989), p. 48.

<sup>1043</sup> See, for example, Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 333.

repeatedly provided a public voice for their members. These associations addressed matters such as women's equal employment opportunities (given that they were not married), their remuneration and taxation, they tried to secure women's input in the education system and to increase their political representation. Thus the IWGAs repeatedly challenged Irish gender ideologies. Yet by maintaining the first wave feminist conviction that married women should refrain from working outside the home, the Irish associations certainly limited the extent to which they could improve women's status and opportunities in society.

Both the IWGAs and the DAB, as established in chapter V, often struggled to gain political recognition and public support for their activities and aims. This was particularly true for most of the organizations' attempts to get the attention of political stakeholders, who in both countries were almost exclusively male. In the predominantly conservative political climate of the 1950s and the early 1960s, in which the ideal of the woman staying at home was repeatedly advocated, politicians often showed little interest and concern for the issues addressed by the organizations. It was, therefore, not surprising that demands, such as those for equal pay and equal opportunities in employment, or initiatives promoting women's influence in public affairs, often found little support and acknowledgement in the public sphere. This limited support among the public and among politicians meant that the organizations, with some important exceptions, usually failed to achieve their goals during the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Nonetheless, despite the DAB's and the IWGAs' inability to achieve many immediate successes during the 1950s and 1960s on their own, their initiatives and objectives throughout these years were crucial in the context of continuing the Irish and the German women's movement. Both organizations were part of a larger network of women's groups and these collaborations with other organizations were important elements in the DAB's and the IWGAs' existence as they helped to increase pressure on the political ranks and public support for an issue. By working within these networks of women's organizations, the IWGAs and the DAB played an important role in bringing about and initiating several legislative changes, significant for women's lives and their status in Irish and German society. Some of these joint efforts were already successful throughout the 1950s and 1960s, as seen, for example, in the change of the



family law in Germany or the appointment of female police officers in Ireland. Verta Taylor's assessment that abeyance organizations usually have little impact with their demands<sup>1044</sup> is thus not entirely accurate in the case of the German and the Irish women's movement. Some achievements were made during the period of abeyance and considering the limited public and political support these achievements were significant gains for these organizations.

Moreover, in a time when the women's movements were reduced to the activities of a few women's groups, both the DAB and the IWAGs played an important part in continuing to address and to publicly deliberate many issues affecting women's lives and their status in Irish and German society during the middle decades of the twentieth century and in this way sought change in both legislation and in social norms. Several of these issues, such as equal pay for equal work, options for women to combine a family and a career, as well as women's increased political representation, became the focus of the early 1970s public and political debates on women's status in society and of the second wave feminist movement. Eventually they also became subject for reform. The fact that many of these issues were ultimately more successfully negotiated by Irish and German women in the 1970s was largely facilitated by the changing political and social opportunity structures since the late 1960s. In the Federal Republic of Germany these changes were closely linked to the political shift from the Christian Democratic government to the more liberal grand coalition between CDU and SPD of 1966-69 and finally to the SPD-FDP government as from 1969. In the Republic of Ireland the changes primarily related to the international pressure on Irish legislators to adopt European conventions and regulations, triggered by the Irish application for an EEC membership. Further external factors initiating the social and political changes in both countries included the proliferation of television, economic expansion and secularization.<sup>1045</sup>

These structural changes thus certainly had an invigorating effect on the women's movement and on the renewed public discussion of women's rights during the 1970s. However, and very importantly, the involvement and activism of women during the preceding decades were crucial for the emergence of the second wave

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<sup>1044</sup> Taylor, 'Social Movement Continuity', p. 762.

<sup>1045</sup> See, for example, Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement*, pp. 8-9.



feminist movement, and, in particular, for the second wave women's rights movement. This wing of the Irish and German second wave feminist movement incorporated many of the long-established organizations, among them the IWGAs and the DAB, in newly formed umbrella groups. The Irish Council for the Status of Women, established in 1972, or the German Women's Council, which had evolved from the German Women's Information Service and was formed in 1969, both predominantly continued to press for women's rights by applying non-confrontational tactics, such as the lobbying of politicians and decision-makers, throughout the 1970s.<sup>1046</sup> By sustaining links and relationships to numerous women's groups and cultivating a collective identity among their members throughout the previous decades, the DAB and the IWGAs contributed to maintaining an active network of women who repeatedly challenged the conservative agenda of the governments. Moreover, and equally significant, by persistently articulating grievances faced by women in Germany and Ireland throughout these years, women's organizations, among them the DAB and the IWGAs, provided a blueprint for some of the reforms of the 1970s and for the demands and protests of the second wave feminist movements. As discussed in chapters III.4.3 and IV.4.3, both organizations had ensured that several of these issues were included in the German and the Irish reports on the status of women, which ultimately became important and influential documents for the re-evaluation of women's status in society and for the implementations of numerous political reforms.<sup>1047</sup> The commissioning of these reports eventually also stimulated an increased activity of both traditional and newly formed women's organizations in both countries, which aimed to ensure that the recommendations of the reports would not be ignored.

Thus, while the two organizations' activities and aims throughout the 1950s and 1960s often only met with limited success during these years, several of the 1970s reforms related directly back to and, essentially built upon, the demands voiced by the organizations in the previous decades. This characteristic of the organizations' work during these decades is consistent with Taylor's theory of abeyance phases in the women's movement. As she has argued, the significance of organizations which

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<sup>1046</sup> See, for example, Linda Connolly and Tina O'Toole, *Documenting Irish Feminisms. The Second Wave* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 22-5 or Gerhard, 'Die Frauenbewegung', pp. 200-4.

<sup>1047</sup> See, for example, Gerhard, 'Die Frauenbewegung', p. 200.



continue to exist and maintain their activism in times of low public and political support, lies in the linkage of the movement and in providing the foundation for increased public protest.<sup>1048</sup> The activism of the DAB and the IWGAs during the middle decades of the twentieth century needs to be understood in this context as both organizations, despite the politically and socially non-receptive climate of these years, persistently challenged social norms and the continuing discrimination of women in certain areas of society.

The findings of this thesis, therefore, add to the growing body of literature which recognizes the women's movement as a social movement which has historically been marked by continuity rather than by breaks and ruptures. Both the Irish and German women's movements were always characterized by diverging strands and definitions of feminism and this dissertation does not intend to generalize the different methods and aims of women activists. The Women's Liberation Movements, for instance, which emerged as part of second wave feminism in Germany and in Ireland during the 1970s, certainly took a different approach to that of the established women's organizations, including the DAB and the IWGAs. For this new and younger generation of women the primary goals were self-determination, reproductive rights and women's full equality within both the public and the private spheres. In contrast to the established women's organizations, which aimed to achieve women's full equality gradually and within the existing political and social system, the Irish and German Women's Liberation Movements sought a radical transformation of society. To achieve their aims these movements used more radical and direct-action methods, as, for example, the organization of the "condom train" from Dublin to Belfast or the self-incrimination abortion campaign in the Federal Republic, than the women's rights movements.<sup>1049</sup> At the time, these two strands of the women's movement thus seemed to have very little in common and, therefore, showed hardly any interaction during the early years of second wave feminism. Nevertheless, as this thesis has argued, the differentiation between aims and tactics should not serve as the basis for categorizing some forms of women's activism as irrelevant and insignificant for the women's movement, as it has often been argued by scholars who have viewed the activities of

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<sup>1048</sup> Taylor, 'Social Movement Continuity', p. 762.

<sup>1049</sup> See, for example, Connolly and O'Toole, *Documenting Irish Feminisms*, pp. 25-31 or Gerhard, 'Die Frauenbewegung', pp. 201-4.

women's organizations during the 1950s and 1960s through the lens of radical second wave feminism. Instead, studies on the history of the women's movement need to be more inclusive and less dismissive of alternative strands of feminism and women's activism.

Crucially, both the DAB and the Irish associations regarded themselves as part of a continuing women's movement throughout the 1950s and 1960s, which suggests that contemporary women activists had little doubt about the existence of an active movement in Germany and Ireland during these years. Within this movement the two organizations, in Erna Scheffler's words, were "neither ruthless militants nor a tentative coffee party".<sup>1050</sup> The DAB and the IWGAs both worked towards a change of social norms and towards ensuring not only women's de jure but also their de facto equality. However, they believed that this change had to come about gradually, each generation of women contributing to drive it forward. Thus, although the women's movement had certainly lost support within the public and the political sphere during the middle decades of the twentieth century, its cause and goals were still very much relevant for the members of the existing women's organizations, among them the DAB and the IWGAs.

While several recent studies, together with this thesis, have acknowledged the contribution of some of the women's groups which maintained their activities during the 1950s and 1960s, there is still much research to be done on women's organized activism during these decades, not only in Germany and Ireland but also in other countries. Choosing a comparative, cross-cultural approach, in particular, as has been done in this study, reveals the often shared experiences of women in different countries while demonstrating the diverging ways in which women viewed and challenged their status and rights in society. It thus helps to further understand the various definitions of feminism and forms of activism by women's organizations and highlights the need to consider each of their demands and activities in the cultural, social and political context of their time and respective country.

In this thesis the comparison of the DAB's and the IWGAs' activities and aims has shown that these two women's organizations shared several similarities, primarily

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<sup>1050</sup> BArch B 232/5, circular letter from Erna Scheffler on the aims, tasks and the role of the DAB, included in the files of the extended executive committee meeting in Hannover, 17-19 October 1969, p. 2.



reflected in their methods and the continuing influence of first wave feminist ideals on their activities. It has also illustrated that the DAB and the IWGAs differed significantly (as established in chapter V) in their levels of activity, as well as in some of their ideological stances (particularly, in regard to married women's work), throughout these years. Despite these differences, however, each organization, in its own way, played a crucial part in maintaining the Irish and the German women's movements. By providing a platform for women who were not satisfied with their subordinate and marginalized status in society and the persistent legal inequality between the sexes, as well as by offering them a public space to voice their thoughts and ideas, the DAB and the IWGAs were both agents of social change.

The findings of this comparative study thus suggest that the women's movement should be generally understood as a continuous movement and that, albeit various social, cultural and political differences and often occurring generational and intergenerational conflicts about methods and aims, each generation of women contributes to the advancement of its respective movement. With the detailed analysis of the DAB's and the IWGAs' activities throughout the 1950s and 1960s, it is hoped that this study has contributed both to a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of the Irish and German women's movement and history during these years. Studies on women's organized activism between first and second wave feminism are still extremely limited and it was only possible to examine two of the several women's groups which existed in Germany and Ireland throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, the focus here is on the activism of an exclusively middle-class group of women, who were mainly concerned with their own interests. A comparative study of middle- and working-class women's organizations during these decades would certainly offer an enlightening perspective on how women from more diverse social backgrounds perceived their rights and status throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century and which different challenges they faced in negotiating these. This could be a subject matter for research on women's organized activism in future.

It is hoped that this thesis will inspire further research into this area and encourage scholars to expose more of the still undocumented sources of women's organizations. There is a wealth of unexplored historical material in this field, which

needs to be uncovered and analysed. As in the case of some of the Irish associations' files, many of these records are probably still hidden in attics and club rooms. Researchers should, therefore, aim to locate and excavate some of the material and files, which have not necessarily yet been archived and which may provide more insight into the history and evolution of women's activism. Only by uncovering and examining these sources in detail will it be possible to write a more comprehensive and inclusive history of the women's movement and of women's lives and struggles during the 1950s and 1960s.



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