

“Leave Your Men at Home:” Autonomy in the
West German Women’s Movement, 1968-1978

by

Bailee Maru Erickson
B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2008

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Supervisory Committee

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Dr. Tom Saunders, Supervisor
(Department of History)

Dr. Oliver Schmidtke, Departmental Member
(Department of History)

Abstract

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This thesis examines “autonomy” as a political goal of the West German women’s movement from its beginning in 1968 to 1978. As the central concept of the movement, autonomy was interpreted and applied in women’s groups and projects through a variety of organizational principles. The thesis takes case studies of different feminist projects. Successive chapters examine the Berlin Women’s Centre; Verena Stefan’s novel *Shedding*, the women’s press *Frauenoffensive*, and the women’s bookstore Labrys; and the periodicals *Frauenzeitung*, *Courage*, and *Emma*. These studies show that autonomously organized projects were characterized by the expression of an anti-hierarchical ethos. The Berlin Women’s Centre organized itself around collective decision making and self sustainability. Women’s writing and publishing projects established an alternative literary space. National feminist periodicals created journalistic spaces capable of coordinating the movement while subverting a dominant viewpoint. These examples illustrate how networks of autonomous projects established an autonomous cultural counter-sphere both separate and different from the established public sphere.

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Introduction

*“We will fight any society that delays our rights or their redemption. So we have organized ourselves autonomously...”*¹

Women of the Berlin Women’s Centre, 1976.

1968 was a year of radical protest for countries across the world. During and after this pivotal year, the powerful voices of political women emerged as compelling influences for change in many Western industrialized nations. From Paris to New York and Berlin to Vancouver, women demonstrated, wrote, and organized political actions on their own behalf for the first time since WWII. Women in West Germany were no exception to this pattern of feminist activism. In September 1968, women of the newly established *Aktionsrat zur Befreiung der Frau* (Action Council for the Liberation of Women) traveled from West Berlin to Frankfurt for a conference of the *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* (German Socialist Student League or SDS), West Germany’s core organization for Leftist student activists. Although the SDS nominally included men and women, women of the *Aktionsrat* felt undervalued and marginalized in the male-dominated organization. At the congress, Helke Sander, a founding member of the council, gave a speech in which she called the SDS an “overblown, counterrevolutionary ball of yeast dough” for treating women unfairly and mocking their political concerns.² When the audience booed, her very pregnant colleague Sigrid Rürger rose from the crowd and threw tomatoes at male SDS theoreticians seated in the front row.

¹ Frauenforschungs-bildungs-und Informationszentrum e.V. (hereafter FFBIZ), A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, “Fraueninfo Berlin: Selbst Darstellung,” 3. AT.

² Helke Sander, “Rede des ‘Aktionsrates zur Befreiung der Frauen’” reprinted in Ann Anders (ed.) *Autonome Frauen: Schlüsseltexte der neuen Frauenbewegung seit 1968* (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1988): 39-47.

Rüger's tomato throw became a powerful symbol of protest against the subordination of women in the student movement. The action sparked the interest of other West German women disillusioned by co-ed student politics. In a development paralleled in countries across the Western world, groups of women broke away from the male-dominated student movement. By separating themselves from the male-dominated New Left, German feminists declared themselves a separate movement working towards their own vision of liberation. Young women burst onto the political scene by pioneering new forms of politics, cultural life, and group organization. Through consciousness raising, public demonstrations, and feminist writing, the *neue Frauenbewegung* (New Women's Movement) fought for a new vision of women's liberation in the Federal Republic of Germany.

A varied and distinctively West German feminist political space developed after the flying tomatoes of 1968. Unique experiences of history and tradition, however, meant that some feminist perspectives were embraced more readily than others. Liberal and socialist feminisms had been strong influences in past German women's movements, but conditions in the 1960s and 1970s were not particularly conducive to their mass re-emergence. Many young women entered the *neue Frauenbewegung* through the student movement and students of this generation did engage socialist ideas. Many new feminists therefore tied the development of their political consciousness to struggles against men in the New Left.³ For the majority of early *neue Frauenbewegung* activists, the "autonomous" feminist perspective constituted the most attractive approach to improving

³ Myra Marx Ferree, "Equality and Autonomy: Feminist Politics in the United States and West Germany," in Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Carol McClurg eds, *The Women's Movements of the United States and Western Europe: Consciousness, Political Opportunity, and Public Policy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 183.

the situation of women. Primary and secondary sources agree that the drive to achieve and maintain “autonomy” made the *neue Frauenbewegung* distinct from earlier German women’s movements as well as from other feminist movements taking place during the 1960s and 1970s.

Autonomy as a political construct requires an operational definition because it is a fairly vague and malleable concept. Various authors agree that, in the case of the first decade of the *neue Frauenbewegung*, the most basic definition of autonomy is a state of political and economic independence from men, the state, and male or state dominated institutions.⁴ In the 1970s, many women’s movement activists understood the state as “little more than an apparatus of male control and domination,” leading to their rejection of institutional politics as a whole.⁵ The concept of autonomy, however, went beyond the simple rejection of parliamentary process to create a new kind of politics by and for women.

In *The Subversion of Politics*, sociologist Georgy Katsiaficas discusses the layers of meaning many autonomous women’s movement activists assigned to their central goal. In the women’s movement, he argued, “autonomy referred to the need for female collective autonomy- for women to have shelter from male violence and male dynamics,

⁴ Ute Gerhard, “Westdeutsche Frauenbewegung: Zwischen Autonomie und dem Recht auf Gleichheit,” *Feministische Studien* 2 (1992), 42; Ursula Nienhaus, “Autonomie und Frauenprojektebewegung,” in Renate Rieger (ed), *Der Widerspenstigen Lähmung? Frauenprojekte zwischen Autonomie und Anpassung* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1993), 39-40; Reinhild Schäfer, “Politik der Autonomie: Das Verhältnis der neuen Frauenbewegung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zum Staat,” *Feministische Studien* vol. 15, no. 2 (1997), 120-123.

⁵ Brigitte Young, *Triumph of the Fatherland: German Unification and the Marginalization of Women* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 48.

for spaces of women's own making and design."⁶ Further, women's groups used the word to "refer to their independence within a non-hierarchical framework that did not create a division between leaders and followers."⁷ Women's movement activists Marie Sichtermann and Brigitte Siegel explained similar ideas in a 1994 essay. Autonomy, they argued, was at the same time the "utopia of the women's movement"⁸ and the "crucial point of organizational problems."⁹ As the central goal of the German movement, autonomy worked to prompt new types of organization in women-controlled spaces. Thus, the ways in which new women's spaces were made and maintained reveal the nuances and characteristics of how activists perceived and applied their politics of autonomy.

In their efforts to create new forms of organization compatible with autonomy, 1970s feminist activists worked to formulate approaches different from traditional administrative methods. These strategies were consistently anti-hierarchical in that they were consciously designed to prevent the emergence of hierarchical power structures characteristic of traditional organizing forms. The anti-hierarchical ethos (*antihierarchischer Impuls*) evident in these approaches thus guided the development of autonomous organizational strategies; where autonomy required operations to be separate

⁶ Georgy Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Canada: Humanities Press International, 1997), 74.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁸ Marie Sichtermann and Brigitte Siegel, "Das Chaos ist weiblich: Organisationsentwicklung in Frauenprojekten," in Renate Rieger (ed.), *Der Widerspenstigen Lähmung? Frauenprojekte zwischen Autonomie und Anpassung* (Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus Verlag, 1993), 111.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

from men, the state, and male or state dominated institutions, the anti-hierarchical ethos was grounded in the creation of organizational methods different from those applied by men, the state, and male or state dominated institutions. The connection of these related concepts worked to emphasize other characteristics associated with the practical application of autonomy as a political perspective.

Autonomy and anti-hierarchical ethos are thus distinct yet closely connected concepts in this thesis. The terms are used deliberately and, although related, are not interchangeable. In this thesis, “autonomy” refers to the feminist political concept of political and economic independence from men, the state, and male or state dominated institutions. The adjective “autonomous” is used to designate entities employing a feminist perspective centred around the ultimate goal of “autonomy.” While an entity can exhibit an anti-hierarchical ethos as part of its autonomous organization, “autonomy” is the larger political concept of which the anti-hierarchical ethos is a crucial component. Thus, the term “anti-hierarchical ethos” is used to designate the drive to actively subvert hierarchical power structures that was seen as consistent with autonomous organizations. When used as an adjective, “anti-hierarchical” is used to designate entities that express, include, or indicate an underlying anti-hierarchical ethos.

Particularities of the German parliamentary system combined with historical experience to contribute to the development of autonomous feminist politics. Sociologist Brigitte Young has shown how the “closed opportunity structure” of the German political state traditionally blocked the influence of social movements. This element of state power led various social movements in Germany to choose “much more confrontational

strategies organized outside traditional party and policy channels.”¹⁰ In the 1970s, the key differences between autonomous feminists and institutional feminists were their oppositional goals and organizational strategies. Autonomous feminists sought a “fundamental restructuring of social institutions” in order to replace capitalism with an environmentally conscious “alternative economy” and a “decentralized, grassroots political system” while “institutional feminists” fought for equality within the existing system.¹¹ This refusal to work with the existing system quickly became entrenched as an important element of political approaches grounded in autonomous feminist ideas.

The BRD’s feminist movement never developed any mass organizational institution comparable to the American National Organization for Women (NOW). Instead, an “informal network” of women’s groups, centres, publications, and projects provided the communicatory structure for an essentially decentralized, grassroots movement.¹² Sociologist Friedhelm Neidhardt has fittingly characterized the West German women’s movement as “networks of networks.” Rather than establishing formal institutional centres to serve as co-ordinating forces, “personal networks of communication” worked to mobilize and organize the *Frauenbewegung*.¹³ As Young has explained, the *Frauenbewegung*’s “rejection of old politics” and “endorsement of an anti-organizational ideology” created a movement with “no institutional centre, no organizational umbrella, no identifiable leaders, and no elected speakers.”¹⁴ Bound

¹⁰ Young, *Triumph of the Fatherland*, 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹² Ferree, “Equality and Autonomy,” 174.

¹³ Friedhelm Neidhardt quoted in Young, *Triumph of the Fatherland*, 53.

¹⁴ Young, *Triumph of the Fatherland*, 53.

together through these grassroots “networks of networks,” women’s movement activists worked towards building a feminist cultural sphere that would actively counter the status quo.

The creation of this “female-centered public countersphere” was a core aim of the BRD’s women’s movement in the 1970s.¹⁵ The resulting “counter-society” was separate and distinct from established political and cultural institutions.¹⁶ The construction of perceived distance from traditional forms of politics converged in the “project culture” of the *neue Frauenbewegung*.¹⁷ Spaces and places open “only for women” (“*nur für Frauen*”) or “by and for women” (“*von und für Frauen*”) were frequent visions of *Frauenprojekte* that sought to entrench an alternative milieu for West German women. Autonomous feminists’ desire for independence and difference from male and state institutions “constituted a new politics of organization” in the construction of the project-based counter-society.¹⁸ These concrete projects encountered unique problems in applying autonomous organizational principles because of the financial and structural obligations involved in maintaining cultural and community institutions. In West Berlin and across the BRD, women active in the *neue Frauenbewegung* created women’s centres, bookstores, and pubs where they could meet, organize, and socialize in physical separation from men and male institutions. In the later 1970s, feminist publications added women-only literary and editorial spaces to the physical places created earlier in the decade. Through the establishment of these different types of gender-exclusive spaces,

¹⁵ Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 226.

¹⁶ Young, *Triumph of the Fatherland*, 26.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 214.

activists forged a project-based cultural counter-sphere where an anti-hierarchical ethos informed autonomous organizations to give tangible manifestations to feminist political ideologies.

Anne Enke has shown that, in the United States, the “new women’s spaces” of the 1970s “at once became sites of protest against the gendered exclusions of public geographies, and also meeting grounds in which multiple cultures of feminist and lesbian activism emerged.”¹⁹ She explains women-only spaces as “sites of ‘temporally and spatially limited separatism’” that served as “*physical* space[s] that would offer legitimacy, comfort, and freedom” from the harassment and limitations experienced in more traditional forms of “public space.”²⁰ Within these places, some groups of women could experience “temporary liberation” from patriarchal limitations and “forge new political effectiveness” for the wider public.²¹ This view of women-only spaces as gathering points and sites of resistance is used in this thesis. Through the application of these ideas, this thesis will seek to understand the connections and tensions between the dual functions of women-only spaces as tools for co-ordination and hubs of resistance contributing to the development of a feminine cultural counter-sphere antithetical to traditional ideas of masculinized public space.

Agnes Senganata Müntz has examined specifically lesbian public spaces in the context of the German women’s movement. In her exploration of the interactions between space and culture, she argues that “lesbians discursively define the meaning of

¹⁹ Anne Enke, “Smuggling Sex through the Gates: Race, Sexuality, and the Politics of Space in Second Wave Feminism,” *American Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 4 (December 2003), 635.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 642.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 638.

culture” in the process of creating cultural spaces that focus on past and present women as agents of cultural and societal change.²² Müntz argues that these processes of redefinition involve women’s movement activists withdrawing “their creative, political and social potential and competence from male-dominated public spaces.” The subsequent creation of women-only space produces “spaces through which the principle of ‘women relating to women’ is visibly valued.”²³ As one of her conclusions, Müntz posits that the public sphere created through the establishment of lesbian, women-only spaces is “based on co-operation between women” rather than the “hierarchical heterosocial relationships” identified with the patriarchal status quo.²⁴

This thesis will show that women-only spaces served a slightly different purpose for the *Frauenbewegung* as a movement involving women of various sexual orientations. Through the application of organizational methods that actively countered the male-identified, hierarchical spaces of mainstream politics and culture, women-only spaces developed to create an alternative cultural sphere for women. This process engaged the redefinitions of culture discussed by Müntz through exclusionary choices and the politicization of cultural production as the growth of a feminist milieu added layers of depth and community to these developing ideas.

In 1982, Dagmar Schultz stated that, personal conflicts, “paralyzing aspects of parliamentary procedures and hierarchical structures [had] been largely avoided” up to that point. She argued that the structure of *Frauenbewegung* groups allowed participants

²² Agnes Senganata Müntz, “Lesbians’ Contribution to the Autonomous Women’s Movement in (West-) Germany, Exemplified by a State Capital City,” *Women’s Studies International Forum*, vol. 23 no. 5 (2000): 605.

²³ *Ibid.*, 606.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 609.

to “focus on creative, cooperative work structures” and avoid “getting caught up in the wheels of cooptation and compromise.”²⁵ While these comments show positive perceptions of autonomous organizational strategies, they shed little light on how activists actually worked out new, anti-hierarchical forms of administration.

This thesis seeks to understand autonomous feminist politics through analyses of how an anti-hierarchical ethos was expressed through the autonomous organizational principles of different feminist projects. Since autonomous feminists rejected traditional male institutions and the hierarchical methods of administration associated with them, new organizational strategies had to be developed during the establishment of alternative, counter-cultural institutions. The loose, informal connections created through the movement’s co-ordinating “networks of networks” meant that no model of autonomous organization was ever universally applied or even determined. Instead, each group or project created and implemented its own unique strategies and values. These methods reveal some of the ways that participants in the *neue Frauenbewegung* understood and applied their common aim of autonomy. This thesis explores how autonomy was applied to concrete feminist projects during the first ten years of the *neue Frauenbewegung*. It focuses on the decade between the flying tomatoes of 1968 and late 1978 in the BRD. Using women’s projects as units of analysis, it investigates how different groups of women organized their endeavours around distinctive understandings of autonomy.

The first chapter contextualizes the *neue Frauenbewegung* through an outline of relevant historiography, historical background, and a narrative of the movement’s early

²⁵ Dagmar Schultz, “The German Women’s Movement in 1982” in Edith Hoshino Altbach, Jeannette Clausen, Dagmar Schultz, Naomi Stephan eds., *German Feminism: Readings in Politics and Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 374.

development. The second chapter is an examination of the West Berlin women's centre and its autonomous organizational strategies during the 1970s. The third chapter explores the establishment of women's literary space in a case study of Verena Stefan's novel *Shedding*, its publisher Frauenoffensive, and women's bookstores in the BRD. The fourth chapter looks at three national feminist publications and their applications of anti-hierarchical organizational principles. These case studies will show the distinct ways in which autonomous women's projects were characterized by an anti-hierarchical ethos.

Chapter One: Historiography and Context

Scholarship investigating the *neue Frauenbewegung* has come primarily from women's studies, sociology, and history. Most books and articles are in German, although some have been written in English and several have been translated. While articles and edited volumes have analyzed and anthologized German feminism, little research has analyzed the national *neue Frauenbewegung* from a project-based historical perspective. Most studies were published as articles in journals or chapters in books during the 1980s and 1990s.

Some of the first books about the *neue Frauenbewegung*'s history were published to celebrate the movement's anniversaries. Edited volumes marking the ten and twenty year anniversaries of the women's movement have been published in German. Alice Schwarzer's 1981 *So fing es an! (So it began!)*, Hilke Schlaeger's 1988 *Mein Kopf gehört mir (My Head Belongs to Me)*, and Ann Anders' 1988 *Autonome Frauen (Autonomous Women)* are three examples that fit into this category.¹ In addition to marking milestones for the women's movement, these books and their authors share other characteristics. Both Schwarzer and Schlaeger were active participants in the early women's movement and had close ties to their books' respective feminist publishers, Emma Frauenverlags

¹ Alice Schwarzer, *So fing es an! 10 Jahre Frauenbewegung*, ed. Alice Schwarzer, (Köln: Emma-Frauenverlags GmbH, 1981); *Mein Kopf gehört mir: Zwanzig Jahre Frauenbewegung*, ed. Hilke Schlaeger (Munich: Frauenoffensive, 1988); Ann Anders (ed.) *Autonome Frauen: Schüsseltexzte der neuen Frauenbewegung seit 1968*, (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1988).

GmbH and Frauenoffensive.² This commonality is important because the authors and their publishers have strong personal and professional connections to the historical information they are communicating. All three volumes include narrative introductions and selected primary sources of the past and present *neue Frauenbewegung*. In some cases such as Helke Sander's speech on behalf of the *Aktionsrat*, the same source is reprinted in all three. These books, edited by active feminists and published by feminist publishing houses, celebrate the history of the women's movement but offer little critical analysis. While certainly useful as primary sources and generational memoirs, this approach anthologizes how the women's movement understood itself at different points in time rather than writing its story from a historical perspective.

English-language studies of the *Frauenbewegung* frequently examine the West German movement using a comparative perspective. Eva Maleck-Lewy and Bernhard Maleck's "The Women's Movement in East and West Germany," published in *1968: The World Transformed*, is an example of this approach. As the title suggests, the authors compare East and West Germany and their respective feminist movements. They conclude that, although 1968 was a pivotal year for women in both Germanies, "the two movements developed largely independently of each other."³ In "Equality and Autonomy: Feminist Politics in the United States and Germany," Myra Marx Ferree qualitatively compares American and West German women's movements through an assessment of the movements' relative feminisms, structures, and approaches. Ferree

² Schwarzer's involvement with *Emma* will be discussed at length in Chapter Four. Schlaeger still works with Frauenoffensive, which will be discussed at length in Chapter Three.

³ Eva Maleck-Lewy and Bernhard Maleck, "The Women's Movement in East and West Germany" in Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker eds., *1968: The World Transformed* (Washington: GHI and Cambridge University Press, 1998), 395.

concludes that differences in recent history and contemporary politics pushed German feminists to fight for their autonomy while Americans “simply assume[d] their autonomy” from government.⁴ While interesting and significant to the history of feminisms, comparative perspectives use distinctive units of analysis that weigh information differently than focused approaches. In order to engage the *neue Frauenbewegung*’s internal dynamics, connections, and problems, it is necessary to examine these independently as well as in a wider context.

Compilations of primary sources from the *Frauenbewegung* have been published in English and German. 1984’s *German Feminism: Readings in Politics and Literature* contextualized textual primary sources from the West German movement through contemporary essays from activists. Editors Edith Hoshino Altbach, Jeanette Clausen, Dagmar Schultz, and Naomi Stephan thoughtfully grouped sources from German feminists of various political orientations into thematic sections such as “feminist strategy,” “our pasts, our future,” and “women’s studies.”⁵ Patricia A. Herminhouse and Magda Mueller took a slightly different approach when they compiled feminist texts from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries in 2001’s *German Feminist Writings*. Focusing on literature, education, gender, and politics, this volume introduced many historical German texts to English audiences.⁶ Collections of sources in the original

⁴ Myra Marx Ferree, “Equality and Autonomy: Feminist Politics in the United States and Germany,” in Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Carol McClurg Mueller eds., *The Women’s Movements of the United States and Western Europe: Consciousness, Political Opportunity, and Public Policy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 188-190.

⁵ Edith Hoshino Altbach, Jeannette Clausen, Dagmar Schultz, Naomi Stephan eds., *German Feminism: Readings in Politics and Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).

⁶ Patricia A. Herminhouse and Magda Mueller eds., *German Feminist Writings* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2001).

German have also been compiled. The most prolific and extensive source of this type, 2008's *Die neue Frauenbewegung in Deutschland* edited by historian and 1970s feminist activist Ilse Lenz, contains nearly 1200 pages of short primary documents of the women's movement from the late 1960s to the present.⁷ While valuable groupings of primary sources, these compilations are chiefly useful for offering potential research ideas and overviews. Collections of primary sources offer much in the way of argument and evidence, but they do not provide much analysis. This thesis goes beyond the collection of sources to analyze and interpret evidence in its evaluation of autonomous projects as case studies of the broader women's movement.

The *neue Frauenbewegung* appears in many books and articles about related topics. English and German readers can access information about the post-1968 German women's movement within broader historiographies of feminism, women, and postwar social movements. While it would be impossible to outline every study that mentions the women's movement, it is useful to note the type of studies that tend to reference it. Thus, the following synopsis is not meant to be comprehensive, but rather an annotated list demonstrating how the history of the German women's movement has been integrated into broader historiographical themes of women's history and anti-authoritarian social movements.

The *neue Frauenbewegung* is the most recent chapter included in *Women in German History*, historian Ute Frevert's 1988 analysis of two centuries of women's history in Germany. Frevert argues that the *neue Frauenbewegung* set off processes

⁷ Ilse Lenz, *Die neue Frauenbewegung in Deutschland: Abschied vom kleinen Unterschied. Eine Quellensammlung* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008).

changing women's expectations of society, government, and themselves that would be virtually impossible to reverse.⁸ Rosemarie Nave-Herz includes a chapter about the *neue Frauenbewegung* in the 1994 edition of her book *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland (The History of the Women's Movement in Germany)*.⁹ Nave-Herz argues that the women's movement of the BRD was characterized by developmental stages of its initial appearance, focused experience group building, the project phase, and institutionalization.¹⁰ In his 1997 book *The Subversion of Politics*, Georgy Katsiaficas argues that an important role of West German feminists was to set the stage for other autonomous social movements through the creation of "liberated spaces."¹¹ Finally, Nick Thomas' 2003 book *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany* places the women's movement as a late stage of anti-authoritarian protest with strong roots in the New Left movements of the 1960s.¹²

These authors all demonstrate the importance of the *neue Frauenbewegung* as a component of larger social or cultural patterns by including it as a part of their broader historical studies. Together, they show a clear pattern of studying West German feminism as a component of something larger. Acknowledging the women's movement as part of broader themes is undeniably valuable as it contextualizes the phenomenon by placing it

⁸ Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*, trans. Stuart McKinnon Evans (Great Britain: Berg, 1988), 302-303.

⁹ Rosemarie Nave-Herz, *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1994).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 65-105. Author's Translation (AT).

¹¹ George Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997), 108.

¹² Nick Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Democracy* (New York: Berg, 2003), 221-238.

within sweeping developments and trends. This approach, however, presents a similar problem to that which I have associated with comparative perspectives because the women's movement itself is not the unit of analysis. An investigation of the *neue Frauenbewegung* itself is necessary in order to understand the complexity of this diverse movement and the new forms of politics that it promoted.

While some authors have used the women's movement as part of larger themes, others have closely examined a particular phase or region of West Germany's women's movement. There are not many studies of this type, but those that have been published are relatively recent, informative, and well-researched. One example is Christine Schäfer and Christiane Wilke's *Die Neue Frauenbewegung in München 1968-1985*, published in 2000. The authors collaborated with the *Frauenakademie München* to write this history of the women's movement in Munich using oral history interviews, print media and sources from private collections, many of which are reproduced in the book. The authors document the origins of the women's movement in mixed social movements, the campaign to legalize abortion, women's centres, women's projects, and the emergence of lesbian feminists in 1968-1985.¹³ Using Munich as its unit of analysis, Schäfer and Wilke's book is a balanced documentation of the women's movement in one city of the Bundesrepublik.

Several edited volumes also take focused approaches. *Als die Frauenbewegung noch Courage hatte* includes essays from a 2006 conference about the women's

¹³ Christine Schäfer and Christiane Wilke, *The Neue Frauenbewegung in München 1968-1985: Eine Dokumentation* (Munich: Buchendorfer Verlag, 2000), 15.

magazine *Courage* and its role in the women's movement.¹⁴ Renate Rieger's 1993 *der Widerspenstigen Lähmung* came out of a 1991 conference about "Balance and Perspective in the Women's Project Movement."¹⁵ This collection examines women's projects in East and West Berlin/Germany in the immediate context of reunification, a pivotal period of redefinition for the German women's movement. Both collections present different authors' viewpoints on a smaller subject within the women's movement to demonstrate multiple perspectives on specific subjects under the broader heading of German feminism.

My research will fill a gap in existing literature by providing a historical study using the *neue Frauenbewegung* and its individual projects as the units of analysis. While existing studies provide insight into some elements of this feminist resurgence, an examination of the theory and practice of autonomy in different feminist endeavors has not yet been undertaken. This thesis synthesizes existing secondary literature and primary materials to examine how women activists defined and implemented autonomous organizational principles expressing an anti-hierarchical ethos in various women's projects (*Frauenprojekte*). The ways in which new organizational principles were imagined, applied, and adapted to different *Frauenprojekte* will show how the common goal of autonomy and its accompanying anti-hierarchical ethos formed an alternative, cultural counter-sphere of women's spaces and institutions.

Historical Background and Context:

¹⁴ *Als die Frauenbewegung noch Courage hatte: Die 'Berliner Frauenzeitung Courage' und die autonomen Frauenbewegungen der 1970er und 1980er Jahre*, ed. Gisela Notz (Bonn: Historisches Forschungszentrum der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2007).

¹⁵ Renate Rieger (ed.), *Der Widerspenstigen Lähmung? Frauenprojekte zwischen Autonomie und Anpassung* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1993), 7.

The young women who participated in the early *neue Frauenbewegung* grew up during decades marked by the uncertainty of defeat, reconstruction, and the economic prosperity of the Adenauer era. After the fall of National Socialism, German women were a vital force in the construction of the new Germanies. Hunger, economic devastation, and frequent rape were features of everyday life for many women during the first weeks and months of occupation. Virtually every German city had been reduced to ruins, political and economic infrastructure was in shambles, and refugees flooded the landscape.¹⁶ The immediate postwar years saw a persistence of wartime circumstances as housing, clothing, food, and adult men remained scarce in the newly occupied zones.¹⁷ Over three million German soldiers died in the war and two million remained prisoners in 1945.¹⁸ In October 1946, the first postwar census found that defeated Germany had 126 women for every 100 men and 2242 marriageable females for every 1000 males.¹⁹ This *Frauenüberschuss* (surplus of women) or *Männermangel* (scarcity of men) was expressed in language that “blurred the distinction between economic and socio-psychological reconstruction.”²⁰ Learning to cope with this gender imbalance was one of the ways that the private lives of Germans had to be rebuilt along with their cities.

The “political reconstruction of the family” occurred in every country that took part in WWII. In the new West Germany, however, the politics of gender were

¹⁶ James Rolleston, “After Zero Hour: The Visual Texts of Post-War Germany,” *South Atlantic Review*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (Spring, 1999): 2.

¹⁷ Robert G. Moeller *Protecting Motherhood: Women and the Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (California: University of California Press, 1993), 21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 28. Moeller’s translation.

exceptionally significant in light of the *Frauenüberschuss* and the legacy of Nazi ideas about women and families.²¹ During the war, the “rigid barrier” separating the work of women and men had softened, if not evaporated.²² This relaxation of attitudes, which persisted from wartime into the reconstruction era, was facilitated by a great need for workers and permitted women to be employed outside of the traditional “women’s industries.” From 1947 onwards, however, female workers in the West were gradually pushed out of their workplaces to relinquish jobs for the returning men.²³

Politically active women were uncommon in the young West Germany. This lack of politicization was especially pronounced in women who had grown up in the Third Reich and had little experience with democracy.²⁴ Four women and sixty-one men participated in the Parliamentary Council that produced the *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law) of 1949. Article 3 of the Basic Law included a formulation of equal rights that is legally binding, theoretically guaranteeing civil equality for men and women.²⁵ The status of women in West Germany came to be defined along this “axis of women’s individual rights and equality with men” as well as their roles as wives and mothers.²⁶ Article 3, however, likely came to be included as a lingering result of wartime experiences. Motivations and actions aiming to uphold Article 3 faded as the memory of war grew fainter and actual practice diverged from statute as gender roles “normalized” in the

²¹ Ibid., 2 and 5.

²² Frevert, *Women in German History*, 261.

²³ Ibid., 261.

²⁴ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 13.

²⁵ Frevert, *Women in German History*, 278-280.

²⁶ Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood*, 41.

1950s.²⁷ As the BRD's economy prospered and West Germans focused more attention on their families, married women's return to domesticity became socially appealing and financially possible; in 1939 one in three women had jobs outside their homes, but by 1950 the figure had declined to one in four.²⁸

In the era of the Economic Miracle both men and women increasingly focused their attention on the family.²⁹ Many lawmakers and civilians saw the ideal of the nuclear family as the chief weapon against the threat of communism despite the obvious barrier of the postwar gender imbalance.³⁰ Conservative Christian politicians and activists seized upon the family as the means to differentiate postwar democracy from the Third Reich, which they understood as hostile towards family life and permissive of promiscuity.³¹ For these reasons, the two-parent family with its traditional gender hierarchies was seen as the "moral buttress" for the BRD during the Cold War.³²

During the 1960s, political tension built steadily in the BRD. The divided state of Germany appeared to solidify with the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961. The German Democratic Republic (DDR) of the East served as a constant reminder of the Cold War and "real socialism" in practice.³³ West Germany banned the German Communist Party

²⁷ Frevert, *Women in German History*, 280-281.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 267.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 265.

³⁰ Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany*, 222-223.

³¹ Dagmar Herzog, "'Pleasure, Sex and Politics Belong Together:' Post-Holocaust Memory and the Sexual Revolution in West Germany," *Critical Inquiry* vol. 24, no. 2 (1998), 411.

³² Erica Carter, *How German is She? Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 29.

³³ Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 101.

(KPD) in 1956, leaving the Social Democrats (SPD) as the sole option for left-wing parliamentary opposition. In late 1966, the SPD joined with the conservative Christian Democrats (CDU) to form a Grand Coalition, controlling 90% of Bundestag seats. The Coalition promised stability, but did so by limiting the democratic process through the removal of voters' power and essential elimination of parliamentary opposition from the left.³⁴ Youth in particular felt that the only way leftist voices could be heard was to take to the street, and this is exactly what many of them did.³⁵ In this charged environment, the policies of the Coalition government promoted tensions between the "Hitler era parents" and their young-adult children, fostering generational conflict that came to distinguish the domestic politics of West Germany's 1960s from those of other Western societies.³⁶

The legacies of National Socialism added distinct anxieties to the BRD's political situation. The extreme-right National Democratic Party (NPD) emerged as an electoral force in Hesse and Bavaria as early as 1965. The following year, the NPD garnered more than 5% of votes in state elections.³⁷ While their base of support hardly indicated substantial support for a Nazi revival, their ascent caused alarm because of Germany's recent experience with fascism.³⁸ In addition to the distress caused by the NPD, the Coalition government made statutory reforms reminiscent of Germany's fascist period.

³⁴ Frank B. Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany since 1815* (California: University of California Press, 2003), 544.

³⁵ Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany*, 92.

³⁶ Michael A. Schmidtke, "Cultural Revolution or Cultural Shock? Student Radicalism and 1968 in Germany," *South Central Review*, Vol. 16, No. 4, Rethinking 1968: the United States and Western Europe (Winter, 1999-Spring 2000), 79.

³⁷ Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany since 1815*, 544.

³⁸ Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany*, 98.

Motivated by a need to validate German postwar sovereignty, the BRD responded to calls for national determination by changing laws dealing with times of crisis. The 1954 Germany Treaty, ratified by the BRD and the Western Allies, previously encompassed these legal powers. Once in power, the Kiesinger-led Coalition passed the *Notstandsgesetze* (Emergency Laws). These laws agitated many Germans because they were similar to the legislation President Hindenberg used to remove the government's responsibility to parliament, a development that facilitated Hitler's seizure of power in 1933.³⁹

Anxieties in domestic politics were exacerbated by the emergence of a revolution in popular sexual morality. In *Sex After Fascism*, Dagmar Herzog investigates the relationship between genocide and sexual morality.⁴⁰ The 1960s saw an intensification of sexual liberalization in the BRD that paralleled processes in much of the Western industrialized world.⁴¹ This "sex wave" swept across the country as film "broke all former taboos," a legitimate marketplace for sexual goods developed, and laws banning homosexuality, prostitution, and pornography were gradually reformed.⁴² During and after 1968, some Germans explained the crimes of the Third Reich with perceptions of Nazism's sexual oppression.⁴³ Leftists in particular believed that sexuality and politics were inextricably linked. While the sexual revolution extended far beyond the students,

³⁹ Schmidtke, "Cultural Revolution or Cultural Shock?" 79.

⁴⁰ Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 142-146.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 156.

they saw themselves as the “vanguard of the *true* sexual revolution.”⁴⁴ In the 1960s, this sexual revolution added to a profound sense of distrust of the persistent presence of former Nazis in positions of influence, the perseverance of authoritarian behavioural patterns within the general population, domestic political conditions and international events to create a fertile environment for social protest.⁴⁵

Interconnected developments in domestic politics, social relations, and cultural change converged to fuel the youth revolts of 1968. The New Left and the *Studentenbewegung* (Student Movement) came to define the generation of West German 68ers who rebelled against the status quo. While preceding developments had laid the groundwork for generational conflict, this anti-authoritarian movement placed young radicals in direct opposition to their parents. Gender roles, sexual morality, and other elements of the established condition were challenged by the ‘68ers as they protested through university teach-ins, street demonstrations, and experimentation with new lifestyles.⁴⁶ Drawing upon Freud, the Frankfurt School, and Weimar-era sexual theorist Wilhelm Reich, student revolutionaries openly challenged “the Establishment” of their parents’ generation and its system of party politics.⁴⁷ The *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* (German Socialist Students Union/League or SDS) in West Berlin, under the leadership of Rudi “the Red” Dutschke, spearheaded the Student Movement from the

⁴⁴ Herzog, “Pleasure, Sex, and Politics,” 395.

⁴⁵ Ingo Cornils “The Struggle Continues: Rudi Dutschke’s Long March” in Gerard J. Degroot (ed.), *Student Protest: The Sixties and After* (United Kingdom: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd., 1998), 101.

⁴⁶ Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 395

⁴⁷ Sabine Von Dirke, *All Power to the Imagination! The West German Counterculture from the Student Movement to the Greens* (United States: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 34-38.

Free University of Berlin and acted as its “engine.”⁴⁸ Through targeted attacks on consumer culture and questioning legacies of National Socialism, this generation of politically active students would come to influence the cultural development of West Germany far more than its relatively small numbers might suggest.⁴⁹

Many older Germans with adult memories of the Third Reich saw the students’ protest as anti-democratic, endangering the tenuous state of the young republic.⁵⁰ Certain positions and mind-sets concerning personal political involvement, authority, democracy, and government were carried over from National Socialism and intensified through the omnipresence of Cold War political ideas and attitudes.⁵¹ These entrenched ideas tended to place a priority on consensus, prevention of neo-Nazism, and dealing with perceived dangers to the general prosperity of the BRD.⁵² This position was oppositional to that of the students because it placed importance on maintaining the status quo through the persistence of authoritarian attitudes and subsequent efforts to sustain political and economic stability above all else.

Both women and men participated in student politics and were members of the SDS. Their involvement, however, was divided along gender lines. Like women activists in the Anglo-American context, women in the West German extra-parliamentary movement were not visible activists wielding equal political power. Female participants

⁴⁸Maleck Lewy and Maleck, “The Women’s Movement in East and West Germany,” 376. The West German SDS is not associated with the American SDS (Students for a Democratic Society).

⁴⁹ Herzog, “Pleasure, Sex and Politics,” 395.

⁵⁰ Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany*, 239.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 239.

were involved with grassroots work, but their male counterparts were the “theorists and leaders” of the movement.⁵³ West German women were the “brides of the revolution”⁵⁴ or “barricade hot stuff,”⁵⁵ involved as accessories but not as actors. While they were present alongside their husbands and boyfriends, few women ever rose to senior positions in any West German protest campaign or organization.⁵⁶ As in other revolutionary movements, women made coffee to keep the men awake, typed pamphlets that the men had written, and were available for sex, “the same thing women have always used to comfort tired warriors.”⁵⁷ While the SDS and the Student Movement preached equality, it remained a “mirror of patriarchal society” in its attitudes towards women.⁵⁸ Growing tension between men and women within the New Left, largely in relation to sexual practices and the “general treatment of women as second-class citizens,” became “*the* spark igniting the feminists’ own revolution.”⁵⁹

After Sander’s speech to the SDS, many German women began to openly express that the New Left was not meeting their needs. Just as anti-male discourse was sparking feminist dissent in Western Europe and North America, the message of the *Aktionsrat* fell

⁵³ Maleck-Lewy and Maleck, “The Women’s Movement in East and West Germany,” 376.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 376.

⁵⁵ Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany*, 228

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁵⁷ Hilke Schlaeger and Nancy Vedder-Shults, “The West German Women’s Movement,” *New German Critique* no. 13 (Winter, 1978), 62-63.

⁵⁸ Ute Kätzel, “Vorwort” to *Die 68erinnen: Porträt einer rebellischen Frauengeneration*, ed. Ute Kätzel (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2002), 15.

⁵⁹ First quote: Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 231; Second quote: Herzog, “Pleasure, Sex and Politics,” 419.

on receptive ears in the BRD.⁶⁰ Shortly after the tomatoes were thrown, the newly established *Frankfurter Weiberrat* (Frankfurt Broads' Council) distributed a pamphlet depicting a naked woman lounging beneath the dismembered penises of head SDS theoreticians. The *Weiberrat's* flier provocatively called for the liberation of the "socialist pricks" from their "bourgeois dicks."⁶¹ Ulrike Meinhof, a writer for the Leftist journal *konkret* until 1969, published a scathing commentary in support of the tomato-throwing women. The tomatoes, she argued, were intended to "force the men whose suits they stained (women would have to clean them again)" to consider issues from women's perspectives. Meinhof predicted that "trainloads of tomatoes" would have to be thrown before the SDS would consider women's needs.⁶² Catalyzed by the rebellion of the *Aktionsrat*, women already active in student politics began to articulate agendas for radical reform by confronting problems of gender relations in the Left.

Between 1968 and 1971, the *Frauenbewegung* was generally confined to small university groups in the BRD's cities. These early *Frauengruppen* (women's groups) were where the foundational politics of the *neue Frauenbewegung* were initially worked out. The earliest groups were Berlin's *Aktionsrat zur Befreiung der Frau* and the *Frankfurter Weiberrat*.⁶³ During this initial period the *Aktionsrat* began to articulate

⁶⁰ Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 234.

⁶¹ Herzog, "Pleasure, Sex and Politics," 418. Herzog's Translation.

⁶² Ulrike Meinhof, "Women in the SDS: Acting on their own Behalf," trans. Karin Bauer in *Everybody Talks About the Weather... We Don't: The Writings of Ulrike Meinhof*, ed. Karin Bauer (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008): 209-213.

⁶³ Ursula Nienhaus, "Autonomie und Frauenprojektebewegung," in Rieger (ed.), *Der Widerspenstigen Lähmung?*, 47.

claims to “self determination,” a concept that soon evolved to become autonomy.⁶⁴ The *Aktionsrat* split in late 1969 when some of its women chose to leave with Helke Sander, who subsequently started the women’s group *Brot ♀ Rosen* (Bread ♀ Roses, commonly shortened to B ♀ R).⁶⁵ The majority stayed in the original group, which changed its name to the *Sozialistischer Frauenbund Westberlin* (West Berlin Socialist Women’s League, commonly shortened to SFB). These “third way women” identified themselves as both communists and feminists, thereby choosing to maintain a position of socialist feminism.⁶⁶ Socialist feminists did not sympathize with the SED-controlled socialism of East Germany. Rather than adhering to any particular established doctrine, they held the position that revolutions in existing socialist states had not realized the gender equality they promised.⁶⁷

Socialist feminism was not new in Germany. An earlier generation of feminist socialists, prominent activist Klara Zetkin among them, denounced “bourgeois” feminists and fought against misogyny in the communist parties of Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic. Despite the earlier tradition, socialist feminism was not dominant among post-1968 German feminists and it lacked “much historical credibility” by the 1980s.⁶⁸ Radical feminism, rather, was the dominant stream that emphasized autonomy as

⁶⁴ Ursula Nienhaus, “Frauen erhebt Euch...” in *Selbstbewusst und frei: 50 Jahre Frauen an der Freien Universität Berlin* (Königstein: Helmer, 1998), 95. Nienhaus, “Autonomie und Frauenprojektebewegung,” 47.

⁶⁵ Frigga Haug, “...und der Sozialistische Frauenbund West-Berlin” in *Die 68erinnen: Porträt einer rebellischen Frauengeneration*, ed. Ute Kätzel (Berlin: Rowölt, 2002), 191.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁶⁷ Ferree, “Equality and Autonomy,” 182.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 181-182.

the goal of the new women's movement.⁶⁹ After the split of the *Aktionsrat* in 1969, radical feminist activists established themselves as the dominant ideological stream and autonomy emerged as the core goal of the *neue Frauenbewegung*. Once these theoretical foundations had been worked out, feminists were able to apply the concept of autonomy to reproductive rights in a way that appealed to many women across the BRD.

The *neue Frauenbewegung* became a mass movement when it made Paragraph 218, the clause in the Basic Law banning abortion, an issue of public debate. On June 2 1971, "a shock wave hit Germany" when *Stern*, a left-leaning Hamburger weekly, ran a spectacular cover story.⁷⁰ The article, provocatively titled "*Wir haben abgetrieben*" ("We have had Abortions"), questioned the BRD's conservative abortion law and printed the names and photographs of 374 women who confessed to having illegal abortions.⁷¹ The response was "a true explosion."⁷² Following the *Stern* cover, over 90,000 signatures and 3000 letters were sent to the West German Federal Justice Minister demanding the immediate abolition of Paragraph 218.⁷³ In the first six weeks, 2345 women publicly admitted to having had abortions and 86,100 men and women voiced their solidarity.⁷⁴ After the *Stern* cover, abortion rights emerged as the "actual crucible" of the women's movement.⁷⁵ Using the slogan "*mein Bauch gehört mir*" ("my belly belongs to me"),

⁶⁹ Ibid., 180-182.

⁷⁰ Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics*, 69.

⁷¹ *Stern* June 6 1971.

⁷² Schwarzer, *So fing es an!* 23. AT.

⁷³ Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany*, 234.

⁷⁴ Frevert, *Women in German History*, 294.

⁷⁵ Maleck Lewy and Maleck, "The Women's Movement in East and West Germany," 374.

feminists mobilized a wide-range of West German women to fight for control over their own bodies through a mass women's movement.⁷⁶

The fight against Paragraph 218 attracted many different interest groups to the first nation-wide *Frauenkongress* in March 1972.⁷⁷ After this event, autonomy increasingly came to be understood as “a comprehensive ‘self-determination,’ especially in terms of ‘control over one’s own body.’”⁷⁸ The power of abortion rights as a women’s problem was realized when feminists framed it as an issue of autonomy. Paragraph 218, they argued, enforced “the enslavement of female sexuality and [its] childbearing potential.” This understanding of the law popularized the desire for “liberation from personal dependence and state paternalism” among West German women.⁷⁹ By prompting a widespread understanding that one’s “own problems are not only personal, but rather societal,” the mobilizing success of the anti-218 campaign propelled the *Frauenbewegung* towards new forms of organizing that emphasized the politics of personal experience.⁸⁰

The campaign against Paragraph 218 saw some legislative success in 1973, when the Willi Brandt-led coalition government reviewed abortion legislation. Proposals for reform of Paragraph 218 were read to the *Bundestag* in May 1973. The proceedings were accompanied by street demonstrations in the capital and across West Germany. The new abortion law came into effect in February 1976. The reformed law permitted first

⁷⁶ Frevert, *Women in German History*, 294.

⁷⁷ Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany*, 235.

⁷⁸ Nienhaus, “Frauen erhebt Euch,” 107. AT.

⁷⁹ Ute Gerhard, “Westdeutsche Frauenbewegung: Zwischen Autonomie und dem Recht auf Gleichheit,” *Feministische Studien* 2 (1992): 42. AT.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 42-43. AT.

trimester abortions on the grounds of medical, ethical, social, or criminal problems.

While more liberalized than before, abortion-on-demand was denied.⁸¹ The new law failed to recognize women's control over their bodies in the way that feminists demanded and Paragraph 218 remained an issue for feminist agitation into the 1990s.⁸²

Both lesbian and heterosexual women actively participated in the *neue Frauenbewegung* after the anti-218 campaign. Lesbians had been organizing with gay men since the 1971 release of Rosa von Praunheim's pivotal film *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Gesellschaft in der er lebt*. (*The Homosexual is not Perverse, but rather the Society in which he lives*).⁸³ The campaign to legalize abortion prompted homosexual women to join with heterosexual feminists because Paragraph 218 was understood as "a symbol of governmental regulation of *all*, including 'gay,' women."⁸⁴ In the evolving feminist milieu, sexual self-determination came to be understood "not only as separation from men, but also as public self-articulation of lesbian women."⁸⁵ Lesbian feminists grew stronger throughout the 1970s, especially in the movement hub of West Berlin. In addition to active collaboration with heterosexual

⁸¹ Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany*, 235-36.

⁸² Abortion was a central issue again during reunification, when lawmakers and activists of both the DDR and the BRD argued to maintain East Germany's liberal abortion legislation over Paragraph 218. For more see Andrea Wuerth, "National Politics/Local Identities: Abortion Rights Activism in Post-Wall Berlin," *Feminist Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 601-631.

⁸³ Cristina Perincioli, "Anarchismus- Lesbianismus- Frauenzentrum. Warum musste die Tomate so weit fliegen?" in *Wie weit flog die Tomate? Eine 68erinnen-Gala der Reflexion* ed. Halina Bendowski (Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 1999), 111-113.

⁸⁴ Nienhaus, "Frauen erhebt Euch," 107. AT.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 107. AT.

women, lesbian feminists formed their own organizations, publications, and groups.⁸⁶

Using these common political goals and issues, openly lesbian women formed a distinct yet strongly associated part of the *neue Frauenbewegung* from the early 1970s.

In addition to mobilizing women of different sexual orientations, the campaign against Paragraph 218 carried over to other issues of women's health. *Brot ♀ Rosen* published *Frauenhandbuch 1* in 1971. The book covered abortion, contraception and other women's health issues. It was a self-help directive that suggested women "get to know and understand their bodies better."⁸⁷ Self-examination of reproductive organs, usually performed with a speculum and hand mirror, became a popularly endorsed method of independently identifying early pregnancy and health problems.⁸⁸ In the mid-to-late 1970s, a revolt against male gynaecologists took place in the name of women's health. As part of the rejection of institutionalized gynaecology, examination chairs were portrayed as degrading, home birth was promoted, and feminist women's health centres and services were established.⁸⁹ Groups of feminists worked to suggest sympathetic gynaecologists by asking women about their experiences.⁹⁰ A women's centre in Frankfurt regularly organized group trips of pregnant women to Holland, where abortions

⁸⁶ Nienhaus, "Wie die Frauenbewegung zu Courage kam: Eine Chronologie," in Notz (ed.), *Als die Frauenbewegung noch Courage hatte*, 19-20.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 12. AT.

⁸⁸ For examples see "Kennst du deine Zervix?" *Frauenzeitung* 1; Christiane Bohm and Gisela Koflür, *Was erwartet uns beim Frauenarzt: Ratschläge für Frauen und Mädchen* (Munich: Verlag Frauenoffensive, 1976).

⁸⁹ See Bohm and Koflür, *Was erwartet uns beim Frauenarzt*, 68; *Courage* 1 January 1977; Rieger (ed), *Der Widerspenstigen Lähmung*, 12.

⁹⁰ See FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 Frauenbewegung Frauenzentrum um 1975 "Es ist wichtig, dass wir unsere Erfahrungen mit Frauenärzten austauschen."

could be obtained safely and legally.⁹¹ By the mid-1970s, women's health was established as a central concern of the *Frauenbewegung* with practical applications and concrete results.

Rosemarie Nave-Herz has called the early 1970s the “phase of accentuated self-experience group building.”⁹² Personal experience groups (*Selbsterfahrungsgruppen*) were similar to consciousness-raising groups pioneered by the Redstockings in the United States.⁹³ In these groups, women discussed and thought about themselves and their strengths as they “tried to find their individual femininity.”⁹⁴ During this period, women's centres began to gain ground as movement strongholds. The first autonomous women's centre (*Frauenzentrum*), which will be explored in detail in Chapter Two, was founded in 1972 at Hornstrasse 2 in the Kreuzberg district of West Berlin. Women in other BRD cities quickly followed suit.⁹⁵ These centres quickly became nuclei of the women's movement as functioning meeting places and information hubs where autonomous groups gathered and new women were encouraged to take feminist action.

In 1975, the United Nations Year of Women, a *Spiegel* survey found that twenty million West German women identified themselves as feminists and twenty thousand engaged in active political work.⁹⁶ New campaigns such as Wages for Housework caused

⁹¹ Frauenmediaturm (hereafter FMT), Frauenzentrum Frankfurt, *Wir fahren nach Holland*.

⁹² Nave Herz, *Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, 70.

⁹³ For Redstockings and American CR see Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Viking, 2000), 196-201.

⁹⁴ Nave Herz, *Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, 71. AT.

⁹⁵ Nienhaus, “Frauen erhebt Euch!” 107

⁹⁶ Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany*, 235.

conflicts between feminists advocating for different approaches to core issues.⁹⁷ While centres of the Student Movement remained in university towns and large cities, the feminist counter-sphere was a visible presence in small towns as well as the cities of the BRD.⁹⁸ The *neue Frauenbewegung* continued to manifest itself in a variety of environments and actions throughout the 1970s, from the disruption of beauty competitions to organized tribunals concerned with abortion reform.⁹⁹ While universities remained its “most stable anchor,” the campaign to legalize abortion appealed to many non-academics and the women’s movement was no longer “trapped in an ivory tower.”¹⁰⁰

In the second half of the 1970s, the *Frauenbewegung* entered what is widely recognized as the “project phase” or the period of the *Frauenprojektebewegung* (women’s projects movement).¹⁰¹ If women noticed the lack of a women’s service or institution, the movement encouraged them to address their unmet needs by creating spaces, events, or services themselves.¹⁰² Groups of women spent varying lengths of time working on these projects, examples of which include women’s pubs and bookstores, shelters for abused women and children, and women’s therapy initiatives.¹⁰³ Historian and activist Ursula Nienhaus has recognized the *Aktionsrat* and *Weiberrat* as the first *Frauenprojekte*, showing that understandings of projects could be expanded to include

⁹⁷ Schwarzer, *So fing es an!* 52-53.

⁹⁸ Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 226.

⁹⁹ Frevert, *Women in German History*, 296.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 296-97.

¹⁰¹ Nave-Herz, *Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, 78.

¹⁰² Marie Sichtermann and Brigitte Siegel, “Das Chaos ist weiblich: Organisationsentwicklung in Frauenprojekten” in Rieger (ed), *Der Widerspenstigen Lähmung*, 111.

¹⁰³ Rieger (ed), *Der Widerspenstigen Lähmung*, 12.

women's groups as well as practically-oriented initiatives.¹⁰⁴ In more common terminology, however, projects are specific undertakings with one concrete goal while women's discussion or consciousness-raising groups are referred to as *Frauengruppen* (women's groups).

For 1970s project groups, organizational strategies were formed around interpretations of autonomy that were tied to the expression of an anti-hierarchical ethos. As these intertwined ideas were applied to different projects, hierarchical organizational structures were recognized and rejected as elements of the male-identified status quo. In place of these male-identified structures, women's groups and projects developed and applied anti-hierarchical organizational methods compatible with their understandings of autonomy. In the realization of women's ideas as actual undertakings, practical problems such as alternative group organization and financial support had to be approached in new ways. Examination of the ways in which women's groups chose to organize themselves will show how women's projects were understood as "nests of resistance" where ideas of autonomy were put into action.¹⁰⁵

The project phase diversified activities of the women's movement and allowed a feminist cultural counter-sphere to grow. Women's writing and publishing projects, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three, facilitated changes to relationships between women writers, publishers, and readers. The success of Verena Stefan's 1975 novel *Shedding* revealed a previously unrecognized market for literature by and for

¹⁰⁴ Nienhaus, "Autonomie und Frauenprojektebewegung," 47.

¹⁰⁵ Rieger (ed), *Der Widerspenstigen Lähmung*, 13-14.

women.¹⁰⁶ Women's publishing houses such as the Munich-based *Frauenoffensive* were established with the express purpose of publishing books by and for women.¹⁰⁷ Once an alternative space for women's writing had been established, the *Frauenbewegung* witnessed an explosion of periodicals by and for women. Two widely available magazines, the Berlin-based *Courage* and Alice Schwarzer's *Emma*, appeared only months apart in 1976 and 1977, respectively. When *Courage* and *Emma* appeared at newsstands, they joined thematic journals such as Helke Sander's *Frauen und Film* and the self-help focussed *Clio*, lesbian papers like *Lesbenpresse* and *Partnerin*, Hannelore Mabry's satirical *Der Feminist*, and countless local publications.¹⁰⁸ In the later 1970s, national periodicals, three of which will be explored in Chapter Four, emerged as new journalistic spaces for the women's movement.

The rise of the women's movement did not go unchallenged. Men from within and outside of the New Left both criticized and mocked the feminists' revolution. In the 1960s and 1970s, West German men frequently argued that feminism was ruining heterosexual sex. Popular magazines *Bild*, *Stern*, and *Spiegel* all published articles supporting the position that the women's movement was damaging to men and their sexual relationships with women.¹⁰⁹ As Leftist texts about sex proliferated in the late

¹⁰⁶Ulla Bock and Barbara Witych, "The Women's Movement and the Construction of a 'Female' Counter Public," in Altbach et. al., eds. *German Feminism: Readings in Politics and Literature*, 49. *Shedding*, which will be discussed at length in Chapter Three, is Stefan's semi-autobiographical novel exploring how the young female protagonist developed her feminist consciousness and identity through several relationships with men and women.

¹⁰⁷ Bock and Witych, "The Women's Movement and the Construction of a 'Female' Counter Public," 48.

¹⁰⁸ Monika Schmid, "Feministischer Blätterwald," *Courage* 2 1977, 42-43.

¹⁰⁹ Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 237-238.

1970s and into the 1980s, it became clear that many men feared that women, “under the influence of feminism,” might reject intercourse altogether.¹¹⁰ In 1982, one man summed up his anti-feminist sentiments in *Stern* by claiming that “the women’s movement has reduced our horniness to zero.”¹¹¹ These anxious reactions reveal more than male fear of women’s newly declared sovereignty over their bodies and reproductive capabilities. With tens of millions of German women identifying themselves as feminists by the mid-1970s, many men who had social and/or sexual relationships with women must have also experienced a politicization of their private lives. Feminist issues such as housework, childbearing, and contraception all questioned the roles and daily activities of men as well as women. Anti-feminist sentiments thus suggest, among other things, an expression of the women’s movement’s impact as it grew in size and influence.

By 1978, the *neue Frauenbewegung* was a powerful socio-cultural force in the BRD. As the first decade of the new women’s movement came to a close, domestic politics began to affect feminists in new ways. After Leftist terrorism reached a peak with the *Deutsche Herbst* of late 1977, “individual terror, revolutionary violence, civil disobedience, criticism of the prevailing order, radical thinking, and grass roots movements” fused in the eyes of the West German state. Together, these elements constituted the “internal enemy” on which the BRD declared war.¹¹² The Left faced multiple barriers as a “new double burden” was placed on feminists after 1977, requiring

¹¹⁰ Herzog, “Pleasure, Sex and Politics,” 429.

¹¹¹ Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 238. Translation is Herzog’s.

¹¹² Margit Mayer, “The German October of 1977,” *New German Critique* 13 (1978), 163.

them to fight for their civil rights in addition to feminist political work.¹¹³ This shift in the social and political environment would affect the *Frauenbewegung* into the 1980s as it struggled with questions of how to maintain autonomous forms of organization without institutionalization.¹¹⁴

This thesis examines the distinctive character of the *neue Frauenbewegung* against this backdrop of developments in the 1970s. My explorations of the West Berlin women's centre, feminist writing and publishing, and national periodicals will show how autonomy and anti-hierarchical organizational principles were connected in different types of women's projects in the 1970s. Analyses of how specific groups expressed this anti-hierarchical ethos will show how secondary characteristics were emphasized through administrative strategies formed around the central concept of autonomy. Together these investigations will show how West German feminists interpreted autonomy and its application in organizational practice.

¹¹³ Monica Jacobs, "Civil Rights and Women's Rights in the Federal Republic of Germany Today," *New German Critique* 13 (1978), 174.

¹¹⁴ Ferree, "Equality and Autonomy," 184-185.

Chapter Two: The Berlin Women's Centre

“The women's centre is a location where different autonomous groups do political work...”¹

Brot ♀ Rosen, 1973.

After the anti-218 *Stern* action in 1971, the size and power of the *neue Frauenbewegung* rapidly expanded. By late 1972, the many spontaneous meetings of women in West Berlin were an indication of the growing attractiveness of the feminist message. Motivated by common experiences working in the male-dominated Left and collective living in *Wohngemeinschaften*, women who were active in the *Frauenbewegung* began to search for a location where they could freely meet, talk, and organize political activities. About 100 women were involved in the initial effort. Prominent participants included Helke Sander, the *Aktionsrat* member who gave the tomato-provoking speech in 1968, and her group *Brot ♀ Rosen*. In February 1973, the group found a suitable location in a commercial space at 2 Hornstrasse.² The storefront and adjoining rooms were located in Kreuzberg, the working-class West Berlin district closed off by the Wall on three sides. The first year's lease for a “women's counseling centre” began 1 March 1973.³ Shortly thereafter the women began a “euphoric stage of

¹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Frauenzentrum (4) von Anfängen bis 1976, “Frauenplenum vom 19.6.1973; Protokoll.” AT.

² FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, 20 Frauenzentrum interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Hasche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, “Geschichte des Frauenzentrums”.

³ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Haseche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, “Mietvertrag”.

renovations and set-up” as they prepared their new *Frauenzentrum* (FZ) for opening.⁴

Beginning 24 March 1973, the BRD’s first women’s centre was open daily from 3:30-8:00pm.⁵

After the women at 2 Hornstr. opened their centre, women in other West German cities and towns quickly followed suit. Previously, politically engaged women had met in private residences or rooms belonging to other organizations.⁶ In the early 1970s, the anti-218 campaign and self-help movement laid the groundwork for women’s centres by bringing new women into the movement and prompting the need for spaces in which they could organize.⁷ As differences between socialist and autonomous feminists were beginning to divide the *Frauenbewegung*, women’s groups were able to work with the common approach of establishing “self-managed spaces in which men were not allowed.”⁸ Some centres were set up in legally rented rooms while others were claimed through squatting.⁹ These gender-exclusive spaces were used for planning and staging group discussions and activities as well as acting as “starting points” for women new to

⁴ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, 20 Frauenzentrum interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Hasche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, “Geschichte des Frauenzentrums.” AT.

⁵ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, 20 Frauenzentrum interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Hasche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, “Eröffnung des Frauenzentrums”.

⁶ Rosemarie Nave-Herz, *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1994), 70.

⁷ Christine Schäfer and Christiane Wilke, *Die neue Frauenbewegung in München 1968-1985: Eine Dokumentation* (Munich: Buchendorfer Verlag, 2000), 220.

⁸ Georgy Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Canada: Humanities Press International, 1997), 71. Also see “Vom SDS zum Frauenzentrum”, *Frauenjahrbuch* 1 (Frankfurt: Verlag Roter Stern, 1975), 10-49.

⁹ See “Chronik der Haus-besetzung”, *Frauenzeitung* 4, September 1974, 11 for an example of an FZ in a squat.

the *Frauenbewegung*.¹⁰ By the end of 1974, West Germany had 17 independently administrated and financed FZs.¹¹ Their numbers continued to swell and by the end of the 1970s the BRD's network of women's centres was, next to Switzerland's, the densest in Europe.¹²

Since each FZ was independently financed and operated, the organizational strategies used in their administration were different. The Berlin FZ was the BRD's first women's centre as well as the first attempt to create permanent feminist space in West Berlin. Since the Hornstr. FZ was the first of its kind, the methods used to run it had to be worked out through experimentation and trial and error. This chapter explores three elements of the Berlin FZ's administration: the *Neueabend* (information evening for new women), *Strukturdebatten* (structure debates), and financing. It will begin with a brief narrative of the FZ's development from its founding in 1973 until around 1978. The analysis of these features and their relationships to one another will provide a comprehensive examination of the women's centre and its relationships with those who used it. Through the exploration of three specific administrative areas and techniques, this chapter will show that, for the Berlin FZ, autonomy and anti-hierarchical structure were expressed through emphases on individual initiative, collective management, and self-sustainability.

Located at the corner of Hornstrasse and Yorckstrasse in Kreuzberg, the Berlin FZ was only about 2 km from the Wall. The *Frauenzentrum* was around the corner from Labrys Women's Bookstore at 22 Yorckstr. and the Blocksberg Women's Pub at 48

¹⁰ Nave-Herz, *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, 70.

¹¹ Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics*, 71.

¹² Nave-Herz, *Die Geschichte der Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, 70.

Yorckstr.. The FZ was accessible by bus and the Mehringdamm and Möckernbrücke U-Bahn stations.¹³ The rental space included a storefront and four adjoining rooms.¹⁴ The larger front room was used for plenums and the smaller ones for counselling and group meetings.¹⁵ Although initially open daily, by 1975 the FZ's hours had been reduced to three days per week with additional hours for counselling on reproductive health and other women's issues.¹⁶ The centre's "shop service" was open from 5:00-8:00 on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings. The *Neueabend* for interested women was held at 8:00 pm on the first Thursday of each month. Remaining Thursdays were used for thematic group discussions. Other meetings and activities also took place after 8:00 pm on the evenings the centre was open.¹⁷

Many of the Berlin *Frauenzentrum*'s activities and groups were also associated with the nearby *Lesbisches Aktionszentrum* (Lesbian Action Centre, commonly shortened to LAZ) located at 20 Kulmer Strasse in Kreuzberg. Founded in 1972 as a sub-group of *Homosexuelle Aktion West Berlin* (Homosexual Action West Berlin, commonly shortened to HAW), the LAZ was a separate group with its own centre by the early

¹³ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, 20 Frauenzentrum interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Hasche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, "Eröffnung des Frauenzentrums".

¹⁴ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Haseche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, "Mietvertrag".

¹⁵ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, 20 Frauenzentrum interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Hasche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, "Tips zur Eröffnung eines FZ."

¹⁶ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, 20 Frauenzentrum interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Hasche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, "Tips zur Eröffnung eines FZ."

¹⁷ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Fraueninfo Berlin: Selbst Darstellung," 53-54.

1970s. In early 1976, the LAZ had five project groups, three consciousness-raising groups, and two karate groups.¹⁸ During this time the centre had about 80 affiliates, all of whom attended weekly meetings.¹⁹ Although the LAZ was a different place than the FZ, women associated with the centres frequently formed groups and worked on projects together.²⁰ The collaborations between these centres are important to keep in mind when discussing the activities of either one. Since the centres both functioned as hubs for feminist activity and were within walking distance of one another (the LAZ was 1.6 km from the FZ's Hornstr. location and 2.5 km from the Stresemannstr. storefront it has occupied since 1976), it makes sense that some women might also be affiliated with both.

As Anne Enke has argued in the context of the American women's movement, women-only spaces "at once became sites of protest against the gendered exclusions of public geographies, and also meeting grounds in which multiple cultures of feminist and lesbian activism emerged."²¹ This conceptualization is also suited to discussion of women-only space in the West German context. The women who used the *Frauenzentrum* understood it as a space in which women could take action on their own behalf. Attendees at a 1973 plenum put forth two definitions of the centre. *Brot ♀ Rosen*, a group in attendance but of equal standing to others associated with the initial project, defined the FZ as "a location where different autonomous women's groups do political

¹⁸ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Fraueninfo Berlin: Selbst Darstellung," 53-54.

¹⁹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Fraueninfo Berlin: Selbst Darstellung," 53-54.

²⁰ For an example see, FFBIZ, BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), Selbstdarstellung, Courage Frauen, Juni 1977.

²¹ Anne Enke, "Smuggling Sex through the Gates: Race, Sexuality, and the Politics of Space in Second Wave Feminism." *American Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 4 (December 2003): 635.

work.” The rest of the women added to this argument by defining the FZ as “a large women’s group that tries to find and develop starting points for women’s [political] work.”²² These perceptions are significant because they show that the FZ was understood as a space conducive to political organizing; the space and its restrictions were the centre’s political statement and power. Whether defined as a “location” or a “large women’s group,” the FZ was imagined as a place where women’s politics could begin rather than a political entity in and of itself. The women who worked to found the centre therefore saw it as “meeting grounds” where the presence of women actively protested existing conceptions of space and gender. Thus, the women-only public space created by the FZ’s exclusionary policies challenged gender hierarchies and public space because women used it to instigate and foster collective political work on their own behalf.

As with many other West German women’s centres in the 1970s, the continuing anti-218 campaign was central to the development of the Kreuzberg FZ.²³ In March 1974, the women’s centre took part in a country-wide week of protest against Paragraph 218. Several months later, the FZ screened a film showing an abortion performed using an extraction method as part of the first *Frauenfest, Rockfete im Rocke* (Rockfest in Skirts).²⁴ The initiative group “218 Last Try” organized women to fight for the repeal of

²² FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum (4) von Anfängen bis 1976, “Frauenplenum vom 19.6.1973; Protokoll”.

²³ For examples of the anti-218 campaign in non-Berlin FZs see: Frauenmediaturm, Frauenzentrum Frankfurt, “Wir fahren nach Holland” and Frauenmediaturm, Projekte 1010 Frauenzentren Nach Städten G-M PD-FB 7, Gerlind Schaidt, “Neuer Treffpunkt für die Frauen,” *Kölner Rundschau*, 9 August 1976; Frauenmediaturm, Projekte a) 1010 Frauenzentren Nach Städten P-Z PD-FB 8, “Frauenzentrum Weisbaden,” 1975.

²⁴ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, “Fraueninfo Berlin: Selbst Darstellung”.

abortion legislation after the Brandt government had reformed it.²⁵ Women's health projects such as the initiative for the *Feministische FrauenGesundheitsZentrum* (Feminist Women's Health Centre, commonly shortened FFGZ) were also affiliated with the FZ in the mid-1970s.²⁶ The centre's provision of counselling services on abortion, contraception, and pregnancy engaged the practical work associated with improving women's access to information and services related to reproductive health.²⁷ Through methods such as these, information and advice on women's health were entrenched as a central concern of groups associated with the Berlin FZ.

By the mid-1970s, 70-80 different groups were affiliated with the centre and approximately 700 women paid regular dues.²⁸ The development and growth of this politicized, women-only space did not go unnoticed by the legal authorities of the BRD. At 7:25 pm on 18 December 1975, twelve police officers searched the Hornstr. *Frauenzentrum*, claiming to be seeking a woman identified as an anarchist. They recorded the names of women who were present, photographed posters and other documents, and interrogated women who were not carrying identification.²⁹ Further

²⁵ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 Frauenbewegung Frauenzentrum um 1975, "Initiativgruppe 218 letzter Versuch in Frauenzentrum Berlin, 18.1.74."

²⁶ See FFBIZ A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Fraueninfo Berlin: Selbst Darstellung," 46.

²⁷ See FFBIZ A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Fraueninfo Berlin: Selbst Darstellung;" A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "Birkenfallinfo Sommernummer September 1976."

²⁸ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "Konzept für den inhaltlichen Ablauf des Neuenabends."

²⁹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum (4) von Anfängen bis 1976, Frauenzentrum Hornstr. 2, "Crimes Against Women in Psychiatry, Gynecology, Film Women's Centres Made Criminal."

police action, however, does not appear in the FZs files from subsequent years. The raid of 2 Hornstr. was part of a nation-wide pattern; similar police action was taken against women's centres in cities including Frankfurt, Heidelberg, and Bremen in 1974 and 1975.³⁰

Around 1975, women affiliated with the FZ began asking their colleagues for input on a new location.³¹ In 1976, the centre moved from its original location at 2 Hornstr. across the Landwehr Canal to a new storefront at 40 Stresemannstr. The opening plenum was held 19 October 1976.³² The explosion of women's projects during this period meant that many new endeavours were born in or associated with the Stresemannstr. *Frauenzentrum* and the nearby LAZ. Lilith's women's bookstore, an initiative for a shelter for abused women, and the nearby women's pub represent some of the projects that came out of the FZ in the mid-to-late 1970s.³³ In February 1975, a group called *Beratungs und Information für Frauen* (Counselling and Information for Women, commonly shortened to BIFF) formed in the FZ and began working to provide services

³⁰ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum (4) von Anfängen bis 1976, Frauenzentrum Hornstr. 2, "Crimes Against Women in Psychiatry, Gynecology, Film Women's Centres Made Criminal" for Frankfurt and Bremen; Frauenmediaturm, Frauenzentrum 85 Nürnberg, "Frauen kommt ins Frauenzentrum," 25 for Frankfurt; FMT, Frauenzentrum 69 Heidelberg, "Frauen in der Plöck 48 oder Bagger, Bullen, und Beamte: Dokumente und Erfahrungen um Heidelbergs erstes Frauenzentrum," for Heidelberg.

³¹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "es geht um ein neues Zentrum!"

³² FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "Birkenfallinfo Sommernummer September 1976."

³³ FFBIZ A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Fraueninfo Berlin: Selbst Darstellung," 47-52.

from the centre.³⁴ In 1976, women from both centres created and distributed the first issue of *Courage*, a Berlin-based magazine for the *Frauenbewegung* that will be discussed at length in Chapter Four.³⁵ These projects joined a proliferation of consciousness-raising and discussion groups dedicated to an increasingly broad array of themes that were formed in and affiliated with the centre over the course of the 1970s.

Activities and developments that took place in, through, and around the Berlin *Frauenzentrum* in the 1970s were shaped through the application of its autonomous organizational principles. Many different women's groups came together in and remained affiliated with the centre as they held discussions or carried out projects. How groups were formed, the ways decisions about restructuring were made, and how the FZ was financed were all influential factors in determining the interactions between women in the space of the centre. Through analyses of the information evenings for new women, the *Strukturdebatte*, and the centre's finances, this chapter will show that the Berlin centre's autonomous administrative strategies were characterized by an anti-hierarchical ethos expressed through emphases on individual initiative, collective management, and self-sufficiency.

Neueabend

In a 1978 essay, a young woman described her cautious first visit to the Berlin *Frauenzentrum*. She used a map to locate the Stresemannstr. centre after seeing it in an issue of *Courage*. Unsure of what she wanted to get out of her visit or what she would find in the centre, the young woman made her way to a Thursday evening *Neueabend*.

³⁴ FFBIZ A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Fraueninfo Berlin: Selbst Darstellung," 47.

³⁵ FFBIZ, BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), Selbstdarstellung, *Courage Frauen*, Juni 1977.

During the evening, established FZ women shared their group themes and projects with the new recruits. The author formed a discussion group with about 12 women. Although the group did not work out, the author's triumphant proclamation that "a beginning was made!" cast the visit as a success.³⁶ This account represents the experience of one individual beginning to move towards an active role in the *Frauenzentrum*. The evening for new women was an essential element of the centre's autonomous organizational strategy through its shaping of the initial contact between interested women and the FZ. The information and ideas communicated through the *Neueabend* are significant because they express an anti-hierarchical ethos through an emphasis on fostering individual thought.

About 700 women paid dues to the centre in the mid-1970s. Since only about 100 women were involved in the effort to found the FZ, most of these women would have come to know the *Frauenzentrum* through the *Neueabend*. In 1977 the information evenings consistently attracted between 50 and 140 women.³⁷ A newspaper article from the same year describes an information evening attended by over 200 women.³⁸ Not all of these attendees, however, would have been first-time participants; some women returned

³⁶ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Frauenzentrum 1975-1987, Renate Janowitz, "Mein erst Besuch im Frauenzentrum," 3.8.1978.

³⁷ See FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "Protokoll vom Neuenabend," 6.1.1977; 3.2.1977; 7.4.1977; 5.5.1977.

³⁸ FFBIZ A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, Ursula Lüders, "Unmögliche Frauengruppe?" *tsp*, 16 January 1977.

for multiple *Neueabende* because they had not yet found a women's group with which they wanted to work.³⁹

When the women's centre first opened in 1973, information evenings for new women were held on the first and third Thursdays of each month.⁴⁰ This schedule did not last long, however, and the FZ soon settled into a routine of holding the *Neueabend* at 8:00pm on only the first Thursday of each month. It was run by a relatively small group, six in 1977, already established in the FZ community. When new women arrived on Thursday evenings they were divided into groups that moved into the centre's smaller rooms where "New Info" booklets were sold.⁴¹ Attendance levels combined with the number of organizers meant that these smaller groups were typically composed of 20-30 new women.⁴² FZ women presented ten-minute long reports to these groups. The talks provided participants with information about the development of the centre, important dates and events, required financial contributions, and possible themes and ideas for the formation of new groups. The organizers then collected possible group ideas from participants, who were subsequently re-gathered in the large plenum room. With all the new women together, organizers shared the suggestions for groups made by participants

³⁹ For an example see FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "Protokoll vom Neuenabend" 3.2.1977.

⁴⁰ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Haseche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, "Protokoll vom 18.12.73."

⁴¹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "Birkenfall Info 4 Januar 1977," 5.

⁴² See FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "Protokoll vom Neuenabend," 6.1.1977, 3.2.1977, 7.4.1977, 5.5.1977.

in their divisions. Women with similar interests who wished to form groups with one another were then able to exchange contact information.⁴³

Guidelines from 1975 explain the five key ideas and pieces of information that were supposed to be communicated through the *Neueabend*. First, the women's centre was to be represented as "autonomous." This concept was explained as a state of independence from political organizations and groups. The centre's institutional independence was one in which each woman was to hold her own political opinion. Where an individual woman was representing the centre, she was to substitute the opinion of the plenum for her own. Second, male-free organization was championed as a way for women to get to know one another and a method to provide them with the courage to speak. Women-only organization was cast as a step towards female independence. Women-only spaces were further justified through allusion to men's having maintained gender-exclusive spaces in many different areas. The third point emphasizes "self determination" and stressed the necessity that women come to the centre on their own behalf. The fourth and fifth sections explained the structure and function of the FZ as well as its various weekly meetings and services.⁴⁴

Although they were responsible for delivering information about the FZ and its groups to new women, the information evening's organizers wanted women to build groups themselves, albeit in conjunction with existing groups. Organizers understood this

⁴³ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "Birkenfall Info 4 Januar 1977," 5.

⁴⁴ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "Konzept für den inhaltlichen Ablauf des Neuenabends."

process as part of individual women beginning to take control of their own lives.⁴⁵ This desire was reflected in the approach they took to group formation. New women were not supposed to join existing groups; rather, they were encouraged to use their own ideas and take their own initiatives to found new groups themselves.⁴⁶ Rather than providing new women with groups they could join, the structure of the *Neueabend* forced participants to form their own. While the groups formed at the information evenings had differing levels of success, having women build their own groups rather than allowing them to join established ones was a significant choice because it shows an encouragement of individual thought and initiative.⁴⁷ The process of group formation required new women to communicate with one another and come up with their own ideas for themes rather than depending on experienced women to do it for them. This attempt to subvert the development of internal power imbalances shows how the autonomous organizational strategy applied to FZ group formation identified all power hierarchies as problematic. Thus, this approach expresses an anti-hierarchical ethos by placing the formative power in the hands of new women rather than restricting it to women with experience in the FZ.

Various problems were encountered in the facilitation of the *Neueabende*. In 1977, concerns such as a lack of co-ordination between evenings,⁴⁸ the lack of a cohesive

⁴⁵ FFBIZ A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Fraueninfo Berlin: Selbst Darstellung," 2.

⁴⁶ FFBIZ A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, Ursula Lüders, "Unmögliche Frauengruppe?" *tsp*, 16 January 1977.

⁴⁷ For examples of different outcomes see FFBIZ A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, Ursula Lüders, "Unmögliche Frauengruppe?" *tsp*, 16 January 1977 and Renate Stefan-Bleese, "Eine mögliche Frauengruppe," *tsp*, 6 February 1977.

⁴⁸ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "Protokoll vom Neuenabend" 3.2.1977.

list of groups and activities associated with the centre,⁴⁹ and age differences causing divisions between women⁵⁰ were raised by participants. In January 1977, a facilitator warned of the distance created between “old” or established women and new women through the evening’s informative lecture. This distance, she felt, contributed to the dangerous possibility of the FZ appearing as a place where only the fully emancipated were able to participate. In order to avoid this effect, she suggested encouraging attendees to participate in discussion rather than lecturing them. This approach, she felt, was less problematic because it led participants to ask questions about subjects, such as financial contributions, themselves.⁵¹ Here, discussion is championed as a less hierarchical form of communication than lecturing because it encourages participants to think and take initiative by actively seeking information through questions and discussion.

The application of autonomous organizational strategies to the Thursday information evenings expressed an anti-hierarchical ethos through the encouragement of individual thought and initiative. At the *Neueabend*, women were provided with the tools they needed to work with the centre through the political program explained in the guidelines and the reports from “old” women. Once this information had been communicated, however, new women were expected to take their integration upon themselves. This encouragement of personal thought and initiative expresses an anti-hierarchical ethos inherent to the FZ’s organizational strategy; the requirement of

⁴⁹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, “Protokoll vom Neuenabend” 7.4.1977.

⁵⁰ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, “Protokoll vom Neuenabend” 3.2.1977.

⁵¹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, “Protokoll vom Neuenabend” 6.1.1977.

forming new groups placed more value on personal initiative than experience or time spent with the centre by implying that all women were equally capable of creating groups. Through this dissemination of responsibility, new participants were immediately charged with the task of initiating the process of determining their work with the centre. In these ways, the autonomous organizational principles applied to the *Neueabend* expressed an anti-hierarchical ethos in their promotion of individual initiative as a necessity of political engagement.

Strukturdebatte

Since many different women, projects, and groups were associated with the Berlin *Frauenzentrum*, decentralized decision-making methods had to be employed when determining how and why the centre would change. Affiliates' understandings of the FZ as a space in which women were able to organize helped shape decision-making strategies by not vesting power in any particular group. This decentralized power structure meant that many women had to be involved in determining the nature and process of reforms. Continuous debates over the structure of the FZ were used as a method to approach functional problems and reform in the centre throughout the 1970s. These discussions involved many of the groups involved with the centre. Through the processes of the structure debates, the Berlin women's centre worked out a method for collective, discussion-based decision making. These techniques represent an element of the FZ's autonomous organizational principles as well as the realities of its operation.

Although formal boundaries were placed on planned structure debates, issues and rules of engagement were discussed in many different contexts in 1973-1978. These debates were not single discussions, but rather the culmination of many different

exchanges in FZ-affiliated groups and larger meetings of delegates. I will therefore examine the structure discussions as a continuous stream of development rather than abbreviated, demarcated debates. With this in mind, the debates focused on similar yet distinct issues. In 1973/74, participants were concerned with restructuring the weekly plenum.⁵² In 1975, perceptions of chaos in the centre prompted discussions of reform.⁵³ The 1976/77 discussions paid more attention to the relationship between women's projects and the centre.⁵⁴ Through discussions of its function and operation, the women of the Berlin FZ expressed an anti-hierarchical ethos through the implementation of collective decision-making strategies.

An early concern of the FZ's structure discussions was the weekly centre-wide plenum. The early meetings were open to all women affiliated with the centre. Their intended functions were to facilitate the exchange of information between groups, the discussion of women's issues, and to plan for collective actions.⁵⁵ The original *Frauenzentrum* plenums involved 70-100 women, some new to the centre and some with established roles.⁵⁶ As more women came to the centre, however, the weekly meetings

⁵² FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum (4) von Anfängen bis 1976, "Protokoll 21.10.74 (Diskussion über Struktur und Weiterarbeit des FZ)."

⁵³ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von B&R ca 1970- Sommeruni 1980, "Was will das Info?"

⁵⁴ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "Das FZ: ein Berliner Durchgangszimmer?"

⁵⁵ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von B&R ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Was will das Info?" 49.

⁵⁶ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum interene Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Haseche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, "Wie kann man die Situation im Plenum und im Zentrum verändern?"

had too many attendees to work through problems in a meaningful way.⁵⁷ The possibility of changing the format of meetings was discussed at a plenum held in February 1974. Minutes from the meeting show that attendees were interested in changing the existing format to one in which delegates from each *Frauengruppe* associated with the centre would participate. This new format would incorporate a systematic style of discussion rather than intensive debate, which would be reserved for work in specialized groups.⁵⁸

On 21 October 1974, about forty women from approximately twenty women's groups met to discuss the "structure and further work of the FZ." At this meeting, attending women drafted a cohesive proposal for reform of the centre's organizational strategy. They argued that plenums should only be attended by delegates from the women's groups associated with the *Frauenzentrum*. These delegates would report plenum discussions to their groups so that all women associated with the centre would continue to be kept up-to-date on developments and controversies. They would also be in charge of compiling lists of their group's participants in order to simplify the collection of FZ fees in the apparent absence of an office. Attending delegates were asked to discuss the problems raised at plenum with their home groups.⁵⁹

Changes to the plenum were made as a result of these discussions. Rather than keeping plenum attendance open to all FZ affiliates, each group selected one or two delegates to represent them at meetings. A co-ordination group took responsibility for

⁵⁷ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von B&R ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Was will das Info?" 49.

⁵⁸ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, "Protokoll 20.2.74".

⁵⁹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum (4) von Anfängen bis 1976, "Protokoll 21.10.74 (Diskussion über Struktur und Weiterarbeit des FZ)."

planning and structuring the meetings.⁶⁰ This application of ideas shows the incorporation of discussions from small groups and a meeting representative of the centre as a whole. By carrying through the conclusions of the plenum into actual practice, the FZ's autonomous administrative strategy automatically placed objective value on decisions achieved through the meeting of many different groups.

The integration of the ideas of the smaller groups associated with the FZ into the broader *Strukturdebatte* was reinforced in the many preparatory materials distributed and disseminated by coordinating groups. In the weeks before the 1977 *Strukturdebatte*, the women's centre disseminated a uniform preparatory questionnaire to many different groups. The questionnaire asked women to consider group structure, problems, processes, and economic principles.⁶¹ The questions were intended to help groups compose self portraits for the debate.⁶² In a 1977 contribution to *Courage*, the FZ women explained the background to their current structure discussion, invited women other than those organized through the centre, and stated their intent to keep *Courage* readers informed of the debate in future issues.⁶³

The distribution of preparatory materials and the use of *Courage* as a vehicle for informing non-FZ women about the debate shows a deliberate effort to bring many women in the decision-making process. Providing groups with discussion questions demonstrates an attempt to gather a number of contributions on specific issues. The

⁶⁰ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von B&R ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Was will das Info?" 50.

⁶¹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "Birkenfall Info 4 Januar 1977," 7.

⁶² FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, "Liebe Frauen" 17.11.1976.

⁶³ "Nachrichten aus der Frauenbewegung," *Courage* 2, February 1977, 26.

Courage contribution furthered this effort by extending the invitation to women who were not organized in the FZ. Together, these sources show an emphasis on the collective nature of the centre's management. By inviting all FZ groups to prepare and participate in decision-making and actually applying their conclusions to reforms, the FZ's organizational strategy emphasized their importance as a group. Extending the invitation to women not (yet) organized with the centre meant that the collective asked to make decisions extended beyond those women associated with the FZ. This type of administration demonstrates an emphasis on collective management through the identification of value in the ideas small groups and non-FZ women in the process of cohesion used to convert suggestions to reforms.

The *Strukturdebatten* articulated the distribution of power amongst associated groups in the FZ's decision-making process. Rather than having one individual or group make decisions affecting the FZ as a whole, all those involved were invited to join the process. This element of the FZ's autonomous organizational approach expresses an anti-hierarchical ethos because it represents an attempt to create a decentralized power structure in which all groups are ascribed equal standing. The stress on collective management also shows how FZ affiliates imagined the centre as a space in which women could act politically; the centre itself had no overriding voice in the *Strukturdebatten*, meaning that it was not constructed as an entity with any power beyond the collective. In these ways, the autonomous organizational strategy applied to the FZ's *Strukturdebatten* expressed an anti-hierarchical ethos through an emphasis on collective modes of management.

Finances

Questions of money and its relationship to autonomy were significant and controversial in the *neue Frauenbewegung*. The West German women's movement was both cautious of capitalism and aware of its own financial needs. Emily Medvec stressed the connection between money and the women's movement in an essay translated from English to German by Berlin feminist activists in 1976. Female economic independence, Medvec argued, was integral to the standing of both women and the women's movement. "Without money," she stated, "we cannot create the conditions for a strong movement of revolutionary resistance." Medvec called for the creation of banks, credit unions, and other institutions to foster the financial conditions for feminist revolution.⁶⁴ While the Berlin *Frauenzentrum* did not go so far as to create its own credit union, its approach to financing is an integral part of its autonomous organizational strategy. Although the autonomous politics of the centre prevented the women behind it from seeking external financial assistance or investment, operating and maintaining it required substantial financial support. Strategies for gathering, managing, and distributing funds show how the women's centre managed the bottom line of its autonomous politics through an anti-hierarchical policy rooted in self-sufficiency.

The establishment and maintenance of the women's centre required a considerable amount of money. The Hornstr. location required 330 DM per month in rent alone.⁶⁵ In May 1975 the FZ reported spending an additional 50 DM per month on utilities such as heat, electricity, and telephone service as well as materials for pamphlets

⁶⁴ Emily Medvec, "Quests Perspektive von Geld, Anerkennung und Macht," translated by Christiane Ewert and Eva Meyer in Christiane Ewert and Eva Meyer (ed.), "*Sterntaler:*" *Feminismus und Geld* (Berlin-West: Frauenselbstverlag, 1976), 13-14.

⁶⁵ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum interene Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Haseche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, "Geschichte des Frauenzentrums."

and other political actions.⁶⁶ A 1977 report from the group concerned with the centre's finances shows a substantial increase in the centre's operating costs after the move from Hornstr. to Stresemannstr. in late 1976. The rent for the new location was almost three times as expensive as the original one at 1119.75 DM per month. Telephone service cost an additional 105 DM per month. Costs associated with the move and fees to membership associations added hundreds of DM to the total. During the month of November 1976 alone, the Berlin FZ cost 1832.35 DM to operate. The cost of maintaining the Stresemannstr. centre during months without extra expenses such as moving would require about 1350 DM.⁶⁷

The Berlin *Frauenzentrum* was fully financed by the women who used it. When the centre opened in 1973, organizers decided that participating women would need to contribute between 5DM and 10DM each per month in order to sustain it.⁶⁸ Students and other low-income women paid 5DM per month while those with sustainable incomes were to pay 10DM.⁶⁹ In order to manage the centre's finances, one or more women were be granted control of the treasury for an extended period of time. This group was

⁶⁶ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Haseche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, "Tips zur Eröffnung eines FZ."

⁶⁷ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "Birkenfall Info 4 Januar 1977," 3.

⁶⁸ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Hasche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, "Geschichte des Frauenzentrums."

⁶⁹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 FZ Hornstrasse & Stresemannstrasse 1974-1977, "Birkenfall Info 4 Januar 1977," 3.

responsible for the FZ's checking account, bill payments, and regular reports of its financial situation.⁷⁰

Regular collection of monthly dues remained a problem for the FZ throughout the 1970s. By 1975, only a year and a half after the centre opened, many women's failure to contribute their dues regularly had already made monthly fee collection a "permanent problem."⁷¹ Several sources show that automatic banking transfers were suggested as a method to pay simply and regularly.⁷² This suggestion, however, did not solve the problem. The dilemma was serious enough to place the centre in serious financial trouble only a year or two after its opening. Around 1975, an exasperated letter from the finance group warned that the centre was in danger because of its affiliates' irregular fee payments. The letter explained the seriousness of the problem by stating that women's late payments put them at risk of losing their centre and having to meet in pubs.⁷³ A discussion held in a FZ project group emphasized the importance of *Frauenprojekte* paying their dues and reporting their activities to the centre. These recommendations

⁷⁰ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Hasche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, "Geschichte des Frauenzentrums."

⁷¹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Hasche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, "Tips zur Eröffnung eines FZ."

⁷² See FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Frauenzentrum 1975-1987, "Frauenzentrum in Gefahr!!!!!" and Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Hasche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, "Tips zur Eröffnung eines FZ."

⁷³ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Frauenzentrum 1975-1987, "Frauenzentrum in Gefahr!!!!!"

were particularly pertinent since the authors claimed that “3/4 of women [working on projects] do not consider it necessary to pay their dues.”⁷⁴

Collecting monthly fees remained a persistent and systemic problem for the Berlin women’s centre in the 1970s. The frequent re-emergence of the issue can be explained by two possible scenarios. The more obvious suggestion is that the same women chose not to pay dues regularly over several years despite warnings and advice from the finance group. This, however, assumes that the FZ’s body of affiliates remained stable. If, on the other hand, a steady stream of new women is taken into account, it appears more likely that organizers were simply repeating their message to women who had not heard it before. Although a combination of these factors is most probable, the 1976 move to the much more expensive Stresemannstr. location strongly suggests the latter explanation because the larger amounts of money necessary to operate the new location would simply have not been available if too many “old” women were consistently choosing not to pay.

With these factors in mind, the irregular collection of fees remained a thorn in the side of organizers in the 1970s. While lack of compliance was an obvious issue, the centre’s approach to financing demonstrates an effort towards self-sustainability through autonomous support methods. The choice to have all members contribute small amounts of money shows that organizers envisioned the FZ as a community that sustained itself. Rather than going outside the groups to finance them, women kept the FZ economically autonomous by paying for the upkeep of their own facilities without support from male or

⁷⁴ FFBIIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) &6, Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum interene Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Haseche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, “Stellungnahme des Feministischen Frauen Gesundheits Zentrum zu Finanzfrage.” AT.

state identified sources. This autonomous organizational approach demonstrates an anti-hierarchical ethos because of the equality of all contributions; since all affiliates made the same payments, no individual or group exercised financial control over the others. In these ways, the autonomous organizational principles applied to the FZ's finances expressed an anti-hierarchical ethos through adherence to a policy rooted in self-sufficiency.

Conclusion

The Berlin FZ's *Neueabend*, *Strukturdebatten*, and financial strategies show how ideas of autonomous management were applied in the context of the Berlin women's centre. Together they demonstrate emphases on individual initiative, collective management, and self-sufficiency. Although I have used each element to explain one of these emphases, they are closely intertwined. For instance, applying a collective management style implies that many individual initiatives contribute to the final decision. The maintenance of a self-sufficient system requires the initiative of many individuals to pay fees in order to sustain the collective. Since these features were all necessary to the FZ's function, they are therefore bound together in the organizational principle of autonomy. Together, they express a state of interdependency in which all members of the FZ community were necessary for the sustenance of the space they occupied as a collective.

All of the examples used in this section show women associated with the FZ speaking to other women associated with the FZ. The autonomous organizational strategies used in the Berlin FZ were therefore applied by affiliated women rather than the centre itself. This observation is significant because it shows that the space created by

the FZ was, essentially, its function. The *Frauenzentrum* did not organize women, tell them what to do, or imbue them with political consciousness. Rather, the FZ was perceived as the place where women organized, decided what to do, and developed their own political consciousness. Independence from men and the state, then, represents only one value emphasized by this autonomous organizational strategy; the powerful expression of an anti-hierarchical ethos shows that difference from male and state institutions was as important to autonomous modes of administration. Thus, the anti-hierarchical structure of the ethos FZ worked to create a space that was both independent of and different from male-identified methods and structures.

Through emphases on individual initiative, collective management, and self-sufficiency, the organizational strategies applied to the Berlin FZ connected a powerful anti-hierarchical ethos to autonomous forms of management. By placing value on these emphasized characteristics, the women who used the centre created space independent of traditional administrative methods and institutions perceived as hierarchical and male-dominated. The choice to implement this approach in the conscious absence of funding from male and government sources demonstrated efforts to be both separate and different from men and the state. The FZ, then, represents an autonomous space constructed through the application of particularized modes of management that aimed to subvert the development of hierarchical power structures. The Berlin FZ communicated a vision of grassroots political organization grounded in the abilities of women to act on their own behalf.

Chapter Three: Literary Space

“... we thus changed reality by simply doing what we did. And suddenly we had everything, our own publisher, our own author, our own book, and our own bookstore.”¹
Verena Stefan, 1994.

The establishment of a literary space in which German-speaking women could read, write, and publish was an important element of *neue Frauenbewegung* activists’ efforts to construct a feminist cultural counter-sphere in the mid-1970s. In 1975, women’s movement activists found that women’s writing was hardly recognized, published, or read in the BRD.² By 1977, however, German feminists had established ten women’s bookstores and three women’s publishing houses. In addition to these internally-driven advancements, the successes of female authors prompted leftist and “bourgeois” publishers to accept women’s manuscripts with much more frequency than before.³ These developments show how West German feminists worked to create a comprehensive literary space through the establishment of counter-cultural institutions dedicated to the publication, dissemination, and consumption of women’s writing. As German literary scholar Sandra Frieden has argued, after the women of the SDS broke away from the student movement in 1968, “those who expressed themselves in direct political activity” were recognized as initiators of the *neue Frauenbewegung*. Women who chose to express themselves through writing, on the other hand, “helped to create a

¹ Verena Stefan, “Euphoria” trans. Tobe Levin in *Shedding and Literally Dreaming* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1994), 133.

² See Christine Schäfer and Christiane Wilke, *Die neue Frauenbewegung in München 1968-1985: Eine Dokumentation* (Munich: Buchendorfer Verlag, 2000), 239 and FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 2 Labrys, Transcript of Interview with Ingeborg Keller, “Frauenbuchladen Labrys.”

³ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 2 Labrys, Transcript of Interview with Ingeborg Keller, “Frauenbuchladen Labrys.”

literary support system” for the movement.⁴ The establishment, growth, and success of this “literary support system” demonstrates the development of a characteristically politicized, feminist cultural counter-sphere in the BRD.

Experimentation with new forms and approaches to women’s writing were central to the development of this new literary space. The emergence of female authorship and women-directed publishing marked a decisive break with contemporary patterns in German-language literature for women. Although *Frauenromane* (novels for women) were well-established as a genre and consumer product in Germany, these texts were primarily produced by male authors writing for a female audience. The new women’s literature was distinctly “grassroots” and treaded new territory in the exploration of feminist ideas and politics.⁵ Literature by and for women was perceived by some feminist commenters as facilitating “the individual’s search for a lost self consciousness.” The compilation of various accounts of individual experience allowed the community of readers to explore “a collective cultural destiny.”⁶ Writing for women was also cast as having a “special significance” because it provided ways for feminists to “develop

⁴ Sandra Frieden, “Shadowing/Surfacing/Shedding: Contemporary German Writers in Search of a Female Bildungsroman” in Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland eds., *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development* (New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1983), 306.

⁵ Angelika Mechtel, “The White Raven Has Learned to Fly: Some Ironic, Some Sarcastic, Some Serious Remarks, Plus a Polemic on a Pressing Problem (1977)” trans. Gabrielle Westphal and Thomas D. Colby in Patricia A. Herminghouse and Magda Mueller eds., *German Feminist Writings*, (New York: Continuum, 2001), 288-289.

⁶ Brigitte Wartmann, “Writing as an Attack Against Patriarchy,” trans. Jeanette Clausen in Edith Hoshino Altbach, Jeanette Clausen, Dagmar Schulz, and Naomi Stephan eds., *German Feminism: Readings in Politics and Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 55.

resistance to ‘normal conditions’ in a male defined world.”⁷ As demonstrated by these ideas, writing by and for women was constructed as a cultural pursuit with political implications expressed through its consciousness-raising and communicatory functions.

A central problem associated with the tasks of new feminist writers was the creation of literature that was “programmatically woman-identified” yet also a challenge to “the very notion of women by which it was defined.”⁸ These authors accepted responsibility for the establishment of vocabularies and representations that would verbalize and give coherence to the new types of experiences and consciousness being communicated by women.⁹ One of this process’ most visible results was the establishment of a new importance for autobiographical novels of personal development, a genre that was already well-established in German-language literature.¹⁰ Female-authored writing that was widely circulated often “reflected a felt need for self expression in sexual matters.”¹¹ In the process, they provided representations of women’s experience from female perspectives, allowing opportunities for many readers to identify with and relate to what they read.¹² The creation and communication of literature with which readers were meant to identify (*Identifikationsliteratur*) was central to the proliferation of

⁷ Wartmann, “Writing as an Attack Against Patriarchy,” 55.

⁸ Angelika Bammer, “Feminism, Frauenliteratur, and Women’s Writing of the 1970s and 1980s” in Jo Catling (ed.), *A History of Women’s Writing in Germany, Austria and Switzerland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 216.

⁹ Frieden, “Shadowing/Surfacing/Shedding,” 306.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 306.

¹¹ Frigga Haug, “The Women’s Movement in West Germany,” *New Left Review* I/155 (January-February 1986), 64.

¹² *Ibid.*, 64.

women's writing as part of the new cultural space established through the *neue Frauenbewegung's* networks of counter-cultural institutions.

This chapter explores the operation of the *Frauenbewegung's* "literary support system" during the compelling period of its rapid expansion in 1975-1978. Through examination of Verena Stefan's novel *Häutungen (Shedding)*, its publisher Frauenoffensive, and the West Berlin women's bookstore Labrys, this chapter explores how feminist literary space grew with and around the counter-cultural institutions established at different levels of its management and production. Through an exploration of these three elements, this chapter will show how this particular type of alternative cultural space was structured and organized. My exploration of feminist literary space will show that, again, autonomy and rejection of hierarchy characterized this network of readers, writers, publishers, and distributors and found expression through emphases on the identification of common experience and the economic independence of individual women.

"autobiographical sketches poems dreams analyses"

In 1972, a young writer named Verena Stefan attended the first BRD-wide women's congress in Frankfurt. During the conference, she felt "an unaccustomed euphoric feeling" that she was "struggling along with the other thousand" there and that "the women's thing" was her "thing."¹³ This experience of participation and its accompanying feeling of inclusion in the *Frauenbewegung* were reflected in *Häutungen (Shedding)*, the novel Stefan wrote in the years immediately following the Frankfurt congress. Stefan began writing her 80-page debut while she was working with Bread ♀

¹³ Verena Stefan, "Cacophony" trans. Tobe Levin in *Shedding and Literally Dreaming*, 138.

Roses, Helke Sander's West Berlin women's group. During this period, she describes being "caught up in personal political action" that she "wanted to put into literary form."¹⁴ To achieve this task in the context of B♀R, Stefan "inscribed [herself] by writing between the fractions and gradually against the remnants of group consensus."¹⁵ Inspired and politicized by her experiences in the *Frauenbewegung*, Stefan's first novel would soon appear to work as a trigger for the growth of the cultural system that supported it.

Stefan has referred to several experiences that, with her membership in B♀R, influenced the development of *Shedding*. In her 1974 travels around North America, she visited a California women's bookstore rich with feminist art and writing. She describes reading *To the Lighthouse*, *Flying*, and *The Bell Jar* repeatedly during the months she was writing *Shedding*. Stefan also recalls viewing heterosexual leftist couples as "thoroughly hypocritical" because she saw their hetero-normative behaviour as contradictory to their proclaimed "revolutionary ideals." As a result, she worked to analyze in "razor-sharp detail the incongruities in these relationships."¹⁶ From this swirl of ideas, Stefan laboured to tell a "truthful" story. "I was obsessed with stating THE truth," she remembers, adding how this obsession allowed her to take risks and "be effusive and inexact in my descriptions of the possible, of lesbian love."¹⁷ From these personal experiences of activism, travel, literature, and relationships, Stefan created a

¹⁴ Ibid., 140.

¹⁵ Ibid., 141.

¹⁶ Ibid., 141.

¹⁷ Ibid., 141-142.

powerful novel that she described as “autobiographical jottings poems dreams analyses.”¹⁸

Shedding tells the story of a young woman (identified through most of the novel only as *ich* or “I”) discovering and coming to terms with different layers of her sexuality in the context of feminist and leftist movements in 1970s West Berlin. Moving through several intimate relationships with men and women, the protagonist’s relationship to herself evolves and is defined through her relationships with others. With each relationship comes a new examination of her sexuality. Components of these explorative phases include the protagonist’s attempts to understand why her experiences are contradictory to the sexual role that society has imposed on her.¹⁹ Moving gradually towards self assurance and the acceptance of a lesbian identity, she sheds “old layers of skin imprinted with identities not her own.”²⁰ As each layer is removed, the protagonist documents her feminist activism and the accompanying rise in her political and sexual consciousnesses.²¹ This only partially veiled autobiographical novel and its explorations of lived experience, sexual politics, and social prescriptions struck a revolutionary chord with reading women. It set into motion processes of change often credited with shaping the subsequent development of German-language writing and publishing by and for women.

¹⁸ Bammer, “Feminism, *Frauenliteratur*, and Women’s Writing of the 1970s and 1980s,” 226.

¹⁹ Frieden, “Shadowing/Surfacing/Shedding,” 312.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 312.

²¹ Bammer, “Feminism, *Frauenliteratur*, and Women’s Writing of the 1970s and 1980s,” 226.

Shedding was published by Frauenoffensive, the autonomous feminist press that will be discussed later in this chapter, as a pocket-sized paperback.²² It first appeared for sale in October 1975.²³ Shortly thereafter, Stefan gave her first reading at Lillemor's Women's Bookstore in Munich.²⁴ Reviews appeared that autumn.²⁵ *Der Spiegel* encouraged readers to pick up Stefan's novel by describing it as an "important and interesting book" for anyone from whom "the new women's movement compels only a tired smile."²⁶ Radio mentions and longer, more substantial articles followed. Bolstered by this media and word of mouth, *Shedding*'s first printing of 3000 copies sold out in just two months. By the end of 1977, 150,000 copies had been sold.²⁷

The process of identifying communally-felt experience stands out as the root of *Shedding*'s broad appeal. Through the communication of representative experiences, Stefan created a novel with which her audience could, and frequently did, relate. A 1976 review in the nation-wide feminist newspaper *Frauenzeitung* shows the compelling power of *Shedding* to relate to its audience. The author explained that "the first reading of the book works like a liberation" because the themes it discusses represented problems that many women had experienced but not publicly expressed. Stefan's book represented what many women felt, if "only in their heads." "With too much sharpness and clarity,"

²² Ibid., 226.

²³ Verena Stefan, "Euphoria," 133.

²⁴ Ibid., 133.

²⁵ Tobe Levin, "Afterword" in *Shedding and Literally Dreaming*, 152.

²⁶ Sopia von Behr, "Etwas an seiner Seite," *Spiegel*, 8 December 1975, 171.

²⁷ Tobe Levin, "Afterword," 152.

argued the author, “we find *ourselves* in this book.”²⁸ In other words, although many women may have already been thinking about sexuality, relationships, and prescribed gender roles, *Shedding* overtly politicized these ideas by bringing them out of the realm of individual reflection and into that of public discussion. By putting her own experience into words, Stefan created a protagonist in which many women saw themselves. Through this interaction between readers and writer, *Shedding* allowed female readers to identify with Stefan’s protagonist and to use her experiences as a way to articulate their own.

Stefan’s portrayal of an increasingly self-aware, politically conscious character and her experiences of straight and lesbian sex and relationships offered a fresh, compelling perspective on women’s sexuality and sexual power. Through its placement of individual experience as a means for communicating with readers, *Shedding* resonated with young Germans and quickly became “*the book a new generation of women identified with.*”²⁹ Its success revealed the market for “women’s literature” to traditional publishers and made it possible for lesser known female writers to have their work published.³⁰ In addition to the new attention paid to women writers by the mainstream press, Stefan donated a portion of her royalties to Frauenoffensive. These contributions aided the autonomous feminist publishing house in its publication of new female authors.³¹ Combined with the growth of the *Frauenbewegung*, these developments

²⁸ “Häutungen,” *Frauenzeitung: Frauen gemeinsam sind stark!* 11/12. Emphasis in original. AT.

²⁹ Ulla Bock and Barbara Witych, “The Women’s Movement and the Construction of a ‘Female’ Counter Public,” trans. Jeannette Clausen in Altbach et. al., *German Feminism: Readings in Politics and Literature*, 49. Emphasis in original.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

worked to encourage a strong pattern of publishing new feminist novels in German during the mid-1970s.³²

The new interest in literature by and for women meant that *Shedding* was soon joined by other examples of women's *Identifikationsliteratur*. Novels such as Ingeborg Bachman's 1971 *Malina* and Brigitte Schwaiger's 1977 *Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer?* (*How does the Salt get into the Sea?*) added to the semi-autobiographical genre popularized by Stefan.³³ Books like these came together to form what socialist feminist Frigga Haug has called a "reading cult" for the *Frauenbewegung*.³⁴ The enthusiasm with which many women consumed stories about the lives of others suggests a compelling need for writing that spoke to the experiential realities of female experience. Validation of experience and day to day oppression could be achieved through the quasi-autobiographical style of *Identifikationsliteratur*; the presentation of a largely nameless, partially fictional protagonist suggested that her story could be that of any woman, but enough reality shone through the novel to authenticate her experiences.

Since its initial appearance in 1975, *Shedding* has been translated into eight European languages.³⁵ The first English translation, published by the Feminist Press at the City University of New York, appeared in 1978.³⁶ Interestingly, although the German

³² Edith Hoshino Altbach, "The New German Women's Movement," *German Feminism: Readings in Politics and Literature*, 14-15.

³³ Frieden, "Shadowing/Surfacing/Shedding," 307; Ingeborg Bachmann, *Malina: A Novel*, trans. Philip Boehm (United States: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1999).

³⁴ Haug, "The Women's Movement in West Germany," 64.

³⁵ Verena Stefan, "Doe a Deer," trans. Lise Weil, *Trivia: Voices of Feminism* 4 (September 2006): <http://www.triviavoices.net/archives/issue4/stefan.html>. Accessed November 5, 2009.

³⁶ See *Shedding and Literally Dreaming*, iv.

edition is no longer being produced, a collection including *Shedding* and other essays by Stefan translated into English is still available.³⁷ Although Stefan's debut novel has been widely hailed as "the bible of the women's movement, a book with which all women can identify, a symbol, [and] a cult manual," Stefan herself recognizes *Shedding* as "the offspring of a collective political process."³⁸ It is for this reason that the community in which the book was written and received must be kept in mind. As Stefan herself has stated, "books came out of the left and women's movements in which a single voice at last said 'I.'"³⁹ *Shedding* also represents a literary contribution engaging lesbian consciousness during a period when women's homosexual experiences were only beginning to be recognized. This nuanced, validating exploration of the politics and experience of one lesbian woman provided an example of a subjective, complex representation of women's sexualities.

Stefan's subversive literary action met a need that many writers and publishers did not know existed. Emerging from the heart of the active *Frauenbewegung* in West Berlin, Stefan was able to mobilize her experiences in a novel that gave voice to silent thoughts at the very moment that many women were willing and ready to express them. In this way, it can be reasoned that, if not for Stefan, another author would likely have filled her place. Although the power of *Shedding* prompted changes and sparked the development of a new feminist literary space, its timing and context may be more important than the novel itself. With these considerations in mind, Stefan's ability to

³⁷ See *Shedding and Literally Dreaming*.

³⁸ Stefan, "Cacophony," 139.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 139.

effectively capture the *Zeitgeist* of women's experience in the mid-1970s stands out as one of the novel's most compelling strengths and, probably, the root of its power.

"One part presence, one part utopia"

The success of *Shedding* essentially guaranteed the continued existence of Frauenoffensive, the autonomous feminist publishing house that accepted Stefan's manuscript. Its origins date to the year before *Shedding*'s first appearance in bookstores. In Munich during the spring of 1974, a group of women established themselves as the "women's division" of the leftist publishing house Trikont Verlag.⁴⁰ The group consisted of 18 women who worked in various groups of the Munich women's centre.⁴¹ Their idea for a feminist publishing house first arose in a women's commune on Munich's centrally-located Marianenstrasse. During a discussion in the kitchen, commune women discussed the problems associated with selling their literature to male publishers who had previously shown no enthusiasm for it. They decided that, in order to remedy this situation, "women needed an institution that published feminist literature."⁴² In order to fill the void they had identified, the group formulated a vague mission statement. They aimed to publish information about the women's movement in the BRD and abroad as well as feminist analyses with reports of subjective experience that they hoped would provide material for discussion and support for practical initiatives.⁴³ This section will show how the autonomous organizational principles employed by the Frauenoffensive

⁴⁰ Levin, "Afterword," 152.

⁴¹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, "Liebe Frauen." AT.

⁴² Schäfer and Wilke, *Die neue Frauenbewegung in München*, 239.

⁴³ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, "Liebe Frauen." AT.

collective expressed an anti-hierarchical ethos through emphases on individual experience and women's economic independence.

With the exception of several collective members' earlier work with Trikont, the women who formed Frauenoffensive had little or no experience in publishing. Trained as bank tellers, retail management assistants, and secretaries, the women had to figure out their organizational strategies through experimentation.⁴⁴ They had originally planned to use a rotation system to move collective members through different divisions. This plan, however, did not work out and the group fell back into a traditional distribution of labour with editing, management, production, and sales divisions. Despite this specialization, the group practiced collective decision-making methods and attempted to ensure that all collective members were aware of what the others were doing.⁴⁵

Frauenoffensive's first publication, a collection of documents related to the wages for housework debate, appeared in May 1974.⁴⁶ The collective soon began work on a journal published four times yearly. Early journal themes included the American women's movement, feminism's relationship to ecology, and identity in patriarchal society.⁴⁷ Non-fiction titles included *Was erwartet uns beim Frauenarzt (What we expect from Gynaecologists)* and *Was geschieht mit kleinen Mädchen (What happens to little Girls)*, translated texts such as Rita May Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle*, and records of

⁴⁴ Schäfer and Wilke, *Die neue Frauenbewegung in München*, 240-241.

⁴⁵ FMT, PD-ME.03.04 Frauenverlag, Frauenbuchprojekte und Initiaven im Literaturbereich 1974-1993 Frauenverlage, Frauenbuchvertriebe, Internationale feministische Buchmesse, Verlegerinnen, Frauennetzwerke. "Nein, militante Feministinnen sind sie nicht," *Börsenblatt*, 28 December 1977.

⁴⁶ Institut für Zeitgeschichte (hereafter ISZ), Bestandssignatur: ED 899 Bandnummer 8, "Frauenoffensive Grundsatzpapier 1976."

⁴⁷ Advertisement for Verlag Frauenoffensive, *Frauenzeitung: Frauen gemeinsam sind stark!* 9/10, 1976.

women's songs added to Frauenoffensive's products in 1975 and 1976.⁴⁸ The collective also worked to collect and publish academic writing of concern to the women's movement by publishing a bibliography of theses and dissertations in 1976.⁴⁹

Although it was accompanied by these and other titles, *Shedding* was arguably the most important text published by Frauenoffensive in the 1970s. In addition to the book's literary and political successes, its overwhelming sales, combined with Stefan's choice to put some of her royalties at Frauenoffensive's disposal, bolstered the unknown collective's entry to the German publishing and feminist milieus.⁵⁰ Once *Shedding* established the collective financially and professionally, they were able to break away from their parent company; Frauenoffensive GmbH, the first autonomous feminist publisher in the BRD, was founded 1 January 1976.⁵¹

By winter 1974, the collective had worked from their initial mission statement towards a more comprehensive determination of political goals. The Frauenoffensive women decided that issues of interest to the collective included "self determination and understanding of our bodies-sexuality-marriage-motherhood- [and] pseudo emancipation." They aimed to challenge "psychological and economic dependency and exploitation" and "patriarchal thought in terms of its impact on human lives and the

⁴⁸ See "Verlage: Durchbruch der 'Frauenoffensive,' *Der Spiegel*, 12 April 1976, 198 and FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, "Frauenoffensive: Buchreihe, Journal, Schallplatten."

⁴⁹ See Advertisement for Frauenoffensive, *Frauenzeitung: Frauen gemeinsam sind stark!* 9/10 and Advertisement for Frauenoffensive, *Frauenzeitung: Frauen gemeinsam sind stark!* 11/12.

⁵⁰ Bock and Witych, "A New Female Counter-Public," 48 and Stefan, "Cacophony," 136.

⁵¹ FMT, PD-ME.03.04 Frauenverlag, Frauenbuchprojekte und Initiativen im Literaturbereich 1974-1993 Frauenverlage, Frauenbuchvertriebe, Internationale feministische Buchmesse, Verlegerinnen, Frauennetzwerke, "Nein, militante Feministinnen sind sie nicht," *Börsenblatt*, 28 December 1977.

cycles of nature.” The Frauenoffensive women understood their publishing house as an instrument for the expression of women’s marginalized position and its consequences. “So long as this oppression is not articulated,” the collective stated, “it is not tangible and we are poor at resisting it.”⁵² The publishers’ goal therefore became the “reclamation of our hushed women’s stories” as a way to “capture of our complex, multifaceted reality.” Through this process, the collective wanted to “let [their] utopia take shape.”⁵³ The feminist press was supposed to contribute to the development of this communal consciousness by acting as “one part presence, one part utopia.”⁵⁴ These examples show that Frauenoffensive identified the political aim of their project as the articulation of oppression in order to take ownership of women’s experience.

A core technique the collective used to work towards this political goal was to focus on providing women with new possibilities for identification in the form of published texts.⁵⁵ The identification and dissemination of these literary potentials for identification were constructed as a means by which to strengthen the women’s movement as a whole. This strategy was expressed through Frauenoffensive’s emphasis on selecting texts intended to be discussed collectively rather than consumed individually.⁵⁶ This process of “community reading” has been explained by Frigga Haug

⁵² FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, “Liebe Frauen.” AT.

⁵³ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, “Liebe Frauen.” AT.

⁵⁴ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, “Neue Impulse von Frauenoffensive,” *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 5 June 1976.

⁵⁵ FMT, PD-ME.03.04 Frauenverlag, Frauenbuchprojekte und Initiaven im Literaturbereich 1974-1993 Frauenverlage, Frauenbuchvertriebe, Internationale feministische Buchmesse, Verlegerinnen, Frauennetzwerke, Gabriele Krämer-Prein, “Nein, militante Feministinnen sind sie nicht,” *Börsenblatt*, 28 December 1977.

⁵⁶ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, “Kollektive Frauenoffensive (München)”.

as a way for women to challenge their “lack of voice in public life” through “the experiences of other women, mediated through language.”⁵⁷ Attention to methods of consumption shows how the collective’s focus on *Identifikationsliteratur* connected to their goal of providing women with tools that could be used to articulate and share their experiences in consciousness-raising ways. Adding group discussion to the process of consuming writing thus heightened its political impact. Frauenoffensive’s selection of texts based on this type of reading process demonstrates a concern with providing forms of communal identification for women of the *Frauenbewegung*. By choosing to focus on the provision of potentials for identification, the collective emphasized the value of collective experience and community in relation to the literature it chose to publish.

As previously mentioned, Frauenoffensive began as the women’s division of Trikont publishing. Despite this important association with the male-identified leftist publisher, the collective understood their organizational strategies as autonomous. In a 1975 *Tagesspiegel* article, the collective stated that they had “made the agreement that we have no control over the general production of Trikont and, conversely, they have no influence over Frauenoffensive’s line.”⁵⁸ Additionally, Frauenoffensive was allowed to approve or object to the leftist press’ publications, permitting them influence on projects not directly related to feminist or “women’s” issues.⁵⁹ The collective’s contractually regulated relationship with Trikont meant that they were able to begin their project

⁵⁷ Haug “The Women’s Movement in West Germany,” 64.

⁵⁸ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, “Es fehlt an Texten,” *Tagesspiegel*, 22 February 1975. AT.

⁵⁹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, “Kollektive Frauenoffensive (München)”.

without starting capital or bank loans.⁶⁰ Even after their technical separation in 1976, Trikont continued to assist the women in their publishing projects through the provision of financial loans.⁶¹ Frauenoffensive's receipt of money and help from a male-identified company brought some criticism from the women's movement.⁶² Despite this evidence of their close partnership, the collective denied that they were an "appendage of the leftist publisher."⁶³ Shortly after their separation, the Frauenoffensive women explained that they "were almost forced by the distrust of women to become too independent."⁶⁴

Frauenoffensive's portrayal of their relationship with Trikont is especially significant to understanding their autonomous organizational principles. By discussing the partnership in terms of financial benefits and feminist influence on the male publisher, the Frauenoffensive women implied that their working with Trikont was positive for the women's movement. In stating that the "distrust of women" caused them to separate, the collective indicated that they perceived the women's movement as having more of a problem with the Trikont partnership than they did. Here, then, economic dependence on the male-identified institution is portrayed as a benefit rather than an impediment to autonomy. Even though independence from male-identified institutions is usually included in basic definitions of autonomy, the Frauenoffensive women crafted their own definition of this separation based on the dynamics of their relationship. Applying this definition in place of those held by other *Frauenbewegung* activists shows

⁶⁰ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, "Liebe Frauen."

⁶¹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, "Liebe Frauen."

⁶² Wilke and Schäfer, *Die neue Frauenbewegung in München*, 240.

⁶³ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, "Kollektive Frauenoffensive (München)".

⁶⁴ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, "Liebe Frauen."

that collective members were able to form a unique autonomous organizational strategy. This relative freedom to interpret the implications of autonomous organizational methods demonstrates an anti-hierarchical ethos because the collective chose to use their own ideas rather than using those being communicated to them from the women's movement. The fact that the movement permitted its activists to apply different interpretations of autonomous organizational principles worked to express an anti-hierarchical ethos by empowering the interpretive experience of individuals over a prescriptive program.

In its earlier years, the Frauenoffensive collective continued to receive financial help in the form of loans from Trikont and portions of *Shedding* royalties from Stefan. During this initial period, Frauenoffensive remained dependent on the collective's volunteer work in production, editing, and distribution.⁶⁵ Despite this reliance on unpaid labour, the collective expressed a desire to create a profitable workplace for women.⁶⁶ Dagmar Schultz has commented on attitudes towards paid and unpaid labour in the *Frauenbewegung* in a 1982 essay. She argued that, in contrast to the United States, West Germany did not have a celebrated tradition of voluntary work. As a result, participants in the German women's movement felt "they ought to be paid for their work, because women [had] been continuously exploited through unpaid labour."⁶⁷ This attitude is reflected in the collective's financial choices and priorities. As early as 1976, two

⁶⁵ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, "Neue Impulse von Frauenoffensive," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 5 June 1976.

⁶⁶ FMT, PD-ME.03.04 Frauenverlag, Frauenbuchprojekte und Initiativen im Literaturbereich 1974-1993 Frauenverlage, Frauenbuchvertriebe, Internationale feministische Buchmesse, Verlegerinnen, Frauennetzwerke, Gabriele Krämer-Prein, "Nein, militante Feministinnen sind sie nicht," *Börsenblatt*, 28 December 1977.

⁶⁷ Dagmar Schultz, "The German Women's Movement in 1982" in Altbach et al, *German Feminism: Readings in Politics and Literature*, 375.

Frauenoffensive collective members were full-time paid employees.⁶⁸ An article from late 1977 reports that all collective members received the same salary, indicating that the collective managed to transition from full dependence on volunteer labour to compensation of employees in the space of less than two years.⁶⁹

The collective's longest strides towards financial sustainability occurred in 1977. In an article published that December, the collective reported the year's sales profits as 670,000 DM. This income was attributed in large part to the sales of almost 130,000 copies of *Shedding* and 20,000 copies of Agnes Smedley's *Tochter der Erde (Daughter of the Earth)*.⁷⁰ During this period, Frauenoffensive also sought contributions from supporters in order to augment income from sales.⁷¹ The collective had decided early on that they did not want their products to be too expensive.⁷² The realities of the capitalist marketplace, however, meant that their prices still had to be determined by those of their competitors.⁷³ Through their collaboration with Trikont, sales, and contributions from

⁶⁸ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, "Improvisation unter extremen Bedingungen," *Badische Zeitung*, 10 May 1976.

⁶⁹ FMT, PD-ME.03.04 Frauenverlag, Frauenbuchprojekte und Initiaven im Literaturbereich 1974-1993 Frauenverlage, Frauenbuchvertriebe, Internationale feministische Buchmesse, Verlegerinnen, Frauennetzwerke, Gabriele Krämer-Prein, "Nein, militante Feministinnen sind sie nicht," *Börsenblatt*, 28 December 1977.

⁷⁰ FMT, PD-ME.03.04 Frauenverlag, Frauenbuchprojekte und Initiaven im Literaturbereich 1974-1993 Frauenverlage, Frauenbuchvertriebe, Internationale feministische Buchmesse, Verlegerinnen, Frauennetzwerke, Gabriele Krämer-Prein, "Nein, militante Feministinnen sind sie nicht," *Börsenblatt*, 28 December 1977.

⁷¹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, "Liebe Frauen."

⁷² FMT, PD-ME.03.04 Frauenverlag, Frauenbuchprojekte und Initiaven im Literaturbereich 1974-1993 Frauenverlage, Frauenbuchvertriebe, Internationale feministische Buchmesse, Verlegerinnen, Frauennetzwerke, Gabriele Krämer-Prein, "Nein, militante Feministinnen sind sie nicht," *Börsenblatt*, 28 December 1977.

⁷³ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.9 a (1) Frauenverlag 1974, "Neue Impulse von Frauenoffensive," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 5 June 1976.

supporters, Frauenoffensive managed the step from a volunteer-dependent “women’s division” to a sustainable employer in a relatively short period of time. The choice to put the collective’s income towards employee salaries instead of other aspects of production demonstrates a clear concern with compensating women for their labor. This concern shows how the publishing house was envisioned not only as a tool for the women’s movement, but also as a potential paying workplace for women. Through their efforts to establish Frauenoffensive as a workplace that could compensate women for their work, the collective demonstrated an emphasis on the individual economic autonomy of women in addition to that of their project. This stress is significant because it shows that, despite the interpretational freedoms taken by the collective, economic independence from male and state forces remained integral to Frauenoffensive’s autonomous organizational principles.

During and after the 1970s, new feminist publishers such as Orlanda Verlag, one of the few projects that has exhibited a long-term commitment to ensuring the participation of Afro-German and immigrant women, have joined Frauenoffensive as publishers of women’s writing in German.⁷⁴ The ways in which Frauenoffensive constructed their political goals, relationship with Trikont, and financial strategy in the 1970s show a group emphasis on communicating examples of women’s experience and individual economic independence. Through the collective’s focus on providing women with writing they could identify with, Frauenoffensive communicated their perceptions of a heightened importance of disseminating stories of women’s distinct experiences. In framing their relationship with Trikont as beneficial to both the project and the women’s

⁷⁴ May Ayim, *Blues in Black and White: A Collection of Essays, Poetry, and Conversations*, trans. by Anne V. Adams (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2003), 54.

movement, the Frauenoffensive group managed to conceptualize their experience of dependence on the male-identified publisher as compatible with their autonomy. Finally, the collective's choice to create a paying workplace for women placed value on their labour, worked to provide opportunities for women's financial independence, and demonstrated the importance of economic independence to their interpretation of autonomy. These choices show how Frauenoffensive expressed an anti-hierarchical ethos through autonomous organizational principles that placed value on women's subjective experiences and economic status as individuals.

“Women's boutiques are also stores, stores for women. But only for women?”

From the mid-1970s, *Frauenbuchläden* (women's bookstores) acted as the distributing arm of feminist literary space in West Germany. Women's new initiatives in writing and publishing had created the framework for the establishment of these female-controlled and centred booksellers. On 3 November 1975, just weeks after *Shedding's* first appearance, Lillemor's Women's Bookstore opened at 57 Arcisstrasse in Munich.⁷⁵ It was the first women's bookstore in the BRD and the second in Western Europe.⁷⁶ Lillemor's was quickly joined by a similar *Frauenbuchladen* project initiated by a group in West Berlin. The Berlin women opened Labrys Women's Bookstore 15 November 1975 at 22 Yorckstrasse in Kreuzberg.⁷⁷ This section unpacks Labrys' autonomous organizational principles from its founding in late 1975 to about 1978 through an

⁷⁵ Schäfer and Wilke, *Die neue Frauenbewegung in München*, 243.

⁷⁶ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 1 Labrys, Barbara Kamrad, “Wein, Weib und Bücher,” *Berliner Sonntagsblatt*, 18 January 1976.

⁷⁷ FMT, FE 03.040, “Frauen, kommt ins Frauenzentrum!” “Frauenbuchladen in Berlin,” *N.N.* 22 October 1975.

examination of the bookstore's roles as a bookseller, meeting point, and workplace for women.

Less than two weeks after the BRD's first *Frauenbuchladen* opened, Labrys Women's Bookstore brought a new type of women-only space to the Kreuzberg neighbourhood of West Berlin. From its opening in mid-November 1975, the *Frauenbuchladen* was open daily from 10:00am-6:30pm.⁷⁸ The project was organized by a small group of women aged 25-55 who worked as teachers, journalists, housewives, and booksellers.⁷⁹ The founding women were active in groups associated with the Berlin *Frauenzentrum* and the Lesbian Action Centre.⁸⁰ The rental space's storefront included three rooms, one of which was occupied by a small café complete with a record player.⁸¹ The location at 22 Yorckstr. was just blocks away from the FZ at 2 Hornstr. The women's pub Blocksberg, which had opened just weeks before Labrys on 23 September 1975, was also close by at 48 Yorckstr.⁸²

The most obvious function of Labrys Women's Bookstore was to sell texts by and for women. As two founders described in a 1977 interview, in 1975 no place existed in which German women's literature was concentrated. Publishers, distributors, and bookstores remained largely in male hands. Women's literature was present in some

⁷⁸ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 2 Labrys, Transcript of Interview with Ingeborg Keller, "Frauenbuchladen Labrys."

⁷⁹ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 1 Labrys, Mirja Bressling, "Findbuch," 26 February 2003.

⁸⁰ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Labrys Frauenbuchladen," April 1977.

⁸¹ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 1 Labrys, Mirja Bressling, "Findbuch," 26 February 2003.

⁸² Monika S. and Vera S., "Blocksberg- for women only: Bericht aus einer Frauenkneipe," *Frauenjahrbuch '76* (Munich: Verlag Frauenoffensive, 1976), 126.

leftist and alternative bookstores, but was often relegated to the corners.⁸³ In order to change the marginalized position of women's literature in the male-identified publishing industry, *neue Frauenbewegung* activists worked to invest power and importance in texts produced by and for women. By founding their own bookstore, the Labrys women expressed a desire to improve the status of women's writing and publishing as well as a sense of ownership over a literature they saw as their own.

The Labrys group sold a variety of publications in their effort to concentrate women's writing. In a 1977 self portrait, the group stated their intentions to avoid "reactionary and stultifying texts— even if they come from women."⁸⁴ The group stocked Labrys with periodicals, books, and pamphlets about abortion, medicine, domestic violence, psychoanalysis, and sociological or theoretical problems of the *Frauenbewegung*.⁸⁵ The *Frauenbuchladen* also carried texts about the situation of women in China, East Germany, and Vietnam in addition to local and foreign feminist periodicals.⁸⁶ Labrys carried publications produced by feminist publishers such as Frauenoffensive and Emma Frauen-Verlag, self-publishing women's groups including Hamburg's *Arbeitsgruppe Hexen* (Witches' Work Group), and more traditional-style publishers such as the photography-focused Schirmer-Mosel Verlag.⁸⁷ In addition to this

⁸³ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 2 Labrys, Transcript of Interview with Ingeborg Keller, "Frauenbuchladen Labrys."

⁸⁴ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 1 Labrys, "Entwurf zum Labrys Selbstverständnispaper," 3 March 1977.

⁸⁵ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 2 Labrys, Transcript of Interview with Ingeborg Keller, "Frauenbuchladen Labrys."

⁸⁶ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 1 Labrys, Barbara Kamprad, "Wein, Weib und Bücher," *Berliner Sonntagsblatt*, 18 January 1976.

⁸⁷ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 2 Labrys, Register.

variety of texts, the store also sold records and posters related to the women's movement.⁸⁸

Although the concentration and distribution of women's writing was an important part of what Labrys did, its founders envisioned it as a place that "should primarily be a contact and communication centre for women."⁸⁹ From its initial establishment, Labrys functioned as a space in which women met and had discussions as well as where they purchased texts. The founding group "wanted to create a space where women could have discussions only with women, get to know each other, and take a break."⁹⁰ They "consciously created a type of public [space]" in which women could "circulate, communicate, and help themselves with other women." In the 1970s, women often came to Labrys seeking advice or counselling related to problems with reproductive health, sexuality, and abuse.⁹¹ In order to create a space in which women could interact and discuss these issues only with each other, Labrys enforced a policy of women-only space. A sign reading "Women, exercise solidarity with women, leave your men at home" was hung above the door.⁹² By requesting women not bring male partners to the store, this sign recognized the continuing prevalence of the heterosexual status quo and established itself as a space separate from traditional society. In its placement of women as the group

⁸⁸ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Labrys Frauenbuchladen," April 1977.

⁸⁹ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 1 Labrys, Barbara Kamprad, "Wein, Weib und Bücher," *Berliner Sonntagsblatt*, 18 January 1976.

⁹⁰ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Labrys Frauenbuchladen," April 1977. AT.

⁹¹ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 2 Labrys, Transcript of Interview with Ingeborg Keller, "Frauenbuchladen Labrys."

⁹² FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 2 Labrys, Transcript of Interview with Ingeborg Keller, "Frauenbuchladen Labrys."

accepted in the space, the sign inverted the gender hierarchies associated with traditional, male-dominated public space. This apparent reinforcement of gendered spheres thus contributed to the establishment of both distance and difference between autonomous, anti-hierarchical women's spaces and the traditional, hierarchically-organized public sphere.

While the nearby women's centre represented an earlier example of gender exclusive space in West Berlin, the bookstore presented new challenges because it was a place of business as well as one of political organization and discussion. A 1977 newspaper article describes a telling interaction between a Labrys shopkeeper and a would-be male customer. Upon the man's entry, the shopkeeper said to him,

“the store is only for women.’ ‘Pardon me?’ asked the man. ‘The store is only for women,’ repeated the woman, quietly but surely. The man looked back at the door; he couldn't see the sign. ‘I can't shop here?’ he asked, confused. ‘The store is only for women’ was the prompt, clear answer. Outside, in large letters above the business it says ‘Women's Bookstore.’ ‘Yes, and...?’ asked the man. ‘Women's boutiques are also stores, stores for women. But only for women?’”⁹³

The confusion evident in this exchange shows some of the challenges faced by the Labrys women in the maintenance of their women-only space. Since Labrys was a store rather than a women's centre, the collective's policy of women-only space added a new layer of understanding to gender exclusive policies. As the confused man in the article stated, stores *for* women were commonplace. Merchants who catered *only* to women, however, challenged ideas about the roles and functions fulfilled by places of business. For instance, if sales and profit are a business' chief concern, enforcing a gender

⁹³ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 1 Labrys, “Nichts für Männer,” *tsp*, 13 November 1977.

exclusive policy is counterproductive because half of the business' potential patrons are immediately eliminated. If, however, a business such as Labrys decides that the facilitation of a female and feminist-friendly discussion and atmosphere is a chief concern, different considerations must be taken into account. Since the Labrys women aimed to create a particular type of feminist cultural space in their bookstore, they chose to implement a gender-exclusive policy even though it eliminated, and likely confused, many of their potential male customers.

The group that ran Lillemor's Women's Bookstore in Munich worked to create an atmosphere that was pleasant and safe for shopkeepers as well as customers.⁹⁴ In 1995, a Lillemor's collective member stated that the project had met many needs simultaneously. While selling women's literature was one element of the store's function, another was creating an "economic basis for the women working there."⁹⁵ This concern with bookstore workers as well as customers was paralleled by developments in the Labrys group. The collective saw the growth of women's writing as the birth of a new type of public space exclusively by and for women. These developments created "the prerequisites that ensured women could become economically independent through their projects."⁹⁶

One way in which this attention to the economic independence of individual women was expressed was through the collective's efforts to turn their store into a viable workplace for women. When the store was founded, the five initiating women were

⁹⁴ Schäfer and Wilke, *Die neue Frauenbewegung in München*, 244.

⁹⁵ Feministische Frauenprojekte in München, 1995 quoted in Schäfer and Wilke, *Die neue Frauenbewegung in München*, 247.

⁹⁶ FFBI, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 2 Labrys, Transcript of Interview with Ingeborg Keller, "Frauenbuchladen Labrys."

employed elsewhere and worked at the bookstore during their free time.⁹⁷ Labrys did not, however, bring in large profits and the group had to take bank credit in order to sustain it. As the project continued, women who were part of the collective were gradually added to the payroll. First only one participant was paid, but by 1977 three women were receiving compensation for their work. A founder described the process of transition from volunteer to compensated labour as part of their “attempt to create workplaces for women, which had been a goal of our project from the beginning.”⁹⁸

The Labrys group’s choice to work towards creating paying jobs for women parallels the efforts of the Frauenoffensive collective as well as those of the Lillemor’s group. As discussed in Chapter Two, German feminist perspectives on female labour saw volunteer employment as a continuance of women’s unpaid and underappreciated work. So, rather than choosing to continue using free labour, the Labrys women chose to focus their energies on the establishment of paying jobs for women. This choice is particularly interesting in light of the business’ substantial debts. Rather than directing profits towards these accounts or other elements of business development, Labrys’ income went towards salaries for the collective. These choices indicate that the *Frauenbuchladen* was not only conceived as a space that would bring women’s literature to feminist consumers, but also as a business with the potential to provide women with paying jobs. Paying work meant that employed women would be able to work towards becoming economically autonomous on an individual level. In their decision to direct profits towards employee paycheques, the Labrys group expressed a powerful concern with valuing women’s work

⁹⁷ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 1 Labrys, Barbara Kamprad, “Wein, Weib und Bücher,” *Berliner Sonntagsblatt*, 18 January 1976.

⁹⁸ FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 2 Labrys, Transcript of Interview with Ingeborg Keller, “Frauenbuchladen Labrys.”

and contributing to the economic self-sufficiency of women who worked at the store. This approach is expressive of an anti-hierarchical ethos because it places value on the economic needs of individuals associated with the project rather than focusing on amassing profits for an owner, leader, or other economic authority. This direction is therefore significant because it demonstrates the anti-hierarchical ethos inherent to Labrys' autonomous organizational principles through an emphasis on contributing to the economic independence of individuals.

The history of Labrys in the 1970s demonstrates how women's projects could fulfill several functions simultaneously. As a distributor of women's literature, the store worked to concentrate and disseminate the work of women writers and publishers. As a women's meeting point and communication centre, the bookstore established a gender-exclusive space in which men were not allowed. The enforcement of this women-only space worked to establish the bookstore as separate and distinct from the male-dominated status quo. Finally, the collective's efforts towards establishing a workplace in which women were compensated for their contributions shows that the *Frauenbuchladen* group was concerned with the economic status of individual women as well as the movement as a whole. Together, this evidence exhibits an autonomous organizational approach demonstrating an anti-hierarchical ethos through emphases on the establishment of women-only space and the provision of paying work for women.

Conclusion:

In 1975, Verena Stefan was lucky to have her manuscript accepted by the small "women's division" of Trikont. Within the space of only a few years, Stefan's book and the group that published it had become part of the rapid development of a specifically

feminist literary space. “Suddenly we had everything,” Stefan has recalled, “our own publisher, our own author, our own book, and our own bookstore.”⁹⁹ By sparking a surge of activity amongst women writers, publishers, and readers, *Shedding* effectively triggered the development of a new feminist literary sphere in which individual experience could be identified with and politicized. Stefan’s book enabled Frauenoffensive’s growth as an autonomous feminist publisher. The publishing collective worked to provide reading women with literature they could identify with, broadening the effect triggered by readers’ connections to experiences portrayed in *Shedding*. Once women’s writing and publishing projects had found success, a network of women’s bookstores began to grow in the BRD. As the second project of its kind, the development of Labrys shows how one *Frauenbuchladen* worked to distribute women’s writing, create a space in which women could interact only with other women and provide compensated jobs for female employees.

Rather than fighting for inclusion in their contemporary publishing milieu, *neue Frauenbewegung* activists opted to create their own institutions to counter the male-identified status quo. And, rather than following traditional organizational methods, *neue Frauenbewegung* activists formed their own projects based in a rejection of these characteristics grounded in the dissemination of common experience and the provision of paying workplaces for women. Through this process, women’s publishing projects positioned themselves as both independent from and differently organized than their male-identified counterparts. In their creation of new, anti-hierarchical cultural

⁹⁹ Stefan, “Euphoria,” 133.

institutions, autonomous German feminists carved out literary space through emphases on women's experience and the development of paying workplaces for women.

Chapter Four: National Feminist Periodicals

“Is it possible and right to bring together different groups with all types of viewpoints in such a newspaper?”¹

Berlin Women’s Centre Report from Munich, 1973.

From the early 1970s, different types of women’s publishing projects worked to form grassroots communication networks for the *Frauenbewegung*. From the beginning of the movement, *neue Frauenbewegung* activists used self-publication projects such as books, newsletters, and magazines to communicate and organize.² As Chapter Three has shown, the mid-1970s saw the growth of a comprehensive literary space for women. The development of these networks for women’s writing, reading, and publishing laid the groundwork necessary for the emergence of feminist periodical publishing projects in the latter part of the decade. Like other undertakings related to women’s writing, feminist periodical projects worked on the principle of autonomy to create journalistic spaces where women could write, read, and debate independent from the male-dominated mainstream press.

By the mid-1970s, West German women’s centres were beginning to be phased out. *Frauenbewegung* activists who had viewed the FZs as the best method for collective action and mobilization worried that the lack of such physical spaces would leave the decentralized movement without guidance or structure.³ The decline of women’s centres,

¹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 20 FZ (4&5) & 6, Sozialistischer Frauenbund (1973-1974), Bericht über München.

² See “Die Chronik der neuen Frauenbewegung”, *Frauenmediaturm: Das Archiv und Dokumentationszentrum* < <http://frauenmediaturm.de/chronik.html> > (September 25, 2009).

³ Edith Hoshino Altbach, “The New German Women’s Movement,” *Signs* vol. 9 no. 3 (Spring 1984), 456.

however, was paralleled by the growth of feminist periodicals, especially those aimed at a national audience.⁴ Through the creation of new types of spaces in which theoretical and practical problems could be discussed, the many magazines and newspapers that emerged in the late 1970s worked to communicate current information and arguments to their reading publics.⁵

By the late 1970s, the *neue Frauenbewegung*'s growing enthusiasm for publishing had generated a rich and diverse collection of thematic journals, lesbian magazines, news sources, and local publications.⁶ West German feminist publishing concentrated in movement hubs including West Berlin, Munich, Köln and Frankfurt.⁷ Most early feminist journals, however, did not reach large audiences because of small circulations and concentrated, often regional, focuses.⁸ Magazines with higher circulations, on the other hand, affected the *neue Frauenbewegung*'s development on a broad scale as a direct result of the grassroots nature of the autonomous movement. With no country-wide leader or membership organization, national feminist magazines provided groups of the women's movement with co-ordination at the national level.⁹ As

⁴ Ibid., 457.

⁵ Frank, "Feminist Publications in West Germany Today," *New German Critique* 13 (1978), 181.

⁶ Monika Schmid, "Feministischer Blätterwald," *Courage* 2, February 1977, 43.

⁷ FFBIZ, Claudia Weinel, "Die Feministische Presse in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und West-Berlin" (MA Thesis, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 1984), 65.

⁸ For average circulations see FFBIZ, Weinel, "Die Feministische Presse in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und West Berlin," 71.

⁹ Myra Marx Ferree, "Equality and Autonomy: Feminist Politics in the United States and West Germany" in Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Carol McClurg Mueller eds., *The Women's Movements of the United States and Western Europe: Consciousness, Political Opportunity, and Public Policy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 174.

a result of this coordinating role, national feminist journals followed autonomous organizational principles applicable to the *neue Frauenbewegung* as a whole.

The women behind *Frauenbewegung* journals were not, for the most part, career or professional authors. Rather, they tended to be “radical activists” who drew motivation for writing and publishing from “their sense of urgency about the need for feminist revolution.”¹⁰ A 1984 study found that most feminist periodicals were published by project groups and women’s centres. Some of these groups were dedicated to publishing projects while others used periodicals as parts of other projects.¹¹ These non-professional origins were reflected in an emphasis on experimentation rather than consistency or commercial success.¹²

This chapter examines three national feminist periodicals from the first decade of the West German women’s movement. The first, *Frauenzeitung- Frauen gemeinsam sind stark* (*Women’s Newspaper: Women together are strong*), was the *neue Frauenbewegung*’s first attempt to create an autonomous newspaper for the national women’s movement in 1973. The second, *Courage*, began as a Berlin-based monthly in 1976 and quickly expanded into national circulation. The third, Alice Schwarzer’s glossy *Emma*, appeared in early 1977, just months after *Courage*. These journals all aimed to provide the *neue Frauenbewegung* with common discussion space and a medium for communication, but the women behind them dealt with questions of financing, commercialism, and hierarchical control in very different ways. In this chapter I will

¹⁰ Frank, “Feminist Publications in West Germany Today”, 181.

¹¹ FFBIZ, Weinel, “Die Feministische Presse in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und West-Berlin,” 63.

¹² Frank, “Feminist Publications in West Germany Today,” 181.

show that the ways in which autonomous organizational strategies were applied to national feminist periodicals demonstrate an inherent anti-hierarchical ethos expressed through emphases on individual choice and the subversion of a dominant viewpoint.

Women together are strong!

The BRD's first national feminist periodical emerged from discussions at women's congresses held in Munich and Frankfurt during 1973. Discussion of a national journal for the *Frauenbewegung* appeared first in a participant's report from an earlier conference in Munich. Women's groups from across the BRD worked out a preliminary plan for the periodical's development. Although participants concluded that the publication would not be administered by a central authority, most other elements of the project were left undecided. With input from women's groups with previous publishing experience, discussion questions were formed to guide ideas about for whom a national feminist periodical would be aimed, how it should look, and whether issue's themes should be predetermined. With these questions to guide them, participants planned to hold a meeting in Frankfurt several months later in order to complete discussion of the project.¹³

In early May 1973, plans for the periodical project were completed at the second Frankfurt *Bundesfrauenkongress*. Building on questions raised in Munich, women at the conference decided to run the journal through a *Rotationsprinzip* (rotation principle) that shifted editorial responsibilities to a different women's group in a different BRD city for

¹³ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 20 FZ (4&5) & 6, Sozialistischer Frauenbund (1973-1974), Bericht über München.

each edition.¹⁴ Although a different group was to form the editorship for each issue, the journal was not intended as a vehicle for women's groups to talk about themselves. While introductory articles explaining the group's ideological positions were encouraged, each issue was to be organized around a theme such as Paragraph 218 or lesbians in the women's movement rather than the editing group itself. Articles from "unorganized women" or groups other than the editing one could also be included as a way to stimulate ideas and their exchange. If the editing group did not agree with a particular article, they would have the option of publishing it with a commentary that would prompt further discussion.¹⁵ Editing groups were to follow a predetermined format to produce a 16-20 page issue of *Frauenzeitung- Frauen gemeinsam sind stark*.¹⁶

The first *Frauenzeitung* appeared in October 1973. It cost 1 DM and contained no advertisements. Printed on large sheets of newsprint, the cover featured a photograph of women in front of their *Frauenzentrum* alongside a hand-drawn title and a fist-within-Venus symbol. The issue's theme was Paragraph 218. It was produced mainly by the *Sozialistische Frauen Frankfurt* (Frankfurt Socialist Women), also known as the *Frankfurter Weiberrat*. The 16-page newspaper featured articles about birth control methods, cervical self-examination, and the anti-218 campaign. In addition to these thematic articles, the first issue included information about lesbians in the *Weiberrat*, the

¹⁴ Kristina Schulz, *Der lange Atem der Provokation: die Frauenbewegung in der Bundesrepublik und in Frankreich, 1968-1976* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2002), 162.

¹⁵ Notes from the congress are reprinted as "Zum geleit..." *Frauenzeitung* 1, October 1973.

¹⁶ "Zum geleit..." *Frauenzeitung* 1, October 1973.

struggles of female dockworkers in Antwerp, and feminist movements in France and the United States.¹⁷

Eleven more issues of the *Frauenzeitung* were produced between 1973 and 1976.¹⁸ They were printed in eight editions, four of which were double issues, at inconsistent intervals falling several months apart. The newspaper was distributed by feminist wholesalers and sold by women's centres and bookstores.¹⁹ Unfortunately, no data about the *Frauenzeitung*'s circulation is available.²⁰ However, considering the size of the *Frauenbewegung* during this period, the newspaper's power as a national mobilizing tool, and interest in similar projects, it is reasonable to assume that around 5000 copies of each issue would have been produced. Since each editing group financed their own edition, however, it is also reasonable to assume that circulation levels fluctuated from issue to issue.

The *Rotationsprinzip* was not administered by any central authority after discussions at the 1973 *Bundesfrauenkongress*. Instead, administration and financing of each issue fell to its editing women's group.²¹ This decentralized organizational strategy likely explains the haphazard appearance of issues. While introductions to some issues stated which groups would be in charge of subsequent editions, the predictions they gave were often wrong. For instance, in the first *Frauenzeitung*, the Frankfurt women stated

¹⁷ *Frauenzeitung* 1, October 1973.

¹⁸ Schulz, *Der lange Atem der Provokation*, 162.

¹⁹ FFBI, A Rep 400 Berlin 20.9a Frauenbüchladen-verlage-und Frauenbuchvertrieb, "frauenbuch vertrieb berlin: frauenbücher katalog frühjahr 1977".

²⁰ Ursula Nienhaus, e-mail to author, 22 September 2009.

²¹ Ursula Nienhaus, e-mail to author, 22 September 2009.

that women in Giessen were editing the second issue.²² As it turned out, the Giessen women's issue was the fourth *Frauenzeitung*, published almost a year later.²³ This example of inconsistency is an expression of the independent function of each issue; women's groups worked on their issues separately until they were ready for publication. Since no central authority enforced a uniform schedule on all groups involved with the project, editing groups released their newspapers when they were finished. While sensible in the context of decentralized, grassroots groups, this system meant that the publishing project appeared to produce issues at fairly random intervals. Despite this effect, the *Frauenzeitung* functioned with this system throughout its entire series.

The women's choice to run the *Frauenzeitung* project without a centralized system of authority is significant to the rest of the project's autonomous administration. Since there was no permanent figure in charge, groups involved in the project had to make themselves responsible for following guidelines. This approach avoided enforcing a uniform production of issues, thus permitting the haphazard schedule of publication. The publication schedule also shows the freedom editing groups were permitted in the absence of a centralized authority. Without an authority to enforce deadlines, each group was able to publish their issue when they saw fit. Allowing groups to make these decisions independently subverted the emergence of a dominant viewpoint by distributing power among all involved groups. In these ways, this element of the *Frauenzeitung*'s autonomous organizational strategy expressed an anti-hierarchical ethos in its subversion of a single authority through a decentralized system.

²² "zum geleit..." *Frauenzeitung* 1, October 1973.

²³ *Frauenzeitung* 4, September 1974.

Since editing groups produced their issues independently, each one was able to add, enhance, or change particular elements of the newspaper in order to adapt it to their own needs and purposes. The individual touches that women's groups included in their issues worked to distinguish each edition of the newspaper from the rest. For instance, when the Darmstadt Socialist Women's Group edited their issue on the theme of "autonomous women's groups," a cartoon character named "Emanzi Panzi" appeared on many of the pages.²⁴ In the issue about "problems in founding, building, and organizing women's groups" edited by women in Giessen, text boxes with dates and historical information add interest throughout.²⁵ By making each issue distinctive, features that changed from issue to issue worked to remind readers of the fluidity of the newspaper's editorship and emphasize the individual character of each editing group.

While some characteristics of the *Frauenzeitung* were unique to particular issues, others were introduced by one editing group and adopted by subsequent ones. A compelling example of this organic mode of development is found in the introduction of a new layout in the newspaper's third issue. *Frauenzeitung* 3 focused on the American women's movement. It was edited by women from Munich and published in March 1974. On the cover, the original red, handwritten text was replaced by purple type, the fist emblem was gone, and a photograph took up more space than previous covers had devoted to images. Inside, hand-drawn details were replaced with an increased amount of type and photographs.²⁶ Although the fourth issue maintained the original, more rudimentary design, all other subsequent issues used the new format.

²⁴ *Frauenzeitung* 2, January 1974.

²⁵ *Frauenzeitung* 4, September 1974.

²⁶ *Frauenzeitung* 3, March 1974.

The persistence of this change is important because it shows an emphasis on individual choice. By adding unique touches to their issues, editing groups were able to express their difference from other groups and editions. The development of these distinct elements allowed later editing groups to choose from different examples of how to proceed. The absence of a central authority allowed later editing groups to freely pick and choose from examples of the *Frauenzeitung* produced by various groups. This stress on distinctive features combined with the freedom of editors to implement or reject the modifications of other groups therefore demonstrates an autonomous organizational strategy that expressed an anti-hierarchical ethos in its emphasis on individual choice.

In addition to influencing changes and continuities in appearance and style, the *Frauenzeitung's Rotationsprinzip* prevented the newspaper from making the persistent arguments necessary for the development of an obvious perspective or program. Instead, the constitutional fluidity of the newspaper meant that viewpoints had to be debated through the presentation of examples and counter examples. An example of this effect is found in *Frauenzeitung 5*, which was edited by a group of women from Bielefeld. In this issue, the editing group stated their dissatisfaction with the Darmstadt women's *Frauenzeitung 2*, which addressed the theme of "autonomy." The Bielefeld women argued that *Frauenzeitung 2* "appeared too abstract" and was "only understandable to a few women." They expressed their dissatisfaction by organizing their complex theme of "sexuality" around reports of personal experience because they believed that this method would be more effective in addressing and motivating readers.²⁷ While the Bielefeld women were able to express their disagreement with the approaches the Darmstadt

²⁷ *Frauenzeitung 5*, 1975, 1-2. AT.

women applied to “autonomy,” they ended up doing so through their issue’s theme of “sexuality.” Instead of simply stating their points, the editing group was able to further their argument through the provision of an example of their proposed method in action.

In this example, the Bielefeld women used the *Frauenzeitung* as a tool for the communication of an opposing viewpoint by demonstrating a concrete counter example. While this framework allowed the later group space to criticize the earlier one, it did not permit the earlier group to rebut through the *Frauenzeitung*, thereby preventing the development of an extended back and forth dialogue on any particular subject. The short-term editorships therefore contained back and forth debate by creating an editorial structure that could not foster a single discussion beyond a single edition. Combined with the lack of a centralized authority, the constantly shifting editorship meant that each editing group could express their own ideas. This element of the newspaper’s organization therefore prevented the emergence of a single viewpoint associated with the publication itself. Although the twelve-issue series represents a single project, the fact that each issue was the project of a distinct editing group meant that no overarching perspective dominated the editions. This subversion is demonstrative of an anti-hierarchical ethos because it stressed the ideas of many contributors rather than that of a single, dictatorial authority.

The subversion of a dominant viewpoint is closely tied to the *Frauenzeitung*’s autonomous organizational strategies’ stress on individual choice. Since no common authority filtered editors’ opinions, readers were presented with many from which to choose and challenge. This feature is conducive to readers’ forming their own ideas because they are presented with a variety of viewpoints rather than a single one that they

were supposed to agree with. The constant changing of editors and subsequent discussion therefore created parallel emphases on the subversion of a dominant viewpoint and individual choice. The resulting patterns demonstrate how the autonomous organizational principles applied to the *Frauenzeitung* project expressed an anti-hierarchical ethos in its emphasis on the subversion of a dominant viewpoint.

The final issue of the *Frauenzeitung* appeared in late 1976. Edited by women from the Aachen *Frauenzentrum*, *Frauenzeitung* 11/12's theme was "how we live with our claim to emancipation." It cost 2 DM and contained advertising for Frauenoffensive, the BRD's first independent feminist press. A composite image of many women's faces occupied most of the cover beneath a title typed in purple script. The 36-page double issue included a review of Verena Stefan's novel *Shedding*, articles about romantic relationships, and letters from readers.²⁸ The editing women's disappointment over a relative lack of contributions to the issue strongly suggests that much of the initial interest in the project had fizzled by this final issue.²⁹ With the publication of *Frauenzeitung* 11/12, the project of the *neue Frauenbewegung*'s first national periodical project came to an unceremonious end.

The autonomous organizational strategies applied during the *Frauenzeitung*'s short run demonstrate an anti-hierarchical ethos expressed through parallel emphases on individual choice and the subversion of an authoritative voice. Although it lasted only a few years, this periodical is significant to the development of feminist publishing in the BRD because it represents the first attempt to create an autonomously-organized journal to serve the national movement. Using its unique anti-hierarchical system, the

²⁸ *Frauenzeitung* 11/12, 1976.

²⁹ *Frauenzeitung* 11/12, 1976, 1-2.

Frauenzeitung's publication opened the way for later national feminist journals to forge information and communication networks for the West German women's movement. As the experiment of the first national feminist journal in the BRD came to an end, women's groups in West Berlin and Köln began to work out how they would apply autonomous organizational principles to their new publishing projects. The two national journals that these groups created quickly gained speed and influence as the *neue Frauenbewegung* developed through and around these new types of coordinating spaces.

"Every woman needs Courage"

In 1976, ten women from the Lesbian Action Centre and the Hornstr. *Frauenzentrum* gathered in West Berlin.³⁰ Mostly students and academics, the young feminists had no journalistic experience or access to funding beyond their personal savings.³¹ Some of them saw a need for a voice to challenge misogyny in institutional policies.³² Others viewed publishing as a necessity for the creation of a larger public space for women and women's groups.³³ They decided to create "a journal that women support, take responsibility for, and that encourages them to demand privileges and power."³⁴ The group that became the *Courage* collective wanted to report critically on the history of women, workplace environments, advertising, psychology, justice, culture, and

³⁰ FFBIZ, BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), Selbstdarstellung, *Courage Frauen*, Juni 1977.

³¹ FFBIZ, BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), Selbstdarstellung, *Courage Frauen*, Juni 1977.

³² Gisela Notz, "Courage - Wie es began, was daraus wurde und was geblieben ist" in Notz (ed.) *Als die Frauenbewegung noch Courage hatte: die 'Berliner Frauenzeitschrift Courage' und die autonomen Frauenbewegungen der 1970er und 1980er Jahre* (Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2007), 25.

³³ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 23. AT.

the women's movement.³⁵ In order to keep contributions "diverse and authentic," the collective decided that they would publish articles by women's groups and untrained writers as opposed to working with a staff of professional journalists.³⁶

After the group had worked out these initial details, they filled two rooms with rulers, paper, photos, typewriters, and coffee cups. With no journalistic or publishing experience and virtually no money, the women sold ads, edited articles, and designed layouts to independently create the first issue of *Courage*.³⁷ They sold their premier issue at a *Frauenfest* in a Berlin pub on 17 June 1976, quickly selling out of the 5000 copies they had produced.³⁸ In September of the same year, the first issue of *Courage* appeared in West Berlin kiosks. Printed mostly in black and white, the magazine contained articles about Berlin's Summer University for Women, West Berlin's Lesbian Action Centre, and the recently deceased Ulrike Meinhof.³⁹ 12,000 copies were initially printed, but circulation was increased to 22,000 by the magazine's third monthly issue.⁴⁰ The magazine expanded from municipal to national circulation in January 1977.⁴¹ By

³⁵ Ibid., 26.

³⁶ FFBI, BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), "Mutige Courage," *Basler Magazin (der Basler Zeitung)*, 17 September 1977. AT.

³⁷ FFBI, BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), "Selbstdarstellung, Courage Frauen, Juni 1977".

³⁸ Notz, "Courage - Wie es began," 27.

³⁹ *Courage* 0, June 1976.

⁴⁰ "Dossier 1976" *Frauenmediaturm* <<http://frauenmediaturm.de/sechsuundsiebzig.html>> (20 September 2009)

⁴¹ FFBI, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970-Sommeruni 1980, "Courage jetzt bundesweit" *tsp* 30 January 1977.

September 1977, one year after its initial appearance, *Courage*'s circulation had expanded to 60,000 copies per month throughout the BRD, Austria, and Switzerland.⁴²

The *Courage* women aimed to create an alternative magazine for women outside the *Frauenbewegung* as well as those already active in it.⁴³ The topics covered by the magazine reflect this goal through the representation of different interests in women's political issues and standpoints. *Courage* regularly reported on culture, society, and careers as well as the national and international women's movements. Features often provided information and arguments about controversial topics such as home birth and prostitution. Although most issues were eclectic, special editions were occasionally organized around themes such as older women, travel, and sexuality.⁴⁴ Classified advertisements, letters from readers, and information about upcoming events contextualized the diverse body of contributions that made up *Courage*'s content.

The *Courage* collective used the rotation of women through various jobs and positions as part of their autonomous organizational strategy. Instead of remaining in fixed positions, women took turns working in layout, editing, advertising, accounting, and office work. The *Courage* group tried to ensure that each member moved through every position. Women would work in one area of the magazine for three or four months and then move on to another.⁴⁵ One of the goals of this rotational approach was for all women to learn how to perform all of the tasks necessary to publish the magazine. The collective did not decide on this form of management easily, choosing it only after much

⁴² FFBIZ, BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), "Presseerklärung, die Courage Frauen".

⁴³ Notz, "Courage - Wie es began," 26.

⁴⁴ Frank, "Feminist Publications in West Germany Today," 182.

⁴⁵ FFBIZ, BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), "Selbstdarstellung, Courage Frauen, Juni 1977".

discussion. It was ultimately selected because the group viewed a division of tasks based in the expertise of individuals (*Fachkompetenz*) as conducive to the development of hierarchical power structures; they argued that when an individual holds skills and knowledge that others do not, their knowledge comes with authority and experts rise in influence. Using a system of rotation in which all women could learn all positions was meant to circumvent the development of hierarchical power structures based in expertise.⁴⁶ This element of the collective's autonomous organizational method represented an anti-hierarchical ethos because the collective used it with the explicit intention of subverting the development of power differentials within the group.

The anti-hierarchical ethos driving *Courage's* autonomous administrative strategies was also reflected in the collective's approaches to financing and employee compensation. Although some of the magazine's income came from advertising, the collective maintained editorial control over ads. In October 1978, for instance, the magazine refused to advertise Frank Zappa or "The Virgin Sperm Dancer" because they were perceived as sexist.⁴⁷ Despite enforcing advertising standards, the *Courage* women eventually turned a small profit. After the first year and a half of publication, during which each issue brought in just enough money to cover the cost of the one before it, the group could afford to begin paying themselves.⁴⁸ Beginning in 1978, members of the collective were compensated on a sliding scale. Each woman's basic subsistence level was determined to be 800 DM per month. Collective members who earned this much or

⁴⁶ "In eigener Sache," *Courage* 3, March 1977.

⁴⁷ Sandra Abelson Zagarell, "Courage, Emma: You Can Read Two Feminist Magazines Each Month in the Federal Republic of Germany!" *Women's Studies Newsletter* vol. 7 no. 1 (1979), 26.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

more from other employment worked without pay whereas others were compensated based on their financial need.⁴⁹ This egalitarian approach to financing is demonstrative of an anti-hierarchical ethos because it worked to counter the emergence of unequal power structures based on rates of pay. While an innovative approach to compensation and demonstrative of a concern for the economic independence of individuals, this financial strategy meant that *Courage* had to pay the collective as well as absorbing publication costs. These financial burdens were some of the monetary commitments that kept the magazine in debt throughout most of its run.⁵⁰

Women who read *Courage* tended to be young, educated, and active in the *Frauenbewegung*. In late 1978, *Courage* published the results of a 1977 reader survey. 1500 women and 37 men responded to the questionnaire. The report located the majority of *Courage* readers in West Berlin and the province of North Rhine-Westphalia. 56% were active in women's centres and/or groups and another 43% reported "some form" of participation in the *Frauenbewegung*. The survey also found that this activist audience was overwhelmingly loyal; 81.8% of respondents owned every issue of the magazine.⁵¹ A 1984 study of the feminist press in the BRD adds more insight into who *Courage*'s readers were. It found that, in inverse patterns to those seen with traditional women's magazines *Brigitte* and *Freundin*, more than 80% of readers were younger than 29 and

⁴⁹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d 1973-1984 (2): "Die sogenannte Durchschnitt Frau," *Börsenblatt* 2 February 1978.

⁵⁰ Notz, "Courage - Wie es began," 46-47.

⁵¹ Sibylle Plogstedt and Monika Arnholdt, "Wer sind die Courage-Leserinnen: Ergebnisse unsere Umfrage", *Courage* 3, March 1978, 22-29.

91% had completed schooling higher than the *Volksschule*.⁵² Additionally, it found that one third of *Courage* readers reported reading other women's movement publications.⁵³ Thus, although the collective aimed to create a magazine for women both within and outside the *Frauenbewegung*, this data shows that *Courage* readers were overwhelmingly young, educated women already active in feminist politics.

Courage's readership is especially significant because readers contributed a large proportion of the magazine's content. In 1979, for instance, 66% of articles were written by readers.⁵⁴ The collective's choice not to work exclusively with professional journalists reflects an extension of the anti-hierarchical ethos inherent to their autonomous organizational strategy. Contributions were not selected according to the political positions they communicated because *Courage* had no defined "line" on which it wanted to confront the women's movement. Rather, the magazine was intended to function more as an "exchange of thoughts" between editors and readers. The editors intended this approach as a way to help them work out women's political goals and what was important to their readers.⁵⁵ The collective sometimes chose to publish articles representing positions unpopular in the *Frauenbewegung*.⁵⁶ These opinions, however, were not necessarily supported or rejected by the editing group. The collective chose to publish articles based on "background, experience, knowledge, or curiosity." They

⁵² FFBIZ, Weinel, "Die feministische Presse in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und West Berlin", 59.

⁵³ FFBIZ, Weinel, "Die feministische Presse in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und West Berlin", 57.

⁵⁴ Zagarell, "Courage, Emma", 26.

⁵⁵ FFBIZ, BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), Selbstdarstellung, *Courage Frauen*, Juni 1977.

⁵⁶ Notz, "Courage - Wie es began," 35.

decided against indicating whether an opinion was “right” or “wrong” because they understood this as a tactic of “bourgeois” publications. Instead, many different viewpoints were published and readers were encouraged to decide for themselves whether or not they agreed with them.⁵⁷

Despite this anti-paternal approach, the *Courage* women certainly had a voice in the magazine. The group responded to readers and contributions in each issue’s opening feature “In eigener Sache” (“On our own behalf”). Despite this unified voice, frequent disagreements took place within the collective. The *Courage* women debated and clashed over politics, sexualities, and opinions about feminist issues.⁵⁸ While the editors certainly had opinions about what they published, they still chose to present a variety of opinions in a manner that prompted readers to draw their own conclusions. This approach demonstrates the high value that the collective placed on individual thought because, in a parallel pattern to that seen with the *Frauenzeitung*, readers were forced to think for themselves in the absence of editorial guidance. The emphasis on individual thought apparent in the autonomous organizational principles applied to the collective’s publication choices demonstrates an anti-hierarchical ethos in its promotion of a spectrum of viewpoints over a clear program.

Courage’s non-professional contributors and inexperienced staff made it “a magazine that [let] its rough edges show.” The magazine’s style and layout quickly advanced from their rather rudimentary beginnings.⁵⁹ The quality of journalism, on the

⁵⁷ “In eigener Sache”, *Courage* 12, December 1977.

⁵⁸ Notz, “Courage - Wie es began,” 37.

⁵⁹ Frank, “Feminist Publications in West Germany Today,” 182.

other hand, varied from issue to issue.⁶⁰ In a column reflecting on the magazine's first year of publication, the *Courage* group reported that they often received articles riddled with problems. Many of the pieces were not critical enough, focused on problems when solutions were present, or downplayed differences between women.⁶¹ The editors decided not to change articles without speaking with their authors. Instead, revisions involved direct criticism and discussion with contributors. The collective found giving criticism unpleasant but usually necessary in order to make articles readable and relatable. Critiques would often lead to discussions that articulated "problems, issues, and wishes" that many readers could identify with.⁶² The collective's choice to publish non-professional writers and work with them in dialogue shaped the magazine through a discussion-based editing process that ultimately determined what appeared in print. This element of *Courage*'s autonomous organizational strategy expressed an anti-hierarchical ethos because its emphasis on group discussion over editorial authority demonstrates an effort to subvert the emergence of a dominant viewpoint.

The discussions that took place behind the scenes of *Courage* were mirrored by debates in the magazine. In mid-1977, many articles criticized Alice Schwarzer for the arguments she made in *Emma* about the issue of wages for housework. Authors of such contributions commented that *Emma*'s articles were an unoriginal version of a "common formula"⁶³ and criticized Schwarzer's argument that paying wages for housework would

⁶⁰ Ibid., 182.

⁶¹ FFBIZ, BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), Selbstdarstellung, *Courage Frauen*, Juni 1977.

⁶² FFBIZ, BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), Selbstdarstellung, *Courage Frauen*, Juni 1977. AT.

⁶³ Verena Schuster, "Oh Emma!" *Courage* 2, February 1977, 45.

create a “housewives’ ghetto.”⁶⁴ After several issues with articles on the topic, the collective announced it would no longer take part because members found the controversy “too boring.” They paired this statement with an open letter criticizing *Emma*’s simplistic portrayal of feminist politics as the “defamation of leftist and male domination.”⁶⁵ This example shows how *Courage* contributors and editors engaged in a discussion through several issues. Although the editors presented their opinions, others were represented as well. Through the juxtaposition of reader and editor viewpoints, discussions in *Courage* were shaped and defined by the collective’s choice to represent a spectrum of opinions and ideas. This pattern of emphasizing discussion in place of editorial or programmatic authority demonstrates the anti-hierarchical ethos inherent to *Courage*’s autonomous organizational principles.

Letters from readers reinforced patterns of multiplicity seen in *Courage*’s articles. Readers’ letters “crackle[d] with debates” about previous articles and problems of the women’s movement more generally.⁶⁶ The editors consistently chose to represent a range of responses in their *Leserinnenbriefe* (Readers’ Letters) section. *Courage* 8, published in August 1977, included a fairly typical assortment of letters. A woman from Berlin harshly criticized the quality of writing, snidely stating that “maybe a journal like *Courage* should not publish every article [sent in] merely because a women’s name is under it.” A reader from Bremen complained that she sometimes found articles inaccessible, but then praised *Courage* for keeping women informed of *Frauenbewegung*

⁶⁴ Gruppe ‘Lohn für Hausarbeit’ Berlin, “Löhn für Hausarbeit: Offener Brief an Alice”, *Courage* 8, 1977, 38-39. AT.

⁶⁵ “In eigener Sache,” *Courage* 6/7, June/July 1977, 2. AT.

⁶⁶ Frank, “Feminist Publications in West Germany Today,” 182.

developments. Another reader thanked *Courage* for an article that motivated her to travel to South America for her anthropological studies.⁶⁷ This representative example shows how a range of negative, mixed, and positive reactions were published in *Courage*. The inclusion of both good and bad responses is significant because published letters represent the reader reactions that editors choose to portray. Since different reactions were included, the collective did not prescribe how readers “should” respond. Rather, the variety of correspondence worked to show that readers responded to the magazine in unique, individual ways. This approach indicates efforts towards subversion of a dominant viewpoint and an encouragement of individual thought through the representation of a range of responses. These emphases and their implications reinforce the anti-hierarchical ethos apparent in other elements of the collective’s autonomous organizational strategy.

In 1976-1978, *Courage* was an ambitious publishing project whose editors used autonomous organizational strategies to create a forum for debate and exchange. An anti-hierarchical ethos was initially expressed in the collective’s rejection of expertise and carried over into many areas of the magazine. The rotating duties of collective members applied a fluid form of administration in a conscious attempt to subvert the emergence of internal hierarchies. This choice combined with publishing articles by women who were not professional writers to lower the value of journalistic experience and raise that of discussion. Representation of different opinions created a magazine laced with the vigor of debate. In these ways, the collective’s original intention that *Courage* function as an “exchange of thoughts” between readers and editors was reflected in the final product.

⁶⁷ “Leserinnen Briefe”, *Courage* 8, August 1977, 58-59. AT.

Through these emphases on discussion and the presentation of different feminist viewpoints, the *Courage* collective produced a magazine that encouraged each reader to decide her opinions for herself. These emphases on individual thought and the subversion of a dominant viewpoint show how an anti-hierarchical ethos characterized the autonomous organizational principles applied by the *Courage* collective.

A journal by women, for women

On 29 September 1976, a group of women in Köln mailed an open letter to women's centres across the BRD. The letter discussed a new feminist monthly to begin publication in December. The publisher of this new journal was Alice Schwarzer, the high-profile West German feminist journalist who spearheaded the *Stern* "ich habe abgetrieben" campaign in the early 1970s. Her 1975 book *Der kleine Unterschied, und seine grossen Folgen (The Little Difference and its Big Consequences)* had sold 140,000 copies by late 1976.⁶⁸ Schwarzer planned to use the book's profits to provide two thirds of the magazine's starting capital. The proposed feminist journal would cover so-called "women's themes" and function as a forum in which women could express themselves. It would be run by a permanent group of unpaid female editors with far less advertisements than traditional commercial magazines.⁶⁹

On 26 January 1977, 200,000 copies of the first issue of *Emma: Eine Zeitschrift von Frauen für Frauen (Emma: A Magazine by Women, for Women)* appeared in kiosks

⁶⁸ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), "Kampf über Emma," *Der Spiegel*, 29 November 1976.

⁶⁹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), Brief von den Emma Frauen, 29 September 1976.

across the BRD.⁷⁰ Many major newsstands sold out of the magazine in a matter of hours.⁷¹ Centred in Köln, *Emma*'s geographical focus provided an alternative to *Courage*'s Berlin-based perspective. The 64-page monthly cost 3 DM and had color printing throughout. It contained features including an interview with actress Romy Schneider, a feminist review of television programs, and profiles of German and English feminist figures from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷² Due to the first issue's success, circulation was increased to 300,000 for *Emma*'s second issue in March 1977. 83% of the copies, about a quarter million magazines, were sold.⁷³

In its first two years of publication, *Emma* featured articles about women and alcoholism, launched a campaign against female genital mutilation, and worked to raise awareness of violence against women. Innovative features such as a page for young girls, a "Pascha of the month" column, and instructions for traditionally "masculine" household tasks such as changing tires and unclogging drains were also included. In the late 1970s, *Emma* discussed the perceived dangers posed by Islamic fundamentalism, initiated a tribunal concerned with violence against women, and took *Stern* magazine to court to challenge its sexist representations of women.⁷⁴ Up until and after 1978, the women behind *Emma* used their magazine as both a platform and a medium to present issues of interest to women in general and feminists in particular.

⁷⁰ FFBIJZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), "Neu an der Frauenfront: Emma," *Die Zeit*, 28 January 1977.

⁷¹ "Emma über Emma", *Emma* 2, March 1977.

⁷² *Emma* 1, February 1977.

⁷³ Die Emma-Frauen, "Emma über Emma," *Emma* 5, May 1977.

⁷⁴ Ricarda Strobel, "Die neue Frauenbewegung" in Werner Faulstich (ed) *Die Kultur der siebziger Jahre* (Germany: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2004), 270.

Emma's organization was very different from that of the *Frauenzeitung* and *Courage* because its administrative approach did not represent an application of autonomous organizational principles grounded in an anti-hierarchical ethos. In direct contrast to *Courage*'s emphasis on debate and orientation towards socialist thought, *Emma* cultivated what one contemporary commentator described as "mass acceptability with an interest in reformist rather than left politics."⁷⁵ The push to make feminism more widely acceptable prompted a vehicle compatible with publishing as many West Germans understood it. In contrast to the innovations of its predecessors, *Emma* was organized along the lines of a traditional magazine in that a staff of professional journalists worked under Schwarzer's permanent leadership. With this in mind, *Emma*'s all-women staff distinguished it from other commercial magazines. As female journalists frustrated with the problems and inequalities associated with working in the mainstream press, the *Emma* women aimed to provide BRD women with a professionally-produced feminist magazine.⁷⁶ Motivations for this decision are stated in the 1976 prospectus letter: as a women-run magazine competing with commercial publications, *Emma* would have to measure itself on their scale. In order to compete, the *Emma* women believed that they would simply "have to be better" than magazines run by men.⁷⁷

In a women's movement that championed anti-hierarchicalism, Alice Schwarzer exercised considerable influence over *Emma*. Her initial financial contributions gave her a significant stake in the project from its earliest stages. Even though it had been planned

⁷⁵ Frank, "Feminist Publications in West Germany Today", 182.

⁷⁶ Zagarell, "Courage, Emma", 25.

⁷⁷ FFBI, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d 1976 (1): Brief von den Emma Frauen, 29 September 1976. AT.

as a collective endeavour, the magazine's "economic roots" quickly prompted a different direction.⁷⁸ The considerable start-up costs associated with launching a glossy monthly had been raised by Schwarzer and her original group of editors. As was announced in the original open letter, Schwarzer herself contributed 100,000 DM from book proceeds. Other editors contributed a total of 70,000 DM from their private savings. 50,000 DM was obtained on credit from the *Frauenkalender*, a *Taschenbuch* publication. The final 50,000 DM was obtained from an appeal for subscriptions from future readers. *Emma*'s finances evened out after circulation stabilized at about 130,000 in mid-1977. This level of consumption meant that each issue generated around 150,000 DM through advertising and kiosk sales. After accounting for the costs of producing the magazine, each editor made about 5000 DM per month in salary.⁷⁹

As the leader of a staff of trained journalists and major financial investor, Schwarzer was *Emma*'s leader and its public face. She appeared on the cover of the premier issue and in most media coverage. In both press coverage and the masthead in the first issues from 1977, Schwarzer was identified as the leader of the project while her staff was referred to simply as *Mitarbeiterinnen* (collaborators).⁸⁰ While the masthead was slightly modified to recognize individuals' work in editing and layout beginning with the August 1977 issue, the division between Schwarzer and her staff remained apparent.⁸¹ Through authoring articles, controlling content, and prominently featuring her own work

⁷⁸ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d (1), Barbara Veit, "Gegenfront aus den eigenen Reihen" *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung*, October 1979. AT.

⁷⁹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970- Sommeruni 1980, "Emma macht Mäuser" *Diese Woche* 34, 11 August 1977.

⁸⁰ See *Emma* 1, 1976-*Emma* 7, 1977 Alice Schwarzer had a regular editorial and the "Emma women" wrote the regular feature "Emma über Emma" ("Emma on Emma").

⁸¹ See *Emma* 8, 1977.

and persona, Schwarzer's position in *Emma*'s organizational strategy allowed her to use the magazine as a vehicle for her views. In stark contrast to *Courage*, little reader opposition was reproduced in *Emma*. While exceptions such as July 1977's debate over wages for housework certainly exist, the great majority of feedback published in *Emma* took a "lachrymose, uncritical tone."⁸² These tactics worked to construct a fixed perspective and the appearance of a feminist consensus when, in reality, autonomy and its expression of anti-hierarchical ethos had created a women's movement rife with debate and diverse ideas.

Perceptions of *Emma*'s organization appeared as sources of conflict among *Frauenbewegung* activists before the first issue appeared in kiosks. Since *Emma* was led by Schwarzer, traditionally organized, used professional journalists, and complied with the status quo enough to compete with commercial publications, the ways in which *Frauenbewegung* groups responded to the new project show how conceptions of autonomy and its relationship to anti-hierarchical organizational methods clashed with Schwarzer's techniques. Despite *Emma*'s promotion of itself as a magazine by and for the *neue Frauenbewegung*, the strong reactions of autonomous feminist activists suggest that the women's movement perceived it differently. This section therefore examines autonomous feminist reactions to *Emma* in order to demonstrate how criticisms of the magazine attacked Schwarzer's dominance and the perpetuation of a single perspective. Examples presented in this section will show that 1970s feminist criticisms of *Emma* expressed an anti-hierarchical ethos through emphases on individual choice and the subversion of a dominant viewpoint.

⁸² Frank, "Feminist Publications in West Germany Today", 183. For the reader debate about wages for housework, see "Lohn für Hausarbeit", *Emma* 7, July 1977, 42-43.

Feminist publishing projects that used autonomous organizational strategies were some of the first to speak out against *Emma*. *Emma*'s first issue appeared just months after *Courage*'s. Perhaps in part motivated by the competition, the *Courage* collective first criticized *Emma* shortly after the mailing of the 1976 prospectus letter. In *Courage* 2 1976, the collective criticized Schwarzer's financial domination and permanent employment of professional journalists. Contrasting *Emma*'s organization to their own, the *Courage* women emphasized their rotating division of tasks and use of contributions from non-professional journalists as strategies better suited to feminist publishing projects.⁸³ *Courage* continued to participate in the controversy after 1976, publishing a slew of articles criticizing Schwarzer and *Emma*.⁸⁴ By differentiating *Emma* from their own project, this reaction shows that the *Courage* women stressed an anti-hierarchical division of tasks as part of autonomous organizational strategies in their definitions of what constituted feminist approaches.

In the midst of these early tensions, Schwarzer was invited to the Berlin *Frauenzentrum* to answer questions about *Emma*. Between 300 and 400 women attended the discussion that took place on 31 October 1976. At the meeting, attendees asked Schwarzer increasingly detailed questions for four hours. Shortly thereafter, the *Emma* women composed a new open letter in response to the criticisms and inquiries raised in Berlin. In the letter, the women identified and broke down four major arguments made by their opponents. The *Emma* women argued that their critics objected to perceptions of the magazine as a commercial undertaking. The Berlin feminists were also hostile towards

⁸³ "In eigener Sache", *Courage* 2, October 1976

⁸⁴ See *Courage* 2 1977, *Courage* 6/7, June/July 1977, and *Courage* 8, August 1977 for some examples.

the involvement of “traditional publishers” and Hans Huffsky, a former editor of *Constanz*, whom they believed was an advisor to the project. The *Emma* women stated that these perceptions were simply not true; they explained in their open letter that they were an independent women’s project whose proceeds would be donated to other *Frauenprojekte*. The letter also claimed that the Berlin women questioned Schwarzer because she chose to start her own magazine rather than working with *Courage*; the *Emma* women denied this as well, claiming that Schwarzer had once met with a member of the *Courage* collective, but had never had any intention to work with the magazine. After making these arguments, the *Emma* women characterized the campaign against them as defamatory and motivated by personal rivalries and political positions.⁸⁵

Emma’s critics were not quieted by the group’s response. In a 1977 open letter, Brigitte Classen and Gabriele Goettle, two editors of the anarcho-feminist journal *Die Schwarze Botin (The Black Messenger)*, called for an information and consumer boycott of Schwarzer and *Emma*. They asked individual women, women’s centres, and women’s groups not to give the new publishing project money, information, or materials. Administrative characteristics presented as grounds for the boycott included the involvement of Huffsky as an advisor, the questionable distribution of funds, and fears related to Schwarzer’s perceived commercialization of the women’s movement.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 FZ (4&5) & 6, Berlin 20 Frauenzentrum Interne Diskussion (1974-1976) Sammlung Ursula Haseche, Renate Richter, Ursula Nienhaus, Brief von den Emma-Frauen, 27 November 1976.

⁸⁶ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d (1), Anruf zum Boycott!!! AT.

A three-page long address list shows that information about the boycott was mailed to feminists and women's organizations throughout the BRD in early 1977.⁸⁷ In a letter dated 26 January 1977, a women's book distributor in Berlin expressed support for the action. The letter explained that the distributor would not carry *Emma* because its organization and messages would interfere with the goals of their project. Unlike other periodicals such as *Courage* and *Schwarze Botin*, *Emma* was seen as incompatible with raising money for *Frauenprojekte* and building autonomy in the women's movement.⁸⁸ This division of *Emma* and autonomously organized projects is significant because it indicates that Schwarzer's organizational strategies were incompatible with the authors' understandings of autonomous organizational principles in women's publishing. This categorization shows how *Frauenbewegung* activists did not perceive *Emma* as an autonomous project despite its claim to be a magazine "by women, for women."

Autonomous feminist criticisms of *Emma* were compounded by an increase in mainstream media attention to Schwarzer. Although she had already received media attention as a result of the *Stern* "ich habe abgetrieben" campaign and her bestselling book, *Emma* gave Schwarzer a new public platform. *Die Zeit*, *Spiegel*, and *Newsweek* were among the widely-circulated publications to write about the magazine's appearance. Regional publications with relatively small circulations also wrote about *Emma* when it first appeared on newsstands.⁸⁹ Schwarzer continued to draw media attention through concerted campaigns and actions throughout the 1970s. In 1979, for instance, Schwarzer

⁸⁷ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d (1), Liste für die Verteilung der Selbstdarstellung des Emma Boykotts, 22 February 1977.

⁸⁸ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d (1), "Zum Emma Informationsboykott", 20 January 1977.

⁸⁹ See FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d (1).

lost a lawsuit she had launched against a company that produced a frying pan called “Emma.”⁹⁰ Also in 1979, Schwarzer and a group of German feminists visited Tehran and met with Ayahtollah Khomeini to demonstrate solidarity with Iranian women.⁹¹ While the mainstream press responded to these efforts with mixed reactions, they gave Schwarzer the press coverage necessary to establish herself as a persistent media presence. Through public actions such as these, *Emma*’s head editor had become, arguably, the most prominent feminist in West Germany by the late 1970s.

Schwarzer’s influence, fame, and control elicited powerful responses from women who read and wrote for *Emma* in the late 1970s. In 1979, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported that the perceived lack of possibilities for collaboration, frequent high workloads, and Schwarzer’s domination stopped many journalists from working for *Emma*.⁹² Former *Emma* writer Lottemi Doorman confirmed these comments in a *konkret* article from 1977. Doorman claimed that *Emma* failed to present “controversial viewpoints” or function as a forum for women’s ideas because opinions were accepted only when they matched with Schwarzer’s “view and style.”⁹³ In a letter dated August 1978, a group of women identifying themselves as “recently *Emma* and *Courage* readers; now *Courage* readers” addressed “*Emma* (without Schwarzer).” The letter asked the *Emma* women to recognize the “direct and indirect” censorship of “the head honcho”

⁹⁰ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d (1), “Bratpfanne darf weiterhin “Emma” heissen,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 24 August 1979.

⁹¹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d (1), *Hanauer Anzeiger*, 23 March 1979; “Alice beim Ayatollah” *Flensburger Tageblatt*, 22 March 1979; “Die Schwarzer bei Khomeini” *Express*, 22 March 1979.

⁹² FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d (1), Barbara Veit, “Gegenfront aus den eigenen Reihen”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* October 1979.

⁹³ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 Berlin 20 von Brot und Rosen ca 1970- Sommeruni 1980, Lottemi Doorman, “Abschied von Emma” *konkret* 7, 1977. AT.

Alice. The authors argued that *Emma*'s editorship was hierarchical and the magazine advocated a "fashionable feminism" (*Modefeminismus*) instead of promoting discussion or individual thought.⁹⁴ As with critiques from other *neue Frauenbewegung* groups, these sources show powerfully negative reactions against *Emma*'s hierarchical organizational strategy by attacking Schwarzer's personal power and promotion of her perspective. This pattern is significant because it expresses an anti-hierarchical ethos through a backlash against the growing power of a single dominant figure.

Despite these criticisms, the presence of a women-only staff made Schwarzer's magazine stand out against the male-dominated commercial press of the later 1970s. Many women appear to have embraced *Emma*'s mandate to act as a magazine produced exclusively "by women, for women." In July 1978, *Emma* announced plans for an issue written completely by men. The idea was not well received. By October, readers' protests were powerful enough to postpone the male-written issue indefinitely.⁹⁵ These reactions show that being "by women, for women" was important to *Emma*'s audience. Although gender exclusivity alone does not constitute an autonomous organizational strategy, reactions to this proposal strongly suggest that, for many readers, *Emma*'s women-only staff still represented a feminist political statement. The magazine's reaction to criticisms from its audience pushes this point further by showing that editors cared about maintaining *Emma*'s image as a feminist publication. Even though its organizational strategy did not express the anti-hierarchical ethos characteristic of autonomous feminist approaches, this example shows how the magazine's construction of women-only journalistic space stood out as one of its distinguishing political goals.

⁹⁴ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d (1), Liebe Emma (ohne Schwarzer), 9 August 1978. AT.

⁹⁵ Zagarell, "Courage, Emma", 25.

Schwarzer also responded to readers' criticisms of *Emma*'s advertising policies. As both a commercial magazine and a feminist journal, *Emma* had to carefully mediate tensions between advertisers and readers. In their 1976 prospectus letter, the *Emma* women stated their intention to limit ad pages to 15% of each issue. Their guidelines for advertisers were also made clear: "No sexist products (eg. vaginal spray), no sexist presentation."⁹⁶ Most readers seem to have received the first issues of *Emma* without protesting its adherence to these advertising policies. After a year and a half of publication, however, problems with this policy arose. In 1978, a 12,000 DM advertising deal was struck with Marlboro.⁹⁷ The back-page ad pictured an American cowboy and promoted the "taste of freedom and adventure."⁹⁸ Angry readers wanted their money back because they saw the advertisement as, in the words of one writer, portraying an "exaggerated obsession with masculinity."⁹⁹ Although it was supposed to run for three issues, readers' responses prompted Schwarzer to stop printing the advertisement after it appeared in one.¹⁰⁰ This example shows how decisions about advertising shaped *Emma*'s administrative strategies. Since they published a magazine that claimed to be both feminist and professionally produced, Schwarzer and her staff had to balance reader expectations and financial sustainability. This conflict is significant because it shows that,

⁹⁶ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d 1976 (1), Brief von den Emma Frauen, 29 September 1976. AT.

⁹⁷ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d (1), "Ärger, nichts als Ärger," *Bunte Illustrierte* 16 November 1978.

⁹⁸ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d (1), "Emma raucht Marlboro," *Die Welt*, 26 October 1978. AT.

⁹⁹ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d (1), "Ärger, nichts als Ärger," *Bunte Illustrierte* 16 November 1978. AT.

¹⁰⁰ FFBIZ, A Rep 400 BRD 20.11d (1), *Die Zeit*, 3 November 1978.

despite criticisms of its administrative approach, many readers still expected certain feminist standards from *Emma*. In a parallel expression to backlash against the male-written issue, this example shows that many readers perceived *Emma* as a feminist publication despite its lack of anti-hierarchical ethos characteristic of autonomous feminist approaches.

In spite of apparent political inconsistencies and negative reactions, many women embraced *Emma* and its message. A 1984 study found that 45% of *Emma* readers read *Courage* and 70% of *Courage* readers read *Emma*.¹⁰¹ This reader crossover is reflected in parallel patterns seen in the two magazines' audiences. In similar patterns to those seen with *Courage*, *Emma* readers in the late 1970s and early 1980s tended to be young, educated, white German women. In 1980, 62% were younger than 30 and a further 25% were aged 30-39.¹⁰² The same study shows that, although almost 70% of BRD citizens had stopped their education with *Volksschule*, 87% of *Emma* readers had completed university or some other form of higher schooling.¹⁰³

While similarities between the two magazines' audiences show patterns present among the readers of feminist magazines, their differences demonstrate *Emma*'s distinctive appeal. While *Courage* readers tended to be 20-something activists, more *Emma* readers were in their 30s and were less likely to be actively involved in the women's movement. Whereas women new to feminism might not see the relevancy of *Courage*'s critiques or have honed the political consciousness to sort their own opinions

¹⁰¹ FFBIZ, Weinel, *Die feministische Presse in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und West Berlin*, 57.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 59.

from debate, *Emma*'s brand of less confrontational feminism was generously accessible for less experienced feminists.¹⁰⁴ Published letters from sources like a 73-year-old woman discovering the feminism of a younger generation, housewives noticing gender-based inequities for the first time, and middle-aged women thankful for accessible articles reflect *Emma*'s appeal to new feminist readers.¹⁰⁵ In other words, where *Courage* mobilized an audience of women already active in the *neue Frauenbewegung*, Schwarzer's formulation of feminist politics engaged a relatively less radical, slightly older audience of new and potential feminists.

Emma's supporters embraced their magazine with as much enthusiasm as its critics rejected it. Writer Viola Roggenkamp fondly recalls how *Emma* received numerous positive letters from readers in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁰⁶ The letters published in each issue certainly glow with praise. "Your journal is fantastic!" and "Alice Schwarzer and *Emma* have come 40 years too late" are comments representative of many letters that the editors chose to publish.¹⁰⁷ While I stated earlier in this chapter that published letters represent what editors wish to convey, the consistency with which *Emma* printed praise from readers indicates that they must have received a considerable number of positive letters on an ongoing basis. This favourable response is reinforced by *Emma*'s sales. The first issue sold out and the second reached what its editors estimated as one million

¹⁰⁴ Frank, "Feminist Publications in West Germany Today," 183.

¹⁰⁵ *Emma* 7, July 1977; *Emma* 5, April 1977; *Emma* 9, September 1977.

¹⁰⁶ Viola Roggenkamp, "Mainstreaming- Feminismus zwischen Emma und Zeit" in Halina Bendowski (ed) *Wie weit flog die Tomate? Eine 68erinnen-Gala der Reflexion* (Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 1999), 210-211.

¹⁰⁷ "Briefe" *Emma* 5, May 1977, 62-63. AT.

readers through the sale of 250,000 copies.¹⁰⁸ Although readership levelled out to about 130,000 per month by August 1977, this was still more than double *Courage*'s September 1977 circulation of 60,000. In other words, even though some autonomous *Frauenbewegung* critics resisted Schwarzer and her magazine, these numbers show that *Emma* was embraced by a large audience of readers in a way that her competition never was.

In the late 1970s, autonomous feminist criticisms of Schwarzer and her magazine focused on her leadership role and style of administration. Since *Emma* communicated a consistent and unified viewpoint, many autonomy-focused feminists saw its hierarchical organization privileging a dominant viewpoint over individual thought. Negative reactions from factions of the *neue Frauenbewegung* consistently demonstrate a powerful anti-hierarchical ethos in their rejection of Schwarzer's cohesive message and permanent position at the top of a hierarchy. By reacting in the ways they did, women already active in the *Frauenbewegung* emphasized the importance of an anti-hierarchical ethos to autonomous organizational principles.

What is especially interesting about *Emma* is its astonishing success in the face of criticisms from what might have been conceived as its target audience. By foregoing the encouragement of individual opinion in favour of a dominant program, *Emma* attracted readers who might have been intimidated by the broad spectrum of opinions presented in *Courage* or the *Frauenzeitung*. By attracting new women to the *neue Frauenbewegung*, *Emma* served a purpose unique among the other periodicals discussed in this chapter

¹⁰⁸ "Emma über Emma", *Emma* 5, May 1977.

despite the irony of having achieved it by rejecting the organizational principles on which the movement had been founded.

Conclusion:

The *Frauenzeitung*, *Courage*, and *Emma* used organizational strategies with different relationships to autonomy and anti-hierarchical administration. The *Frauenzeitung*'s *Rotationsprinzip* refused a hierarchical model through the subversion of regional, factional, and individual hegemony. The approach of the *Courage* collective articulated the same ethos through the rejection of expertise and heightened importance of discussion. Feminist reactions to *Emma*'s hierarchical, professionalized method demonstrate anxieties about top-down organization and the problem of individual authority. Overall, the value these emphases attached to individual thought and the subversion of a dominant viewpoint in the histories of these three national feminist publications show how autonomy again worked against hierarchy.

In the cases of the *Frauenzeitung* and *Courage*, the anti-hierarchical ethos was powerfully expressed through administrative choices that greatly diversified the messages appearing in print. The resulting lack of clear programs or overarching perspectives created journals that presented many ideas and encouraged readers to process them independently. In the case of *Emma*, the absence of such diversity triggered a backlash from autonomous feminists despite Schwarzer's all-female staff. Although *Emma*'s gender exclusivity constituted separation from men and the male-dominated press, many autonomous feminists reacted against the magazine because of its hierarchical organization. If political and economic independence from men and the government were the only requirements of autonomy, *Emma*'s women-only staff and financial

administration should have qualified the magazine as an autonomous feminist endeavour. However, responses indicate that autonomy was about not only separation from men, the state, and male or state dominated institutions, but also about choosing a distinct organizational model. By enforcing the idea that women's spaces should be both independent and organized in new, anti-hierarchical ways, the histories of the *Frauenzeitung*, *Courage*, and *Emma* demonstrate the inherent connection between anti-hierarchical organizational methods and the principle of autonomy.

Conclusion

In the 1970s, feminists in West Germany worked to apply their understandings of autonomy to groups, projects, and actions. This thesis has shown how autonomy meant development of physical, literary, and journalistic spaces for women and that these spaces were organized on anti-hierarchical lines. The emphases these systems placed on characteristics including individual choice, self-sufficiency, and economic independence worked to clarify the implications and ideas connected to autonomy's core requirements of political and economic independence from men, the state, and male or state dominated institutions. By choosing to apply autonomy in these particular ways, the gender-exclusive spaces forged through the *neue Frauenbewegung* formed a cultural counter-sphere marked by an anti-hierarchical model.

The networks of autonomous projects only constituted one element of the feminist political space forged in the 1970s. As discussed in my introduction and illustrated in Chapter Four, autonomous feminism represents only one stream that emerged after the tomatoes were thrown in 1968. While socialist, liberal, and autonomous feminists all fought for the advancement of women in the 1970s, their approaches differentiated them dramatically. Both socialist and liberal feminists desired equality for women in imagined or established social systems. By working towards the inclusion of women in a greater system, the approaches taken by activists in these feminist streams indicated support for integrating women into a broad, unified society. While working in a socialist or liberal framework supported socialist or liberal systems in which women played a role, working within a framework of autonomy supported *alternative* spaces in which women could think and act autonomously. This focus on providing grassroots, women-centred

alternatives distinct from the male-identified status quo therefore differentiated the autonomous perspective from other women's activists working in the German feminist political space.

Brigitte Young has shown that autonomous feminism and its relationships to men and the government "constituted a new politics of organization" reliant on "networks of networks."¹ While these new organizational politics certainly functioned through networks, the methods applied to *Frauenbewegung* projects went beyond fostering large-scale organization to actually embody the autonomy that activists worked towards. Through the development of autonomous organizations, women-only physical, literary, and journalistic spaces served as sites of resistance in which women could exercise independence from men and the state. *Frauenbewegung* activists furthered this resistance by rejecting traditional hierarchical structures in the administration of these separate women's spaces. By organizing according to principles antithetical to established norms, they emphasized their distinctiveness. The establishment of these autonomous spaces thus worked to provide women with environments both separate and different from the patriarchal status quo. Networks of these gender-exclusive spaces formed a broader milieu offering temporal sites of protest that worked to counter the essentialisms of mainstream society. By forging and connecting alternative spaces, autonomous feminist activists created new, anti-hierarchical administrative approaches that offered the vision of an equitable society, countering the status quo and its male-identified institutions.

The networks of spaces that made up the feminist counter-sphere worked to provide women with alternatives to established institutions without doing away with the

¹ Brigitte Young, *Triumph of the Fatherland: German Unification and the Marginalization of Women* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 214.

status quo. The goal of autonomy was not to replace patriarchy with matriarchy, but to forge a functional network of spaces that would give women viable choices through the provision of women-centred alternatives. Emphases on debate and independent thought facilitated by anti-hierarchical structures also worked to give women the tools to make informed, conscious decisions about the different options available to them. The Berlin Women's Centre focused on coordinating groups of women to help themselves in a self-sufficient collective; women's literary space worked to add female voices to German literature; national women's periodicals created journalistic spaces where women could write, organize, and discuss their views. While the actions and projects discussed in this thesis certainly criticized and protested established institutions, these focuses show a common emphasis on creating spaces where women could work with and for women. This pattern of concentrating on internal strength rather than the destruction of external forces strongly suggests that elimination of established systems was not a necessary implication of autonomy. As a milieu of alternative institutions, the autonomous feminist counter-sphere worked to counter the male-dominated mainstream in ways that pointed towards the vision of a society in which women's independent decisions were facilitated by a variety of accessible choices.

Together, the autonomous spaces constructed by 1970s *Frauenbewegung* activists constituted a cultural counter-sphere. The convergence of community-based political space exemplified by the Berlin FZ, literary space as discussed in Chapter Three, and journalistic spaces such as *Courage* and *Emma* worked to form a system of feminist alternatives separate and different from the status quo. By establishing space for women in areas such as journalism, politics, health, and publishing, feminist projects of the 1970s

worked to establish a diversified feminist sphere defined by spaces created through autonomous organizational principles characterized by the expression of an anti-hierarchical ethos. While comprehensive autonomy may not have been possible or even desired, its application through anti-hierarchical organizational methods in 1970s *Frauenbewegung* projects demonstrate a distinct and compelling feminist approach that placed power in the hands of women who were encouraged to think and act on their own behalf.

Epilogue

In parallel patterns to those seen in other Western industrialized countries, the West German women's movement has changed dramatically since its height in the 1970s. Beginning in the 1980s, feminist conceptualizations of autonomy in women's projects changed significantly. As this thesis has illustrated, many projects struggled with problems of commitment, time, and finances in the 1970s. Late in the decade, after shelters for abused women received state grants, these issues played significant roles in debates over whether other projects should accept government funds.¹ By the early 1980s, the conversation concluded that economic autonomy was no longer "an aim nor a claim" and dependence on state funding ceased to be seen as an impediment to autonomous feminist development.² Sociologist Agnes Senganata Müntz has shown how this new view of autonomy persisted, arguing that lesbian feminists of the early 2000s were fighting for an autonomy defined as "the ability to define subjects, methods, analyses and aims independently, despite being publicly funded."³ This shifting of emphasis from economic independence to independent thought shows how practical problems and available resources worked to catalyze this major change in feminist constructions of autonomy after 1978.

¹ Dagmar Schultz, "The Women's Movement in 1982" in Edith Hoshino Altbach, Jeannette Clausen, Dagmar Schulz, Naomi Stephan eds., *German Feminism: Readings in Politics and Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 375.

² Agnes Senganata Müntz, "Lesbians' Contribution to the Autonomous Women's Movement in (West-) Germany, Exemplified by a State Capital City," *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 23 no. 5 (2000): 605-606.

³ *Ibid.*, 606.

These shifts in feminist political ideology were paralleled by major changes in the politics, culture, and society of the BRD during and after the *Wende*. In 1989, after decades as a divided nation, the Berlin Wall fell and the DDR's SED-controlled government collapsed. Able to legally engage one another for the first time in generations, East and West German feminists encountered one another against distinct social, political, and cultural backgrounds and experiences. During the initial period of (re)unification in the 1990s, Eastern and Western women activists all struggled to influence the creation of policies for the new singular state.⁴ As in the 1970s, Paragraph 218 emerged as a polarizing political issue for German women. From 1972, women in the DDR had full legal rights and access to first trimester abortion services whereas the BRD maintained the legal restrictions of Paragraph 218.⁵ East and West German activists alike fought to maintain the more liberal Eastern law, leading to both statutes being left in effect for the two years following unification. Despite activist efforts, the Bundestag ultimately maintained the restrictions of Paragraph 218, technically legalizing first trimester abortions with conditions of anti-abortion counselling and a waiting period before obtaining a procedure.⁶

Abortion legislation represents just one issue that required feminists from East and West to negotiate conceptions of women's rights formed in forcibly separated, distinct German societies. As Brigitte Young has demonstrated, East and West German feminist movements were very different and had developed "in isolation from each

⁴ Brigitte Young, *Triumph of the Fatherland: German Unification and the Marginalization of Women* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 6.

⁵ Pamela Fisher, "Abortion in post-communist Germany: The end of *Muttipolitik* and a still birth for feminism," *Women's Studies International Forum* 28 (2005): 24.

⁶ See Andrea Wuerth, "National Politics/Local Identities: Abortion Rights Activism in Post-Wall Berlin," *Feminist Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 601-631.

other.”⁷ Some elements of East German feminism encompassed aspects of “old politics” including formal organization, centrality of the state, and a defined program. Other features, however, included grassroots political methods such as a reliance on personal connections for mobilization and ideas about emancipation outside the confines of party politics.⁸ Thus, where BRD feminists forged their grassroots “networks of networks,” women activists in the DDR worked both within and outside the state system to develop a “hybrid form” of feminist movement.⁹

Since 1990, Eastern German women have endured a Western colonization that has “decreased women’s social protections while simultaneously offering them increased democratic freedoms.”¹⁰ While DDR conditions were certainly far from ideal, the loss of its state-supported single motherhood, access to abortion on demand, and near-universal employment rate has contributed to significant disparities and distances between Eastern and Western women. Despite their distinct sets of origins, ideas, and concerns, this newly united group has been “forced to share a common political space” since 1990.¹¹ For women’s rights activists, balancing differences between feminisms and feminists within the shared political space formed by unification has led to compelling experiences of

⁷ Young, *Triumph of the Fatherland*, 14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 216-217.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 216-217.

¹⁰ Katja Guether, “A Case Study of Local Feminist Mobilization in Eastern Germany, 1990-2000,” *Journal of Women’s History*, vol. 15 no. 3 (Autumn), 139.

¹¹ Young, *Triumph of the Fatherland*, 14.

conflict, continuity, and change that continue to shape German feminist discourses in the twenty-first century.¹²

1970s *Frauenbewegung* activists very rarely engaged issues of race or acknowledged voices other than those of white Germans. After the movement's first decade, however, this pattern changed when non-white Germans' contributions to discourses of feminism, race, and intersectionality became increasingly visible. Since the mid-1980s, Afro-German women's voices have engaged issues of sexism, racism, and xenophobia in particularly salient ways. In spring 1984, Audre Lorde taught a poetry workshop and course on African American women poets at Berlin's Free University. Her courses brought together a group of young Afro-Germans, some of whom had grown up "in the almost total absence of a Black community."¹³ In 1986, Orlanda Frauenverlag published *Farbe bekennen: Afro-deutsch Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte* (English title: *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*), an edited volume engaging multiple historical and contemporary issues faced by black German women. In 1986, the Initiative of Black Germans (ISD) formed and began working to provide social, political, and cultural activities for non-white Germans.¹⁴ Since 1989, notable authors such as May Ayim, Ermine Sevgi Özdamar, and Yoko Tawada have continued to

¹² For German feminisms since 1990 see: Guether, "A Case Study of Local Feminist Mobilization in Eastern Germany," Ulrike Helwerth and Gislinde Schwarz eds., *Von Muttis und Emanzen: Feministinnen in Ost-und West Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH, 1995); Elizabeth Mittman, "Gender, Citizenship, and the Public Sphere in Postunification Germany: Experiments in Feminist Journalism," *Signs*, vol. 32 no. 3 (2007): 759-792; Young, *Triumph of the Fatherland*.

¹³ Audre Lorde, "Foreward to the English Language Edition" in May Opitz, Katharina Oguntoye, and Dagmar Schultz eds., *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*, trans. Anne V. Adams (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), vii-ix.

¹⁴ Opitz et. al., eds., *Showing Our Colors*, xvi.

challenge German conceptions of racial, ethnic, and cultural difference through artistic and literary political activism delivered using non-white German perspectives.¹⁵ While much work still needs to be done in order to meaningfully integrate dialogues of difference and Germanness, the increasing visibility of some non-white German women's voices is working to draw attention to the intersections of race and gender in a shift away from the homogenized white feminist identity of the 1970s.

As the *Frauenbewegung* worked out new goals for autonomy and negotiated new German voices, West German women's projects have met with different levels of success and survived for varying lengths of time. The projects discussed in this thesis developed in tandem with the redefinitions of Germanness and feminisms that took place after 1978. While many projects ended, others adapted to changing conditions and continue at the time of writing.

Courage was an early casualty of the *neue Frauenbewegung*'s second decade. By the early 1980s, financial problems and competition with *Emma* prompted the *Courage* collective to introduce a "cheaper format" of weekly issues. The experiment failed miserably.¹⁶ As one former collective member recalled, the weekly editions "did not

¹⁵ For examples see May Ayim, *Blues in Black and White: A Collection of Essays, Poetry, and Conversations*, trans. by Anne V. Adams (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2003); Ermine Sevgi Özdamar, "The Courtyard in the Mirror," trans. Leslie A. Adelson, *Transit* 2 (1) (2006) < <http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/1nd8r83v>> (25 January 2010); Yoko Tawada, *Where Europe Begins*, trans. Susan Bernofsky and Yumi Selden (United States: New Directions Books, 2002).

¹⁶ Gisela Notz, "Courage - Wie es began, was daraus wurde und was geblieben ist" in Notz (ed.) *Als die Frauenbewegung noch Courage hatte: die 'Berliner Frauenzeitschrift Courage' und die autonomen Frauenbewegungen der 1970er und 1980er Jahre* (Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2007), 45. AT.

function” and were simply “not good.”¹⁷ In 1981, six women left the collective over the high workload and low circulation associated with the shift to the weekly format.¹⁸ Additionally, *Courage* had never managed to become financially sustainable. Persistent underfunding and escalating debts were not resolved by appeals to readers.¹⁹ The final issue of *Die wöchentliche Courage* (*The Weekly Courage*) appeared 25 May 1984.²⁰ After two and a half months as a weekly publication, conflicts over debts and money led to the collapse of *Courage*.²¹

Labrys was another project that encountered difficulties after the 1970s. In February 1981, a drastic rent increase drove Labrys Women’s Bookstore from its original Kreuzberg storefront to a new location at 64 Hohenstaufenstrasse in the West Berlin district of Schöneberg. The bookstore remained at its new address for thirteen years until overwhelming debts forced its closure in late March 1994.²²

The Kreuzberg women’s centre has survived several turbulent decades and remains at 40 Stresemannstr. at the time of writing. Its longevity, however, is not typical of 1970s West German women’s centres. Many FZs were phased out in the later 1970s and 1980s when feminist publications grew to take over some of their co-ordinating

¹⁷ Sibylle Plogstedt quoted in Notz in Notz (ed.), *Als die Frauenbewegung noch ‘Courage’ hatte*, 45. AT.

¹⁸ Notz, “Courage - Wie es began,” 45.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

²⁰ *Die wöchentliche Courage* 21, 25 May 1984.

²¹ Notz, “Courage - Wie es began,” 46-47.

²² FFBIZ, Rep 400 ACC 150 B20 9a No 1 Labrys, Mirja Bressling, “Findbuch,” 26 February 2003.

roles.²³ Since 1990, the processes of unification have given rise to new incarnations of *Frauenzentren*. Despite the services and rights they lost through unification, women from the DDR did not respond by mobilizing on a national scale. Without large-scale organization, women's centres offering services such as daycare, creative activities, and women-only social spaces have become valuable resources for Eastern German women negotiating the life changes resulting from the *Wende*. These centres and the services they provide are working to help with women's negotiation of new economic and social conditions in cities throughout the former DDR.²⁴

While women's centres have shifted in purpose, many publishing projects have continued to pursue similar courses of action to those of the 1970s. Although the *Frauenzeitung* project ended in 1976 and *Courage* ceased to exist after 1981, Frauenoffensive continues to exhibit a powerful commitment to women's writing in German. The project, which is ongoing, still demonstrates a commitment to the ideas laid out in 1975 by publishing books on subjects such as health, motherhood, and ecology written from women's perspectives.²⁵

Emma is another publication project that continued to make waves in the 1980s and 1990s. Schwarzer's new campaigns included discussions of female military service and the "PorNO" Campaign. *Emma* is the only periodical discussed in this thesis that is still in print at the time of writing. Now published as *Emma: Magazin von Frauen für*

²³ Edith Hoshino Altbach, "The New German Women's Movement," *Signs* vol. 9 no. 3 (Spring 1984), 457.

²⁴ See Guenther, "A Case Study of Local Feminist Mobilization," 140; *My Second Life: East German Women in a Changed World*, Coastline Productions, 1996.

²⁵ "Sachbücher," *Frauenoffensive - Ein Verlag der Frauenbewegung* < <http://www.verlag-frauenoffensive.de> > (13 November 2009).

Menschen (*Emma: A Magazine by Women, for Humanity*), it is currently a bimonthly feminist journal with about 120,000 readers in the BRD.²⁶ Despite recent rumors of her departure, Alice Schwarzer is still the magazine's head editor. She has also continued her success as a public feminist figure. The many books she has published, written, and/or edited include 2007's *Die Antwort* (*The Answer*), 2000's *Der grosse Unterschied* (*The Big Difference*), and 2008's *Damenwahl* (*Ladies' Choice*), which includes an introduction by Angela Merkel.²⁷ In the 1990s, Schwarzer entered a new medium by making frequent and continuing television appearances. In 1994, she founded FrauenMediaTurm (Women's Media Tower), an archive and library housing a rich collection of historical sources of the *neue Frauenbewegung*.²⁸

The feminist projects founded during the first ten years of the *neue Frauenbewegung* laid the groundwork for the changes it has undergone since 1978. Understanding how these concrete applications of feminist ideology were imagined and carried out illustrates how the autonomous women's movement reacted and adapted to the problems and challenges of practical implementation. By forging a cultural counter-sphere of alternative spaces for women, these early initiatives established movement emphases on autonomous organizational principles characterized by the expression of an anti-hierarchical ethos. As understandings of feminist politics continue to evolve, the

²⁶ Ricarda Strobel, "Die neue Frauenbewegung" in Werner Faulstich (ed) *Die Kultur der siebziger Jahre* (Germany: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2004), 269.

²⁷ "Bücher von Alice- Im Handel", *Alice Schwarzer*, <<http://www.aliceschwarzer.de/117.html>> (20 September 2009).

²⁸ Alice Schwarzer, "Ein Turm für Frauen allein (1994)", *FrauenMediaTurm: Das Archiv und Dokumentationszentrum* <<http://frauenmediaturm.de/turm fuer frauen.html>> (25 September 2009).

ways in which historical activists worked out their foundational goals and strategies offer compelling directions for the continuing study and development of women's movements.

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