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# Bulletin of the German Historical Institute

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# Preface

This Bulletin features a special thematic forum titled "The Campus and Beyond: Higher Education and Social Inequalities in Europe and the United States since the 1870s." This forum – which grew out of a 2025 conference organized by the German Historical Institute with the support of the Fritz Thyssen Foundation and is co-edited and introduced by Stefanie Coché (University of Gießen), Raphael Rössel (GHI Washington), and Elizabeth Tandy Shermer (University of Georgia) – presents five case studies that examine issues of inequality, social mobility, and diversity in higher education in Europe and the United States since the late nineteenth century.

The first article, "Detours to Promotion: American Doctorates as Upward Social Mobility in Germany, 1870s-1920s," by Olga Sparschuh (University of Vienna), examines how aspiring dentists in Imperial Germany dealt with a particular kind of status inequality, namely the fact that while physicians were trained at German universities, generally completing their studies with a doctoral degree (Dr. med.), dentists were trained outside the university system and could not earn doctorates. Starting in the 1870s, increasing numbers of aspiring dentists began to address this status gap by obtaining doctoral degrees in dentistry in the United States – some by attending legitimate American dental schools, others by obtaining degrees from diploma mills. The proliferation of American doctorates in dentistry led to complaints from general practitioners of medicine and to government regulations limiting the recognition of foreign degrees – until the introduction of the "Dr. med. dent." degree in Germany in 1919 made the American doctorates obsolete.

In the second article, "Fighting Intellectual Unemployment: The League of Nations, Marie Curie, and Social Inequalities in Higher

Education," Jonathan Voges (University of Hannover) investigates how the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation set up by the League of Nations in 1922 sought to address the problem of academic unemployment that resulted from the combination of the expansion of higher education and the straitened economic circumstances of the postwar era. The article focuses on Nobel laureate Marie Curie, who in 1926 proposed an international scholarship program designed to support promising junior scholars – allowing those who did not have their own financial means to pursue scientific research and careers. By the time the expert commission presented its report in 1930, however, the world economic crisis had eliminated any prospect of funding such a program.

The third article, "Breaking Barriers: Women in Croatian Advanced Education (1892–1942)," by Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak (University of Zagreb), addresses the role of gender in higher education by examining the complicated process by which Croatian women gradually gained access to a university education. Addressing the complex legal, institutional, and cultural barriers to women's education, Ograjšek Gorenjak shows how women first got access to college-preparatory secondary education (Lyceum), which then, often with the crucial support of Lyceum teachers, gradually opened the path toward university study for women. Probing gradual changes in family support and public opinion, she explores how women gradually managed to break through barriers to professional careers.

In the following article, "Balancing Conservativism and Diversity: Participatory Democracy as a Challenge and Resource for U.S. Evangelical Colleges," Stefanie Coché (University of Gießen) shows how, starting in the 1980s, Evangelical colleges in the United States strategically used notions of diversity and minority rights to secure their own position in the American higher education landscape. Although evangelicals generally championed traditional gender roles, Evangelical colleges met the challenge of the women's and civil rights movements by increasing ethnic diversity in their student bodies and highlighting female students in their

publicity. At the same time, they began to use the language of diversity and civil rights in order to position evangelical universities as representing a religious minority deserving of protection, thus bolstering their position within American higher education.

The final article, "From Old to New Inequalities: The East-West Gap in Post-Unification German Higher Education," by Aron Schulze (Technical University Dresden), examines the role of economic inequalities in the transformation of East German higher education during the process of German unification that began in 1989/90. By focusing on two particular issues – the gradual but, for a long time, incomplete integration of student financial aid for East German university students into the West German BaFöG system; and the gaps in pay and pension rights for a particular cohort of East German academics who were promoted to full professorships at East German universities after unification, the so-called *Aufbauprofessoren* – Schulze is able to show that the process of unification in higher education was characterized by significant economic inequalities between East and West German students and professors, which lingered for more than a decade after unification.

Finally, this issue reports on GHI conferences on a wide range of subjects, including the history of gender and violence, climate migration, and digital approaches to the history of sound and language, as well as reports on the West Coast Germanists' Workshop and the Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar in German History. Please turn to our news section for recent GHI news. For up-to-date information on upcoming events, publications, fellowships, and calls for papers, please consult the GHI website at http://www.ghi-dc.org, check our Bluesky account @ghiwashington.bsky.social or sign up for our digital newsletter on our website. We look forward to welcoming you at upcoming events in both Washington and Berkeley.

**Ulrike von Hirschhausen** (Director)
**Insa Kummer** (Editor)
**Richard F. Wetzell** (Editor)

Forum

# The Campus and Beyond: Higher Education and Social Inequalities in Europe and the United States Since the 1870s

Edited by
Raphael Rössel
Stefanie Coché
and Elizabeth Tandy Shermer

# The Campus and Beyond: Higher Education and Social Inequalities in Europe and the U.S. Since the 1870s

Raphael Rössel, Stefanie Coché, and Elizabeth Tandy Shermer

Since the late nineteenth century, European and North American universities have evolved from small, elite schools into sprawling institutions that have become, as historian Laurence Veysey predicted in 1970, as common "as the church was three hundred years ago." Diplomas, for example, may have stood out a century ago, but today many adults on both sides of the North Atlantic list at least one college degree at the top of their resumes or CVs. Today's degree holders likely enrolled in college or university for many reasons, but teachers, politicians, economists, university spokespeople, and many others assure aspiring students, young and old alike, that higher education remains essential for better economic opportunities in the future. No matter what financial challenges or struggles to stay in school an applicant may face today, the message is that a degree will eventually be worth it.[1]

Yet inequality remains endemic to colleges and universities on either side of the North Atlantic. While reporters have drawn attention to student visa restrictions as well as political threats to jobs, donations, and grants in recent years, it is the soaring costs of a

**1** Laurence Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago, 1970), quote on x; for the statistical change, see for the U.S.: https://ies.ed.gov/learn/blog/celebrating-150-years-education-data; for Imperial Germany: https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/forging-an-empire-bismarckian-germany-1866-1890/students-attending-universities-and-other-institutions-of-higher-learning-in-prussia-1869-1912; See the contributions in *The Transformation of Higher Learning, 1860–1930: Expansion, Diversification, Social Opening, and Professionalization in England, Germany, Russia, and the United States*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (Chicago, 1983).

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college education that have dominated the news. In the United States, tuition fees have skyrocketed over the last decades with some schools listing fees as high as six figures a year. Millions of students, even those enrolled at less expensive universities, have to rely on government loan programs that often leave them, and their parents, with crippling debts.[2]

Rising college costs have also exacerbated inequalities in Europe. English universities recorded recent rises in tuition costs in line with inflation.[3] On the continent, university towns simply do not have enough housing for residents, much less students, who struggle to find affordable housing.[4] Meanwhile, enrollment statistics demonstrate that educational opportunities are still largely tied to social background. For example, in Germany, the European Union's most populous country and the member state with the highest GDP, the vast majority of the children of academics enroll at a university themselves (79 percent in 2022). Despite the successes of individual, pioneering first-generation students, only 27 percent of children born to parents without a university education matriculated in 2022.[5]

Journalists have thus far not paid as much attention to demands for more inclusive, affordable universities. Over the last two decades, for example, strikes and protests have roiled British campuses.

**2** Tracy Moran, "Canada, U.S. both roll back welcome mat for international students," *National Post*, July 9, 2026, https://nationalpost.com/news/canada-u-s-both-roll-back-welcome-mat-for-international-students; Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, *Indentured Students: How Government-Guaranteed Loans Left Generations Drowning in College Debt* (Cambridge, MA, 2021); Thomas Adam, *The History of College Affordability in the United States from Colonial Times to the Cold War* (New York, 2020); Felix Krämer, "Living on Credit: Student Debt in the U.S. History of Knowledge," *History of Knowledge,* September 27, 2024, https://doi.org/10.58079/12pzx; Elissa Nadworny, "College 'sticker prices' have risen dramatically. Here's why," *NPR*, November 20, 2025, https://www.npr.org/2025/11/20/nx-s1-5600854/college-costs-have-risen-dramatically-in-the-last-20-years-heres-why.

**3** Branwen Jeffreys, "University Tuition Fees in England to Rise with Inflation Every Year from 2026," *BBC News*, October 20, 2025, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgkzj87n8rdo. On the crisis of British universities and the resulting layoffs and closures of departments see Daniel Siemens, "Dem Aufschwung folgt der Ausverkauf," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* June 24, 2026, N4.

**4** Helen Whittle, "Germany's Housing Crisis Hits University Students Hard,"*Deutsche Welle,* October 22, 2023, https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-housing-crisis-hits-university-students-hard/a-67149695; "The European Students' Union's Opinion on the European Affordable Housing Plan," January 30, 2026, https://esu-online.org/the-european-students-unions-opinion-on-the-european-affordable-housing-plan.

**5** *Hochschul-Bildungs-Report 2020 – Abschlussbericht 2022*, ed. Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft e.V, https://www.hochschulbildungsreport.de/sites/hsbr/files/hochschul-bildungs-report_abschlussbericht_2022.pdf, 2022, 13. However, in Germany the quota of first generation students at private institutions of higher learning is higher than in the public education sector: Gerald Wagner, "International Universities. Studium zum Schleuderpreis, in *FAZNET*," July 16, 2025, https://www.faz.net/aktuell/karriere-hochschule/die-international-university-lockt-mit-guenstigen-gebuehren-und-schnellen-titeln-110590778.html.

Students have condemned the funding cuts and tuition hikes that have made higher education even more unaffordable. They have been joined by faculty who objected to temporary contracts replacing permanent jobs as well as significant pension reductions. In 2021, German academics launched a social media campaign in response to a video published by the Ministry for Research and Education that was supposed to demonstrate the advantages created by a new law introducing fixed-term contracts for mid-level academic staff (*Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz*, WissZeitVG). Using a fictitious character named Hanna, the video sought to illustrate how the new law improved her academic career opportunities. The ensuing *#IchBinHanna* campaign cleverly highlighted the challenges many German academics faced trying to secure permanent positions, which have also become rarer at North American universities.[6]

In the United States, students, parents, citizens, and politicians have debated what kind of institutions universities should be and what uses they should have long before University of California President Clark Kerr mused about the many purposes of the "multiversity" in his now canonical *The Uses of the University* (1964). Campuses transformed North American and European societies, which greatly benefited from the advances in science, technology, and medicine that research universities produced. Yet historians have noted that postsecondary institutions have also reflected and contributed to longstanding social inequalities even when purportedly contributing to what Charles Dorn has called the "Common Good."[7] Other historians have emphasized critical differences between U.S. and European universities. Mitchell G. Ash, for example, argues that Americans have focused on higher education as a "private good" for individual professional development whereas Europeans have tended to argue that universities must function for the "public good."[8]

**6** Sean Coughlan, "Students protest against tuition fees," *BBC News*, November 4, 2015, https://www.bbc.com/news/education-34721681; "UK universities hit by strike action over pay and pensions," *Guardian*, November 30, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/nov/30/uk-universities-hit-by-strike-action-over-pay-and-pensions; Amrei Bahr, Kristin Eichhorn, Sebastian Kubon, *#IchBinHanna: Prekäre Wissenschaft in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main, 2022). For an analysis of this social media campaign, see Ahmadou Wagne, Elen Le Foll, Florentine Frantz, and Jana Lasser, "Giving the Outrage a Name – How Researchers Are Challenging Employment Conditions under the Hashtags #IchBinHanna and #IchBinReyhan," *Information, Communication & Society* 28, no.9 (2025): 1647–1673.

**7** Charles Dorn, *For the Common Good: A New History of Higher Education in America* (Ithaca, NY, 2017).

**8** Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge, MA, 1964); Mitchell G. Ash, "Higher Education in the United States and Europe since 1945. Multiple Transformations and the Current Crisis," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 77 (Spring 2026): 59-90, 87-90. https://www.ghi-dc.org/fileadmin/publications/Bulletin/bu77/GHI-77_04-FEA-Ash_Universities_3pp.pdf

This forum builds on a conference held at the German Historical Institute and the George Washington University Museum and Textile Museum in October 2025.[9] Our conference unearthed how different higher education systems have sustained similar, intertwined inequalities. The papers in this forum build on an immense body of scholarship as the history of universities in Europe and the U.S. is a well-established field.[10] However, the historiography of universities has traditionally tended to focus more on the institutions rather than on the social realities of those attending, teaching, or working at them, although those dynamics have received more attention in recent years.[11]

This forum highlights the complex dynamics between inequalities on and off college campuses. Many of those disparities have been and remain rooted in capitalism, which has long enabled a wealthy few to more easily succeed politically, financially, and, of course, academically. Entering higher education rather than starting a job right after secondary school has long been and remains a financial decision, often not just for the potential student but for their entire family. In the Industrial North, college attendance remained, often well into the twentieth century, disproportionately concentrated among white men of means, a pattern produced by exclusionary social norms and institutional practices that restricted access along racial, ethnic, gender, and ability lines. Although specific colleges for racial minorities, women, and the deaf were more common in the United States than in Europe, all these demographics faced real limits on educational opportunities, although not always explicitly. Social norms, customs, university rules, and state laws, for example, kept European and North American women from matriculating at many schools until well into the twentieth century.[12] Few schools in the United States, especially in the Southern states, admitted African Americans, who also faced numerous obstacles finishing the high school diplomas needed for admission by the

**9** The conference was organized by Raphael Rössel, Stefanie Coché, and Elizabeth Tandy Shermer. It was generously funded by the GHI Washington and the Fritz Thyssen Foundation. See the conference report by Vincent Musebrink in the *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 77 (Spring 2026): 133-140. https://www.ghi-dc.org/fileadmin/publications/Bulletin/bu77/GHI-77_09REP-campusandBeyond_3pp.pdf

**10** Among the many syntheses of the history of U.S. higher education is John Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore, 2019); for Europe see the four-volume series *A History of the University in Europe*, ed. by Walter Rüegg and Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (Cambridge, 1992-2011).

**11** For a broader sociohistorical approach towards education, see Till Kössler, "Sozialgeschichte der Bildung in der Erweiterung. Einleitung," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 62 (2022): 9-30.

**12** Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale and Princeton* (Boston, 2005); Harold S. Wechsler and Steven J. Diner, *Unwelcome Guests: A History of Access to American Higher Education* (Baltimore, 2021).

early decades of the twentieth century.[13] Likewise, students classed as disabled received schooling that ended without degrees or gave them credentials that would not allow them access to higher education. Jewish students faced exclusionary quota systems on both sides of the Atlantic. And even if they were admitted, Jewish students often faced severe everyday discrimination as well as physical and verbal abuse that made it clear to them that they were not welcome.[14]

The five articles assembled in this forum shed light on different dynamics in the interplay of academia and social stratification. Olga Sparschuh reveals the history of German students of dental medicine traveling to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to obtain the doctorates that the established German medical academy denied them at home. In contrast to Germany, a multitude of degree programs for aspiring dentists had been established in the United States by that time, some of which turned out to be diploma mills rather than respectable institutions. Many German dental practitioners or those aspiring to take up the profession felt that the lack of a doctoral degree disadvantaged them in comparison to other fields of medicine and sought to overcome this professional inequality by obtaining a foreign degree. In the long run, the proliferation of American doctorates in the German Empire pressured German universities and the medical establishment to accept the degree "Dr. med. dent."

Jonathan Voges analyzes how the League of Nations sought to tackle the problem of academic unemployment in the interwar period. The intergovernmental organization founded after the First World War hoped to go beyond merely studying the question of rising unemployment among academics. The International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC), an advisory board to the League, envisioned a global scholarship program that would help academics to continue their work despite a scarcity of funds in academia. Voges shows how renowned scientist Marie Curie not only took a leading role in the debates about the scholarship program but also stressed how it could particularly benefit women in academia. Ultimately, these initiatives were stunted by the global Depression and rising nationalism in the 1930s.

**13** Linda Perkins, *To Advance the Race: Black Women's Higher Education from the Antebellum Era to the 1960s* (Urbana, 2024), 227.

**14** Raphael Rössel, "Die Abwehr unerwünschter Kommilitonen. Initiationsgewalt gegen jüdische Akademiker in den USA, 1890er- bis 1920er-Jahre," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 74, no.1 (2026): 24-39.

Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak traces the rise of Croatian secondary and postsecondary education for women during the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the emergence of a Yugoslavian state. As the end of the Empire curtailed student mobility and impacted women's collegiate choices, female academics had to navigate various cultural, legal, and social barriers. Gorenjak's work also reveals how opposition and support for women's higher education intersected with the ongoing processes of nation building.

Stefanie Coché's article focuses on the strategic use of notions of diversity by evangelical colleges from the 1980s onwards.[15] While evangelical institutions are often seen as places that limit expressions of sexuality, Coché shows that they did incorporate some aspects of diversity into their mission statements. Institutions like Liberty University in Virginia and Fuller Seminary in California used sign language and prominently featured female students in their promotional material. Those choices helped both universities remain eligible for federal tuition assistance programs and secure donations, which were both vital to the U.S. academy's highly complex business model, which relies on many different types of funding.[16] But these institutions also strategically cast themselves as representatives of religious minorities whose rights were legally protected when seeking accreditation from professional organizations.

In the final contribution, Aaron Schulze looks at the economic impact of German unification on East German students and professors. In the GDR, higher education was tightly controlled by the ruling SED party to create a politically loyal elite. East German students were provided with monthly stipends by the state that made them financially independent from their parents at a relatively early age. After unification in 1990, East German students had to adjust to the West German system of financial support, which granted student loans only if the income of the students' parents was deemed to be insufficient to finance their child's university education. Moreover, unification created a class of East German professors, the so-called gap professors, who were ineligible to receive the same level of pension payments as their West German peers

**15** Adam Laats, *Fundamentalist U: Keeping the Faith in American Higher Education* (New York, 2018); Sophia Egbert, *Religion und Psychologie: Forschung und Lehre an evangelikalen Hochschulen in den USA, 1945–1998* (Köln, 2026).

**16** Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, *The Business of Education: Why American Universities Have Always Had to Hustle* (forthcoming in 2027).

because they were above the age limit for entering Germany's civil service. Their organization, Aaron Schulze emphasizes, continues to address this imbalance.

Taken together, these contributions shed light on the complex inequalities that continue to shape academia on both sides of the Atlantic. Even though university systems in the United States and Europe differ significantly, particularly in terms of funding, this forum also emphasizes that students faced, and still confront, similar obstacles — class, race, and gender have long determined access to higher education as well as chances of academic success. A history of universities that focuses on the production of, and the struggle against, social inequalities makes an important contribution to understanding how belonging and inclusion were negotiated throughout the long twentieth century. Such an approach to the history of higher education emphasizes that students, faculty, and university leaders had agency. They fought for inclusion as well as against discrimination and biases. We contend that those who were experiencing financial hardship often found ways to better their situation. Indeed, all of the articles reveal that inequality is socially and politically created and, therefore, can be undone.

**Raphael Rössel** is a research fellow in North American history at the German Historical Institute Washington. His research focuses on the history of hazing at U.S. colleges in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He received his PhD at Kiel University in 2022 with a dissertation on the history of family care for children with disabilities in the Federal Republic of Germany. The study analyzes the social history of the everyday lives of households raising children with disabilities. It received multiple awards and was shortlisted for the Hedwig Hintze Prize for best dissertation awarded by the German Association of Historians. It was published as *Belastete Familien? Eine Alltagsgeschichte westdeutscher Haushalte mit behinderten Kindern (1945–1990)* (Campus, 2022).

**Stefanie Coché** is an assistant professor at Justus Liebig University Gießen and has recently published her second book, *Religiöse Erweckung und Irdische Macht. Religion und Demokratie* (Hamburger Edition, 2025). She previously led a research group on "Evangelical Colleges in the U.S. since 1945." Her award-winning dissertation examined psychiatric commitment in the age of extremes. It was published in English translation as *Psychiatric Institutions and Society: The Practice of Psychiatric Committal in the "Third Reich," the Democratic Republic of Germany, and the Federal Republic of Germany, 1941–1963* (Routledge, 2024).

**Elizabeth Tandy Shermer** is a professor of history at University of Georgia, where she teaches courses on labor, capitalism, and politics. She has written about those topics in op-eds, academic articles, and scholarly books, including *Sunbelt Capitalism* (2013) and *Indentured Students* (2021), as well as edited collections, such as *Barry Goldwater and the Transformation of American Politics* (2013) and *The Right and Labor*, a 2012 volume co-edited with Nelson Lichtenstein. In 2027, the University of Pennsylvania Press will publish her research on the public/private character of American higher education, *The Business of Education*.

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# Detours to Promotion: American Doctorates as Upward Social Mobility in Germany, 1870s-1920s

Olga Sparschuh
University of Vienna

Higher education offers not merely knowledge, but credentials that open the door to specific professions and positions.[1] However, access to higher education is not equally available to everyone, and different social groups have unequal opportunities to obtain qualifications.[2] As a result, higher education itself produces inequality and shapes the career and status opportunities of those who hold degrees and those who do not.[3] Academic titles and credentials such as diplomas or doctorates make these status hierarchies explicit. In German-speaking countries, for example, the abbreviation "Dr." is placed before a person's name, indicating not only academic merit but also an elevated social position.[4]

At the end of the nineteenth century two contrasting trends emerged in the German Empire: The title "Dr." became increasingly

**1** Ingrid Miethe, Dominik Wagner-Diehl and Birthe Kleber, *Bildungsungleichheit. Von historischen Ursprüngen zu aktuellen Debatten* (Opladen/Berlin/Toronto, 2021), 10.

**2** Wilfried Rudloff, "Ungleiche Bildungschancen, Begabung und Auslese," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 54 (2014): 193-244, here 193.

**3** Anna Brake and Peter Büchner, *Bildung und soziale Ungleichheit. Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart, 2012), 15.

**4** See Laetitia Boehm, "Akademische Grade," in: Rainer Christoph Schwinges, ed., *Examen, Titel, Promotionen. Akademisches und staatliches Qualifikationswesen vom 13. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert* (Basel, 2007), 11-54, part. 28; Ulrich Rasche, "Geschichte" der Promotion in absentia. Eine Studie zum Modernisierungsprozess der deutschen Universitäten im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert," in ibid., 275-352, part. 276.

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important in everyday life: In a "title-saturated environment" where traditional noble titles and old military ranks prevailed and a complex hierarchy of official and professional titles had developed, the distinction "Dr." – which originally dated back to the Middle Ages – increasingly played an important role as cultural capital.[5] In his 1914 book on the fraudulent use of academic and other titles, German lawyer Richard Biermann explained matter-of-factly that "no other country in the world places as much importance on titles."[6]

At the same time, the traditional holders of doctoral titles wanted to protect their exclusive status. Initially, it was only possible to obtain a doctorate in the four classical disciplines: theology, law, philosophy, and medicine.[7] Since the founding of the first universities, students of general medicine had been able to attain a "Dr. med." after passing an oral exam and writing a dissertation.[8] But this was not the case for practitioners of the specialized disciplines into which the field of medicine was branching out in the late nineteenth century, including psychiatry and neurology, as well as veterinary and dental medicine.[9] For these new disciplines in particular, the title became an important milestone on their path to professionalization. As a contemporary veterinarian emphasized regarding his colleagues' title aspirations, the "Dr." was not only a sign of academic achievement, but also an important part of the professional designation: "medics need the title of 'doctor' because, since time immemorial, the general public has been accustomed to referring to them as 'doctor' rather than 'physician'."[10] However, general practitioners repeatedly expressed "serious concerns about any specialization of the doctoral title" that would split their field.[11]

**5** Harm-Hinrich Brandt, "Promotionen und Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert," in Schwinges, 625-706, here 627 and 628.

**6** Richard Biermann, *Der Schwindel mit Hoflieferanten-, Kommerzienrats-, Geheimrats-, in- und ausländischen Doktortiteln sowie der sonstige Titel- und Ordensschacher in Deutschland, nebst den juristischen Bestimmungen über Führung in- und ausländischer Titel, insbesondere des Doktortitels* (Fallersleben, 1914), 5.

**7** Max Baumgart, *Grundsätze und Bedingungen zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde bei allen Facultäten der Universitäten des Deutschen Reiches* (Berlin, 1884), 45.

**8** See on the history of doctorates in medicine Nils Hansson, Michaela Clark and Thorsten Halling, eds., *Dissertation Cultures in Medicine. Histories of Academic Merit and Accreditation* (London, forthcoming).

**9** Claudia Huerkamp, "Ärzte und Professionalisierung in Deutschland: Überlegungen zum Wandel des Arztberufs im 19. Jahrhundert," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 6 (1980) 3: 349-382, here 351; more general, Wolfgang U. Eckart, Geschichte, Theorie und Ethik der Medizin (Berlin, 2021), 251.

**10** Reinhold Schmaltz, "Das Promotionsrecht der tierärztlichen Hochschulen," *Berliner Tierärztliche Wochenschrift*, 14. 1906, 5. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's.

**11** Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (GStA PK), I HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, Va Sekt. 1 Tit. VI, No. 1 G, Supp. 1, Vol. 1: Zahnärztliche Doktortitel, Zeitungsartikel, 1912-1914: "Preußen gegen die Verleihung des zahnärztlichen Doktortitels," December 12, 1913.

Eventually, they feared, this might put the new specialized disciplines on a par with general medicine, thus making practitioners less distinguishable not only in academic terms but also concerning their social standing and earning potential.

Unable to satisfy their status aspirations within the Empire, German dentists took advantage of opportunities that opened up abroad in this era of globalization, which increasingly also affected higher education.[12] Already since the 1860s, aspiring German dentists ventured to the United States to obtain the degree of "Doctor of Dental Surgery" or one of the many similar dental titles which had existed there since the 1840s due to the early professionalization of dentistry at the numerous newly established dental schools.[13] Soon the "American doctorate" became so important that ten per cent of dentists practicing in the German Empire held one.[14] At the same time, dental technicians and dental artists working in the rapidly expanding field of dental care also ventured to the United States to acquire professional titles as they had no chance of obtaining degrees for their work in the German Empire.[15] Given the limited prior qualifications of many of these title seekers, so-called "title mills" proliferated, offering credentials in exchange for money.[16]

This article argues that the possibility of acquiring these professional titles in a transatlantic setting gave these different kinds of "American dentists," as they were called despite their diverse backgrounds, the chance to mitigate inequalities engrained in academia. Given the strict hierarchies between the different social groups working in the medico-dental field in the German Empire, going to the United States became a means of achieving upward

**12** For a more general account, see Isabella Löhr, *Globale Bildungsmobilität, 1850-1930. Von der Bekehrung der Welt zur globalen studentischen Gemeinschaft* (Göttingen, 2021); Hilary Perraton, *International Students, 1860-2010. Policy and Practice Round the World* (Cham, 2020).

**13** See J. A. Taylor, *History of Dentistry. A Practical Treatise for the Use of Dental Students and Practitioners* (London, 1922), part. 157-166.

**14** Adolf Petermann, *Zahnärztlicher Almanach. Ein alphabetisch geordnetes Namensverzeichnis der im Deutschen Reiche und in Österreich-Ungarn practicierenden Zahnärzte* (Frankfurt am Main, 1880); see George Bion Denton, Die Beziehungen zwischen der deutschen und der amerikanischen Zahnärzteschaft von 1800 bis 1914, *Deutsche zahnärztliche Zeitschrift* 14 (1959): 1196-1207, here 1199; also Bruno Zimmermann, *Der amerikanische Einfluss auf die deutsche Zahnheilkunde im ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert* (Ph.D. diss. Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn, 1969), 46.

**15** Linda Marion Krebs, *Amerikanische Zahnärzte in Deutschland und der große „Diplomschwindel" (1880-1920)*, (Ph.D. diss., LMU Munich, 1974).

**16** For a general account, see A.J. Angulo, Diploma Mills: How for-profit Colleges Stiffed Students, Taxpayers and the American Dream (Baltimore, 2016), particularly chapter 1; in detail GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, Va Sekt. 1 Tit. VI Nr. 14 Bd. 2: Paul Steinberg, *Der Doctortitel Deutsch-amerikanischer Schwindelinstitute* (Nürnberg, 1902).

social mobility for dentists as well as dental artists, who did not have the opportunity to obtain the coveted credentials at home. Hence, the detour of educational mobility abroad can be understood as an investment to achieve the professional success and higher social status attached to the doctorate at lower cost and in less time.[17] Once retroactive regulations governing the use of foreign titles in the German Empire were issued, which required obligatory nostrification – the official process of getting a foreign university degree recognized – from 1897 onwards, this gradually diminished the transatlantic status enhancement practices before the introduction of the "Dr. med. dent." title in Germany in 1919 finally put an end to these practices.

By examining the history of foreign doctoral degrees in the German Empire, this article aims to contribute to research on inequalities in higher education in two ways. First, it addresses an understudied source of inequality. The rich German historiographical research on social stratification has focused on the uneven distribution of "privileges such as power, wealth, and prestige" – usually in that order.[18] As the social historians Friedrich Lenger and Dietmar Süß pointed out, however, the significance of "prestige distribution" has been examined less frequently than the accumulation of wealth or the role of personal influence and networking.[19] With a specific focus on foreign doctoral degrees, this article centers on prestige as a prerequisite for upward social mobility.

In a second line of argument, this article considers how crossing borders affects inequalities. Up to now, inequality research has been strongly tied to the nation state. If cross-border dynamics involved in its production have come into view, they have usually focused on the devaluation of credentials and the sharpening of inequalities along national and ethnic origins.[20] The concentration on "imported" degrees, instead, makes it possible to highlight how crossing borders helped individuals to overcome inequalities manifested within the nation state and within an academic field. Since the degrees were available in much greater numbers and far more easily abroad than at home, they undermined the domestic

**17** Not unlike in its outcome to what Robert L. Hampel has labelled as shortcuts in higher education within the United States, *Fast and Curious. A History of Shortcuts in American Education* (Lanham, 2017), 153.

**18** Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "Vorüberlegungen zur historischen Analyse sozialer Ungleichheit," in id., *Klassen in der europäischen Sozialgeschichte* (Göttingen, 1979), 9-32, here 10.

**19** Friedrich Lenger and Dietmar Süß, Soziale Ungleichheit in der Geschichte moderner Industriegesellschaften, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 14 (2014): 3-24, here 11.

**20** See Michael Bayer, Gabriele Mordt, Sylvia Terpe and Martin Winter, eds., *Transnationale Ungleichheitsforschung. Eine neue Herausforderung für die Soziologie* (Frankfurt am Main, 2008); also Petrus Han, *Soziologie der Migration* (Stuttgart, 2010), 17.

distribution system of scarce goods that conventionally underlie inequalities in each society.

A look at the contemporary literature shows just how important the topic of foreign or imported doctoral degrees was at the time: Numerous publications dealt with the validity of foreign doctoral degrees, particularly in dentistry.[21] Specific attention was paid to title fraud[22] and the closely related quackery which acutely afflicted German healing practices.[23] Since the 1970s American doctorates in particular have been addressed in a number of Ph.D. theses in dentistry and in studies charting the discipline's professionalization.[24] However, the topic has not been related to the broader issue of validating foreign qualifications. Despite a growing interest in assessment cultures in educational science, doctoral degree practices have not yet attracted attention.[25] While a study on conferment in Germany is available,[26] doctorates are only now being studied in a comparative perspective.[27] Despite the intertwined history of German-American higher education[28] as well as a growing interest in student mobilities, what is missing in these studies is the aspect of transatlantic validation.[29]

To deliver this perspective the article draws on the rich collections of the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin as well as university archives in Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago as the centers of (German) dentistry in the U.S.[30] Sources include not only letters to the Ministry of Education by those who requested

**21** Johann Anton Zehnter, *Die Führung zahnärztlicher Titel, sowie des Doktortitels durch im Inland nicht approbierte Personen. Ein Beitrag zur Klärung dieser Frage* (Karlsruhe, 1893).

**22** Biermann 1914; Dominik Groß, "Titel ohne Wert? Zur Debatte um den Stellenwert des ‚Doctor medicinae dentariae' von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart," in *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ethik der Zahnheilkunde* (Würzburg, 2006), 77-96.

**23** Wilhelm Ebstein, *Charlatanerie und Kurpfuscher im Deutschen Reich* (Stuttgart, 1905); Walter Lustig, *Die Bekämpfung des Kurpfuschertums* (Berlin, 1927).

**24** Krebs 1974; Zimmermann 1969; Dominik Groß, *Die Geschichte des Zahnarztberufs in Deutschland* (Berlin, 2019).

**25** Schwinges 2007; Cristina Alarcón López and Martin Lawn, eds., *Assessment Cultures. Historical Perspectives* (Frankfurt am Main, 2018).

**26** Siegfried Wollgast, *Zur Geschichte des Promotionswesens in Deutschland* (Bergisch Gladbach, 2001).

**27** Hansson et al. (forthcoming); Ku-ming (Kevin) Chang and Alan Rocke, *A Global History of Research Education. Disciplines, Institutions, and Nations, 1840-1950* (Oxford, 2021), here 3.

**28** Jürgen Overhoff, New Perspectives on German-American Educational History: An Introduction, in Jürgen Overhoff and Anne Overbeck, eds., *New Perspectives on German-American Educational History: Topics, Trends, Fields of Research* (Bad Heilbrunn, 2017), 9-23.

**29** Anja Werner, *The Transatlantic World of Higher Education. Americans at German Universities, 1776-1914* (New York/Oxford, 2013).

**30** The author is grateful that her archival research in the U.S. was made possible by a Horner Library Fellowship from the German Historical Institute in Washington and a fellowship from the Botstiber Institute for Austrian-American Studies.

permission to use their foreign doctorates in the German Empire, but also the U.S. educational institutions' student records and correspondence as well as numerous periodicals and pamphlets.

To provide an insight into the use and abuse of foreign titles as detours to promotion, my article first describes the development of dentistry as a profession in Prussia and the German Empire and the social status issues this entailed. Second, I present the possibilities of dental studies on the Atlantic's American side. Third, I analyze what measures were put into place to assess the "actual" qualifications of the "American dentists" who had studied abroad to determine their social position. Fourth, I look at the contested introduction of the "Dr. med. dent." title in the Weimar Republic, which put dentists on a par with physicians and ended the debate on the dental doctoral title as well as the lively career of "American dentists" in Germany.

## I. Dental Education in Prussia and the German Empire

German dentistry was not much developed in the mid-nineteenth century. Admittedly, the professional journal *Der Zahnarzt* had been published since 1846 and a local association, *Verein der Zahnärzte in Berlin*, had been established a year later.[31] Yet, when the national *Central-Verein Deutscher Zahnärzte*, the Central Association of German Dentists, was created in 1859, only 250 dentists were practicing in the 39 states that made up the German Confederation.[32] Twenty years later this number had almost doubled, and Adolf Petermann's recently founded *Zahnärztlicher Almanach*, a dental almanac listing all registered dentists in the German Empire as well as in Austria-Hungary, included "489 dentists (amongst which 10 ladies)."[33] However, many cities – for example, Bochum in the Ruhr area with 27,000 inhabitants – did not have a resident dentist at all.[34]

The small number of dentists can be explained by the fact that dental treatment at the time was mostly limited to the extraction of damaged or painful teeth, which was often carried out by people in related professions such as barbers.[35] Only slowly did

**31** *Der Zahnarzt. Das Neueste und Wissenswürdigste des In- und Auslandes über Zahnheilkunde* 1 (1846), no. 1.

**32** Julius Parreidt, *Geschichte des Central-Vereins Deutscher Zahnärzte, 1859-1909* (Berlin, 1909), 6.

**33** Petermann 1880, 87: Statistische Übersicht.

**34** Petermann 1880, 91: Verzeichnis einiger Städte im Deutschen Reich, die einen Zahnarzt nicht besitzen.

**35** Groß 2019.

healthy, well-cared-for teeth come to be seen as a desirable physical characteristic of a modern person. While the popular women's magazine *Der Bazar* published a series on dental care already in 1869,[36] general pamphlets and educational books on the issue only became commonplace at the end of the century.[37]

Despite the growing interest in dental care, dentists continued to be disregarded by the rest of the medical profession and the authorities. In 1836, the Berlin court dentist August Blume had been denied the official designation of privy councilor [*Geheimrat*] on the grounds that "dentists, together with midwives, occupy the lowest rank among the healers in the state, which can only be attributed to their modest knowledge and work."[38] In the 1830s, the professional reputation of dentists was still so low that Moritz Heider, who later became Doctor of Medicine and Professor of Dentistry at the University of Vienna as well as a key representative of the *Central-Verein*, repeatedly turned down the offer to become assistant to eminent Viennese dentist Georg Carabelli and, thereupon, take on the city's most important practice, stating: "An honest person who has learned something cannot become a dentist."[39]

One reason for this low regard was that dental studies were not much regulated. Prussia introduced its first set of directives in 1825.[40] However, prior education played a minor role; one could practice with only a *Tertia* degree from a German *Gymnasium*, that is, after completing ninth grade, and some demonstrable knowledge of anatomy and pharmacology.[41] So minimal were the requirements that even a few women practiced dentistry, as Hamburg dentist Eduard Kranner pointed out.[42] In 1869, new regulations came into effect across the Prussian-dominated North German Confederation, which defined the examination requirements for dentists in more detail. The requirements now included completion of the *Prima*, the penultimate grade of the *Gymnasium*, and two years of study and practical training.[43] Yet it was not until 1909 that the obligatory course of study was extended to seven semesters and that the *Abitur*, the university entrance exam, became a requirement.[44] However, even after 1909 the "*immaturi*" without *Abitur* who had trained according to the old regulations were allowed

**36** Ludwig Heinrich Hollaender, "Lose Gedanken über Zahnheilkunde und Pflege der Zähne und des Mundes," *Der Bazar. Illustrirte Damen-Zeitung* 15 (1869) no. 4: 35.

**37** Adolf Petermann, Zahnärztliche Belehrungen für Laien (Frankfurt am Main, 4th ed., 1887); Julius Parreidt, *Die Zähne und ihre Pflege* (Leipzig, 1913).

**38** Dominik Groß, 150 Jahre „Deutsche Gesellschaft für Zahn-, Mund- und Kieferheilkunde". Eine zahnärztliche Organisation schreibt Geschichte, https://www.zm-online.de/artikel/2009/das-verborgene-wort/eine-zahnaerztliche-organisation-schreibt-geschichte, 2009.

**39** Parreidt 1909, 30.

**40** Groß 2019, 11.

**41** Hans-Heinz Eulner, Die akademische Frühzeit der Zahnheilkunde in Deutschland, *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 1 (1966) no. 1, 3-15, here 4.

**42** Parreidt 1909, 7.

**43** Eulner 1966, here 6.

**44** Otto Schröder, *Das Studium der Zahnheilkunde und die gesetzlichen Vorschriften für die Prüfung der Zahnärzte im Deutschen Reich* (Halle, 1910), 17.

to continue practicing dentistry, prompting the dental historian Hans-Heinz Eulner to describe them as "a burden on the social status of dentists."[45]

Yet it was precisely the lower admission requirements, compared to those for medical studies, that opened an entry path for groups that did not traditionally have access to the liberal professions. In nineteenth-century Prussia and later the German Empire, intergenerational professional self-recruitment was incredibly prevalent. Although the *Gymnasium* was also attended by members of the urban middle classes, the majority of students dropped out after reaching the lower grades, such as the *Tertia*. The small percentage who went on to earn the *Abitur*, which qualified them for university studies, mostly came from well-educated and well-connected backgrounds.[46] By contrast, for those who lacked the *Abitur* and were therefore unable to enroll in a medical degree program, studying dentistry for a comparatively short period of two years must have appeared advantageous from a cost-benefit perspective as it still offered the opportunity to have one's own practice. A look at the biographies of some of the first German dentists shows that they often came from merchant families, including those of Jewish origin, who possibly hoped to improve their social status in this way.[47]

Yet, a doctorate as a publicly recognized degree marking the completion of specialized medical training did not exist in dentistry. To address this shortcoming, many dentists endeavored to acquire an additional doctorate in general medicine. As the doctorate in medicine could only be obtained after eight semesters and the obligatory state examination, however, the degree was only attainable for those who could finance it.[48] Most of those who chose this route practiced as dentists for a few years to save up the necessary funds before studying for the medical doctorate.[49] Others tried to earn a doctoral degree from a philosophy faculty, which took at least three or four semesters and was complicated by the fact that the subjects were entirely unrelated to dentistry.[50]

By far the largest group, however, ventured out to the United States to pursue their title aspirations, most frequently aiming for a

**45** Eulner 1966, here 6.

**46** Karl Jeismann, *Das preußische Gymnasium in Staat und Gesellschaft. Vol. 2: Höhere Bildung zwischen Reform und Reaktion 1817-1859* (Stuttgart, 1996), 391; see also Rainer Bölling, Kleine Geschichte des Abiturs (Paderborn, 2010), 17.

**47** See the biography of Ludwig Heinrich Hollaender, founder of the Universitätszahnklinik at Halle University, Anne Schauer, *„Die Schärfe meiner Ausdrucksweise entspricht der Größe meines Unwillens." Ludwig Heinrich Hollaender (1833-1897). Leben und Werk* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Halle, 2015), here 14.

**48** Parreidt 1909, 159.

**49** See for example the biography of practical dentist Adolph Witzel in Jena in Parreidt 1909, 159.

**50** GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, Va Sekt. 1 Tit. VI, No. 1 G, Supp. 1 Vol. 1, "Führung irreleitender Titel durch Zahntechniker," *Berliner Neueste Nachrichten*, February 20, 1914.

"Doctor of Dental Surgery" or a "Doctor of Dental Medicine" or other such titles. By 1880, of 629 dentists in the German Empire and Austria-Hungary there were "70 Drs. of Dental Surgery, 44 Drs. med. and chir. (amongst which 1 hon. causa), 34 Drs. med. (amongst which 1 hon. causa), 14 Drs. philos., 4 Drs. chir., 2 Drs. of Dental Medicine and 1 Dr. chem."[51] This means that more than a third of all dentists in German-speaking countries believed it necessary to hold a Dr. to practice and presumably realize their social aspirations even though this degree did not even exist in their discipline.

In practice, however, the situation regarding dental diplomas in the German Empire was even more complex. In addition to trained dentists, there were an even greater number of so-called dental artists or dental technicians.[52] Since the 1869 Prussian Law on the Freedom of Occupation had been extended to the German Empire in 1872, medicine had been placed on the same legal level as the trades, meaning everyone could now set up a dental practice and carry out treatments.[53] This led to a rapid increase in the number of people performing treatments without providing evidence of training at an institution of higher education. While this had proven to be disadvantageous for general practitioners of medicine, it affected the young, barely consolidated professional group of dentists even more since they were less equipped to deal with unlicensed competition.[54]

The unlicensed practitioners were often people who had previously worked in a variety of related professions or crafts, including barbers, woodturners or goldsmiths, but who had some experience in extracting damaged teeth or had acquired technical expertise in the manufacture of dentures.[55] Their services were significantly cheaper; dental historian Dominik Groß assumes that they charged about half the regular price.[56] Thus, their skills were increasingly used by a population that was rapidly becoming more conscious of healthy teeth and beautiful smiles. As extensive employment opportunities opened up in this boom phase of dental treatment, dental artists or technicians also developed a strong desire to professionalize. As early as 1880, they had organized in the *Verein*

**51** Petermann 1880, 87: Statistische Übersicht.

**52** See Dominik Groß, "Vom 'Gebißarbeiter' zum 'staatlich geprüften Dentisten'. Der Berufsbildungsprozess der nichtapprobierten Zahnbehandler (1869-1952)," in id. 2006, 99-125.

**53** Karl Weber, *Gewerbeordnung für das Deutsche Reich vom 21.6.1869 mit Anmerkungen* (Erlangen, 1872), § 29, 23; Lustig 1927, 64.

**54** Groß 2019, 24.

**55** Zimmermann 1969, 78.

**56** Groß 2019, 33.

*deutscher Zahnkünstler* [Association of German Dental Artists], which published its own monthly magazine.[57] The first dental technology training institute was founded in Berlin in 1900 and quickly published its own textbook, which showed that the services they offered comfortably fell within the remit of a trained dentist, as they comprised not only the "extraction of a tooth or root," but also "gold fillings."[58]

For dental technicians or artists there were even fewer opportunities to obtain a professional title. Due to their lower education level, they were eligible for neither a Dr. med. nor a Dr. phil. degree but were particularly keen on titles to gain legitimacy – and used them liberally. In 1896, a pamphlet by a dental association complained that many dental artists utilized "dentist-like designations intended to mislead, such as dentist, American dentist, dental studio, Americ. dent.-atelier, dental artist or dental art, pr. dent., dental specialist, institute for dental patients, dental clinic, clinic for dental patients, and the like."[59] Sounding very similar to the actual doctorate, these titles were intended to evoke false associations among potential clients as the general population did not know how to distinguish between approved and unapproved practitioners.[60] Only the university-conferred title "Doctor" used by physicians as well as the "*zahnärztliche Approbation*", the state-issued, permanent license to practice dentistry, were protected designations while many other titles were not, much to the chagrin of dentists.[61] Therefore, several dentists complained, "dental technicians, who are recruited from all walks of life . . . and who mostly lack any scientific training, are allowed to perform the same activities as licensed dentists, possibly under grandiose titles."[62] As growing competition developed between dentists and dental artists, both groups used foreign doctorates from the United States to convey their status to potential patients.

## II. Dental Training and Title Conferment in the United States

In comparison to the slow development of dentistry in the German Empire, the United States was far ahead. Here, too, there had been a long history of rudimentary dental treatment, mainly involving

**57** See *Monatsschrift des Vereins deutscher Zahnkünstler* 1. 1880; also Groß 2019, 26.

**58** "Vorwort," in Prof. Dr. Benninghoven, *Der deutsche Zahnkünstler* (Berlin, 1903), 3 and 434 f. The fact that the author, who worked at a non-university institution, signed the book only with a professorial title of unclear origin rather than his full name once again demonstrates the casual way in which dental technicians used all kinds of titles.

**59** Denkschrift der Allgemeinen Versammlung der in Deutschland approbirten Zahnärzte Berlins, *Die Gestaltung des zahnärztlichen Standes in der Zukunft, zugleich eine Beantwortung der Broschüre der Zahntechniker: „Was sind und was wollen die Deutschen Zahnkünstler"*, December 9, 1896, 17.

**60** Ebstein 1905, 53.

**61** Weber 1872, § 29, 23.

**62** Denkschrift 1896, 16.

the extraction of damaged teeth. Dentistry was, in fact, learned during an apprenticeship or simply undertaken without training and therefore held in low regard.[63] But this changed in 1839, the "birth year of organized dentistry," with three important steps toward professionalization.[64] The first dental journal, the *American Journal of Dental Science*, was founded.[65] That same year, the American Society of Dental Surgeons was established as the first national organization for dentists with the purpose to "elevate the profession."[66] Most importantly, the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery was also founded in 1839.[67] This first dental school not only intended to replace on-the-job training with academic learning, but also pioneered the award of a degree in dentistry – analogous to an M.D. – and soon began to attract foreign students seeking formal degrees.

Its founders, four medical doctors, had tried in vain to launch the school at various medical faculties.[68] As a consequence, they decided to establish the first independent dental school to promote dentistry as a separate discipline. The school promptly began to instruct a handful of students, graduating two as Doctors of Dental Surgery (D.D.S) as early as 1841.[69] It is worth taking a closer look at this degree and the criteria for its conferral. An excellent source is William Gies's pioneering 1926 report on dental education in the United States and Canada. Funded by the Carnegie Foundation, the co-founder of the School of Dentistry at Columbia intended to do for dentistry what Abraham Flexner had done for the standardization of medical education 16 years earlier and also provided a concise analysis of the title conferment practices.[70] According to Gies, the title "Doctor of Dental Surgery" (D.D.S) had been created by the Society of Surgeon Dentists of the City and State of New York after its foundation in 1834.[71] The aforementioned American Society of Dental Surgeons, founded in 1839, subsequently adopted the title and awarded all its members the degree of Doctor of Dental Surgery (D.D.S), including two of the Baltimore school founders.[72] In the charter, they not only specified that there "should be at least one annual term of instruction not less than four months in length" but also authorized the faculty to confer the degree "upon

**63** William J. Gies, *Dental Education in the United States and Canada. A Report to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*, Bulletin No. 19 (New York, 1926), 31.

**64** James Wynbrandt, *The Excruciating History of Dentistry. Toothsome Tales and Oral Oddities from Babylon to Braces* (London, 1998), 126.

**65** Malvin E. Ring, "Founders of a Profession. The Original Subscribers to the First Dental Journal in the World," *The Journal of the American College of Dentists* 72 (2005), no. 2: 20–25.

**66** Gies 1926, 43.

**67** Taylor 1922, 157; see on the Baltimore College also Walter Hoffmann-Axthelm, *Die Geschichte der Zahnheilkunde* (Berlin, 1973), 390.

**68** Gies 1926, 8.

**69** Gies 1926, 8.

**70** See also Abraham Flexner, Medical Education in the United States and Canada. A Report to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Bulletin No. 4, 1910.

**71** Gies 1926, 34.

**72** Gies 1926, 72.

the graduates and also upon practitioners after examination or as an honor."[73] Hence, the D.D.S was both a professional degree as well as an honorary title awarded without the requirement of a written dissertation or oral examination. In order to earn this degree and use the title, no prior academic knowledge was required for admission, and training took less than a year.

Considering the initial difficulty in finding an institutional home for the dental school, the title was an attempt to create a degree comparable to the M.D. to give dentists better professional standing vis-à-vis physicians. The expanding dental profession took this up immediately, and institutions in New York and Philadelphia adopted the title instantly. Yet the practice of conferring the title on "practitioners worthy of the distinction" meant that the regulations remained vague.[74] No wonder then that these modern American institutions where a "professional doctorate" could be earned rather easily and quickly began to attract foreign students.[75] In fact, between 1840 and 1885 many of the newly founded and scarcely regulated dental schools had no formal academic requirements for admission as long as prior dental practice was proven, with all requirements being interpreted very generously by the individual institutions despite the formation of the American Dental Association in 1859.[76]

Before long, American dental colleges had such a liberal reputation that, in 1868, Henriette Hirschfeld, a young woman who later became an eminent Berlin dentist, applied to study dentistry in Philadelphia. Despite the fact that at the time it was just as impossible in the U.S. as it was in Germany to study dentistry as a woman, she traveled to Philadelphia convinced that she would have no trouble obtaining a dental education in "free America".[77] After initially being turned down by the Board, she actually managed to persuade Dean Dr. T. L. Buckingham of the Pennsylvania College of Dental Surgery to enroll her.[78]

A few years later, the newly founded Dental Department of the University of Pennsylvania began to set certain admission criteria. According to its first Annual Announcement 1878/79, it only

**73** Gies 1926, 40.

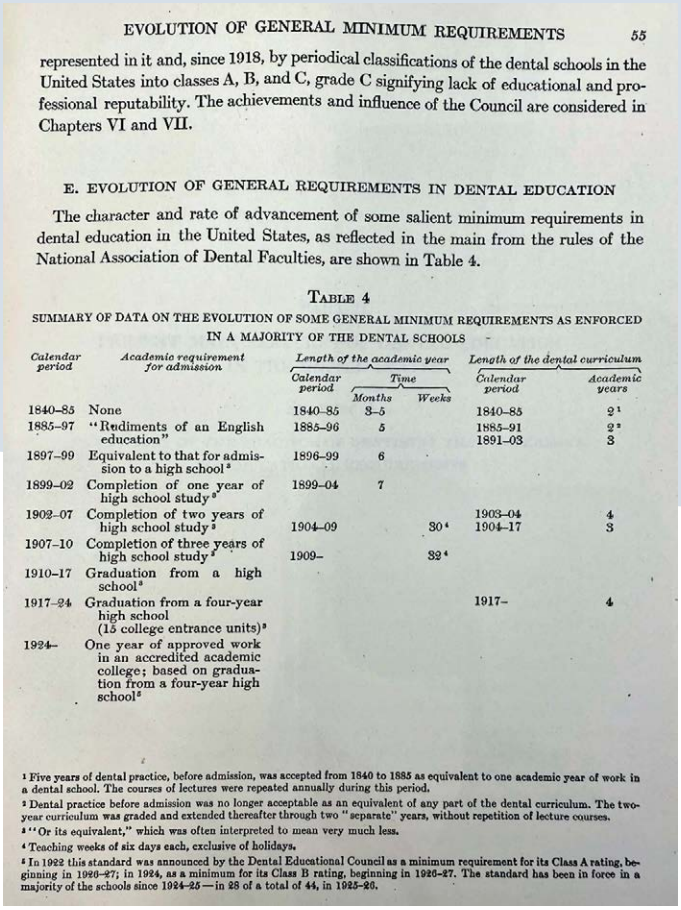
**74** Gies 1926, 72.

**75** Zehnter 1893, 15.

**76** Gies 1926, 55.

**77** James Truman, The Entrance of Women into Dentistry, in: Second Annual Report of the Woman's Dental Association and Minutes of the National Meeting held in Chicago, August 18, 1893, here 41. See also Cécile Mack, Henriette Hirschfeld-Tiburtius. Das Leben der ersten selbständigen Zahnärztin Deutschlands (Frankfurt, 1999).

**78** Ibid.



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represented in it and, since 1918, by periodical classifications of the dental schools in the United States into classes A, B, and C, grade C signifying lack of educational and professional reputability. The achievements and influence of the Council are considered in Chapters VI and VII.

E. EVOLUTION OF GENERAL REQUIREMENTS IN DENTAL EDUCATION

The character and rate of advancement of some salient minimum requirements in dental education in the United States, as reflected in the main from the rules of the National Association of Dental Faculties, are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4

SUMMARY OF DATA ON THE EVOLUTION OF SOME GENERAL MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS AS ENFORCED IN A MAJORITY OF THE DENTAL SCHOOLS

| *Calendar period* | *Academic requirement for admission* | *Length of the academic year* | | | *Length of the dental curriculum* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Calendar period* | *Time* | | *Calendar period* | *Academic years* |
| | | | *Months* | *Weeks* | | |
| 1840–85 | None | 1840–85 | 3–5 | | 1840–85 | 2 [1] |
| 1885–97 | "Rudiments of an English education" | 1885–96 | 5 | | 1885–91 | 2 [2] |
| | | | | | 1891–03 | 3 |
| 1897–99 | Equivalent to that for admission to a high school [3] | 1896–99 | 6 | | | |
| 1899–02 | Completion of one year of high school study [3] | 1899–04 | 7 | | | |
| 1902–07 | Completion of two years of high school study [3] | | | | 1903–04 | 4 |
| | | 1904–09 | | 30 [4] | 1904–17 | 3 |
| 1907–10 | Completion of three years of high school study [3] | | | | | |
| | | 1909– | | 32 [4] | | |
| 1910–17 | Graduation from a high school [3] | | | | | |
| 1917–24 | Graduation from a four-year high school (15 college entrance units) [3] | | | | 1917– | 4 |
| 1924– | One year of approved work in an accredited academic college; based on graduation from a four-year high school [5] | | | | | |

[1] Five years of dental practice, before admission, was accepted from 1840 to 1885 as equivalent to one academic year of work in a dental school. The courses of lectures were repeated annually during this period.

[2] Dental practice before admission was no longer acceptable as an equivalent of any part of the dental curriculum. The two-year curriculum was graded and extended thereafter through two "separate" years, without repetition of lecture courses.

[3] "Or its equivalent," which was often interpreted to mean very much less.

[4] Teaching weeks of six days each, exclusive of holidays.

[5] In 1922 this standard was announced by the Dental Educational Council as a minimum requirement for its Class A rating, beginning in 1926–27; in 1924, as a minimum for its Class B rating, beginning in 1926–27. The standard has been in force in a majority of the schools since 1924–25—in 28 of a total of 44, in 1925–26.

**Figure 1.** Evolution of General Minimum Requirements, in William J. Gies, *Dental Education in the United States and Canada. A Report to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*, Bulletin Number Nineteen (New York, 1926), 55.

accepted students who were over 21 years of age, had been studying "under a private preceptor for at least two years", and had the means to pay not only the one-off enrollment fee of 5 dollars, but also 100 dollars per course taken and a further 30 dollars for graduation.[79] Nevertheless, a glance at the University of Pennsylvania's extensive collection of enrollment forms reveals that students had a wide variety of prior qualifications: while some were already practicing as dentists, others worked as chemists or even accountants – but were still admitted.[80] The forms also show that the students came not only from the rest of the English-speaking world, but also from Germany, Russia, and South America. In order to regulate the growing influx of international students, from 1885 on most dental colleges introduced the requirement of "rudiments of an English education" as a criterion for admission.[81] However, until the Immigration Act of 1924, there were no state-imposed restrictions on entry for students – and despite clamping down on other

**79** University of Pennsylvania Archive, 4.6. School of Dental Medicine, General Records, Box 1: First Annual Announcement of the Dental Department of the University of Pennsylvania, 1878-79, 7.

**80** University of Pennsylvania Archive, 4.6. School of Dental Medicine, Student Records, Box 74: Matriculation Forms, 1897-1907.

**81** Gies 1926, 55.

forms of immigration even this tight new regulation exempted "bona fide students [. . .] at accredited schools" from any quotas.[82]

The fact that D.D.S. degrees were awarded so generously, and outside universities, had become an issue already when the first dental school was established within the medical faculty at Harvard University in 1867.[83] While there had been no admission requirements for dentistry there either, now the question arose what degree should be awarded to the first graduates. Since most faculty members were M.D.s at this point, they would have preferred the graduates to receive that title, while others suggested *Scientiae Dentium Doctoris*, which was rejected on the grounds that dentistry was not considered a science.[84] Finally, Harvard introduced the *Dentariae Medicinae Doctoris* (D.M.D.), for which a three-year course of study was compulsory. Most other institutions, however, stuck with the D.D.S. This degree had become the standard despite its vague criteria. Nevertheless, in Germany the belief persisted that degrees even from Harvard were easily and, above all, quickly obtained. As late as 1894, Amandus Bröckling, a prospective student from Jena, bluntly asked Dean Thomas H. Chandler to provide him with information about "what shortest time may be necessary to obtain the diploma."[85]

In view of the problems arising from the liberal title practices, there were initial attempts to regulate dental institutions in the United States. New York was among the first states to specify requirements in 1868 and to institute a board to examine applicants who had received a diploma from dental schools before issuing a certificate of license.[86] The National Association of Dental Examiners was founded in 1883, but it took until 1900 for statutes to come into effect in all states and for graduation from a dental school to become a requirement for the dental license examination across the United States.[87] Additionally, the newly founded National Association of Dental Faculties voted to require all candidates for the D.D.S. to attend two full regular terms of not less than five months each, in separate years, beginning with the academic year 1885/86, thus ending the recognition of practice as an equivalent of a portion of the work required for the degree and, most importantly, its honorary conferment.[88]

**82** The Immigration Act of 1924 (the Johnson-Reed Act), see the full text at San Diego State University Source Collection, https://loveman.sdsu.edu/docs/1924ImmigrationAct.pdf

**83** Gies 1926, 41.

**84** Gies 1926, 72.

**85** Countway Library of Medicine, Harvard School of Dental Medicine, Box 1, Folder Dean Chandler Correspondence 1894, Letter Amandus Bröckling to Dean Thomas H. Chandler, August 5, 1894. Original in English and underlined.

**86** Gies 1926, 35, also 44.

**87** Gies 1926, 35.

**88** John E. Gurley, The Evolution of Dental Education, American College of Dentists (St. Louis, 1960), 71.

However, even thirty years later, in 1926, the Carnegie Report regarded the vague conferment criteria of the D.D.S. as the biggest problem. On the one hand, Gies criticized that a doctorate – in name at least – was used to indicate completion of undergraduate courses in dentistry.[89] On the other hand – and this was possibly even more serious – the indiscriminate awarding of honorary D.D.S. titles to a large number of – presumably often mediocre – practitioners had done more harm than good to the profession.[90] In hindsight, it was clear that precisely this loose conferment practice had given rise to the problem that "dental schools multiplied excessively during the period from 1881-1900."[91] In Illinois alone, then a state with particularly lax state laws and lacking regulatory oversight, 28 dental schools had been founded. Many of these were working as diploma mills for purely commercial reasons and "freely sold the degree of doctor of dental surgery at home and abroad."[92]

It was this variance in doctorate title practice on the two sides of the Atlantic that led not only reputable German dentists, but also dental artists to acquire titles abroad in order to establish a practice back home. In doing so, they severely disrupted the existing status hierarchy of medical titles in the German Empire and posed a major challenge for Prussian institutions.

## III. Gaining Status: "American Dentists" Back Home

Having set off with the goal of obtaining a title in the United States, almost all the different kinds of "American dentists" immediately returned to Prussia to devote themselves to their new dental practice. Due to the good reputation of American dentistry and its modern treatments, "American dentist" quickly became a household name in Europe.[93] Not only practices, but also laboratories advertised their "American" training, services, and connections.[94]

Yet doubts about the legitimacy of American titles emerged quickly within the dental profession. As early as 1876, Halle dentist Ludwig Heinrich Hollaender pointed out the glaring discrepancy between the increasing state regulation of domestic diplomas and the lack

**89** Gies 1926, 202.

**90** Gies 1926, 45.

**91** Gies 1926, 47-48.

**92** Gies 1926, 48-49.

**93** Zimmermann 1969, 46. For the quintessential "American dentist" in Europe see the biographical novel on celebrity-dentist turned diplomat Thomas W. Evans, Gerald Carson, *The Dentist and the Empress. The Adventures of Dr. Tom Evans in Gas-lit Paris* (Boston, 1983).

**94** See for example the ad American Dental Co. in Richard Barnett, *Mut zur Lücke. Kunst und Geschichte der Zahnheilkunde* (Cologne, 2018), 186 as well as the ad of the S.S. White Dental Manufacturing Co., "An die Herren Zahnkünstler in Europa," *Monatsschrift des Vereins Deutscher Zahnkünstler* 6 (1886), no. 1, V.




**Figure 2.** Advertisement for the American Dental Co., c. 1900. Richard Barnett, *Mut zur Lücke. Kunst und Geschichte der Zahnheilkunde* (Cologne, 2018), 186.

of awareness of foreign certificates in the association's journal, particularly criticizing the degradation of the entire discipline "by the countless army of bunglers who, adorned with a diploma from Philadelphia, suddenly appear everywhere."[95] He complained about the lack of government involvement in validating foreign titles, which meant that "today any useless barber's assistant or hairdresser's apprentice, every goldsmith, every bankrupt merchant or failed stockbroker, adorned with an American pseudo-doctorate, can put the life and health of every single German at risk."[96]

Determined not to dismiss the American institutions altogether, the Würzburg general practitioner and dentist Dr. V. Schneider also published an article on the topic in the same issue.[97] While emphasizing the legitimacy of the Pennsylvania College of Dental Surgery based on his own study experience in 1873/74, he also reported numerous cases of "so-called diplomas" issued by other Philadelphia institutions.[98] This was a reference to the professional fraudster "Dr." John Buchanan, who had turned the German "craze for titles" into a business and gained fame "with his worthless doctorate degrees" since the early 1870s.[99] Although he was exposed after a few years and eventually forced to give up his suspect "American University of Philadelphia" and later his "Livingstone University of America," renowned Leipzig dentist Julius Parreidt estimated that "doctoral degrees [issued by him] were sold to Germany for another two decades."[100] Despite his more nuanced stance, Schneider also demanded "that the authorities finally take serious

**95** Ludwig Heinrich Hollaender, "Die gegenwärtige Zahnheilkunde," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Zahnheilkunde* 16 (1876), 1-5, here 4.

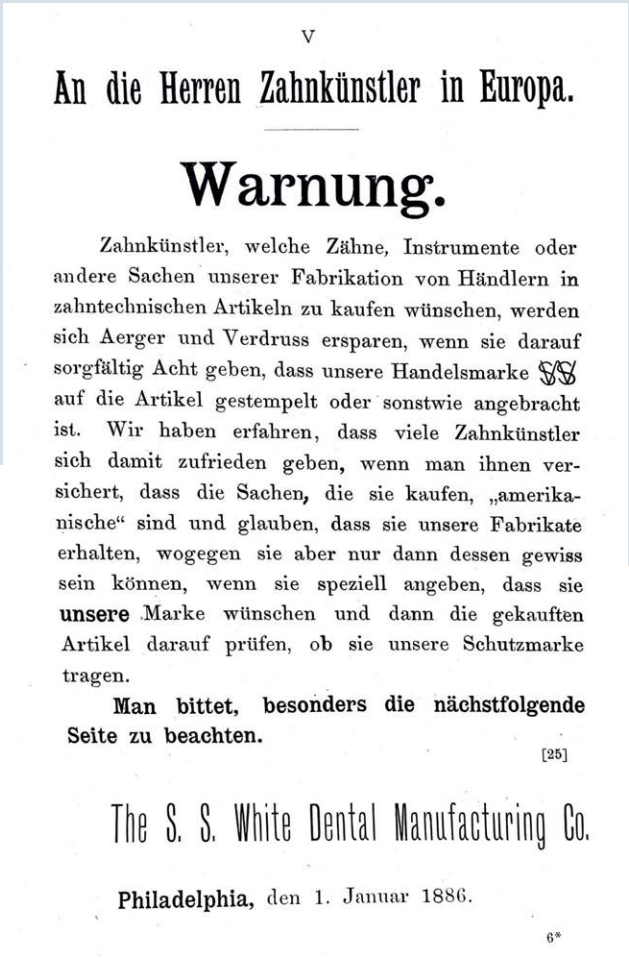
**96** Hollaender 1876, 4-5.

**97** See Schneider, "Philadelphia und die amerikanischen Doktordiplome," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Zahnheilkunde* 16. 1876, 335-338.

**98** Schneider 1876, 336.

**99** See Zehnter 1893, 17-18; also Krebs 1974, 21 f. Now also David Alan Johnson, *Diploma Mill: The Rise and Fall of Dr. John Buchanan and the Eclectic Medical College of Pennsylvania* (Kent, 2018).

**100** Parreidt 1909, 68.



V

An die Herren Zahnkünstler in Europa.

# Warnung.

Zahnkünstler, welche Zähne, Instrumente oder andere Sachen unserer Fabrikation von Händlern in zahntechnischen Artikeln zu kaufen wünschen, werden sich Aerger und Verdruss ersparen, wenn sie darauf sorgfältig Acht geben, dass unsere Handelsmarke SS auf die Artikel gestempelt oder sonstwie angebracht ist. Wir haben erfahren, dass viele Zahnkünstler sich damit zufrieden geben, wenn man ihnen versichert, dass die Sachen, die sie kaufen, „amerikanische" sind und glauben, dass sie unsere Fabrikate erhalten, wogegen sie aber nur dann dessen gewiss sein können, wenn sie speziell angeben, dass sie **unsere** Marke wünschen und dann die gekauften Artikel darauf prüfen, ob sie unsere Schutzmarke tragen.

**Man bittet, besonders die nächstfolgende Seite zu beachten.**

[25]

The S. S. White Dental Manufacturing Co.

**Philadelphia,** den 1. Januar 1886.

6*

**Figure 3.** S.S. White Dental Manufacturing Co., "An die Herren Zahnkünstler in Europa," *Monatsschrift des Vereins Deutscher Zahnkünstler* 6 (1886), no. 1, V.

action against this nonsense," because "Why . . . study, take exams, and pay such high tuition fees when you can get it so easily and certainly more cheaply this way?"[101]

After the Buchanan scandal, dental professionals took it upon themselves to separate illegitimate from legitimate titles. Published since 1877, Adolf Petermann's *Zahnärztlicher Almanach* aimed not only to provide a dentists' directory but also intended "to be welcomed with joy by all those who have become dentists in the proper manner and who need not be ashamed of their 'Doctor' title. To others, it will be a thorn in their side, as it will knock the spurious doctor's hat off their heads."[102] He publicly denounced individual dentists, as for example "the Gentlemen Heuckeroth, Güntert and von Keszycki," whose titles' origins were uncertain and demanded that "they clear their names of any involvement with acts of fraud."[103] At the annual meeting of the Central Association of German Dentists in 1878 Adolph Witzel, a practicing dentist

**101** Schneider 1876, 336.

**102** Adolf Petermann, *Zahnärztlicher Almanach 1877. Ein alphabetisch geordnetes Namensverzeichnis der im deutschen Reiche practicierenden Zahnärzte* (Frankfurt am Main, 1877), Foreword, unpaginated.

**103** Petermann 1877, 105.

and associate professor at the University of Jena, appealed to all his colleagues to voluntarily relinquish dubious diplomas.[104] Likewise, other publications, such as the *Zahnärztliches Wochenblatt*, for example, a journal for dentistry, stated as one of its primary goals "the ruthless pursuit of all abuses (title fraud – purchased doctorates)."[105]

In view of these problems, the Prussian state aimed to regulate the use of foreign titles and particularly dubious American doctorates. In 1897, the government issued a decree obliging all those who had gained a foreign title to obtain the approval of the Minister of Ecclesiastical, Educational and Medical Affairs to use it in Prussia.[106] The wealth of individual letters to the ministry requesting permission to use their titles at home reveals the many ways in which "American doctorates" were used to reduce status inequalities in the German Empire.

Friedrich Schuckmann, a dentist from Hamelin who had studied in the United States, applied to the ministry for permission to use the title "*Dentariae Medicinae Doctoris*" after his return home in the autumn of 1899. He stated that he had earned his degree at the "University of Cambridge near Boston in New England."[107] Harvard was, as he explained to the authorities, "a renowned and respectable university that can claim a better reputation than many German universities"; in addition, its School of Dentistry applied some of the strictest criteria for awarding the D.M.D. after three years of study, meaning that he had conducted serious studies abroad. His letter, which closed with the urgent plea, "My entire life's success depends on my title question,"[108] illustrates that recognition was an existential matter for him.

Others were rather shameless in exploiting the authorities' lack of knowledge about foreign institutions and titles to their advantage.

One case that ended up in court was that of Paul Splittgerber from Stettin, who claimed to have earned the degree *Doctor chirurgiae dentariae* from the Academia Medicinae Dentariae Germanico-Americana in Chicago in March 1899.[109] A sign he had mounted next to the entrance to his practice identified him as "Dr. chir. dent.

**104** Parreidt 1909, 78.

**105** Advertisement for *Zahnärztliches Wochenblatt*, 10 (1896/97), *Dr. Richter's Zahnärztliches Adressbuch*, 9 (Berlin, 1897), unpaginated.

**106** "Verordnung vom 7. April 1897 betreffend die Führung der mit akademischen Graden verbundenen Titel," *Gesetz-Sammlung für die Königlichen Preußischen Staaten* 1897, 99; Biermann 1914, 87.

**107** GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, Va Sekt. 1 Tit. VI No. 14, Vol. 2: Letter Friedrich Schuckmann, Hamelin, 17.10.1899.

**108** Ibid.

**109** GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, Va Sekt. 1 Tit. VI Nr. 14 Bd. 2, Abschrift Urteil, August 3, 1900; see also *Deutsche Zeitung*, July 4, 1900.

Splittgerber. American Dentist. State-approved in America." After his application for permission to use the title was rejected and following several appeals, including one to the Higher Administrative Court, he was ordered to remove the sign and to pay 500 Marks in legal costs. While the ruling focused on the ministry's refusal to recognize his title, the nature of the institution that had granted him the degree played no part in the decision. However, soon after Splittgerber's trial, the "German-American Dental College" – with its ever-changing name, in some cases Latinized as above – was exposed as a bogus institution in 1902.[110] Under the leadership of Chicago-based Fritz Huxmann, it awarded a large number of Doctor of Dental Surgery diplomas not only to dentists but also to dental technicians from Germany.[111] The only requirements were payment of a fee of 50 dollars and the attendance of a course of study lasting officially six weeks, but in some cases as little as two weeks.

A few years later, a government report noted that the regulation of nostrification "to prevent damage to German doctors, dentists, etc. caused by competition from less qualified foreign doctors" had proven extremely beneficial – and, in using this wording, failed to take into account that the majority of those who returned with a foreign degree were, in fact, Germans.[112] Against this backdrop and in view of the still increasing numbers of imported titles, the authorities tightened regulations further. Now the government prohibited the use of academic titles acquired abroad that were not also offered by German universities. In particular, the new regulations specified that "foreign dental and veterinary doctorates are generally excluded, even if they may have been awarded in individual cases based on serious requirements."[113]

However, those who had obtained their diplomas abroad were not prepared to give up their degree and status. In 1901, German dentists who had graduated in the United States formed a lobby group named Centralverein in Amerika graduirter Doctoren der Zahnheilkunde (Central Association of Doctors of Dentistry who Graduated in America) to defend their titles. They took the position that while it had become desirable for Germans to study at the advanced American Dental Schools in the 1880s, private insti-

**110** GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, Va Sekt. 1 Tit. VI Nr. 14 Bd. 2: Paul Steinberg, *Der Doctortitel Deutsch-amerikanischer Schwindelinstitute* (Nürnberg, 1902).

**111** Paul Steinberg, Facts about the Disgraceful Issuing of Degrees and Licenses in the State of Illinois, *Items of Interest* 1899, 484-497, here 488.

**112** GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, Va Sekt. 1 Tit. VI, No. 1 E, Vol. 3, Dreißigster Petitionsbericht der Unterrichtskommission, 20. Legislaturperiode 1904/05, 4.

**113** Ibid.

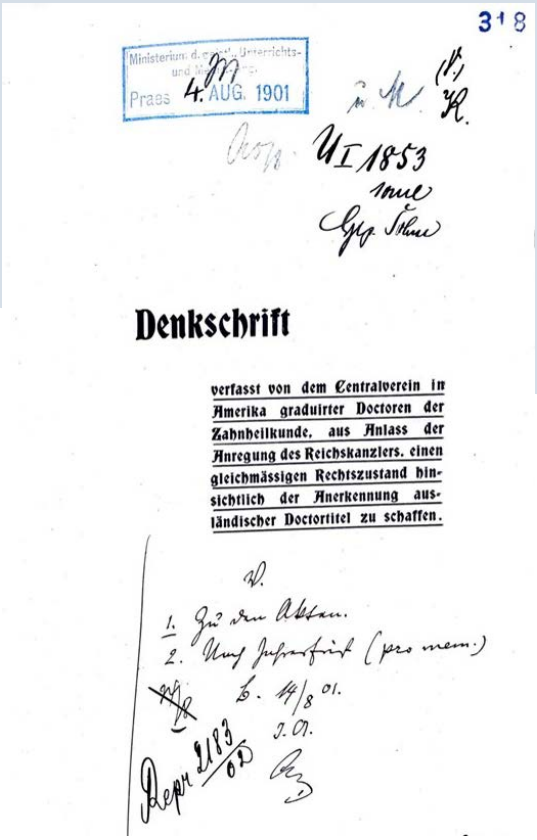



**Figure 4.** *Denkschrift verfasst von dem Centralverein in Amerika graduirter Doctoren der Zahnheilkunde*, Hamburg, July 1901.

tutions had "awarded doctoral degrees to foreigners hungry for decorations" at the same time.[114] Therefore, they aimed to prevent "our honestly acquired titles from being confused with such bogus titles."[115]

Notwithstanding scandals and political interventions, there still were many fraudulent titles in circulation. In 1902 the journal *Zahnärztliche Rundschau* warned its readers about "criminal and non-criminal titles of dental technicians," stating for example that the extravagant title "Medicus dentium" but also "American dentist in conjunction with the title of Doctor" were illegitimate.[116] Disputes involving titles acquired abroad by dental technicians now increasingly ended up in court, as the extensive collection of rulings compiled by Ernst Imming, director of the German Association of Dental Technicians, illustrates.[117] In 1912 a higher administrative court ruled that it was inadmissible for a dental technician to use the title "Dr. of dent. surg.," for example, since "these diplomas are far from having the same significance as the titles awarded by German universities, as graduation often takes place after only six months of attendance at the institute, which can be described as inferior."[118]

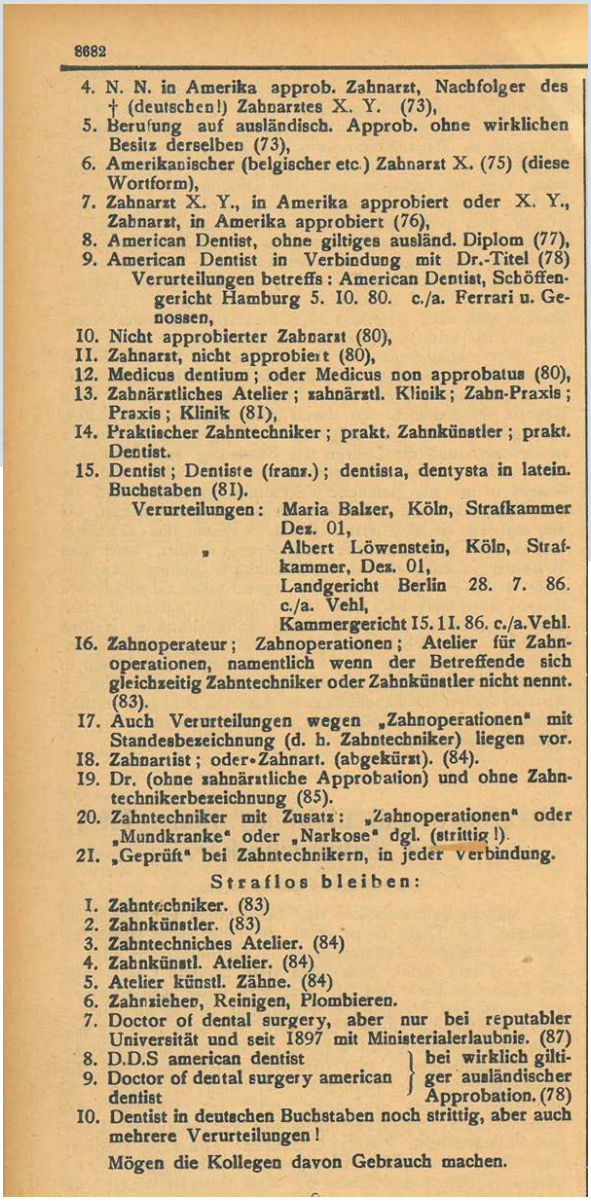
**114** GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, Va Sekt. 1 Tit. VI No. 14. Vol. 2: Denkschrift verfasst von dem Centralverein in Amerika graduirter Doctoren der Zahnheilkunde, Hamburg, July 1901, 1.

**115** Ibid.

**116** Zahnarzt Eckstein, Fulda, "Strafbare und nichtstrafbare Titel der Zahntechniker," *Zahnärztliche Rundschau*, March 1, 1902.

**117** Ernst Imming, *Der Dentist im Gesetz und vor Gericht* (Berlin, 1913).

**118** Imming 1913, 146. Also this title stemmed from the German-American Dental College in Chicago.



8682

4. N. N. in Amerika approb. Zahnarzt, Nachfolger des † (deutschen!) Zahnarztes X. Y. (73),
5. Berufung auf ausländisch. Approb. ohne wirklichen Besitz derselben (73),
6. Amerikanischer (belgischer etc.) Zahnarzt X. (75) (diese Wortform),
7. Zahnarzt X. Y., in Amerika approbiert oder X. Y., Zahnarzt, in Amerika approbiert (76),
8. American Dentist, ohne giltiges ausländ. Diplom (77),
9. American Dentist in Verbindung mit Dr.-Titel (78)
   Verurteilungen betreffs: American Dentist, Schöffengericht Hamburg 5. 10. 80. c./a. Ferrari u. Genossen,
10. Nicht approbierter Zahnarzt (80),
11. Zahnarzt, nicht approbiert (80),
12. Medicus dentium; oder Medicus non approbatus (80),
13. Zahnärztliches Atelier; zahnärztl. Klinik; Zahn-Praxis; Praxis; Klinik (81),
14. Praktischer Zahntechniker; prakt. Zahnkünstler; prakt. Dentist.
15. Dentist; Dentiste (franz.); dentista, dentysta in latein. Buchstaben (81).
    Verurteilungen: Maria Balzer, Köln, Strafkammer Dez. 01,
    „ Albert Löwenstein, Köln, Strafkammer, Dez. 01,
    Landgericht Berlin 28. 7. 86. c./a. Vehl,
    Kammergericht 15. 11. 86. c./a. Vehl.
16. Zahnoperateur; Zahnoperationen; Atelier für Zahnoperationen, namentlich wenn der Betreffende sich gleichzeitig Zahntechniker oder Zahnkünstler nicht nennt. (83).
17. Auch Verurteilungen wegen „Zahnoperationen" mit Standesbezeichnung (d. h. Zahntechniker) liegen vor.
18. Zahnartist; oder Zahnart. (abgekürzt). (84).
19. Dr. (ohne zahnärztliche Approbation) und ohne Zahntechnikerbezeichnung (85).
20. Zahntechniker mit Zusatz: „Zahnoperationen" oder „Mundkranke" oder „Narkose" dgl. (strittig!).
21. „Geprüft" bei Zahntechnikern, in jeder Verbindung.

Straflos bleiben:

1. Zahntechniker. (83)
2. Zahnkünstler. (83)
3. Zahntechniches Atelier. (84)
4. Zahnkünstl. Atelier. (84)
5. Atelier künstl. Zähne. (84)
6. Zahnziehen, Reinigen, Plombieren.
7. Doctor of dental surgery, aber nur bei reputabler Universität und seit 1897 mit Ministerialerlaubnis. (87)
8. D.D.S american dentist } bei wirklich giltiger ausländischer Approbation. (78)
9. Doctor of dental surgery american dentist }
10. Dentist in deutschen Buchstaben noch strittig, aber auch mehrere Verurteilungen!

Mögen die Kollegen davon Gebrauch machen.

**Figure 5.** Zahnarzt Eckstein, Fulda, Strafbare und nichtstrafbare Titel der Zahntechniker, *Zahnärztliche Rundschau*, March 1, 1902.

Whereas in the 1860s Minister of Education Adalbert Falk had assured Henriette Hirschfeld that she could practice in Germany on the sole basis of her American degree, these days were clearly over by the first decade of the twentieth century.[119] Yet American dental degrees had not entirely lost their validity or significance. Lacking their own doctoral qualifications, the first dental institutes to be established at German universities often required an American doctorate as a prerequisite for joining the faculty. This was the case for Julius Parreidt, a well-respected dentist as well as chronicler of the Association of German Dentists, who had been offered the

**119** Truman, 1893, here 7.


D.D.S.-Titel

Wer erteilt gewissenhaft Rat, wie man solchen erwirbt?

Gefäll. Off. unter M. Z. 1154 an Rudolf Mosse, München. 20596

**Figure 6.** Advertisement, *Zahnärztliche Rundschau*, February 3, 1901.

chair of the new dental institute to be established at the University of Leipzig in 1884. Yet, as his son, who also became a dentist, later recalled, "the condition was that he had to go to America first to obtain the D.D.S. title, at his own expense, of course."[120] Despite all the doubts that had arisen about training in the United States, even established German dentists had to provide proof of an American degree in order to be eligible for certain positions, risking professional disadvantages if they did not.

Fundamentally, this shows how difficult it remained to deal with doctoral degrees earned in the United States whose professional value was so hard to assess, and which therefore made it challenging to assign their holders a specific social status. Conversely, however, this very fact made it all the easier to level the carefully drawn distinctions in status that existed in the German Empire by using foreign titles.

## IV. Re-Establishing Hierarchies: Dr. med. dent.

The lengthy deliberations about the value of foreign dental doctorates only became a serious discussion when the introduction of a German dental doctorate was suggested in 1913. While there had been earlier attempts to introduce such a degree in Germany, they were quickly abandoned due to the stern opposition from general practitioners and medical faculties. A 1903 survey conducted by the Ministry of Education among the medical faculties of the major Prussian universities showed that most were against this "in order to prevent the devaluation of the doctoral title," as one opinion from Breslau stated.[121] However, when the "Dr. med. vet." was introduced after a long – and largely parallel – debate about Swiss veterinarians in 1910, the push for the dentistry degree gained momentum. Based on this precedent, those advocating for a doctorate degree in dentistry believed that they could no longer be denied this after it had been granted to the veterinarians.[122]

More important, though, was another issue of professional and social standing. Due to the severe shortage of dental care, particularly in small towns and rural communities, the new German

**120** Reinhold Parreidt, "Erinnerungen," *Zahnärztliche Mitteilungen* 17. 1955, 624-627, here 624.

**121** GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, Va Sekt. 1,Tit. VI, No. 1 E, Vol. 1, "Äußerungen zu der Frage der Schaffung besonderer Grade eines Doctor medicinae veterinariae/Doctor chirurgiae dentariae," November 10, 1903.

**122** GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, Va Sekt. 1 Tit. VI, No. 1 G, Supp. 1, Vol. 1: "Preußen gegen die Verleihung des zahnärztlichen Doktortitels," 12.12.1913. See Olga Sparschuh, Going Abroad to Gain a Title. Doctorate Strategies of "American Dentists" and "Swiss Veterinarians", 1860-1919, in Hansson et al. (forthcoming).

Empire Insurance Ordinance [*Reichsversicherungsordnung*] of 1911 stipulated that, as of January 1, 1914, "so-called dentists or practical dentists or dental technicians, whose limited training and education is generally known" would be allowed to call themselves "state-approved" and be authorized to treat patients covered by health insurance.[123] When this news spread, dental students went on strike in Leipzig in the autumn of 1913, followed by students in Berlin and Würzburg, to demand the right to "admission to doctoral studies."[124] What motivated them, Berlin dentist K. L. Koneffke argued in the daily *Berliner Tageblatt*, was that "the general public would no longer be able to tell the difference between dentists and dental technicians, and he demanded that the title 'Dr. med. dent.' be used to draw a clear distinction."[125] He found it necessary to point out that the profession was not demanding the creation of a German dentistry degree merely "for motives of vanity, but purely for economic reasons, to be recognizable from the outside and to have an equivalent."

Before any serious reform attempt could be made, however, the First World War broke out and the plans were shelved. It was only in 1919 that the degree "Dr. med. dent." was introduced in the Weimar Republic, requiring a dissertation and an oral examination and making the "American doctorates" obsolete virtually overnight. With their own doctoral degrees, dental surgeons now stood almost on the same level as medical doctors. This marked a significant upgrade in the status of dentistry in both science and practice, and, as a result, the number of students and practitioners rose rapidly.[126] Dental artists or technicians, on the other hand, were deprived of the opportunity to earn a doctorate abroad and evolved into a more technical profession, producing custom-made dental restorations (such as crowns, bridges, and dentures) as well as orthodontic appliances, but working less directly with patients.[127]

Still, the titles acquired in the United States enjoyed a considerable afterlife and continued to shape the field. In 1929, more than thirty years after the beginnings of the nostrification practice in Prussia and ten years after the introduction of the "Dr. med. dent." title in the Weimar Republic, another pamphlet was published

**123** GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, Va Sekt. 1 Tit. VI No. 1 G, Supp. 1, Vol. 1: Zahnärztliche Doktortitel, Zeitungsartikel, 1912-1914: "Der Kampf um den Doktortitel," *Berliner Tageblatt*, December 13, 1913; "Die Zahnarzneistudenten geben nach," *Berliner Morgenpost*, December 18, 1913. See also Reichsversicherungsordnung vom 19. Juli 1911 nebst d. Einführungsgesetz, § 123, Münchner DigitalisierungsZentrum, https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb11124329?page=154,155.

**124** Ibid., "Der Streik der Studierenden der Zahnheilkunde," *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, December 11, 1913.

**125** Ibid., Zahnarzt K. L. Koneffke, Berlin, "Der Kampf um den Doktortitel," *Berliner Tageblatt*, December 13, 1913.

**126** Groß 2009, online.

**127** Groß 2006.

that fundamentally questioned the value of foreign doctoral and professorial titles. The author, Maximilian Camillo Neuburger, a general practitioner, explained their continued existence as follows: "the public attaches great importance to the title used by someone offering medical treatment, yet would not question the legitimacy of the degrees themselves."[128] Once again, this underlines the general inability of the public to classify the (foreign) titles. Despite all the discussion surrounding their validity, without doubt many Dr. titles acquired abroad remained a mark of social distinction across the Weimar Republic, too.

**128** Maximilian Camillo Neuburger, *Welchen Wert haben die amerikanischen Dr.- und Prof.-Titel?* (Zittau, 1929), here 9.

## Conclusion

The doctorate increasingly became a key mark of social standing in the German Empire and was particularly sought after. While general practitioners were protective of their "Dr. med." title vis-à-vis the professionalizing discipline of dentistry, aspiring dentists venturing to the United States were able to overcome these status differences, at least for a certain period, by obtaining abroad the degrees that they were denied at home. However, the lack of clarity regarding foreign institutions and diplomas from which the dentists initially benefited also served less thoroughly trained dental technicians, who obtained a title despite lower qualifications or who simply purchased the coveted degree. Ultimately, it was not only initiatives by dental professionals but also state regulation that led to the introduction of an officially regulated German dental doctorate, which placed dentists on a par with medical doctors and distinguished them from less qualified dental workers. Regulation at the national level therefore ended the temporary possibility of rising in Germany's social hierarchy through foreign doctoral titles.

Several aspects of transnational educational mobility were crucial for the rise and fall of the "American dentists": First, there were fundamental differences in access to higher education in the German Empire and in the United States. As neither dentists nor dental technicians had the possibility of obtaining a doctorate, either because they lacked the *Abitur* or simply because no doctorate of

dentistry existed in the German Empire at all, they took advantage of the United States' higher education system. There, they found a rather unregulated practice of dental (as well as medical) education at numerous quickly established institutions that required little or no academic credentials for admission. By contrast, in the German Empire, fierce competition between the established medical profession and emerging dentistry became apparent early on, and the doctorate was vehemently defended as a privilege by the groups that had traditionally been able to obtain it. Thus, transatlantic differences in the organization of higher education were a vital element for transcending social inequalities determined by diplomas. After returning to Germany, the foreign doctorates made it possible to blur the strong dividing lines between the different status groups, at least for a while.

**129** Rasche, 2007.

Second, this practice was only possible due to the lack of reliable knowledge about foreign qualifications. Owing to the national organization of education systems, the Prussian authorities were inadequately prepared to evaluate foreign degrees - a task which was even more difficult because of the incongruity of titles awarded in the German Empire and the United States. While the "Doctor of Dental Surgery" sounded quite similar to a German medical doctorate, the content of the diploma was very different. The D.D.S. was awarded by colleges unaffiliated with universities as a professional title upon graduation and, for a long time, also as an honorary title. Even if the actual criteria for obtaining a doctorate still differed widely, in Germany as well as in Europe from the nineteenth century onwards the doctorate was awarded as an academic title at a university after completion of the dissertation with the attendant oral defense.[129] Since the D.D.S. was similar in name but not in content, one could argue that the history of "American doctorates" in Germany that spanned the period between the 1870s and the 1920s was essentially based on the (smartly used) ambiguity of the term in translation.

Finally, mass educational mobility led to a harmonization of the degrees. From the 1880s onwards, there were attempts in the United States to regulate many institutions' hitherto very liberal

diploma practices. More importantly, in the German Empire the nostrification practice made the justification of degrees obtained abroad necessary. However, after shifting from an enthusiasm for everything new and American to a fundamental lack of trust in degrees from the United States, particularly in the field of dentistry, eventually these diplomas were no longer recognized, and only the introduction of the "Dr. med. dent." brought certainty. Thus, domesticating the degree ended the possibility of using foreign diplomas to transcend the social inequalities determined by titles back home and re-established a status hierarchy. While the title meant advancement for trained dentists and placed them on a par with general practitioners, it relegated dental technicians to a lower level of the national education system.

The history of the "American dentists" shows that when researching inequalities in higher education, it is crucial to also consider the aspect of social prestige. In a world of nationally organized education systems, transnational student mobility and the diplomas obtained abroad diminished the unequal status of different groups practicing in the medico-dental field. At least temporarily, all those who went abroad succeeded in overcoming the differences manifested by the doctoral degree in the German Empire and expanded their possibilities, before national regulations made the attainment and use of doctoral degrees controllable again. In this regard, student mobility does not only appear as a way for students and scholars "to broaden their educational and cultural horizons," as is frequently held in educational research.[130] It can also be considered a detour to promotion that proved very successful for different kinds of German dental workers for a while.

**130** Rajika Bhandari and Peggy Blumenthal, "Global Student Mobility and the Twenty-First Century Silk Road: National Trends and New Directions," in id., eds., International Students and Global Mobility in Higher Education. National Trends and New Directions (New York, 2011), 1-23, here 1.

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# Fighting Intellectual Unemployment: The League of Nations, Marie Curie, and Social Inequalities in Higher Education

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## I. Introduction

> The expression 'market for intellectual employment,' which the reader will encounter frequently in the following pages, has only recently come into use. The very existence of such a 'market' passed unnoticed until it ceased to function smoothly.

These sentences were written in 1940 when the "market" no longer functioned but was in a "morbid condition." Before the First World War, finding a position "appropriate to their training" was relatively straightforward for university graduates, a growing number of women among them. By 1940, the times of a "happy balance between supply and demand"— the economic terminology remains striking — were over. The public had to learn to grapple with "intellectual unemployment," which was particularly problematic because its "victims" suffer a specific form of shame "which other unemployed people do not experience in the same degree." This was especially dangerous because the situation caused dissatisfaction among those who were endowed with "superior intellectual equipment."[1] The report concluded that with

**1** International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, ed. *The Future of Graduates. The Investigation and Forecasting of Opportunities for Intellectual Employment* (Paris, 1940), 9.

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**Figure 1.** Entrance of the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, Paris, undated. Unknown photographer. Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine - Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication. Public domain.

their skills and connections unemployed academics were able to turn their personal problem into a political one. They could portray their own social dilemma as a symptom of a supposedly "degenerate" state, threatening its legitimacy. In other words, unemployed academics became a problem for the democracies of the world.

The report from which I am quoting here was published by the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation in 1940. In 1924, the Institute was placed under the authority of the French government and entrusted to the League of Nations in order to assume the administrative responsibilities of the League's International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation. This arrangement was subject to the condition that the Institute be headquartered in Paris and headed by a French director. Although the Institute formally continued to exist during the German occupation of Paris, it effectively ceased to undertake any new activities. The 1940 report thus constituted virtually the last publication for which the Institute bore responsibility before its functions, archives, furnishings, and a number of its staff members were absorbed into the newly established UNESCO after 1945.

The data collection for the report had been initiated prior to the war, starting in 1937.[2] Its purpose was not only to define the "intellectual labor market" but also to present, in an internationally comparable format, the situation of male and female university graduates who had not managed to secure a position. The hope

**2** See folders R4044/5B/26949 which include enquiries into the situation of unemployed academics in several countries and the attempts to generate general assumptions from these national reports.

was to find – through international agreement and cooperation – a way to remedy this problem, which was not only perceived as an individual issue but above all as a general societal and especially a political problem.[3]

A quasi-paradisiacal world of the past in which the academic world was still in order and everyone could find a position that suited their training is, of course, an illusion.[4] Yet even if the problem was not new, one can observe a rising awareness of "academic unemployment" in the twentieth century, particularly once the phenomenon came to be framed as a threat to political stability.[5] In this article I examine the strategies that were developed to cope with the instability of academic employment. These efforts were carried out by institutions that wanted to address the problem not only in a nation-state framework, but from a supranational perspective[6] – that of the League of Nations and those of its subsidiary organizations that were devoted to the topic of intellectual cooperation.[7] The League of Nations was founded after the devastations of the First World War in 1919/20 as an international organization whose aim was to promote international cooperation and achieve international peace and security based on the tenets of international law. By the time the cited report appeared (1940), however, the League was increasingly regarded, not without reason, as a failed institution.[8]

In this article I investigate how, and for what reasons, the League of Nations engaged with the question of academic unemployment as a global problem. In doing so I will focus on the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, set up by the League of Nations in 1922, which was tasked with precisely such questions. I start by highlighting the significance of academic unemployment in the 1920s and 1930s. In the next section I introduce the organization

**3** International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, ed. *Future of Graduates*, 9.

**4** For the early modern period, for example, see Franz Quarthal, "Öffentliche Armut, Akademikerschwemme und Arbeitslosigkeit im Zeitalter des Barock," in Volker Press, ed., *Barock am Oberrhein* (Karlsruhe, 1985), 153–188.

**5** For the Weimar Republic, see Konrad Jarausch, *The Unfree Professions. German Lawyers, Teachers, and Engineers, 1900–1950* (New York, 1990).

**6** For a definition of "supranational organizations," see Kiran Klaus Patel, "Zeitgeschichte Europas als supranationale Geschichte?" *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 72 (2024): 303 – 315.

**7** Jean-Jacques, *L'Unesco oubliée. La Société des Nations et la cooperation intellectuelle (1919–1946)* (Paris, 1999); Jonathan Voges, "Wissenschaftler als Diplomaten. Der Völkerbund und die internationale geistige Zusammenarbeit in den 1920er Jahren," *Acta Historica Leopoldina* 73 (2021): 121–138; Jonathan Voges, "Internationale Experten in eigener Sache? Der Völkerbund und die Organisation der geistigen Zusammenarbeit in der Zwischenkriegszeit," in Felix Selgert, ed., *Externe Experten in Politik und Wirtschaft* (Berlin, 2020), 223–243.

**8** For a recent introduction to the history of the League of Nations, see Michel Marbeau, *La Société des Nations. Vers un monde multilateral, 1919 – 1946* (Tours, 2017); Ruth B. Henig, *The Peace that Never Was. A History of the League of Nations* (London, 2019).

and its activities, especially with regard to its attention to the situation at universities around the world. In the final section I discuss the efforts of one of its prominent members, Marie Curie, who, beginning in the mid-1920s, developed a project that promised to address academic unemployment, which ultimately failed.

## II. "La grande crise actuelle": Academic Unemployment in the 1920s and 1930s

The survey upon which the publication on the future prospects of university graduates was based was launched in 1937 under the working title *Unemployment among Intellectuals*.[9] From the outset, this framing made clear that the study was primarily concerned with negatively inflected futures — exclusion and marginalization – rather than successful professional careers. As the *rapporteur* noted before the Assembly of the League of Nations: "The growth of unemployment amongst young intellectuals in the different countries has been discussed in detail by the committee." The task now, he continued, was "to draw the attention of Governments to this delicate problem, and to suggest that they take such national steps as may seem necessary to them."[10] In order to establish the precise scope of the problem, a "circular letter on this question" was to be distributed to the member states (as well as selected non-members such as the United States and Germany), and the League expressed its hope that the inquiry would have a "practical value . . . for fighting against the unemployment of the *jeunes diplômés*."[11]

Whereas states such as Siam or the Australian federal states responded to the League's inquiry by emphasizing "that unemployment among university youths in this country [Siam] does not yet present a problem, which warrants the taking of any action in the matter,"[12] others — particularly those industrialized nations most severely affected by the economic crisis of the 1930s — acknowledged the significance of the issue within their own borders. Concern about graduate unemployment was widespread at the international level as well, featuring, for example, promi-

**9** Intellectuals meaning all employees working in professions that either needed a scientific or an artistic training, mainly graduates from universities.

**10** Communication to the Council, September 10, 1936. League of Nations Archives. C.375.1936.XII.

**11** Société des Nations, *Travaux de l'organisation de coopération intellectuelle. Rapport soumis par la septième Commission a l'Assemblée* (Geneva, 1938), 5.

**12** Siamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Secretary of the League of Nations, June 14, 1937. League of Nations Archives, Unemployment among Intellectuals. Enquiry started on January 25th, 1937. Siam. R4044.

nently in the Committee of International Student Organizations, which maintained close ties to the League of Nations.[13]

At the heart of the problem was a development that can be illustrated by the case of Germany. During the 1920s, university enrollment expanded dramatically. By 1931, there were 158.8 university students per 100,000 inhabitants, compared to 89.9 in 1913 and 94.4 in 1925.[14] As a result, university graduates – mainly in the humanities but increasingly even in the natural sciences – began to struggle to secure appropriate employment upon completing their degrees. This tendency was further reinforced by the fact that the pull of favorable admission conditions encouraging young people to enter higher education was stronger than the push of unfavorable labor market prospects that might have discouraged them from doing so.[15] In other words, even when the number of positions available for qualified graduates no longer kept pace with demand, student enrollment did not decline proportionately, which exacerbated the problem over time. A broadly similar situation prevailed in France, where intellectual unemployment had been discussed by organizations representing intellectual workers since the 1920s under the slogan *la grande crise actuelle*. During the 1930s, these groups campaigned for the introduction of unemployment benefits for intellectual workers, which provoked heated parliamentary debates but failed to produce any tangible results.[16]

The issue was international in scope, albeit with important exceptions (Siam and Australia being just two), while manifesting itself in nationally specific forms. Correspondingly, the debates surrounding graduate and intellectual unemployment became increasingly internationalized. The League of Nations — and, more specifically, its International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation — served as an important vehicle for this process of internationalization. It did so, first, through the aforementioned inquiry, which sought to collect, compare, and systematize information on academic unemployment across different national contexts. Second, it promoted a series of initiatives that helped pave the way for this project.

**13** Société des Nations/Institut international de cooperation intellectuelle, *Rapport sur la onzième session du comité des representatives des organisations internationales d'étudiants*, May 1936. League of Nations Archives, Committee of Representatives of International Student Organisations. R3983

**14** Volker Müller-Benedict, Axel Nath, and Hartmut Titze, "Universitätsbesuch und akademischer Arbeitsmarkt im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert," in Helmut Heid and Wolfgang Klafki, eds., *Arbeit – Bildung – Arbeitslosigkeit. Beiträge zum 9. Kongreß der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft* (Weinheim, 1985), 68–76; 69.

**15** Ibid., 73.

**16** Alain Chatriot, "La lutte contre le 'chômage intellectuel.' L'action de la Confédération des Travailleurs Intellectuels (CTI) face à la crise des années trente," *Le Mouvement Social* 214 (2006): 77–91.

## III. The League of Nations Commission and the Crisis of Universities after 1918

Alongside the lofty goal of making future wars impossible, the *Statute of the League of Nations* also included the mandate that the new international organization should devote itself to promoting international cooperation.[17] The text of the Statute lists several areas for cooperation more or less randomly: combating the trafficking of women, cooperation in public health, and other topics. Intellectual cooperation – that is, culture and science – was not mentioned, however.[18] At the very first Assembly of the League of Nations, French delegate Léon Bourgeois therefore proposed a plan for an "International Commission for Intellectual Cooperation" for the next session.[19] After some changes in name and scope of tasks, the Commission was established in 1922. It would initially have twelve members, among them such illustrious figures as Henri Bergson, Marie Curie, and Albert Einstein.[20] The goal of the Commission was to devise instruments by which intellectual cooperation on an international scale could be promoted. Initially, a division dedicated to the administrative preparation and follow-up of the Commission's tasks was set up in the Secretariat of the League of Nations.[21] Then, in 1925, the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation, based in Paris, was established to assist with the Commission's growing administrative duties.[22]

The Institute's tasks were broadly defined and included promoting study abroad semesters among students, creating international bibliographic reference works,[23] and drafting concrete proposals

**17** The Peace Treaty of Versailles, signed June 28, 1919. Part I: The Covenant of the League of Nations. https://www.ungeneva.org/en/about/league-of-nations/covenant (accessed March 12, 2026).

**18** Through UNESCO, the UN sought to integrate culture, science and education into its portfolio from the very beginning after 1945. Poul Duedahl, *A History of UNESCO. Global Actions and Impacts* (New York, 2018).

**19** Léon Bourgeois, *Organization of Intellectual Work. Council of the League of Nations – Report Presented by Mr. Léon Bourgeois, Representative of France*. League of Nations Archives. R1029/13C/15363/14297.

**20** Margarete Rothbarth, "Internationale geistige Zusammenarbeit," in Julius Hatschek and Karl Strupp, eds., *Wörterbuch des Völkerrechts und der Diplomatie Volume 3* (Berlin/Leipzig, 1929), 873-884.

**21** For an early overview of the work of the secretariat, see L. Krabbe, "Le Secrétariat Général de la Société des Nations et son Activité," in Paul Munch, ed., *Les Origines et L'œuvre de la Société des Nations. Volume II* (Copenhagen, 1924), 264-282.

**22** Margarethe Rothbarth, "Das Institut für geistige Zusammenarbeit in Paris," *Völkerbundfragen* 3 (1926): 134-139.

**23** Jonathan Voges, "The Role of Bibliographic Indices for Knowledge Circulation," Wiebke Keim, Leandro Rodriguez Medina, Rigas Arvanitis, et al. eds., *Routledge Handbook of Academic Knowledge Circulation* (London, 2023), 214–222.



**Figure 2.** International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (League of Nations). Plenary session in the Palais des Nations, August 1939. Unknown photographer. United Nations Archives in Geneva, League of Nations Pictures, File CM 075. CC 4.0

for League of Nations-inspired schooling worldwide.[24] Since many of those in charge — in both the Commission and in its administrative branches — were (or had been) members of universities, it is not surprising that universities played a particularly important role in their portfolio of tasks.[25] Several members of the Committee had themselves traversed difficult paths before reaching the positions from which they were appointed to the Commission as distinguished intellectuals. The most striking example is Marie Curie, who shortly after her appointment would seek to develop a structural solution to at least one aspect of the problem of academic unemployment. Not only was she subject to the structural discrimination faced by women. At the time of her studies in the late nineteenth century, higher education for women was neither institutionally consolidated nor was it generally considered conceivable that a woman might one day become a university professor. Moreover, from the outset, Curie's scientific career was

**24** Jonathan Voges, "„Moralische Abrüstung" als Grundlage von Völkerversöhnung? Die Völkerbundorganisation für intellektuelle Kooperation und die Bemühungen um einen dauerhaften Frieden in den 1920er und 1930er Jahren," in Corinne Defrance, Jürgen Finger, Ulrich Pfeil, eds., *„Versöhnung" zwischen Vergessen und Erinnerung. Geschichte eines bewegten Konzepts. Europa 19. Jahrhundert und erste Hälfte 20. Jahrhundert* (Brussels, 2022), 195–216.

**25** Some critics even think that the League of Nations concentrated too much on universities and therefore neglected schools and especially primary schools. See Mark Mazower, *Governing the World. The History of an Idea* (London, 2012), 150.

transnational in character. Initially spanning both Poland and France, it subsequently acquired an increasingly international dimension through her connections to the United States and her work within the framework of the League of Nations.

The fact that eminent scholars took on the issue of academic unemployment on behalf of the United Nations had two important consequences: First, some of these professors' own graduates were hired by the Institute or the League of Nations Secretariat, becoming academic service providers who organized and sustained the intellectual cooperation that the League of Nations had set as part of its agenda.[26] Second, as I have examined elsewhere, employment at the UN improved an academic's chances on the domestic academic job market, as it allowed them to demonstrate international experience in subsequent applications. Therefore, members of the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation never tired of placing their own students at the institute—or at least attempting to do so.[27]

But the Commission also attempted a structured solution to the problem. The very first official act of the Commission was to initiate a wide-ranging inquiry [*enquête*] that addressed the "situation of intellectual labor" in different countries.[28]

> The Commission, deeply shaken by the reports coming from many sides regarding the condition of intellectual work and of those engaged in intellectual labor, a condition which in some countries seemed to threaten the progress of civilization, resolved for the time being to conduct a general investigation. This was to shed light on the extent of the evil under which intellectual work in various countries and intellectual workers of the various kinds suffered.[29]

Based on the Commission's resolution, the Secretariat Division in Geneva developed a questionnaire, which was sent to relevant authorities in the nation-states, asking for information about the condition of their academic and cultural institutions. The Commission published the replies in a series of booklets that now provide a rich resource for a comparative history of academic life shortly after the First World War.[30] It is important to keep in mind, however, that a standardized questionnaire does not guarantee that

**26** Jonathan Voges, "In the Engine Room of Intellectual Cooperation. A Prosopographical Approach to the Civil Servants of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in Paris," in Martin Grandjean and Daniel Laqua, eds., *Intellectual Cooperation at the League of Nations. Shaping Cultural and Political Relations* (Geneva, 2025), 75–84.

**27** Jonathan Voges, "'An able and clever person' – mit Beziehungen. Akademische Patronage und Abhängigkeiten am Beispiel des Internationalen Instituts für geistige Zusammenarbeit in Paris," *Werkstatt-Geschichte* 92 (2025): 51–65.

**28** Jonathan Voges, "An International Survey of "Kopfarbeit"? The League of Nations and the *Enquête sur la situation du travail intellectuel* in the 1920s," *Central European History* [forthcoming].

**29** Nachrichtenabteilung des Völkerbundes, ed., *Der Völkerbund und die geistige Zusammenarbeit* (Geneva, 1927), 16. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's.

**30** In addition to the published reports, see the folders in Enquiry into intellectual Life. S405. Archives of the League of Nations.

all respondents understood the requested information in the same way. Also, very different bodies and individuals in each country responded to the League's request.[31]

The questionnaire could also be used strategically. To the newly formed nation-states of East-Central and Southeastern Europe, it was important to assert through their responses that their new states were underpinned by an independent, culturally elevated, unified national culture.[32] Among the countries whose economy had been particularly gravely affected by the First World War was Hungary.[33] The report devoted to Hungarian institutions of higher education made clear that the financial situation of even the country's largest university — the University of Budapest — was ruinous. "Hungary . . . has to encounter difficulties of an extraordinarily grave character";[34] established professors earned so little that they did not know how to support their families; new books could not be acquired ("It is in this branch that the situation is most hopeless"); equipment could not be kept up to date, could sometimes not even be repaired.[35] At the same time, student enrollment had been rising since 1920, while the number of faculty members was shrinking.[36] Thus the academic career path narrowed, especially since national and travel stipends did not keep pace with Hungarian inflation; in fact, travel stipends had lost all significance because it was no longer possible to travel abroad with what the Hungarian state paid. If tenured and salaried professors were already suffering, the situation for the next generation looked far more precarious.[37] The League's Commission — and above all Marie Curie — wanted to aid future scholars to attain financial stability.

## IV. Creating a Decent Life for Academics: Marie Curie's Scholarship Plans

Biographical research on Marie Curie usually maintains that she refrained from political statements.[38] During the First World War,

**31** The Commission for Hygiene had the same problem while collecting the data for the Health Yearbooks. See Iris Borowy, "World Health in a Book. The Internationalist Health Yearbooks," in Iris Borowy and Wolf D. Gruner, eds., *Facing Illness in Troubled Times. Health in Europe in the Interwar Years, 1918-1939* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005), 85–127.

**32** For an overview of different nation states, see Michaela Maier, Maria Mesner, Robert Kriechbaumer et al., eds., *Die Krisen der Demokratie in den 1920er und 1930er Jahren. Spanien – Portugal – Italien – Jugoslawien – Ukraine – Ungarn – Rumänien – Polen – Österreich* (Wien, 2023).

**33** Zsolt Nagy, *Great Expectations and Interwar Realities. Cultural Diplomacy in Horthy's Hungary* (Budapest/New York, 2022).

**34** Geza de Daruváry, *The Situation of Intellectual Workers in Hungary. Reply to the Questionnaire of the Intellectual Co-operation Commission of the League of Nations* (London, 1923), 5.

**35** Ibid., 6.

**36** Ibid.

**37** Ibid., 23.

**38** For a first attempt to evaluate Curie's activities as part of the Commission – without any reference to the scholarship program – see Eva Hemmung Wirtén, *Making Marie Curie. Intellectual Property & Celebrity Culture in an Age of Information* (Chicago, 2015).

however, she expressed her clear commitment to France in its war against Germany, and she also was an outspoken advocate for women's rights — in particular, for women in science, who were long – and in many areas continue to be[39] – forced out of academia despite their academic achievements.[40] Curie's appointment to the Commission was almost inevitable because the statute explicitly required that women also be appointed,[41] and in the early 1920s there were few women with scientific credentials as outstanding as Nobel Laureate Curie's. While Curie had lived in Paris for decades, she still held Polish citizenship. Thus, her presence *de facto* made the French influence in the Commission stronger, but *de jure* she could be considered as the representative of an East-Central European country.[42] The Commission and Marie Curie took a special interest in a group we refer to as "postdocs" today: doctoral graduates who, after receiving their degree, decided to strive for a university career. Already in the early 1920s, the path toward a permanent professorship was quite difficult, as was so eloquently described by Max Weber.[43]

Curie explicitly introduced natural science topics into the Commission's work. For example, along with Albert Einstein and physicist Hendrik A. Lorentz, who was also the president of the Commission, she advocated for the establishment of an international meteorological institute.[44] Another matter in which she took a particular interest was the recruitment of qualified scientific junior staff. In 1926, Curie put the matter of scholarships for postgraduates on the Commission's agenda; the Secretary of the Commission, Georges Oprescu, immediately asked her to produce an exposé on this topic.[45] Since Curie had been assured that, beyond the meetings in Geneva, no other tasks would be assigned to her, this request might have come as a surprise. Her role was supposed to

**39** See Jenna P. Carpenter, ed., *Women in Academia* (Chams, 2026).

**40** See for example Iwona Dadej, *Beruf und Berufung international. Deutsche und polnische Akademikerinnen in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Osnabrück, 2019); Christine von Oertzen, *Science, Gender, and Internationalism. Women's Academic Networks, 1917–1955* (New York, 2014); Britta Lohscheider, *„Die Knäbin mit dem Doktortitel". Akademikerinnen in der Weimarer Republik* (Pfaffenweiler, 1994).

**41** "Its members, who—by explicit resolution—were also to include women, consisted of 12 (later 14) scholars who were selected on the basis of their scientific significance, without regard to nationality." Rothbarth, "Internationale geistige Zusammenarbeit," 874.

**42** For a critique, see Otto Soehring, *Völkerbund und internationale wissenschaftliche Beziehungen. Vier Rundfunk-Vorträge gehalten für die "Deutsche Welle"* (Leipzig, 1927).

**43** Max Weber, *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (Berlin,[9]1991).

**44** Marie Curie, Albert Einstein, and Hendrik A. Lorentz, "The Establishment of an International Bureau of Meteorology" *Science* 65 (1927): 415–417.

**45** Georges Oprescu to Marie Curie, 23 March 1926. Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Papers of Marie Curie: XCIX Société des Nations – Swajcer.

be mainly representative.[46] Curie, however, well aware where the major wealthy foundations that could decisively support a scholarship program of the envisaged scale were located, namely, the United States, dispatched her paper accordingly, possibly intending to inform interested parties in the United States about the Commission's plans – even before the issue had in fact become an official Commission topic.[47]

Directly referring to the *enquête,*[48] Curie presented a plan centered on support for graduate university affiliates. Confidently, Curie emphasized the great importance of science for humanity:

> I shall devote but few words to a declaration of faith in the importance of science for humanity. If that importance has sometimes been discussed, and if words such as 'the failure of science' have been uttered in the bitterness of discouragement, it is because humanity's effort toward its most beautiful aspirations is imperfect like all that is human and has often been diverted from its way by forces of national selfishness and social regression.[49]

The scholarship program proposed by Curie was intended to address both above-mentioned problems — national selfishness and social challenges — together. For Curie, nothing less than the future of humanity depended on the financial security of early career scholars: "It is in this spirit that the question of scholarships will be considered here, which I hope our Commission will pay all the attention it deserves." For "the protection of scientific vocations is a sacred duty for every society concerned about its future."

Curie considered two categories of persons eligible: first, category 1 for those who had made a name for themselves with their initial research and who therefore had good prospects for advancement to regular employment — but who were as yet without a permanent position: "Give working means to advanced scientists who would already have made themselves known by scientific works guaranteeing their aptitudes."

The second category comprised those whose prospects were not yet equally guaranteed, those who merely stood out from the crowd

**46** Curie had explicitly noted in her reply to the invitation that she was not certain whether her university obligations and her health would allow her to participate in the commission (Curie to Drummond, 1 June 1922). The Secretary-General of the League of Nations, however, assured her that the work of the commission would certainly not conflict with her other activities: 'it will moreover be entirely up to the members themselves to determine the programme and scope of this work' (Eric Drummond to Marie Curie, 7 June 1922). Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Papers of Marie Curie: XCIX Société des Nations – Swajcer.

**47** Curie to Oprescu, 11 June 1926. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Papers of Marie Curie: XCIX Société des Nations – Swajcer.

**48** She explicitly referred to "the state of mind of intellectuals of various countries, as it was revealed by the recent war." Marie Curie, untitled and undated draft for an international scholarship programme. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Papers of Marie Curie: XCIX Société des Nations – Swajcer.

**49** For all subsequent quotes from Curie, see previous fn.

by recommendation from their "maîtres" [doctoral supervisors] or by their graduation grades: "Give to all candidates animated by the desire to devote some time to science a chance to develop their aptitudes, under the sole guarantee of being recommended by their supervisors or by the academic diplomas obtained." Curie also made clear that these categories were not always clearly separable; the aim had to be to move persons from category 1 into category 2. Graduates who had passed through scholarship category 1 should form the pool from which further scholars could be recruited: "Note that while the first category of candidates appears more interesting, the second is obviously larger."

What was new about Curie's plan was that the scholarships offered should not be a national affair alone — rather, she demanded an "international organization of scholarships," which should allow laboratories (her plan concerned only the natural sciences) to disburse funds to those persons deemed suitable by them: "Internationality would be assured by the removal of clauses relating to the nationality of the scholar."

This would mean that laboratories and universities could become centers of international science. "It is in the interest of a laboratory to receive workers in order to broaden its action and the extent of its service to society." This also meant that Curie did not want the scholarships to be understood solely as an act of benevolence toward the graduates. Rather she made it clear that laboratories would receive something in return for their investment of "economic capital," to use Pierre Bourdieu's phrasing. In addition to benefitting from the labor of the scholar recipient, laboratories would bolster their scientific reputation ("cultural capital") and above all also increase their international networking ("social capital").[50] Curie emphasized this last point as especially important for modern science.

Curie's plan envisaged two different classes of scholarships: Full scholarships for young scientists designed to enable the recipients to maintain a modest but sufficient standard of living — "without any other resources."[51] Travel costs were to be covered by the schol-

**50** Pierre Bourdieu, "Ökonomisches, kulturelles und soziales Kapital." Pierre Bourdieu, *Die verborgenenen Mechanismen der Macht* (Hamburg, 1992), 49–75.

**51** Curie, Draft for international scholarship programme. Subsequent quotes ibid.

arship as well. Its main purpose was to open university careers to a broader demographic who could not rely on family wealth. In return, the recipient was to undertake all tasks that the director of the laboratory deemed important. That director, in turn, was to supervise the work of his (or in fewer cases her) protégé, jointly prepare publications, and submit an annual report to the foundation. The duration of the scholarship was to be one year with the possibility of extension. A maximum of two extensions up to a total of three years could be granted — by then it would have to be decided whether the recipient had qualified for a second category of scholarship. For this second type of scholarship, extensions were always to be possible "to any worker [travailleur] who deserves them."[52] These therefore took the role of consolidator grants. This option, however, meant that the researchers receiving these scholarships, who were often already advanced in age, remained in a limited-term position instead of securing a permanent appointment at a university or research institution.

Curie concluded that both sides would ultimately benefit: The institution would gain a qualified specialist at the expense of the scholarship provider, and some of the scholars — Curie was well aware that not all could follow the path into science — "would show more rare aptitudes and it would be fitting to encourage them to pursue a scientific career." For researchers, the time at their chosen institute would afford the opportunity to make a name for themselves through publications (in most cases jointly with the supervisor) and thereby increase their "employability," to use a contemporary term.[53]

I shall not go further into another class of scholarships here; Curie only treats it in passing, but she intended also to open paths for established scientists to spend some time at research institutions abroad. With regard to the question of social inequalities within universities as workplaces, however, the first category is far more significant. It explicitly addressed two forms of social inequality: first, family-based economic circumstances. Academic careers were no longer to depend on the availability — or absence — of such financial resources when it came to the advancement of young

**52** Curie consistently referred to the academics in question as "*travailleurs*" (workers), totally in line with the phrasing of the League of Nation Committee. The reason for this was to make intellectual work visible as work and, in a second step, to demand improvements for the situation of intellectual workers.

**53** For the present, see Thies Johannsen, *Die Zukunft akademischer Berufe. Innovation durch Transferkompetenz in der Hochschulbildung* (Bielefeld, 2025).



**Figure 3.** Marie Curie and four female students, c. 1910. Photo: Bain News Service. Library of Congress, George Grantham Bain Collection.

scholars.[54] Second, it addressed the differences that existed between individual nation-states by seeking to enable each applicant to work in the location most conducive to their research. These attempts to compensate for social imbalances through scholarships, however, came into effect relatively late in a student's academic trajectory, namely, only after their completion of an advanced degree.

The lack of academic opportunities for women was a form of inequality that Curie addressed more implicitly. From her own experience, she knew that women, in particular, often lacked familial support for pursuing a (permanent) university position.[55] With the scholarship system she developed, Curie sought precisely to decouple the support of promising candidates from their families' financial means and willingness to provide assistance. For women at universities in particular, this meant being able to continue their studies without having to rely on their families' approval of, or support for, higher education for women; academic merit alone was intended to determine eligibility for support.

**54** Biographers from socialist countries even wrote that Curie was explicitly interested in the fate of children from peasants and workers' families – even though there is no hint in the sources that would support such a proto-socialist understanding of her scholarship program. Olgierd Wołczek, *Maria Skłodowska-Curie und ihre Familie* (Leipzig, 1978), 133.

**55** For Curie's work for women in science, see Michel Pinault, "Marie Curie, une intellectuelle engagée?" *Clio* 24 (2007): 1-13; 4.

As requested, Marie Curie submitted her memorandum in printed form in 1926 for discussion by the Commission. Like all discussion papers of the League of Nations, it was made publicly accessible.[56] The Commission did what it often did and established an expert commission to examine the question. This process alone took several years. Besides Curie herself, the committee included: German political scientist Arnold Bergsträsser, a founding member of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and connoisseur of France;[57] Jules Duesberg, first rector of the University of Liège (Belgium); eminent Slavicist Louis Eisenmann representing the Office Nationale des Universités et des Écoles Francaises; jurist Massimo Pilotti, Italian delegate at the Institute in Paris; English biochemist Ida Smedley of the International Federation of University Women;[58] and W. E. Tisdale of the Rockefeller Foundation.[59] While its members' professional backgrounds varied widely, their geographical locations did not: the Global South was not represented at all, neither was Asia. This was, however, not unusual for the work of the Committee. Although it was acknowledged that universities and university-trained individuals modelled on Western institutions had by then emerged in other parts of the world, Western models nevertheless remained the benchmark. The selection of experts made clear that it would primarily be universities in the Global North that had something to offer prospective candidates — not only their particular modes of conducting research, but also the necessary financial resources. These institutions were not merely assumed to serve as models; they were expected to become integral to the higher education of not only their own students but also those arriving from elsewhere.

The experts' commission presented its report in 1930.[60] Throughout it made clear that precisely because of the continuing economic crises, especially after the Wall Street Crash of 1929, it was becoming ever more difficult to attract academically trained persons to work in science because they pursued more lucrative careers. This

**56** Société des Nations/Commission de Coopération intellectuelle, ed., *Mémorandum de Mme Curie de la Commission sur la question des bourses internationales, pour l'avancement des sciences et le développement des laboratoires* (Geneva, 1926).

**57** Volkhard Laitenberger, "Der DAAD von seinen Anfängen bis 1945," in Peter Alter, ed., *Der DAAD in der Zeit. Geschichte, Gegenwart und zukünftige Aufgaben – vierzehn Essays* (Berlin, 2000), 21-48; Volkhard Laitenberger, "Theorie und Praxis der „Kulturellen Begegnung zwischen den Nationen" in der deutschen auswärtigen Kulturpolitik der 30er Jahre" *Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch* 31 (1981): 196-206.

**58** On the federation, see von Oertzen, *Science, Gender, and Internationalism*.

**59** See Helke Rausch, "US-amerikanische „Scientific Philantropy" in Frankreich, Deutschland und Großbritannien zwischen den Weltkriegen" *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 33 (2007): 73-98.

**60** Réunion d'experts pour la question des bourses d'études post-universitaires à l'Institut international de coopération intellectuelle, Paris, le 17 mars 1930, à 10 heures du matin. Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Papers of Marie Curie LXXVII Documents concernant le Comité de Coopération intellectuelle de la Société des Nations.

situation, the commission argued, presented "a real and pressing danger for the future of science." The report also stressed that to maintain the current "level of scientific culture" it was absolutely necessary to develop institutions that could sustain "an elite engaged purely in research."

The establishment of the scholarship system proposed by Curie was thus welcomed — with some limitations — and formally endorsed in a resolution, which called for the following measures:

1. "by all appropriate means" to enable young academics to pursue a university career;
2. to provide them with scholarships that allow "a decent existence free from material worries";
3. to open scholarships to foreign applicants as well as to nationals (here the resolution did not go as far as Curie's proposal, which had called for a strictly international scholarship system);
4. to create bilateral scholarship systems that would permit exchange of scholars between individual states (a watered-down version of Curie's plea for international academic mobility);
5. to prepare a publication listing all existing scholarships in the different countries.[61]

As was perhaps to be expected after the resurgence of nationalist sentiment during the Depression era,[62] the experts gathered in Paris did indeed make concessions with respect to the grand international ambition that Curie had formulated in her initial considerations. What they continued to affirm, however, was the importance of postdoctoral scholarships in order to retain promising candidates within academia.[63]

As with so many projects of the League's Commission, however, the scholarship system subsequently faltered, as, in the 1930s, it became increasingly difficult for the message of international cooperation to be heard,[64] and the economic situation made it not particularly attractive for national governments to invest further funds in universities.[65] Nevertheless, the League's efforts document both the issue of academic unemployment in the interwar period

**61** Société des Nations/Institut international de coopération intellectuelle. Réunion d'experts pour la question des bourses post-universitaires (Paris, 17 mars 1930). Résolution unique. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Papers of Marie Curie. LXXVII Documents concernant le Comité de Coopération intellectuelle de la Société des Nations.

**62** Paul Jankowski, *All Against All. The Long Winter of 1933 and the Origins of the Second World War* (New York, 2020).

**63** Résolution unique.

**64** For the case of fascist Italy, see Elisabetta Tollardo, *Fascist Italy and the League of Nations, 1922–1935* (London, 2016).

**65** Jan-Otmar Hesse, Roman Köster, and Werner Plumpe, *Die Große Depression. Die Weltwirtschaftskrise 1929–1939* (Frankfurt am Main, 2014).

and the awareness of it among those seeking to effect change. They not only possessed first-hand experience derived from their own professional careers, but also maintained close contact with students, serving as university teachers and supervisors of doctoral research. Beyond these admittedly anecdotal forms of knowledge, however, their membership in the Committee provided them with access to statistically generated information on the conditions of academic labor across a wide range of countries. This enabled them to situate their personal experiences within a broader social framework – and to do so on a global scale.

The Committee's efforts also show that there were indeed attempts to remedy this situation and that these sought international solutions for a phenomenon observable on an international scale. The failure of these plans was undoubtedly due, at least in part, to the specific circumstances of the 1930s. The continuing global economic crisis left politicians with little inclination to allocate scarce resources to international students rather than to their own constituencies. At the same time, growing numbers of scholars – regardless of age – were compelled to go abroad and, often without any support from the League of Nations organization, seek opportunities for employment in unfamiliar university systems.[66]

Remarkably, no trace of the League of Nations' scholarship program, developed over a number of years, appears to survive in any national archival record. Nor does Curie's proposal reappear in the League's own documentation, despite the fact that the organization continued to engage with the issues she had raised, as evidenced by the survey conducted in 1937.

## V. Conclusion: Some Degree of Order in Academic Careers

> At this post-university stage of their lives, the young students whom science attracts find themselves faced with pressing necessities. More often than not the family has done everything it could to bring the young man or young woman to this stage and, unable to make further sacrifices, asks them to make do.[67]

**66** See for example the findings of the GHI Washington project "In Global Transit," https://www.ghi-dc.org/research/history-of-migration/in-global-transit

**67** Curie, *Draft for an International Scholarship Programme*.

In this passage Marie Curie was certainly drawing on her own experience.[68] When she campaigned for her scholarship program, she pointed not just to individual hardship but also offered a socio-political perspective: "Thus every nation loses each year a large part of the rarest and most precious vital sap."[69]

The League of Nations' efforts document an awareness of social inequality in higher education in the 1920s and early 1930s not only among academics but also within the League of Nations. With hindsight, the concern that young graduates facing unemployment or having to take positions not corresponding to their training not only signified a waste of intellectual resources but might alienate these young people from liberal democracy proved a rather perceptive observation.

At the same time, the counter-measures proposed by Curie also point to problems of academic precarity that continue to shape the lives of those who choose a career in academia to this day: dependence on the good will of a single person – in Curie's plan the director of the laboratory – still appears as a patronage relationship. The postponed final decision about who may stay in the academic system, and who may not, also appears in Curie's plan; here the scholarship is in effect an extension of the precarious state. But it also includes the promise to make careers more plannable: proving oneself to a professor abroad, joint publications, and the aforementioned advocacy of an established scientist as elements meant to smooth the path into science as a profession. The "marketization" of the university introduced via the concept of the "intellectual labor market" would have been one of its consequences.

Much of what one reads in Curie's problem description and in the League of Nations Institute plan from 1940 therefore seems, unfortunately, very current. This applies, for example, also to the hope of introducing "some degree of order into the movement toward intellectual careers through the reorganization of the educational system."[70] Whether the introduction of a general *numerus clausus* to reduce enrollment, "the creation of placement offices and offices for professional guidance, and the constitution of commissions to

**68** See Ulla Fölsing, *Marie Curie, Wegbereiterin einer neuen Naturwissenschaft* (Munich, 1990).

**69** Curie, *Draft for an International Scholarship Programme*.

**70** International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, ed., *The Future of Graduates*, 10.

study the problem of overcrowding in the universities and in the intellectual professions" are the best available means, as proposed in the 1940 report, is debatable.[71]

The framing of scholarships that Curie proposed, however, is also important for the present: understanding academic research per se as important for humanity; insisting that those who engage in research receive support and that this is not an act of charity but a reciprocation to those who have already made their contribution to academic research and society and wish to continue doing so: "In the case of scholars, the regulations should be more generous since such persons have already rendered services to science."[72]

**71** Ibid.

**72** Curie, *Draft for an International Scholarship Programme.*

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# Breaking Barriers: Women in Croatian Higher Education, 1892–1942[1]

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## I. Introduction

"Yesterday afternoon I attended a lecture for the very first time. You know how it felt! Happiness and a certain kind of fear merged in my soul, that sense of uncertainty, where to go, which door to enter."[2] Zdenka Marković, who became a distinguished Slavicist, wrote these words in 1902 to her former schoolmate and close friend Elza Kučera. Women had been granted the right to enroll at the University of Zagreb only a year earlier and Zdenka found herself standing at the threshold of exciting new possibilities, while simultaneously confronting the uncertainty and challenges inherent in venturing onto previously untraveled paths.

The admission of women into higher education represented a profound shift in their social position. It was inseparably linked to the organization and activities of the women's movement, women's gradual inclusion in the public sphere, and their entry into the world of paid white-collar labor. This transformation, however, cannot be understood as the result of a single legislative breakthrough alone. Rather, it unfolded as a long and uneven process that began with the opening of secondary education to women,

**1** This work was supported by the Croatian Science Foundation as part of the project "Women and Changes: Women as Subjects of Historical Changes in Croatia" (IP-2024-05-3847).

**2** NSK (National and University Library in Zagreb), R4771b, "1902-1905 Letter from Zdenka Marković to Elza Kučera", October 22, 1902. Cited in Tihomir Vukelja and Tihana Luetić, *Prirodoslovke i matematičarke. Prve žene u hrvatskoj akademskoj prirodoslovno matematičkoj zajednici* (Zagreb, 2024), 92. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's.

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well before the first formal university enrollments. Even after legal barriers had been lifted, women continued to face less visible, but no less restrictive cultural norms, professional obstacles, and entrenched prejudices that shaped both their educational trajectories and their future opportunities. Particularly long and difficult was the path leading from student status to an academic teaching position within the university itself.

The history of women's education represents a well-established and widely researched field in both European and Croatian scholarship. Over the past several decades, a number of authors, including, among others, Dinko Župan, Tihana Luetić, Štefka Batinić and myself, have examined various aspects of women's education in Croatia, focusing on specific themes within this field. These studies have typically addressed well-defined problems, individual educational institutions, or particular groups of female students within clearly delineated historical periods. Together, they have laid important foundations for the development of a more comprehensive analysis, one that brings together multiple historical processes, moves beyond conventional chronological dividing lines (such as the First World War or the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire), and presents a coherent narrative tracing women's educational trajectory. Such an approach makes it possible to follow developments from the first instances of women's entry into advanced education to the period in which female students became well represented and gradually began to establish pathways into academic professions.

To provide such a comprehensive perspective, the chronological scope of this article spans half a century, framed by two key moments. It begins with the establishment of the Women's Lyceum in Zagreb, the first *Gymnasium* (college-preparatory secondary school) for women, which laid the formal and conceptual groundwork for women's entry into the university and provided crucial networks of support, among peers as well as with professors, in overcoming obstacles along the way. The article then follows the gradual opening of individual faculties at the University of Zagreb, tracing not only the lived experiences of female students but also broader



**Figure 1.** Zagreb University, 1910. Photo: Éva Marton. Museum of Arts and Crafts, Zagreb, Croatia - CC BY-SA.

shifts in their numbers, social position, ambitions, and their perceived roles within academic and professional life.

Geographically, the focus is on Croatia. To be precise, throughout the entire period under consideration both the first women's *Gymnasium* and the country's sole university were in Zagreb. The political context within which women pursued higher education was far from static, however. In 1918, Croatia underwent a fundamental transformation, changing from a peripheral region of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, where Croatian lands had been divided between the Austrian and Hungarian parts, into the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later Yugoslavia). Within this new state, Zagreb would long occupy the position of a major cultural and economic center.

The aim of this article is to identify the wide range of barriers women encountered along their educational paths and to situate their experiences within the broader educational, political, and cultural developments that defined the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. The article's first part examines the gradual removal of formal legal barriers to women's access to secondary and higher education in Croatia. The second part argues that, even after these restrictions were lifted, women continued to face persistent social, professional, and cultural obstacles, which they negotiated through family support, informal networks, and women's organizations.

## II. Legal Barriers to Women's Education and the Path towards Reform

During the nineteenth century, the significance of education was fundamentally transformed as schooling became crucial for building modern bureaucratic states, shaping collective identities, structuring social hierarchies, and regulating access to labor markets. Across Europe, this led to reforms aimed at modernization, standardization, and secularization, seen in Austria-Hungary in the late 1860s, in France with Jules Ferry's reforms of the 1880s, and in England through legislative acts between 1870 and 1892.[3] These were dynamic processes shaped by tensions between liberal and conservative forces, balancing aspirations for teachers' professional autonomy with demands for centralization and bureaucratization.

Croatian educational reforms unfolded within the same timeframe, reflecting disputes between Church and State and mirroring initiatives from the imperial government. Educational debates, however, extended beyond secularization to include the choice of language of instruction (Croatian, German, or Hungarian), curricula, and the interpretation of cultural and historical narratives. The key turning point came in 1874, when reforms affecting primary schooling and higher education were enacted. The Act on the Organization of Public Schools and Teacher Training Colleges standardized primary education, initiated its secularization, mandated five years of compulsory schooling, and regulated teacher training and professional status.[4] Primary schools were divided into four-year mandatory lower public schools and three- or four-year „civil schools" (later renamed higher public schools) intended for students who wished to continue their education but did not plan to attend a *Gymnasium* or *Realschule*.[5] The reform formed part of Ban Ivan Mažuranić's broader modernization program, which aimed to liberalize Croatian legislation and strengthen Croatia's autonomy within Hungary. His successor, the pro-Hungarian Ban Khuen-Héderváry (1883–1903), sought to reverse these changes by lowering educational standards, promoting Hungarian in schools, and placing teachers under stricter state supervision.[6] Nevertheless, the reform's main principles remained in force throughout the period discussed here.

**3** Julia Zinkina, Andrey Korotayev, and Alexey I. Andreev, "Mass Primary Education in the Nineteenth Century", in *Globalistics and Globalization Studies: Global Transformations and Global Future*, ed. Leonid E. Grinin, Ilya V. Ilyin, Peter Herrmann, and Andrey V. Korotayev (Volgograd, 2016) https://www.sociostudies.org/upload/sociostudies.org/almanac/globalistics_and_globalization_studies_5/063-070.pdf

**4** Dinko Župan, "Utjecaji Mažuranićeve reforme školstva na pučko školstvo u Slavoniji (1875-1885)," *Scrinia Slavonica* 2/1 (2002): 277-285, https://hrcak.srce.hr/10398.

**5** Ibid.; Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, "Reforma obrazovnog sustava kao jedno od ključnih društvenih pitanja 19. Stoljeća," *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu* 39/1 (2007): 61-65. https://hrcak.srce.hr/49080

**6** Mirjana Gross, "Modernizacija – sastavnica hrvatske nacionalne integracije u drugoj polovici 19. Stoljeća," *Historijski zbornik* 52 (1999): 151.

In 1874, the University of Franz Joseph I was established in Zagreb. Following the Austrian model of a fully-fledged university, it included faculties of Law, Theology, Philosophy, and Medicine, with the latter beginning operation only in 1917.[7] Following the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the University saw significant changes. The loss of Austro-Hungarian academic networks and funding structures posed a considerable challenge. State scholarships were first centralized in Belgrade, after which their numbers dropped dramatically, while most of the private foundations folded following the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy due to devaluation of the now-defunct state currency and their prior investments in government war bonds. By contrast, Zagreb University was reorganized along the lines of the University of Belgrade, achieving greater academic autonomy and introducing the position of docent (assistant professor) as the lowest full academic rank with full rights. During these years, it also developed into a Croatian and partly regional academic center, with the establishment of new faculties, including the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry (1919), the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (1924), and the Faculty of Engineering (1926), while the School of Economics and Commerce was granted faculty status in 1925, although it remained outside the University. The pharmaceutical course was expanded into a four-year program in 1928.[8]

Secondary education followed the mid-nineteenth-century monarchical pattern: *Gymnasium*, *Realschule*, and vocational schools. The *Gymnasium* offered an eight-year classical curriculum culminating in the *matura* exam required for university entry. The *Realschule* emphasized modern languages, science, and technical training and was gradually expanded into four-year minor and seven-year full programs, though these remained less socially and academically prestigious than attending a *Gymnasium*, partly because further study required going to Austria or Hungary. To bridge the divide, Minister of Education Izidor Kršnjavi, inspired by his travels through the Scandinavian countries, proposed *Real-Gymnasiums*, schools that would offer both training in modern languages and science and preparation for the *matura*. Following initial public resistance, the transformation of *Realschulen* into *Real-Gymnasiums*

**7** Vlasta Švoger, "Modernizacija visokog školstva u Habsburškoj Monarhiji i utemeljenje modernog sveučilišta u Zagrebu 1874. godine", in *Studije iz povijesti Sveučilišta u Zagrebu*, ed. Velimir Veselinović (Zagreb, 2025), 22-27. Students who left formal education after completing lower public school were required to attend an additional year of *opetovnica* [continuation school], where they revised the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

**8** Hodimir Sirotković, "Sveučilište između dva rata (1918-1941)," in *Spomenica u povodu proslave 300-godišnjice Sveučilišta u Zagrebu*, vol. I, ed. Jaroslav Šidak (Zagreb, 1969), 126, 142-144.

finally began in the mid-1890s.[9] Alongside them, various vocational schools, especially teacher-training institutions, provided one- to four-year professional programs.

In these reforms, the importance of gender increased with the level of schooling. Primary education was open to all, and girls, like boys, were required to attend five years of schooling. They could continue their education in "secondary public schools" or, more acceptably, in "secondary schools for girls."[10] However, girls' education was understood differently, with authorities emphasizing gender segregation, moral instruction, and the regulation of female behavior.[11] Girls could also attend vocational schools, training for occupations such as dressmaking, millinery, midwifery, and bookkeeping.[12] Nevertheless, their educational opportunities narrowed sharply after the age of fifteen. They could not enroll in the upper grades of the *Gymnasium*, take the *matura* (qualifying exam for university admission),[13] or attend university lectures. The only path to a university education was through women's teacher-training schools, which often occupied a no-man's-land amidst the conflict between church and state over the control of female education.[14] By the end of the nineteenth century, only one such institution remained in Northern Croatia, run by the Sisters of Charity and criticized by some for promoting German cultural narratives and limiting "progressive" pedagogical ideas.[15]

As elsewhere in Europe, this framework was both class-based and gendered. Lower-class women entered the workforce out of economic necessity, while middle- and upper-class women were expected to find fulfillment through marriage and family life. Women's access to higher education was often dismissed as a private matter, family strategy or ultimately only a "women's" issue.

**9** Vlasta Švoger, Ivana Horbec, „Nacrt temeljnih načela javne nastave u Austriji (1848.) - osnova modernizacije školstva u Habsburškoj Monarhiji", *Anali za povijest odgoja* 12/12 (2013), 15, 30. https://hrcak.srce.hr/334445; Štefka Batinić, "Hrvatski školski sustav u XX. stoljeću", *Anali za povijest odgoja* 2/2 (2003), 55. https://hrcak.srce.hr/334748

**10** The history of secondary schools for girls in Croatia dates back to 1868.

**11** Dinko Župan, *Mentalni korzet. Spolna politika obrazovanja žena u Banskoj Hrvatskoj (1868-1918)* (Osijek – Slavonski Brod, 2013), 125-140.

**12** Antun Cuvaj, *Građa za povijest školstva kraljevine Hrvatske i Slavonije*, X (Zagreb, 1913), 245-251.

**13** In Austria, women were permitted to take the *Matura* exam as external candidates starting in the 1870s.

**14** The first Women's Teacher Training College was opened by the Sisters of Charity in Zagreb in 1848. Later, from 1865 to 1875, the order also operated a college in Đakovo. Its closure coincided with the establishment of the state-run Royal Women's Preparatory School [*Kraljevska ženska preparandija*] in Zagreb, which existed for only eight years. In southern Croatia, a Women's Teacher Training College was established in Dubrovnik in 1875, while in Istria, a similar school would eventually open in Pazin in 1912. Župan, *Mentalni korzet*, 158-166.

**15** Dragutin Franković, *Povijest školstva i pedagogije u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb, 1958), 170.

Therefore, it was precisely female teachers, writers, and women's associations who brought women's educational rights into public debate and challenged existing barriers.

## III. Renegotiating the Limits of Women's Education

In the major cultural and national centers of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, women's educational activism was largely organized through associations such as the Association for Extended Women's Education [Verein für erweiterte Frauenbildung] (1888); Czech Women's Industrial Association [Ženský výrobní spolek] (1871), Minerva Association for the Foundation and Maintenance of the Girls' *Gymnasium* (1890); the Hungarian National Association for Women's Education [Országos Nőképző Egyesület] (1868). Together, these organizations created an institutional network of vocational courses, girls' schools, and women's secondary education, while also advocating for expanded educational opportunities.[16]

In Croatia, by contrast, no comparable association existed at this time. As an agrarian country with a relatively small bourgeois civil society until the late nineteenth century, Croatia lacked the capital and social foundations necessary to sustain such initiatives. Modernizing projects, first promoted by Vienna for administrative purposes and later adopted by national movements seeking greater political autonomy, developed under significant structural constraints. Territorial fragmentation, limited capital, the economic crisis of the 1870s and 1880s, and the subordination of Croatian economic interests to Vienna and Budapest slowed social transformation. It was only in the mid-1890s that a more consolidated bourgeois society began to emerge.[17] Within this context, the development of women's secondary schools and associations followed a reverse trajectory. The first major women's association focused on female education and employment was founded only in 1900, supporting the already established Temporary Women's Lyceum.[18]

**16** "Minerva. Verein für Frauenbildung," *Ariadne. Frauen in Bewegung 1848–1938,* Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, https://fraueninbewegung.onb.ac.at/node/30.; "Verein für erweiterte Frauenbildung," *Ariadne. Frauen in Bewegung 1848–1938*, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, https://fraueninbewegung.onb.ac.at/node/474; Katalin Kéri, "The Topic of Girls' Education in Hungary in the Late 1800s," *e-Eruditio* 7/ 2 (2023): 40–49, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1416686.pdf.; Marie L. Neudorflová, *Česke ženy v 19. století. Ůsilí a sny, úspěchy i zklamaní na cestě k emancipaci* (Prague, 1999), 116-142; Stjepan Radić, *Djevojački sviet - izabrane pripovijetke čeških spisateljica*, (Zagreb, 1902), XXIV-XXXVI.

**17** Arnold Suppan, *Oblikovanje nacije u građanskoj Hrvatskoj 1835-1918* (Zagreb, 1999), 141-155, Gross, 151; Cvjetko Milanja, *Konstrukcije kulture: modeli kulturne modernizacije u Hrvatskoj 19. Stoljeća* (Zagreb, 2012), 73.

**18** Martina Piškor, Ines Sabotič, "The Ladies Society and Ladies Club: Two Examples of Women's Associations in Zagreb," *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu* 55/1 (2023): 265-287. https://doi.org/10.17234/RadoviZHP.55.1

The advancement of women's educational rights relied heavily on the initiatives of prominent women teachers. Their professional position improved significantly during Ivan Mažuranić's educational reforms, which professionalized teaching and equalized the rights and salaries of male and female teachers. By the late nineteenth century, women teachers had become active participants in public debates, publishing pedagogical, popular, and literary works and advocating for women's education. Among them, Marija Fabković and Marija Jambrišak played a particularly instrumental role. Fabković was a Czech-born teacher who settled in Croatia after marriage. Her direct, modern and feminist attempts to transfer feminist initiatives from the Czech to the Croatian context, however, often encountered indifference or resistance, revealing the limited resonance of explicitly feminist agendas in the local environment.[19] A different strategy was adopted by her younger colleague Marija Jambrišak, a graduate of the Vienna Paedagogium. Jambrišak argued that in Croatia, "to fight for the full equality of women in every respect would amount to abandoning common sense."[20] Instead, she based her arguments for the reform of girls' education on traditional values and gender roles. Yet, her proposal to the Zagreb City Council for extending secondary schools for girls by two to three years, cautiously referring to such an institution as a "lyceum," was still unsuccessful.[21]

Nevertheless, these initiatives brought Croatia into broader debates on women's education across the Dual Monarchy. While opponents claimed that higher education threatened women's "natural sphere" and social order, supporters emphasized female honor, social necessity, and national interests. In Croatia, discussions focused on daughters from impoverished civil service families, who lacked dowries and required respectable professions. Educated women were also presented as better mothers and, above all, as transmitters of national culture. In the context of nation-building, women's higher education was therefore justified not only as a social necessity but also as a project serving the nation's moral and cultural development.[22]

**19** Mihajl Ogrizović, *Marija Fabković* (Zagreb, 1973); Fabković: "Hrvatskim gospojama," *Obzor* (1872) no. 4.

**20** Marija Jambrišak, "O uzgoju že, ske mladosti," *Pučki prijatelj* (1873) no. 24.

**21** "Kakva je naša viša djevojačka škola i je li opravdana želja za njezinom reformom," *Narodne novine* (1890) no. 93; "Djevojački licej u Zagrebu," *Hrvatska* (1891) no. 259; Marija Jambrišak, "Iz škole u život," *Godišnje izvješće viših i nižih djevojačkih škola i ženske obrtne škole Zagreb* (1890) vol. 1 (Zagreb, 1891).

**22** Tihana Luetić, "Prve studentice Mudroslovnog fakulteta kr. Sveučilišta Franje Josipa I. u Zagrebu," *Povijesni prilozi* 21/ 22 (2002): 167-171 https://hrcak.srce.hr/28671; Tihana Luetić, "Breaking into the Men's World: First Female Students' Experiences at the Royal University of Francis Joseph I in Zagreb," *History in Flux* 5 (2023): 62, https://doi.org/10.32728/flux.2023.5.3; Kamila Staudigl-Ciechowitz, "The Long Struggle to Open Austria's Law Faculties to Women. From the First Woman Doctor of Law to the First Female Law Professor," *Journal on European History of Law* 13/ 2 (2022): 12-15; Ida Ograjšek, "Zastupljenost ženskog pitanja u hrvatskim glasilima na kraju 19. Stoljeća," *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu* 34-35-36/ 1 (2004): 92-96, https://hrcak.srce.hr/49178.

Croatian girls gained the right to a *Gymnasium* (college-preparatory secondary school) education roughly at the same time as girls in the major capitals of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Temporary Women's Lyceum in Zagreb opened its doors in 1892, the same year as the Girls' *Gymnasium* of the Association for Extended Women's Education in Vienna (1892), only two years after the "Minerva" Girls' *Gymnasium* in Prague (1890), and four years before the Veres Pálné Girls' *Gymnasium* in Budapest (1896). It is worth noting that all the other mentioned schools were established as private institutions by women's associations, whereas the Zagreb Lyceum was founded as a state institution. Despite the publicly predominant attitude towards the purpose of female education, it proved to be a more ambitious institution than what Marija Jambiršak had initially demanded. Indeed, Izidor Kršnjavi later emphasized that he strategically retained the name "Lyceum" instead of "Gymnasium" to "avoid public alarm."[23] In doing so, he likely relied on the established practice of opening *lyceums* in other parts of the Monarchy as institutions that promoted a "feminine" type of education that didn't confer the right to enroll in university.[24]

At first glance, the Zagreb Lyceum appeared to conform to this broader trend, with a curriculum that included domestic science, singing, painting, needlework, and world literature, while its final examination lacked the legal status of a *matura*. However, it was a far more complex institution, adapted to the specific socio-political context of Croatia and broader reformist aims. Conceived as an eight-year school, the first four grades followed an expanded curriculum of the "higher school for girls" (Viša djevojačka škola, for girls aged 10-15), while the final four grades offered three distinct tracks: pedagogical, general, and Latin. The first functioned as a teacher-training program, the second emphasized modern languages, and the third provided preparation for the *matura* and university studies.[25] This structure allowed the Lyceum to address the need for a state teacher-training institution, while also serving as a testing ground for Izidor Kršnjavi's concept of the *Real-Gymnasium* within, as he put it, the "marginalized sphere of female education."[26] The institution's pioneering character was reflected in its prolonged "temporary" status until its transformation in 1913

**23** Isidor Kršnjavi, *Primjedbe uz Načela o uređenju srednjih škola u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* (Zagreb, 1919), 7.

**24** Juliane Mikoletzky, "An Unintended Consequence: Women's Entry into Engineering Education in Austria," *History and Technology, an International Journal* 14/1-2 (1997): 31-48, DOI: 10.1080/07341519708581920, 35.

**25** Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, "Odgovorne pred historijom. Prve učenice Privremenog ženskog liceja," *Historijski zbornik* 59 (2006): 69-92. https://hrcak.srce.hr/317049.

**26** Kršnjavi, 7.




**Figure 2.** Graduates of the Women's Lyceum in Zagreb, 1899. Josipa Steinkuš (standing) became the first Croatian woman to specialize in Greek philology and later taught at the Lyceum. Photo: G. & I. Varga. Croatian School Museum, HŠM Mf 1108.

into the Royal Women's *Real-Gymnasium*. Furthermore, it fostered a distinct identity among its students and helped prepare the way for women's access to higher education. Although Zagreb University remained closed to women, the Lyceum diploma was recognized by universities in Switzerland, and its graduates could sit for the *matura* at secondary schools for boys. In the following decades, the women's *Real-Gymnasium* expanded rapidly, with institutions established throughout Croatia.[27]

The next frontier was university education, where a recognizable pattern began to emerge across the Dual Monarchy. Initially, women were permitted to attend university lectures only as auditors, without the right to take examinations; from the mid-1890s onward, they gradually gained the right to enroll as regular students (Budapest, 1895; Vienna and Prague, 1897). This process also followed a distinct institutional trajectory: women were first

**27** Dubravka Miljković and Štefka Batinić, "Iz povijesti hrvatskoga srednjega školstva u razdoblju od 1918. – 1940," *Napredak* 152/3-4 (2011): 511-514. https://hrcak.srce.hr/82.

admitted to Faculties of Philosophy, followed by Medicine, while access to Law remained the final frontier.

The University of Zagreb mirrored this incremental model. Its doors were first nudged open in 1895, when female teachers from the Lyceum were allowed to attend lectures as non-degree students. Once the first cohort of Lyceum graduates had completed their final year, individual applications for admission began to arrive, only to be initially rejected.[28] Some of these women subsequently enrolled as external students, others pursued their studies in Vienna, Prague or Zurich,[29] while others remained within the teaching profession. Finally, a 1901 decree permitted women to enroll at the Faculty of Philosophy, which encompassed a broad spectrum of disciplines in both the humanities and the natural sciences, including a pharmaceutical course. Interest among women, however, remained fairly modest. Overall, until the outbreak of the First World War, women constituted less than ten percent of the student body at the Faculty of Philosophy.[30] Although changes in the enrollment of female students during the First World War have not been systematically studied, personal testimonies suggest that the number of women at universities increased at that time. "You can tell that the country is at war even at the university. There are far more young women than young men attending lectures, which saddens me greatly,"[31] wrote Croatian-Hungarian poet and translator Gizzella Tarczay Papp in 1916.

In 1918, women gained the right to study law and medicine. Three years later the Vidovdan Constitution of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes guaranteed equal access to higher education for all citizens, thereby extending this right to women across the full range of faculties and courses as well as new academies that would emerge in the following years. The new state framework also brought about a shift in prevailing attitudes toward the position of women. The lack of a sustained focus on the question of women's rights limited women's chances of winning political rights, but it also allowed Serbian women to begin enrolling at the "Belgrade Higher School," the predecessor of the University of

**28** The first request for regular enrolment was submitted by Marija Göszel in 1898. Vukelja, Luetić, 73.

**29** See Luka Boršić and Ivana Skuhala Karasman, "Prve hrvatske studentice na Sveučilištu u Zürich," *Metodički ogledi* 3/1 (2025): 45-67. https://hrcak.srce.hr/335175; Iskra Iveljić, "Kroatische Studenten und Professoren in Wien (1790-1918)," in *The Entangled Histories of Vienna, Zagreb and Budapest (18th-20th Century)*, ed. Iskra Iveljić (Zagreb, 2015), 291-335.

**30** Tihana Luetić, "Počeci visokoškolskog obrazovanja za žene u Hrvatskoj i usporedba sa stanjem u susjednim zemljama," *Historijski zbornik* 59 (2006): 64-65. https://hrcak.srce.hr/317048; Tihana Luetić, "Breaking into the Men's World," 59–61; Tihana Luetić, "Prve studentice Mudroslovnog fakulteta," 167–207.

**31** Gizzella Tarczay Papp, "Nevjerna rijeka. Priča s priobalja rijeke Save," prepared by Ana Batinić and Ivana Sabljal, in *Moderne misleće žene. Intelektualna povijest žena u Hrvatskoj 19. i 20. stoljeća* 1, ed. Marijana Kardum and Ana Batinić (Zagreb, 2025), 181.

Belgrade, almost unnoticed from the late decades of the nineteenth century.[32] During the interwar period, the University of Belgrade even appointed its first female docent, Ksenija Atanasijević, thus contributing to the normalization of women's presence in higher education. The number of female students in Croatia rose rapidly during the interwar period. By the eve of the Second World War, women accounted for approximately twenty percent of all university students and represented more than half of the enrolment at the Faculty of Philosophy and in pharmacy.[33]

Formal educational qualifications did not, however, necessarily translate into professional opportunities. From the outset, the first generation of female graduates encountered legal barriers. Thus the 1888 Héderváry Act required celibacy from female teachers in Croatia, reflecting the belief that married women should devote themselves to family life and should not compete with male or single female teachers for employment. Although the regulation formally remained in force until the collapse of the Monarchy, it was often circumvented because educational expansion created a shortage of teachers.[34]

The First World War began to soften the boundaries between "male" and "female" occupations, undermining assumptions about women's incapacity but also heightening public awareness of the issue. In the postwar period, legal provisions formally embraced the principle of equality, yet its implementation in practice remained inconsistent. The Vidovdan Constitution (1921) and the Civil Service Act (1923) guaranteed equal access to public employment, yet numerous sectoral regulations continued to restrict women's careers. For example, the Law on State Transport Personnel (1923) limited women to clerical and auxiliary positions despite proclaiming equal access in principle.[35] Female law graduates encountered some of the greatest obstacles. A 1928 decree barred them from judicial appointments, although they could still qualify as lawyers. Writing at the time, the lawyer Ida Knežević argued that excluding women from the judiciary undermined the status of all women in the legal profession, while broader legal inequalities (women were still excluded from serving as witnesses to wills or as guardians)

**32** Luetić, "Počeci visokoškolskog obrazovanja za žene u Hrvatskoj i usporedba sa stanjem u susjednim zemljama," 67.

**33** Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, "Ženska strana Zagrebačkog sveučilišta u međuraću," in *Zagreb 1924. – 1930. i 1945. – 1967. Društvo, kultura, svakodnevica: Znanstveni skup s međunarodnim sudjelovanjem Desničini susreti 2018*, ed. Drago Roksandić (Zagreb, 2019), 235–267, doi: 10.17234/Desnicini_susreti2018.15.

**34** Dubravka Dulibić-Paljar, "Zakonski celibat za učiteljice: kulturni fenomen 19. Stoljeća," *Croatica et Slavica Iadertina*, 19/1 (2023): 169-177, https://doi.org/10.15291/csi.4305.

**35** Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, *Opasne iluzije. Rodni stereotipi u međuratnoj Jugoslaviji* (Zagreb, 2014), 253-254.

further constrained their careers.[36] Furthermore, gender discrimination was not explicitly prohibited. Teachers complained that there were more unemployed female than male teachers, as "women's applications were only considered once those of men had been dealt with."[37] Women chemists noted that "when an engineer is required, one may hear: just don't send a woman,"[38] while banks openly advertised positions seeking male candidates only.[39] Thus, in contrast to the breakthrough achieved in higher education, overcoming legal barriers to employment proved to be the battle that would extend deep into the twentieth century. Similarly challenging and long-lasting were the subtle obstacles woven into personal identities and prevailing cultural conceptions.

## IV. Cultural Barriers

Among the first cohort admitted to the higher grades of the Lyceum only five girls chose to pursue the Latin track qualifying them for higher education. In the pivotal year 1901, the University of Zagreb enrolled only three regular female students. Throughout the first decade following the expansion of educational opportunities, female enrollment in the Latin track and at the university remained consistently low, showing only a modest increase. The abolition of formal legal restrictions had resolved only part of the problem. Women's educational trajectories were shaped by far more delicate obstacles than legal provisions: their own ambitions, convictions, identities, and the expectations placed on them by their families and by society. Young women first had to want to pursue higher education, and in doing so disregard the deeply ingrained social and possibly personal belief that studying was incompatible with their feminine nature and social role.

Alternative visions of womanhood played an important role in this process, particularly the emergence of the feminist "New Woman" at the turn of the century and her consumer-oriented, globally popular successor, the "modern girl" of the 1920s. Although both concepts mostly existed as admired or criticized discursive constructs, they nevertheless became powerful symbols of modernity

**36** Ida Knežević, "Stručni problemi žena pravnika u Jugoslaviji," compiled by Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak in *Moderne misleće žene: Intelektualna povijest žena u Hrvatskoj 19. i 20. stoljeća*, ed. Marijana Kardum, Ana Batinić (Zagreb, 2025), 230; Ida Knežević, "Žena u našoj advokaturi," *Odvjetnik. Glasilo advokatske komore u SRH* 9 (1968): 300-305.

**37** IAB (Historical Archives of Belgrade), UOŽ (Unverzitetski obrazovane žene), 1939/3, appendix 4.

**38** IAB, UOŽ, 1939/3, appendix 6.

**39** Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, *Opasne iluzije*, 262.

and of the changes on the horizon. They introduced into the public sphere a prototype of a woman who questioned traditional norms, sought education and professional opportunities, and demanded political, personal, and sexual liberation.[40]

In Croatia, the idea of the "New Woman" was promoted, albeit indirectly and only partially, by prominent late-nineteenth-century teachers such as Milka Pogačić, Marija Jambrišak, Natalija Wickerhauser, and Jagoda Truhelka, as well as the journalist and writer Marija Jurić Zagorka. Through their education, public engagement, promotion of "women's issues," and socially transgressive conduct – such as drinking tea alone in a café, cutting their hair short or choosing to leave arranged marriages or abusive husbands – these women gradually wove an alternative model of womanhood into the Croatian public sphere.[41] They thus offered young girls a meaningful point of identification and support as they contemplated paths beyond the conventional. Their influence extended far beyond the classroom. Lyceum teachers often maintained contact with their successful former students, encouraging them and following their careers with interest and pride.[42]

After the war, actresses, aviators, beauty queens, professionals, and other "modern girls" became a regular presence in the growing number of women's magazines. The most influential of these publications was *Ženski list* [Woman's Paper], edited by journalist, writer, and women's rights activist Marija Jurić Zagorka. Significantly, Zagorka founded the magazine out of patriotic conviction after rejecting an offer from the German publisher Ullstein to edit a Croatian edition of its women's magazine. As she later recalled: "I told him about my past, when I fought in the streets against German influences . . . The proposal was therefore absurd . . . I also warned

**40** Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester and New York, 1997); Alys Eve Weinbaum et al. eds., *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham, NC, 2008).

**41** Tomislav Topolovčan, "Značajne učiteljice iz povijesti hrvatskog školstva u vrijeme Ivana Filipovića: komparacija djelovanja Marije Fabković, Marije Jambrišak i Milke Pogačić," in *Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog simpozija Dvjestota obljetnica rođenja Ivana Filipovića (1823. – 2023.) održanog u Osijeku 23. i 24. lipnja 2023,* ed. Snježana Dubovicki, Emina Berbić Kolar, Anica Bilić, et al. (Osijek, 2025), 287-311; Ana Batinić, "Plemkinje duha: Marija Jambrišak - Jagoda Truhelka - Zdenka Marković," *Nova Croatica* 2 [32]/2 [52] (2008): 197-215. https://hrcak.srce.hr/17466; Tihana Bertek et al., *In the Footsteps of Fierce Women,* transl. Marija Marčetić, Nikola Sarnavka, and Toni Zadravec (Zagreb, 2022); Slavica Jakobović Fribec, "Marija Jurić Zagorka: protagonistica nenapisane povijesti hrvatskog feminizma," *KNJIŽEVNA REPUBLIKA, časopis za književnost* 5-6 (2006): 43-52.

**42** Ana Batinić, "Pisma Jagode Truhelke Zdenki Marković," *Kronika Zavoda za povijest hrvatske književnosti, kazališta i glazbe HAZU* 13-14-15 (2004): 113-198; Camilla Lucerna, "Natalija Wickerhauser," *Izvješće Privremenog ženskog liceja i s njim spojene vježbaonce koncem školske godine 1906/7* (Zagreb, 1907), 3-7; Ivana B. Spasović, "Dr. Milica Bogdanović – dar, san i put," in *CRNI KABINET: OBRAZOVANJE, ZDRAVLJE I ROD*, ed. Lidija Dujić, Maša Grdešić, Suzana Coha, Anita Dremel, Sandra Prlenda (Zagreb, 2024), 18-20.

him that if he attempted to find another person for this undertaking, . . . I would launch my own magazine without a penny."[43] Zagorka consciously promoted American culture as a counterweight to what she perceived as dominant German cultural influence. Central to this vision was the figure of the "modern girl" as an alternative model of modernity. The magazine declared: "Today, the question is no longer whether one should engage in sport, but rather which sport to choose."[44] Its pages featured women skiing, playing tennis, driving automobiles, and pursuing professional careers, while articles addressed women's employment, professions, and scientific work.[45] Smiling, stylish, and active, these women challenged conventional ideals of femininity and encouraged readers to imagine new social roles. Thus, Zagorka presented a successful American businesswoman: "Dorothy Shaver is an attractive young woman who appreciates perfume, flowers, elegant dresses, lipstick and powder, and other cosmetic refinements . . . for she believes that a woman, no matter how accomplished she may be in her profession, must be equally accomplished in her womanhood."[46] This model thus successfully presented higher education and professional achievement as integral elements of modern femininity.

For many women, the decision to take advantage of new educational opportunities was a deeply personal one. Even though supporters of expanding women's education had to battle claims of self-serving ambition and the accusation that it was just a strategy for securing a better marriage, the first female students embraced these emerging opportunities with unmistakable anticipation and excitement. In her student address at the Lyceum's opening, future math professor Marija Göszel recalled the mix of disbelief and hope that the sudden news of new educational opportunities had evoked: "With such joy our parents told us that a women's lyceum would be opened; with such excitement we asked them what a lyceum was and whether we, too, would be allowed to attend that new school. And then, at last, the day dawned that would be written in golden letters in the annals of Croatian education."[47] Similarly, student Zdenka Marković confided to her friend Elza Kučera: "I entered the university. Elza, I am happy now! Do you

**43** Marija Jurić Zagorka, *Kako je bilo* (Belgrade, 1953), 44. Also see Marina Vujnović, "The Emergence of *Ženski list* in the Context of Interwar Croatia and the *Bubikopf* Debate," in *Neznana junakinja-nova čitanja Zagorke*, ed. Maša Grdešić and Slavica Jakobović Fribec (Zagreb, 2008), 237-256; Marina Vujnović, *Forging the Bubikopf Nation. Journalism, Gender, and Modernity in Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York, 2009).

**44** "Koji ćete šport izabrati?," *Ženski list* 4 (1937), 8.

**45** "Ženska zvanja," *Ženski list* 10 (1927), 26; "Ženska zaposlenja," *Ženski list* 10 (1928), 36; "Ženska zvanja su postojala već u davnini," *Ženski list* 7 (1929), 34; "Žena u diobi rada," *Ženski list* 8 (1930), 8; „Žena naučni i socijalni radnik", *Ženski list* 8 (1930), 9.

**46** "Žena i poslovni čovjek," *Ženski list* 11 (1936), 30.

**47** *Narodnim novine* 1892. br. 233



**Figure 3.** Croatian writer, translator, and teacher Zdenka Marković, undated photo by an unknown photographer. Požega City Museum.

believe me? I am so delighted."[48] Gizzella Tarczay Papp wrote in her diary: "I enrolled. I have already begun my third year within the walls of my *alma mater* in Zagreb. Oh, how I love this dear old building!"[49] Several decades later, Milica pl. Bogdanović, the first woman to earn both a degree (in history and geography) and a doctorate at the University of Zagreb, concluded that education had given women the freedom "to earn their own living . . . to marry or not to marry by the right of self-determination, independent of any need for economic security."[50]

However, as secondary and higher education for girls gradually gained public legitimacy, aspiring to them became a status symbol in its own right. Consequently, some young women found themselves pressured by their families to follow these academic paths. In 1910 Zdenka Marković, now a teacher, wondered, "what will become of the many girls choosing the Latin track," and concluded that "many study only to satisfy their own vanity or, at times, the vanity of unreasonable parents."[51]

Young women also tended to prioritize social acceptability when choosing their course of study and future profession. Even after all faculties were formally opened to women, many continued to opt for established pathways. During the interwar period, nearly half of all female students in Zagreb enrolled in the Faculty of Philosophy, as another 14 percent chose pharmacology.[52] While those students showed interest in the humanities and natural sciences, this distinction had little impact on their eventual career

**48** NSK, R 4771b, Zdenka Marković's letter to Elza Kučera, Zagreb, October 22, 1902. Retrieved from Luetić, "Breaking into the Men's World," 63.

**49** Tarczay Papp, "Nevjerna rijeka. Priča s priobalja rijeke Save," 277.

**50** *Spomenica u proslavu osamdesete obljetnice rođenja Marije Jambrišak* (Zagreb, 1927), 39-45.

**51** Zdenka Marković, "Ženska zvanja," *in Izvješće Zemaljske više djevojačke škole smjera kućanskog u Zagrebu 1909./10* (Zagreb, 1910), 32.

**52** Ograjšek Gorenjak, "Ženska strana Zagrebačkog sveučilišta u međuraću," 244-249.

paths. Most programs within the Faculty of Philosophy ultimately prepared women for teaching positions, a profession that accorded with traditional notions of women as educators and one in which earlier generations of female teachers had already established a foothold.

Some students, however, pursued uncharted paths. Medicine and Law each attracted around fifteen percent of female students, while only a small number enrolled at the Faculty of Engineering, initially in architecture and later, in the 1930s, in chemistry. Theology and veterinary medicine remained the least attractive fields, as they conflicted with contemporary expectations regarding acceptable occupations for women.[53] Women physicians generally entered professional life with greater ease than women in other pioneering fields. This was largely due to the shortage of medical personnel and the fact that, when the Faculty of Medicine in Zagreb opened, seventeen women doctors were already active in Croatia after completing their studies at universities abroad, including Zurich, Vienna, and Geneva.[54] After graduation, women doctors often found employment, particularly in pediatrics, internal medicine, dentistry, and public health. Kornelija Sertić, one of the first female graduates of the Zagreb Faculty of Medicine, built a notable career in pediatrics and public health,[55] while Anka Orešković-Zdunić became Croatia's first woman specialist in rheumatology.[56] By contrast, women trained in law faced far greater obstacles. The first woman to pass the Zagreb bar exam, Marija Ilić (Agapova), soon left legal practice for a librarianship in Belgrade.[57] Nevertheless, several women succeeded in establishing independent law practices, including Antea Vujić-Mainkas Barbot in Osijek, Mira Winter, Ida Knežević, Jelisava Bačić and Eva Komloš in Zagreb or Erna Bergstein Finzi in Bjelovar.[58]

## V. Family Support and Public Opinion

Family support was always a key factor, but it played an especially important role in the educational trajectories of women. In a society in which women's mobility and behavior were still regulated

**53** Ibid.

**54** Marko Kolić, "Liječnice i farmaceutkinje u Banskoj Hrvatskoj," *Povijesni prilozi* 44/ 68 (2025): 207-243. https://doi.org/10.22586/pp.v44i68.30510

**55** *Hrvatski muzej medicine i farmacije*, "Kornelija Sertić", https://hmmf.hazu.hr/kornelija-sertic/, accessed May 15, 2026.

**56** Ivica Vučak, Marko Kolić, „Anka Orešković-Zdunić (Karlovac, 30. 1. 1900. - Zagreb, 8. 12. 1969.)- stogodišnjica promocije prve hrvatske reumatologinje", *Liječničke novine*, 25/ 240. (2025): 76-79

**57** Mira Kočonda Vodvarška, "Dr. Mara Ilić, prvi ženski advokat u Zagrebu," *Ženski pokret* 10 (1927): 4; Jelena Tepavac, "Marija Ilić Agapova - Heroina beogradskog bibliotekarstva," https://www.011info.com/ko-je-bio/marija-ilic-agapova-heroina-beogradskog-bibliotekarstva, accessed May 15, 2026.

**58** Ida Knežević, "Žena u našoj advokaturi," 300-305.



**Figure 4.** Dr. Elza Kučera at the Royal University Library, today's National and University Library in Zagreb, where she served as deputy director from 1920 to 1942. Unknown, c. 1919. Print collection, National and University Library Zagreb.

by strict social norms, female students required a more stable environment and a more reliable network than their male counterparts. In practical terms, this meant financial security, emotional support, and safe and respectable accommodation. Parental correspondence and autobiographical writings frequently reveal a strong sense of parental pride and encouragement. "My dear girl! Be healthy and happy and enjoy the enormous beauty of science,"[59] wrote the Croatian scientist Oton Kučera to his daughter Elza during her studies in Zurich. Similarly, Slavicist Božena Kralj secured her mother's support even for the uncertain prospect of spending a semester in Moscow at an institution that had not yet admitted women.[60] Evidence from the ambitious, though methodologically inconsistent survey conducted by the Association of University Women in Yugoslavia in the 1930s indicates that the vast majority of female students were supported either by both parents or by a widowed mother.[61]

Securing accommodation was a considerable challenge in a rapidly expanding university city. Male students frequently described their cramped, damp, and noisy lodgings in vivid detail. According

**59** NSK R 4771b, Oton Kučera's letter to Elza Kučera, Zagreb 23 October 1906. Cited in Luetić, "Breaking into the Men's World," 67.

**60** Tihana Luetić, "´Pa, mora i to biti!´ – 'sveučilištarka' i prva 'Domagojka 'Božena Kralj," *Croatica Christiana periodica* 38/ 73 (2014): 127-43.

**61** Ljiljana Turkalj Šarić, "Studij žena po fakultetima u Zagrebu i univerz. žena u karijeri u Zagrebu i Savskoj banovini," prepared by Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, in *Moderne misleće žene: Intelektualna povijest žena u Hrvatskoj 19. i 20. stoljeća*, ed. Marijana Kardum and Ana Batinić (Zagreb, 2025), 180-216.

to the historian Tihana Luetić, before the First World War the average male student changed address about five times during his studies. By contrast, female students typically remained at the same address throughout their entire academic careers.[62] This pattern shifted as the number of women students grew into the thousands, and the scholarship system collapsed after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the interwar period some of the female students ended up in the free but extremely poor women's residence on Josipovac or in the somewhat better dormitory on Mlinarska Street. However, female students' living conditions generally remained comparatively more stable and appropriate. They could rely on family and social networks or secure accommodation in expensive private boarding houses for young women.[63] Reports from university health services further suggest that female students were less likely to seek medical assistance or to dine in student cafeterias, concluding that "parents are more reluctant, unless they have sufficient means, to send their daughters away from home."[64] Such a standard of living, however, required stable financial resources.

Describing her fellow students, Gizzella Tarczay Papp wrote: "Most of the girls . . . came from so-called 'good families.' By contrast, the young men were largely poor, yet studious, attentive, and serious."[65] The social profiles of the earliest female students studying at both the Lyceum and university in the interwar period reveal a consistent pattern. Although they were not a socially homogeneous group, female students were disproportionately drawn from urban upper- and middle-class backgrounds compared to their male counterparts. They came primarily from administrative, entrepreneurial, and intellectual circles, often hailing from Zagreb and its surrounding area.[66] Daughters of rural and working-class families were exceedingly rare and typically required much broader networks of support to succeed. A telling example is Josipa Steinkuš, the talented daughter of a locksmith from Varaždin, who became the first Croatian female classicist. Her path to higher education was made possible through the support of her teachers in Varaždin, a family friend in Zagreb, and Lyceum teachers who took

**62** Tihana Luetić, *Studenti sveučilišta u Zagrebu (1874.-1914.)* (Zagreb, 2012), 121-134.

**63** Ograjšek Gorenjak, "Ženska strana zagrebačkog sveučilišta," 250-251.

**64** Andrija Štampar, "Razvitak socijalne i zdravstvene zaštite visokoškolaca," *Liječnički vjesnik* 63 (1941), 105.

**65** Tarczay Papp, "Nevjerna rijeka. Priča s priobalja rijeke Save", 281.

**66** Ograjšek Gorenjak, "Odgovorne pred historijom," 76; Luetić, "Prve studentice Mudroslovnog fakulteta," 183; Ograjšek Gorenjak, "Ženska strana zagrebačkog sveučilišta," 252.

her into their home after that friend passed away.[67] While families generally provided a foundation of support for female students, starting a family of their own soon became a major source of frustration, especially for those determined to continue their careers.

Entering the world of paid employment was generally viewed as an acceptable fallback option for women, something they could turn to if they failed to marry or if their husband's income proved insufficient. The pursuit of higher education, however, destabilized this assumption. Young women who had invested significant emotional and financial resources into earning a degree were not inclined to give up their newly acquired independence or the sense of social purpose that accompanied it. "As soon as the human [man] within her comes into conflict with the woman, she sacrifices the woman so that she may remain human [man], so as not to fall back into zoology,"[68] wrote student of classical philology Mira Kočonda in 1908. Her article, "The Progressive Woman and Contemporary Men," written as she was embarking on her professional and personal life, called for a clearer definition of the social position of this small yet distinctive group of educated women, as well as a rethinking of their place within marriage. It sparked thoughtful responses from two feminist-oriented writers and journalists as well as two patronizing, cynical reactions from a journalist and a well-known Croatian author.[69] This first feminist debate in Croatia already brought into focus the relationship between educated women, marriage, and employment. The questions it raised would continue to shape public discourse throughout the period under consideration. Surveys carried out by the Association of University Women in Yugoslavia and by various women's magazines of the 1920s and 1930s reveal women torn between traditional expectations and their own wishes.[70] None of the available choices appeared favorable: abandoning a career into which they had invested so much, giving up the motherhood they still desired, or attempting to combine both and accepting the inevitable sense of guilt and the double burden that came with it. Young Mira Kočonda saw the solution in the need to change men's attitudes; married feminist writer Zofka Kveder saw it in

**67** Ograjšek Gorenjak, "Odgovorne pred historijom," 83-84.

**68** Mira Kočonda, "Napredna žena i današnji muškarci," *Zvono* 2/50-51 (1908): 779. In the Croatian language, the word *čovjek* can mean both "human being" and "man." In this context, however, it does not denote a male subject but rather the human as a cultural and rational being, set in opposition to "woman," which is framed in terms of biology.

**69** Marija Jurić Zagorka, "Napredna žena i današnji muškarci (odjeci)," *Zvono* 3/1 (1909): 11-14; Zofka Kveder-Jelovšek, "Moderna žena i brak," *Zvono* 3/1 (1909): 14-16; Stjepan Parmačević, "Muškarac i žena," *Zvono* 3/1 (1909): 16-17; Antun Gustav Matoš, "Naprednjače i brak," *Hrvatsko pravo*, January 9, 1909, 2-3.

**70** IAB 1939/3, prilog 1; IAB, UOŽ, 1936/Pravilnici, „Žena u profesiji"; "Anketa," *Ženski list* 9 (1929), 32-33.

the pragmatic technical modernization of household management; Belgrade law student Radmila Radonjić suggested the introduction of paid domestic help.[71]

At the same time, married educated working women faced considerable public pressure, as their careers were portrayed as selfish, harmful to family life, and a threat to male employment, particularly during the Great Depression.[72] Such attitudes often translated into policy: salary reductions for married women, career obstacles or dismissals. "All signs suggest that dark days lie ahead for working women," warned Yugoslav/Slovenian feminist Alojzija Štebi in 1933, pointing to measures such as restrictions on women's teacher training, exclusion from higher pedagogical institutions, preference for male candidates, and quotas limiting women's employment.[73] Further concern was caused by legislation proposed in 1934, which would allow the dismissal of married women from civil service positions if their husbands were also state employees. These measures prompted a coordinated response from the Yugoslav Women's Alliance, the Alliance of the Women's Movement, and the Association of University Women, which organized conferences, submitted petitions, and appealed to state authorities in defense of women's right to work.[74] Although their actions prevented large-scale dismissals, these debates must have reminded female students that their professional careers remained constrained by expectations surrounding marriage, family, and social norms, inevitably influencing their choice of studies.

**71** Kočonda, "Napredna žena i današnji muškarci"; Kveder-Jelovšek, "Moderna žena i brak"; "Moderna devojka, pravnik i književnik," *Ženski svet*, 4 (1930), 10.

**72** Ograjšek Gorenjak, *Opasne iluzije*, 259-264.

**73** Alojzija Štebi, "Što se sprema ženama," *Ženski pokret* 9-10 (1933): 102.

**74** Ograjšek Gorenjak, Opasne iluzije, 259-264.

## VI. Professional Barriers: Isolation, Scrutiny, and Opposition

In an education system and a society where gender segregation was the norm, the arrival of women at universities caused a profound shock. Young women moving freely through shared spaces without chaperones, socializing and interacting with their male peers, provoked curiosity, discomfort, and often outright disapproval. Studies from other universities describe a range of strategies devised to manage this new reality, from assigning women separate seating to placing them under the supervision of professors who would

escort them into lecture halls.[75] Yet the concern was not only about female modesty. Perhaps even more pressing was the fear that women's presence would distract male students and undermine the quality of teaching. "When there were no women in medicine yet . . . the academics worked normally," a professor at the University of Lviv in Poland nostalgically recalled, and then "she" arrived and disrupted everything. "All the colleagues . . . are looking at her instead of the professor; their hands go to their collars as they adjust their cuffs."[76]

Personal accounts by female students across Europe frequently speak of isolation and a sense of being set apart in overwhelmingly male environments. Comparable sentiments appear in the recollections of Croatian women. In her letters, Zdenka Marković traced a spectrum of discomfort, from "God help me! A dreadful feeling," when she found herself the only woman in the lecture hall, to an almost "pleasant" sense of relief when joined by two other female students in Slavic studies.[77] Decades later, in her short autobiography, she still felt compelled to contrast this experience of isolation and subtle gender clustering in the "cold" and "rigid" academic atmosphere of Zagreb with the far more multicultural and stimulating environment she encountered during her later studies at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland.[78] This impression undoubtedly reflected not only the constant, curious gaze of male colleagues but also a deeper personal uncertainty. There simply were no clear social norms governing informal interaction with young men of the same age. In such situations, were they to behave as women who must treat every sign of attention with caution, or as fellow students free to speak more openly than convention typically allowed in mixed company?

As pioneers, first in secondary, and then in higher education, these young women were also subjected to constant public scrutiny. Both their academic progress and their behavior were observed with suspicion. Former Lyceum students recall regular inspections by Izidor Kršnjavi, while their headmaster forbade them from having any male escort, family or not, on their way to school.[79] Female university students encountered a wide range of criticism in the

**75** Vuklelja, Luetić, 90-91; Georgia Oman, "Segregation, Regulation, and the Gendering of Space at the University of Wales, Bangor, 1884–1907," *Women's History Review* 29 /2 (2020): 308–30. doi:10.1080 /09612025.2019.166 0056.

**76** Romana Pachucka, *Pamiętniki z lat 1914–1936* (Wrocław, 1958). Cited in Marta Kargól, "Dressed for Knowledge: Fashioning the First Female University Students from Central and Eastern Europe (1860-1910)," *The Journal of Dress History* 4/4 (2020): 59.

**77** Vuklelja, Luetić, 93.

**78** Zdenka Marković, "Autobiografija," u *Autobiografije hrvatskih pisaca*, prepared by Vinko Brešić (Zagreb, 1997), 641.

**79** "Naša ženska sveučilišna mladost," *Hrvatski đak* 1 (1907), 9.

press, from claims that they were too "colorless" to make any meaningful contribution to Croatian science and culture, to accusations that their primary aim was to provoke "sexual desire in men."[80] Faced with such pressures, many sought to cultivate an image that would allow them to blend into their surroundings. Polish historian Marta Kargól has argued that the first generation of female students at central European universities developed a style of dress that deliberately distanced them both from the mannish image of the "suffragette" and from the more glamorous fashions associated with the marriage market. Instead, they adopted a modest, restrained, and serious yet still distinctly feminine style, often posing in photographs with recognizable attributes such as glasses, a pencil, or a book.[81] The resulting aesthetic began to fade after the First World War as the number of female students increased sharply and they came to embody the emerging ideal of the energetic, fashionable "modern girl." The women's press followed this shift with interest and enthusiasm, charting this transformation from women with "a man's coat, low heels, and glasses on the nose" to composed young women for whom "remaining a lady" posed no contradiction.[82]

However, increased visibility also brought new anxieties and renewed public suspicion. Within a few decades, female students had shifted from being a curious and unsettling novelty to being perceived as a genuine threat, associated with the feminization of professions, the erosion of prestige once secured through male exclusivity, and fears over shrinking employment opportunities. While historian Tihana Luetić's research points to largely positive interactions between the earliest Croatian female students and their professors, later generations recall more troubling experiences. Physics students in the 1930s remember a professor who refused to begin his lecture unless half of his female students left the room, while psychology students describe being mocked and harassed by both peers and professors.[83]

Marginalization did not end with graduation. On the contrary, only then were young women forced to swallow the bitter pill of reality. Women teachers struggled to advance into leadership positions;

**80** Ibid., "Kolegicama studenticama," *Jugoslavenska žena*, 3/7 (1919): 343.

**81** Kargól, 46-81.

**82** *Žena i svet* 3 (1929), 11. Retrieved from Stanislava Barać, "Žena i svet (1925–1941) između moderne i nove žene: ambivalencija ilustrovanog ženskog (modnog) magazina," *Književnstvo: časopis za studije književnosti, roda i kulture* 4/4 (2014), https://journal.knjizenstvo.rs/index.php/knjizenstvo/sr_Latn/article/view/344.

**83** Andrea Feldman, "Prilog istraživanju historije ženskih organizacija. Udruženje univerzitetski obrazovanih žena," *Žena*, 44/2-3 (1986): 52; Luetić, "Breaking into the Men's World," 65-67.

women chemists faced a job market that overwhelmingly favored their male counterparts, and women lawyers and pharmacists found themselves sidelined even within their own family businesses. Some female university graduates entered openly misogynistic workplaces where they were subjected to bullying before being dismissed as "hysterical."[84] An academic career remained largely out of reach. Women could occasionally find work at university as illustrators or assistants. Elza Kučera even held a position as an adjunct docent for a time. But it was not until 1942 that a woman, Blaženka Peičić-Marković, was appointed as a docent in the Department of Pathology – after having served as an assistant for seventeen years. In the aftermath of the Second World War, however, the new Yugoslav authorities reviewed all appointments made during the era of the collaborationist Independent State of Croatia, and most promotions from that period were annulled, eventually opening up more opportunities for women. Blaženka Peičić Marković was reappointed as a docent in 1954, after which she embarked on a rapid academic rise, eventually becoming a full professor (1964) and the first female dean (1966–1968) of the newly established School of Dental Medicine at the University of Zagreb, the first woman ever to hold the position of dean at the University of Zagreb.[85]

## VII. Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

In their struggle for equal opportunities in education, women had to overcome prejudice and marginalization through a combination of patience, flexibility, and strategically coordinated efforts. The strategies they employed changed over time in response to shifting social attitudes. The earliest initiatives took shape in a society deeply skeptical of the need for women's education, and its proponents therefore framed their efforts within established, traditional narratives. The most prominent public advocate of women's education in the nineteenth century, Marija Jambrišak, upheld patriarchal values and conventional gender roles. This approach proved effective. She not only emerged as the "driving

**84** Ana Solter, Jelena Seferović, "´Živčano ozbiljno oboljele´" ili one koje se ne uklapaju?- prve žene u Arheološkom muzeju," in *Historija zaborava. Prve žene zagrebačkih muzeja*, ed. Ana Solter (Zagreb, 2025), 114-146; Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, "´Prijelazna generacija´ i ´krčiteljice puteva´. Samorefleksija i samopercepcija intelektualki u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji," in *Zbornik Božene Vranješ Šoljan*, ed. Damir Agičić et al. (Zagreb, 2022), 236.

**85** Ranka Franz-Štern, "Žene na Sveučilištu u Zagrebu – od prvih studentica i nastavnica do da nas,"*Sveučilišni vjesnik* 48/1-4 (2002): 31–33; Marko Kolić and Sven Seiwerth, *102 godine Zavoda za patologiju* (Zagreb, 2025), 138-139; Ivica Šute, "Sveučilište u Zagrebu 1918-1990," in *Sveučilište u Zagrebu 350 godina*, ed. Mirjana Polić Bobić (Zagreb, 2019), 56-71.

force" behind the Lyceum, effectively acting as its head in all but name, but also succeeded in redirecting funds from the Jelisaveta Foundation – established in memory of the late Empress Elisabeth (Sisi) – towards the creation of a boarding facility for its students.[86]

The founding of the Lyceum represented a major milestone that opened up entirely new strategic possibilities. In a strictly gender-segregated society, it was considered preferable for girls to be taught by women, but the female teachers lacked adequate formal training. To address this, they were granted permission to attend university lectures, thereby tentatively opening the doors of higher education to women. During the early decades of the twentieth century, the Lyceum also became a central hub of women's activity in Croatia, fostering networks that its alumnae would later draw upon in a wide range of initiatives. Many of the first female graduates, including Milica pl. Bogdanović, Josipa Steinkuš, and Mira Kočonda, found employment as teachers at the Lyceum after completing their education. Others could rely on connections formed there in pursuing professional opportunities. When Milica pl. Bogdanović set out to organize the Children's Literature Association, she reached out to fellow Lyceum alumnae through newspaper appeals. Likewise, the founding committee of the first feminist organization, the "Women's Movement" Society, included numerous former Lyceum students, headed by its first president, Mira Kočonda. When the Yugoslav Association of University Women sought to establish a branch in Zagreb, it relied precisely on the networks of Mira Kočonda and Adela Broch, while another Lyceum alumna, Olga Osterman, became its first president. Even moments of controversy, such as the brief appearance of the journal *Eva*, which presumptuously and inappropriately claimed to spearhead the women's movement in Croatia, were addressed through meetings of Zagreb women convened at the Lyceum itself.[87]

The formation of women's associations enabled the institutionalization of collective strategies, the coordination of activities aimed at advancing women's educational and professional goals, and the establishment of intergenerational networks of support. Female students in Croatia did not succeed in forming

**86** Zdenka Marković, *Naš licej- o šesedesetgodišnjici njegova osnutka jeseni 1892* (Zagreb, 1953), 6; Cuvaj, XI, 393-399; Piškor, Sabotič.

**87** Ana Batinić, "Književnice iz ´podmornice´ ili ´trganje spona´ – Društvo hrvatskih književnica (1936. – 1941.)" *Rad HAZU*, [forthcoming]; Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, "(Re)shaping the Associations of University Women in Zagreb (1931-1955)," *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu* 55/ 1 (2023): 289-318. https://doi.org/10.17234/RadoviZHP.55.13; "Poziv na konferenciju," *Eva* 7-8, March 5, 1928.

an autonomous permanent women's student club. The Yugoslav Club of Female Academics, founded in 1920, and later attempts in 1933 and 1935 to establish an Association of Female University Students were all short-lived.[88] Female students eventually organized, instead, as a junior section within the Zagreb branch of the Association of University Women of Yugoslavia. Although later socialist-period historiography often interpreted these youth branches as channels appropriated by the illegal Communist Party for political mobilization and propaganda, in their contemporary context they functioned primarily as spaces of mentoring and assistance, where younger students received guidance, protection, and encouragement from senior students to pursue similar paths. Students retained autonomy in organizing their own activities while also benefiting from shared resources, including meeting spaces, language courses, and classes in rhythmic gymnastics. Senior members further supported them by arranging affordable meals, offering discounts in their pharmacies, and providing free medical consultations.[89]

Of greater significance were the activities of the Alliance of the Women's Movement, of which the Croatian "Women's Movement" Society was a member, and the Association of University Women of Yugoslavia. These organizations offered women a platform to analyze their social position, articulate their views, and advance public initiatives advocating women's right to education and employment. The Association of University Women of Yugoslavia actively lobbied state institutions on behalf of its members, securing, among other achievements, the appointment of the first female head of a girls' *Gymnasium* in Zagreb.[90] In collaboration with the Alliance of the Women's Movement, it also launched a public campaign during the Great Depression to counter widespread criticism of married women in the workforce, likely helping to prevent their mass dismissal. Crucially, the arguments advanced in these debates had shifted. No longer grounded in patriarchal or traditionalist reasoning, they increasingly reflected a new vision of womanhood, one that asserted women's right to personal development, emancipation, fulfilment, and dignity.[91]

**88** Ograjšek Gorenjak, "Ženska strana zagrebačkog sveučilišta," 254.

**89** Ograjšek Gorenjak, "(Re)shaping the Associations of University Women in Zagreb," 297.

**90** Paulina Albala, *Deset godina Udruženja univerzitetski obrazovanih žena u Jugoslaviji 1928-1938* (Belgrade, 1939), 57.

**91** Ograjšek Gorenjak, "´Prijelazna generacija´ i ´krčiteljice puteva´," 23.

## VIII. Conclusion

Croatia both reflected and diverged from broader regional patterns in women's access to education. In many respects, developments in Croatia were deeply embedded in the educational and cultural dynamics of the Habsburg Monarchy, whose influence remained strong long after its dissolution. Croatian reformers and teachers were often trained in Austrian and Czech institutions, while domestic educational reforms frequently drew on models already tested elsewhere in Central Europe. Likewise, Croatian female students shared the aspirations, anxieties, and forms of discrimination experienced by their contemporaries across the region, confronting similar prejudices and relying on comparable strategies of advancement.

These developments, however, were not merely a passive reflection of metropolitan trends. Such influences were selectively adapted to local political, social, and national circumstances, and in some cases, developments even anticipated those of imperial centers. Croatia's weaker economic development and its peripheral and almost colonial position within the Austro-Hungarian framework produced a smaller, less affluent, and later-forming bourgeoisie. This social configuration slowed the diffusion of feminist ideas into the Croatian cultural sphere since feminist thought elsewhere was often sustained by a confident and economically secure middle class. Paradoxically, however, these same limitations contributed to a comparatively rapid institutionalization of women's education. The first Croatian *Gymnasium* for girls was established almost simultaneously with analogous institutions in the more developed centers of the Dual Monarchy but, in contrast to many of them, it was state-funded from the outset. This early and direct involvement of the state in Croatia suggests that women's education carried wider social and economic significance than the public was prepared to acknowledge. At the same time, women's education became an integral part of the broader process of Croatian nation-building. From the very beginning, political leaders recognized the importance of integrating women into this national effort, not only

in their role as mothers of future generations, but as indispensable participants in society itself. The struggle over women's education thus intersected directly with debates about national identity and cultural sovereignty. Providing advanced education for women "in the national spirit" was, accordingly, as much a national project as it was a gendered one.

These interconnections persisted into the interwar period, albeit under altered political circumstances. The abolition of former provincial and state borders strengthened Zagreb University's position as both a national and a regional academic center, thereby encouraging broader access to higher education for women as well as men. The incorporation of Croatia into the Yugoslav state somewhat slowed the development of feminist thought that had begun to emerge in the early twentieth century, influenced by Austrian and Czech urban centers. However, the new political framework also created opportunities for contact and exchange with educated women in Serbia, where public disinterest in women's education had paradoxically allowed for easier access to university studies and earlier academic advancement. Serbian women reached important milestones considerably earlier than their Croatian counterparts, offering both contrasts and points of reference. In the longer term, the Yugoslav framework also fostered new forms of transregional women's collaboration and the organization of joint initiatives across national divides. Within these emerging networks, Croatian women no longer occupied a peripheral position but assumed a more visible and influential role and successfully developed new strategies for advancement of their educational and professional abilities.

Thus, within a relatively short period, women in Croatia progressed from gaining access to *Gymnasium* education to enrolling in all university faculties, in some cases constituting a predominant share of the student body. This development, however, was not linear. Educational gains were accompanied by labor market restrictions, marginalization within academic environments, and persistent tensions between professional ambitions and social expectations. Political, cultural, and economic processes could both

enable and hinder women's participation in education. While educational reforms, new models of femininity, and the women's movement created important opportunities, periods of re-traditionalization, particularly during the Great Depression, could slow or even reverse earlier gains. Moreover, educational advancement throughout this period remained largely confined to women from urban middle- and upper-class backgrounds. Although the number of female students increased over time, both scarcity and numerical growth brought distinct challenges. Early cohorts faced isolation and uncertainty regarding their social position, while later generations encountered growing hostility, as their presence was increasingly perceived as a threat to professional status and labor market competition. In response, women developed a range of strategies to navigate and challenge these constraints. They relied on family support, cultivated informal networks, and increasingly organized through women's associations that provided resources, advocacy, and a platform for collective action. These efforts did not eliminate all barriers. Questions of gender equality at work, the reconciliation of private and professional life, and the recognition of women's academic contributions continued to generate debate throughout the twentieth century and beyond. However, women's academic opportunities and social position changed dramatically in this period. Over the course of fifty years, a recognizable group of educated women emerged, capable of articulating their position, organizing initiatives to advance their status, and asserting themselves not only as a socially useful group but also as individuals with their own goals, aspirations, and needs.

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# Balancing Conservatism and Diversity: Participatory Democracy as a Challenge and Resource for U.S. Evangelical Colleges

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In his TV show *Old Time Gospel Hour*, the neo-fundamentalist[1] preacher and political organizer Jerry Falwell often featured promotions for Liberty University, a university providing a strictly evangelical und fundamentalist environment. One of the many shows that featured Liberty front and center was a 1985 episode entitled "Turning America Around." Early on in his televised service, Falwell asked two of his choir members for testimonies about their decision to study at Liberty.[2] Two young women enthusiastically gave testimony and explained confidently what opportunities Liberty offered and how blessed they felt to get an education at a college that helped them not only to earn a degree, but to develop as Christians.

**1** The term "neo-fundamentalist" describes a group of evangelical Christians who see themselves in the tradition of the very strict fundamentalist tradition of the early twentieth century. The term "fundamentalist" is a self-description that refers to the belief that what religiously conservative Christians regard as the foundations of their faith — such as a literal interpretation of the Bible — must not be compromised. "Evangelical" is a broader term that includes fundamentalists – thus, fundamentalism is an extraordinarily strict brand of evangelicalism. For a discussion of the different brands of evangelicalism and their development, see Michael Hochgeschwender, *Amerikanische Religion. Evangelikalismus, Pfingstlertum und Fundamentalismus* (Frankfurt, 2007).

**2** Old-Time Gospel Hour (OTGH): sermon 0671 "Turning America Around," Video recording, October 18, 1985, min. 11:57-14:02, Jerry Falwell Library, Archives & Special Collection, https://cdm17184.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p17184coll9/id/12039/rec/1, accessed December 11, 2025.

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**Figure 1.** Rev. Jerry Falwell sermonizes to his flock from the Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va., during the live broadcast of the "Old Time Gospel Hour", 1981. Courtesy of the Jerry Falwell Library

Lynchburg Baptist College changed its name to Liberty Baptist College in 1976 and eventually to Liberty University in 1984, and its television ads reflected the institution's rapid growth. Moreover, they demonstrate how successful televangelism was as a recruiting strategy. Notably, Falwell did not call on any of the four young men who had raised their hands to give testimony. Instead, by focusing on two women giving testimony, Falwell presented a more progressive picture of his evangelical campus in terms of female representation. Simultaneously, everything Falwell and the choir members said was translated by a sign language interpreter. I argue that Falwell, who is accurately remembered for championing traditional gender roles and whose church had promoted racial segregation for decades, strategically presented his audience with a more diverse college campus throughout the 1980s.

In addition to prominently featuring women and using sign language interpretation during televised events, advertisements for Liberty University usually featured students of different ethnic backgrounds. Its promotional material often presented students from the Philippines or Southeast Asia who declared how grateful they were for the opportunity to study at Liberty.[3] One of the young women giving testimony in the scene described above closed her statement with the words that she knew that Liberty had what she wanted. The scene symbolizes the unlikely success of evangelical

**3** Ibid., min. 01:24-01:30.

colleges' embrace of diversity. It is especially noteworthy because Liberty University was such a decidedly conservative place. Of course, Liberty was never on the forefront of promoting diversity, but it is very telling that even such a conservative stronghold made an effort to display its own version of diversity at a time when progressive schools were actively embracing this concept in the 1970s and 1980s.

This article will explore how evangelical institutions of higher education navigated the challenges presented by the civil rights and women's movements and their ideals of participatory democracy. Specifically, I will examine how predominantly white, all-male faculties with conservative religious beliefs responded to calls for greater diversity among their faculty and student populations. I will proceed in four steps and propose two key arguments to help explain the success of evangelical colleges during the latter half of the twentieth century. First, I will provide a short overview of Jerry Falwell's neo-fundamentalist empire and the development of evangelical institutions of higher learning in twentieth-century America. Here, I will also outline why colleges were essential to the evangelical movement as well as an integral part of American higher education. Second, I will show that evangelical colleges demonstrated a surprising openness to engaging in diversity initiatives, actively seeking to increase the representation of women and individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Third, I will discuss how these institutions positioned themselves as a religious minority, a minority that should be granted exceptions and accommodations. Consequently, some evangelical colleges started advocating for their proper representation in what they perceived as predominantly secular academic organizations. Finally, I will explain why evangelical colleges' political influence today cannot be understood without taking into consideration their gradual embrace of diversity since the 1970s.

## I. Jerry Falwell's Conservative Empire

Few religious leaders have stood for a brand of evangelicalism that was as distinctly conservative as Jerry Falwell's was during

the 1980s. In comparison to more moderate evangelical preachers like Billy Graham, Falwell stands out for three reasons: First, he took an extraordinarily conservative stand on all sexuality- and gender-related issues. Falwell's vehement opposition to abortion was a prime example of this. Unlike the Catholic Church, many evangelicals leaned towards a pro-choice stance on abortion in the 1970s. Scholars like R. Marie Griffith have argued that the 1973 Supreme Court ruling on Roe v. Wade contributed to polarization on this issue, causing evangelicals to switch sides.[4] In his sermons and political activism, Falwell took up the question of abortion and styled himself as a Christian crusader who stood up for those who were particularly vulnerable to liberal anti-Christian modernity: unborn Christians.[5]

By hosting his own television show, the *Old-Time Gospel Hour*, Falwell became a leading advocate of televangelism. The influential position of televangelists today has its origins in the 1960s, but it was not until the mid-1970s that television programs began to be perceived as serious competition and a threat to local churches.[6] Like many other successful evangelical organizations, Jerry Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church was interdenominational, even though it had originally been a Baptist congregation. In the case of television preachers, overcoming denominational and local boundaries was essential as expensive production costs could only be financed through a broad base of donations.[7] Programs such as Falwell's *Old-Time Gospel Hour* also benefited from changes in the media landscape. They represent the paradox of the media revolution unfolding at that time. Until the 1970s, there had been three major television networks — ABC, CBS, and NBC — which conservatives often disliked. By the end of the 1970s, cable television, which was initially intended to provide TV reception to remote areas, had developed into a very successful competitor of the three major networks. While the same media could now be consumed everywhere in the country, cable television's disparate offerings fostered the formation of particular identities.[8] Given the wide range of cable television offerings, narrow-casting, pioneered by MTV's targeting of younger viewers, proved to be a successful model. Christian for-

**4** Marie R. Griffith, *Moral Combat. How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics* (New York, 2017), 202.

**5** For this article, I reviewed Jerry Falwell's sermons since the late 1970s. They are available online at the Jerry Falwell Library: https://www.liberty.edu/library/. For Falwell's political fight against abortion, see Matthew Avery Sutton, *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right. A Brief History with Documents* (Boston, 2013).

**6** Berit Bretthauer, *Teleevangelikalismus in den USA. Religion zwischen Individualisierung und Vergemeinschaftung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1999), 30-36.

**7** Ibid, 19.

**8** Kevin M. Kruse and Julian E. Zelizer, *Fault Lines. A History of the United States since 1974* (New York, 2019), 135.

mats in particular took advantage of the opportunity to produce programming tailored to a specific audience. Despite the difficulty of determining reliable viewer numbers, Falwell boasted in 1980 that his show had over fifty million viewers.[9] Falwell used his media power to generate political influence and build what he called the "Moral Majority," which would become a major player of the New Christian Right – a political coalition that espoused conservative social values, including steadfast opposition to abortion, pornography, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), and gay rights.[10]

The connection of certain stations and programs to a fixed target audience can only be explained when further changes in the U.S. media landscape are considered. In addition to the emergence of cable television, the abolition of the Fairness Doctrine in 1987 is particularly noteworthy in this context. This regulation of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) had previously required that both sides of a debate always be represented on radio and television. However, conservative radio and television hosts had increasingly disregarded this rule in previous years, and its official abolition contributed to the intensification of media polarization.[11]

In addition to his own TV program, Falwell also founded his own evangelical university. Liberty University emerged as a profoundly conservative place even in comparison to other evangelical institutions. Liberty University and the *Old Time Gospel Hour* were closely connected. Falwell's roughly one-hour program, which had been broadcast since the early 1980s, was not simply a broadcast of his sermons at Thomas Road Baptist Church, but also served as a donation pipeline for both his church and university. Each service was interrupted several times by appeals for donations to his cause, and the ads frequently featured Liberty University.[12] Like other televangelists, Falwell solicited donations by offering special gifts, often religious books. These were usually not available on the open market, suggesting to donors that they belonged to an exclusive religious network. In fact, the television program was deliberately designed as a fundraiser for Liberty. A fundraising expert had come up with the scheme of suggesting to viewers that they themselves were shareholders in the neo-fundamentalist

**9** Bretthauer, *Televangelikalismus in den USA*, 23.

**10** Patrick Allitt, *Religion in America Since 1945: A History* (New York, 2003), 153.

**11** Kruse and Zelizer, *Fault Lines*, 151.

**12** Previously, and at times concurrently, there was a "cassette ministry" from 1978 to 1982. Recordings of Falwell's church services were mailed out on cassette. A register of these can be found here: Jerry Falwell Library, Cassette Index, Falwell's Ministry, https://liberty.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p17184coll9/id/1378.

educational institution through club memberships. Falwell was the first televangelist to use the services of a computer company to tailor advertising to be as individualized and efficient as possible.[13] With his affinity for technology and capitalism, Jerry Falwell was typical of evangelical college founders and of the evangelical college world, which was becoming increasingly diverse since its emergence in the early twentieth century.

## II. Evangelical Higher Education in the Twentieth Century

In the first half of the twentieth century, Christian fundamentalist educational institutions existed in their own sphere, disconnected from the secular mainstream. Fundamentalist educational institutions were usually referred to as "Bible schools." When theologians created these institutions at the turn of the twentieth century, they focused on Bible courses, rhetoric, and preparatory classes for missionary work.[14] These schools were not institutions of higher education, as a high school diploma was not a prerequisite for enrollment.[15] Bible schools had virtually no exchange with non-fundamentalist schools, nor did they share any commonalities. However, since even young fundamentalists who did not want to pursue a full-time religious career did not want to study at a secular college, Bible schools gradually began to offer a wider range of subjects and to refer to themselves as colleges or universities. It was only with the rise in (male) college enrollment through the 1944 Servicemen's Readjustment Act ("G.I. Bill") that fundamentalists transformed into the evangelical middle class as we know it today. After the Second World War, evangelical colleges experienced a rush of students, which intensified the desire for official recognition of their degrees. At the same time, evangelical leaders created new colleges that were designed from the outset to offer a broad range of subjects. Since evangelical colleges offered few graduate programs, it was important for students to be able to transfer to non-evangelical universities. Most evangelical institutions therefore spared no effort to become accredited and were successful in this endeavor.[16] Conservative Protestant institutions

**13** Michael S. Winters, *God's Right Hand: How Jerry Falwell Made God a Republican and Baptized the American Right* (New York, 2012), 89-91.

**14** Virginia L. Brereton, "The Bible Schools and Conservative Evangelical Higher Education, 1880-1940," in *Making Higher Education Christian. The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America,* ed. Joel A. Carpenter and Kenneth W. Shipps (Eugene, OR, 1987), 119.

**15** Adam Laats, *Fundamentalist U. Keeping the Faith in American Higher Education*, (Oxford, 2018) 14; Brereton, "The Bible Schools and Conservative Evangelical Higher Education."

**16** Laats, *Fundamentalist U*, 158–165.

generally offer numerous accredited bachelor's degrees and a limited number of selected graduate programs. However, the colleges differ greatly in terms of their content. Some offer a wide range of degrees, such as Wheaton College near Chicago, which was founded in the mid-nineteenth century. Others focus on a select range of subjects, such as psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary near Los Angeles, which opened in the mid-twentieth century.

All institutions mentioned in this article are nondenominational. They are particularly interesting because they bring together young evangelicals from different traditions — such as Baptists and Methodists — who came to identify as evangelicals. Unlike many denominational institutions, they do not have an ethnically homogeneous base.[17] At the same time, they often refer directly to the revivalist movements because they were founded by the leaders of revivalism.[18] Interdenominational colleges are key to understanding the development of evangelicals as a cohesive group in the second half of the twentieth century. The increasing importance of interdenominational colleges, like the rise of non-denominational special-purpose groups highlighted by sociologist Robert Wuthnow, can be seen as a marker of the restructuring of U.S. religious landscape in the second half of the twentieth century.[19]

Evangelical colleges form a significant part of the American educational landscape. Not concentrated solely in the South or in rural areas, they can be found throughout the United States.[20] The 1976 organization of evangelical colleges into the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) was led by institutions in the North and Northeast of the country. It is only in the last three decades that another geographical focus has emerged in the South of the United States. This correlates with demographic developments in the South, which has been experiencing significantly faster population growth than other parts of the country.[21] For the evangelical colleges in the Northeast, which also influenced foundations in the West, the unique selling point of evangelical colleges is that they engage exclusively in teaching and research that is based on their evangelical understanding of faith, that is,

**17** Thomas A. Askew, "The Shaping of Evangelical Higher Education Since World War II," in *Making Higher Education Christian. The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America,* ed. Joel A. Carpenter and Kenneth W. Shipps (Eugene, OR, 1987), 139.

**18** One may think of Liberty University, Fuller Theological Seminary or Moody Bible Institute.

**19** Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion. Society and Faith Since World War II* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), 100-132.

**20** Timothy L. Smith counted several hundred evangelical colleges as early as the mid-1980s. Timothy L. Smith, "Introduction. Christian Colleges and American Culture," in Carpenter and Shipps 1987, 3.

**21** Rich Ostrander, "The Southernization of the Evangelical Mind," in *American Evangelicalism. George Marsden and the State of American Religious History*, ed. Darren Dochuk, Thomas S. Kidd and Kurt W. Peterson (Notre Dame, IN, 2014), 358-360.




**Figure 2.** Wheaton College welcome sign. Photo: Kenneth C. Zirkel. https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=50626834, CC BY-SA 4.0.

a literal understanding of the Bible.[22] By contrast, the evangelical character of institutions in the Southern States was and continues to be expressed primarily in extracurricular activities and, of course, in the social control of the evangelical college community. Coordinated efforts to export the conservative "integrative" model to the South have been evident over the past three decades.[23] Liberty University can be seen as a pioneer of this development in the South. Overall, the evangelical university landscape illustrates that conservative Christian religiosity is not a phenomenon that can be attributed solely to the so-called flyover states but one that highlights the interconnectedness of evangelical institutions throughout the country and draws both its dynamism and its conservative core from areas not exclusively in the Bible Belt.

Overall, after 1945 evangelical colleges in the United States shifted from being perceived as religious institutions separate from the mainstream higher education system to becoming more integrated into academic and professional contexts. This transformation required diversifying their curriculum and implementing reputable academic degrees, as well as obtaining accreditation and recruiting professors, some of whom had graduated from prestigious Ivy League schools. However, unlike most other U.S. universities, evangelical colleges did not see themselves as part of the

**22** The idea that Christian colleges should teach all subjects based on faith can be traced back primarily to the Dutch theologian and politician Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920). Ibid., 362.

**23** Ibid, 263-70.

so-called liberal consensus in the post-World War II era. On the contrary, they continued to view themselves as bastions of cultural conservatism. Thus evangelical colleges played a significant role in the postwar era of college expansion and received support from government programs, while also maintaining a commitment to teaching and research rooted in the biblical principles epitomized in their statements of faith.

## III. Embracing Diversity

All evangelical colleges and universities prominently feature a statement of faith. Wheaton's statement of faith – originally written in 1924 and in today's version adopted in 1992 – can be seen as a typical example. Wheaton College remains a flagship institution in the evangelical college world,[24] and its statement of faith is reflective of this status. The statement emphasizes "that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are verbally inspired by God and inerrant" and that all human beings were born with a sinful nature because Adam and Eve sinned by rebelling against God. Sin in general features prominently in the statement – and not just in a metaphorical way. Wheaton stresses that students and teachers believe in "the existence of Satan" and other "evil powers."[25] The statement of faith is not merely an abstract notion, rather it "defines the biblical perspective which informs a Wheaton education."[26] This means that at Wheaton as well as at all other evangelical colleges, all subjects – be it biology, geography, history or English literature – are taught from a distinctly evangelical perspective. The statement of faith forms the backbone of evangelical colleges in every conceivable way.

In the first decades after the Second World War, joining an evangelical institution, whether as professor or as student, typically meant one had to commit to the strictly evangelical convictions laid out in the institution's statement of faith. Unsurprisingly, the statement of faith turned out to be a significant challenge when evangelical colleges began to strive for accreditation from secular academic institutions. Fuller Theological Seminary in

**24** Adam Laats, "Brave Sons and Daughters True. 1960s Protests at the 'Fundamentalist Harvard'," in Roger L. Geiger, Nathan M. Sorber and Christian K. Anderson, eds., *American Higher Education in the Postwar Era, 1945–1970* (New York, 2018), 146–169, 149.

**25** https://www.wheaton.edu/about-wheaton/statement-of-faith-and-educational-purpose/, accessed December 11, 2025.

**26** https://www.wheaton.edu/about-wheaton/community-covenant/, accessed December 11, 2025.

Pasadena, California, was one of the first evangelical institutions that achieved accreditation in a field that hitherto had been considered strictly secular, namely in clinical psychology.[27] To understand the pioneering role of this comparatively small theological seminary, it is important to mention that Fuller took a progressive turn in the 1960s. Its founder and namesake, Baptist minister Charles E. Fuller, had long been known for his fundamentalist views. But Fuller Theological Seminary was a joint venture of Fuller and Harold Ockenga. A Congregational minister and prolific author, Ockenga, who was a generation younger than Fuller, took a more conciliatory approach and gave more prominence to immanent – as opposed to transcendental – problems than would have been conceivable from a traditional fundamentalist point of view that focused more prominently on the afterlife. Instead of focusing on eschatological questions, he was more interested in how Christians should navigate in this world.

While the financial resources for establishing the school came from Fuller, Ockenga played a key role in determining the institution's orientation. For the first 15 years, the seminary's direction was controversially discussed within the institution. Some of the staff belonged to a progressive evangelical wing, while others were of a stricter fundamentalist orientation. When Fuller's assets began to dwindle in the 1950s — partly due to his own mismanagement — the institution became more dependent on financial backers who often held strictly conservative views. But despite both external pressure and heated discussions within the seminary, the institution eventually took a more progressive path. This became apparent in the 1962 decision to appoint a progressive evangelical, David Hubbard, as president, who paved the way for a psychology program that would gain accreditation from a secular scientific association.[28] Additionally, following in the spirit of a more inclusive evangelicalism, the National Association of Evangelicals concluded in 1963 that government financial aid should no longer be considered a threat to the evangelical college sector.[29]

The American Psychological Association (APA) accredited Fuller's program in clinical psychology in 1972. In this first-ever

**27** For a complete analysis of Fuller's psychology program, see Sophia Egbert, *Religion und Psychologie. Forschung und Lehre an evangelikalen Hochschulen in den USA, 1945-1998* (Cologne, 2026).

**28** George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism. Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1995); Darren Dochuk, "Reforming Fundamentalism," in *American Evangelicalism. George Marsden and the State of American Religious History,* ed. Darren Dochuk, Thomas S. Kidd and Kurt W. Peterson (Notre Dame, IN, 2014), 398-417.

**29** Axel R. Schäfer, *Piety and Public Funding. Evangelicals and the State in Modern America* (Philadelphia, 2012), 152.

accreditation of an evangelical psychology program, Fuller resolved the fundamental(ist) issue with an innovative maneuver. From the APA's perspective, the statement of faith remained a problematic issue that would not be resolved even after multiple rounds of negotiation. The association objected to the statement of faith for two reasons: first, it was perceived as an obstacle to freedom of research, and second, the association saw the potential for religious discrimination against teachers and students with a different religious background or no religious affiliation at all. Within the evangelical community, however, the statement of faith was essentially equivalent to religious accreditation for staff members. It was Fuller's way of signaling unmistakably that the seminary's students could pursue their studies with all the benefits of a secure, evangelical framework. Therefore, for Fuller, dropping the statement in exchange for professional accreditation was unthinkable. But without professional accreditation, career opportunities for graduates remained poor. To appease the APA, Fuller decided in 1972 to drop accreditation for students – but kept it for staff. This was a huge sacrifice for the evangelical institution – coupled with the hope that the problem would now be permanently resolved. When this was not the case and the APA brought up the matter again in 1979 when Fuller needed to renew accreditation, key figures at the seminary were prepared to consider legal action if reaccreditation was denied. The following struggle for reaccreditation in 1979 and 1980 revolved around recruitment and enrollment practices and a conflict about whether the APA or Fuller were engaging in "religious discrimination." While Fuller called the APA's refusal to accredit the seminary discriminatory, the APA considered Fuller's selection of staff and students based at least in part on their religion a discriminatory practice.

In the end, Fuller resolved the issue by partially accommodating the APA: They accepted that the statement of faith for students was gone for good and they accommodated the APA by diversifying their staff with regard to gender and ethnicity while keeping the statement of faith for professors and administration.[30] This was acceptable for the APA, that had made clear – even when it had

**30** Stefanie Coché and Sophia Egbert, "The Rise of Evangelical Psychology. Establishing Clinical Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary," *Isis* 116, no. 3 (September 2025): 534-545, here: 540-543.

voted against Fuller's first attempt for accreditation in early 1972 – that the Association had no general reservations against an evangelical psychology program. On the contrary, the APA committee noted – here paraphrased by Fuller: "there was a higher percentage of graduates relating their services to the needs of churches than would be found among other institutions. They considered this to be a strength. The report noted the unique attempt of the program to relate psychology and theology."[31]

The APA did not object to a program tied to a very specific religious worldview. But they were concerned that the statement of faith prevented equal access for different student groups. The APA's efforts to promote diversity in the 1970s resulted from educational reforms in response to the civil rights and women's movements. In the wake of these social movements, greater attention and effort were directed toward achieving equality and equal rights within the United States' higher education system. The 1964 Civil Rights and 1965 Higher Education Acts as well as the enforcement of Title IX after 1972 added new legal expectations for equal opportunities that were being enforced in the 1970s.[32] As a result, Fuller kept the statement of faith as a requirement for staff but abolished it for students, thereby (nominally) opening the school to Catholic, Jewish, and other non-Protestant students. Women had been allowed to study psychology at Fuller from the very beginning, even if very few did so at first. In preparation for APA reaccreditation in 1978/1979, Fuller took steps to hire a more diverse staff in accordance with APA guidelines, specifically recruiting women and people of color. Subsequently, Fuller created scholarships for minority students such as the H. Newton and Suzanna Malony Scholarship for ethnic minority students in the School of Psychology.[33] This strategic turn to minorities also made financial sense, because evangelical colleges, like many other smaller colleges, faced market pressures and financial constraints: Compliance with the diversity notions of the APA helped to maintain accreditation and accreditation made it easier to apply for founding. The only other way to deal with market pressure was to lower the costs. Lowering the costs was difficult for evangelical institutions because their

**31** H. Newton Malony and Hendrika Van de Kemp, *The Early History School of Psychology* (Pasadena, CA, 1995), 115.

**32** Christopher P. Loss, *Between Citizens and the State. The Politics of American Higher Education in the 20th Century*, (Princeton, NJ, 2012), 4.

**33** Jeffrey P. Bjorck, "Remembering H. Newton Malony: Pastor, Psychologist, and Integration Pioneer," *The International Journal of the Psychology of Religion* 30, no. 4 (2020): 350.

personnel costs were already very low. In general, the faculty at evangelical colleges earned less than faculty at non-evangelical schools and professors maintained a high teaching workload.[34]

Overall, the APA's accreditation of Fuller's psychology program in 1972 had a signaling effect. In this psychology degree program, attendance of theological courses was mandatory, and the course content needed to align with a conservative Protestant understanding of the Bible. Although Fuller was increasingly perceived as a comparatively "progressive" evangelical institution in the 1970s and 1980s, the evangelical community regarded its accreditation as a significant and valuable precedent. It now seemed more likely that the APA and other professional institutions would sign off on programs at other evangelical establishments. Since then, many evangelical colleges and universities, including more conservative ones, have successfully obtained accreditation.

## IV. Embracing Minority Strategies

During the 1970s, evangelical academics in the field of psychology were quick to present themselves as victims of discrimination within the public higher education system. They adopted strategies of the civil rights and women's movements, who had previously exposed exclusionary practices in academia.[35] Evangelicals suggested, for example, that the APA should officially list religious affiliation for each of its members. They also claimed to promote what they called "religious diversity." When Biola University, a private Christian evangelical university near Los Angeles, sought accreditation in the early 1980s, it was obvious that Biola had learned from Fuller.[36] The application for accreditation of the school's psychology program by the APA includes this passage:

> It was the observation of Rosemead's [Biola's school of psychology] founders that most quality doctoral programs do at least a minimally adequate job of helping students develop a sensitivity to individual and cultural differences in areas such as age, race, sex and social background, but that very few programs even attempt to address the area of religious interests, background and diversity.[37]

**34** Laats, *Fundamentalist U*, 242.

**35** On the significance of victim status in identity politics, see Svenja Goltermann, *Opfer. Die Wahrnehmung von Krieg und Gewalt in der Moderne* (Berlin, 2017), 171-246.

**36** For a complete analysis of Fuller's psychology program, see: Sophia Egbert, *Religion und Psychologie*.

**37** Application for Accreditation to American Psychological Association for Doctoral Training Programs in Professional Psychology, 38. Rosemead had been founded as an independent evangelical school of psychology in 1968 but later merged with Biola University in 1977.

Evangelical schools were more than ready to embrace identity politics, realizing that they could use the concept for their own goals.[38] And indeed, by the 1980s evangelical schools no longer consisted of a predominantly male student body, as advertised in Falwell's fundraising efforts for Liberty University – a place far more conservative than Fuller or Biola. Liberty was far from being at the forefront of the diversity movement, however. On the contrary, even in the evangelical sphere, Liberty stood for extraordinarily conservative viewpoints in almost every regard. Against this backdrop, it is even more noteworthy that even this bastion of conservatism made an effort to display some kind of diversity. Since then, evangelical colleges have become notably less white. One indicator of this is the language of instruction. Today, Fuller offers degree programs in Spanish as well as in Korean.[39] As many colleges do not require their students to sign a statement of faith, they are no longer exclusively Protestant. At Azusa Pacific University in California, for example, there are roughly 600 Catholic students, most of whom have a Latin American family background.[40] This development is connected to the sizeable Hispanic population in the Los Angeles area and reflects the fusion of Protestant and Catholic academic movements.[41] Catholic Hispanic students studying at evangelical institutions might be a factor in the overall conversion trend toward Protestant evangelicalism among the younger Hispanic population.[42] One of the reasons for Catholic Hispanics to choose evangelical institutions of higher learning might be a common set of moral core values. This would imply that social policies are more important than differences of faith.

As in secular institutions, women began to outnumber men in some disciplines. However, evangelical colleges never endorsed the reform processes that made such changes possible. They have remained steadfast in their belief that there is only one "correct" way to understand the world: through a Christ-centered evangelical

**38** Identity politics gained importance in the political sphere under Richard Nixon. Joe Merton, "An Ethnic Presence in the White House? Ethnicity, Identity Politics, and the Presidency in the 1970s," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 50 (2020): 418-435. For the history of conservative identity politics and on the competition of different forms of identity politics, see Jürgen Martschukat, Alexander Obermüller, and Lisa Patt, "Umkämpfter Sex, umkämpfte Demokratie. Konkurrierende Identitätspolitiken in den USA seit den 1970er-Jahren," *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 20 (2023), no. 3: 426-454.

**39** https://fuller.edu/centro-latino/, accessed March 2, 2026; https://fuller.edu/korean-studies-center, accessed March 2, 2026.

**40** Nathan Foster, "Are Catholic Students Welcome at APU?," in *ZU Media Student Voice of Azusa Pacific University* (April 2, 2018) https://zunews.com/2018/04/16395/, accessed December 15, 2025.

**41** Stefanie Coché, *Religiöse Erweckung und Irdische Macht. Religion und Demokratie in den USA* (Hamburg, 2025), 421-437.

**42** Protestants (including evangelicals) are the second-largest faith group after Catholics, accounting for 21% of Hispanic adults. https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/04/13/among-u-s-latinos-catholicism-continues-to-decline-but-is-still-the-largest-faith/.

lens. The appropriation of participatory democracy principles at evangelical colleges has, in numerous respects, anticipated the inclusion of non-white communities into a wider cultural conservative framework. Inter-ethnic conservative coalitions are characterized less by references to race than to common beliefs regarding family values and gender dynamics.[43] Accordingly, evangelical colleges remain strongholds of traditional, binary gender roles. While they have embraced a multiracial identity and promote women's higher education, they still demonize feminism, homosexuality, and transgender people. Against the backdrop of diversity initiatives, evangelical scholars actively lobbied in secular academic associations such as the APA to shield their communities from accusations of discrimination. In 1991, one of Wheaton's professors of psychology, Stanton L. Jones, told his colleagues at the prestigious evangelical school:

> I will be taking leadership in a divisional response to the APA on recent proposed changes in the ethical codes for psychologists which may present real difficulties for religious schools since they articulate so forcefully the unacceptability of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. If such an ethical change were thoroughly enforced, this could be used to strong arm religious schools into hiring practicing homosexuals or losing their accreditation. It is vital that Division 36 (Psychologists Interested in Religious Issues) responds to this matter at this time. Responding through the Division 36 would put us in a stronger position than responding just as a religious program.[44]

## Conclusion

The acceptance of some kinds of diversity at evangelical colleges foreshadowed the multiracial evangelical coalition that backed Donald Trump in the presidential races in 2016, 2020, and 2024. Black, White, Asian, and Latino evangelicals did not stick to the established political alignment that had historically tied Black and Latino voters to Democrats but instead prioritized shared beliefs about abortion, gender roles, and LGBTQ+ issues that had been shaping increasingly ethnically diverse evangelical college campuses for decades.[45]

**43** On the Republican Party's appeal to Latino voters, see Paola Ramos, *Defectors. The Rise of the Latino Far Right and What It Means for America* (New York, 2024).

**44** Wheaton College, Buswell Library, Special Collection, Dean of the Graduate school Records, Box 19, Folder 23, Memo August 23, 1991.

**45** Groundbreaking on the topic of multi-cultural conservatism: Angela D. Dillard, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner Now? Multicultural Conservatism in America* (New York, 2001).

Evangelical colleges did what other conservative organizations and institutions did, too: Under legal and cultural pressure, they appropriated progressive talking points and used them for their own advantage. This development had parallels in the industrial sector, where conservative organizations like the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) strategically acquiesced to progressive legislation in the 1960s and 1970s. Historian Jennifer Delton has shown that the notoriously conservative NAM encouraged members to hire nontraditional factory workers, such as women, the disabled, and people of color.[46] At the same time, evangelical colleges strategically continued their well-established policy of colorblindness. First introduced by conservative Southern Protestants in the mid-1960s as a way to continue segregating their churches, the central argument of the colorblindness policy is that a better and more equitable relationship between Black and white Americans could only be achieved through Christian-motivated personal rapprochement, disregarding skin color, and under no circumstances through structural, legal, or political measures.[47] Although the evangelical institutions' turn toward minorities has to be understood in relationship to systematic legal pressure, this did not mean that evangelicals abandoned their core belief in God-guided interpersonal relationships. Institutions like Fuller stand for a multi-cultural evangelicalism, yet they still prefer government not to interfere in their business.

It is important to understand that evangelicals are not a monolithic block. In early February 2025, Wheaton alum Russell Vought was confirmed as the director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Before his appointment, Vought had been a leading figure within the controversial Project 2025, the plan for a second Trump Administration issued by the Heritage Foundation, a leading conservative think tank. It was not only religious outlets that reported on conflict among Wheaton staff and alumni over whether to cheer Vought's appointment. Even the *New Yorker* featured a story titled "A Fist Fight Over Donald Trump at the Evangelical Version of Harvard."[48] This recent friction within the evangelical collegiate community is just the tip of the iceberg. The past decade

**46** Jennifer A. Delton, *The Industrialists: How the National Association of Manufacturers Shaped American Capitalism* (Princeton, NJ, 2020).

**47** Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause*, 1865-1920 (Athens, GA, 1983), 125.

**48** Emma Green, "A Fist Fight over Donald Trump at the Evangelical Version of Harvard," *The New Yorker*, February 18, 2025, https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-lede/a-fistfight-over-donald-trump-at-wheaton-college-around-russell-vought, accessed December 15, 2025.




**Figure 3.** Marriage Equality Decision Day Rally in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, June 26, 2015. Photo: Elvert Barnes, CC BY-SA 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marriage_rally_(19186805251).jpg

has fractured conservative Christians deeply, as it did evangelical colleges. Many of them are trying yet again to reconcile different brands of evangelicalism. Fuller and Wheaton are, for example, continuing to grapple with LGBTQ+ issues. Unsurprisingly, Liberty University is stricter in this regard than Wheaton or Fuller. For example, Liberty University has recently fired a transgender employee arguing that Liberty University, as a Christian employer, has an absolute right to employ only people who adhere to its doctrinal statement.[49] Wheaton College even has a center to help students who are "navigating personal experiences with their sexual orientation and or gender identity"[50] – of course with the overarching aim to reconcile those students with the biological sex they were assigned at birth or help them live a celibate life. However, it is remarkable that at some evangelical colleges there are openly queer students, a phenomenon that is very likely connected to the gradual embrace of diversity at evangelical institutions of higher learning since the 1970s.

**49** https://wset.com/news/local/liberty-university-cites-first-amendment-and-religious-freedom-in-firing-transgender-employee-seeks-dismissal-ellenor-zinski-title-vii-lawsuit-september-2025, accessed March 3, 2026.

**50** https://www.wheaton.edu/life-at-wheaton/student-development-offices/student-wellness/refuge/

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# From Old to New Inequalities: The East-West Gap in Post-Unification German Higher Education

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## I. Introduction

On October 3, 2025, Germany celebrated its 35th Day of German Unity. To mark the country's national holiday, political leaders usually emphasize the successful integration of East Germany – the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) – and West Germany since their reunification in 1990. In the Western German city of Saarbrücken, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz (CDU) declared that "German unity has been a success," a sentiment he said was shared by the country's European neighbors. Nevertheless, he also reflected on "mutual misunderstandings," "experiences of neglect," and a "devaluation of East German biographies." One of his examples was the relative absence of East Germans in leadership positions despite the fact that East Germans make up 20 percent of the population. This imbalance had fostered feelings of unequal treatment and West German dominance. Merz called for "a new unity in our country" through a "joint effort" in view of the growing challenges posed by autocratic regimes, economic structural change, and the ongoing digital revolution.[1]

**1** "Der Staat, das sind wir alle," speech by Federal Chancellor Friedrich Merz at the German Unity Day ceremony on October 3, 2025, https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/bundeskanzler-merz-zum-tag-der-deutschen-einheit-2387076, accessed March 2, 2026. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's.

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**Figure 1.** German Federal Minister for Research, Technology, and Space Dorothee Bär (CSU, second from left) and Thuringia's Minister-President Mario Voigt (CDU, left) visit the Fraunhofer Institute for Ceramic Technologies and Systems in Hermsdorf, Thuringia, March 2026. Photo: Steffen Prößdorf, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Just a few weeks after Merz's appeal for unity, however, the federal government cancelled a previously approved innovation hub in Eastern Germany, the *Deutsche Agentur für Transfer und Innovation* or DATI [German Agency for Transfer and Innovation], which was supposed to be established in Erfurt, the capital of Thuringia, by 2029. With the explicit aim to promote innovation in a structurally disadvantaged region, the previous federal government had deliberately chosen an East German location in 2022. At the end of October 2025, however, Federal Minister of Research, Technology and Space, Dorothee Bär (CSU) announced that this project "would not be pursued further."[2] The originally earmarked €700 million was apparently needed elsewhere. East German members of the Bundestag and representatives of the city of Erfurt denounced the decision. They said that the rejection showed "once again that the East pays the price when things get tight in Berlin."[3]

Although the Erfurt DATI debate is only one example, it illustrates how the relationship between Eastern and Western Germany is often discussed. Research on the years since reunification in 1990, the so-called transformation period, has highlighted the unequal social impact of reunification on East and West Germans. Yet, historical research is still only beginning to assess how the unification process and the implementation of West German laws and procedures have affected individual social groups.

The impact of the unification process on academia, for instance, has become an increasingly important subject of historical research since archival access restrictions for documents from this time period expired in the 2020s.[4] Referring to East German professors, recent research speaks of "forgotten inequalities" that have led to

**2** Steffen Winter, "Wie Dorothee Bär pünktlich zum Tag der Deutschen Einheit den Osten in Wut versetzte," *Der Spiegel*, October 24, 2025, https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/forschung-dorothee-baer-stoppt-innovationsagentur-in-erfurt-wut-im-osten-a-d98c0193-9257-4dcd-a09c-8a328225f324, accessed March 2, 2026.

**3** Ibid.

**4** Mitchell G. Ash, "Higher Education in the United States and Europe since 1945. Multiple Transformations and the Current Crisis," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 77 (Spring 2026): 59–90, here 73–80.

the systematic disadvantaging of East Germans in German society as a whole.[5] Today, an East-West asymmetry is particularly evident in the German academic system and in the personnel structure at German universities. When sociologist Julia Reuter and her co-authors published a book about biographical success stories titled *Vom Arbeiterkind zur Professur* [From Working-class Child to Professor] in 2020, it did not contain a single East German biography.[6] Professors who were born in the GDR or on the territory of the former GDR represent a minority in the German academic system. East German academics are underrepresented in academic leadership positions compared to their West German colleagues.[7] In an updated 2025 study, the German Center for Higher Education Development (CHE) found that 61 university rectors were born in Western Germany, while only five stated that they were from Eastern Germany.[8] With only around 7.5 percent of elite university positions held by scholars who were born in the GDR or grew up in Eastern German states after 1990, they are significantly underrepresented relative to their share of the population. The sociologist Raj Kollmorgen argues that the terms "East German" and "academic elite" appear as mutually exclusive to the German public.[9]

The background to this East-West gap is the post-socialist change in leadership at Eastern German institutions in the 1990s. At universities, this process primarily affected academics in disciplines that were subject to strict state control and high pressure to legitimize party-political ideology during the GDR era. In subjects such as philosophy, history, economics, cultural studies, and the humanities in general, which were known to be highly ideological due to the large number of SED party members among teaching staff and the systematic infiltration of these disciplines by the Ministry for State Security (MfS), a comprehensive personnel restructuring took place in the wake of German reunification. Due to the political and structural reorganization of these subjects based on the Western model, there was an urgent need for personnel with the necessary knowledge and experience in the West German system. In this comprehensive process, numerous professors at East German universities were replaced after 1990. Appointment committees

**5** Laura Behrmann, Markus Gamper, and Hanna Haag, eds., *Vergessene Ungleichheiten. Biographische Erzählungen ostdeutscher Professor*innen* (Bielefeld, 2024).

**6** Julia Reuter et al., eds., *Vom Arbeiterkind zur Professur. Sozialer Aufstieg in der Wissenschaft. Autobiographische Notizen und soziobiographische Analysen* (Bielefeld, 2020).

**7** Behrmann, Gamper, and Haag, *Vergessene Ungleichheiten*, 11–16.

**8** Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung, DataCHECK 5/2025, Hochschulleitungen in Deutschland Update 2025, https://hochschuldaten.che.de/hochschulleitungen-in-deutschland-update-2025, accessed March 3, 2026.

**9** Raj Kollmorgen, "Ostdeutsche Wissenschaftselite – noch immer ein Oxymoron?," in Behrmann, Gamper, and Haag, *Vergessene Ungleichheiten*, 41–73.

were established to assess the suitability of candidates following a political and academic review. In the humanities in particular, these committees were composed almost exclusively of West German experts.[10]

This article addresses the question to what extent the history of the GDR and the process of adaptation to the West German system after 1989/90 led to the production of new social inequalities. It addresses continuities and ruptures and applies the concept of a "long history of the *Wende*."[11] According to this notion, coined by the historian Kerstin Brückweh, change did not begin with the upheavals of 1989/90 but emerged from longer lines of development. Against this background, the first section of this article examines the relationship between higher education and social inequality in the GDR in order to understand the preconditions for the process of transformation. It then looks at the long attempt to adapt to the West German system, focusing on student financing, in order to finally examine the question of the production of new inequalities on the basis of academic staff and developments in various subjects.

## II. From Counter-Privileging to Socialist Elitism

In the "real, existing socialism" [*real existierender Sozialismus*] that the GDR claimed to offer, education was highly ideological. The political leadership propagated an image of the GDR as a workers' and farmers' state in which a newly formed socialist intelligentsia was to overcome the traditional connection between education and social origin. Particularly during the reconstruction phase in the 1950s, there were political efforts to break the educational monopoly of the middle classes and to provide greater support to less affluent groups.[12] With this form of countering existing privileges, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) proclaimed the goal of creating equal opportunities for workers and farmers to access higher education. It also made efforts to achieve gender equity by actively integrating women into higher education, which distinguished the GDR from West Germany. While this integration

**10** A prominent example is the restructuring of the history department at Humboldt University in Berlin; see Krijn Thijs, "Die „Ritter-Kommission" und ihre Mitglieder. Asymmetrische Erneuerungspraktiken am Geschichtsinstitut der Humboldt-Universität (1991–1993)," in Franziska Bomski, ed., *Inventur. Der Personalumbau in den ostdeutschen Wissenschaften nach 1989* (Halle-Wittenberg, 2024).

**11** Kerstin Brückweh, Clemens Villinger, and Kathrin Zöller, eds., *Die lange Geschichte der "Wende". Geschichtswissenschaft im Dialog* (Berlin, 2020).

**12** John Connelly, *Captive University. The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945–1956* (Chapel Hill/London, 2000).

was successful in terms of raising the number of female students and research assistants, women still encountered a glass ceiling at the professorial and leadership levels.[13]

The ideological motive behind counter-privileging measures was to prevent the self-reproduction and recruitment of the educated middle classes in favor of a larger working-class enrollment. In the long term, the SED hoped that this policy would produce loyal, well-trained cadres from working-class backgrounds in the leadership levels of administration, law, business, and science.[14] The most important instrument of this project was a type of preparatory school called "*Arbeiter- und Bauernfakultäten*" (ABF) [Workers' and Farmers' Faculties]. These institutions, which were affiliated with universities but remained independent, were intended to enable educationally disadvantaged groups to obtain their high school diplomas, thus allowing them to attend university. An important prerequisite for this was the political reliability of the applicants. Potential students were therefore obliged to undergo politically charged aptitude tests to determine their suitability for university studies.[15]

The educational historian Ingrid Miethe characterized this development as a "major educational policy experiment aimed at reducing social inequality."[16] The SED's goal was far from altruistic, however. Rather, this policy of counter-privileging served as a means to an end in the party's political agenda.[17] In terms of content, the ABF courses were broadly based and thus resembled the general education provided in the extended secondary schools (EOS), the GDR high schools, which were the prerequisite for admission to academic studies. The subjects ranged from biology, physics, and mathematics to German and Russian. Specialization in a particular subject only took place at the beginning of university studies after successful completion of the preparatory schools. So-called Marxist-Leninist teaching, which introduced students to key communist concepts such as dialectical and historical materialism, formed an integral part of higher education and was also included in the curriculum at the workers' and farmers' faculties.

**13** Gunilla Budde, *Frauen der Intelligenz. Akademikerinnen in der DDR 1945 bis 1975* (Göttingen, 2003).

**14** Ingrid Miethe, *Bildung und soziale Ungleichheit in der DDR. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer gegenprivilegierenden Bildungspolitik* (Opladen, 2007), 12; Peer Pasternack, "Das Hochschulwesen," in Jakob Benecke, ed., *Erziehungs- und Bildungsverhältnisse in der DDR* (Bad Heilbrunn, 2022), 270–290, here 277.

**15** Guidelines for admission to the Workers' and Farmers' Faculties at universities and colleges in the GDR, dated March 29, 1950 (excerpt), Hochschulbestimmungen Nr. 10: Zulassungen zu den ABF / Ministerium für Volksbildung, Berlin 1950; Ilko-Sascha Kowalczuk, *Geist im Dienste der Macht. Hochschulpolitik in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1961* (Berlin, 2003), 145.

**16** Miethe, *Bildung und soziale Ungleichheit in der DDR*, 14.

**17** Ibid., 337.



**Figure 2.** Study course at the Workers' and Farmers' Faculty of Dresden Technical University in the 1950s, TU Dresden archive, photo collection.

However, the children of workers and farmers were not necessarily actively involved in the SED's political agenda and did not always prove to be the loyal target group that the state leadership had hoped for. After only a few years, the policy of counter-privileging appeared inefficient and too expensive.[18] While the SED continued to publicly advocate the targeted promotion of working-class academics and exaggerated the proportion of workers' and farmers' children at universities in its official communications,[19] it actually turned away from its counter-privilege education policy at an early stage and once again recruited young academics from the middle classes.[20]

Even though there was a temporary de-bourgeoisification of professors in some academic fields and the rates of habilitation declined,[21] starting in the 1970s the self-reproduction of the academic intelligentsia increased once again. At the end of the GDR's existence, only 22 percent of students came from working-class and farming families, while 73 percent had parents with university degrees.[22] In fact, in the years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, East German universities were far more exclusive than their West German counterparts. In West Germany, academia had become more socially diverse since the late 1960s. The fact that the proportion of children of workers and farmers fell to the level of the 1940s in the GDR also meant that its universities developed into "socialist elite universities."[23] This completely contradicted the

**18** Ibid., 338.

**19** Peer Pasternack, *Das Hochschulwesen*, 284.

**20** Vertrauliche Kollegiumsvorlage 2/8/54 zur politischen Lage an den ABF und über Maßnahmen zur Verbesserung der politischen und erzieherischen Arbeit. BArch, DR 3/I. Schicht/149, quoted from Ingrid Miethe, "Der Mythos von der Chancengleichheit. Die Bildungspolitik der DDR zwischen Gegenprivilegierung, Machtsicherung und Reproduktion von Ungleichheit," *Zeitschrift des Forschungsverbundes SED-Staat* (2007): 35–54, here 47.

**21** Ralph Jessen, *Akademische Elite und kommunistische Diktatur, Die ostdeutsche Hochschullehrerschaft in der Ulbricht-Ära* (Göttingen, 1999).

**22** Peer Pasternack, *Das Hochschulwesen*, 284.

**23** Ralph Jessen, "Massenausbildung, Unterfinanzierung und Stagnation. Ost- und westdeutsche Universitäten in den siebziger und achtziger Jahren," in Michael Grüttner et al., eds., *Gebrochene Wissenschaftskulturen, Universität und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2010), 261–278.

political leadership's claim to ensure equal opportunities. Nevertheless, academic elitism secured the SED's position of power, which had increasingly focused on politically loyal circles since the 1970s and 1980s.

## III. "Are We to Live in Tent Cities?" The Westernization of Student Finances

Although university enrollment in the GDR was reserved for a politically loyal elite and the coursework remained highly ideological, many East German students believed that their system was more socially just than West German academia. This perception resulted primarily from the social security provided by the state and from political propaganda. The GDR largely paid for the education and training of young people. An aspiration for a socially equitable society was reflected, at least officially, in the GDR's system of grants and scholarships. In the GDR, every student received a monthly scholarship of 200 East German marks, regardless of parental income, throughout the entire duration of study. The state provided further subsidies for rent, public transportation, and food. Bonuses were paid out for good academic results. Although these sums appear relatively low by today's standards, in a 1993 documentary two Berlin Student Council representatives recall that dormitory housing in the GDR cost 10 marks per month and a one-room apartment cost 30 marks.[24] The cost of living was therefore significantly lower than in West Germany, and a scholarship of 200 marks plus supplements sufficed for many. The SED's subsidy policy underscores that in socialist countries it was not the family but the state that was responsible for financing the education of children and young adults. This also meant that East German students lived rather independently of their parents. At the same time, the state's assumption of responsibility for schoolchildren and students was regularly staged in a publicity-effective manner.[25] However, as mentioned above, university education was reserved for a relatively small and exclusive group due to limited capacity and political admission criteria. Financial support thus functioned as a subsidy for the politically loyal.

**24** Malte Sieber and Ronald Freytag, *Kinder des Systems. DDR-Studenten vor, um und nach dem Herbst '89* (Berlin, 1993), 162.

**25** Ibid., 161f.

State support enabled East German students to complete their studies in a relatively short period of time. Unlike in West Germany, students in the GDR did not have to take on part-time jobs to support themselves. They could, however, be assigned to harvest crops or work in industrial jobs during the summer break. In West Germany, Willy Brandt's social-liberal government coalition had created an instrument for promoting equal opportunities with the 1971 Federal Training Assistance Act [*Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz*]. German students still receive financial support in accordance with this law today. Abbreviating the law's name, the subsidy is universally referred to as BAföG. The West German model for financing studies differed significantly from the GDR model in that it was based on individual eligibility. BAföG funding depended on parental income. It was not granted unconditionally to every student, as it was in the GDR. Also, BAföG rates were initially paid out as partial loans and therefore had to be partially repaid after graduation.

In West Germany, the situation changed with the new conservative administration led by Chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU) in 1982. The economic crises of the 1970s and the steadily growing number of students had exacerbated systemic problems. During the negotiations to form a coalition government between Kohl's conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU/CSU) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP), cutting BAföG funding was seen as a way to reduce the state's high spending. Following tough negotiations between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education, the coalition partners agreed to convert BAföG into an interest-free full loan starting in the summer of 1983. From then on, student loans in West Germany had to be repaid in full. This decision drew considerable criticism, particularly from education policymakers on the left wing of the governing parties and from the SPD, which publicly interpreted the cuts as a measure to reduce social welfare.[26] Funding was now also linked to a fixed standard period of study. If this was exceeded – for example, because the student had to work alongside their studies to cover the cost of living in metropolitan university cities such as Cologne, Munich, or Hamburg – their entitlement to BAföG funding was reduced or expired altogether.

**26** Hendrik Böttcher, *Die Atempause. Das wirtschaftspolitische Sofortprogramm der Wende von 1982* (Berlin/Boston, 2023), 192–200.

Against this backdrop, the euphoria of the revolutionary autumn of 1989 gave way to concerns among East German students as early as spring 1990. The first free general election of the *Volkskammer*, the GDR parliament, on March 18, 1990, saw a landslide victory for the CDU-led multi-party "Alliance for Germany." The Alliance was a coalition between the East German CDU, the *Deutsche Soziale Union* (DSU), and the newly formed *Demokratischer Aufbruch* (Democratic Awakening, DA), whose shared political goal was German reunification. Their election victory resulted in the last *Volkskammer* of the GDR under the leadership of Lothar de Maizière (CDU) and set the course for rapid reunification – or, more precisely, the incorporation of the GDR into the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany. This process would bring with it the adoption of the West German economic and social system, including the introduction of the BAföG system to the GDR, tying students' eligibility for financial aid to their parents' income. A month before the *Volkskammer* elections, East German students were already pushing for an increase in financial aid due to rapid inflation following the fall of the Berlin Wall. With the prospect of unification, or at least a potential economic and social union between the GDR and the FRG with a common currency, many students felt that their financial security was fundamentally threatened. Not only was the future of basic scholarships for East German students uncertain, but dormitory rents and other living expenses were also gradually rising.[27]

In order to unite the students' interests and establish a legitimate representative body to deal with the GDR government, a National Student Council [*Republiksprecherrat*] was founded in March 1990 at a nationwide meeting of GDR students in Karl-Marx-Stadt (Chemnitz).[28] This council presented the students' demands for an increase in scholarships to the subsistence level and the provision of affordable dormitory housing to the GDR Ministry of Education and published the results of the meeting in *UnAufgefordert*, an independent student newspaper of Berlin's Humboldt University.[29] According to the report, Deputy Minister of Education Eberhard Kallenbach (NDPD) had assured the Council of Representatives that he would take the students' interests into account in government

**27** "Die Ruhe vor dem Sturm," *UnAufgefordert. Unabhängige Zeitung von und für Studenten*, No. 5 & 6, February 29, 1990, 1.

**28** "Republiksprecherrat der Studenten gebildet," *UnAufgefordert. Unabhängige Zeitung von und für Studenten*, No. 8, March 27, 1990, 10.

**29** "Mehr Stip in Sicht? Neues aus dem Bildungsministerium," *UnAufgefordert. Unabhängige Zeitung von und für Studenten*, No. 9, April 10, 1990, 4.



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Das Fragezeichen hat sich erledigt Foto: Kracheel

## Das war's dann?

19.000 Studenten auf der Straße, eine Woche lang Mahnwache vor der Volkskammer, Resolutionen, Briefe an Abgeordnete, Gespräche mit Ministern - und am Ende: eine Entscheidung des Ministerrates, die weit hinter unseren Forderungen zurückbleibt. Und das gar nicht so sehr wegen der Höhe des Stipendiums: auf exakt 495,- Mark wäre es wohl niemandem angekommen. Vielmehr ist es das PRINZIP der Elternabhängigkeit, das nun per Dekret in der DDR (wieder) eingeführt wird.

Denn auch wenn es sich zunächst nur um eine vom Einkommen der Eltern abhängige Aufstockung des Grundstipendiums handelt, ist klar: Dies ist nur eine Übergangslösung, die Weichen für spätere Regelungen stellen soll, welche dann dem BaFöG immer ähnlicher sein werden. (Warum sollte man sich hier mehr Mühe geben als mit den „zig anderen einfach übernommenen Gesetzen...) Und ganz egal, wieviel Stip beim einzelnen Studenten letztlich ankommt: das PRINZIP schreibt fest, daß er noch lange nach Erreichen der Volljährigkeit seinen Eltern auf der Tasche liegt. Und das ist selbst dann, wenn man "vom Normalfall familiärer Beziehungen ausgeht"

(O-Ton Minister Meyer) - was man ja nicht tun muß - wohl nicht sehr angenehm und hat wohl auch kaum etwas mit dem Recht auf Emanzipation und Selbstbestimmung zu tun.

War's das jetzt? Das Semester neigt sich, der Urlaub lockt, Massenaktionen sind nicht mehr drin, Streiks würden nur noch die eigenen Prüfungen treffen... Resignation ist verständlich, aber nicht angebracht. Immerhin haben unsere Aktionen nicht nur die Studentenschaft, sondern auch die Öffentlichkeit für das Thema sensibilisiert. Und: Neue Bedingungen erfordern neues Herangehen. Wenn die für den 21. Juni nach Berlin einberufene außerordentliche Konferenz der Studentenräte ein solches berät, sollte sie auch über neue Bündnispartner nachdenken, mit denen man im Herbst neue, größere Aktionen starten kann. Unternehmer und Politiker basteln schon lange an gesamtdeutschen Lobbys - für ein Zusammengehen der Studenten in Ost und West ist es höchste Zeit. Nur so haben wir am Ende - und nicht nur gegen BaFöG - wirklich eine Chance.

MALER

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**Figure 3.** *UnAufgefordert* No. 14, June 21, 1990. Title page.

policy. Specifically, this meant an increase in scholarships by 150 marks (to 350 marks) effective from June 1. However, timing became a political variable as this concession was a decision made by the outgoing government. With the *Volkskammer* election on March 18, the cards were reshuffled. Although Kallenbach recommended that his successors implement the scholarship increase, it was entirely unclear to what extent the new government would take this recommendation and the students' interests into account.[30]

**30** Ibid.

To publicly reinforce their demands, East German students regularly wrote open letters to the new government of the GDR and encouraged their fellow students to write to politicians and university officials. One recipient of these letters was Hans Joachim Meyer, an adjunct professor of English at Humboldt University. In April 1990, Meyer became the GDR's new Minister of Education and Science. Following a student congress in Dresden, representatives pointed out to Meyer that the cost of living in the GDR had demonstrably risen in recent months while the basic stipend remained the same. The students did not feel their interests were represented

in the new government's policy and demanded an increase in the stipend.[31] Meyer addressed these demands by giving an exclusive interview to Berlin's leading student newspaper. In the interview, he affirmed his intention to enshrine student representation in law and to advocate for their interests politically. Yet he also reminded students that "I'm not the finance minister. I don't have the money; I have to get it."[32]

The student protest campaign culminated in an open letter to Lothar de Maizière, Prime Minister of the GDR, and Walter Romberg (SPD), the GDR's Minister of Finance. Mockingly, the student council of Berlin's Humboldt University announced that they would transfer a basic stipend of 215 marks each (including the Berlin supplement) to the ministers. For one month, Romberg and de Maizière should make do exclusively with this money, "so that their decision regarding the amount of the stipends is based on professional expertise and an intimate understanding of the situation."[33] To cushion the additional burden of high rent costs, both would be provided with a bed in a Berlin student dormitory for 10 marks. While provocative and satirical in tone, the letter demonstrates how urgent this situation was and how creatively student advocacy was organized and communicated during the unification process.

Yet the GDR economy was already in a state of decline at that time, resulting in a massive slump in tax revenues which left the state budget with hardly any resources for scholarships. Meyer therefore sought close coordination with the West German federal government in Bonn.[34] He found a "competent partner"[35] in Fritz Schaumann, a state secretary and education politician from the Free Democratic Party (FDP). Schaumann proposed extending the Federal Training Assistance Act in a modified form to the GDR as early as July 1, 1990, when the monetary union came into effect that made the West German Deutsche Mark the official currency of the GDR. East German students would still be entitled to a base amount of 280 marks, slightly higher than before, regardless of their parents' financial situation. The stipend could be increased to a maximum of 450 marks if their parents' income was deemed

**31** Letter from the Dresden Student Congress to Minister Meyer, *UnAufgefordert. Unabhängige Zeitung von und für Studenten*, No. 11, May 8, 1990, 6.

**32** "Ich bin nicht der Finanzminister," Exklusiv-Interview mit Bildungsminister Hans Joachim Meyer, *UnAufgefordert. Unabhängige Zeitung von und für Studenten*, No. 11, May 8, 1990, 14.

**33** Open letter from the HU Student Council to Walter Romberg and Lothar de Maizière, June 4, 1990, *UnAufgefordert. Die Berliner Studentenzeitung*, No. 13, June 6, 1990, 4.

**34** For an autobiographical account, see Hans Joachim Meyer, *In keiner Schublade. Erfahrungen im geteilten und vereinten Deutschland* (Freiburg, 2015), 132–135.

**35** Ibid., 133.




**Figure 4.** "Student housing of the future, like this?? A tent city on Herder Square?!" Student protest in Weimar against the poor conditions in student dormitories in the GDR, April 1990. Photo: Heinz Hirndorf. Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1990-0426-025.

to be too low to allow them to support their child at university. The GDR Ministry of Finance preferred a socially differentiated solution based on parental income. In his autobiography, Meyer emphasizes that this option would have likely been effective for most GDR students due to their parents' low incomes compared to those of parents in West Germany.[36]

Since this measure meant students would become more financially dependent on their parents, a large student protest took place in front of the GDR's *Volkskammer* on June 7, 1990. Students from universities across the GDR participated, traveling to Berlin on chartered trains from Leipzig, Halle, Erfurt, and Jena. The protesters' main demand was a guaranteed basic allowance of 495 marks per student, regardless of parental income. Around 10,000 demonstrators initially gathered for a sit-in in front of the parliament building. The protest was largely supported by Heinrich Fink, the rector of Humboldt University in Berlin. Fink's support became a key factor, as some lawmakers and ministers were willing to engage in dialogue with the demonstrators solely because of his presence. Despite intense discussions with members of parliament, GDR Finance Minister Romberg stuck to the measure already agreed with Bonn: a basic scholarship of 280 marks with possible increases depending on social circumstances.[37]

**36** Ibid.

**37** See "Der D-Day! Eindrücke von der Demo am 7. Juni," *UnAufgefordert. Die Berliner Studentenzeitung*, No. 14, June 21, 1990, 3–4; Sieber and Freytag, *Kinder des Systems*, 166–169.

Disappointed by Romberg's decision, a small group of students stormed the *Volkskammer*, disrupting a parliamentary session. From the visitors' gallery, the students unfurled a banner and showered the members of parliament with leaflets listing their demands. Despite their protest and the critical attitude of some GDR ministers toward BAföG,[38] the Council of Ministers [*Ministerrat*] approved the new scholarship regulations only a few days later, on June 13. Students succeeded in forcing an *Aktuelle Stunde*, a parliamentary procedure used by the *Volkskammer* to discuss pressing issues on short notice. However, the students lacked the standing to speak in parliament and instead had to have their concerns presented by parliamentarians of the PDS (the successor party of the SED) and the Green Party. A few days later, one of the students present described the debate as empty talk and concluded that it dragged on as a mere formality "until all parties had fulfilled their duty and Minister Meyer delivered the closing remarks."[39] Although Meyer was not satisfied with the outcome, he felt the 280 marks plus socially differentiated increases were "what was feasible at the time."[40] The activists were far from pleased with this outcome. In a symbolic vigil, they camped in front of Berlin Cathedral across from the *Volkskammer* for one week, until June 21, 1990.[41]

Since this solution combined established elements from both the GDR (basic student grants) and West Germany (parental income-dependent supplements), this piece of education policy differed significantly from other decisions made as part of the transformation process. In areas such as economic policy, for example, so-called "third way" initiatives combining East and West German models were quickly abandoned. During the summer break of 1990, protest activity subsided, while preparations were underway to extend the West German BAföG system to the territory of the former GDR following German reunification on October 3. Nevertheless, the collective struggle for social security provisions for students in the GDR had a strong community-building effect. The practice of collective protest was mobilized again at later stages of the transformation process, for example in 1991 against the closure of individual departments and entire institutions of higher

**38** Meyer, *In keiner Schublade*, 134.

**39** "Palaver im Hohlen Haus. Aktuelle Stunde in der Volkskammer zur Lage der Studenten," *UnAufgefordert. Die Berliner Studentenzeitung*, No. 14, June 21, 1990, 7.

**40** Ibid.

**41** Sieber and Freytag, *Kinder des Systems*, 170.



**Figure 5.** Students storm the visitors' balcony of the *Volkskammer* in East Berlin, June 1990. Photo: Bernd Settnik. Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1990-0607-024.

education (referred to as *Abwicklung*), and toward the end of the decade in protests against the introduction of tuition fees – by then an issue affecting Germany as a whole.[42]

When the transitional arrangement providing GDR students with a basic allowance independent of parental income expired in early 1991, the BAföG system was fully extended to the East German states and East Berlin. That students gradually came to accept their situation is evident in the fact that the Berlin student newspaper *UnAufgefordert* launched a recurring column during this period providing information on the key provisions of the BAföG system – with specific calculation examples and tips on how to get the most out of financial aid.[43] The transfer not only changed eligibility for student funding, but also imposed an enormous bureaucratic burden on the budding local authorities in East Germany. For this reason, West German student service organizations offered training and counseling programs for East German municipalities in order to transfer knowledge about the application, review, and approval processes as quickly as possible. Since around 80 percent of those

**42** "Studentischer Protest gegen den Studiengebührenputsch der CDU," *UnAufgefordert. Die Studentinnen- und Studentenzeitung der Humboldt-Universität*, December 1999, 8.

**43** "BAföG – keiner will's und 's kommt doch. Ein UnAuf-Supersonderspezialservice," *UnAufgefordert. Die Studentenzeitung der Berliner Humboldt-Uni*, No. 16, October 31, 1990, 6–7.

eligible for BAföG in the former GDR depended on this source of funding alone, there was considerable time pressure to establish an effective administrative system.[44]

One key aspect of social inequality in the transformation of higher education in Eastern Germany was that initially higher rates of financial aid were paid to West Germans compared to East Germans. This was due to several factors determining the calculation of support rates for East German recipients of BAföG. To determine parental income levels, earnings from October to December 1990 were used as the basis from which an annual average was extrapolated. But this method distorted the actual economic situation and thereby produced unequal treatment. Unlike in West Germany, incomes of East German parents had deteriorated rapidly, primarily as a consequence of rising unemployment and reductions in work hours resulting from the deindustrialization and privatization of the GDR economy. In addition, income levels during these months appeared higher because of temporary social compensation payments, making them unrepresentative as a basis for calculating support rates for 1991. These arguments were advanced in the German *Bundestag* by members of the SPD and the PDS.[45] The governing CDU-FDP coalition, on the other hand, justified the differences by pointing to lower costs in the East, particularly for student housing. Furthermore, members of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group feared that the student financial aid administration recently established in Eastern Germany might be overwhelmed by yet another revision of the calculation criteria and support rates.[46]

However, the cost of living and housing in the East also rose rapidly after German reunification, gradually approaching Western German levels. For students, the price increase was most noticeable in dormitory rents, as these facilities had to raise rents to cover the costs of substantial renovation and maintenance projects.[47] In addition, other living expenses, such as the cost of public transportation, food, and clothing, rose sharply in the months that followed. This was primarily due to the monetary union that had come into effect the previous year and the sudden introduction of the capitalist economic system. As a result, living costs appeared to

**44** "BAföG gibt's ab 1. Januar auch bei uns. Etwa 80 Prozent der Studenten darauf angewiesen," *Dresdner Universitätsjournal* 1 (1990), No. 18, 3.

**45** German Bundestag, 12th Legislative Period, Plenary Minutes, 25th Session, May 14, 1991, 8126.

**46** German Bundestag, 12th Legislative Period, Plenary Minutes, 31st Session, June 13, 1991, 2384–2385.

**47** "Mietwucher im Wohnheim. Studenten klagen gegen Mieterhöhung," *UnAufgefordert. Die Studentenzeitung der Berliner Humboldt-Uni*, No. 22, April 17, 1991, 9.

be rising more rapidly than could be offset by the projected BAföG rates for East Germany, even with the planned gradual increases. Also, opportunities for student employment were more limited in Eastern Germany compared to Western Germany due to structural changes in the labor market. By contrast, living costs in the West remained relatively stable after 1990. Many East German students therefore felt that their lower BAföG rates were a clear social disadvantage. Inequality proved particularly controversial in the case of educational commuters from the GDR, which can be illustrated by the following example: If a student lived in East Berlin but was enrolled at a university in West Berlin, he or she received the West German BAföG rate.[48]

This inequality even became a topic at the first all-German CDU party conference in December 1991 although the party had itself argued for different BAföG rates in the *Bundestag* just a few months earlier. The conference took place in Dresden under the slogan *Einheit leben* [Living Unity]. The Federal Ministry of Education submitted a corresponding motion at the request of the CDU-affiliated *Ring of Christian Democratic Students* (RCDS).[49] In response to this inquiry, Parliamentary State Secretary Norbert Lammert stated that the cost of living in Eastern and Western Germany was becoming increasingly similar, so students in the former GDR should be granted the same BAföG rates as students in the West. Since BAföG is a means-tested financial aid program, this was required by the principles of equality and fairness. Lammert also noted that the current rule could easily be circumvented by studying at a university in Western Germany. He feared that this could initiate a "brain drain" from Eastern Germany and further strain the already overcrowded Western universities. As the necessary funds were expected to be available in the 1992 federal budget, the motion for material equality for students in Eastern German states was accepted at the party conference with only one abstention.[50]

Although the government decided at the beginning of 1992 to increase BAföG by 6 percent, the difference between East and West remained: while the maximum rate for students in the West rose from 890 to 940 marks, students in East Germany were to receive

**48** German Bundestag, 12th Legislative Period, Plenary Minutes, 80th Session, February 21, 1992, 6640.

**49** Minutes of the 2nd Party Conference of the CDU Germany, Dresden, December 15–17, 1991, 232.

**50** Ibid., 233.



**Figure 6.** Rainer Ortleb (FDP), the first Federal Minister of Education and Science from East Germany after German reunification (1991–1994). Photo: Elke Schöps. Bundesarchiv Bild 183-1990-0309-322. CC BY-SA 3.0

only 825 marks instead of 690 from July 1992 onwards. East German students therefore referred to it as "BAföG light" starting in the fall of 1992.[51] In a two-stage process, the East German rates were then to be adjusted to the West German level by 1993. Originally, Federal Minister of Education and Science Rainer Ortleb (FDP) wanted to implement the adjustment between East and West all at once. As the first East German minister in this post, Ortleb argued against discriminating against students for the sake of saving money. But his plans were rejected by Finance Minister Theo Waigel (CSU), who cited several reasons for postponing the adjustment: on the one hand, rent subsidies were not included in the basic BAföG amount that would be affected by the increase; on the other hand, the federal government would incur considerable costs in connection with a revision of the abortion law [Article 218], which was to make abortion eligible for state-subsidized general health insurance coverage. These expenses would mean cuts elsewhere.[52]

From an East German perspective, BAföG remained confusing: The lack of knowledge about eligibility, the tedious application process, and the limited financial aid available posed a problem for many students. The situation they had been accustomed to in the GDR, where they did not have to work alongside their studies and could therefore focus fully on their education, was now a thing of the past. East German students were dissatisfied with this situation and feared that the tight financial constraints would prolong their studies – an issue familiar to West Germans.

**51** "WS 92: wie aus mehr BAföG weniger Geld wird," *UnAufgefordert. Die Studentenzeitung der Berliner Humboldt-Uni*, No. 37, May 20, 1992, 4.

**52** "Kabinett beschloß BAföG-Erhöhungen. Häppchenweise im Osten," *Sächsische Zeitung*, January 9, 1992; "Sechs Prozent mehr BAföG ab Juli. Erst 1993 gleiches Geld im Osten," *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten*, January 9, 1992.

For some of the politicians involved in the decision-making process, such as the SPD politician Doris Odendahl, the dispute over "BAföG East" turned into an "endless story."[53] In a plenary session of the German Bundestag, the Social Democrat argued that this case once again demonstrated how tapping into BAföG funds had become common practice in order to compensate for financial shortfalls elsewhere.[54] Dietmar Keller, an East German member of the Bundestag for PDS/Linke Liste, likewise renewed his criticism of the de facto disadvantages faced by East German students, which, he argued, already began with the use of flawed survey and assessment methods to calculate basic financial need. As a result, the percentage increase in BAföG support fell far short of the substantially higher rise in living costs. Moreover, the structural transformation of the labor market in Eastern Germany had significantly reduced opportunities for students to engage in paid employment alongside their studies.[55] At the very least, the Ministry of Education had succeeded in introducing a hardship regulation intended primarily to account for rising rents and to permit increases in housing allowances in justified cases.

Meanwhile, the governing coalition continued to insist on the existence of structural differences between East and West resulting from divergent income and price levels in Eastern Germany.[56] However, the assumption that lower price levels necessarily entailed lower living costs proved to be mistaken. Partly in response to concerns raised in the Bundesrat, in which the new federal states were represented after German reunification, a public hearing with experts was held in March 1992. The experts concluded that there was no substantive difference in the basic financial needs of students in Eastern and Western Germany, prompting the federal government to revise the draft legislation. Ultimately, in May 1992, in response to mounting criticism from politicians, student representatives, and the broader public, it was decided that the basic student allowance [*Grundbedarf*] would be equalized in Eastern and Western Germany in a single step from autumn 1992 onward, rather than gradually, with full equalization only in autumn 1993 as originally envisaged. This did not yet apply to all components

**53** German Bundestag, 12th Legislative Period, Plenary Minutes, 80th Session, February 21, 1992, 6640.

**54** Ibid.

**55** Ibid., 6643–6644.

**56** See the parliamentary speech by FDP Member of Parliament Margret Funke-Schmitt-Rink, German Bundestag, 12th Legislative Period, Plenary Minutes, 80th Session, February 21, 1992, 6644–6645.

of BAföG, however, as the housing allowance continued to differ between East and West.[57]

Although the basic BAföG allowance in Eastern and Western Germany was now formally equalized, substantial disparities persisted in practice. East German students continued to face structural disadvantages resulting from different income conditions, methods of parental income assessment, and the broader economic crisis accompanying post-socialist transformation. As a result, the term "BAföG East" remained in circulation throughout the 1990s. In the following years, various models and solutions were discussed at the federal and state level, with the student body also being represented institutionally by the *Deutsches Studentenwerk*.[58] As a neoliberal shift in education and research policy became apparent in the mid-1990s, leading politicians such as Minister of Education Jürgen Rüttgers (CDU) even considered charging interest on loans and shortening the funding period.[59] However, his proposal was not signed into law. Instead, in 1996, the federal government and the states passed a BAföG amendment that further adjusted funding rates nationwide from the winter term 1996/97, while some East-West differences – notably in housing allowances – remained. The separate rules for assessing parental income in the new federal states were subsequently abolished from autumn 1997.[60] Nevertheless, important forms of East-West inequality in the BAföG system persisted until the turn of the millennium, with the remaining differences in funding being fully eliminated in 2001. This made East-West inequality in student financial aid a long-standing issue of the German unification process in higher education. In this respect, a policy that was designed to promote equal opportunity deepened social inequality between East and West German students.

## IV. New Inequalities: Gap Professors

Political decisions not only created social inequalities among students but also influenced the dynamics among academic staff. Due to the political indoctrination of teaching staff in the GDR,

**57** German Bundestag, 12th Legislative Period, Plenary Minutes, 91st Session, May 7, 1992, 7439–7453.

**58** Meyer, *In keiner Schublade*, 398–402.

**59** See the speech by Jürgen Rüttgers, German Federal Minister of Education, Science, Research, and Technology, German Bundestag, 13th Legislative Period, Plenary Minutes, 98th Session, April 18, 1996, 8688–8691.

**60** 18. BAföG-Änderungsgesetz (BAföGÄndG) of July 17, 1996, *Bundesgesetzblatt*, 1996, Part I, No. 36.

East German universities underwent a comprehensive personnel turnover after 1989/90. The humanities and social sciences were particularly affected by this process, as ideological indoctrination had been a reality in these fields in the GDR, particularly in subjects closely tied to Marxist-Leninist doctrine. The question of who would teach these disciplines in the future, and how they should be taught, therefore became a significant issue for a unified Germany confronted with the legacies of two dictatorships. Quantitative studies on professorial appointments between 1990 and 1995 show that around 50 percent of new chairholders in the natural sciences and engineering came from West Germany, while fully 86 percent of positions in the humanities and social sciences were filled by West German academics. In disciplines such as political science and philosophy, only West German scholars were considered for professorships. In electrical engineering, by contrast, the proportion of West German professors was the lowest, at 23.1 percent.[61] Simply belonging to a particular academic department was therefore a decisive factor in determining the extent to which scholars who had made their careers in the GDR were affected by the restructuring of the academic workforce and the social consequences they could expect. Thus, scholars in the humanities faced far less favorable prospects for a professional future in the unified German academic system than their colleagues in the natural and technical sciences.

To evaluate the political integrity and professional competence of academic staff, the East German states and East Berlin established personnel review commissions, which were elected by the university members and appointed by the state. In Germany, most university professors are civil servants. Academics who received a positive evaluation were deemed qualified for continued employment in the Federal Republic of Germany's public service. However, a positive evaluation did not guarantee continued employment. Positions or entire institutions could be eliminated through liquidation based on Article 13 of the Unification Treaty.[62]

To keep teaching and research activities going during this extended period of transition, scholars who were deemed to possess political

**61** Ho Fai Chan et al., "Science after Communism: Why does Westernization Correlate with Productivity?," (July 1, 2022), https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3961712, 13.

**62** Treaty between the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany on the Establishment of German Unity – Unification Treaty, August 31, 1990, https://www.verfassungen.de/ddr/einigungsvertrag90-i.htm, accessed March 13, 2026.

integrity and the professional qualifications to lead the internal restructuring of the universities were appointed to professorships through an expedited process that exempted them from the regular application process.[63] The state of Saxony made particularly extensive use of this option, filling approximately 25 percent of newly established professorships with scholars from Saxony or the former GDR.[64] For the reasons already mentioned, these positions were primarily filled by East German academics from the natural sciences and engineering fields. Since the universities were to be restructured and rebuilt around these positions, these posts were referred to as *Aufbauprofessuren* [developmental professorships] or *Lückeprofessuren* [gap professorships]. As the *Vorläufige Hochschulordnung* [Provisional Higher Education Ordinance] of September 18, 1990 reorganized GDR higher education and the East German states drafted their own higher education laws, the term *Professoren neuen Rechts* (professors under the new law) became established for this group of professors. In total, this group comprised approximately 950 individuals across all East German universities. These academics were tasked with restructuring East German universities from within and assuming leadership responsibilities, for example, by coordinating the hiring for staff positions in their departments or administrative posts at the universities. This included, for instance, the medical director of Leipzig University Hospital, Manfred Schönfelder, or the materials scientist and future rector of the Freiberg University of Mining and Technology, Ernst Schlegel.[65]

Although these East German professors had undergone a rigorous personal and professional vetting process and subsequently performed the same work as their West German colleagues, they were not treated equally in financial terms. Rather, they were initially paid less because they were denied status as *Beamte*, a German civil service position with special pension benefits. The majority of the *Aufbauprofessoren* were between 49 and 59 years old at the time of their appointment. Since each German state has a legal age limit for entry into the civil service (ranging from age 40 to 50), most East German *Aufbauprofessoren* had exceeded the age limit. In Saxony,

**63** Gertraude Buck-Bechler et al., eds., *Hochschulen in den neuen Ländern der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Ein Handbuch zur Hochschulerneuerung* (Weinheim, 1997), 340f.

**64** Peer Pasternack, *Die vier Dimensionen des ostdeutschen Wissenschaftsumbaus. Strukturen und Personal, akademische Kultur und wissenschaftliche Inhalte* (Halle-Wittenberg, 2025), 226.

**65** See the detailed documentation by the affected East German professors in Hartmut Enderlein, Wolfgang Merbach, and Jürgen Stritzke, eds., *Zur Altersversorgung der Aufbauprofessoren in Ostdeutschland* (Chemnitz, 2025), 9f.

for example, civil service status was ruled out if the individual had passed the age of 50. This legal provision caused considerable irritation at the time, as professors in Germany were typically appointed as civil servants for life and were thus entitled to public sector benefits and a pension. Accordingly, the affected scholars from East Germany perceived this as unequal treatment and a social disadvantage compared to their West German colleagues.[66]

The administrative rationale behind this social differentiation was the challenging process of transferring pensions and other retirement benefits from the GDR into the West German pension system. Initially, periods of prior employment in the GDR's public service were not officially recognized because the Federal Republic of Germany regarded itself as a separate state. Furthermore, if retirement occurred after the cutoff date of June 30, 1995, the entitlement to the *Altersversorgung der Intelligenz* (AVI) acquired in the GDR was forfeited due to the economic, monetary, and social union of the two German states effective July 1, 1990. Since the pension insurance scheme of the *Versorgungsanstalt des Bundes und der Länder* (VBL) – which was standard in West Germany – was not introduced for public sector employees in East Germany until 1997, after a considerable delay, it did not apply to those East German professors who played a key role in shaping the restructuring of higher education between 1990 and 1995.[67] As a result, upon retirement, they received the pension benefits of a laboratory engineer or a research assistant[68] while West German professors who joined the university after reunification could expect the higher pension benefits of a civil servant as long as they did not exceed the age limit.

The fate of the East German professors who were entrusted with rebuilding the universities in the former GDR is especially bitter considering that they were prevented from having an academic career in the GDR since they had refused to join the SED and participate in the political indoctrination of the universities. Although they finally secured a professorship after the political transition of 1989/90, they were now once again subjected to unequal treatment compared to their West German colleagues while performing the same duties, bearing the same responsibilities, and working the same hours.

**66** Ibid., 3.

**67** Ibid., 10–12.

**68** Ibid., 3.

East German professors subsequently engaged with policymakers with great dedication and perseverance to end this unequal treatment.[69] In 2000, they created their own association – the *Verein zur Altersversorgung für angestellte Professoren und Hochschuldozenten neuen Rechts* (VAV)[70] – and organized themselves in various professional societies.[71] In June 2012 – more than twenty years after reunification – the presidents of the German Chemical Society, the German Mathematical Society, and the German Physical Society addressed a joint letter to the state premiers of the Eastern German states and the governing mayor of Berlin regarding pension inequality.[72] In it, they urged that this "social injustice, which has existed for years, be addressed quickly, before it becomes impossible to rectify due to demographic changes."[73] What they meant was the passing of this group of individuals due to the advanced age of many former university professors. Because the *Aufbauprofessoren* had served for a shorter period of time, the federal government could, under current law, pay out only about 30 to 35 percent of their former salaries, which amounted to a monthly sum in the low three-digit range.[74]

In October 2012, Reiner Haseloff (CDU), Minister President of Saxony-Anhalt and chair of the Conference of Minister-Presidents of the Eastern German States, responded to the professional associations and stated that he had raised the matter directly with the German federal government. He requested that the necessary conditions be promptly established to grant a monthly compensation payment that duly recognized the lifetime achievements of the affected group.[75] Haseloff received a personal response from Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU). Having worked as a scientist in the GDR herself until 1989, Merkel was aware of the exceptional contributions made by East German professors after reunification and could understand that the low retirement benefits were perceived as a personal hardship by those affected. Nevertheless, she noted that "difficult questions"[76] – above all legal issues – needed

**69** "Ernüchterung zum Ruhestand. Wie SED-kritische Forscher nach der Wende benachteiligt wurden," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 13, 2010.

**70** Association for the Pension Provision of Professors and University Lecturers under the New Law.

**71** See https://www.vav-web.com/vereinsziele.html, accessed March 13, 2026.

**72** The letter was made available to the author from the private archive of Prof. Otto Wienhaus, who served as an *Aufbauprofessor* in plant chemistry and ecotoxicology at Dresden University of Technology beginning in 1990.

**73** Letter from the presidents of the German Chemical Society, the German Mathematical Society, and the German Physical Society to the state premiers and the governing mayor of the federal states, dated June 28, 2012; from the private archive of Otto Wienhaus.

**74** Ibid.

**75** See the letter from Reiner Haseloff, Minister President of Saxony-Anhalt, to Barbara Albert, President of the German Chemical Society, dated October 26, 2012, from the private archive of Otto Wienhaus.

**76** Letter from Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, to Reiner Haseloff, Minister President of the State of Saxony-Anhalt, dated February 5, 2013, from the private archive of Otto Wienhaus.

to be clarified in this context, a task assigned to the Federal Government Commissioner for the New Federal States [*Beauftragter der Bundesregierung für die neuen Länder*], who was to find a solution in consultation with the individual ministries.

Despite the efforts of the Commissioner, Christoph Bergner (CDU), attempts to find a fair solution for East German professors repeatedly failed in the years that followed due to the issue of (financial) jurisdiction. Basically, it could not be legally determined whether the federal government or the individual states were responsible for any potential compensation payments to the *Aufbauprofessoren*. In response to this stalemate, the *Deutscher Hochschulverband* (DHV) – an association of German university faculty – developed a realistic proposal for a solution to the issue of social inequality. Under this proposal, universities affiliated with the DHV would establish a foundation supported by state governments to provide additional retirement benefits to the affected individuals.[77] However, due to the tight budgetary situation in the new federal states, the problem repeatedly bounced back and forth between the federal government and the states. As a result, no satisfactory solution has been implemented to this day.

The eastern German states have adopted different approaches to retirement benefits for their *Aufbauprofessoren*. Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania completed the restructuring of its higher education system in the 1990s by granting professors civil servant status. In contrast, Saxony only granted civil servant status to professors who had not yet reached the retirement age under federal law. Thuringia, on the other hand, made a one-time payment of €12,000 in 2021 after a lengthy political and legal battle by East German professors as a "political gesture with symbolic significance."[78] In Saxony, a similar proposal had failed two years earlier due to opposition from the governing CDU and SPD parties in the state parliament. In an open letter, the VAV association described this decision by the Saxon state government in 2019 in the following terms: "This effectively denied and rejected, in a discriminatory manner, the legitimate claims to equal treatment in pension provision to this occupational group."[79] The *Deutscher Hochschulverband*

**77** See Hans Joachim Meyer, "Nach 30 Jahren. Die ostdeutschen Hochschulen im Vereinigungsprozess," *Forschung und Lehre* 8/2020: 668–670.

**78** "DHV kritisiert Umgang mit Lückeprofessoren," *Forschung und Lehre* 11/2022: 845.

**79** Open letter from the VAV regarding the vote on motion Drs. 6/12233 in the Saxon State Parliament on August 15, 2019, https://www.vav-web.com/presse.html, accessed March 16, 2026.

(DHV) referred to a "failure of state policy" and a "grave injustice in terms of provision."[80]

**80** "DHV kritisiert Umgang mit Lückeprofessoren," *Forschung und Lehre* 11/2022: 845.

## V. Conclusion

More than 35 years after German reunification, social inequalities between East and West persist. A historical examination of the changes in academia following 1989/90 has revealed the extent to which the ideal of creating equality has been undermined by the emergence of new, often unintended inequalities. Under socialism, higher education was initially geared toward empowering socially disadvantaged groups and granting them access to universities through affirmative action – for those loyal to the ruling party. For a time, this policy led to discrimination against the middle classes, whose educational monopoly was to be broken for ideological reasons. However, these efforts failed to create the ideologically motivated group of loyalists from the working classes that the SED had hoped for. In the late socialist period of the 1970s and 1980s, students were therefore increasingly recruited from middle-class, politically loyal circles. The government's policy to grant an unconditional basic stipend to all students enabled students in the GDR to achieve a high degree of independence from their parents and obtain an academic degree in a relatively short period of time.

With German reunification and the extension of the West German social welfare system to East Germany, financial aid programs such as BAföG were implemented in the territory of the former GDR. For students, this meant that their parents' socioeconomic status determined how they could finance their studies. Furthermore, East German students received a lower rate of financial aid than their West German peers due to their supposedly lower housing and living costs. This social inequality persisted for some time, even though the gaps in cost of living between Eastern and Western Germany narrowed after reunification. Due to the uncertainty surrounding higher education, economic structural change, and high unemployment in Eastern Germany, a college education increasingly became a privilege that one had to be able to afford.

Partly because of this inequality in the higher education system, the number of East German academics eligible for academic leadership positions remains relatively small. The structures that have developed since reunification have exacerbated this inequality in two ways: First, German national unity itself has led to social inequalities between East and West, one manifestation of which can be empirically observed in the pay and pension provisions for university professors as well as in the initially lower rates of financial aid for East German students. Second, the East-West gap in the higher education system is not merely a question of pay, but also one of recognition of lifetime achievements and of belonging to a social system. The history of the gap professors and the persistent underrepresentation of East Germans in academic elites illustrate how long such social structures can outlast changes in political systems and governments.

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# Conference Reports

# Eighth West Coast Germanists' Workshop: German History at the Crossroads? New Narratives, Perspectives, and Approaches

Workshop at the University of Colorado Boulder, March 6-7, 2026. Co-sponsored by the GHI Washington Pacific Office and the History Department at the University of Colorado Boulder. Conveners: David Ciarlo (University of Colorado Boulder), Thomas Pegelow Kaplan (University of Colorado Boulder), Isabel Richter (GHI Washington | Pacific Office, Berkeley), and Raphael Rössel (GHI Washington). Participants: Lucia Alvarez (University of California, Los Angeles), Julie Ault (University of Utah), Eva Baudler (Stanford University), Adam Blackler (University of Wyoming), Grace Buhler (University of Wyoming), Sarah Ernst (University of Southern California), Claire Farnsworth (University of Colorado Boulder), Annika Frieberg (San Diego State University), Heike Friedman (GHI Washington), Charlotte Gibs (University of Southern California), Julian Gillilan (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Mathew Greenlee (University of Colorado Boulder), Jan Hansen (University of California, San Diego), CJ Headley (University of California, San Diego), Mo Healy (Lewis and Clark College), Zach Henson (University of Colorado, Colorado Springs), Erich Hochman (Southern Methodist University), Milena Kagel (University of Southern California), Stephen Kooshian (University of California, San Diego), Stefan Laffin (University of California, Berkeley), Paul Lerner (University of Southern California), Alex Levine (University of California, Los Angeles), Jennifer Lynn (Montana State University Billings), James McSpadden (University of Nevada, Reno), Eleanor Moseman (Colorado State University), Caitlin Murdock (California State University Long Beach), Sloane Nilsen (University of California, Berkeley), Alexia Orengo Green (University of Southern California),

Glenn Penny (University of California, Los Angeles), Bruno Rios de la Fuente (University of Colorado Boulder), Kara Ritzheimer (Oregon State University), Alexandria Ruble (University of Idaho), Fernanda Sada Jiménez (University of California, Berkeley), Erika Schumacher (University of California Davis), Grace Shaffer (University of Southern California), Cheuk Him Ryan Sun (University of British Columbia), Elizabeth Sun (University of California, Berkeley), Ariel Yingqi Tang (Stanford University), Brett M. Van Hoesen (University of Nevada, Reno), Kathleen Walsh (Washington University in St. Louis), Elissa Watters (University of Southern California), Dorothee Wierling (Professor emerita, University of Hamburg), Kurt Woolford (University of Southern California), Chloe Zheng (University of California, Los Angeles).

The 8th West Coast Germanists' Workshop gathered academics and students from some twenty universities to the University of Colorado Boulder for two days of scholarly exchange. Participants presented and reflected on topics related to the theme, "German History at the Crossroads? New Narratives, Perspectives and Approaches." In opening the conference, David Ciarlo highlighted the dissertation of Mildred Sherwood MacArthur, who between 1914-1917 defended, presented and published her research on the importance of Germans to the state of Colorado at a time when they were treated with hostility by Americans. He then noted that "our workshop – occurring at another moment of transatlantic tension . . . might not only offer an avenue of scholarly exchange . . . but an equally poignant attempt to foster understanding in a time of deep troubles." Ciarlo's hopes came to fruition as the panels, roundtables, keynote, and even breaktimes resulted in respectful dialogue among the forty-seven participants.

The first panel, chaired by Thomas Pegelow Kaplan and titled "Frameworks of Global and Transnational History," started with Stephen Kooshian's presentation focused on German pro-Armenian activism. He argued that Weimar Germany made strides towards demanding accountability for genocide

as prompted by the efforts of disparate groups such as missionaries, the press, and political activists. While the Treaty of Lausanne made an Armenian state impossible, German activists continued to feel a moral obligation to support Armenians via humanitarian aid projects, which constituted an early example of "minority-rights politics." Following Kooshian's remarks, James McSpadden explained his developing book project which seeks to both trace and account for the physical movement of books and other materials located throughout Europe in 1933 to Germany due to Nazi looting, and later to the United States. Rather than restoring stolen texts to their original owners, millions of Nazi insignia-stamped books ended up in the United States, a historical legacy McSpadden argued we must confront even today. Kathleen Walsh then presented on the role *Sammelbilder* played in contributing to concepts of German identity between 1928 and 1938. Instead of a nationalist conception of "Germanness," Walsh suggested a transnational concept of identity, where factors such as language and commodity culture overcame traditional borders, allowing for Austrian involvement in the notion of what it meant to be German.

The next panel was titled "Imagination, the Unconscious, and the History of Emotions" and chaired by Glenn Penny. Claire Farnsworth presented first on letters as evidence for maintained parent-child relationships during the *Kindertransporte*. Farnsworth noted that while some scholars claim that letter-writing was predominantly the province of mothers, the example of Paul Freundlich, a Jewish father who sent his daughter, Erika, to England following the November Pogroms, overturns this standard narrative. She thought his extensive efforts to continue parenting his daughter via letter-writing to be remarkable, especially considering the harsh reality he faced as a Jew trapped in Nazi Germany. Ariel Tang then presented her research on dreams as manifestations of political agency through the lens of Charlotte Beradt's *The Third Reich of Dreams*. Tang explained that dreams of the Third Reich

should be looked at as more than mere chronicles of wartime horror. Rather, they can be viewed as "archives," "prognosis," and "possible histories." In the discussion of their papers, both Tang and Farnsworth responded to comments about the fragmentary nature of their respective source material and reflected on how to navigate research knowing dreams and letters can be frustratingly incomplete.

Raphael Rössel chaired the third panel, "Reading Against the Grain Revisited." Elissa Watters presented first on "Anarchist Strategies in the Interwar German Avant-garde" In her paper, she conducted an analysis of works like those by Franz Wilhelm Seiwert, arguing that his art and that of other Cologne progressives have often been misinterpreted as being inherently communist. However, she argued their works confronted physical spaces, meaning they should be interpreted as distinctly separate from a typical left-right political dichotomy. Kara Ritzheimer then turned our attention to the institution of the *Bund Deutscher Mädel*. Through interpreting Gestapo records that chronicled instances of gossip, rumors, and jokes, Ritzheimer claimed that German citizens blamed the Nazi regime for a perceived increase in promiscuity among teenagers. She then argued that people who produced this negative gossip essentially resisted Nazism, as rumors provided an avenue by which they could judiciously critique the regime. CJ Headley concluded the panel discussing colonial education in German East Africa. He explained that Germany established colonial schools in order to train more workers, and in doing so predominantly employed "native" teachers. In grappling with understanding the liminal space occupied by these teachers, Headley deliberately chose to describe them as "participants" in the colonial regime rather than as collaborators or resistors, reminding us that colonial Africa did not operate as a straightforward top-down regime but in conversation with a multitude of at least semi-autonomous players like native instructors.

Dorothee Wierling delivered the keynote address entitled, "The German Blues: A Historian's Perspective on the Rise of Right-Wing Populism in Eastern Germany." Her project used two oral history projects that spanned three cities and multiple generations to account for the contemporary rise of the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) party in the East. Overall, Wierling argued that these oral history interviews revealed that East Germans generally perceived themselves to be somewhat ostracized from greater German society, leading them to seek recognition through the nationalist program of the AfD. For interviews targeting those born in the 1920s, Wierling argued that though all of Germany lost the Second World War, East Germans eventually harbored feelings of resentment towards West Germany as it thrived following the country's division. Likewise, the ill-executed reunification of Germany and resultant suffering led East Germans to further resent the West. Wierling then articulated that the AfD provides Germans in the East what they long desired; the ability to feel seen and valued.

Day two commenced with the fourth and final panel entitled "Visual History: Interpretation of Images and Visual Narratives," which was chaired by David Ciarlo. Brett Van Hoesen began with her presentation on zebra prints as a manifestation of "colonial legacy in arts and visual culture" of the Weimar Republic and later global cosmopolitanism. Marianne Brandt's photo assemblage "Untitled [mit Anna Mae Wong]" for example distinctly connected women's fashion with animal exoticism. For Van Hoesen, these allusions to zebra print in fashion, design aesthetics, and even the First World War camouflage nodded to German colonialism while simultaneously endeavoring to downplay the violence of the past. Cheuk Him Ryan Sun then presented "Framing Colonial Exile in German Jewish Refugees' Photograph Albums (1938-1948)." He argued that Shanghai Jewish refugees deliberately constructed family photo albums to present a successful narrative of endurance. While photographs of cats, the

benign, and the journey to Shanghai would seem typical of such an endeavor, the albums also include uncomfortable photographs of non-European peoples, which Ryan Sun argued helped the families "make sense of their displacement and exile in and after Shanghai." Eleanor Moseman concluded the panel presenting on surrealist art and its relationship to resiliency in postwar West Germany. Her presentation centered on the story of Ellida Schargo von Alten, who moved to Worpswede with her family, lost her husband in the Second World War, helped relaunch the postwar career of her new partner, painter Richard Oelze, and supported her family, all while continuing to write and create her own art. Moseman hoped to negate pre-existing stereotypes ignoring von Alten's own unique achievements in creative practice and in the Worpswede community.

A group of five graduate students then presented in a roundtable on the Thyssen fund, a fellowship for which first and second year graduate students can apply to conduct research in German archives for four to six weeks. Fernanda Sada presented first, introducing her research project on taste, sensing, and commodification in German, Austrian, and Mexican coffeehouses. Utilizing the Thyssen fellowship, Sada conducted research in the Landesarchiv Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Stadtarchiv Leipzig, and the Deutsches Archiv der Kulinarik, discovering documents such as the Walter Poganietz collection of cookbooks that helped her research. Mathew Greenlee then introduced his project titled "Discourses on Honor and Humiliation, 1918-1930," which investigates the impact of the Treaty of Versailles on German self-perception in the interwar period. The Thyssen grant allowed Greenlee to research at the Landesarchiv Duisburg and Landesarchiv Münster, where he discovered egodocuments written by Germans under occupation who grappled with complicated feelings of shame and inferiority. Charlotte Gibs then presented her research on women's violence in and surrounding National Socialist concentration camps. During her funded

research trip to Germany, Gibs sought to understand how femininity and womanhood operated within the framework of Nazism by studying at the Jüdisches Museum Berlin, the Bundesarchiv, and the Landesarchiv, finding sources such as *NS-Frauenschaft* documents to support her research. Sloane Nielsen then remarked on how his Thyssen-funded research fundamentally shifted his understanding of the Third Reich. While investigating life at night in Berlin (expecting the Nazis to have utilized the night to maintain control), Nielsen instead learned that nighttime was actually an "environmental condition that destabilized fascism." Alex Levine concluded the panel discussing his research on trends in Protestant missionary work between 1914 and 1960, a time when missionaries had to renegotiate their identities after the collapse of the formal German Empire. He noted that his time at archives like the Basel Mission Archive and the Evangelisches Zentralarchiv Berlin helped him find sources like maps indicating preaching networks. During the discussion, the panelists were asked whether they could realistically have conducted their research via online archives in the United States. The overall response was that while online archives are beneficial, researching on site in Germany proved transformative for their work and they were grateful for the Thyssen foundation for making their travels possible.

The final session of the conference was a roundtable on teaching titled "Teaching and Learning in Universities under Political and Social Pressure." Grace Buhler, a graduate student and secondary school teacher based in Wyoming, noted how in an area where engineering, agricultural studies, and applied science classes are prioritized and the humanities have had to constantly justify their relevance, history teachers need to be intentional, as they "[cultivate] informed and reflective citizens." She recommended Blooms Taxonomy for those looking to improve their pedagogical practices. Erika Schumacher then discussed her experience teaching classes on the Holocaust, advocating for providing more graduate students

(like herself) with opportunities and support to teach while in school. In her own experience, having high standards for students but making assignments low stakes enables students to thoughtfully engage in class. Paul Lerner then reflected on his own fascism-focused class, noting that students flocked to it, evidently a response to the current political moment. He advised that while "[professors] are trained to provide nuance . . . sometimes students need someone to listen," meaning informed and empathetic teachers are needed now more than ever. Jan Hansen relayed a few pieces of advice for those teaching German history, including emphasizing understudied topics in German history, introducing students to the material of the past (such as social orders embedded in public spaces), and making contemporary connections to historical discussions. Participants in the Q&A generally expressed a common fear for the future of teaching German history but felt solace in being able to discuss such topics surrounded by supportive colleagues.

**Claire Farnsworth**
(University of Colorado Boulder)

# Listening to the Past: Digital Approaches to the History of Sound and Language

Workshop held at the German Historical Institute Washington, March 19–20, 2026, made possible by a grant from the Volkswagen Stiftung. Conveners: Hans Boas (University of Texas–Austin) and Atiba Pertilla (GHI Washington). Participants: Faime Alpagu (University of Vienna), Samuel Backer (University of Maine), Margaret Blevins (University of Texas), Sadie Couture (McGill University), Jana Dunz-Keck (GHI Washington), Stephan Elspaß (University of Salzburg), Laura Fischlhammer (University of Salzburg), Àkos Goscál (University of Pécs), Andreas Greiner (GHI Washington), Katharina Hering (GHI Washington), Mèhèza Kalibani (University of Tübingen), Pratiti Ketoki (University of Minnesota), Ursula Lehmkuhl (University of Trier), Douglas Peach (American Folklife Center, Library of Congress), Ali Raj (Columbia University), Anouk Rehder (University of Basel/University of Strasbourg), Raphael Rössel (GHI Washington), Thomas Schmidt (Linguistic Bits), Josh Shepperd (University of Colorado Boulder), and Joshua Sternfeld.

The "Listening to the Past" workshop brought together scholars from history, linguistics, and the digital humanities to explore the growing importance of audio and audiovisual sources in historical research. Connected to the collaborative project "Let the People of the Past Speak! Turning Migrant Letters of the 19th Century into Speech," the workshop, funded by the Volkswagen Stiftung, reflected a broader scholarly shift toward the history of the senses, in which researchers seek to understand how people in the past experienced and interpreted the world through sound, sight, smell, and other sensory perceptions. Over the past two decades, historians and linguists have increasingly developed

innovative methodologies to study nontraditional sources such as songs, oral histories, and recipes. Linguists, particularly sociolinguists, have used oral recordings and digital analysis of historical texts to trace the development of dialects, language change, and social communication over time. These approaches not only provide insight into linguistic evolution but also reveal the regional and social dynamics that shaped historical communities. Building on these developments, the workshop brought together historians and linguists engaging with sources from North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa, and served as an interdisciplinary workspace for assessing the current state of research and identifying future opportunities for studying and disseminating the sensory dimensions of the past.

The first session focused on linguistic and affective dimensions of historical communication. Laura Fischlhammer examined request strategies in nineteenth-century German correspondence, analyzing primarily emigrant, soldier, and patient letters. Using a micro-analytic approach, she identified a clear predominance of directive ("impositive") forms, such as imperatives and explicit requests, in contrast to the more indirect strategies common in present-day communication. Her findings demonstrate that social distance and writing experience significantly influenced linguistic choices: closer relationships encouraged more direct requests and less experienced writers tended to avoid indirect or mitigated forms. Gender differences were also observed, with male writers showing a slightly greater tendency toward conventional indirect strategies. Faime Alpagu's presentation shifted the focus to audio letters and migration memory, drawing on Kurdish immigrant family recordings from the 1970s. She conceptualized audio letters as more than carriers of information: they function as sites of intergenerational memory, shaped by linguistic, technological, and emotional factors. Alpagu emphasized the "messiness" of listening, particularly in contexts of language loss and poor audio quality, and

argued that recordings gain new meanings through processes of digitization and reinterpretation. Her work highlights how sound mediates absence, intimacy, and memory, especially in transnational family contexts.

The second session addressed sound as both a linguistic and media-historical object. Ákos Gocsál explored Hungarian newsreels from the early 1930s, demonstrating how linguistic metadata can be used to analyze historical speaking styles. He highlighted challenges such as identifying speakers and distinguishing between scripted and spontaneous speech. Newsreels, combining narration with ambient sound, reveal both stylistic conventions—such as the authoritative "voice-of-God" narrator—and moments of authentic interaction. Ali Raj examined "Muslim phonology" in East Pakistan, present-day Bangladesh (1947–1971), focusing on the interplay between Urdu and Bengali. His presentation illustrated how linguistic features became markers of political and religious identity, particularly in the context of state-driven language policies. Pronunciation patterns and naming practices reflected broader tensions between competing nationalisms. Josh Shepherd and Sadie Couture discussed the U.S. Radio Preservation Task Force and the broader issue of representation in audio preservation. They emphasized that sound archives remain uneven and often exclude marginalized voices. Their post-custodial approach, focusing on endangered and privately-held collections, aims to democratize preservation practices while remaining attentive to questions of ownership, access, and institutional responsibility.

The third session explored sound in mass culture and performance. Samuel Backer analyzed blackface minstrelsy and early American popular music, using topic modeling of sheet music collections to trace changing representations of race and romance. He primarily focused on Tin Pan Alley, where he argued the concept of popular song and mass musical culture originated. It emerged out of 1890s and 1900s commercial

music, which was specifically created to appeal to the largest possible audience. During the same time minstrelsy became more widespread and popular throughout various parts of the United States, arguably becoming a steppingstone to popular song. Backer pointed out that minstrelsy was deeply embedded in the structures of commercial publishing and played a key role in shaping mass culture at the turn of the twentieth century. In her presentation, Anouk Rehder focused on sound in contemporary German-language theater, proposing methodological approaches to studying its ephemeral nature. She identified sound as a crucial medium for historical representation, capable of creating "acoustic palimpsests" in which multiple temporal layers overlap. Rehder argued that sound not only conveys historical narratives but also exposes their constructed and ephemeral nature, opening spaces for critical engagement.

The fourth session focused on written sources and digital approaches to the history of sound and language. Ursula Lehmkuhl examined migrant letters as evidence of dialectal variation and non-standardized writing practices. These letters, often written by individuals with little formal education, preserve features of spoken language that are typically absent from standardized texts. Rather than treating orthographic irregularities as errors, Lehmkuhl emphasized their analytical value in capturing phonological and dialectal traits. Importantly, the letters reflect a period before the full standardization of German orthography, resulting in a high degree of variation. This allows researchers to trace how spoken forms were mapped onto writing systems and how individuals negotiated between dialect and emerging standard norms. Digital tools and transcription practices play a crucial role in making these features accessible for systematic analysis. Stephan Elspaß presented the linguistic differences of writers in common letters in the nineteenth century. He noted that fully standardized language is an abstraction rather than a lived reality and that informal texts provide insights into grammatical and lexical variation. By highlighting levels of

informality in correspondence, Elspaß argued these linguistic shifts act as a gateway to a better understanding of regional and socio-economic variations. He stressed that linguistic heterogeneity is inherent to language and that standardized forms represent only a limited perspective.

The fifth session concentrated on the digital reconstruction of historical speech, with a particular focus on nineteenth-century Texas German. The presentations highlighted both the potential and the methodological challenges of using artificial intelligence to transform written sources into audible language. The project "Let the People of the Past Speak," led by Hans Boas and Atiba Pertilla, aims to reconstruct spoken language from historical migrant letters by employing AI-based tools. This work is situated within the broader context of the German diaspora, which produced an extensive corpus of correspondence during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Texas German represents a particularly complex case, as it developed from multiple dialects brought by migrants and evolved in relative isolation in the United States. The variety experienced a significant decline following the First World War due to English-only policies and anti-German sentiment, and it is now spoken by only a small number of elderly individuals. To address the challenges of reconstructing such a variable and non-standardized dialect, the project integrates multiple types of data, including handwritten letters from the nineteenth century, audio recordings from the 1950s, dialect surveys such as the Wenker data, and lexicographical sources.

Thomas Schmidt's presentation emphasized that defining a coherent language variety is inherently difficult because of regional, temporal, and individual variation. The project therefore relies on detailed processes of transcription and mapping, in which written forms are systematically linked to reconstructed phonological representations. The reconstruction process is further supported by the use of text-to-speech

systems and retrieval-based voice conversion technologies, which enable the generation of plausible audio outputs. However, these technologies also present limitations, particularly with regard to the availability and quality of training data. An innovative methodological approach involves the creation of fictional personas who provide a social and biographical context for the reconstructed speech and make the results more tangible. At the same time, this approach underscores the interpretative nature of the reconstruction, as the resulting voices are not direct reproductions of historical speakers but carefully modeled approximations. Margo Blevins highlighted the importance of building a comprehensive knowledge base that includes a wide range of textual genres, such as letters, diaries, and memoirs. These texts are processed using handwriting and optical character recognition technologies and are subsequently corrected manually to ensure accuracy. The inclusion of speakers with varying levels of fluency, ranging from fully fluent individuals to those with partial recall, illustrates the diverse ways in which language is preserved and transmitted.

The sixth session addressed the methodological and ethical complexities of working with historical sound recordings from colonial contexts. The presentations emphasized that listening to the past is not a neutral activity but is shaped by historical power structures and contemporary interpretative frameworks. Pratiti Ketoki introduced the concept of "temporal unease" as a methodological approach to engaging with colonial sound archives. Drawing on recordings of Bengali prisoners of war from the First World War, she illustrated how contemporary listeners encounter these materials differently from the ethnographers who originally produced them. While early recordings were often created within colonial frameworks of knowledge production, present-day researchers may experience a sense of familiarity or emotional connection to the voices. This shift creates a tension between historical context and contemporary interpretation which must be

carefully navigated. Meheza Kalibani further explored the colonial dimensions of sound recordings by analyzing materials produced by German ethnographers. He argued that such recordings are deeply embedded in systems of power, including racial hierarchies, colonial ideologies, and asymmetrical relationships between researchers and recorded subjects. As a result, these recordings cannot be treated as neutral representations of sound but must be analyzed in relation to the conditions of their production. A central contribution of this session was the identification of different forms of silence as analytical categories. Structural silence arises from unequal power relations, while technical silence results from the limitations of recording technologies. Content-related silence reflects the absence of certain topics due to taboos or censorship, and performative silence emerges in moments of interruption or omission during recording. Political silence refers to the absence of explicit resistance or dissent. These forms of silence are not merely gaps in the archive but meaningful elements that shape how recordings can be interpreted.

The workshop demonstrated the richness and complexity of sound as a historical source. Across diverse case studies, participants showed that sound is not merely a medium of preservation but a dynamic site of meaning-making, shaped by social, technological, and political contexts. A recurring theme was the need for interdisciplinary collaboration, combining methods from linguistics, history, digital humanities, and media studies. At the same time, the discussions underscored the importance of ethical reflection, particularly when dealing with sensitive or historically unequal contexts. By bringing together a wide range of perspectives, the workshop successfully highlighted both the opportunities and challenges of "listening to the past." It opened new avenues for research while encouraging scholars to rethink the fundamental nature of their sources and the role of sound in historical inquiry.

**Oleg Arbatski**
(GHI Washington)

# Rebuild or Retreat? Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Climate Migration and Mobility in the Global North

Workshop held at the German Historical Institute Washington, April 23–24, 2026. Conveners: Jana Dunz-Keck (GHI Washington), Sarah Beringer (GHI Washington), Simon Richter (University of Pennsylvania), Andreas Huebner (University of Kiel), Max Gruenig (POCACITO Network / Georgetown University, BMW Center for German and European Studies), and Brendan O'Donnell (POCACITO Network / Heinrich Böll Foundation). Participants: Illya Azaroff (American Institute of Architects), Vidya Balasubramanyam (Coastal States Organization), Hélène Benveniste (Stanford University), William D. Buckingham (Institute for Public Ethnomusicology), Dagomar Degroot (Georgetown University), Nepomuk Dunz (World Bank), Wiwandari Handayani (Diponegoro University), Felicitas Hillmann (Technical University Berlin), Bruce Holsinger (University of Virginia), Andy Horowitz (University of Connecticut), Rizqa Hidayani (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Lindsay Jenkins (Georgetown University), Justin Ángel Knighten (The George Washington University Alliance for a Sustainable Future), Patrick Nederkoorn, Kayly Ober (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), Jacqui Patterson (The Chisholm Legacy Project), Kira Vinke (German Council on Foreign Relations, Center for Climate and Foreign Policy), Koko Warner (IOM Global Data Institute), Claudia Wolff (University of Kiel), and Robert S. Young (Western Carolina University).

This international workshop set out to explore a central question in the age of climate change: who rebuilds, who retreats, and under what conditions? Bringing together scholars and

practitioners from different fields, it examined how contemporary debates about climate migration, adaptation, and managed retreat can be placed in dialogue with longer historical perspectives. While the workshop primarily focused on the Global North, it also included case studies from the Global South in order to highlight both the global dimension of climate migration and the highly local challenges through which it is experienced, negotiated, and governed.

Bruce Holsinger's opening keynote, "The Fiction of Managed Retreat," set the tone by approaching retreat not primarily as a policy problem but as an imaginative, emotional, and ethical one. Drawing on his 2022 novel *The Displacements*, Holsinger reflected on what fiction can reveal about climate mobility, loss, and displacement that bureaucratic language often cannot. Centering on a wealthy family who become internally displaced by catastrophe, the novel challenges the assumption that climate change affects only poor populations or the Global South while showing how privilege shapes the experiences of "temporary relocation," rebuilding, and loss. Managed retreat, Holsinger argued, requires imagining the end of a place before that end has fully arrived, and it is precisely this anticipation of future loss that produces resistance. Fiction can make visible the affective dimensions of retreat, confusion, dependency, grief, and disorientation, in ways policy frameworks cannot. His discussion of the novel's fictional web archive of oral histories from survivors of a Category 6 hurricane also raised a question that resonated throughout the conference: what archives of climate change and climate displacement will remain for future historians, and which stories will be lost?

The first panel, "Voices from the Ground: Lived Experience, Heritage, and Displacement," shifted attention to communities already living with environmental stress. Wiwandari Handayani's case study of coastal sinking cities on the northern coast of Java traced the interwoven effects of sea-level rise,

flooding, land subsidence, and social inequality. Her research underscored how climate change disproportionately affects economically disadvantaged groups and especially women, many of whom remain responsible for households and local livelihoods while men migrate temporarily for work. Yet immobility, she showed, is often not simply a choice but the outcome of limited resources, social ties, and uncertainty elsewhere. Claudia Wolff's comparative study of managed retreat initiatives in Europe similarly emphasized that retreat is rarely a straightforward relocation process. Instead, it tends to be fragmented and reactive, shaped by compensation, governance, timing, trust, and the degree of community involvement. Together, the papers highlighted that adaptation is highly context-specific and that retreat is best understood as a broader social and spatial transformation rather than a merely logistical exercise.

Panel II, "Governing Climate Mobility: Law, Policy, and Political Responsibility," examined the unequal capacities that determine who is able to move, who is forced to stay, and who can recover. Hélène Benveniste argued that mobility and immobility are two sides of the same coin, both structured by unevenly distributed resources and institutional capacity. Her findings suggested that climate change may deepen immobility for the poorest populations, including those effectively trapped in high-risk environments. Kira Vinke emphasized the growing gap between scientific recognition of climate migration and much slower policy responses. Drawing on both the Ahr Valley flood in Germany and case studies from Burkina Faso, she showed that climate shocks interact unevenly with social vulnerability and that habitability under climate change depends on unequal levels of resilience, insurance, and state support. Koko Warner, in turn, explored rebuilding and retreat through the lens of financial instruments. From the Dust Bowl to Hurricane Katrina, she demonstrated that decisions to stay or move are shaped not only by environmental exposure

but also by access to credit, insurance, and household resources. As private insurers increasingly withdraw from high-risk areas, she argued, the growing role of public programs raises pressing questions about governance, responsibility, and long-term capacity.

The third panel, "Mapping Climate Retreat: Geographies of Risk and Relocation," sharpened the conference's comparative and political-economic dimensions. Felicitas Hillmann asked what can be learned from environmental resettlement and relocation concepts in the Global South, comparing examples from Indonesia and Germany. She stressed that migration should be understood as a social normality rather than an exception and cautioned against understanding climate mobility as triggered by sea-level rise alone. Her case studies on Indonesia revealed how communities respond to chronic flooding through a range of in situ adaptation strategies, including raising houses, planting mangroves, gardening, recycling, and community-led improvements, often driven by women and NGOs. At the same time, she highlighted the psychological burden of slow environmental decline and contrasted it with the sudden displacement caused by the 2021 Ahr Valley flood, where bureaucracy complicated access to recovery funds despite large-scale public support. Robert S. Young's presentation on "oceanfront retreat in the USA" offered a stark critique of American coastal adaptation. Rather than pursuing coherent long-term retreat, he argued, the United States continues to subsidize highly unequal and often irrational forms of protection, from beach nourishment to rebuilding in speculative coastal investment zones. His cases from Florida, New Jersey, North Carolina, and South Carolina showed how adaptation funding frequently follows property value and investor interests rather than vulnerability, while buyout programs remain marginal. Together, the panel underscored that retreat is shaped by ownership, infrastructure, race, and political economy.

The session "Making Climate Comedy" opened another perspective on public engagement by asking how the humanities and arts can communicate climate migration to broader audiences. Simon Richter discussed his animated *Poldergeist* project, which translates climate history and adaptation debates into accessible visual narratives, particularly for Dutch audiences facing questions of retreat and sea-level rise. Patrick Nederkoorn reflected on using comedy to confront audiences with their own possible futures as climate migrants in shows such as *Der fliehende Holländer* [The Fleeing Dutchman] and *Die Orangene Gefahr* [The Orange Hazard]. In these performances, he addresses audiences in the Netherlands about their own possible futures as climate refugees, while also engaging audiences in neighboring Germany with the prospect of future "floods" of Dutch and hence "orange" climate migrants. Performing in both the Netherlands and Germany, and in cities as well as smaller towns and villages, Nederkoorn is in contact with highly diverse audiences across different segments of the political and social spectrum. His work also addresses the specific legacy of Dutch colonialism by playing with the audience's potential racial bias, for example by referring to the show's pianist as Indonesian and pointing out that his large family, too, may be forced to seek refuge because of rising sea levels in the not-so-distant future. Together, Richter's and Nederkoorn's contributions suggested that humor and creative media can make difficult and unsettling questions publicly discussable in ways that conventional academic or policy formats often cannot.

Panel IV, "Lessons Learned? Historical and Cultural Perspectives on Climate Migration," returned to longer historical and cultural perspectives. Andy Horowitz examined post-Katrina New Orleans as a case that exposed the political and ethical tensions between rebuilding and retreat. Plans to shrink the city after the storm disproportionately affected predominantly Black neighborhoods met with fierce resistance from local activists defending residents' right to return. Yet the

broader rebuilding that followed did not resolve the underlying tension between the right to return and long-term safety, leaving many communities exposed to future risk. William D. Buckingham offered another case study from Louisiana, this time from coastal communities not far from New Orleans, to highlight a different dimension of climate change: the erosion of cultural life and memory. Focusing on Isleños communities, descendants of Canary Islanders, he argued that environmental degradation and displacement threaten not only livelihoods but also intangible cultural heritage, including language, music, and oral tradition. As part of his involvement in creating a digital archive of songs and oral histories, Buckingham showed how cultural preservation can itself become a form of resilience and political intervention. At the same time, this archive makes it possible to teach and learn from the largely lost history of the Isleños, many of whom were ultimately forced to leave because of climate change.

The conference's final sessions focused more explicitly on outreach, pedagogy, and collaboration. In "Creative Scenarios and Solutions: Designing Adaptive Futures," Dagomar Degroot presented *The Climate Chronicles*, a public-facing platform that combines lectures, videos, teaching materials, and a glossary to make climate history accessible to a broader audience. Drawing on both natural and societal archives, including weather observations and ship logs, Degroot showed how climate history can bridge scientific and humanistic inquiry. The breakout session, facilitated by Jana Dunz-Keck and Sarah Beringer, translated the conference's discussions into more concrete terms. Participants identified research gaps, methodological challenges, and possible collaborative activities, while stressing the need for stronger interdisciplinary exchange, clearer shared vocabularies, and greater attention to inequality, place attachment, and public-facing scholarship. They also used the session to discuss concrete next steps, including which interviews with climate migrants they hoped to conduct next and which kinds

of empirical data still need to be created in order to advance the field.

The closing panel, "Where Do We Go From Here? Research, Policy, and Publics," brought these themes back to questions of practice. Jacqui Patterson drew on her work with front-line communities of color to show how disaster response and buyout programs in the United States can be weaponized against vulnerable populations when residents are excluded from meaningful decision-making. Justin Ángel Knighten highlighted the difficulty of effective disaster response in the face of competing governmental priorities and the disproportionate vulnerability of elderly, low-income, and Indigenous communities. The discussion made clear that climate mobility cannot be addressed through technical planning alone. It requires sustained attention to justice, participation, and the unequal distribution of risk and resources.

Across all panels, the conference demonstrated that climate migration and managed retreat are not simply environmental or policy problems, but also historical, cultural, and ethical ones. Speakers repeatedly showed that decisions to stay, move, rebuild, or retreat are shaped by social inequality, attachment to place, political power, and the stories societies tell about risk, belonging, and the future. The conference thus made a compelling case for combining empirical research with public engagement and for treating climate mobility not as an exceptional crisis at the margins, but as a central question for understanding the present and future of the Global North.

**Oleg Arbatski, Sarah Beringer, and Jana Dunz-Keck**
(GHI Washington)

# Gender and Violence: Power Dynamics and Their Representations, 19th to 21st Centuries

International Conference at the GHI Rome, May 20–22, 2026. Co-sponsored by the GHI Washington, the GHI Rome, the Forschungsstelle Zeitgeschichte in Hamburg, the LWL-Institute for Westphalian Regional History Münster and the German Research Foundation. Conveners: Raphael Rössel (GHI Washington), Daniel Gerster (Forschungsstelle Zeitgeschichte in Hamburg), Claudia Kemper (LWL-Institute for Westphalian Regional History Münster), Petra Terhoeven (GHI Rome). Participants: Mara Keire (University of Oxford), Maren Röger (University of Leipzig / Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe), Alberto Rizzelli (Universities of Padua and Venice Ca' Foscari), Hannah Ahlheim (University of Gießen), Kirsty Campbell (University of the Bundeswehr Munich), Emma Teworte (University of Oxford), Zhanna Popova (International Institute of Social History Amsterdam), Daniel Gerster (Hamburg), Elisabeth Kimmerle (Leibniz Center for Contemporary History Potsdam), Amrei Kienle (University of Tübingen), Catherine Davies (University of Zurich), Lars Döpking (GHI Rome), Lisa Hellriegel (University of Bremen), Emilia Musumeci (University of Teramo), Sabina Mompó Toribio (Autonomous University of Barcelona), Claudia Kemper (LWL-Institute for Westphalian Regional History Münster), Kim Bootsma (Netherlands Defence Academy Breda), Henk de Jong (Netherlands Defence Academy Breda), Louise Earnshaw (University of Leeds), Petra Terhoeven (GHI Rome), Kena Stüwe (Humboldt University of Berlin), Eva Payne (University of Mississippi), Paula Muhr (Brand University of Applied Sciences Hamburg/ Technical University Berlin), Vera Grund (GHI Rome), Ellinor Schweighöfer (University of Frankfurt), Anna Horstmann (University of Bielefeld), Susan Grayzel (Utah State University).

Incidents of violence, their experience and their perception, have been, and remain intertwined with gender relations and norms. Social power relations cannot be explained without taking this connection into account. In recent years, sexualized deepfakes as well as the Pelicot case, for example, have made that fact abundantly clear. To historicize this observation, Raphael Rössel, Daniel Gerster, Claudia Kemper, and Petra Terhoeven convened an international conference at the German Historical Institute in Rome. In their introduction the conveners touched on the historicity of narratives of violence and non-violence, aggression and vulnerability, and of victims and perpetrators to explore representations of gendered violence. "Gender and Violence" traces the trajectory of these narratives from the nineteenth century onwards and analyzes how these narratives have influenced social reality, gender hierarchies, and policymaking.

In her keynote Mara Keire problematized the ambivalent character of the visibility of gendered violence. She analyzed how the increasing availability of instant cameras (Polaroids) from the 1960s onwards made popular, sexualized depictions of domestic suburban life possible. Later, this technology was adopted by urban youths such as Robert Mapplethorpe, who depicted a queer, alternate domesticity. The photos' suggestion of immediacy also allowed activists like Nan Goldin to create photograph series depicting intimate partner violence. While her taking her own picture after her boyfriend had abused her was an active choice, Polaroids later found themselves in the state's hands and made female victims into passive non-agents.

As established by the keynote, intimate partner violence was a major theme of the conference. Maren Röger gave a glimpse into her book project which intends to offer a comprehensive history of sexual violence in Europe's long twentieth century. She argued that the topic had been present in public discourse not just, as previously thought, after the emergence of

the first feminist movements. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, saw intimate partner violence subsumed under general, marital problems. Society often regarded it as a woman's responsibility to fix the problem or at least endure it and it only ever became noteworthy when murder was committed. Focusing on examples from East Central Europe, Röger showed that intimate partner violence was not fully acknowledged in the Soviet sphere, where it was treated as a remnant of bourgeois society. Alberto Rizzelli zoomed in on a case study from late nineteenth-century Italy. Giuseppe Pierantoni's shooting of his ex-girlfriend, the poet Evelina Cattermole, led to a sensational trial. Rizzelli showed how the case veered between debating alleged sexual transgressions by Cattermole as well as Pierantoni's class transgression of courting a woman above his station.

Kirsty Campbell detailed how settler women in German Southwest Africa were expected to reinforce colonial rule through enacting violence in the private sphere. Campbell showed that they used their constrained agency to police racialized boundaries by surveying and punishing colonized laborers. The settler women's "agency," Campbell emphasized in the discussion, must be analyzed in a nuanced way as they only gained it by actively playing into dominant cultural norms of domestic womanhood. Emma Teworte covered three case studies of intimate partner violence from mid-twentieth-century Germany to present general findings about perpetrators' tactics as well as victims' experiences and the role abortion played in this context. In all cases, abusers tried to isolate their victims while law enforcement failed to prosecute them or in some cases even prosecuted a victim. Abortion eased, but in all cases also prolonged the abuse. The extent to which (state) ideology has an influence on women's reaction to sexual violence became even more clear with Zhanna Popova's contribution. Her paper showed that female workers in early twentieth-century Eastern Europe could predominantly address sexual violence in the workplace only as an aspect of

class tension. Perpetrators recorded in trade union sources are usually foremen while incidents involving male workers as perpetrators were seldom explicitly addressed.

Opening the third panel, Elisabeth Kimmerle discussed why the concept of femicide, which did not yet exist when the Pierantoni and Cattermole case went on trial, matters to the crime's perception. She argued that West German feminists' notions around intimate partner violence prevented them from adopting the femicide concept that had been publicly introduced at the 1976 Tribunal on Crimes Against Women. In addition to the fact that the advocates of the femicide concept came from outside of Europe and German feminists therefore perhaps paid them less attention, West German feminists thought of what is considered "femicide" today as simply a continuum of the structural issue of intimate partner violence. Amrei Kienle covered changes in concepts of masculinity in her paper. In 1950s West Germany, riots in Essen and Stuttgart sparked a conversation about "correct" forms of masculinity, leading commentators to condemn the confrontational, militaristic manliness they attributed to the police. Rather, masculinity was discursively linked to taking responsibility for the family and in society. Government bodies had to walk a tightrope between these demands and not losing face when confronted with violent protests. Catherine Davies pointed to state reactions to sexual violence by examining the response from the anti-rape movement in 1970s to 1990s France, West Germany, and the United States. She explained that feminists' cooperation with the state came with strings attached in the United States, meaning that they had to abandon their principle of peer support at times. In contrast, Germany's state funding had little influence on the internal functioning of feminist organizations such as rape crisis centers. While notions of carceral feminism seemed to resonate with these cooperations between activists and state actors, their exact nature must be investigated further, Davies concluded.

The fourth panel considered questions of legal approaches to gendered violence. From the 1920s to the 1950s, women in Germany had to present proof of active resistance to make the case that they were victims of sexualized violence. Being present in the domestic space of a man was interpreted as consent, Lisa Hellriegel explained. In police investigations and court proceedings, women's alleged sexual history was used against them, whereas if a man had had previous sexual relationships with other women this was counted in his favor as it supposedly proved his attractiveness. Such court rulings reflected internalized ideas of sexual violence, making women less likely to sue, Hellriegel explained in the discussion. Emilia Musumeci explored the idea prevalent in nineteenth and twentieth-century Italy that it was impossible for a woman to be raped by a single man; in 1997 commentators still argued that jeans could not be removed against a woman's will. The courts only considered those cases rape where there was evidence of strong resistance, demonstrated by shouting and force: Trials put the onus of proof on the victim. The theme of sexual violence extending into state violence against women was expanded on by Sabina Mompó Toribio, who argued that Francoist Spain's judicial proceedings, influenced by the nineteenth-century penal code, subjected female victims of rape and sexual assault to institutional and symbolic violence. Not only were women's morality and behavior questioned, but the authorities ordered vaginal examinations of victims to investigate if the hymen had been ruptured during or before the rape.

The second day of the conference began with a panel on gendered violence in military contexts and during wartime. Kim Bootsma and Henk De Jong discussed questions of visual material and the methodology to analyze these. Contrary to their own expectations, they hardly found any differences when examining the published pictures by female and male correspondents during the Second World War. Similarities, they stressed, certainly outweigh differences. It remains to be

discussed whether war reporting appeals to specific individuals and pushes gender issues into the background. Bootsma and De Jong hope to find new material in the archives that either reveals a female gaze that was simply not published or the absence of it. Louise Earnshaw analyzed POW testimonies from the First World War to show how ideas of masculinity influenced the acknowledgment of violence suffered. Hans Baumgartner's case illustrates that public and private depictions of being a POW differed widely in acknowledging the erosion of dignity that POWs experienced. Publicly, the prisoners displayed endurance, stoicism,"""""""""" and sacrifice while private documents reveal a picture of humbling circumstances and despair in the face of camp violence. Earnshaw stated that this negotiation of male suffering was visible in many similar sources.

The sixth panel looked at how concepts of bodies and bodily integrity featured in debates of gendered violence, for example in discussions about the pregnant body in pronatalist, left-wing organizations. Kena Stüwe challenged the depiction of Germany's proletarian leagues for birth regulation as emancipatory, showing that they argued for the right to one's body when criticizing mandatory vaccinations, but not when it came to the abortion ban. The organizations argued that women would have no reason not to want to get pregnant if it wasn't for capitalist injustices. Harm of the female body, be it by forced pregnancies or by male violence, was subsumed into a structural critique that rendered both female victims and male violence invisible. Eva Payne presented an unusual perspective by comparing sex work and American Football in the twentieth-century United States as two forms of commercializing the body. The trope of "white slavery" and the view that prostitution can never be consensual led to the popular conviction that the body was the one thing that should not be bought or sold. At the same time, a public debate about the violent and at times deadly sport of American Football and its increasing commercialization unfolded. Payne offered

a strong comparison of sex work and "violence work" and demonstrated why American Football is now one of the biggest sports globally and why prostitution is outlawed in the United States. The invisibility of female victims was a theme expanded on by Paula Muhr, who examined medical accounts of hysteria from the nineteenth century onwards. Nineteenth and early twentieth-century sources implicitly mention sexual or intimate partner violence as causes for women's hysteria. Not only did Freud omit gendered violence from his diagnoses, but the diagnosis of Functional Neurological Disorder, a recent classification of symptoms similar to hysteria, ignores these elements of gender and quantifies and thereby decontextualizes patient's experience of violence.

The seventh and final panel addressed intersecting forms of violence. Ellinor Schweighöfer discussed the 1979 Cleveland Elementary School shooting perpetrated by Brenda Spencer that was referenced in the Boomtown Rats song "I Don't Like Mondays." Schweighöfer discussed the crime's history, its public perception, and its relation to the concept of "running amok." While gender did not explicitly feature in the European discourse immediately after the adoption of this concept, it carried with it ideas of masculinity from its origins in ethno-psychiatrist studies of South-East Asia. Scientific debates class women as victims and men as perpetrators, and therefore descriptions of women perpetrating amok killings adhere to concepts of male violence. Men were said to cope with a perceived loss of prestige with such violent outbursts. Anna Horstmann discussed legacies of gendered violence during wartime. Her project looks at 7,500 German school essays written during the 1950s. In these essays, women are only ever portrayed as victims and have a small range of agency. By contrast, men were described as both perpetrators and victims, with some sources even relating the violence of German soldiers. Despite the methodological challenges posed by this type of source, Horstmann has observed that girls' and boys' essays differed in that the former clearly recounted

occurrences of sexual violence while the latter used more indirect language. The sources suggest that girls became witnesses and felt an obligation to talk about (sexual) violence. Susan Grayzel examined state action in France and the United Kingdom during the Second World War to guarantee the safety of expectant mothers and their continued willingness to give birth. The state accepted that delivery under (threat of) fire was a form of violence and tried to evacuate pregnant women from Paris and London to remote locations. While the state's resources were very limited at the time, the projected population decline meant that women's bodies mattered immensely to both wartime societies. Suggestions to alleviate women's pain during birth were cast aside with the argument that the state was already overtaxed with providing for pregnant women.

In the final discussion, the participants focused on important concepts and methodological questions that came up during the conference: heteronormativity, patriarchy, (mal)adaption and biased sources, transnationality, spatiality, and more. Future research should also include perpetrators of violence in order to fully understand the dynamics of power. More attention needs to be paid to colonial spaces and the Global South since the modern history of gender and violence will invariably remain incomplete without those histories. Overall, the conference highlighted the complex entanglements of gender and violence with its attendant methodological challenges. The thematic breadth and the fruitful comparative discussions of this conference will serve as a great starting point for further, much needed historical work on the topic.

**Matthias Lehnen**
(University of Heidelberg)

# 31st Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar: German History from the 18th Century to the Present

Seminar at University of California at Berkeley, June 15 – June 18, 2026,. Co-Organized by the German Historical Institute Washington and the BMW Center for German and European Studies, Georgetown University. Conveners: Anna von der Goltz (Georgetown University) and Richard F. Wetzell (GHI). Faculty Mentors: Hannah Ahlheim (University of Gießen), Steven Press (Stanford University), and Isabel Richter (GHI Pacific Office). Participants: Viola Alianov-Rautenberg (GHI Pacific Office), Florian Balbiani (University of Erfurt), Rebecca Epstein-Boley (University of Chicago), Daniel Funke (University of Stuttgart), Johann Gerlieb (University of Leipzig), Jahn Lukas Hermann (University of Mainz), Amy Kerner (GHI Pacific Office), Margaret McCool (Indiana University), Nina Neuscheler (ZZF/University of Potsdam), Benjamin Pfannes (University of Potsdam), Alexandra Raptis (University of Hamburg), Richard Rashid-Smith (York University), Hayley C. Roy (Emory University), Teresa Schenk (Humboldt University), Erika Schumacher (University of California, Davis), Simon Specht (ZZF/Humboldt University).

The 31st Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar in German History brought together doctoral students from universities in the U.S., Germany, and Canada working on dissertations on eighteenth- to twentieth-century German history. The first panel of the seminar, chaired by Anna von der Goltz, began with opening remarks by Rebecca Epstein-Boley and Benjamin Pfannes. Florian Balbiani and Alexandra Raptis presented papers that both dealt with the history of knowledge and German colonialism. Balbiani examined the appropriation, research, and publication of Swahili manuscripts in the 1930s, focusing on two European collectors and their East

African collaborators. He demonstrated that, although this collaboration was built on colonial infrastructures, it was not solely shaped by the Europeans. It was also based on the knowledge practices, networks, interests, and business models of Africans. Raptis stressed that collecting was a crucial part of constructing and teaching science in the nineteenth century. In German South West Africa, German teachers and their students were encouraged to participate in colonial collection networks and interact with their environment in specific ways. Much of the discussion focused on violence in the various forms of colonial knowledge production. Did it always involve "slow violence"? Participants also discussed the agency of African individuals and how to best avoid Eurocentrism when writing the history of European scientists in Africa.

The second panel, chaired by Viola Alianov-Rautenberg, dealt with gender history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Daniel Funke and Simon Specht introduced the papers. Using personal websites as an example, Nina Neuscheler analyzed how the web became structured along gender lines from the 1990s onward. She argued that the women who ran these websites, on the one hand, reproduced "traditional" social roles and, on the other hand, negotiated the expansion of women's roles around the turn of the millennium. These "women's websites"—which anticipated today's social media—also illustrate how the boundary between the private and public spheres shifted online. Teresa Schenk argued that it is impossible to understand the proliferation of naturopathic sanatoriums around 1900 without the promise of an "alternative" treatment experience that was both sensory and emotional. The senses and emotions were a central component not only of the holistic understanding of health, but also of the German naturopathic movement's strategies for fostering a sense of community and distinguishing itself from others. This became particularly clear in the promise of a "gentler" treatment of so-called women's ailments at naturopathic sanatoriums. The ambivalence of modernity emerged as an overarching theme

in both papers, stimulating a lively discussion that touched on the multivalent political dimensions of these phenomena.

Margaret McCool and Johann Gerlieb introduced the papers of the third panel, which was chaired by Richard Wetzell. Richard Rashid-Smith and Jahn Lukas Hermann examined the history of Germans in the world from the perspective of the different ways the two German states employed "soft power" during the Cold War. Rashid-Smith demonstrated that, from 1964 to 1989, the trade unions and youth movements of Tanzania and East Germany made sincere efforts to foster grassroots solidarity between their respective populations. Though these relationships were often imperfect and impeded by larger Cold War developments, they illuminate the alternative relationships pursued by the socialist bloc and postcolonial states. Jahn Lukas Hermann examined the cultural policy dimension of West Germany's early foreign policy. Regarding West German cultural policy toward Poland (and Eastern Europe), relevant memoranda from the Foreign Office revealed that, in addition to trade, the primary means by which the Comecon states were sought to be influenced was through culture. However, despite being the subject of public debate for the first time, the establishment of a West German Goethe Institut was not realized in the 1960s.

On Wednesday, the first panel was chaired by Isabel Richter and introduced by Hayley Roy and Erika Lynn Schumacher. Johann Gerlieb and Daniel Funke presented papers on new diplomatic history in the mid-nineteenth century, both of which were explicitly informed by social science theory. Gerlieb's paper reexamined the cause of the War of 1866. He argued that the political language used at the end of the German Confederation was pivotal. Using the example of a Saxon diplomat in Vienna, Gerlieb reconstructed how deliberate use of political language and once-powerful paradigms were employed in an attempt to prevent a war foreshadowed in the language before it broke out. Funke offered a new perspective on the political relationship between Wilhelm I and Bismarck

— a true "power couple" — by applying the systems-theoretical analytical tool of the "power-intimate partnership." Funke argued that this tool revealed how and under what conditions power inferiority or superiority existed between the monarch and his chancellor. The most important case study was Austrian Silesia in 1866. The discussion focused on the promises and perils of interdisciplinary work, the role of theory in historical research, and the role of language in history and communicating research findings.

Wednesday's second panel, chaired by Hannah Ahlheim and expertly introduced and contextualized by Alexandra Raptis and Florian Balbiani turned the participants' focus to the role of utopias in history. Simon Specht provided a detailed analysis of the "progress" discourse across the twentieth century. Much historical research assumes that the 1970s debates on environmental issues and limits to growth in the Federal Republic of Germany signaled the demise of the focus on "progress." However, closer examination reveals that the concept of progress was rarely rejected entirely. More common were patterns of reinterpretation, reappropriation, and reification of the original concept. Margaret McCool examined human rights discourse in East Germany. She argued that, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the East German Committee for Human Rights (KMR) cemented its position in East Germany and abroad as the face of a socialist human rights campaign. This campaign elicited responses from individuals in various roles related to international human rights. The discussion centered on the tension between utopian thinking and pragmatism, as well as between political aspirations and rhetoric and the realities on the ground.

On Thursday, the first panel featured Teresa Schenk and Jahn Lukas Hermann as commentators and Steven Press as chair. The panel adopted a cultural history lens and took participants back into the late eighteenth and late nineteenth century. Erika Lynn Schumacher analyzed a specific space: Weimar's Park an der Ilm, which was constructed by Duke Carl

August beginning in the 1770s. Despite its combination of conflicting styles and visions of the past, the park presented a unifying narrative of recovering past grandeur to overcome recent decline and welcome a golden age. This narrative perpetuated the myth of Classical Weimar, which maintained traditional rule while promising to educate the public through an open connection with art and nature. Rebecca Epstein-Boley examined itinerant musicians from Bohemian Preßnitz and Bavarian Westpfalz. She argued that these musicians helped create a globalized European entertainment music culture between 1840 and 1914. Contemporaries described musical itinerancy as a problem of moral, social, and musical degradation, treating music itself as the source of itinerant labor's social meaning. The discussion touched on the delineation of "high" and "low" culture and emphasized comparative perspectives on German environmental history.

The seminar's final panel, introduced by Richard Rashid-Smith and Nina Neuscheler and chaired by Amy Kerner, focused on German history from an international perspective during two distinct periods. Hayley Roy examined the transformation of nursing at the turn of the twentieth century in Zanzibar and German East Africa. She contended that histories of nursing in the German context often contrast the trajectory of German nursing with that of other Western nation-states, where nursing is often a higher-status profession than in Germany. She argued that efforts toward nursing standardization cannot be understood without considering the specific needs of colonial doctors and officials. She demonstrated that Zanzibar was a pivotal location for German nurses, as their work was observed and scrutinized by an international audience. Benjamin Pfannes examined U.S. foreign and security policy from the 1980s onward, arguing that it significantly influenced the intensification of Franco-German cooperation during this period. He challenged interpretations identifying the 1986 Reykjavik Conference as the pivotal moment of closer Franco-German military

cooperation. Instead, he demonstrated that the security policy rapprochement between Paris and Bonn began in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

During the concluding discussion of the three-day seminar, participants reflected on what the topics and approaches revealed about broader trends in German history and the discipline as a whole.

**Anna von der Goltz**
(Georgetown University)

# GHI News

# New Transnational Research Group "Imperial Legacies"

Together with the German Historical Institute Rome and the German Center for Art History Paris, the German Historical Institute Washington successfully proposed a new research hub, which was approved by the Max Weber Foundation's Board of Trustees at its 56th meeting on May 8, 2026. The new Transnational Research Group will be based in Santiago de Chile.

This research group, *Imperial Legacies. Conflicts over Norms, Power, and Images in the Post-Imperial Societies of Latin America (1820–2020)*, will examine how colonial and imperial pasts continue to shape political cultures, legal systems, international relations, and visual orders in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. Bringing together scholars from Latin America and Europe, the project combines perspectives from history, legal history, and art history.

The research group will investigate how imperial concepts of order persisted after independence and were reinterpreted or contested in debates over citizenship, law, political legitimacy, international influence, and social belonging from the nineteenth century to the present. Emphasis will be placed on the intersection of history, legal history, and art history, treating power, norms, and images as interconnected fields through which post-imperial orders continue to be negotiated. Ulrike von Hirschhausen, the director of the German Historical Institutes in Washington/Berkeley will serve as the spokesperson of this new group.

With its new office in Santiago, the Max Weber Foundation is strengthening its presence in Latin America. Chile offers a strategically important location for the research group, combining academic excellence with strong opportunities for regional cooperation and exchange across Latin America.

"The MWS Board of Trustees sees this new research group not only as a promising example of inter-institutional collaboration, but also as the basis for a possible medium-term establishment of an institute in Latin America — a continent of major forward-looking importance for German historical research and social sciences," stated Ute Frevert, President of the Max Weber Foundation.

Transnational Research Groups allow one or more institutes of the Max Weber Foundation to carry out fixed-term research projects with clearly defined research questions in cooperation with international partners. Projects may have a regional, thematic, or disciplinary focus, and they are intended to contribute to the strategic development of the foundation. Previous Transnational Research Groups operated in Delhi (2013–2017), Dakar (2017–2021), and Rome/Warsaw (2022–2026).

The Max Weber Foundation promotes research in history, cultural studies, economics, and the social sciences in select host countries around the world. To this end, it maintains 11 institutes as well as research groups and offices internationally. The foundation is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Research, Technology and Space.

Inquiries about the new research group should be directed to Dr. Sarah Beringer, head of strategy and communications at the German Historical Institute Washington.

## 2026 Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize

The 2026 Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize, which is awarded annually by the Friends of the German Historical Institute for the best dissertation in German history completed at a North American university, was awarded to Lane B. Baker for his dissertation "From Encounter to Expulsion: Romani Immigrants in the Holy Roman Empire, 1417-1498," completed at Stanford University in 2025 under the supervision of Rowan Dorin.

The Stern Prize Committee comprised Molly Loberg (Chair, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo), Amy Leonard (Georgetown University), and Michelle Kahn (University of Richmond). The committee's prize citation (*laudatio*) read as follows:

"The committee commends Dr. Lane Baker for his truly breathtaking dissertation, "From Encounter to Expulsion: Romani Immigrants in the Holy Roman Empire, 1417-1498." With painstaking care, Baker excavates traces of one of the last great migrations in the European Middle Ages and explores the dynamic interplay between arriving and receiving communities. He reveals a world filled with contingencies and unknowns, one in which xenophobia and expulsion were not the first, nor the only responses to newcomers.

The reader simply cannot miss the scope and depth of Baker's scholarship. The bibliography spans eighty pages and includes nearly seventy archives, libraries, and museums across multiple countries. Yet, this list merely hints at the dissertation's methodological range and precision. Baker's close reading of texts is inspired. Rather than relying only on printed editions of chronicles, Baker sought out the archival originals, identified alterations, and recovered omissions. In doing so, he revealed these sources as richer and more layered than previously imagined. Baker authenticates letters of safe conduct by cross-referencing them with royal itineraries. Through a combination of medieval evidence and shrewd detective work, Baker pinpoints overlapping locations and dates within a matter of miles and days. From imperial charters to municipal account books, he extracts administrative categories and ways of thinking at all levels of governance. Baker charts the evolution of literary and visual tropes in popular dramas, tapestries, and even medical manuscripts. Baker's deep dive into German dialects is both erudite and eminently readable. And the findings are profoundly important. By drawing on a vast collection of sources and his remarkable linguistic skills, Baker ascertains the presence and the agency of Romani immigrants in a time before the more familiar historical terms for identifying them had emerged or solidified.

At the same time, Baker shows remarkable sensitivity to the limits of his archive, teasing out the voices of the Roma, even within these oftentimes hostile depictions. His sources are mostly by non-Romani observers—municipal authorities, chroniclers, and ecclesiastical institutions. He is explicit that he does not, and cannot, claim to recover Romani voices in any direct sense. Rather than treating this as a problem to be solved, Baker makes it central to his analysis. The categories through which Romani people were understood—pilgrims, guests, imposters—are themselves products of these documentary frameworks. What we see, then, is not simply Romani experience, but the processes by which that experience was interpreted, constrained, and ultimately transformed into grounds for exclusion.

The dissertation is equally impressive in its command of the broader historiography. Baker engages with multiple bodies of scholarship—on late medieval migration, charity, urban regulation, the history of marginality, and modern views of the Roma—without ever losing sight of his central argument. The significance of Baker's findings resonated deeply with each committee member, across the centuries and diverse themes of our expertise. We are delighted that this dissertation will inspire and guide research in many fields for years to come."

## In Memoriam Konrad Jarausch

The German Historical Institute Washington as well as the entire community of scholars of German history, lost a great colleague and patron when Konrad Hugo Jarausch, Lurcy Professor Emeritus of European History at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, accidentally drowned on September 1, 2026, while swimming near his home. A towering figure in the discipline for more than half a century, Jarausch helped guide the growth of the GHI in Washington from its birth and strove to unify the historical profession and historical discipline in Germany after 1990. Together with German-born, U.S.-based historians of an older generation, such as Fritz Stern and Georg Iggers, Jarausch always centered the

transatlantic interaction of and exchange between historians of Germany in Germany and the United States. And at the same time, he was a perennial leader in the methodological and technological changes that have shaped historical research and dissemination. Finally, in manifold ways he always prioritized support for the work of the Institute, as part of his limitless personal generosity, energy, and kindness.

Born in Magdeburg in August 1941, Jarausch never met his father, who died in Russia. Together with his mother, Jarausch navigated the disruption of defeat in the western zones of occupied Germany seeking shelter and employment in a time of scarcity. Yet in his affecting memoir, The Burden of German History, Jarausch chronicled a childhood full of happy memories. But by the time he finished the Arndt Gymnasium in Krefeld, he had become discontent with the constraints of Adenauer-era West Germany and decided to spend a gap year in the United States before returning to attend university. Instead, he remained in the United States to pursue his higher education, first at the University of Wyoming in Laramie and then taking his Ph.D. in German history at the University of Wisconsin, a dynamic center for young scholars of German history. Directed by Theodore Hamerow, his dissertation, and his first book, was an interpretation of German responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War by way of a life of Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg. Jarausch then began his distinguished career at the University of Missouri, Columbia, before he was called to the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in 1983 to become Lurcy Professor of European Civilization. Chapel Hill thereafter became his home base while he spent the rest of his career teaching and mentoring a cohort of outstanding historians of Germany, founding or building institutions near and far, and writing an enormous body of outstanding historical work as he continued to explore the burden of German history, always in a double historical and personal sense.

Jarausch's scholarship embodies the evolution of methodological and historiographical trends in the field over the course of his career. Moving from the political and diplomatic history that typified the era in which he wrote his

dissertation, he mastered quantitative social history, producing impressive monographs on German university students and German professions, while pausing to write a still-relevant guide to quantitative methods for historians. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the "rush to German unity," Jarausch focused intently on capturing the history of the growth of an under-appreciated civil society in the German Democratic Republic and the national and international politics of the rapid unification in 1990, producing important analyses and documentary collections for teaching and research. That work led Jarausch deep into memory studies, as he wrote incisive works on memory culture in both the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic, and the continued burden of German history in the newly-unified, or still-unifying, Berlin republic. Still active as a scholar at the end of his life, Jarausch had again shifted the focus of his research to a full-throated celebration of the project of European integration, even as the strains imposed by resurgent, and sometimes xenophobic, populist nationalism seemed to have sapped its appeal among thought-leaders in Europe and the United States.

This kind of advocacy and activism showed in Jarausch's institution-founding and -building as well. Jarausch was delighted when the German Historical Institute Washington opened its doors in 1987 and immediately became deeply involved in supporting it in any fashion that he could. Along with Gerald D. Feldman, Vernon L. Lidtke, Mack Walker, and Geoffrey Giles, in 1990-91 Jarausch founded the tax-exempt nonprofit corporation Friends of the German Historical Institute Washington, whose purpose is to support the work of scholarly production and transatlantic exchange that is the mission of the GHI. The founders raised an endowment, coordinated closely with successive Directors, helped to finance important projects such as German History in Documents and Images (in which Jarausch co-edited the most recent period in a first and second digital edition), sponsored an annual Gerald D. Feldman Memorial Lecture, and an annual Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize competition for the best dissertation in German history completed in the prior year at a North American university. Jarausch served as the inaugu-

ral President of the Friends of the GHI and happily delivered the 2024 Feldman lecture.

The Friends of the GHI was not the only important historical institution that Jarausch helped build and nurture. In 1993, he co-founded the Center for European Studies in the Department of History at UNC. Between 1998 and 2006 he served as co-director of the Leibniz-Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung in Potsdam, where he helped promote a new history of the German Democratic Republic and built ties to the United States. And closer to home, he was instrumental in working with others to create in 2006 the North Carolina German Studies Seminar and Workshop Series, which since 2019 has awarded the annual Konrad H. Jarausch Essay Prize for Advanced Graduate Students in Central European History. Always an engaged citizen in the discipline and profession, he served as President of the German Studies Association and of the Central European History Society.

But Jarausch's most indelible and endearing trait was his warmth and generosity. Shy and reserved, he nonetheless reached out to younger scholars, far beyond the ranks of his own students, to encourage them in their work, to make keen and insightful suggestions, and to include them in important networking opportunities at conferences and symposia. He was always quick to include these younger scholars in his cherished outdoor activities, and any who found themselves in Berlin when he was in Potsdam found themselves frequently invited to long Sunday treks through the fields, forests, and villages of the Fläming. The profession will miss him, the German Historical Institute mourns his passing, and the Friends of the GHI will always appreciate him as a foundational figure in its work.

Kenneth F. Ledford
Case Western Reserve University
President, Friends of the GHI, 2019-2026

# GHI Publications

### Publications of the German Historical Institute

Bradley Nichols. *Making Germans: Race, Empire, and Assimilation in Nazi Europe*. Cambridge University Press, 2026.

### Transatlantische Historische Studien

Julia Lange. *Identity Trouble: Deutschamerikanische Identitätspolitiken und die Erinnerung an den Holocaust*. Franz Steiner Verlag, 2026.

### Studies in German History

Claudia Kreklau. *The Making of Modern Eating: How the German Middle Class Forged the Way We Eat, 1780–1910*. Berghahn Books, 2026.

Stephan H. Lindner. *A History of the I.G. Farben Trial: Armament, Exploitation, Auschwitz*. Berghahn Books, 2025.

# Staff Changes

**Christiane Hoth de Olano** joined the GHI Washington as a Research Fellow in June 2026. Christiane is a historian of Latin America and the Caribbean specializing in environmental history and the history of knowledge and science. She received her Ph.D. from KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt in 2024 and has held academic appointments at the University of Bern and UniDistance Suisse in Brig, Switzerland. Prior to joining the German Historical Institute, she was affiliated with the Centre for Empire Studies (CES) at the University of Münster. Her first monograph, *Frontier Medicine: Practices, Knowledge, and Science in Southern Chile, 1883–1939*, is forthcoming with Brill. The book builds on her doctoral dissertation, for which she received the Maximiliana Kocher Prize. Her publications address missionary encounters, exhibitions, and collections, drawing on approaches from mate-

rial culture studies and the history of photography. Her current postdoctoral research at the German Historical Institute explores the environmental history of water in the imperial Caribbean during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

# GHI Fellowships and Internships

As part of the GHI Washington's mission to promote junior scholars in both Europe and North America, the institute awards a number of fellowships each year to serve several different purposes and provide opportunities for different types of scholars. Through its home in Washington as well as its regional office in Berkeley, the GHI is well-positioned to connect scholars to major universities within the U.S as well as provide proximity to world-renowned research facilities. The fellowships are an important means for furthering international dialogue, particularly between European and North American academics.

### Short-term Visiting Fellowships at the GHI

The GHI awards short-term research fellowships to European and North American doctoral students as well as postdoctoral scholars to pursue research projects that draw upon primary sources principally located in North America. We are particularly interested in research projects that fit into the following fields:

- German and European history
- The history of German-American relations
- The role of Germany and the USA in international relations
- North American and Pan American history, including Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean (European doctoral and postdoctoral scholars only)

The proposed research projects should make use of historical methods and engage with the relevant historiography. We especially invite applications from doctoral students and postdoctoral scholars who currently have no funding from

their home institutions. The fellowships are usually granted for periods of one to four months but, in exceptional cases and depending on the availability of funds, they can be extended by one month.

The GHI has two deadlines each year for the fellowships: April and October. Questions about applying or for the fellowship program in general should be directed to fellowships @ghi-dc.org.

### Long-term Visiting Fellowships at the GHI

The German Historical Institute Washington (GHI) is now accepting applications for its long-term visiting fellow program. The fellowships will be granted for a period of 6 to 12 months in the following thematic areas:

- German, European & Jewish History
- Transatlantic History & History of the Americas
- History of Migration & Mobility
- History of Empires and their Legacies

These thematic areas are intentionally broad and aligned with the GHI's broad research fields. The GHI welcomes applications from scholars whose research addresses these fields, especially those who explore them from transnational or global perspectives. We are open to projects that employ digital history methods or engage with questions of digital scholarship in innovative ways.

Applicants should explain how their project fits within one or more of the thematic areas and why the GHI provides a suitable environment for pursuing their research. Proposed projects should employ historical methods and engage substantively with relevant historiography.

The fellowship will preferably start in September 2026. The Fellow is expected to be in residence in Washington, DC, and participate in GHI activities and events. The Fellow will have the opportunity to make use of the resources in the Washington metropolitan area, including the Library of Congress

and the National Archives, while pursuing his or her own research. Travel within the U.S. to work in archives and libraries will be possible. Candidates doing original research for a dissertation or a second book project will be given preference.

The fellowship is open to both doctoral and postdoctoral scholars based in North America and Europe. The monthly stipend is €2,400 for doctoral students and €3,400 for postdoctoral scholars. Fellows will receive a subsidy toward their round-trip travel to Washington, DC.

Applicants should be based at (or recent graduates of) a North American or European university or research institute. Postdoctoral scholars should be untenured. For doctoral students applying, ABD status (or the equivalent) is required prior to commencing the fellowship. For postdoctoral scholars applying, the preference is for projects that are designed for a "second book" (Habilitation or pre-tenure equivalent).

Questions about applying or for the fellowship program in general should be directed to fellowships@ghi-dc.org.

### Binational Visiting Tandem Program at the GHI's Pacific Office in Berkeley

The German Historical Institute Washington (GHI) and the Institute of European Studies at the University of California, Berkeley (IES), are seeking applications for a Binational Visiting Fellow Tandem for postdoctoral researchers with at least one degree from a German university (German tandem partners) and at least one degree from a North American University (North American tandem partners). The 24-month fellowship program contributes to the research foci on German, European, and global history at the GHI's Pacific Office in Berkeley.

The GHI's fellowship program promotes cutting-edge research in history and related disciplines and international exchange among scholars. For this purpose, the GHI and IES invite two postdoctoral scholars, one from a German and one from a North American university, to collaborate as a

binational research tandem during a 24-month fellowship. The research programs of the GHI's Pacific Office center on German and European, as well as global and transregional history, including global Germany and the Pacific world. The visiting tandem program is designed for postdoctoral historians with an outstanding academic record. For applicants based in Germany, a good working knowledge of English is essential. Tandems can be formed on the basis of shared methodological approaches, shared regional expertise, or linked topics. Applicants may apply individually and be matched by the GHI or apply together with their potential tandem partner. Preference will also be given to candidates doing original research for a new book project.

The visiting fellow tandem program at the GHI's Pacific Office in Berkeley presents an excellent opportunity for scholars to develop their expertise by collaborating closely, to work with additional resources, and to make connections with others in their fields. The successful applicants will be in residence at the GHI's Pacific Office for a 24-month fellowship, starting September 1, 2026. They will be expected to conduct their research and fully participate in the academic life at the GHI's Pacific Office. Further, in collaboration with the GHI's staff there, they will organize a workshop in their field of expertise at an institution of higher education of their choice on the North American West Coast. Fellows will have access to the UC Berkeley academic and social facilities (library, databases, email address, office space at the IES, etc.) and are offered the opportunity to make use of further resources in the greater Bay Area–including the Magnes Collection, the Hoover Institution Library and Archives, the Archives in Stanford, and the National Archives/Pacific Region in San Bruno–while pursuing their research.

A member institution of the Max Weber Foundation, the German Historical Institute Washington is a distinguished independent research institute that fosters inter- and transdisciplinary research with a transatlantic focus. The GHI's Pacific Office is located at UC Berkeley's Institute of European Studies. It organizes a series of programs and scholarly events aimed at facilitating cooperation and dialogue

among researchers in the humanities and social sciences based in North America and Germany, as well as in Latin America and the Pacific world.

Funding will be provided for a 24-month stay at the GHI's Pacific Office/ UC Berkeley. The monthly stipend ranges from $5,957 to $6,889, depending on the recipient's level of seniority. In addition, fellowship recipients will receive an allowance for their round-trip economy airfare. The GHI regrets that it is unable to provide accommodation for its fellows.

Eligibility Requirements

- PhD completed before the start date of the fellowship; German tandem partners should have completed one of their academic degrees at a German university (such as a B.A., an M.A., or a doctorate); North American tandem partners should have completed one of their academic degrees at a Canadian, Mexican, or US University (such as a B.A., an M.A., or a doctorate)
- current affiliation with a North American or European research institution or university
- ability to remain in residence in Berkeley for the duration of the fellowship

### Gerda Henkel Fellowship in Digital History

With the generous support of the Gerda Henkel Foundation, the German Historical Institute (GHI) and the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at the George Mason University (RRCHNM) invite applications from postdoctoral scholars and advanced doctoral students based in Europe for a 12-month fellowship in digital history

This fellowship aims to connect scholars from Europe to digital history in the United States. The fellowship is intended to support a junior scholar working in the field of digital history or a junior scholar with less experience in digital history but interested in learning new research methods. We welcome applications from scholars who are seeking seed-funding in order to develop an innovative idea into a new project and/or

funding proposal as well as from scholars who wish to pursue fully-fledged research projects.

The fellowship provides a unique opportunity for the recipient to work on his or her research project at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media (RRCHNM) at George Mason University (GMU), one of the most established centers for digital history in the United States with strengths in K-12 educational materials for history, historical podcasting, and data-driven histories. The fellow will be in residence for one year. While at the Center, the fellow will also have the opportunity to consult with the RRCHNM's faculty and staff in order to develop his or her project, join teams working on projects in development at RRCHNM, and to sit in on graduate digital history classes at GMU.

The fellow is also expected to work with the GHI on a regular basis. She/he will participate in the Institute's scholarly activities and its digital projects. Moreover, the fellow will have the opportunity to connect with other North American centers for digital history or digital humanities and to participate in local digital history initiatives in the Washington, DC region. Depending on funding and approval, the fellow might also have the chance, after completing the fellowship, to be participate in the annual GHI Conference on Digital Humanities and Digital History, which is jointly convened with the Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History ($C^2$DH).

Starting September 1, 2025, the successful applicant will be in residence at the RRCHNM and will also participate in GHI activities, events, and digital projects. Funding will be provided for a 12-month stay for postdoctoral scholars as well as advanced doctoral students, who are currently affiliated with a European research institution. The monthly stipend will be €3,400 for postdoctoral scholars or €2,400 for doctoral students. The fellow will also receive reimbursement for his or her round-trip economy airfare to the U.S. and a grant for travel to other North American institutions.

For more information, please contact: fellowships@ghi-dc.org at the GHI or Dr. Lincoln Mullen lmullen@gmu.edu at the RRCHNM.

## Fritz-Thyssen-Pre-Dissertation Fellowship

For Doctoral Students in German and European History at North-American West Coast Universities

The program will grant up to seven summer fellowships of up to 3,500 Euro each to graduate students in German History at North American Universities located west of the Mississippi River and the western provinces of Canada. This funding will give doctoral students with a focus on German history the opportunity to work for four to six weeks in German archives and libraries to review material for their dissertation. In individual cases outstanding projects can also be funded, which are not primarily concerned with German History but require a research stay in German archives.

This preparatory research is intended to make it easier for doctoral candidates to write a detailed description of their project which in turn can improve their chances of success if they choose to apply for a longer-term research fellowship in Germany in the future. Questions about applying or about the fellowship program in general should be directed to Heike Friedman (friedman@ghi-dc.org).

This program is generously funded by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation.

Eligibility Requirements

- Enrollment in a graduate program at a university in western North America (west of the Mississippi River);
- Being in the early stage of the dissertation project (no more than two years after the project has begun);
- Sufficient proficiency in German, particularly strong reading skills;
- Existing or planned connections with universities or non-university research institutions in Germany;
- A well-developed research and archival plan.

# GHI Fellowships at the Horner Library

Together with the German Society of Pennsylvania, the German Historical Institute will sponsor two to four fellowships of up to four weeks for research at the Joseph Horner Memorial Library in Philadelphia between April 1 and Sept. 30, 2026.

The fellowship will be awarded to PhD and M.A. students and advanced scholars without restrictions in research fields or geographical provenance for research using materials at the Horner Library. Opportunities for research at other special collections in Philadelphia may be available.

In 2026, the United States will be celebrating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. This will shine a special light on Philadelphia, the city where it was written and from where it was sent to the 13 states whose representatives had met here, as well as out into the world. In honor of this anniversary, research topics on themes related to the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress, and the early days of the republic would be especially welcome for 2026, though this will not be a requirement.

The Joseph Horner Memorial Library houses 50,000 volumes and is the largest German American collection in the US outside of a university. The collection offers rich materials from the 17th to the 20th centuries to historians of German American immigration culture, especially in Pennsylvania, as well as historians of German fictional and non-fictional literature, including travel and popular literature.

Questions about applying or for the fellowship program in general should be directed to fellowships@ghi-dc.org.

# GHI Internship Program

The German Historical Institute (GHI) Internship Program gives students of history, political science, public relations, and public administration at German and U.S. universities an opportunity to gain experience at a scholarly research institute. The program is very flexible: the GHI will try to accommodate accepted interns' interests, abilities, and goals. Students of history and political science can apply for a research-oriented internship, in which they assist current research projects, help with our publications and assist in the preparation and hosting of conferences. They also have the chance to engage with our digital projects and create content for the institute's academic blogs based on their individual research projects, mentored by the editorial team.

Students interested in public relations and "Wissenschaftskommunikation" can apply for an internship with our communications and press team, where they can assist in writing communication materials and be involved in the planning of public events. Students in the fields of public administration or public management from Germany are eligible to apply for an internship in the administration of the GHI. These interns will have the chance to gain experience in different fields, such as finances and auditing, human resources (including related legal issues). Ideally, all candidates should have prior experience in the respective fields.

For the on-site internships, a three-month stay is preferred. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. However, for planning purposes we recommend that applicants interested in coming to Washington the following year submit their applications by July 31 of the previous year. Preference is given to applicants who have completed a BA degree or equivalent qualification. Applicants who require a visa must be enrolled at a university at the time of their internship. Candidates who have already completed an internship at the Max Weber Foundation or one of its institutes are not eligible to receive an internship.

German students applying for an internship are strongly advised to familiarize themselves with the American visa requirements beforehand. Information is available on the website of the American Embassy in Berlin. The GHI cooperates with an organization authorized by the State Department to issue the relevant papers to obtain visas. Applicants accepted into the internship program will receive further information on the procedure in their acceptance letters.

Applications should include a cover letter, a CV, a letter of recommendation from a professor or academic advisor, and copies of university degrees/transcripts. Applicants may write in either English or German; we recommend that they use the language in which they are most proficient. Please send applications electronically in one (1) PDF file via email to internships@ghi-dc.org. The letter of recommendation should be sent directly by your academic advisor or professor. For further information please contact Markus Borchertmeyer (borchertmeyer@ghi-dc.org).

# GHI Fellowship Recipients, 2026-2027

### Long-term Visiting Fellowships

Victoria Bergbauer (Emory University)
Carceral Mobilities: Punishment, Displacement, and the Atlantic World

Jonathan Kaplan (University of Verona)
Political Solidarity: The Cold War and East Germany's Jewish Diplomacy

Paige Newhouse (University of Michigan)
Revisiting the Right to Stay: Vietnamese Migrants in Contemporary Germany

### Binational Visiting Tandem Program at the GHI's Pacific Office in Berkeley

Aron Brouwer (University of Pennsylvania)
Empire and Counterrevolutionary Internationalism in a Post-Imperial World, 1945–1991

Derek Hattemer (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin)
Insuring Global Markets: Insurance Privatization in the Age of Globalization, 1980–2008

### Short-term Doctoral Research Fellowships

Alexander Brackebusch (University of Munich)
Morality Amendments: Strategic Constitutional Reform Proposals and Collaboration with the Christian Right, 1960–1989 (Working Title)

Caroline Bühler (University of Munich)
Women Making Money: Labor Unions and Feminized Professions in U.S. Economic Culture (1960–1990)

Meike Katzek (University of Erfurt)
Political Epistemologies of the Science Wars in the 1990s

Mariia Kovalchuk (University of Munich)
Imagining Ukraine in Times of Cold War: Ukrainian Exiles and the CIA in the Secret Anti-Soviet Alliance

Fritz Kusch (University of Bremen)
The Defenders. The Popularist Attempt to Uphold Protectionism in the United States, ca. 1880–1930

Alexandra Schenke (University of Munich)
Let's Make America Great Again: The "Pro-Hero" Image Makers of the Reagan Era

Leon Wallich (University of Linz)
Transnational Networks of Anti-Imperialism: The Philippine Revolution as a global event

### Short-term Postdoctoral Research Fellowships

Joachim Bürkle (University of Cologne)
Rechtskatholizismus und katholisches Intellektuellenmilieu am Ende der Weimarer Republik

Susanne Quitmann (Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect, University of Munich)
Tree Time: (Re-)Thinking Modern Temporalities through Trees

Benedikt Sepp (University of Munich)
Entscheidende Millimeter. Kaliberstandardisierungen im langen 20. Jahrhundert

### Horner Library Fellows

Tyler Carrington (Cornell College)
Tales from the German Midwest: Crime, Courts, and Contested Cultural Identity

Olga Sparschuh (University of Vienna)
Travelling Titles: Imported Doctorates and Educational Protectionism in a Globalizing World, 1870s–1920s

Julius Wilm (University of Leipzig)
Selective Allures of Fascism: Pennsylvania German American Elites and the Third Reich

### Exploratory Fellowships - Between Democracy and Dictatorship

Dalila Munoz Lira (Freie Universität Berlin)
Gender Mandates in Tension during the Popular Unity, the Dictatorship, and Exile, 1970–1990

Javier Sadarangani Leiva (University of Bern)
The Limits of Democracy: Emotions, Morality and Authoritarian Alternatives in the Writings of Tancredo Pinochet LeBrun in Chile and in Leopoldo Lugones in Argentina, 1900–1930

Daniela Silva Jara (Freie Universität Berlin)
Objects, Nation, and Democracy: The Formation of the Collections of the National Historical Museum of Chile and Their Narratives (20th Century)

# Research Seminar and Colloquium, Spring 2026

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| **February 26** | **Colloquium**<br>**Lauranne Wolfe (Boston University)**<br>"Our Children Are Special": Claiming Unaccompanied Children with Disabilities<br><br>**Simon Schulz (Universität Heidelberg)**<br>Soviet "Weather War" or American "Fog of Lies"? Cold War Weather Modification across the Iron Curtain |
| **March 11** | **Research Seminar**<br>**George Derek Musgrove (University of Maryland)**<br>"You don't have to demonstrate . . .": Black Political Incorporation, 1965–76 |
| **March 30** | **Washington-Area German History Seminar**<br>**Javier Samper Vendrell (University of Pennsylvania)**<br>Who's Afraid of the Bogeyman? Gender, Sexuality, and the Politics of Childhood in the AfD |
| **April 29** | **Research Seminar**<br>**Alice Weinreb (Loyola University Chicago)**<br>Originary Wound: Hilde Bruch, Jewish Trauma, and the Invention of Eating Disorders |
| **May 6** | **Research Seminar**<br>**Marie Huber (National Air and Space Museum)**<br>The Problem of Flying: African Airlines and Global Connectivity |

**June 10**

**Research Seminar**
**Ofer Ashkenazi (University of Wisconsin-Madison)**
Paying Attention at the End of the World: The Collapse of the Weimar Republic in Photographs of German Jews

# Calendar of Events, 2026-2027

**2026**

**September 15** **The "New Jews": (Post-)Soviet Migration and the Reinvention of Jewishness in Germany since 1990**
Gerda Henkel Lecture Tour at UC Berkeley | Speaker: Frank Bösch (Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam)

**September 17** **Die Freiheit der Zugelassenen: Wissenschaftsfreiheit zwischen Moral und Moralisierung**
Keynote Lecture at Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften | Speaker: Caspar Hirschi (Universität St. Gallen)

**September 17-18** **The Moralization of Science Conference at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna** (Austria) | Conveners: Daniel Brewing, Moritz Fischer, Elke Seefried (RWTH Aachen), Alexander Bogner (Austrian Academy of Sciences), Axel Jansen (GHI Washington)

**September 22** **Scripting Silence: Animals Political and Unpolitical in Charlotte Beradt's Dreamscape**
Lecture at UC Berkeley | Speaker: Ariel Tang (Stanford University)

**September 26** **Dealing with Dictatorships: German Interactions with Worldwide Autocracies since the 1950s**
Gerda Henkel Lecture Tour at the Annual Meeting for the German Studies Association | Speaker: Frank Bösch (Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam)

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| **September 29** | **Dealing with Dictatorships: German Interactions with Worldwide Autocracies since the 1950s**<br>Gerda Henkel Lecture Tour at UCLA \| Speaker: Frank Bösch (Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam) |
| **October 5** | **German-American Encounters – 250 Years of Shared Histories**<br>Panel Discussion at United Church \| Panelists: Katja Sipple (German-American Heritage Foundation), Shirley Gindler-Price (Founding President, Black German Cultural Society), and Maria Sturm (German Society of Pennsylvania); Moderator: Raphael Rössel (GHI Washington) |
| **October 8** | **Reckoning with the Past in Germany and the United States: The Case for Thinking Comparatively about Reparative Justice**<br>2026 Feldman Lecture at Alumni House Berkeley<br>Speaker: Rita Chin (University of Michigan) |
| **October 8-9** | **Flight, Exile and Emigration in Germany's Age of Extremes: Biographical Perspectives**<br>International workshop at Georgetown University \| Conveners: Frank Biess (UC San Diego), Anna von der Goltz (Georgetown University), Simone Lässig (TU Braunschweig) and Richard Wetzell (GHI Washington) |
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Workshop at the University of California, Berkeley | Conveners: Sheer Ganor (University of Minnesota), Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (University of California, Berkeley), Stefan Laffin (University of California, Berkeley), and Isabel Richter (German Historical Institute Washington | Pacific Office Berkeley), in conjunction with the Townsend Working Group in German History and Culture

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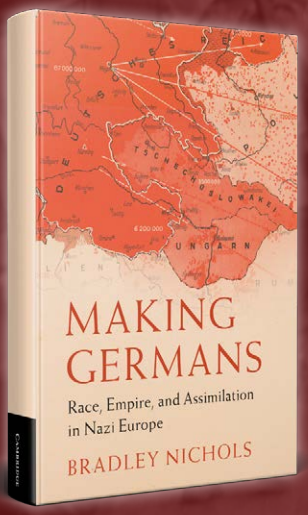
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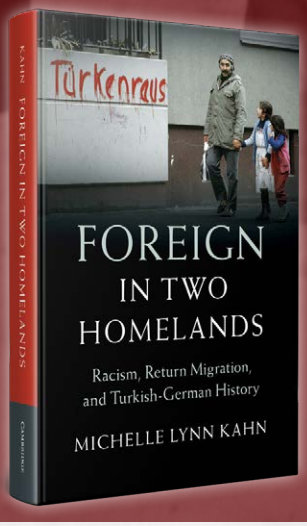
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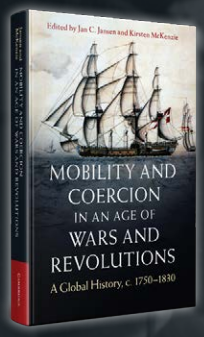
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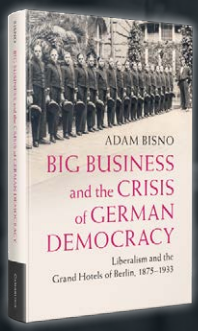

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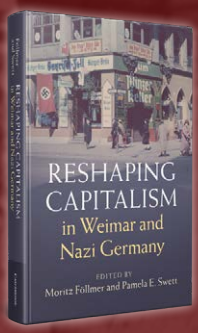



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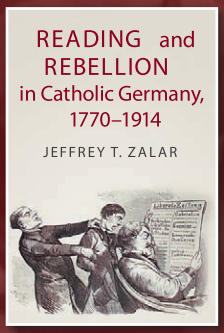
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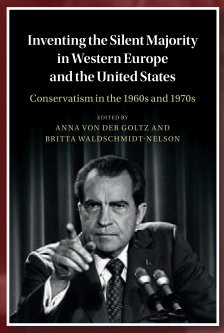
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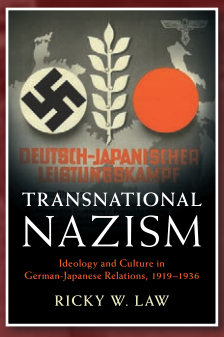



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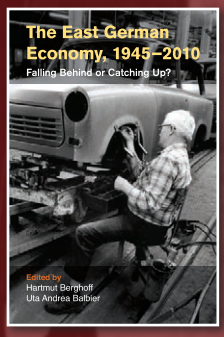
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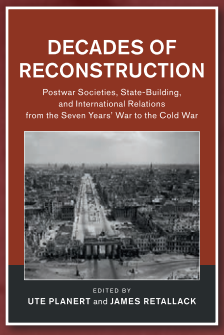

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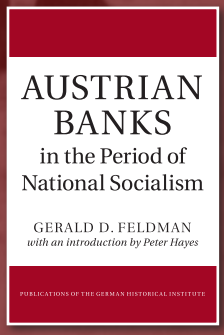

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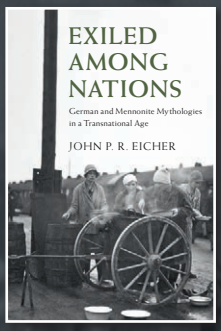
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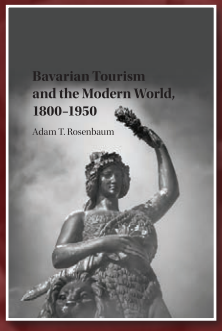
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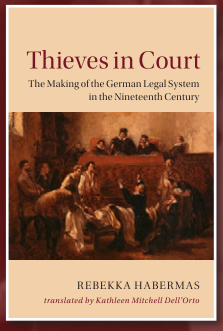

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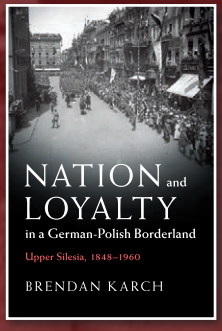
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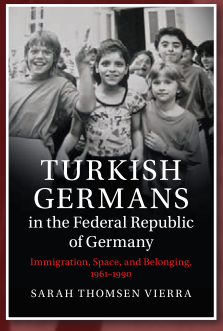
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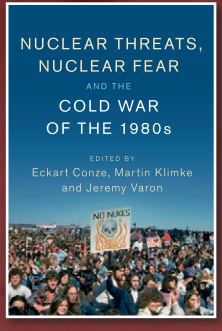
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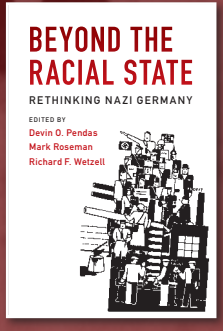

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*Winner of the Franz Steiner Prize in Transatlantic History 2025.*

### The author

Nadine Klopfer is a lecturer in North American Cultural History at LMU Munich. Her research focuses on the cultural history of North America from a transatlantic perspective, with particular interests in material culture, consumer culture, and urban history.

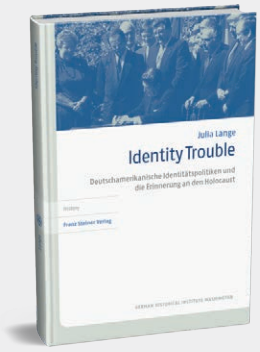
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What happens to German American constructions of identity and the past when Holocaust remembrance gains prominence in U.S. collective memory? With what (counter)narratives do German American organizations respond to the "Americanization of the Holocaust"? *Identity Trouble* analyzes the dynamics between German American identity politics and the U.S. Holocaust discourse since the Ethnic Revival. Various German American actors sought to advance their interests under the banner of German America even after World War II. They competed for discursive authority, but also formed alliances. The Holocaust served German American advocates as a projection screen for prejudices and fears of a loss of standing.




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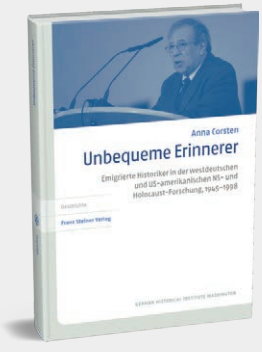
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What motivates people to give to those in need? Founded in 1945, the Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe (CARE) allowed U.S. citizens to send humanitarian aid to friends and family overseas. Germany was the most popular destination, exceeding all other European destinations combined. Maximilian Klose examines why Americans were more likely to give aid to their defeated enemies than to their allies or to the victims of Nazi aggression. Embedding case studies in social, cultural and political debates of the early postwar era, the study finds these acts were more than altruistic. Donors used humanitarianism for their own purposes. Humanitarianism was as much about the donors as about the recipient.




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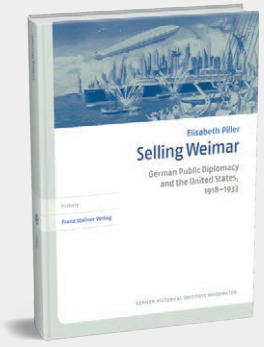
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Elisabeth Piller, winner of the *Franz Steiner Preis für Transatlantische Geschichte 2019*, explores these questions not from an economic, but from a cultural perspective.




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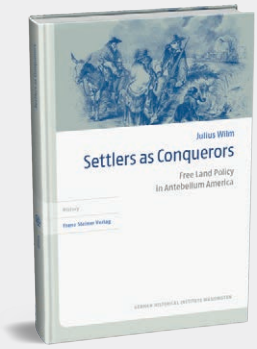
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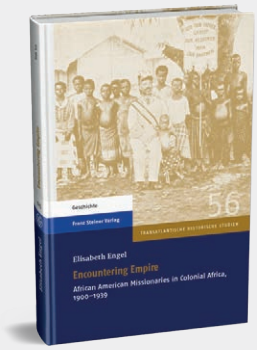
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