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**Patriarchy and the Gendered Division of Labour in the
Muttipolitik Era (1972-1989) of the
German Democratic Republic**

by

Michelle Reinhardt

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of Political Science
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
April 1999

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**THE PATRIARCHAL GENDERED DIVISION OF LABOUR AS A STRUCTURAL
PROBLEM IN INDUSTRIALIZED SOCIETY:
THE CASE STUDY OF THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC**

submitted by

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts

Chair, Department of Political Science

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Abstract

The German Democratic Republic (DDR) attracted world-wide attention because of its far reaching and extensive set of legislation, *Muttipolitik* ("mommy policies or politics") designed to help women combine motherhood with paid employment. The hypothesis: "*Muttipolitik* promoted gender equality in the DDR" is tested by using the concept of gendered division of labour (GDL). Three GDL indicators -- the feminization and devaluation of reproductive work, the exploitation of women's reproductive work and male domination of productive work are applied to the period of *Muttipolitik* (1972-1989).

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Acceptance form will eventually go here

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Introduction

In 1972, the German Democratic Republic (DDR) expanded its *Frauenpolitik* (“women’s politics or policies”). These new policies, which lasted until the demise of the DDR, came to be known as *Muttipolitik* (“mommy politics or policies”) because they were specifically directed at working mothers. The DDR invested millions into *Muttipolitik*. It was probably the most expensive set of social policies in its history. It is little wonder that *Muttipolitik* caught the eye of Western observers. Few nations in history have appeared to devote so many resources to the Woman Question as the DDR did.

Muttipolitik entailed more affirmative action for women in the work place, education and representation in political institutions. It also included the expansion of state subsidized daycare; provided financial support for single mothers; and announced a shorter work week and one paid housework day off from work per month. These policies made it easier for women to combine motherhood and a full-time job.

Many feminists in the West praised the DDR’s legislation and claimed that East German women were more emancipated than their Western women because of it. By 1989, 91% of East German women of working age were employed.¹ DDR women were highly

¹This is the most cited figure from *Frauenreport 90*, the most authoritative compilation of official DDR statistics on women. Please see Maria Beyer and Gunnar Winkler (Ed.) *Frauenreport 90. Ministerium für die Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern*, (Berlin: Verlag Die Wirtschaft, 1990).

The official DDR statistic on female labour force participation differs from statistics of women’s labour force participation in the West because it includes those

educated and qualified and were entering traditionally male-dominated professions at a greater rate than in the West. Furthermore, East German women were financially independent. This is reflected by the fact that the DDR had one of the highest numbers of single mothers in the world. In 1988, 32% of all births and 70% of all first-births were to unmarried women.² No woman in East German had to remain in an unhappy marriage in order to support her children. This financial independence seems to have made DDR women more self-confident and assertive. Rosenberg commented in 1985 that:

A generation of independent, self-reliant women has developed in the DDR today. The general feeling among the women I interviewed in a series of visits to the DDR in 1980, 1982, and 1984, was critical but fairly optimistic that they will continue to improve their status.³

The East German regime encouraged the interest in the status of its women by distributing publications in Western countries, claiming that gender equality had been achieved in the DDR. For example, a 1983 publication states:

women on official child care leave or in occupational training. See Sabine Schenk, "Gleichstellungspolitik und geschlechtsspezifische Arbeitsteilung: Erwerbstätige Frauen in der DDR," in eds Hela Both and Johanna Kootz, ***Gleichstellungspolitik in der DDR und der BRD***, (Berlin: Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Frauenforschung, Humboldt University, 1990) pp. 45-60.

Based on an INFAS (Institut für Angewandte Sozialwissenschaft) sample survey, Fremerey and Kupierschmid estimate 86% of women aged 16-60 were in the labour force in 1990: 71% employed, 7% on educational or child care leave and 8% unemployed. See Ulrike Fremerey and Peter Kupierschmid, ***Materialien zur Frauenpolitik: Frauen in den neuen Bundesländern im Prozeß der deutschen Einigung***, (Bonn: Bundesministerium für Frauen und Jugend, 1991).

²Jutta Gysi, "Frauen in Partnerschaft und Familie," in ***Wir wollen mehr als ein Vaterland: DDR-Frauen im Aufbruch*** in: (Ed.s) Gilinde Schwarz and Christine Zenner, Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rohwohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1990, 99-101.

³D. Rosenberg, "Emancipation of Women in Fact and Fiction," pp. 360-1.

In the DDR equal rights are a reality. Over 76% of all women in our country have completed some form of vocational training. Half of the DDR's work force is female. All women are guaranteed the right to work, and almost 90% make use of that right.⁴

The initial assessment of the situation of DDR women in the 1980s appears to support the argument that *Muttipolitik* improved the status of women. This paper will test this hypothesis, namely that “*Muttipolitik* promoted gender equality in the DDR”.

In the first chapter, the current controversy in the West surrounding “legislation of difference” (which includes affirmative action) is examined. It argues that the DDR's *Muttipolitik* is relevant to this debate. The phrase “gender equality” is made operational by examining the concept of “gendered division of labour” (GDL). It will be argued that GDL is a good gauge of the degree of gender inequality (patriarchy) in post-WWII industrial society because GDL encompasses two fundamental components of the concept of patriarchy: exploitation and the exclusion of women from decision-making power. Three indicators of GDL are then developed: firstly, reproductive labour is feminized and devalued; secondly, female reproductive labour is exploited; and thirdly, productive labour is male-dominated. If a society displays these three GDL indicators, then gender inequality is present. The GDL indicators can be examined over the period of time beginning when gender-specific legislation is introduced in order to determine whether the legislation had an effect on the GDL. If the GDL indicators remain unchanged during this period of time, it means that the GDL was unchanged. This in turns signifies that gender inequality was not promoted.

⁴*Equal Opportunity for Women? A Report From the German Democratic Republic*, Berlin, Panorama DDR, 1983, p. 7.

In Chapter Two, the GDL indicators are applied to the DDR during the period of *Muttipolitik*, 1972-1989. The results of this study show the GDL was unchanged during this period. This means that gender equality was not promoted by *Muttipolitik*. The original hypothesis must then be reworked to state: “*Muttipolitik* did not promote gender equality in the DDR”. The implications of this hypothesis are discussed in the conclusion.

Chapter 1

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The hypothesis “*Muttipolitik* promoted gender equality in the DDR” will be placed in the context of the current debate in the West over whether group-specific legislation helps or hurts equality. It will be argued that the DDR’s *Muttipolitik* is relevant to this debate.

In order to develop a methodology to test whether *Muttipolitik* promoted gender equality, “gender equality” or “patriarchy” must be narrowed into more precise and meaningful terms. Patriarchy is examined through the lens of the concept of GDL. GDL encompasses two fundamental aspects of patriarchy: the exploitation of women and exclusion of women from decision-making power. It will be argued that for this reason, the concept of GDL is a good “gauge” of patriarchy in post WWII industrial society. If GDL exists in a society, then so does gender inequality or patriarchy.

Three indicators of GDL are developed. Firstly, reproductive labour is feminized and devalued. Gender socialization in the family, the schools and official discourse reinforces the GDL by transmitting the assumption that reproductive work is the natural activity of women. This is manifested in the fact that housework is mostly done by women, that women voluntarily do devalued reproductive work, and the development of different interests in boys and girls. Female reproductive work is unpaid and devalued in comparison to male-dominated productive labour in the economy.

Secondly, female reproductive work is exploited. Because it is seen as “not real work” it is discounted and made invisible, yet it is central to functioning of society. Women’s role as reproducers is instrumentalized by the State in order to realize its interests which limits women’s reproductive autonomy. Women are confined to a limited reproductive role in the family or are forced to endure a double burden if they work outside the home. As a result of the double burden, women have significantly less free time than men and more work-related stress and health problems compared to men.

Thirdly, productive labour is male-dominated. There is discrimination in the workplace against women. Because of their role in the family, women are perceived as unreliable workers. Overall, women lack political and economic power in relation to men. There are lower percentage of female political representatives, and women in leader/managerial positions in comparison to men; women’s income, level of education and training is lower compared to men.

Does Group-Specific Legislation Promote Equality?

There has been much controversy in the last three decades in the West regarding gender-specific legislation and other group-specific legislation. The most widely known type of such legislation is “affirmative action”. We can find insight into how beneficial or harmful such legislation is to the group in question, and society at large, by examining the DDR’s *Frauenpolitik* (“women’s policies”). The most far-reaching and intensive phase of *Frauenpolitik* was *Muttipolitik* (“mommy policies”) which was implemented in 1972 and directed primarily at mothers or potential mothers. It remained in effect until the demise of

the DDR in 1989, lasting 17 years altogether.

Muttipolitik was legislation in a state socialist society, but it is very relevant to current debates in Western countries regarding group-specific legislation. Some social movements, theorists and politicians have argued very convincingly that group-specific legislation could remedy institutional oppression. *Muttipolitik* was a form of group-specific, namely, gender-specific legislation, very similar in form to what many Western feminists have long been in favour of: for example, the DDR's extensive provision of subsidized daycare, the official policy of full employment for women, affirmative action for women in education, training, political bodies and the workplace, and more flexible work-time for women. When *Muttipolitik* was dismantled after German reunification, Western feminists, including those in the former Federal Republic of Germany, commented that women were the "losers of reunification".

It can be argued, however, that unlike the intention of existing and proposed gender-specific legislation in the West, the primary purpose of *Muttipolitik*, was not necessarily intended to redress gender inequality (despite all the official claims) and this weakens the comparison to similar Western legislation. As will be discussed in the next chapter, *Muttipolitik* was unequivocally pro-natalist legislation. It encouraged women to have more children at a younger age with minimal interruption to their paid productive labour. The *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED)⁵, was concerned about the country's plummeting birthrate but still needed women's productive labour. On the other hand, *Muttipolitik* also promoted the education and training of women and facilitated their entry

⁵"The Socialist Unity Party", the DDR's ruling party.

into male-dominated professions. It included extremely liberal policies toward reproduction: contraception and abortion were free on demand. These education and reproduction policies did not directly or obviously promote the interests of the DDR economy and appear to have been motivated, at least in some part, by a genuine commitment to gender equality.

Whatever the ends of the DDR's *Multipolitik* were, many Western feminists praised its means, the use of legislation, directed specifically at women, as a distinct group with special needs from men. Iris Marion Young outlines the argument for a conception of justice that acknowledges, affirms and attends to difference. Central to her insight are the concepts of oppression and dominance. She argues that the idea of impartiality, a cornerstone of most theories of justice, represses difference because it prescribes that all moral situations must be treated according to the same rules. She argues, however, that in many cases acknowledgement and affirmation of group difference must override the principle of equal treatment in order to promote a certain group or groups full participation in society and "to reduce actual or potential oppression".⁶ Current theories of justice cause the oppression of certain social groups because they claim to be universal and timeless. They claim to assume a point of view that stands outside the social context, independent of actual social institutions and relations and serve as a reliable and objective normative standard for evaluating those institutions and relations. But it is not possible to have a truly universal theory of justice because its premises implicitly derive from the experience of people in a particular society and a particular time. The desire to be universal puts pressure on all to converge to whatever

⁶Marion Iris Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 1990) p. 11.

the standard of “normal” is, usually defined by the groups that are most powerful in society and gives rise to a tendency to ignore and repress difference. This feeds “cultural imperialism by allowing the particular experience and perspective of privileged groups to parade as universal”.⁷ Because a theory of justice cannot escape being influenced by its social context, it “implicitly conflates moral reflection with scientific knowledge”.⁸

On the other hand, argues Young, a realistic theory of justice admits its inherent bias and does not strive to be universal: “Reflective discourse about justice... should not pose as knowledge in the mode of seeing or observing, where the knower is initiator and master of the known”.⁹ Furthermore, continues Young, even if it were hypothetically possible for a theory of justice to be truly universal, objective and independent of social institutions and behaviour, then it would be too abstract to be a useful anyway.¹⁰

For Young, a theory of justice must take into consideration the “unintended social sources of oppression under judgement” and seek an “institutional remedy” for these “cultural sources of oppression”.¹¹ When one realizes that much of oppression results from “unconscious aversions and stereotypes and from the assumption that the point of view of the privileged is neutral, affirmative action programmes are a reasonable resolution”.¹²

⁷Ibid, p. 10.

⁸Ibid, p. 4.

⁹Ibid, p. 4.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 4.

¹¹Ibid, p. 11.

¹²Ibid, p. 12.

She acknowledges the fear of her opponents that such differential treatment will stigmatize and cause a backlash against the very groups it is trying to help. But this only happens, she says, if: “we continue to understand difference as opposition — identifying equality with sameness and difference with deviance or devaluation”.¹³

There is a contradiction in Young’s argument. To treat oppressed groups differently — even if the intention is to promote their equality — reinforces the assumption that they are not “normal”. Laws may arguably never be truly universal because human thought is inevitably shaped by the social context as Young says; but it does not follow from this, that the goal to be objective, timeless, gender-free, race-free, and so on, should be abandoned. Ideally, a more universal theory of justice would encompass and transcend all human difference. The assumption would be that everyone is different and that is normal.

Young’s theory of justice however envisions a world in which difference must always be an issue in order to fight the oppressors. This betrays a fear and a hopelessness that there will always be a privileged group (namely, white, property-owning males) that imposes its vision of normality on the rest of society.

Young argues that the way to best serve justice is to use the concept of oppression. For her, the concept of oppression has five aspects: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence and it happens to “social groups”. Young defines social groups as:

ways that people identify themselves and others, which lead them to associate with some people more than others, and to treat others as different. Groups are identified in relation to one another. Their existence is fluid and often

¹³Ibid, p. 11.

shifting, but nevertheless real.¹⁴

“Woman”, however, is too broad a category to be defined as a “social group”. Women do not necessarily identify with, associate with, agree with or befriend other women more than they do with men. Even among feminists, there can be strong identity differences, for example. Black feminists have criticized white, middle-class feminism.

The Concept of Patriarchy

In order to develop a method for measuring “gender inequality”, this broad term must be made meaningful. A discussion of the concept of patriarchy is helpful here. There is some disagreement among feminists about the meaning or usefulness of the concept of patriarchy. Its original meaning “rule of the fathers” is generally not taken literally. Patriarchy usually means something along the lines of a system where men rule over women, or male domination.

Mies’ use of the term “exploitation”, which differs from the Marxist term “exploitation”, is helpful here. Exploitation for Marxists has been a concept reserved for economic exploitation of the wage-worker: the appropriation of surplus labour by capitalists. Mies argues, instead, that the concept of “exploitation” is much broader than that: “in the last analysis it means that somebody gains something by robbing someone else or is living at the expense of someone else”.¹⁵ This definition of exploitation is appropriate for this paper because it denotes a systems of rewards and benefits for certain behaviour and explains

¹⁴Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁵M. Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, p. 36.

motives. It has more explanatory power than attributing patriarchy to some intangible innate aggressiveness of men. Patriarchy then can be defined as a social system in which women are exploited *as women* and in which, because of this exploitation, women do not have the same degree of autonomy as men.

It is surprising how many thinkers both inside and outside gender theory misunderstand the term patriarchy. Yuval-Davis expresses a widespread criticism that “contrary to what the notion of patriarchy suggests, women are not usually just passive recipients and non-participants in the determination of gender relations”.¹⁶ But the term patriarchy does not suggest that at all. What makes the problem of patriarchy so bewildering is that women *are* active agents in the production and reproduction of patriarchal relations. Patriarchy is a complex social systems that rarely needs to resort to brute force in order to function. This is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of patriarchy: how women willingly participate in their own exploitation and oppression.

A fundamental aspect of patriarchy can be said to be women’s systematic exclusion from decision making power through history. As Grant remarks: “to charge that women have nothing to do with politics sounds disturbingly plausible,”¹⁷ or as Cynthia Enloe asks, “where are the women?!”¹⁸ This makes “women’s standpoint theory” so compelling. A popular explanation is that until now women have not yet “entered” the realm of politics, because

¹⁶Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Culture*, p. 8.

¹⁷R. Grant, “Sources of Gender Bias in International Relations Theory”, p.8.

¹⁸This was the subversive question in her book, *Bananas, Bases and Beaches: Making Feminist Sense of IR*, Pandora, London, 1990.

they have been discriminated against and/or overlooked, but now women are “entering” the realm of politics along with other traditionally oppressed groups as human society becomes more enlightened about human rights and equality. This reasoning betrays an ignorance of the fundamental importance of gender relations to the functioning of society and puts the female gender in the same add-on category as other traditionally oppressed groups. Gender theory reveals how political society has been too often a masculine construction based deliberately on the exclusion of the female gender. For this reason, it is not possible to explain political society without examining women’s deliberate and systematic exclusion from it.

The fact that women have been excluded from history is often met with a simple response, just permit women to enter the public world and the gender inequality will instantly be resolved. The gender perspective reveals however that the construction of the private and public spheres are related, and “women’s full and equal membership in public life is impossible without changes in the domestic sphere”,¹⁹ i.e., that patriarchy in the public sphere cannot be rectified without changing relations in the family sphere first.

Feminists are concerned with the relation between the “forgotten” family sphere and what has been traditionally considered “political” society. They argue that the ‘separate’ worlds of the family and political life are actually interrelated, connected by a patriarchal structure”.²⁰ The public world cannot be understood in isolation from the private world. These conjugal, personal, familial relations are politically charged and the public world of

¹⁹Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, p. 129.

²⁰Ibid, p.132.

politics cannot be understood in isolation from this private sphere; hence the famous feminist slogan “the personal is political”. As Yuval-Davis says:

The most important contribution of feminism to social theory has been the recognition that power relations operate within primary social relations as well as within the more impersonal secondary social relations of the civil and political domains.²¹

State socialism and capitalism (and now post-communism) have ignore women reproductive work in the family because it is assumed to politically irrelevant: therefore “most contemporary controversy between liberal and socialists about the private and the public is not about the patriarchal division between natural and civil”.²² The debate between capitalists and socialists is about what they consider “political” society. The natural sphere of the family which is the locus for women’s oppression is ‘forgotten’ in their debate.²³ This is even though the “political world” depends on exploitation of women’s labour in family: Pateman states that both liberals and Marxists:

always assume that it is possible to understand economic activity in abstraction from domestic life. It is ‘forgotten’ that the worker, invariably taken to be a man, can appear ready for work and concentrate on his work free from the everyday demands of providing food, washing and clean, and care of the children, only because these tasks are performed unpaid by his wife. And if she is also a paid worker she works a further shift at these ‘natural’ activities.²⁴

Firestone makes the argument that men “confine” women to reproduction (nature) and this

²¹Ibid, p. 80.

²²C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 12.

²³Ibid, p. 12.

²⁴Pateman, *The Disorder of Women*, p. 132.

frees them up 'for the business of the world'.²⁵

Reproductive labour however is the precondition of all productive labour, so while it is devalued it is also tapped into and exploited. Italian feminist Maria-Rosa Dalla Costa was the first feminist to challenge the orthodox Marxist notion that housework was 'unproductive'. The productivity of the housewife is the precondition for the productivity for the (male) wage labourer. The family is the social factory where 'commodity' labour power is produced. The housewife and her labour therefore are not outside surplus value production, but constitute the very foundation upon which this process can get started.²⁶

Mies argues that "without the ongoing subsistence production of non-wage labourers (mainly women), wage labour would not be 'productive'". Capitalist production comprises both the exploitation of wage labour and the *superexploitation* of non-wage labourers. The exploitation of wage labour is the appropriation by the capitalists of the time and labour over above the 'necessary' labour time, the surplus labour. Exploitation of wage labourers cannot exist without the *superexploitation* of non-wage labourers: the time and labour necessary for people's own survival or subsistence production.²⁷

The GDL in industrial society is functional because it allows more labour power to be channelled into the production sphere in order to keep up militarily, technologically and economically with other (industrialized) nations. The ideology of technology is inherent in

²⁵S. Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (W. Morrow, New York, 1970) p. 232.

²⁶Maria-Rosa Dalla Costa, "The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community" (1972) cited in M. Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, p. 31.

²⁷ M. Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, p.48

industrialism: the endless pursuit of technological innovation in order to “progress” from the state of nature. Men are relieved of equal responsibility of parenting and housework and this frees them up for more intensive productive labour: Pettman argues that women’s unpaid labour in the home is a subsidy to men and the state.²⁸

From this analysis of the concept, it can be seen the exploitation of women and the exclusion of women from decision-making power are fundamental components of patriarchy. As is demonstrated by indicators below, these components of patriarchy are central to the concept of the GDL. This means that the GDL can be used as a gauge of gender inequality in a particular society in a particular time.

The Indicators of GDL

1. Reproductive Labour is Feminized and Devalued

Under industrialism, paid labour in the public sphere became the only valued “work”. This overvaluation of productivity is relatively new. “It was not until late in the nineteenth century that civil society developed into an ‘employment society’, in which ‘work’ was the key to citizenship and full (male) employment became the central political demand of the working class”.²⁹ The equation of human progress with conquering nature and the privileging of production is also inherent in the classical theoretical canon of socialism. The need for state socialist societies to compete economically and militarily with the capitalist

²⁸J. J. Pettman, *Worlding Women*, p.165

²⁹C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 36

West further prioritized the sphere of production over reproduction.

Productive value-producing work is the standard by which all work is measured in industrial society. The devaluation and exploitation of reproductive work is made easier by the fact that it is different in nature and purpose from productive work. When reproductive work is judged by the standards of productive work, i.e., surplus producing value, it is made “invisible”. Reproductive work such as cleaning, laundry, grocery shopping, and cooking is often repetitive in nature with no task definitions or time boundaries, hence the famous saying “a woman’s work is never done”. The nature of reproductive work is such that it is difficult to plan or schedule and can overwhelm the individual who likes to be “in control” of situations.

Lenin revealed an understanding of the constant burden of housework when he described the “barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying, and crushing drudgery of housework” / “the domestic life of the woman is a daily sacrifice of self to a thousand insignificant trifles”.³⁰ Lenin’s comments reveal that he views housework so negatively not just because it is a constant burden but because it is so different in nature from and a distraction from what he considers “real” work, i.e., productive work.

Reproductive work involves tasks which are often difficult to substantiate; for example, enhancing the emotional well being of others, diffusing conflicts, providing a pleasant home atmosphere. This means that reproductive work, unlike productive work, has no clear boundaries and is difficult to define. These tasks are valuable to the quality of life

³⁰Lenin, cited from “On the Emancipation of Women” cited in Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to the Market*, p.28

of a family. These can also be called “nurturing” tasks which are central to traditional concepts of “femininity”. This gives them strong emotional underpinnings which makes them resistant to change.

Men of course also perform unpaid reproductive labour in the family even if it is overwhelmingly done by women. Even within reproductive work there is a gendered division of labour between clearly defined tasks and repetitive tasks, between household maintenance and “caring/nurturing” labour. Men tend to do functionally specific tasks that have ‘identifiable components and well-defined boundaries’, for example, mowing the lawn, and tasks which allow discretion in when and how they are performed such as minor household repairs whereas women carry out the hard-to-define, constant process of “pre-task planning”, for example, planning meals and compiling a grocery list.³¹ This is “invisible” work that tends to unnoticed and therefore unappreciated by the rest of the family. Men also tend to perform tasks that could be construed as “active leisure”, like gardening and playing with children.

Gender socialization in schools, media, official discourse and family reinforces the assumption that reproductive work is the natural activity of women. Indicative of this is how females voluntarily do devalued “women’s work” and how reproductive work is done mostly by women. The choices young people make with regards to education, training and career are gendered.

Why do women in industrial society not challenge the GDL and the resulting double burden despite the fact that they are objectively disadvantaged and exploited by them? Most

³¹B. L. Marshall, *Engendering Modernity*, p. 37

women do not carry out an unrelenting, voluble campaign against men's "patriarchal" behaviour, instead they not infrequently adopt what appears to be an accommodating and approving stance with regard to the familiar patterns, for example, they take on the bulk of the housework.³² This can be explained by gender socialization. Gender socialization is highly political but appears as "natural" and this in turn legitimizes unequal relations between the genders. In order for women to voluntarily perform reproductive labour for free, cultural forms, norms and socialization are needed to invoke the 'natural' function of women. This is the assumption that reproductive labour is performed by women 'out of service of love', a natural duty, and therefore the law of exchange, contracting labour etc. do not apply in this area of human relations. This belief in the natural functions of women are central to ideals of womanhood and femininity and thus have strong emotional overtones.³³ This makes beliefs about traditional gender roles particularly stubborn and tenacious and hard to change.

Every new generation is born into a given context of social reproduction, and into concrete historical, economical, political, and general cultural relations. To the extent that these relations are assimilated through practical activity, specific generational experience is gained; but beyond that these relations themselves are reproduced in modified form. Socialization is at core the formation of the subjective characteristics that ensure social

³²Ibid, p. 45.

³³Dölling "Culture and Gender", p. 34

reproduction in its economic, political, and cultural dimensions.³⁴ Gender socialization is that group-typical process which results in gender-typical action profiles and social identities (state of consciousness, subjective perceptions). It takes place as an educational process and on the basis of environmental and life conditions (which vary objectively by sex) and the accompanying requirements of action. Gender socialization has its causal (but not only) explanation in the concrete historical division of labour between men and women.³⁵

Reproductive work of women 'doesn't count' as real work because it is assumed to be natural unconscious activity rather than conscious human work: "Women's household and child-care work are seen as an extension of their physiology, of the fact that they give birth to children, of the fact that 'nature' has provided them with a uterus".³⁶ Not only does this mean that productive labour is valued over reproductive labour, it means that reproductive labour becomes invisible because "women and their work are being 'defined into nature'"³⁷ The labours of housewives are never included in any official measurements of national productivity.³⁸

From a sociological standpoint, gender socialization among other things prepares the

³⁴Hildegard M. Nickel, "Sex-Role Socialization in Relationships as a Function of the Division of Labour: A Sociological Explanation for the Reproduction of Gender Differences", in M. Rueschemeyer and C. Lemke eds., *The Quality of Life in the German Democratic Republic: Changes and Developments in State Socialist Society* (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1989) p. 51

³⁵Ibid, p. 52.

³⁶Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, p. 45.

³⁷Ibid, p. 47.

³⁸Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, p. 137.

new generation to reproduce masculine and feminine work capacities in modified form. Gender socialization is a practical social process in the course of which boys and girls, men and women, develop the necessary subjective capacities for social action, and especially for their role in the social organization of labour.³⁹

The socialization of girls is highly, if not predominately, oriented toward the family, and thereby reinforces the corresponding cultural forms and patterns especially in the informal and self-evident division (i.e., non-division) of chores within the family. From early childhood, the conditions of development within the family are still clearly different for girls and boys, and these differences lead to manifold different activities for young boy and girl adolescents.⁴⁰ As unpaid “privately” performed work it is still associated with the implicit assessment that it is not “real” work. And so specific mechanisms for the “socialization” of girls and women are still broadly operative, making them individually willing and able to fulfil these “private” reproduction functions “voluntarily”.⁴¹ Socialization in the family concentrates above all on cultivating the individual conditions for the exercise of “private” reproduction functions. Gender-specific divisions of functions and their traditional valuation are passed on and appropriated in the practical course of everyday family life. Unlike activities carried out by parents at their jobs, which are obscure to children for a relatively long period, the “private” work of reproduction and valuations

³⁹H. M. Nickel, “Sex-Role Socialization”, p. 52.

⁴⁰Dölling, “Culture and Gender”, p. 40.

⁴¹Ibid, pp. 40-1.

associated with it become visible very early, especially for girls in direct family life.⁴²

Girls' activities soon acquire a predominately personal orientation. They are socialized to feel responsible for the mental and physical well-being of all family members, and for seeing to it that the household work necessary for this is accomplished. They are also socialized to feel responsible for avoiding and diffusing conflicts in the family:

A permanent concern for the well-being of others, seen as self-evident, as a proof of love and partiality for one's intimate family, is considered to be a demonstration of feminine virtue. The highly personal orientation of the female socialization process has the consequence that a woman's own feeling of personal worth is dependent first and foremost on recognition by others in these direct "social" forms. The gender specific peculiarities and consequences of women's socialization also have effects on their occupational activity, and on the methods they use to meet the standards of action required by their profession. Women concentrate in occupations that are highly person-oriented, ie- [sic] they correspond with functions and demands within the family.⁴³

The special training of girls for their future "duties in the private service of the family" has moulded a basic posture which may be described as a "readiness for sacrifice", a willingness to forego one's own wishes and demands in favour of those of others.⁴⁴ This makes women willing to perform the double burden as a natural part of their womanhood. To challenge the GDL and resulting double would appear "unwomanly" and "selfish" and harmful to the family. This helps to account for why feminists tend to be a minority in most industrial societies and are often mocked as "unfeminine".

This has profound political consequences. It means that women will not take political

⁴²Ibid, p. 41.

⁴³Ibid, p. 41.

⁴⁴Ibid, p. 42.

action if it interferes with their housework/family duties. It makes women reluctant to organize specifically around “women’s interests”. Traditional theories of political culture have explained women’s lack of political participation as “lack of interest” which is a complete misreading of the situation. The reluctance to become politically active and/or “feminist” perpetuates women’s lack of political power.

It should not be underestimated how powerful subtle behavioural regulations are. They are based on the empirical perception that recognition, rewards, indulgence, and fulfilment of wishes can be had more rapidly and without great effort or conflict, if the traditional “feminine” and “masculine” tasks are performed as expected.⁴⁵ This helps to account for why most women are reluctant to identify themselves as “feminist” even if they agree with feminist arguments. This also helps to explain why women perform most of the housework/child care in the family even if they work the same number of hours outside the home as their husbands and/or feel it is an unjust division of labour in itself.

Gender socialization is a function of GDL. It allows the relations of GDL to reproduce themselves and therefore remain stable. As Hildegard argues:

To take gender socialization as a point of departure and to expect decisive changes to come from it is essentially to turn things upside down. Gender socialization is a function of the social division of labour, not vice versa.⁴⁶

Classic socialist theory said that women would be emancipated when they were integrated as equals into paid labour; but this could not happen without the technology that

⁴⁵Ibid, p. 24.

⁴⁶Hildegard M. Nickel, “Sex-Role Socialization”, pp.55-6.

would relieve women of “their” natural womanly duties. Engels said: “the emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large social scale, and when domestic duties require “their” attention only to a minor degree”⁴⁷ / “the individual family ceases to be an economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of children become a public matter”.⁴⁸ Work was central to the socialist conception of citizenship and meaningful life. However, socialist theory had a narrow definition of “work” that did not include reproductive labour.

Under state socialism the “natural disadvantage” of women, namely the capacity to bear children and their role as homemaker and mother, was to be legislated away with the special women’s policies. These were designed to help women combine their “womanly duties” with their paid work in the public sphere. This betrayed the socialist assumption “that the unequal starting point of women is naturally rather than socially determined. This in turn suggests that the domestic division of labour and women’s double burden resulting from it are also somehow natural and immutable”.⁴⁹ There were no corresponding constructions of men as “father-workers” or any special men’s legislation. As Hilda Scott says that under state socialism:

men set the goals, define the ‘socialist norms’, and order the priorities by standards according to which men and women are equal but it is women who are different... they see equality as something that can be given to women

⁴⁷Engels cited in Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to the Market*, p. 20

⁴⁸Engels cited in Ibid, p.27

⁴⁹B. Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to the Market*, pp. 26-7.

without affecting the position of men.⁵⁰

⁵⁰Hilda Scott, *Women and Socialism: Experiences from Eastern Europe* (London: Allison and Busby, 1976) p.198

2. Female Reproductive Labour is Exploited

Women working outside family pay the price in the form of the double burden: women are overworked, have less free time, more work-related stress and health problems compared to men. Women lack reproductive autonomy: Women as child-bearers are objects of State population and labour policies. Women's choice and access to birth-control and abortion is restricted or eliminated for state interests (not moral considerations). Women are constrained to reproductive role or forced to take on double burden of productive and reproductive work. The double burden is particularly extreme under state socialism because women were under immense pressure from society to work full time and this restricted their choice to work part-time — a common compromise solution for Western women. Furthermore, there was considerable pressure on socialist citizens to involve themselves in the wider concerns of society such as participation in local or central government, union politics, school or neighbourhood committees. This affected women in a gender-specific way. Einhorn argues that because of the pressure on socialist citizens to become involved in political life, socialist women actually had a “triple” burden. They “worked longer hours than anywhere else in the world, taking into account their paid work time and the time spent on household tasks”.⁵¹

For women, the ability to reconcile occupation with motherhood and household duties is the determining factor in their self-conception. The contradictory nature of the demands placed upon them in the different domains of the family and workplace and/or political participation gives rise to serious individual conflicts and the need to find

⁵¹ Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to the Market*, pp.116-7.

compromise solutions.⁵² Women experience a gender specific contradiction in their lives. They must acquire abilities and needs for two spheres which in some cases have very different requirements. They must also bring them into a relatively harmony with one another in their own self-conception. The skills needed to manage the household, to care for the emotional well-being of all members of the family and provide a harmonious conflict free family atmosphere are in complete contrast to the skill and requirements for the workplace and for professional advancement. Women turn to compromise solutions to meet these different requirements which include part-time work, temporary interruption in professional activity until the children are older, taking jobs beneath their acquired qualifications, near their homes, or without shift work, or foregoing their own professional development in favour of their husbands.⁵³

The double burden of women benefits industrial society because it allows more labour power to be diverted to the production sphere in order to keep up militarily, technologically and economically with other (industrialized) nations. The ideology of technology is inherent in industrialism: the endless pursuit of technological innovation in order to “progress” from the state of nature.

3. Productive Labour is Male-Dominated

There is discrimination in the workplace against women because of her role as caretaker in the family. Women are viewed as unreliable workers because of their primary commitment

⁵²Dölling, *Gender and Culture*, p. 39.

⁵³Ibid , p. 40.

to the family. Also, there is a low proportion of women representatives and women in managerial/leader positions; occupational gender segregation; women's income levels are lower than men's; women's level of education and training is lower and more limited than men's.

Discrimination against women occurs mainly because in the public world working women do not have the same status as workers as men.⁵⁴ This can be seen in both state socialist and capitalist systems with the concept of the "family wage":

The wage is not merely payment for a (sexually neutral) worker's labours, but.... a payment that enables a man to support an economically dependent (subordinate) wife and minor children. The wage received for public work presupposes a private world of women and unpaid labour.⁵⁵

Because the wage has been seen as a family wage, women's earnings have been regarded as a "supplement" to a husband's wage. Women are assumed to be wives, and wives are assumed to be economically dependent on their husbands, obtaining their subsistence in return for domestic service. Therefore, wage have been sexually differentiated. Women workers are paid less than men — and so an economic incentive for women to become wives is maintained. The conviction that a "wage" is what is due to a male breadwinner is nicely illustrated as recently as 1985 in the United States in the claim that "women have generally been paid less [than men] because they would work for lower wages, since they had no urgent need for more money. Either they were married, or single

⁵⁴Pateman, *The Disorder of Women*, p.8

⁵⁵Ibid 9

and living at home, or doubling up with friends””.⁵⁶

Women’s subordinate position in the capitalist labour market has been traditionally explained by “human capital theory”, which is applicable to state socialism as well.. Women accumulate less human capital (training, experience, career commitment and allied qualities) which are rewarded in the market because they “prefer” to invest time and energy within the family. Therefore they choose jobs that require less training, mobility, commitment, less opportunity for advancement and lower wages. This theory suggests that because of the innate “preferences” of women, their subordination in the labour market is inevitable.

However, market segmentation theory better explains women’s lower status in state socialist and capitalist economies. This theory differentiates between segmentation of labour market (demand factors) and that of labour force segmentation (supply factors) show that men and women supply their labour on different terms. Therefore “The labour market position of women is not intrinsically vulnerable but is the result of the role specialization in the family and expectations which follow therefrom”.⁵⁷ This affects the wage structure. The ‘role specialization’ in the family assigns primary responsibility for family care and household maintenance to women. There is the expectation that they will be party to income-sharing with a male wage-earner: “many employers assume that women in general have lower income needs and lesser attachment to their jobs than men, even where in

⁵⁶ Ibid 138

⁵⁷Garnsey et al, Labour “Market Structure and Work-Force Division”, in Rosemary Deem and Graeme Salaman eds, *Work, Culture and Society*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985) p. 59.

individual cases this assumption is inapplicable”.⁵⁸ Men also have specific positions in the family which influence the terms on which they make their labour available on the market. For example, they may need to provide for dependents, they may be free to work long and flexible hours because they can rely on others to provide the domestic labour they and their dependants require.⁵⁹

Women do not have an equitable share in economic and political power. The double burden means that women have less free time at their disposal to take advantage of professional and political openings.⁶⁰ Women therefore do not have systematic input into the making of many of the decisions that affect them in society. In the state socialist countries women did participate more in politics than in the West. They were involved in the lower levels of politics because it was closer to home and easier to combine with their family duties. They were therefore fairly well represented at the local level. Although local government in these societies had limited discretion and relatively little power, they did have jurisdiction over many matters such as social services and retain hours, which have an impact on day-to day life in their area.⁶¹ But overall, women in state socialist and capitalist countries play a relatively small role in the direct exercise of political power. In both systems,

⁵⁸Ibid, p. 60

⁵⁹Craig et al, *Payment Structures and Smaller Firms: Women's Employment in Segmented Labour Markets*, Research Paper 48 (London: Department of Economics, 1984) p. 95 cited in B. L. Marshall, *Engendering Modernity*, p. 44

⁶⁰Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to the Market*, p.166

⁶¹Sharon. L. Wolchik, “Women and Politics: Introduction” in S. L. Wolchik and A. G Meyer, eds, *Women, State and Party in Eastern Europe*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985) p.115

women's representation among political leaders decreases as we get closer to the seat of real power. Because of the GDL in the family, women are more likely to take an active part in autonomous social movements than in mainstream political parties and electoral processes.⁶² Women also participate more at the grassroots and local levels than in centralized mainstream political structures. The relatively high figures for women's involvement at the local level results from the fact that local politics appears more accessible, and is more amenable to combination with domestic and child care responsibilities. In addition party political meetings are often held at anti-social hours, so do not lend themselves well to being meshed with family life. This is why, for many Western women interested in mainstream political participation, the old question of a forced choice between career and family often still holds.⁶³

Summary

The DDR's *Muttipolitik* is relevant to the current debate raging in the West over the benefits and disadvantages of group-specific legislation. On first glance, it appears that *Muttipolitik* promoted the equality of women. In order to test this hypothesis, the term "gender equality" is made more precise and meaningful. The concept of GDL is centred on two fundamental aspects of patriarchy: the exploitation of women and the exclusion of women from political power. This means that GDL can be used as a gauge of patriarchy. The existence of GDL in a society then signifies gender inequality or patriarchy. Three indicators of GDL are then

⁶²Jaquette, *The Women's Movement in Latin America*, p. 206.

⁶³Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to the Market*, p. 164.

developed: firstly, the feminization and devaluation of reproductive labour (housework and child-rearing); secondly, the exploitation of female reproductive labour and finally the male dominance of productive labour.

These indicators of GDL will be applied in the next chapter to the case study of the DDR during the time frame of *Muttipolitik* (1972-1989). If the GDL indicators remained unchanged throughout this time period, then it means that gender equality was not promoted by *Muttipolitik* and the original hypothesis is disproved and must be reworked.

Chapter 2

The Effect of *Muttipolitik* on the Gendered Division of Labour

In order to test the hypothesis “*Muttipolitik* promoted gender equality”, the indicators of GDL, which were developed in the last chapter -- the feminization and devaluation of reproductive labour, the exploitation of female reproductive labour and the male dominance of productive labour -- are applied to the DDR during the *Muttipolitik* era (1972-1989). DDR laws, Constitution, Party Congresses, Reports to the Central Committee as well as unpublished files⁶⁴ are consulted in order to understand the motives and construction of *Muttipolitik*. Sociological research conducted in the former East Germany and *Frauenreport 90* -- the first and only and most definitive compilation of data on DDR women from 1949-1989 -- are consulted to determine what effects the laws had on DDR society.

The results of the test reveal that throughout this time frame, the GDL remained constant and was in some cases reinforced. The positive signifiers -- the high level of women's education and training, the entry of women into male-dominated professions -- are traced back to *Frauenpolitik* before 1972, which emphasized gender legal equality.

⁶⁴The unpublished files of the SED were located by Eva Maria Maier and are cited in her book, *Die Frauenpolitik der SED*. Please see Eva Maria Maier, *Die Frauenpolitik der SED unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ära Honecker: Motivation - Anspruch - Wirklichkeit* (Stuttgart: Institut für Politikwissenschaft der Universität Stuttgart, 1997).

Muttipolitik was a significant departure from **Frauenpolitik** of the past. It constructed women as “mother-workers”, in other words, women were treated as different from the norm of the male worker. The original hypothesis “**Muttipolitik** promoted gender equality” is then revised to “**Muttipolitik** did not promote gender equality”.

Before looking at **Muttipolitik** more closely, a brief overview highlighting some of its most remarkable features may be useful:

- A 40-hour working week at full pay for all mothers with two or more children under sixteen years of age. The normal working week in the DDR was 43.5 hours, or 40 to 42 hours per week for shift-workers at the time.
- A monthly paid housework day for all married women, mothers of children under sixteen years of age and for all women over forty.
- 26 weeks of pregnancy or maternity leave since 1976. In 1950 it was 11 weeks, in 1963 14 weeks, in 1972, 18 weeks.
- A state birth premium of 1,000M which was an average month's pay.
- Paid leave with between 70-90 per cent of the mother's average income for one year after the birth of a first or second child, and 18 months for each subsequent child. Return to the workplace was guaranteed. Since 1986, the “baby year” could be taken by either mother or father or could be divided between. Two extensions were allowed in case of absence of day-care space.
- A financial support payment to unmarried mothers at the level of sick pay (70-90 percent of average income) until the child is three years of age, if the child is unable to attend day care for health reasons or if no day care is available.

- Free contraception, and the choice for every woman to decide during the first twelve weeks of pregnancy whether she wants an abortion (free of cost).
- A broad network of state- and factory-supported child care services (creches, nursery schools, after-school child care, school-dinner programmes). By 1988, 81 percent of children under three were in creches. Sufficient nursery-school places were available so that any parent of a child between three and six years old who wished to could place their child in kindergarten. The spaces in these centres were free of cost, parents paying only a very modest fee (approximately 30M per month) as a contribution to the cost of meals or milk.
- A monthly state child-support payment for each child; and financial support for youngsters in the 11th and 12th grades in the same amount as received by apprentices.
- Furthermore, all health-care services were free of charge and the prices of foodstuffs, rents, electricity, public transport, and children's clothing, among other things were heavily subsidized.

The GDL Indicators Applied to *Muttipolitik* (1971-1989)

1. The Devaluation and Feminization of Reproductive Labour

A. Gender Socialization and Patriarchal Assumptions

Official discourse also reinforced gender roles by its construction of women as “mother-workers” but with no corresponding “father-worker” construction. *Muttipolitik*, specifically designed for working mothers, officially exempted men from their fair share of parenting and housework responsibilities. The mother-worker construction reflected and reinforced the

assumption that women are naturally more caring, nurturing, and emotional than men. These roles were taken for granted by most adults and shaped the minds of children who learn mostly by example.

The fact that children learn mostly by example, means that GDL in the family was a very conditioning influence on their value system. The DDR sociologist Irene Dölling states:

Unlike the activities carried out by parents at their jobs, which remain rather obscure to children for a relatively long period, the “private” work of reproduction and the valuations associated with it become visible very early.⁶⁵

Besides learning by example, children were also drawn into the family’s GDL. A 1974 study showed that girls helped out in the household twice as much as boys did.⁶⁶ Another study revealed that although boys helped out less with housework, they were rewarded more, usually with money, even though on average a boy’s allowance was already higher than a girl’s.⁶⁷

This state of affairs appeared to remain unchanged in the early 1980s. A 1981 study showed that girls were still more involved in housework at a younger age than boys.⁶⁸ A 1984 report from the Institute of Sociology and Social Politics of Family Life reported that

⁶⁵Dölling, “Culture and Gender”, p. 41.

⁶⁶Wilhelm Lost, *Zur Arbeitserziehung in den Familien* (Informationen, 2/1974) p.52.

⁶⁷Kabat vel Job, *Zum Problem der familiären Erziehung der Jugend*, p. 41.

⁶⁸Otmar Kabat vel Job and Arnold Pinther, Jugend und Familie. *Familiäre Faktoren der Persönlichkeitsentwicklung Jugendlicher* (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Publishers der Wissenschaften, 1981) p.65.

women were still significantly more responsible for housework than men. Over 60% of women spent 2, to more than 4 hours, doing housework per day. Men assumed a helper position with regard to housework. The stereotypical feminine tasks were still being done overwhelmingly by women.⁶⁹

By the 1980s, the allocated housework day and shorter work week for working mothers had not alleviated their double burden.⁷⁰ Girls continued to do more housework than boys and they received less praise for good school grades than boys did.⁷¹ Girls also had less free time than boys.⁷²

There is some evidence that by the late 1980s, men were helping out with the housework more than ever before.⁷³ However, it is in which areas of housework and in what ways men help out that is the real indication if women's burden is alleviated.⁷⁴ As stated in the previous chapter, even within reproductive labour there tends to be a GDL whereby men participate in the more attractive jobs. Studies show that men mostly did different kinds of housework tasks such as repairs which are generally less time consuming, more pleasurable

⁶⁹Institut für Soziologie und Sozialpolitik der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, "...Bevölkerungsbefragung zur Lebensweise von Familien im Prozeß der Gestaltung der entwickelten sozialistischen Gesellschaft in der DDR", Berlin, April 5, 1984, in: *SAMPO-BArch-ZPA*, (DY 30/JIV2/17/14) p. 9.

⁷⁰Eva Maria Maier, *Die Frauenpolitik der SED*, p. 240.

⁷¹G. Helwig, *Jugend und Familie*, p. 41.

⁷²U. Bruhm-Schlegel, and O. Kabat vel Job, *Jungen Frauen Heute*, p 52 ff.

⁷³J. Gysi, et al, *Frau und Familie - Hausarbeit*, P. 127.

⁷⁴Eva Maria Maier, *Die Frauenpolitik der SED*, p.153.

and can wait until one feels more motivated to do as opposed to cooking meals and laundry which were done predominately by women.⁷⁵ Furthermore, in child care, men tended to play the most with the children whereas women mostly did the feeding, bathing and caring for sick children.⁷⁶ The number of hours of housework per day for women increased with the number of children in the family. Remarkably, for men, the number of hours of housework per day actually decreased with the number of children!. In families with one child, women did on the average 4.22 hours per day and in families with three or more children, they did an average 5.27 hours per day. The respective numbers for men were 2.4 and 2.33.⁷⁷ Also remarkably unjust, was that the degree of GDL in a family was hinged *only* on the woman's education. There was a negative correlation between the woman's level of education and her burden of housework.⁷⁸ Educated women tended to insist their partners (regardless of their education) help out around the house and with the children. On the other hand, most educated men would not challenge the GDL on their own initiative.

The overwhelming response to an informal poll done by this author in January 1998, indicated that, of the respondents, women still did the most housework.⁷⁹ The housework that men did do tended to be traditional "men's tasks" around the house which are less time-

⁷⁵J. Gysi, *Frauen- und Familienentwicklung in der DDR*, p.101.

⁷⁶J. Gysi, D. Meyer, "Leitbild berufstätige Mutter", p. 161.

⁷⁷U. Hempel, "Familie-Hausarbeit und Hausarbeitsteilung", in : Winkler, G (Ed.) *Sozialreport 90*, (Berlin), p. 269.

⁷⁸J. Gysi, et al, "Die Reproduktiven Funktionen in der Familie", p. 159.

⁷⁹Please see appendix.

consuming, more pleasurable and can be done at one's convenience such as household repairs, gardening, and car maintenance. Most men said that they helped out with the dishes, grocery shopping and cooking. The "hard-core" cleaning, for example, laundry, was done exclusively by women.

The DDR school system reinforced the gender socialization children learned in the family, although officially, it was claimed that education was gender-neutral and girls and boys took the same subjects. Up until the early 1980s, textbooks in the DDR were blatantly sexist, depicting men and women in traditional gender roles in the family. This reinforced the gender roles children learned at home. Einhorn discusses in some detail the sexism in DDR textbooks.⁸⁰ The DDR **pedagogue** Erna Scharnhorst documented in her 1970 study that children's reading books overwhelmingly portrayed mothers and grandmothers as nurturers of the family and fathers as non-participants in housework.⁸¹ In the late 1970s there was an attempt to remove sexism from school textbooks. A publication on the emancipation of women, stated in 1979 that in the reformed educational system:

The text and illustrations of readers reflect the [new] position of women in society, as well as the new relationship between men and women in the family, including the division of labour of familial tasks... Not only is a new female role model developed for boys and girls, but also a new model of how men and women live together and of marriage and family.⁸²

The reform of the textbooks was not sufficient to root out gender socialization. There was

⁸⁰See Einhorn, *Cinderalla Goes to the Market*.

⁸¹E. Scharnhorst, *Zur Widerspiegelung der gesellschaftlichen Stellung der Frau in den Lesebüchern unsere Schule*, Informationen 1/1970, p. 27.

⁸²Autorenkollektiv, *Zum 100. Jahrestag... Die Frau und der Sozialismus*, p. 51.

little awareness among teachers about the unconscious yet powerful ways that gender socialization shapes young minds in the classroom; for example, the learning process is unconsciously informed by gender, which means that boys and girls often process information in gender-specific ways, even if the information itself is gender-neutral. Testimony to this, is how East German boys and girls, despite receiving identical education, developed different interests. For example, boys preferred to read about technology whereas girls preferred to read about love, marriage and friendship.⁸³ Also, girls did not think as much about technology as boys did (technology was emphasized in DDR education). Outside school, girls did not apply their knowledge of technology in their everyday life to the same extent as boys did. This is despite the fact that girls and boys had the same grades in this area.⁸⁴ Also, teachers had gender specific behaviour expectations and this in turn reinforced the gender-specific behaviour. For example, teachers expected girls to be more well behaved and consequently did not punish boys as much for the same misdemeanours (the “boys will be boys” attitude). Also boys were permitted to do more in play.⁸⁵ Teachers were kept uniformed about these subtle, unconscious forms of gender socialization in the classroom even though DDR sociologists had studied and were informed about such

⁸³O. Kabat vel Job, *Zum Problem der familiären Erziehung der Jugend im Sinne der Gleichberechtigung der Geschlechter* (Information 6/1976) p. 41f.

⁸⁴A. Pinther, *Zum Anteil der Familie an der Persönlichkeitsentwicklung Jugendlicher* (Information 6/1976) p. 27.

⁸⁵K. Otto, *Diziplin bei Jungen und Mädchen* (East Berlin, 1970) p. 202.

processes.⁸⁶ Furthermore, even at the beginning of the 1980s, 90% of school teachers were female while most principals were male. This reinforced the gender stereotype that women are more suitable for caring, nurturing jobs and less suitable for managerial positions.⁸⁷

Gender socialization conditions women to voluntarily do devalued feminized work. A survey in 1988 revealed how complacent most women were to the GDL. Although most women felt they did most of the housework, the majority (67%) felt that this was fair.⁸⁸ Three main factors account for this attitude: Firstly, most women believed that their shorter work week and paid housework day enabled them to do more than men; Secondly, many felt they were better and quicker at household tasks and therefore it was just more efficient and practical for them to do it themselves; And thirdly, women believed that because their partners tended to have more demanding jobs with more responsibilities and better pay (manager positions were mostly filled by men in the DDR), men should be exempt from housework duties.⁸⁹

A gender analysis of post WWII industrial society reveals however that because men are responsible for little or no housework, they are enabled to spend more time and take on more challenging and better paid work in the economy. But on an individual level, on which most people operate and think, it simply appears “natural”, normal or logical for the woman

⁸⁶For example, see Hidegard M. Nickel, “Sex-Role Socialization in Relationships as a Function of the Division of Labour”, p. 56.

⁸⁷Eva Maria Maier, *Die Frauenpolitik der SED*, p. 248.

⁸⁸Eva Maria Maier, *Die Frauenpolitik der SED*, p. 254.

⁸⁹J. Gysi et al, “Die reproduktiven Funktionen in der Familie”, p. 156.

to do most of the family work if her partner earns more, has more job stress and responsibility.

Furthermore, women in the DDR (as is also true for most industrialized nations) tended to underestimate and discount much of family work they do. For example, some housework (such as child care or cooking) involves love and pleasure, so women often don't count it as "real work" and see it as part of their "free time".

B. The Value of Reproductive Work

Reproductive labour in East Germany was clearly feminized, but it was not consistently devalued. At the individual level, women's work for the family was often discounted as "not real work" and was of course unpaid. At the official level, the value of women's reproductive work was understood. The SED was highly aware of how central women's reproductive work was to the functioning of the economy and the stability of the State. This is because the SED consulted sociologists when they were formulating population and economic policies. Many sociological studies highlighted the crucial role women play in these areas. Some studies warned that a lower birthrate meant a shrinking of future labour force, which in turn would mean a weaker economy.⁹⁰

The SED made massive investment to increase the provision of child-care and in

⁹⁰See for example the study by G. Winker, "Einführungsvortrag auf der 11. Tagung des wissenschaftlichen Rates für die wirtschaftswissenschaftliche Forschung", in H. Scheel (Ed.) *Aufgaben und Probleme der Sozialpolitik und Demographie in der DDR: Grundfragen der sozialen und demographischen Entwicklung bei der Gestaltung der entwickelten sozialistischen Gesellschaft in der DDR* (East Berlin, 1975) p. 57.

apartment building projects for young families. The latter was intended to raise the standard of living for families which in 1970 were appalling. Only 20% of residences were damage free. Only 39% had a bath or shower; 26% had hot water; 11% had modern heating and only 39% had an inside toilet.⁹¹ Raising the standard of living for families by building new residences would directly help women with their family work. This in turn was meant to encourage young families to have more children:

The new residential areas are to be furnished now more extensively than ever with the needed facilities. In addition to nursery schools, creches, schools and supermarkets, it is also necessary to build service and health care facilities. This will reduce the daily burden of human life, *especially that of working women*.⁹² The momentum of the building project increased within a short period of time. In 1970, 70, 088 new residences were built. The May 9, 1973 Conference of the Central Committee of the SED pledged that until 1990, 2.8 to 3 million more residences were to be built.⁹³ In 1975, 140, 793 new residences were built. By 1975, 1.8 million citizens lived in new homes.⁹⁴

Through sociological studies, the SED became increasingly aware of how women's role as mother was central to the formation of citizens. In Erich Honecker's words: "the home contributes in significant measures to cultivate and develop the characteristics of young Communists".⁹⁵ Up until the 1970s, the SED had tried to make daycare and schools replace

⁹¹Eva Maria Maier, *Die Frauenpolitik der SED*, p. 162.

⁹²(Italics and translation mine). Protokoll Nr. 12 der Sitzung des Politbüros des Zentralkomitees am 2. April 1974, Anlage Nr. 5.

⁹³Eva Maria Maier, *Die Frauenpolitik der SED*, p. 163.

⁹⁴Ibid, p. 163.

⁹⁵E. Honecker, *Bericht des Zentralkomitees der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands an den IX. Parteitag der SED*, in: *Protokoll der Verhandlungen des IX. Parteitages der SED vom 18. 22. Mai 1976* in Berlin, p. 116.

the family as the main influence of children's personality. But sociological studies made it clear that, in the DDR, the family remained the main influence on the development of the child's personality. A commentary from the *Familiengesetzbuch* in 1973 reveals the SED's acceptance of this sociological research:

The child's development in the family as a specific contribution to personality development cannot be substituted by increased efforts of others involved in the child's education (for example, Kindergarten, school, youth organizations). This has been widely proven.⁹⁶

Because of this awareness, the SED changed its approach. Instead of trying to replace the family, the education system would work together with parents to teach children to become good citizens:

the development of the child's personality will be the combined task of the parents, the teachers, the child care facilities and the youth organizations, whereby the school will have a special importance as state educator.⁹⁷

If the parents were *systemkonformen* ("conformists to the system") then the chances were greater that their children would grow into state-supporting adults. Eva Maria Maier argues that the supportive measures of the *Familienpolitik* can be seen as an attempt by the state to convince families of the benefits of socialism.⁹⁸ This was relevant to women in particular because they were the ones who bore most of the responsibility for child raising. As mentioned above, the building programme which raised the standard of living for families made it easier for women to provide services for their family.

⁹⁶*Das Familienrecht der DDR, Kommentar*, (revised edition, East Berlin, 1973) p. 179.

⁹⁷*Ibid*, p. 182.

⁹⁸Eva Maria Maier, *Die Frauenpolitik der SED*, p. 226.

This is fitting with Dölling's "Father-State" thesis. In her well known article "Between Hope and Helpless", Dölling argues that *Muttipolitik* was paternal in nature and thus anti-emancipatory. It fostered a dependency mentality in women. Father-State was always helping them to be mothers with the extensive system of benefits, assistance that was exclusively for working mothers. The unspoken message women received was that without help of Father-State they could not be as effective mothers or workers (or "mother-workers") This instilled feelings of gratitude and guilt in women toward the State and hurt their self-esteem. Women had a gender-specific stake in the stability of the regime and were therefore supportive of it.⁹⁹

The SED was highly aware of the importance of child care to the functioning of the economy. One of the most notable aspects of *Muttipolitik* was the steady increase in this time period of the provision of daycare. Sociological studies had made it known to the SED that many women were taking part time work or remaining housewives because there was not enough child care places available. If the SED wanted women to increase their participation in productive work, they knew they had to provide more daycare.

The SED also recognized the importance of women's reproductive labour in the literal sense, that is, bearing children. In a sense, women were "paid" when they had children through the "birth incentive" measures. With the birth of one child, the parents received 1000M. Also there were financial incentives for couples to marry young. The thinking behind this was that the younger the couple, the more children they were likely to have.

⁹⁹See Irene Dölling, "Between Hope and Helplessness: Women in the GDR after the 'Turning Point'", *Feminist Review* (No. 39 Winter 1991) pp. 3-15.

Young couples under 26 years of age who received a combined income of less than 1400 would receive up to 5000M in “state credit”. With their first child, 1000M was deducted from this loan, 1500M with the second child and 2500 with the third or more.¹⁰⁰ On December 4, 1975 a law was passed granting parents *Kindergeld*, (“children money”), a monthly allowance for every child in the family. With the first and second child, parents received 20M per month, 50M per month for the third, 60M for the fourth and 70M for the fifth.

Interestingly, on July 1, 1973 the *Modification des Rentenrechts* (“modification of the pension law”) granted a monthly pension of 200M to women starting at age 60 who bore at least 5 children in their lifetime, regardless of whether they worked outside the home or not.

There was also extensive support for single mothers. Also, all mothers had the right to paid sick leave when a child was ill. In 1972, this paid sick leave cost the state 11.4 million Mark. Working women received monthly support when they could not work because of lack of child care spaces. Pregnant students or mother students were paid 50M per child and if a student mother could not find a place in daycare for her child, she received 150M per child.¹⁰¹

There can be no doubt that the SED realized the importance of women’s reproductive work as central to the economic and political order. They were more aware of this important fact than other states probably because they relied heavily on sociological studies in order to

¹⁰⁰Ibid, p. 145.

¹⁰¹Ibid, p. 142.

formulate their policies. This is why they enthusiastically invested millions into *Muttipolitik*, which was probably the most expensive set of policies in the DDR. On the surface, such a heavy investment into “women’s laws” appeared to be an unusual dedication of a nation to pursue the “woman question”. This is what caught the eye of Western feminists and proponents of affirmative action.

As discussed above, real gender equality was not the primary concern for the SED. The socialist definition of gender equality however was useful. Ironically, although the official discourse on women’s equality was largely just empty rhetoric masking state interests, it appears that the DDR population did sympathize and internalize much of it. For example, women’s full-time employment was an unquestioned norm for East Germans. As stated in the introduction, by 1989, 91% of East German women of working age were employed. Also, opinion polls since reunification have revealed that most East Germans believe that a woman with a career is more emancipated than a housewife. An informal survey conducted by this author in January 1998 demonstrated that most respondents felt that women who worked outside the home were more emancipated than housewives.¹⁰²

In order to understand why East Germans were receptive to the ideals of women’s emancipation, it is helpful to examine traditional German political culture and the effects of Nazi catastrophe on the population. Traditional German political culture encouraged reverence of authority. Due to the lack of any successful democratic experience in German history and most especially after the Nazi disaster, Germany’s *Obrigkeisstaat* tradition was stronger than ever in 1945 Germany. *Obrigkeisstaat* tradition can be described roughly as

¹⁰²Please see appendix.

an authoritarian political culture in which the population has an intense fear of change and debate, a yearning for consensus and harmony at almost any cost and a Platonic conception that politics is best left to the leaders. *Obrigkeitsstaat* tradition manifests itself as obedience and a polarization between state and society, the leadership and the subjects. This mentality facilitated the implementation of a new anti-democratic political system. Ultimately, the DDR became the most tightly controlled East Bloc country with a secret police more pervasive than even the *Gestapo*.¹⁰³

The devastating experience of National Socialism and the *Obrigkeitsstaat* tradition made the DDR population particularly vulnerable to ideological infiltration. The SED effectively utilized the “functional ideological concept”¹⁰⁴ of *Antifaschismus* (“antifascism”). This effectively reinforced a tendency towards unquestioning obedience in East Germans by playing upon their deepest insecurity: the fear of regressing back to a chaotic, violent past, marred by Nazi evil. *Antifaschismus* was presented as a way for the East Germans to cleanse themselves of their Nazi past and start anew as the “good” Germany. The “other Germany” meanwhile was still stained by the fascist legacy. Capitalism was portrayed as a softer version of and slippery slope to fascism.

Antifaschismus enabled the SED to co-opt the East German intelligentsia much more effectively than what happened elsewhere in the East Bloc. An entire generation of

¹⁰³P. Marcuse, “Moral Indignation and Politics: the Debate Over the Stasi.” *New Political Science* (Spring/Summer 1993) p.9

¹⁰⁴This term was coined by W. D. Graf, W. Hansen and B. Schulz “From *The People* to *One People*: The Social Bases of the East German ‘Revolutions’ of 1989”, in H. G. DeSoto and D. G. Anderson (Ed.s) *The Curtain Rises: Rethinking Culture, Ideology and the State in Eastern Europe* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993) p.4

intellectuals, socialized in postwar East Germany, saw in *antifascism* the only chance to form a new “good” Germany. Many leftist exiles returned to East Germany to be part of the *antifascist* experiment. The SED therefore initially legitimated itself among intellectuals by its claim to be *antifascist*.¹⁰⁵ The writer Christa Wolf describes how “we felt a strong reluctance to organize resistance against people who had been in concentration camps during the Nazi period”.¹⁰⁶ However, the majority of the DDR population was estranged from the intelligentsia and the leadership and probably did not embrace the values of *Antifaschismus* (including gender emancipation) as whole heartedly as the elite did; hence the “double revolutions” of 1989. (During *die Wende*, the intelligentsia demanded a democratic East Germany separate from the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), while the overwhelming majority of DDR citizens supported reunification instead). Nonetheless, the SED and intelligentsia did set the framework for social and moral values that affected the general population. This was especially true because the leadership attempted to isolate the population as much as possible from any countervailing values from West Germany or the capitalist West in general.

The very fact that official discourse repeatedly celebrated the “emancipation of our women” over and over indicates that it was an effective ideological functional concept, i.e., that the people responded to it. It appealed to emancipatory values in the population in order to legitimize the radical women’s policies. It played on and reinforced already existing

¹⁰⁵D. Bathrick, “The End of the Wall Before the End of the Wall”, *German Studies Review* (XIV, May 1991) p.306

¹⁰⁶Christa Wolf quoted in *Ibid* p.307

popular ideals of gender emancipation. It was central in official discourse that the DDR be seen as “an historical alternative to patriarchy, specifically to the patriarchal authority of West Germany”.¹⁰⁷ Statements like the following were extremely common in official discourse:

It is in fact one of the greatest achievements of socialism to have realized equal rights for women in this country, both under the law and in practical everyday life to a far-reaching degree. No capitalist country can claim such an achievement.¹⁰⁸

Walter Ulbricht once remarked:

Even if our Republic hadn’t accomplished anything else, the emancipation which our women have achieved would suffice to prove its social superiority over West Germany.¹⁰⁹

The “emancipation of our women” became a source of pride and identity for East Germans, most especially when compared to the “other” Germany. For example, East Germans believed that DDR women were more emancipated than FRG women. The responses to this author’s informal survey also reflected this belief.¹¹⁰

The constant use of this rhetoric was most likely because the SED realized that they had found sympathy in the population for this ideal and they could use it to generate regime legitimacy. This appears to be the only logical explanation to the constant references to

¹⁰⁷J. Borneman, “Heidi and the Wall”, *Canadian Woman Studies*, (Vol. 16, No. 1, Winter 1995) p. 15

¹⁰⁸From the Central Committee Report to the 8th Party Congress, 1971.

¹⁰⁹Walter Ulbricht quoted in Schäffer-Hegel, “Makers and Victims of Unification” p. 104

¹¹⁰See Appendix.

women's equality in official discourse if one assumes that the SED had no real commitment to gender equality.

Overall, most feminist analysts agree that *Muttipolitik*, in particular the extensive provision of subsidized child care, made it easier for women to combine their economic roles with their mother roles, and the family legislation did improve the living standards for families, especially those with children.

2. Female Reproductive Labour is Exploited

A. The Double Burden

In the DDR, women suffered a double burden. This was not supposed to happen according to classical socialist theory. The emancipation of women would happen when they were fully integrated into paid labour. This could only happen if they were freed from "their" burden of housework and child care. This in turn could only happen with the socialization of housework and child care. The socialization of housework would be achieved through technology. The SED's definition of women's emancipation followed classical socialist theory to a tee, however it neglected the one of the theory's main conditions for it, i.e., the socialization of housework.

Eva Maria Maier argues that DDR women had to "pay" for their "emancipation with their double burden. Instead of a true commitment to the socialization of housework, the SED adopted a *Vereinbarkeitskonzeption* ("unity" or "compatibility" conception) approach to women's double burden instead of "an extensive socialization of housework and child-

raising”.¹¹¹ This resulted in *Entlastungsmaßnahmen* (“relief measures”), laws and policies designed to help women combine their productive and reproductive work, to alleviate their double burden so they would continue to work and at the same time be encouraged to bear more children. *Entlastungsmaßnahmen* then were adopted instead of a commitment to and pursuit of real gender equality.¹¹²

Frauenpolitik up until this point had already been geared to reduce women’s double burden so that they could still perform their motherly duties. Although the SED always adhered to the classical socialist definition of women’s emancipation, it neglected the one of the theory’s main conditions for it, the socialization of housework. The SED had adopted a *Vereinbarkeitskonzeption* approach to the Woman Question. This approach entailed *Entlastungsmaßnahmen* (“relief” or “assistance” measures), laws and policies designed to assist women in combining their productive and reproductive work. *Entlastungsmaßnahmen* then were adopted instead of a commitment to and pursuit of real gender equality.¹¹³ The demographic shock in 1970, where the death rate exceeded the birthrate, made the SED realized that up until this point, the *Entlastungsmaßnahmen* had not sufficiently alleviated women’s double burden.

But the *Vereinbarkeitskonzeption* never came under scrutiny. Rather, the solution was to increase the number and intensity of the *Entlastungsmaßnahmen*. It was a second more determined attempt to alleviate women’s double burden so women would no longer

¹¹¹Eva Maria Maier, p. 9.

¹¹²Ibid, p. 10

¹¹³Ibid, pp. 9-10.

experience an *Entscheidungskonfliktfall* (decision conflict) between child-raising and paid labour. The task of this new stage of *Frauenpolitik* had the task to ensure:

that women could meet the growing expectations and demands of both spheres of life... and that they never had to feel it necessary or inevitable to make grave concessions in one area for the sake of the other.¹¹⁴

This new phase of *Frauenpolitik* came to be known as “*Muttipolitik*” because it was directed specifically at women of child-bearing age in order to realize State population targets. The goals of *Muttipolitik* was to foster the growth of the 2-3 child family (i.e., encourage women to bear more children) in order to raise the birthrate.

During the period of *Muttipolitik*, child care was successfully socialized but there was only a very limited socialization of housework, perhaps because the socialization of housework did not appear to directly benefit the economy:

While child care is accepted as an economic necessity and pregnancy leave is vital to maintaining the population, transforming unpaid private housework into socialized domestic labour is seen as an expensive political goal lacking in urgency.¹¹⁵

In 1970, 291 *Kinderkrippen* (creches) places were available per 1000 children. By 1975, there was 508 places per 1000 children with the goal of 700 per 1000 by year 1990.¹¹⁶ In 1970, there was 645 *Kindergarten* (nursery school) places available per 1000 children, in 1975 the number was 850 per 1000.¹¹⁷ Before and after school, school-aged children could

¹¹⁴(Translation mine) Autonenkollektiv, *Familienrecht*, (Lehrbuch, East Berlin, 1972) cited in G. Helwig, “Familie”, in *DDR-Handbuch*, (Vol. 2, Köln, 1985) p. 372.

¹¹⁵Dorothy Rosenberg, “The Emancipation of women in Fact and Fiction”, p.351.

¹¹⁶Eva Maria Maier, *Die Frauenpolitik der SED*, p. 156.

¹¹⁷Ibid, p. 156.

spend time in the “*Schulhort*” with their teacher. Homework was usually done in this time and the children left when their mother was home from work. In 1970, 18% of all school children were in *Schulhort*, by 1975, 64% were.¹¹⁸ The concern to increase the quantity of daycare as quickly as possible overrode the concern for its quality.

Improved technology and availability of consumer goods in the 1970s and 1980s made certain housework tasks significantly easier and less time-consuming, for example, washing machines and refrigerators for individual family use. Many women saw these things as heaven sent luxuries that virtually eliminated certain tasks, for example, washing clothes and preserving food.¹¹⁹ In reality however, laundry and food preparation remained central and time-consuming work for the maintenance of the family.

Consumer goods were neglected in favour of capital goods. This meant that the resulting lack of consumer goods (for example, frozen, pre-packaged foods) made housework and therefore the double burden extremely time-consuming. Women had to spend extra time in the home in order to compensate for the lack of consumer goods so that the productive sphere could be prioritized.

Women had to spend two hours or more each day simply standing in line for scarce

¹¹⁸Ibid, p. 157.

¹¹⁹ After reunification many East German families with children purchased a dishwasher, something that was very rare in the DDR and was (and still is) considered a luxury. In the informal survey done by this author (see appendix), many women said “neither” partner did the dishes because they had a dishwasher. But who loaded and unloaded the dishwasher most often and made sure to run cycles regularly so there would be enough clean dishes for the family? Chances are most woman did this work but did not count it as “real work”.

services or sufficient foodstuffs to put together any kind of meal.¹²⁰ This was despite the fact that the DDR was relatively affluent in terms of consumer durables in relation to the Soviet Union and East Central Europe.¹²¹

The goal to socialize housework was never taken seriously and quickly forgotten. For example, there was an attempt to make laundry communal by providing a washing machine for each apartment complex to share. Bathrooms and kitchens were made too small to appropriately house a washing machine and most did not have the proper plumbing to install one.¹²²

Nonetheless, most women hankered after one for their own apartment. The SED most likely found this an annoying remnant of the bourgeois housewife mentality. Einhorn argues that women rejected the communal washing machine because they were “competing not with the Joneses, but at an individual level with the capitalist West, as represented by their relatives in West Germany”.¹²³ But when providing laundry service for an entire family, it is extremely

¹²⁰Gunnar Winkler, (Ed.) *Sozialreport 90*, (Verlag die Wirtschaft, Berlin, 1990) p. 133.

¹²¹It was the norm for most children and adults to be provided with a hot meal at work or school. In 1988, 67 percent of young married workers in their twenties owned automatic washing machines, while all households owned some form of washing machine and a refrigerator. Approximately 53 percent of all households of employed people also owned a freezer, 60 percent possessed a colour (not black and white) TV and 59 percent owned a car. See B. Einhorn, “Emancipated Women or Hardworking Mothers?”, pp.134-5.

¹²²According to popular wisdom, plumbers and other tradesmen were the affluent ruling class in the DDR society because their services were in such high demand. Ibid 134.

¹²³Ibid

labourious and inconvenient to share one washing machine with the entire apartment complex. The male-dominated leadership simply had no understanding of the amount of work and effort there is in reproductive labour such as laundry and how there is a genuine need for one washing machine for each family unit.¹²⁴ Likewise, if there is a communal dry cleaning service it needs to be available more than once per month (as it was in the DDR) in order to be effective and helpful.

Also, there was some attempt to help women with “their” housework. On May 10th 1972, two significant laws in this regard were put into effect. Firstly, maternity leave was increased from 4 weeks to 18 weeks with pay. In the case of a complicated birth or multiple birth, the leave would be extended for 2 more weeks.¹²⁵ That year 100,000 female employees took advantage of this new legislation.¹²⁶(141) Secondly, the 40 hour work week and increased vacation time for mothers working full time were put into effect.¹²⁷ (141)

¹²⁴Also there were no clothes dryers. East German women hung laundry to dry and then would iron to soften it. East German women did an enormous amount of ironing, much more than in Western societies where a clothes dryer is the norm. Nonetheless ironing represents one of the last bastions of housework that Western men — who are gradually helping out more with housework — have not entered. Ironing is one of the most repetitive, monotonous, unrewarding and time-consuming tasks of housework.

¹²⁵“Verordnung über die Erhöhung der staatlichen Geburtenbeihilfe und die Verlängerung des Wochenurlaubs vom 10. Mai 1972”, *Gesetzblatt der DDR*, Teil II, Nr. 27, (1972), p. 314-316, § 4, Sec.s 1 and 2, p. 315.

¹²⁶Eva Maria Maier, *Die Frauenpolitik der SED*, p. 141.

¹²⁷“Verordnung über die Einführung der 40-Stunden-Arbeitswoche und die Erhöhung des Mindesturlaubs für vollbeschäftigte werktätige Mütter mit mehreren Kindern vom 10. Mai 1972”, *Gesetzblatt der DDR*, Teil II, Nr. 27 (1972), p 313-314, § 2, Sec. 1, p. 313.

On October 24, 1972, the Central Committee Politburo passed a resolution calling for the immediate and long term development of consumer goods, especially household items, such as washing machines, fridges, and freezers.¹²⁸ (161) This meant that the time spent on a number of household tasks that were done primarily by women was significantly reduced. As will be discussed below, however, the SED never took the goal of socializing housework — a precondition to free women up for paid employment according to classical socialist theory — seriously. Despite these improvements in the early 1970s, housework continued to be the area of reproductive work that demanded the most of women's time in the DDR, that is, more than child care.

This, many feminists would argue, was simply a case of “too little to late”. The SED was only concerned with lessening the double burden of women because it appeared to be the cause of their having fewer children. This stronger emphasis on consumer goods was just another means to realize the State's population plan, just as the almost sole emphasis on capital goods up until this point had promoted the economic goal of rapid industrialization. Never in the history of the DDR did the SED give any hint or indication that it was seriously concerned about the inherent injustice of the double burden, or the mental and physical stress women suffered because of it, such as little free time, health problems and sleep deprivation.

The double burden caused a conflictual identity for women. Paid labour and family

¹²⁸Protokoll Nr. 45 der Sitzung des Politbüros des Zentralkomitees am 24. Oktober 1972, Punkt 4, “Beschluß des Sekretariats des ZK vom 18.10.1972 über Vorschläge zur sofortigen und langfristigen Entwicklung des Konsumgüterproduktion”. p. 2.

labour “each observe their own distinct laws and internal logic”.¹²⁹ Gender socialization conditioned women to place other’s interests over self interest. This conditions women to willingly perform reproductive labour and the double burden because it is seen as a natural activity of womanhood. This mentality is at odds with the competitive atmosphere in the workplace. Women were reluctant to take on more challenging responsibilities at work for fear this would conflict with their family duties. This manifested itself in woman displaying: “poor assertion skills, fear of responsibility, sometimes a commitment to evading success”.¹³⁰

Women’s skills and orientations toward the family conflicted with their paid employment. In the workplace, DDR women tended to seek a certain “personalization” of their work situation. Their job situation was determined by social considerations for example, opportunity for communication, company atmosphere, direct personal acknowledgement, rather than so called “objective” conditions (income leverage in collective bargaining, promotion prospects). Women experienced their occupational labour in terms of content and task-related considerations rather than in terms of relevance to promotion. In their value hierarchy they were constantly balancing career interests against family interests.¹³¹ This mental stress of the double burden should not be underestimated. There was the constant contradiction in women’s lives and identities between the interests of their family and their career. Women often felt guilt for not spending enough time with their children and at the

¹²⁹Hildegard. M. Nickel, “Women in the GDR and the New Federal States”, p.143.

¹³⁰E. Beck-Gernsheim, “Männerrolle-Frauenrolle und was steckt dahinter?” in R. Eckert, (Ed.), *Geschlechterrolle und Arbeitsteilung* (Munich 1972) p. 37.

¹³¹Ibid, p. 37.

same time for being an “unreliable” worker because of family duties.

Women did two-thirds to three quarters of the housework plus the larger share of child-rearing.¹³² They had little time to themselves. “The burden was too much for most women to permit them to enjoy their economic independence and certainly too much for them to be able to strive for political influence”.¹³³ Family life of course was also important to men “in fact it supplied a vital, if not irreplaceable framework for male regeneration” but it rarely meant as much labour for men as it did for women.¹³⁴ Women had virtually no free time during the week and their free time was often directly related to the needs of other family members. Women suffered more health problems and took more sick days off work, no doubt because of the emotional and physical stress caused by the double burden.

B. Double Burden of Women Benefits Society

There was internal and external pressure on the DDR to modernize as quickly as possible in order to compete economically and militarily with the capitalist West, especially West Germany. The DDR inherited the primarily agricultural part of prewar Germany. There was an absence of a postwar source of capital investment like the Marshall Plan for West Germany. On the contrary, DDR was heavily burdened with reparation payments to the Soviet Union.

Like in the other East Central European countries, there was a decimation of the male

¹³²Dölling, “Culture and Gender”, p.39.

¹³³Barbara Shaffer-Hegel “Makers and Victims of Unification”, p. 105.

¹³⁴H. M. Nickel, “Women in the GDR and the New Federal States”, p.139.

population in the Second World War. This problem was aggravated in East Germany by the large numbers fleeing to West Germany. Between 1949 when the DDR was founded and 1961 when the “Antifascist Protective Wall” was erected, 2.7 million people, or 14% of the 1949 population left the DDR because they experienced expropriation, loss of status and because of disappointing prospects with regard to their standard of living.¹³⁵ Three million left the DDR between 1949-1989, mostly to West Germany where they received citizenship instantly.¹³⁶

Women’s labour power was needed but economic factors were not the only factors involved. Socialist ideology made it acceptable to tap into women’s labour. East Germany did not entertain the idea of importing male foreign labour like West Germany did to protect the traditional breadwinner/housewife model family.

Women were also needed to continue their traditional reproductive roles. At the inception of the DDR, the death rate exceeded the birthrate. Of the East Bloc countries, the DDR had the most pressing problem with regards to a declining birthrate. It was “perhaps the only state in history to have had a constantly declining population throughout its entire history”.¹³⁷ The birthrate did not equal the death rate until 1977.¹³⁸ Besides the low birthrate

¹³⁵Heike Trappe, “Work and Family in Women’s Lives in the German Democratic Republic”, *Work and Occupations* (vol. 23, no. 4, November 1996) p.357

¹³⁶William D. Graf, *Not Without the Workers: Regime Delegation through Class Alienation in the GDR*, paper presented at the 64th Annual Meeting CPSA, Charlottetown, May 31 - June 2, 1992, p.18

¹³⁷Einhorn “GDR: Emancipated Women or Hard Working Mothers?”, p.137

¹³⁸D. Rosenberg “Emancipation of Women in Fact and Fiction”, p.359

and predominance of the one-child family which was common to all state socialist countries, there was a “DDR-specific” cause for the declining population: the constant leak through the border to West Germany.

C. Women Are Objects of Population and Labour Policies

Female reproduction was instrumentalized for collective interests in the DDR. *Frauenpolitik* at no point in the DDR existed as an independent policy area. It was always more or less and important and constant part of family, social, work and education policies that met state priorities. *Frauenpolitik* from 1949-1971 saw the intensity of work and family policies vary and the state concentrated on different groups of the female population at different times.¹³⁹

After years of hovering side by side, the death rate finally exceeded the birthrate in 1970. This was alarming and more studies were conducted into what was causing the birthrate to drop. These studies showed that demographic problems, for example, an aging population or not enough women in their childbearing years, were not the problem. Rather working women still felt overwhelmed by their double duty as “mother-workers” and were having fewer children because of lack of time.¹⁴⁰ “This latter realization must have been extremely disconcerting to the SED — that their goal to integrate women into the labour force

¹³⁹Eva Maria Maier, *Die Frauenpolitik der SED*, p. 11.

¹⁴⁰K. Lungwitz, “Ökonomische und soziale Probleme der Geburtenentwicklung”, *Wirtschaftswissenschaft*, (Vol. 22, no. 11, 1974) p. 1618.

had apparently only been achieved through 'demographic victims'."¹⁴¹ Also, the insufficient living conditions for families made it difficult for couples (namely women) to raise children. Even though full time work for women appeared to be the cause of the declining birthrate, the SED did not (could not) question the desirability of their policy of full-employment of women. Women's labour power was indispensable to the SED's economic goals of rapid industrialization. Furthermore, it was central to the classical socialist definition of women's emancipation which had been a part of official discourse since the conception of the DDR.

Muttipolitik, although centred on women, was not *for* women; in other words, it was not feminist legislation designed to improve the status of women. Legislation designed with the equality of women in mind would have addressed the problem of the GDL which was the cause of women's double role and burden. *Muttipolitik* was first and foremost designed to address the State's priorities by focussing on women's central role in the economy.

Muttipolitik was essentially population politics concentrated on women. Earlier... The burden and responsibility to save the DDR from its demographic crisis was placed squarely on the shoulders of women. That is why the SED invested so heavily into *Muttipolitik*. Minister President Willi Stoph remarked: "family and population development is a matter concerning all of society".¹⁴² *Muttipolitik* cost the state dearly.

¹⁴¹(Translation mine.) Eva Maria Maier, *Die Frauenpolitik der SED*, p. 136.

¹⁴²(Translation mine), W. Stoph, "Bericht zur Direktive des VIII. Parteitages zum Fünfjahrplan für die Entwicklung der Volkswirtschaft der DDR in den Jahren 1971-1975", in: *Protokoll der Verhandlungen des VIII. Parteitages der SED vom 15.-19. Juni 1971 in Berlin*, (Vol. 2, East Berlin, 1971) pp. 47f.

One benefit of the *Vereinbarkeitskonzeption* was that it made it easier for women to combine a paid labour with motherhood (albeit at the price of the double burden). Einhorn, for example comments:

The DDR went the furthest of the state socialist countries in balancing its policies towards women as producers and reproducers, hence to a degree facilitating choice about whether and when to have children, and if and when to return to one's job afterwards.¹⁴³

3. Productive Labour is Male-Dominated

A. Discrimination in the Workplace

In the “Equality Politics” phase of *Frauenpolitik* prior to 1972, Article 20 of the DDR Constitution stipulated that “men and women shall have equal rights and the same legal status in all spheres of social, political and personal life”. The DDR’s 1950 *Act for the Protection of Mother and Child and the Rights of Women* laid the basis for all subsequent DDR laws. The Act provided for the creation of state child care facilities, maternity grants and paid maternity leave, revisions in marriage and family laws, and for measures designed to help women improve their level of qualification and gain access to previously male-dominated occupations. It followed the 1946 decree of the Soviet military administration, which, in giving women equal rights in all spheres and granting equal pay for equal work, had predated by five years the respective UN Convention (no. 100).¹⁴⁴

Muttipolitik was associated with noticeable increases in gender segregation on the

¹⁴³B. Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to the Market*, p. 34-5.

¹⁴⁴Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to the Market*, p.22

job.¹⁴⁵ People were resentful of the benefits given to mothers which they saw as unearned privileges. Women were encouraged to be grateful for the privilege of being able to have a family and a job. Media images shifted in this period to emphasize the dual responsibilities of women and downplay themes of equality.¹⁴⁶ Women were seen as “unreliable” workers who were frequently absent; they were also seen (and saw themselves) as unsuited for the more demanding or responsible positions. The workplace was the centre for friendships in the DDR, so it was psychologically distressing for women to be criticized as a worker.

Because the workplace was the most emphasized seat of identity in the GDR and the respect and esteem of colleagues psychologically central this meant an increasing attack on the self-esteem of able and ambitious women.¹⁴⁷

Muttipolitik also entrenched the GDL and this increased the double burden on women. Men were officially relieved of their fatherly duties. It was women, and women only, who were expected to care for sick children or manage the “second shift” of housework because they were the ones who were “given” the time off work to do so.¹⁴⁸

Muttipolitik also resulted in a hardening of traditional attitudes. In a 1988 survey in the then DDR, it was revealed that 37 percent of women and 43 percent of men believed that while the children are young, women should be the ones to make career compromises. Only

¹⁴⁵See for example, Dölling “Between Hope and Helplessness” and M. M. Ferree “The Rise and Fall of ‘Mommy Politics’”

¹⁴⁶See Irene Dölling, “‘But the Pictures Stay the Same...’ The Image of women in the Journal *Für Dich* before and After the ‘Turning Point’” in Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (Ed.s) *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections From Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

¹⁴⁷M. M. Ferree “The Rise and Fall of ‘Mommy Politics’”, p. 95.

¹⁴⁸Ibid, p. 95.

3 percent of women and 1 percent of men believed that men should at some time put their career on hold when there were children in the family.¹⁴⁹ This author encountered a common claim among DDR men and women that the many sick days women took off from work in the DDR were really just “time off” for themselves. An awareness of women’s double burden would have dispelled this misconception immediately.

The total lack of awareness of the objective disadvantaging of women in the economy, made women complacent to their disadvantaged position in society. In fact the claim of the “emancipation of our women” became a useful functional concept for the SED, much like Antifaschismus. It made it seem that there was no need to improve status of women and this served to silence and ridicule feminists as irrational, unintelligent women.

DDR women saw the double burden as an individual problem, not as a symptom of the systematic problem of gender inequality. Women did not feel oppressed as women — probably because they were not personally or individually financially dependent on men. It was largely believed by the population that the GDL was “natural”, making the double burden an inevitable and practical problem for women. Faced with this inevitable “fact”, one option to relieve the stress of the double burden for women was getting a divorce and/or remaining single. Marriage meant an extra person to perform housework for and this was not worth if there was no love. But on the whole, women were — confident or not— willing take on the bulk of housework and child care as a service “out of love” for their families. This service was still central to the conceptions of femininity and womanhood in the DDR. The

¹⁴⁹Gunnar Winkler, (Ed.), *Sozialreport 90*, (Verlag Die Wirtschaft, Berlin, 1990) p. 274.

conception of womanhood was more shaping of behaviour than beliefs in gender emancipation. Furthermore even if women sympathized with feminists, they were hesitant to call themselves “feminist”. Gender socialization promotes a system of rewards and punishments to encourage people to follow gender roles. Because feminists prioritize women’s rights they are often constructed as “selfish” and “unfeminine” because they appear to be placing “special interests of women” over the family. To be made to feel “unfeminine” is an emotionally painful experience for women because it is a form of social isolation and non-acceptance. Irene Dölling also comments:

I think that the irreverent speech and slightly odd appearance of its representatives, who do not attempt to conform to general standards of dress and behaviour, as well as their insistence upon women’s autonomy and independence, was perceived as alienating and provoked a fearful and aggressive response. So-called “normal” women probably selectively registered only those characteristics which were foreign to them. The needs and behavioural structures of most women are obviously not what the Independent Women thought they were.¹⁵⁰

The only group of people who were gender aware were DDR feminists, a minute percentage of DDR society. Events during and after *die Wende* revealed that the majority of DDR women did not identify with the feminists. Official discourse had ridiculed feminism and therefore feminism was a bad word. East German women were very active during *die Wende*. This was remarkable and heartening in view of the disturbing absence of women’s participation in the other East European Revolutions of 1989. East German women mostly did not organize specifically around women’s rights issues. Their participation was spontaneous and non-permanent which is “typical” for women’s political participation. Social

¹⁵⁰Dölling, “Between Hope and Helplessness” p.4

movements and informal participation fits better with women's roles as housewife and mother as was discussed in chapter two. After *die Wende*, East German women retreated from the political scene.

Gender socialization conditioned women to place the interests of others over their own self interest at all times. It is this aspect in particular of gender socialization that makes the GDL stable because it creates a mentality that is not conducive to feminism. The assumption that women's interests are "special interests" was strong in the DDR, as was the belief that it is selfish and hurts the family and society to prioritize such "special interests". Even women who recognized the gender inequality were hesitant to challenge it because they felt that their family would suffer as a result.

DDR feminists tended to be the educated, professionals, the intelligentsia and writers. During *die Wende*, DDR feminists became very active. This was remarkable because feminist activism had been noticeably absent in the dissidence and 1989 of the other East European countries. Feminists saw the opportunity to make feminist gains during the transition and tried to take advantage of them by organizing rapidly. In the spring of 1990, after the collapse of censorship and free access to printing services was available, new feminist publications quickly followed. Rosenberg comments that:

the speed with which these projects blossomed is a direct reflection of the level that feminist consciousness had attained in the GDR before the events of 1989-90.¹⁵¹

The development of feminist consciousness was impressive. DDR feminists had a

¹⁵¹Dorothy Rosenberg, "Shock Therapy: GDR Women in Transition from a Socialist Welfare State to a Social Market Economy", *Signs* (XVII, 1, Autumn 1991) p.144.

very sophisticated analysis and critique of *Muttipolitik*. Although DDR feminists derided *Muttipolitik* they were still in favour of a family neutral legislation. Feminists were against reunification because they believed that the West German capitalist system would not support a family legislation and would encourage women to become homemakers. DDR feminists warned women that reunification would revitalize traditional gender roles and send them back to the home as was the norm in West Germany. Firstly feminists organized themselves as various smaller interest groups such as lesbians and single mothers; and soon afterwards these smaller groups banded together to form “The Purple Offensive” in October 1989. One month later The Purple Offensive presented a comprehensive political programme and agreed to meet again in December 1989.

The demands of the Purple Offensive programme included: benefits for all adults caring for children, abolition of benefits attached to marriage, civil rights guaranteed for non-married couples of any sexual orientation; revision of the existing penal code; abolishment of gender discrimination; and punishment for all forms of violence against women.¹⁵² On Sunday, December 3, 1989, arguably, the greatest triumph for East German feminists occurred at a meeting in a Berlin theatre: The Independent Women’s League (UFV)¹⁵³ was formed. Only 300 women had been expected, but 1500 showed up. “If you don’t watch out, you’ll be stuck in the house” was the slogan of the day. The Independent Women’s League became the

¹⁵²B. Schäffer-Hegel, “Makers and Victims of Unification: German Women and the Two Germanies”, *Women’s Studies International Forum* (XV, no. 1, 1992) pp.101-2

¹⁵³ UFV stands for “*Unabhängige Frauen Verband*”, (Independent Women’s League)

umbrella organization for a large number of feminist and women's groups. The organization resolved to defend DDR women's rights in the new Germany. It went on to represent women's interests at the Round Tables and provided the first Minister of Equal Rights, Tatiana Böhm in the interim Modrow government. The Independent Women's League also conducted research on women's issues.

The March 1990 election revealed, however, that over 46 percent of all registered women voters chose the conservative CDU led Alliance for Germany and therefore reunification in the March 1990 elections — precisely what feminists warned women not to do. This demonstrated that: “the vast majority of women in the GDR do not associate themselves with emancipatory or feminist ideas and practices and in fact reject them”.¹⁵⁴

B. Women Lack Political and Economic Power

Women made considerable inroads into previously male-dominated occupations and professions. In 1977-79, 45 percent of judges and 30 percent of lawyers in the DDR were women. (Only 5 percent of West German lawyers were women). In 1983, women accounted for 57 percent of dentists and 52 percent of doctors in the DDR (compared with only 20 percent of dentists and 23 percent of doctors in the FRG in 1987).¹⁵⁵ There were impressive statistics for the political representation of women: 25 percent of local mayors in 1986, and

¹⁵⁴Dölling, “Between Hope and Helplessness”, p.4

¹⁵⁵Barbara Einhorn “German Democratic Republic: Emancipated Women or Hardworking Mothers?”, in Chris Corrin ed., *Superwoman and the Double Burden: Women's Experience of Change in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, (London: Scarlet Press, 1992) p. 130.

32 percent of members of the *Volkskammer*, the DDR Parliament were women.¹⁵⁶ In education, there were the *Frauenförderungsmaßnahmen* (“measures for the promotion of women”). They were a form of positive discrimination enabling women in employment to take paid time off for courses or training to improve their level of qualification. This resulted in the percentage of working women who were unskilled falling from 44.4 percent in 1971 to 12.3 percent in 1989 (as opposed to 23.3 percent and 7.1 percent of men in each of those years.)¹⁵⁷

The stress on women as mothers was associated with an increase in gender occupational segregation. “The family clearly diminished the appeal of female labour power as a commodity in the market economy.... it boosted the value of male labour power and denied equality of opportunity to the sexes in the labour market”.¹⁵⁸ Employers were reluctant to hire women for positions of higher responsibility and women themselves were reluctant to take on higher positions of responsibility. Despite the large numbers of women party members (an indication of political interest), few women members ever rose higher than this in the political hierarchy. The higher the political body in the decision-making hierarchy, the smaller the percentage of women representatives was. In the history of the DDR, no woman ever became a member of the *politburo*.

¹⁵⁶Ibid, p. 144.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 141.

¹⁵⁸H. M. Nickel “Women in the GDR and the New Federal States”, p. 139.

Women earned on average 12-25 percent less than men.¹⁵⁹ Of the total work-force, women made up an average 72 percent of the lowest three income brackets but only 16.4 percent of the top two. The gendered wage gap existed even in industry, the most privileged sector of the economy, due to the concentration of women in jobs requiring lower level of qualification and responsibility. Hence in 1989, 56.7 percent of all women employed in industrial production were concentrated in the two lowest income brackets, whereas only 13.8 percent of them held demanding jobs in the top two income brackets.¹⁶⁰

There was horizontal and vertical gender occupational segregation. Female workers in the DDR were heavily represented in industry as a whole but there was a high level of occupational segregation. Women tended to be concentrated in certain traditionally female-dominated sectors of the economy, in retail and in the service sector, all of which paid lower wages than did the prioritized heavy industry and construction sectors. Most nurses, creche and nursery school teachers, secretaries, cleaners, shop assistants, and hotel and restaurant workers were women.

This clearly illustrates the notion, widely held to be true for western Europe, that women's labour-force participation tends to parallel their domestic roles.¹⁶¹ Einhorn makes this point rather bluntly:

Put more crudely it seems that in the DDR, as in non-socialist countries, the majority of working women tended to be concentrated in occupations

¹⁵⁹Einhorn, "German Democratic Republic: Emancipated women or Hardworking Mothers?" p. 129

¹⁶⁰Maria Beyer, Gunnar Winkler, (Ed.) *Frauenreport 90*, pp. 86-92

¹⁶¹Einhorn, "GDR: Emancipated Women or Hardworking Mothers?" p.129

involving care for and cleaning up after other people.¹⁶²

Ultimately, the lower status of women in paid employment meant that women had less political autonomy and decision making power in comparison to men in DDR society. There was a diminishing representation of women towards the top of career pyramids, such that medical consultants tended to be men, as did head teachers or university professors. Although 77 percent of teachers in the DDR in 1985 were women, only 32 percent of head teachers and 7 percent of college and university lecturers, including full professors were women. (The 7 percent figure was valid for 1977-78 when the corresponding figure for FRG was 0.6%)¹⁶³ In GDR industry too, this under-representation was characteristic even of those occupations and sectors of the economy that remained female-dominated. The average female share of managerial positions in industry as a whole was 21 percent in 1988.¹⁶⁴

Although women had made some inroads into formerly male-dominated occupations, there appears to have been a reverse trend during the 1980s. It appears that especially where the introduction of new technology requires skill rather than manual dexterity and hence involves higher levels of pay, women tend to be displaced by men.¹⁶⁵

Women accounted for about one-third of the *Volkskammer* (the DDR parliament) as late as 1985, but only one of 12 members of the secretariat of the SED was a woman. Of the 25 members and candidates in the *Politburo*, only two were women, both candidates. Neither

¹⁶²Ibid, p. 129.

¹⁶³Ibid, p. 131.

¹⁶⁴Ibid, p. 131.

¹⁶⁵Ibid, p. 131.

candidate ever became a *Politburo* member.¹⁶⁶

Summary

The GDL indicators for the period of *Muttipolitik* reveal the GDL remained strongly intact. The positive developments in women's education, qualifications, were due to the "equality phase" of *Frauenpolitik* prior to 1972 which promoted women's equal rights. With regards to the first GDL indicator, reproductive labour remained undisputably feminized in the time period in question. By 1989, women were still primarily responsible for child care and housework. Men were doing more reproductive work towards the end of this period, but they were only beginning to participate in the attractive tasks. The monotonous, unrewarding and invisible reproductive work remained the domain of women. Gender socialization was strongly reinforced the GDL. In the family, children learned the GDL from their parents. Officially, through gender-specific legislation women were constructed as "mother-workers" but there was no corresponding "fathers-workers" thereby reinforcing the assumption that women are naturally better at parenting. And despite genuine attempts to make education gender-neutral, the school system reinforced gender stereotypes.

The sphere of male dominated productive work was clearly prioritized in the DDR over reproduction. Women's reproductive work was not uniformly devalued. The leadership did understand the centrality of reproductive labour to society. The SED consulted regularly with sociologists. As a result, the leadership was highly aware of woman's central role in society and the economy: as child caretakers, women had a strong influence on the

¹⁶⁶M. Rueschemeyer, "Women in the Politics of East Germany", p. 95.

development of future citizens; furthermore, the strength of the economy depended on women's willingness to bear children; the easier it was for women to provide a good standard of living through her housework, the more children they were likely to have. It must be noted however, that the interest the SED took in women's reproductive labour was not motivated by a desire to promote women's equality. Rather the SED was only interested reproductive work in how it affected levels of production and demography. DDR women had a heavy double burden as producers and reproducers. This inflicted emotional stress and health problems on women and meant that they had significantly less free time in comparison to men. The double burden of women was inflicted on women because of *Vereinbarkeitskonzeption* the leadership took adapted toward women workers. Instead of socializing housework, which would have meant channelling less resources to production, they attempted to create measures that would enable women to combine motherhood and paid labour.

Women were utilized by the state for the child bearing capacity in order to meet population targets. The burden of resolving the DDR's demographic crisis was put squarely on the shoulders of women. Women were the objects rather than the subjects of the DDR's family and population policies. On the other hand however, one of the greatest successes of the DDR, was the reproductive freedom for women: the free and unlimited access to birth control and abortion and the choice to combine motherhood and career. DDR women were more able than ever before in German history (including present day reunified Germany) to do this.

Productive labour remained male-dominated in the DDR. There was discrimination

against women in the work place. “Mother-workers” were seen as unreliable workers unsuitable for leadership positions. Also, there was resentment against the perceived “special treatment” of mothers and no awareness of the women’s disadvantaged position in the economy or the double burden.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the relationship between gender-specific legislation and gender equality by looking at the case study of *Muttipolitik* in the DDR. The hypothesis, “*Muttipolitik* promoted gender equality” was tested using the concept of GDL. GDL was shown to be a gauge of patriarchy (gender inequality) and three indicators of GDL were developed: the feminization and devaluation of reproductive labour; the exploitation of female reproductive labour and the male dominance of productive labour. When these indicators were applied to *Muttipolitik*, it was revealed that the GDL, and therefore gender inequality, remained constant. This meant that *Muttipolitik* was not associated with the promotion of gender equality and was actually associated with increased discrimination against women and gender occupational segregation. The positive development of women’s growing presence in productive labour occurred was attributed to pre-1972 *Frauenpolitik* which emphasized legal equality. *Muttipolitik* was a divergence from the *Frauenpolitik* of the past because it constructed women as “mother-workers”, in other words, as fundamentally different from the “normal” male citizen-worker. The original hypothesis therefore was revised to “*Muttipolitik* did not promote gender equality”.

Muttipolitik is very relevant to the current debate in the West regarding group-specific legislation. What state socialist, capitalist and post communist society share in common is that male-dominated production is valued over feminized reproduction. The

“universal” citizen is a masculine being freed of reproductive work. Women make unreliable workers because they cannot put in the same long hours as men, because of “their” “natural” role as housewives and mothers.

If gender equality is valued, then there would be a revaluation of priorities. There would be the recognition that reproductive and productive labour are equal in value and neither is the exclusive domain of one gender. This would mean less emphasis on production, such as a shorter work week, so that both genders can participate equally in reproductive work without the being oppressed by a double burden. Existing laws need to be re-modelled after a gender-free citizen, for example, a shared baby year for both parents.

Gender-specific legislation perpetuates the misconception of the male norm from which women differ. Proponents of gender-specific legislation argue that the attempt to be gender-free will result in the suppression of female difference, in other words, trying to make women more like men. This is only true if the “universal citizen” is a masculine construction. Proponents for gender-specific laws seem to be unconsciously operating on the assumption that the political order is naturally patriarchal and the only way to remedy this is to have special laws for women to counterbalance this. This does not address the roots of the gender inequality and it fosters a dependency mentality in women on the paternal state.

It may be true that laws can never be purely universal, because humans, despite all attempts to the contrary, are inevitably influenced by their social context. It does not follow from this however, that the goal to create gender-free legislation should be abandoned. There should be a real attempt in post-WWII western societies to create laws that are gender-free. This would foster an egalitarian world view, that takes as given, that men are just as

different as women, and women are just as normal as men.

Appendix

Informal Survey

Questionnaire: Housework and Occupation for Women in East Germany¹⁶⁷

A Canadian student kindly requests your help for her thesis research.

Part I

Please circle the correct answer

1. Sex: female male

2. Age group: 0-21 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 over 60

3. Your work:

employed self-employed student housewife/husband retired unemployed

4. Your partner's work:

employed self-employed student housewife/husband retired unemployed

5. Approximately how many hours per week do you work outside of the home?

0-10 11-20 21-30 31-40 over 40

6. Approximately how many hours per week does your partner work outside of the home?

0-10 11-20 21-30 31-40 over 40

7. Are you and your partner married? Yes No

¹⁶⁷Translated from the German. This survey was conducted in January, 1998.

8. How many children are in your household?

0 1 2 3 4 5 more

Part II

On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- 1 - strongly disagree
- 2 - disagree somewhat
- 3 - don't know
- 4 - agree somewhat
- 5 - strongly agree

9. Women in the former GDR were more emancipated than women in the FRG.

1 2 3 4 5

10. East German women lost rights *as women* after the *Wende*.

1 2 3 4 5

11. The disproportionately high women's unemployment in the former East Germany could have been prevented.

1 2 3 4 5

12. A woman with a career is more emancipated than a housewife.

1 2 3 4 5

13. Unfortunately in these bad economic conditions, women's issues cannot be a priority.

1 2 3 4 5

14. Although it would be ideal, it is not realistic to expect that men and women share the housework and child rearing equally -- even when the woman works outside the home.

1 2 3 4 5

Part III

If you and your partner share the housework, please answer the following questions:

15. Who does more housework?

me my partner we share it equally

16. How do you distribute the housework? Who performed this task the most in the last three months?**a. cooking**

you your partner both equally neither

b. washing the dishes

you your partner both equally neither

c. laundry

you your partner both equally neither

d. grocery shopping

you your partner both equally neither

e. ironing

you your partner both equally neither

f. car maintenance

you your partner both equally neither

g. gardening

you your partner both equally neither

h. house/apartment repairs

you your partner both equally neither

i. window cleaning

you your partner both equally neither

j. Christmas preparations

you your partner both equally neither

Thanks! Michelle

The tables on the two following pages show complete results of the survey. For questions that do not have a numerical answer, Numbers refer to number of the answer checked on the sheet.

Responses to Questions 9 -- 14 by Gender (Average)

Figure 1. Average degree of agreement by gender for questions 9 -14

Figure 1. Shows the average responses to Questions 9 through 14. Note that there is virtually no difference between responses by men and those by women.

The table below gives the results for questions 15 through 16f.. Quite obviously, women do more housework (Q15) and the only tasks of our survey that are done more often by men than women are 'car maintenance' (Q16f) and 'house/apartment repairs' (Q16h).

	Q15	Q16a	Q16b	Q16c	Q16d	Q16e	Q16f	Q16g	Q16h	Q16i	Q16j
women	53%	77%	41%	80%	33%	92%	13%	11%	6%	75%	38%
men	27%	5%	19%	5%	17%	3%	61%	20%	77%	5%	0%
both	20%	17%	33%	13%	50%	2%	13%	31%	13%	17%	61%
neither	0%	2%	8%	3%	0%	3%	14%	38%	5%	3%	2%

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