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The Quest for Equal Rights: The Women's Movement in Germany and its Care-based Argumentation

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Abstract

Building upon the Three-Level Model of the Public Sphere, we (a) analyse how women's associations in Germany, both during the Wilhelmine era and in the days of the early Federal Republic of Germany, interlinked women's care work with demands for equality, and (b) examine the public responses to women's associations' use of care as the basis for their argumentation. To accomplish these goals, we discuss the results of a standardised content analysis of three feminist magazines from these two eras (*Centralblatt*, *Welt der Frau*, and *Informationen für die Frau*) and supplement the results with a historical-hermeneutic analysis of selected articles, an approach that provides contextualised and detailed insights. Furthermore, we analyse the corresponding discourse in mass media and politics by focusing on major legislative changes and presenting the results of our hermeneutic analysis of selected articles from two periodicals with a strong focus on socio-political issues (*Die Hilfe* and *Der Spiegel*).

Keywords

equal rights – care – argumentation – Wilhelmine era – Federal Republic of Germany

The success of social movements depends heavily on their ability to gain access to – and gather support from – important institutions, such as mass media organisations or parliaments.[1] Feminists of the Wilhelmine era (1890–1914), for example, were highly aware of this prerequisite when they were fighting for formal equal rights in Germany. As early as 1895, Germany's first female lawyer, Anita Augspurg (1857–1943), stated that "resistance […] can only be overcome by direct contact with the gentlemen and by influencing public opinion."[2] To gain public support, first-wave feminists based their claims on arguments that were regarded as justifiable within the established lines of public discourse at that time.[3] Consequently, the women's movement in Germany did not typically demand equal rights on the basis of universal human rights and natural law.[4] This "individualist"[5] approach, as Karen Offen has called it, was adopted by

1 Frank Nullmeier and Joachim Raschke, "Soziale Bewegungen," in *Regierungssystem und Regierungslehre*, ed. Stephan von Bandemer and Göttrik Wewer (Wiesbaden, 1989), 249–272; regarding feminist movements, see Elisabeth Klaus and Ulla Wischermann, "Öffentlichkeit als Mehr-Ebenen-Prozess: Theoretische Überlegungen und empirische Befunde am Beispiel der Frauenbewegungen um 1900," *Zeitschrift für Frauenforschung & Geschlechterstudien* 26 (2008), 103–116; Ulla Wischermann, *Frauenbewegungen und Öffentlichkeiten um 1900: Netzwerke – Gegenöffentlichkeiten – Protestinszenierungen* (Frankfurt, 2003); Susanne Kinnebrock, "Internationalization or Nationalization by Communication? The International Communication Relations of the German Suffrage Movement," *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 8 (2011), 47–71.

2 Translated from the following: "Der Widerstand […] ist nur durch die direkte Tuchfühlung mit den Herren und der Beeinflussung der öffentlichen Meinung zu besiegen." Anita Augspurg, "Letter to Mathilde von Mevissen," 3 December 1899, Historical Archive of the City of Cologne 1067/67; see Susanne Kinnebrock, *Anita Augspurg (1857–1943): Feministin und Pazifistin zwischen Journalismus und Politik: Eine kommunikationshistorische Biographie* (Herbolzheim, 2005).

3 Kinnebrock, "Internationalization or Nationalization by Communication," 47–71.

4 It has to be considered that due to manifold hindrances, the first women's movement in Germany unfolded relatively late compared to other industrialized nations – e.g., the United States and the United Kingdom; see Sylvia Paletschek and Bianka Pietrow-Ennker, "Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century: Conclusions," in *Women's Emancipation Movements in the Nineteenth Century: A European Perspective*, ed. Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker (Stanford, CA, 2004), 301–333. Additionally, specific to the German situation at that time is the paucity of cooperation between middle class and socialist feminists, since class affiliations were strong and socialist feminists regarded their movement primarily as part of the workers' movement (see Richard J. Evans, "Bourgeois Feminists and Women Socialists in Germany 1894–1914: Lost Opportunity or Inevitable Conflict?" *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 3 (1980), 355–376). As a result, our paper focuses only on one part of the first women's movement in Germany, on middle-class feminism and its associations.

5 Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," *Signs*, 14 (1988), 119–157.

the Anglo-Saxon women's suffrage movements.[6] In Germany, the "relational"[7] approach was predominant, based on the idea that women first had to serve the state before being eligible for civil or even political rights.[8] Consequently, the women's movement in Germany usually referred to women's care work – be it professional, voluntary, or familial – when demanding political rights in public. At the same time, the "male" state was accused of dramatically failing to provide social security to all members of society due to the systematic exclusion from public life of women and their care expertise.[9] As a result of this discursive strategy, the women's movement in Germany adopted a remarkably gendered view on the concept of care, with care being treated as the natural competence and responsibility of women.[10]

A few decades later, after the turbulent Weimar Republic (1918–1933) and the abominable Nazi regime (1933–1945), the political situation of women in Germany had changed significantly: the German Democratic Republic adopted a completely new political system – socialism – in which women were regarded as equals. The Federal Republic of Germany, meanwhile, continued with the capitalist economic system that had originally been established in the Wilhelmine era but expanded the welfare state. In the Federal Republic of Germany (since 1949), women were no longer denied political rights, such

6 Eleonor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, MA, 2000); Harold Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign, 1866–1928*, 2nd ed. (London, 2009); Paletschek and Pietrow-Ennker, *Women's Emancipation Movements in the Nineteenth Century*.

7 Offen, "Defining Feminism," 119–157.

8 Bärbel Clemens, *Menschenrechte haben kein Geschlecht!: Zum Politikverständnis der bürgerlichen Frauenbewegung* (Pfaffenweiler, 1988).

9 See, for example, Sophia Sotke, *Frauenkarrieren zwischen Emanzipation und bürgerlicher Sozialreform* (Göttingen, 2013); Leonie Wagner and Cornelia Wenzel, "Frauenbewegung und Soziale Arbeit," in *Soziale Arbeit und Soziale Bewegungen,* ed. Leonie Wagner (Wiesbaden, 2009), 21–71; Christoph Sachße, *Mütterlichkeit als Beruf: Sozialarbeit, Sozialreform und Frauenbewegung, 1871–1929* (Weinheim, 2003); Kerstin Wolff, *Stadtmütter: Bürgerliche Frauen und ihr Einfluss auf die Kommunalpolitik im 19. Jahrhundert (1860–1900)* (Königsstein, 2003); Iris Schröder, *Arbeiten für eine bessere Welt: Frauenbewegung und Sozialreform, 1890–1914* (Frankfurt, 2001); Dietlinde Peters, *Mütterlichkeit im Kaiserreich: Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung und der soziale Beruf der Frau* (Bielefeld, 1984).

10 Our understanding of "care" follows that of the sociologist Margrit Brückner, who defines care as comprising the entire spectrum of care and nursing work that is dedicated to the health care, education, and care of persons in need of help (e.g., children, persons in need of care, and the elderly) in the family and/or the institutional framework, as well as help for persons in socially precarious situations (e.g., for the unemployed and homeless). In short, the term *care* encompasses familial, voluntary, and professional activities, and care activities include both paid and unpaid work; see Margrit Brückner, "Der gesellschaftliche Umgang mit menschlicher Hilfsbedürftigkeit," *ÖZS*, 29 (2004), 7–23.

as the right to vote, the freedom of assembly, or the freedom of association. However, although significant progress had been made, major problems regarding gender equality remained. For example, women were still subject to outdated matrimonial and family law established in the Wilhelmine era.[11] Accordingly, the women's movement turned its attention to this outdated law and pleaded for reform. In this context, when fighting for equal rights, women's associations still resorted to the argument regarding the (exclusively) female responsibility of care.[12] This strategy should be considered in connection with the following two facts: first, after the end of World War II, the (re) founding of women's associations was often undertaken by the women who had already played a major role in the first German women's movement during the Wilhelmine era.[13] Secondly, in terms of the prevailing discourses in the public sphere, the situation was similar in both periods, as binary approaches to gender concepts persisted. Although women had fulfilled crucial needs for numerous kinds of service on the home front during World War II, the constant renegotiation and reconstruction of gender norms within society did not lead to more gender equality:[14] the early Federal Republic of Germany was characterised by a retreat into the private sphere, and the projected ideal of the woman as being exclusively a caring wife and mother.[15] The woman was

11 Ute Gerhard, ed., *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts: Von der frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 1997).

12 Andre Dechert and Susanne Kinnebrock, "Care – ein höchst ambivalentes Legitimationsmuster für Gleichberechtigung: Ein Vergleich öffentlicher Diskurse aus Kaiserreich und Nachkriegszeit," *Ariadne: Forum für Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte*, 75 (2019), 90–107.

13 Elke Schüller, "Westdeutsche Frauenorganisationen der Nachkriegszeit: ein 'missing link' zwischen alter und neuer Frauenbewegung," in *Das Jahrhundert des Feminismus: Streifzüge durch nationale und internationale Bewegungen und Theorien*, ed. Anja Weckert and Ulla Wischermann (Königsstein, 2006), 171–182.

14 For a historical approach to the analysis of processes of value change, especially regarding gender norms, see, e.g., Isabel Heinemann, *Wert der Familie: Ehescheidung, Frauenarbeit und Reproduktion in den USA des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 2018).

15 There are different explanations for this continuity or even intensification of dual gender conceptions in wartimes or with contemporary family constellations. As Margaret and Patrice Higonnet have pointed out, fundamental changes in the situation of women during the World Wars (e.g., the widespread taking over of activities with male connotation) were accompanied by an ideological consolidation of gender differences; see Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.R. Higonnet, "The Double Helix," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the two World Wars*, ed. Margaret R. Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, and Margaret Collins Weitz (New Haven, CT–London, 1987), 31–47. In an impressive study, "Family in the 20th Century," Christopher Neumaier has aptly summarised that a political reconstruction of the family took place in the FRG, which aimed to simultaneously distance itself from national

responsible for the house and the children, but the husband and father was, as we will show, the one making decisions regarding all (crucial) matters; in the household, neither the responsibilities nor the rights were shared, with family roles being complementary.[16]

Building on the fact that the women's associations in both the Wilhelmine era and the early Federal Republic of Germany used the importance of female care as the basis for their argumentation, we adopt a comparative perspective in this paper. We consider how issues of gender, care, and participation were, in these two very different periods, interlinked in the German women's movement and publicly discussed, particularly in mass media and politics. Our aim is to analyse both the rationale of the women's movement and the public responses to the movement's use of care as the basis for their argumentation in these two time periods.

At the theoretical level, our approach is based, on the one hand, on the assumption that processes of social change can be initiated by social movements and their communication efforts, as the communication scholar Elisabeth Klaus highlighted in her "Three-Level Model of the Public Sphere."[17] Her model places social movements in the intermediate "medium level" of the public sphere, connecting coincidental communication at the "encounter level" with professional mass media and political communication at the "complex level" of the public sphere. In historical terms, social movements' media outlets were central discussion forums of exchange, in which diverse concerns were sometimes bundled with common topics and demands, and thus made accessible to the political and journalistic elites of society.[18] On the other hand, as Klaus also pointed out, a movement's success ultimately depends on how influential institutions – the complex level of the public sphere, such as mass

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socialism and protect itself from communism. At the same time, however, it has already been noted that – particularly in the conception of contemporaries – the concept of the nuclear family, with its clearly defined gender roles, took on a stabilising and regulatory function in the FRG; see Christopher Neumaier, *Familie im 20. Jahrhundert. Konflikte um Ideale, Politiken und Praktiken* (Berlin, 2019), 285–286.

16 Helmut Schelsky, *Wandlungen der deutschen Familie in der Gegenwart: Darstellung und Deutung einer empirisch-soziologischen Tatbestandsaufnahme* (Stuttgart, 1967); Ute Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte: Zwischen bürgerlicher Verbesserung und neuer Weiblichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1986).

17 Elisabeth Klaus, "Öffentlichkeit als gesellschaftlicher Selbstverständigungsprozess und das Drei-Ebenen-Modell von Öffentlichkeit: Rückblick und Ausblick," in *Öffentlichkeiten und gesellschaftliche Aushandlungsprozesse: Theoretische Perspektiven und empirische Befunde*, ed. Elisabeth Klaus and Ricarda Drüeke (Bielefeld, 2017), 17–37.

18 Klaus and Wischermann, "Öffentlichkeit als Mehr-Ebenen-Prozess"; Wischermann, *Frauenbewegungen und Öffentlichkeiten um 1900*.

media organisations or parliaments – react to the movement's public demands. According to Klaus, elite institutions are key for the actual implementation of social change. Given that such institutions potentially reach all members of society with their arguments and decisions, social movements must strive to gain access to, and support from, these institutions.[19] Therefore, when examining public processes, it is necessary to take a closer look at social movements' forums (middle level) and to assess how the issues that were discussed within these forums have been addressed by influential institutions, such as the mass media and political actors (complex level of the public sphere).

In line with Klaus's remarks on social movements and processes of social change, our article is based on a previously conducted standardised content analysis of three influential feminist magazines (one from the imperial period, one from the immediate post-war period, and one from the early Federal Republic of Germany), which allowed us to identify the major tendencies within the large corpus of articles published in these magazines. The three magazines are *Centralblatt* [Central Paper] (volumes from 1899 to 1921), *Welt der Frau* [Woman's World] (volumes from 1946 to 1952), and *Informationen für die Frau* [Information for the Woman] (volumes from 1952 to 1960).[20] All three are relevant to the prevailing discourses in the German women's movement, as the magazines represented a broad spectrum of opinions within the movement. They can be described as forums of exchange within the German women's movement and represent, with regard to women's issues, the middle level of the public sphere in their respective times. By analysing the contents of these magazines, we identified the debates and topics internal to the movement's movement, such as women's suffrage and the reform of matrimonial and family law.

While a standardised content analysis can only reveal the main discursive lines in such a vast textual corpus, a supplementary historical-hermeneutic analysis of selected articles can produce contextualised and detailed insights. Therefore, we have applied both methods to reconstruct feminist discourses.

To contextualise the debates within the women's movement, we also analysed the corresponding discourse in mass media and politics not only by investigating the changes in the legislation but also by carrying out a hermeneutic analysis of selected articles – that is, the articles on those issues that were of special importance to the movement – from two periodicals with a

19 Klaus and Wischermann, "Öffentlichkeit als gesellschaftlicher Selbstverständigungsprozess und das Drei-Ebenen-Modell von Öffentlichkeit."

20 We would like to thank Desirée Dörner, who supervised the standardised content analysis, and the coders, particularly our student-assistant Theresa Titz.

strong focus on socio-political issues: *Die Hilfe* [The Help] (volumes from 1895 to 1921) and *Der Spiegel* [The Mirror] (volumes from 1947 to 1960). Thus, we will take a closer look at how the complex level of the public sphere – that is, the influential mass media and political institutions – responded to the demands of the women's organisations in both the Wilhelmine era and the early Federal Republic of Germany, especially to the strategy of linking together the issues of care, participation, and gender.

In the first of two main sections of our paper, we will focus on the Wilhelmine era. Here we outline the discursive connection between female care competencies and the demands for political participation established by first-wave feminists in Germany, and describe the responses to the movement's strategy of argumentation in the media, as well as the major changes in legislation. In the second section, we will focus on the women's associations in the Federal Republic of Germany (women's organisations having at least partly resumed or begun their work in the period of Allied-occupation in Germany).[21] We will describe how women's associations once again resorted to women's involvement and expertise in care as a political argument. Then, we will also describe the media responses to this strategy, and the changes in legislation. In this context, the reform of matrimonial and family law will serve as an example, as this field of law was one of the central subjects to which the supra-regional women's organisations devoted their attention.[22]

1 The Wilhelmine Era

In the Wilhelmine era, the idea of "true womanhood" was widespread.[23] This idea was mainly developed in the eighteenth century by middle-class philosophers, who perceived women as "graceful virgins" and, after marriage, caring mothers devoted to maintaining the house as the realm of familial harmony. With their "natural character," including qualities such as softness, politeness, warmth, and altruism, women seemed predestined for care work in the private sphere. The rough spheres of labour and politics were reserved for men, whose "natural character" was conceptualised as being opposite to that of women.

21 Schüller, "Westdeutsche Frauenorganisationen der Nachkriegszeit."

22 See also ibid., 177–178; Irene Stoehr, "Lieber geben als nehmen?: Westdeutsche Frauenorganisationen in menschenrechtlicher Perspektive, 1948–1959," in *Menschenrechte und Geschlecht im 20. Jahrhundert: Historische Studien,* ed. Roman Birke and Carola Sachse (Göttingen, 2018), 101–128.

23 Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860," *American Quarterly*, 18 (1966), 151–174.

As a strong husband, a married man was expected to protect his family and private sphere from outside influences. These binary conceptions of gender roles became a widespread ideal, which even those who could not afford an upper-middle-class lifestyle attempted to emulate.[24]

One effect of this dual conception of gender roles was that women were denied the rights they would need to compete in the labour and public spheres. Whereas middle-class and working-class men were slowly granted civil rights in the nineteenth century, women were deprived of the few rights afforded to them by tradition (e.g., ownership rights as widows).[25] Even though women were granted some social rights in the late nineteenth century, such as entitlement to social security benefits,[26] they were not allowed to participate in the nation's affairs by exercising the right to vote, either actively or passively. In fact, until 1908, in most parts of Germany, women were not even allowed to attend political meetings, let alone become members of political clubs, associations, or parties.[27] However, even against this background, the women's movement of the Wilhelmine era succeeded in bringing about social change by putting women's concerns and issues on the public agenda. Indeed, the care work done by women and the women's movement was of vital importance in this context. The women's movement motivated its followers to engage in newly founded social services and supervised their semi-official care work. In 1908, more than half of the approximately 7,000 women's associations in Germany were engaged in care work, such as helping the sick, poor, and homeless, while their members were also increasingly hired by the state as social care workers.[28] In certain sectors, it was the women's movement that established welfare

24 For the U.S., see Welter, "Cult of True Womanhood," 151–174; for Germany, see Karin Hausen, "Family and Role-Division: The Polarisation of Sexual Stereotypes in the Nineteenth Century: An Aspect of the Dissociation of Work and Family Life," in *The German Family: Essays on the Social History of the Family in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany*, ed. Richard J. Evans and W. R. Lee (London, 1981), 51–83; Ute Frevert, *"Mann und Weib, und Weib und Mann": Geschlechter-Differenz in der Moderne* (Munich, 1995); J. A. Mangan, "The Social Construction of Victorian Femininity: Emancipation, Education and Exercise," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 6 (2007), 1–9.

25 Ute Rosenbusch, *Der Weg zum Frauenwahlrecht in Deutschland* (Baden-Baden, 1998).

26 Barbara Fait, "Arbeiterfrauen und -familien im System sozialer Sicherheit: Zur Geschlechterpolitischen Dimension der 'Bismarck'schen Arbeiterversicherung'," *Economic History Yearbook*, 38 (1997), 171–206.

27 Rosenbusch, *Der Weg zum Frauenwahlrecht in Deutschland*.

28 Angelika Schaser, *Frauenbewegung in Deutschland, 1848–1933* (Darmstadt, 2020), 40; Susanne Kinnebrock and Désirée Dörner, "Teilhabe durch Fürsorge? Die Mediendebatte über bürgerliche Freiheits- und Wahlrechte für Frauen im deutschen Kaiserreich," in *Kommunikationswissenschaftliche Gender Studies: Zur Aktualität kritischer*

structures that were later adopted by the state. Based on this work, the women's movement formulated far-reaching demands for political participation.

The strategy of linking the demands for political participation with women's care work is especially evident in *Centralblatt*, the official media outlet of the Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine [the Federation of German Women's Associations], the umbrella organisation of middle-class women's associations (founded in 1894). This periodical was published twice a month, usually comprising eight pages in quarto format, and reflected – at least under the editorship of Marie Stritt (1855–1928) from 1900 to 1913 – a wide spectrum of feminist positions ranging from moderate to radical.[29] In total, 441 articles published in *Centralblatt* between 1899 and 1921 dealt with care issues.[30] Of these articles, 249 – that is, more than 56 per cent – also included commentary on women's social and political participation. Although these are rather distinct topics in theory, in practice, care issues and political participation were commonly addressed together.

To show the link between these two topics more precisely, we carried out an in-depth, statement-level analysis of these 249 articles (a total of 3,575 statements). The analysis revealed that the discourse tended to take the form of an appeal: almost 58 per cent of all statements (a total of 2,087) contained a demand, with the majority of the demands (73 per cent) aiming at political improvements regarding women's equality, political participation, and legal status. Consequently, in two-thirds of the cases, those to whom these statements were addressed were the state or specific persons and institutions connected to the political system. The following quote, drawn from a contribution calling for a reform of the laws related to women's freedom of association, illustrates this tendency:

Gesellschaftsanalyse, ed. Ricarda Drüeke, Elisabeth Klaus, Martina Thiele and Julia Elena Goldmann (Bielefeld, 2018), 199–214; Sylvia Schraut, "Burghers and Other Townspeople: Social Inequality, Civil Welfare and Municipal Tasks during Nineteenth-Century Urbanisation," in *Towards an Urban Nation: Germany since 1780*, ed. Friedrich Lenger (Oxford, 2002), 69–85.

29 Ulla Wischermann, "Die Blätter des Bundes: Zur Publikationstätigkeit des BDF," *Ariadne*, 25 (1994), 46–51. Our analysis, as well as a standardised content analysis of the *Centralblatt*, could show that, as an editor, Marie Stritt succeeded in giving voice to different authors and positions; see also Daniela Noppeney, "Untersuchung des Centralblatts des Bundes Deutscher Frauenvereine von 1899 bis 1910 unter der Herausgeberin Marie Stritt mit besonderer Berücksichtigung radikaler Themen in der ersten deutschen Frauenbewegung" (Master's dissertation, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, 1998).

30 Across all categories, inter-coder reliability was measured for *Centralblatt* (.83 Holsti). This indicates the reliability of the coding system and the coding process.

> The association laws of most German federal states include provisions that prohibit women from participating in political associations and, in some cases, also in political assemblies. We feel that these restrictions of our civil rights, which put us on an equal footing with minors, are unworthy and do not correspond to the cultural status of the German nation. The association laws of individual federal states make it more difficult for women to have a legitimate and fruitful stake in the currently demanded socio-political reforms of public welfare […].[31]

In this article from 1905, the care work done by women was explicitly used as an argument for legal reform. In subsequent years, the women's movement in Germany held on to the following argumentation strategy when demanding women's suffrage: women's professional care work – which was partly voluntary and partly paid – was emphasised as an indispensable contribution to the (emerging) welfare state.[32] Moreover, the women's movement could also rely on the support of some men in journalism and in parliament. Some left-wing politicians were especially active in supporting the cause of the women's movement in parliament and the mass media. In 1910, for example, Hermann M. Popert (1871–1932), the liberal politician and member of the Hamburg Parliament, argued in *Centralblatt* as follows:

> Women's suffrage means the participation of women in the parliamentary elections of the Reich, the State, and the community. It also means […] the participation of women in the negotiations and decisions of these parliaments. Why should we want it to be introduced? […] I […] see that the picture immediately changes substantially where the parliament (be it that of the state or the community) ceases to be a purely male parliament. […] The maternity instinct is absolutely decisive for the woman's nature, and ultimately decisive in every detail. Therefore, it is no wonder that where women sit in parliaments, the actual enemies of the human

31 Translated from the following: "Vereinsgesetze der meisten deutschen Bundesstaaten enthalten Bestimmungen, welche den Frauen die Teilnahme an politischen Vereinen und z.T. auch an politischen Versammlungen verbieten. Wir empfinden diese Beschränkungen unserer staatsbürgerlichen Rechte, die uns mit Minderjährigen auf eine Stufe stellt, als unwürdig und dem Kulturstand des deutschen Volkes nicht entsprechend. Das Vereinsrecht einzelner Bundesstaaten erschwert den Frauen die berechtigte und ersprießliche Mitarbeit an den von der Gegenwart geforderten sozialpolitischen Reformen an der Volkswohlfahrt […]." "Bundesnachrichten" in *Centralblatt*, 7 (1905), 113.

32 Schraut, "Burghers and Other Townspeople," 69–85.

> race (miserable housing, overwork, prostitution, alcohol) are fought ruthlessly and until extermination.[33]

Friedrich Naumann (1860–1919), an influential left-wing liberal politician of the Wilhelmine era, made a similar argument. A minister and member of the Reichstag, Naumann supported women's efforts to achieve the right to vote in two distinct ways. First, he offered the activists from the women's movement the opportunity to publish articles in his news magazine *Die Hilfe*, which allowed the activists to address the complex level of the public sphere. Secondly, he himself published articles that supported women's quest for suffrage. In both cases, references were made to women's care work to legitimise the demands for women's suffrage. For example, when the well-known activist Käthe Schirmacher (1865–1939), an eloquent supporter of radical feminism, advocated for women's suffrage in *Die Hilfe*, she also emphasised women's care work within the family: "Maternity is […] the social service in whose name the woman can easily claim the right to vote."[34] Naumann, moreover, also supported women's demands for suffrage by highlighting the care work done by women in the public realm: "The woman follows the work […]. If the work becomes social, that is, if it serves the community, you will also find women there."[35] For him, the legitimacy of women's claims for suffrage was beyond question:

> Without men and women, the state could never exist, and that is why they have always been real co-regents before the right to vote. The progress of modern times lies only in the fact that the parliamentary form

33 Translated from the following: "Frauenstimmrecht heißt Mitwirkung der Frauen an den Wahlen zu den Parlamenten in Reich, Staat, Gemeinde. Es bedeutet weiter […] auch die Mitwirkung der Frauen an den Verhandlungen und Beschlussfassungen dieser Parlamente. Warum ist dies zu wünschen, daß es eingeführt werde? […] Ich […] sehe, daß das Bild sich sofort wesentlich ändert, wo das Parlament (sei es das des Staates oder Gemeinde) aufhört, ein reines Männerparlament zu sein. […] Für das Wesen der Frau ist der Mutterschaftsinstinkt der unbedingt maßgebende und schließlich auch in allen Einzelheiten entscheidende. […] Darum ist es auch kein Wunder, daß da, wo Frauen in den Parlamenten sitzen, die eigentlichen Feinde der menschlichen Rasse (Wohnungselend, Überarbeit, Prostitution, Alkohol) rücksichtslos und bis zur Vernichtung bekämpft werden." Hermann M. Popert, "Warum ich Anhänger des Stimmrechts bin," *Centralblatt*, 12 (1910), 107–108.

34 Translated from the following: "Die Mutterschaft ist [..] die soziale Leistung, in deren Namen die Frau das Wahlrecht ohne weiteres beanspruchen kann." Käthe Schirmacher, "Was das Stimmrecht nicht ist," *Die Hilfe*, 13 (1907), 134–135.

35 Translated from the following: "Die Frau folgt der Arbeit […]. Wird die Arbeit sozial, daß heißt, sucht sie Gemeinschaftsplätze, so findet ihr dort auch Frauen." Friedrich Naumann, "Neue Frauengegner," *Die Hilfe*, 18 (1912), 386.

> was found for this age-old factual relationship, first of all for men. What women demand is in reality not a new State but only a new expression of the good old, unwritten law.[36]

By extension, he believed that any action against the women's movement should be regarded as a "disturbance of normal development."[37]

To draw an interim conclusion, therefore, one could say that in the Wilhelmine era, the women's movement succeeded in addressing influential institutions at the complex level of the public sphere, such as mass media organisations and parliaments, as the movement's demands were debated and even supported, at least by some liberal and socialist representatives of the political system.[38]

2 The Early Federal Republic of Germany

A few decades later, even though women's socio-political situation had progressed significantly, major inequalities persisted. The West German Constitution, in fact, stated that "men and women are equal,"[39] but many laws at that time were not in line with this major principle and had yet to be adapted accordingly. When addressing legal inequalities, women's associations once again used women's care expertise and practices as arguments in favour of reforms. This time, however, they did not refer to women's professional care work, which was still done by many women's organisations.[40] Parallel to the

36 Translated from the following: "Ohne Männer und Frauen könnte der Staat niemals bestehen, und deshalb waren sie auch vor den Wahlrechten schon immer tatsächlich Mitregenten. Der Fortschritt der Neuzeit liegt nur darin, daß für dieses uralte sachliche Verhältnis die parlamentarische Form gefunden wurde, und zwar zuerst für die Männer. Was die Frauen verlangen, ist in Wirklichkeit kein neuer Zustand, sondern nur ein neuer Ausdruck für gutes altes, ungeschriebenes Recht." Friedrich Naumann, "Das alte Recht der Frau," *Centralblatt*, 19 (1917), 152–153.

37 Translated from the following: "Störung der normalen Entwicklung." Naumann, "Neue Frauengegner," 387.

38 See also Susanne Kinnebrock, "Der Aufstieg als Niedergang? Eine Analyse der Öffentlichkeitsprozesse rund um politische Frauenzeitschriften in Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik," in *Öffentliche und gesellschaftliche Aushandlungsprozesse: Theoretische perspektiven und empirische Befunde*, ed. Elisabeth Klaus and Ricarda Drüeke (Bielefeld, 2017), 79–100.

39 Translated from the following: "Männer und Frauen sind gleichberechtigt." West German Constitution (Grundgesetz), Article 3, Paragraph 2.

40 For an exemplary analysis of a typical local women's organisation, see Mirjam Höfner, "'[…] wichtig zur Orientierung der jüngeren Generation': Erinnerungskultur nach 1945 im Münchener Verein für Fraueninteressen und Frauenarbeit," in *Erinnern, vergessen,*

development according to which the political work of the women's organisations shifted from the local to the federal level,[41] the women's organisations focused on women's unacknowledged care work in the private sphere. In some specific but important contexts – for example, the reform of matrimonial and family law which dated back to the Wilhelmine era – female care work in the family was used in the magazines of the women's movement as an argument in favour of reforms. This strategy is evident in *Welt der Frau* and *Informationen für die Frau*, both of which were integral to the West German women's movement and represented the debates at the middle level of the public sphere.

The women's journal *Welt der Frau* was founded in 1946 and served as a communication platform for women's organisations in the very early post-war period.[42] It was published on a monthly basis, usually consisted of 34–36 pages in quarto format, and mostly contained articles written by women, often in defence of women's rights.[43] In the 1950s, the direction of *Welt der Frau* changed remarkably to that of a much more "conservative" women's magazine, with feminist issues fading into the background or finding a home in another women's journal: *Informationen für die Frau*.[44] Beginning in April 1952, the lobbyist network Informationsdienst für Frauenfragen e. V. [Information Service for Women's Issues] began publishing *Informationen für die Frau*, which primarily addressed officials of women's organisations.[45] The magazine was published on a monthly basis and generally comprised at least 20 pages in DIN A4 format. Researchers have argued that this magazine "basically reflected the work of the women's associations."[46] Indeed, *Informationen für die Frau* can be

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umdeuten? Europäische Frauenbewegungen im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert, ed. Angelika Schaser, Sylvia Schraut and Petra Steymans-Kurz (Frankfurt am Main, 2019), 127–154.

41 Schüller, "Westdeutsche Frauenorganisationen der Nachkriegszeit," 177–178.

42 Sylvia Lott, *Die Frauenzeitschriften von Hans Huffzky und John Jahr: Zur Geschichte der deutschen Frauenzeitschrift zwischen 1933 und 1970* (Berlin, 1985), 357.

43 Astrid Lehr, "Nachrichten aus der Welt der Frau: Die Nachkriegs-Frauenzeitschriften in den drei westlichen Besatzungszonen Deutschlands," *Geschichte in Köln*, 22 (1987), 146–147; Angela Seeler, "Ehe, Familie und andere Lebensformen in den Nachkriegsjahren im Spiegel der Frauenzeitschriften," in *Frauen in der Geschichte*, ed. Anna-Elisabeth Freier and Anette Kuhn (Düsseldorf, 1984), 90–121.

44 Lott, *Die Frauenzeitschriften von Hans Huffzky und John Jahr*, 356–357.

45 The following associations were, amongst others, founding associations of the Informationsdienst für Frauenfragen: Arbeitsgemeinschaft Katholischer Deutscher Frauen Deutsche Angestellten-Gewerkschaft, Deutscher Akademikerinnenbund, Deutscher Frauenring, Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (Hauptabteilung Frauen), Deutscher Hausfrauenbund, Evangelische Frauenarbeit in Deutschland. For a full list of the founding associations, see Irene Stoehr and Rita Pawlowski, *Die unfertige Demokratie: 50 Jahre, Information für die Frau* (Berlin, 2002), 81.

46 Angela Icken, *Der Deutsche Frauenrat: Etablierte Frauenverbandsarbeit im gesellschaftlichen Wandel* (Wiesbaden, 2002), 72.

regarded as mirroring the debates in the movement, with the issue of women's rights being a major topic, as scholars have indicated.[47]

Like the *Centralblatt*, which covered the debates in the women's movement of the Wilhelmine period, the two magazines *Welt der Frau* and *Informationen für die Frau* interlinked the topics of care and political participation. This is the first result of the standardised content analysis that focused not only on articles but also on statements, wherein a statement could comprise a demand and an addressee of the demand.[48] In total, 639 articles published in *Welt der Frau* (volumes from 1946 to 1952) and *Informationen für die Frau* (volumes from 1952 to 1960) dealt with both political participation and care topics. As in the previous era, the articles tended to take the form of an appeal: 44 per cent of all statements contained a demand, a smaller percentage than in the Wilhelmine era, but one that still underlines the activist nature of the magazines. The demands were mostly related to issues of gender equality, not only demanding equal rights for women in general (10 per cent) and the right to self-determination (11 per cent) but also asking for more formal political participation (14 per cent) in light of the underrepresentation of women in post-war political offices and institutions. A portion of the demands, moreover, were formulated in concrete terms – for example, when calling for legislative reforms, the demands were detailed and specific (11 per cent).

As discussed earlier, women's organisations and associations paid special attention to West Germany's matrimonial and family law when demanding legislative reforms via their media outlets.[49] For example, *Welt der Frau* regularly published a column called "Die rechtliche Lage der Frau" [The Legal Status of Women]. This column focused in particular on issues related to matrimonial and family law, which were, as the magazine's editors stated in a foreword to the column, "in urgent need of reform" because they contained "all sorts of amazing flaws" regarding women's rights.[50] Although the column's style was

47 Stoehr and Pawlowski, *Die unfertige Demokratie*, 29.

48 Across all categories, inter-coder reliability was measured for *Welt der Frau* and *Informationen für die Frau* (.81 Holsti). This indicates the reliability of the coding system and of the coding process.

49 A comparatively large share of all 7,647 statements in these 639 articles dealt with the issues of women's legal inequality (2 per cent); see also Dechert and Kinnebrock, "Care – ein höchst ambivalentes Legitimationsmuster für Gleichberechtigung," 90–107; Andre Dechert, "Von der gegenseitigen Information zur gemeinsamen Aktion? Frauenverbände und gewerkschaftlich organisierte Frauen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland der 1950er-Jahre," *Arbeit – Bewegung – Geschichte: Zeitschrift für historische Studien*, 18 (2019), 68–83.

50 Translated from the following: "Immer wieder wird—endlich—von Frauen und Frauenverbänden auf die dringend reformbedürftigen Abschnitte des Ehe- und Familienrechts hingewiesen, das, was die in der neuen Verfassung festgesetzte

predominantly factual and informative, in some cases there were implicit or explicit references to the domestic, or private, care activities of women and their corresponding care competencies. These references served to support the demands for equal rights for women by positioning the woman as a service provider in the marriage and the family. For example, in one column entry, the lawyer Maria Friedemann (1912–1999), who was also a member of the conservative party (the Christian Democratic Union), explained that, according to current legal opinion, the furniture of the household belongs to the husband insofar as he is the sole earner in the family and has consequently financed it. However, Friedemann also argued that "[the wife], who usually manages the family income, as a housewife and mother, does just as much as the husband does at work and should have an equal share in the fruits of the common economy."[51]

Although it was already stated in the Federal Republic's constitution that outdated legislation had to be adapted to the new constitution (but not beyond 1953),[52] the reform process proved to be a lengthy one; in fact, due to controversial debates, which took place not only between parties but sometimes even within parties, the matrimonial and family law was not reformed until 1957. The conservative government of the Federal Republic of Germany (a coalition of the Christian Democratic Union and the Free Liberal Party) shared "[t]he notion that female fulfilment was tied to a single marital state [...] – that of marriage – remained nearly unquestioned," and argued "that the housewife, while morally and socially equal to the husband, was legally subordinate."[53] The Christian Democrats, supported by Catholic bishops, "defended" the model of the patriarchal family with a strict hierarchy.[54] Given this resistance to reform from such traditionalist quarters, it is not surprising that it was not until 1957 that the West German Bundestag finally managed to enact the reform of matrimonial and family law. The new law stated that household management and raising children were to be regarded as equivalent to gainful employment. As a result, the principle of marriage as a community

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Gleichberechtigung der Frau anbelangt, allerlei erstaunliche Mängel aufweist." Emmy Diemer, "Die rechtliche Lage der Frau," *Die Welt der Frau*, 2 (1947), 30; see also Maria Frizle, "Die rechtliche Lage der Frau," *Die Welt der Frau*, 2 (1947), 22.

51 Translated from the following: "sie, die ja meist das Familieneinkommen verwaltet, leistet als Hausfrau und Mutter ebenso viel wie der Mann am Arbeitsplatz und sollte an den Früchten der gemeinsamen Wirtschaft gleichen Anteil haben." Marie Friedemann, "Die rechtliche Lage der Frau VI. Wem gehören Hausrat und Wohnung?" *Die Welt der Frau*, 2 (1947), 24.

52 See Grundgesetz [West German Constitution], article 117, paragraph 1.

53 Elizabeth D. Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany* (Berkeley, CA, 2003), 146.

54 Robert G. Moeller, *Geschützte Mütter* (Munich, 1997), 170.

of acquisition was introduced. However, closer analysis shows that the outcomes of the reform for women's lived experience were very limited. As the law scholar Dieter Schwab has summarised, "The 'Equal Rights Act' strengthened the rights of the wife in many respects, but real equality in the family was not intended for her […]. The overall aim of the reform was […] to leave the traditional-housewife marriage as a model, but to give stronger protection to the woman in this position."[55] The Equal Rights Act in fact stated, as had its initial drafts, that women were responsible for managing the household. In fact, a woman was only allowed to pursue a professional activity if it was compatible with tasks in the household, marriage, and family.[56] Otherwise, the husband could terminate his wife's employment without her consent. As the historian Ute Frevert aptly put it, "For […] wives who were […] gainfully employed, such a language regime meant that their double burden in family and work was officially sanctioned, while their husbands were formally not required to work in the household and raise children."[57]

It is remarkable that influential women's associations did not question the widespread if not dominant ideal of the woman as wife and mother. A closer look at *Informationen für die Frau* confirms that the West German women's associations, despite their very different backgrounds, all argued for equality by highlighting the fact that women were obligated to their families, but without seeking to dismantle this underlying obligation, the traditional role ascribed to women.

From 1952 onwards, the initial drafts of the Equal Rights Act were published and discussed in *Informationen für die Frau*. However, women's responsibility for the home and family, as described in § 1356, did not trigger any protests among the women's associations.

For example, in a letter that was addressed to, amongst others, the Minister of Labour and the members of the West German Bundestag, and which was published in *Informationen für die Frau*, Dr. Else Ulich-Beil (1886–1965), the chairwoman of Deutscher Frauenring [German Women's Circle], made the following claims when arguing for equal pay for men and women:[58]

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55 Dieter Schwab, "Gleichberechtigung und Familienrecht im 20. Jahrhundert," in *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts: von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Ute Gerhard (Munich, 1997), 790–827.

56 See § 1356 Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch [West German Civil Code].

57 Translated from the following: "Für […] Ehefrauen, die [..] erwerbstätig waren, bedeutete eine solche Sprachregelung, daß ihre Doppelbelastung in Familie und Beruf offiziell sanktioniert war, während ihren Männern formell keine Arbeitspflichten im Haushalt und bei der Kindererziehung oblagen." Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte*, 268.

58 In fact, wage discrimination against women prevailed in the early Federal Republic: regardless of the work they actually performed, women earned much less than their male

> As a result of industrialisation and the consequences of two world wars, millions of women – especially in Germany – today depend on earning a living for themselves, their families or other helpless relatives. Hundreds of thousands of working women bear double burdens as housewives and mothers. The wage level decisively determines the living possibilities of all these groups. [The German Women's Circle] also supports these demands [for equal pay for work of equal value] based on the conviction that their disregard must have fatal consequences for the German youth and the German family.[59]

Instead of emphasising the right to equal treatment at work, the potential for negative consequences for other family members issuing from a denial of this equal treatment was used as an argument for reform. The concept of one (well-paid) breadwinner for each family still dominated. In a similar vein, female representatives from unions argued that, in the case of family law reform, "no fundamental objections could be raised"[60] against the supremacy of the role of wife and mother, as Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund – West Germany's largest umbrella organisation of trade unions – had argued in a statement to the members of the Bundestag. This statement, signed by Thea Harmuth (1906–1956), the head of the organisation's women's branch, was also published in *Informationen für die Frau*. In a letter to the Federal Ministry of Interior and Justice, even the central lobbying organisation, the German Women's Circle, stressed that it was "redundant" to "especially assign the leadership of the household to the woman," as this "follows from the nature of marriage."[61]

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counterparts; see Petra Drohsel, *Die Lohndiskriminierung der Frauen: Eine Studie über Lohn und Lohndiskriminierung von erwerbstätigen Frauen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1945–1984* (Marburg, 1986).

59 Translated from the following: "Durch die Industrialisierung und die Folgen zweier Weltkriege sind Millionen von Frauen – vor allem in Deutschland – heute darauf angewiesen, den Lebensunterhalt für sich, ihre Familien oder sonstige hilflose Angehörige zu verdienen. Hundertausende von berufstätigen Frauen tragen als Hausfrau und Mutter doppelte Lasten. Die Lohnhöhe bestimmt die Lebensmöglichkeiten all dieser Gruppen entscheidend. […] Er unterstützt diese Forderungen [um gleichen Entgelt für gleichwertige Arbeit] auch aus der Überzeugung, daß sich ihre Nichtbeachtung verhängnisvoll für die deutsche Jugend und die deutsche Familie auswirken muß." Else Ulich-Beil, "Gleicher Lohn für gleichwertige Arbeit," *Informationen für Frauen* 2, 7/8 (1953), 11.

60 Translated from the following: "Dagegen sind grundsätzliche Einwendungen nicht zu erheben." Thea Harmuth, "Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB)," *Informationen für die Frau*, 1 (1952), 4–8 (appendix).

61 Translated from the following: "Es erscheint überflüssig, der Frau die Führung des Hauswesens besonders zuzuweisen. Sie folgt ohne weiteres aus dem Wesen der Ehe." Maria Prejawa, "Deutscher Frauenring," *Informationen für die Frau*, 1 (1952), 13.

The Arbeitsgemeinschaft Katholischer Deutscher Frauen [the Association of Catholic German Women] also agreed with this position, calling the "precedence of the duties of marriage, housewives and mothers" the "cornerstone of Christian Western culture."[62] However, some other women's associations from West Germany, when addressing influential political institutions, did not unquestioningly accept the double burden imposed on women of being a wife and a mother. For example, in letters to various political functionaries – again published in *Informationen für die Frau* – the Berufsverband der Sozialarbeiterinnen und Sozialarbeiter [the Association of Social Workers] pointed out that "very many mothers […] collapse physically or mentally, after having borne the double burden [of family and job] for a long time with great effort and sacrifice."[63]

Even though mothers were said to be responsible for the household and the family, the Equal Rights Act of 1957 guaranteed the husband's supremacy in the family. In the case of disagreements with his wife on how to raise and educate the child, the father had the legal right to the so-called casting vote. This gave a particular privilege to the male head of the family: the husband and father was the one who was supposed to make decisions in educational matters; accordingly, he, rather than his wife, was the only legitimate representative of the child.[64] The father's casting vote was legally binding until it was finally overruled by West Germany's constitutional court in the summer of 1959.[65]

This right to a casting vote was heavily criticised by many women's organisations. In some statements, also published in *Informationen für die Frau*, women's associations objected to the father's casting vote by referring to West Germany's constitutional law, the Grundgesetz, which stated that men and

62 Translated from the following: "Nach unserer Meinung ist der Vorrang der Ehe-, Hausfrauen- und Mutterpflichten der Frau ein Eckpfeiler der christlich-abendländischen Kultur." Greta Krabbel, Helene Weber and Elisabeth Zillken, "Katholische Frauenorganisationen," *Informationen für die Frau*, 1 (1952), 21.

63 Translated from the following: "In der Praxis der Fürsorge sehen unsere Mitglieder sehr viele Mütter, die unter der Belastung durch Haushalt und Kinder neben ihrer Erwerbstätigkeit körperlich oder seelisch zusammenbrechen, nachdem sie die doppelte Last lange Zeit unter größten Mühen und Opfern getragen haben." Gertrud Herzog, "Um den Hausarbeitstag," *Informationen für die Frau*, 8 (1959), 7.

64 See, for example, Mareike Hansen, *Erna Scheffler (1893–1983): Erste Richterin am Bundesverfassungsgericht und Wegbereiterin einer geschlechtergerechten Gesellschaft* (Tübingen, 2019), 145–160.

65 Schwab, "Gleichberechtigung und Familienrecht im 20. Jahrhundert," 810–811; Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte*, 267–268; Moeller, *Geschützte Mütter*, 326–332; see also Till van Rahden, "Demokratie und väterliche Autorität: Das Karlsruher 'Stichentscheid'-Urteil von 1959 in der politischen Kultur der frühen Bundesrepublik," *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, 2 (2005), 160–179.

women were equal.[66] However, once again the organisations did not question the ideal of the woman as wife and mother, trying, instead, to use it as an argument in their quest for equality. Several associations justified their rejection of the paternal casting vote by highlighting women's maternal and/or domestic care work. For example, the women's associations from Württemberg, such as the local chapter of the German Women's Circle, emphasised the following in a joint statement: "It is impossible to see why the mother's rights should take second place to those of the father. It is precisely she who, in the vast majority of cases, practically cares for and educates the child. Therefore, it cannot be in the child's interest if the father can decide without the mother's consent, or possibly even against her will."[67]

Along with the widespread protests by women's organisations, the renowned news magazine *Der Spiegel* reported in 1958 that many protests against the father's casting vote had been voiced by women.[68] However, no women's associations were cited; the women's movement, as a possible *united* voice for women's rights, was not represented in *Der Spiegel*. Instead, the news magazine reported that Hildegard Krüger (1909–1994), a judge at the administrative court in Düsseldorf, North Rhine–Westphalia, was one of the leading opponents of the father's casting vote. As *Der Spiegel* reported, she stated the following: "The world is democratising, and even the tyrants believe that they cannot do without a democratic façade. Nevertheless, the Bundestag thought it had to create the patriarchal father as a legal model contrary to the norm of the constitution."[69] The judge's rationale clearly differed from the arguments

66 Dr. med. G. Graeff, "Zum 'Stichentscheid' im Familienrecht. Der deutsche Verband berufstätiger Frauen," *Informationen für die Frau*, 6 (1957), 5; Anne Marie Heiler, "Zum 'Stichentscheid' im Familienrecht. Frauen-Verband Hessen, Landesverband im DFR, " *Informationen für die Frau*, 6 (1957), 5; Lotte Uekermann, Maria Harzendorf and Lieselotte Petzold, "Zum 'Stichentscheid' im Familienrecht. Der Deutsche Hausfrauenbund," *Informationen für die Frau*, 6 (1957), 54–55.

67 Translated from the following: "Es ist nicht einzusehen, warum die Mutter in ihren Rechten hinter dem Vater zurückstehen soll. Gerade sie ist es ja, die in den weitaus meisten Fällen praktisch für das Kind sorgt und es erzieht. Es kann daher auch nicht im Interesse des Kindes liegen, wenn der Vater ohne die Zustimmung der Mutter oder unter Umständen sogar gegen ihren Willen entscheiden kann." Marie Harzendorf and Liselotte Petzold, "Zum 'Stichentscheid' im Familienrecht. Der Landesverband Württemberg des Deutschen Frauenrings und das Frauenparlament Baden-Württemberg," *Informationen für die Frau*, 6 (1957), 5.

68 Hildegard Krüger, "Gleichberechtigung: Die Zukunft der Notare," *Der Spiegel*, 28 (1947), 22–26.

69 Translated from the following: "Die Welt demokratisiert sich und sogar die Tyrannen glauben, der demokratischen Fassade nicht entraten [sic] zu können. Gleichwohl meinte der Bundestag, den patriarchalischen Vater als gesetzliches Leitbild entgegen der Norm der

propounded by the West German women's associations: while the latter seemed to accept the traditional model of the patriarchal family, Krüger criticised this very ideal.

It can be assumed that the demands expressed in the publications of the women's movement, such as *Welt der Frau* and *Informationen für die Frau*, had a very limited audience within the West German public in the 1950s, as women's issues were gradually pushed aside in the media and in social and family policy.[70] For example, *Der Spiegel* (volumes from 1947 to 1960), a news magazine with a focus on socio-political topics,[71] very seldom reported on the West German women's movement. Of the few articles that mentioned the women's associations, most did so only in passing.[72] Even more rarely did *Der Spiegel* cover the (necessary) reform of the matrimonial and family law in detail – besides the article just mentioned, only one other article dealt extensively with the reform.[73] In these two articles, the argument put forward by the women's associations regarding female care work was scarcely discussed. For example, the other article, from 1952, merely presented the "serious, concretely formulated present proposals for amendments to the German Civil Code"[74]

Verfassung schaffen zu müssen." Krüger, "Gleichberechtigung: Die Zukunft der Notare," 22–26; see also van Rahden, "Demokratie und väterliche Autorität," 160–179.

70 On the discourse in mass media, see Christine Feldmann-Neubert, *Frauenleitbild im Wandel 1948–1988: Von der Familienorientierung zur Doppelrolle* (Weinheim, 1991); Elizabeth Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's Crisis Years and West German National Identity," in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949–1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton, NJ, 2001), 21–56; Annegret Braun, *Frauenalltag und Emanzipation: Der Frauenfunk des Bayerischen Rundfunks in kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive (1945–1968)* (Münster, 2005). On the social and family policy of that time, see Astrid Joosten, "*Die Frau, das, segenspendende Herz der Familie": Familienpolitik als Frauenpolitik in der, Ära Adenauer* (Pfaffenweiler, 1990); Annette Kuhn and Doris Schubert, eds., *Frauen in der deutschen Nachkriegszeit* (Düsseldorf, 1986); Christoph Sachße and Florian Tennstedt, eds., *Geschichte der Armenfürsorge in Deutschland: Fürsorge und Wohlfahrtspflege in der Nachkriegszeit, 1945–1953* (Stuttgart, 2012).

71 Dieter Brumm, "Sturmgeschütz der Demokratie? Der Spiegel," in *Porträts der deutschen Presse: Politik und Profit*, ed. Michael Wolf (Berlin, 1980), 183–200.

72 A full text search of the journal's digital archive and the subsequent close reading of the identified articles revealed that the women's associations and women's branches that participated in the founding of the "Informationsdienst für Frauenfragen" were only partly and rarely represented in *Der Spiegel* (in total, 13 articles and reports). For the full text search, we used the names of the women's associations and branches.

73 This is the result of a full text search using the journal's digital archive and the subsequent close reading of the identified articles. We used the following search terms: Eherecht, Familienrecht, Stichentscheid, and Gleichberechtigungsgesetz.

74 Translated from the following: "[n]euere, ernstzunehmende, konkret formulierte Aenderungsvorschläge zum BGB." "Eherecht: Bettelei ums Haushaltsgeld," *Der Spiegel*, 6 (1952), 28–30.

by the German Women's Circle and the influential organisation Evangelische Frauenarbeit in Deutschland [Protestant Women's Work in Germany] in tabular format. However, the positions taken by these associations were not discussed in detail.

As women were striving for the reform of matrimonial and family law, it is hardly surprising that women's associations explicitly referred to women's care work within – and thus for – the family. The associations pointed to women's care work, which corresponded to the dominant ideal of the woman as wife and mother. However, this line of argumentation unwittingly supported another objective that existed in the politics and the media of the time – namely, to push women back into the private sphere. Overall, the argument based on the primacy of female care was not successful: not only was women's representation in the mass media limited, but the West German government and parliament, instead of ensuring equal rights for women, implemented legislation that guaranteed patriarchal control via the husband's right to the casting vote.

3 Conclusion

The aim of this article was, first, to investigate to what extent and how female care work was used by the women's movement as an argument in favour of women's political participation at two different periods and, secondly, to examine the resonance that this strategy generated. The Wilhelmine era served as a comparative foil for the post-war period and the early Federal Republic of Germany. At the theoretical level, we assumed that women's associations from these two periods tried to initiate processes of social change. But their efforts ultimately depended on the public support of influential institutions, such as parliaments and mass media organisations.

Via its journals, the women's movement of the Wilhelmine era initiated debates about fundamental political participation claims and successfully underpinned these with references to women's care work. However, both after World War II and during the early Federal Republic of Germany, women already possessed fundamental political rights. The question of women's political participation thus seemed to have been largely resolved in the second period under study, but, in truth, issues of gender inequality continued to persist. Until the late 1950s, for example, the movement's journals debated the reform of matrimonial and family law. Regarding this particular reform, organised women continuously voiced grievances, and had recourse in their arguments to women's care work, just as their predecessors had in the Wilhelmine era – that is, to a previously successful pattern of argumentation. However,

from a diachronic-comparative perspective, it is clear that a significant shift in discourse had occurred between the two periods of investigation. After 1945 – in contrast to the Wilhelmine era, when women's associations argued against marriage and family law – the debate was not about the professional social work done by women but about women's domestic, or private, care responsibilities; that is, the care work that took place within the narrow confines of the family. As marriage and family law were the central objects of the legal debates, it might have appeared natural to the women's movement to refer to domestic care work and use it as an argument for the extension of women's rights. However, the discursive strategy based on the importance of women's care work backfired against the aims of the women's movement and contributed to the political and media goals of the time – namely, to push women back into the private sphere.[75]

Indeed, as female activists re-applied the care argument to support legal reforms, the public responses were quite different in Western Germany after World War II than they had been in the Wilhelmine era. While the activists from the first women's movement managed to gain access to, and gather support in, the mass media because their demands seemed logical to their contemporaries, West German women's associations in the late 1940s and the 1950s were not as successful. According to the trend which then prevailed, women were primarily regarded as wives to their husbands and mothers to their children. While women did most of the work within society's most important microunit, the family, it was primarily men who participated in public discourses and made decisions, not only for themselves but also for women. Although women's associations highlighted women's contributions to society, these contributions seemed to draw women back into the private sphere, limiting their public voice in the running of that very society. The 1950s thus saw West German society relapse into the inequalities characteristic of supposedly bygone days.

75 On gender roles in mass media, see Feldmann-Neubert, *Frauenleitbild im Wandel, 1948–1988*; Heineman, "Hour of the Woman"; Braun, *Frauenalltag und Emanzipation*.