

***Modell Leistungsgesellschaft: the 'Achieving Society' and
the concept of 'Leistung' in the Third Reich and the Federal
Republic, 1933-1975***

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the uses of the concept of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* to explore the breaks and continuities in the transition from Third Reich to Federal Republic as well as within the post-war era. Between 1933 and 1975, the 'achieving society' and the concept of *Leistung* became ever more widely used and criticised. The individual in the National Socialist period was pressured to achieve in the name of a politically and racially defined commonweal, or risk exclusion from the national community. By contrast, the post-war period witnessed a shift as Ordoliberalism emphasised the individual opportunity a focus on performance in a competitive market generated. However, Ordoliberal theory had a limited impact on policy, also failing to overcome the tension between endorsing individual achievement and the developing welfare state. As part of an increasingly international debate, sociologists assessed how far the opportunities of the market actually extended and gauged the consequences of the *Leistungsgesellschaft*. These discussions show the active role of researchers in moulding a mental map of a highly advanced 'West'. At the same time, a pattern that coheres with the model of the 'long sixties' is also present in these debates. The increasingly critical tone adopted by sociologists predated and prepared the way for the more radical ideas of the New Left. By the mid-1960s, activists and academics were highlighting the repressive emotional and psychological consequences of stressing achievement, prompting conservative efforts to defend *Leistung*. On the whole, a gendered line of exclusion and a trend towards *Verwissenschaftlichung* are the most striking continuities between 1933 and 1975. Racialized understandings of achievement are reframed in the context of debates about the 'underdeveloped' states. The thesis as a whole paints a picture of an increasing individualisation of *Leistung* as well as growing focus on the pressures and problems inherent in endorsing achievement.

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Introduction

“*Leistungsgesellschaft* is the economic and social order which has allowed us in the Federal Republic to complete the journey from an unprecedented national disaster to a of position international renown”,¹ claimed Kurt Sontheimer in a speech to the Metal Industry Employers Association in 1977. The concept of an achieving society (*Leistungsgesellschaft*), to Sontheimer, denoted both a social system that rewarded merit as well as an economic structure which encouraged performance. In Sontheimer’s narrative, this dual system was the means of attaining national prosperity in the post-war period. His decision to tie the achieving society specifically to the post-National Socialist, West German state is crucial, as the *Leistungsgesellschaft* he referenced was neither fascist nor socialist. Rather it was a vital distinction between the Germany that had preceded, and the other Germany that existed alongside the Federal Republic.

Sontheimer’s statement was addressed to an employers union, perhaps making it unsurprising that he would reference an economic structure which rewarded achieving in the workplace and a societal system which supposedly allowed individuals who did so to rise to the top. Yet his observation is part of a widespread and varied use of conceptualisations of meritocracy and achievement (*Leistung*) in 19th and 20th century Germany, which continues to this day.² Both concepts have only become the subject of scholarly research comparatively recently. Work on the 19th century has tied the genesis of the concept of achievement and a belief that the former generates success to a distinctly bourgeois mentality.³ Yet Nina Verheyen has called these theories

¹ Kurt Sontheimer, *Ist die Leistungsgesellschaft am Ende?* (Cologne: Arbeitgeberverband der Metallindustrie, 1977), 10.

² For examples of current debates see Peter Carstens, “Merkel droht mit Ausschluss aus der Euro-Zone,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17th March, 2010, accessed 4th January, 2012, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/generaldebatte-im-bundestag-merkel-droht-mit-ausschluss-aus-der-euro-zone-1953584.html>; “Staatsverständnis: Der Traum von der sozialen Leistungsgesellschaft,” *Der Spiegel*, 26th April, 2006, accessed 4th January, 2012, <http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/0,1518,413178,00.html>.

³ Manfred Hettling, “Die persönliche Selbstständigkeit. Der archimedische Punkt bürgerlicher Lebensführung,” in *Der bürgerliche Werthimmel: Innenansichten des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Manfred Hettling and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 59. Geoff Eley lists a belief in independence alongside a commitment to *Leistung* as two of the values which gained ascendancy after German unification in 1870. See Geoff Eley, “Liberalism, Europe and the bourgeoisie 1860-1914,” in *The German Bourgeoisie: Essays on the social history of German middle class from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century*, ed. David Blackbourn and Richard J. Evans (London: Routledge, 1991), 303.

into question. Verheyen contends that a focus on and orientation towards *Leistung* became widespread in the late 19th century as part of a developing mass society which produced standardised means of assessing performance, a dynamic that eventually came to put pressure on the bourgeoisie.⁴ The latter responded, in part, by vocalising a critique of modernity which bemoaned the increasing presence of competition in the capitalist market and other areas of life.⁵ Scholarship on the 19th century thus roots the emergence of conceptualisations of achievement in the genesis of an understanding of society tied to the mechanisms of capitalism.

Other studies focus on overarching continuities, particularly in the way work was discussed from the 19th into the 20th centuries, including the National Socialist period. Joan Campbell traces an intellectual tradition of “joy in work” from the early modern period on, contending that *Arbeitsfreude* was an important component of the German debate about work from the 19th century onwards.⁶ In Campbell’s analysis, the Nazis tapped into these pre-existing debates about work, redefining what was considered “German work”.⁷ As part of this development, *Leistung* came to the fore after 1933, “itself an ethical concept deeply rooted in the German tradition” which “proved to be particularly suited to the needs of a regime bent on preparing the nation for war.”⁸ Despite the appropriation of this set of ideas by the Nazis, Campbell contends that 1945 does not constitute a major break in terms of discussions of work, claiming that the “German ethic” survived the era of National Socialism. Rather, the issue of alienation and the search for joy in work continued to feature in debate about working life.⁹ Alf Lüdtkke, too, has outlined discussions among engineers, industrialists, social reformers and social researchers about *Qualitätsarbeit* from the late 1800s on, a debate focussed not on optimal

⁴ Nina Verheyen, "Unter Druck. Die Entstehung individuellen Leistungsstrebens um 1900," *Merkur. Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken* 5 (2012): 386.

⁵ Nina Verheyen, "Gemeinschaft durch Konkurrenz. Georg Simmel und die Ellenbogenmenschen des Kaiserreichs," *Merkur. Deutsche Zeitschrift für Europäisches Denken. Wir? Formen der Gemeinschaft in der liberalen Gesellschaft* 10 (2013): 918-919.

⁶ Joan Campbell, *Joy in Work, German Work: The National Debate, 1800-1945* (Princeton: PUP, 1989), 9-10.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.320.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 339.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 378, 382.

outcome or results but rather a workers' pride in his/her own achievements.¹⁰ In a manner similar to Campbell's assessment of the flexibility of concepts such as *Arbeitsfreude* and work more generally, Lüdtkke has also claimed that the emotional attitude towards work was in many ways undefined and could be charged in a number of ways.¹¹ This included producing something that was capable of destruction or equating the violence committed by soldiers in the East under National Socialism with the labour of civilian counterparts.¹² Both Campbell and Lüdtkke locate the impact of National Socialism on these ideas within much longer-term trends, emphasising both the flexibility and durability of ideas of work.

Placed against this backdrop of debates about understandings of work in Germany in the modern age, a worldview featuring a society driven by the urge to achieve and the assumption that such achievements will merit rewards has been attributed to the Nazi period. Building on the work of Martin Broszat, Hans Ulrich Wehler's *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte* claims that the economic upswing in post-war West Germany was, at least in part, due to the almost fanatical attachment to *Leistung* cultivated between 1933 and 1945.¹³ A mentality that valued *Leistung* above all else survived the transition from the Third Reich to the Federal Republic, while the conceptual roots of such a mindset were pushed aside, argues Wehler.¹⁴ Malte Thießen's recent work suggests the term was just as popular after 1945. More than a decade after the war, Germans "referenced the model of a *Leistungsgesellschaft*," a trend which

¹⁰ Alf Lüdtkke, "Deutsche Qualitätsarbeit – ihre Bedeutung für das Mitmachen von Arbeitern und Unternehmern im Nationalsozialismus," in *Firma Topf & Söhne – Hersteller der Öfen für Auschwitz*, eds. Aleida Assmann, Frank Hiddemann, Eckhard Schwarzenberger (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2002), 128.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹² *Ibid.*, 130-132.

¹³ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 5, *Bundesrepublik und DDR 1949-1990* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1992), 214; Martin Broszat, "Soziale Motivation und Führerbindung des Nationalsozialismus," *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 18:4 (1970): 681, accessed 29th June, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30197023>. See also: David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution* (London: W. W. Norton, 1980), 56.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

“can be explained against the backdrop of economic developments from the fifties on.”¹⁵

Research concerned with the 1960s as a locus of change within West German history also touches on the concept of *Leistung*, and a society that values it, repeatedly. Most prominently, the debate about the so-called *Wertewandel*, a generational shift in values between the mid-sixties and mid-seventies, describes and seeks to comprehend contemporary diagnoses of the decline of traditional values such as *Leistung* to the detriment of national culture and prosperity.¹⁶ Yet Detlef Siegfried’s work on youth culture in the Federal Republic paints a picture of a younger generation that maintained an understanding of what it meant to achieve, albeit in a manner that was markedly different.¹⁷ The connection between achievement and work, which runs through the literature discussed here has been taken up and made explicit in Jörg Neuheiser’s attempts to establish whether this alleged change in values resulted in practical changes in the world of work.¹⁸ Aside from Neuheiser’s work, only very few other pieces of research extend into the 1970s and make specific reference to *Leistung*.¹⁹ Heiko Stoff’s recent investigation of the instrumentalization and optimization of the body in sports and labour, which takes the late 19th century as its starting point, stresses the divisive effect of criticism of *Leistung* around 1970.²⁰

It is on these areas of debate within the 20th century that I would like to focus here, specifically the period between the seizure of power by the National

¹⁵ Malte Thießen, “Schöne Zeiten? Erinnerungen an die Volksgemeinschaft nach 1945,” in *Volksgemeinschaft*, eds. Michael Wildt and Frank Bajohr (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2009), 176.

¹⁶ Andreas Rödter and Wolfgang Elz eds., *Alte Werte-neue Werte. Schlaglichter des Wertewandels* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008); Helmut Klages, *Traditionsbruch als Herausforderung: Perspektiven der Wertewandelgesellschaft* (Frankfurt; Campus, 1993); Ronald F. Ingelhart, “Changing Values Among Western Publics from 1970 to 2006,” *West European Politics* 31: 1-2 (January to March 2008): 130-146.

¹⁷ Detlef Siegfried, *Time Is On My Side: Konsum und Politik in der westdeutschen Jugendkultur der 60er Jahre* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 56.

¹⁸ Jörg Neuheiser, “Der “Wertewandel” zwischen Diskurs und Praxis: Die Untersuchung von Wertvorstellung zur Arbeit mit Hilfe von betrieblichen Fallstudien,” in *Gab es den Wertewandel? Neue Forschungen zum gesellschaftlich-kulturellen Wandel seit den 1960er Jahren*, eds. Bernhard Dietz, Christopher Neumaier and Andreas Rödter (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2014): 141-167.

¹⁹ Lukas Held is currently undertaking doctoral research into notions of performance in both German societies in the context of work, school and sport. See research profile, accessed 10th March, 2014. <http://www.fsw.uzh.ch/personenaz/held.html>.

²⁰ Heiko Stoff, “Das Leistungsprinzip in der Wettbewerbsgesellschaft, 1960-1980,” in *Die Spiele gehen weiter: Profile und Perspektiven der Sportgeschichte*, eds. Frank Becker and Ralf Schäfer (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2014), 291-297.

Socialists in 1933 and 1975. While much attention has been paid to 1973 as a “structural break”²¹ in West German history, I believe that expanding the time frame of the study slightly further into the 1970s allows me to examine the repercussions of this shift for ideas of *Leistung*. My aim is to link the concept of *Leistung*, predominantly in connection with work and the broader societal ideal of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* with the question of breaks and continuities in the transition between Third Reich and the Federal Republic and within the post war period.²² Is there any continuity in the manner in which *Leistung* and the model of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* were discussed between 1933 and 1975? What meaning were the terms invested with in the period, which groups appropriated or rejected them? What do these processes reveal about contemporary self-understanding? As declaring a society to be meritocratic leads to the question of what “merit” is to signify, the main focus will be on the concept of *Leistung*, albeit primarily in connection with broader conceptualisations of society.

In answering these questions, my focus is targeted intervention at pertinent points in the debates about achieving and *Leistungsgesellschaft* within the period between 1933 and 1975. The project therefore covers four groups and stretches of time in some detail: the accounts of achieving and meritocracy offered by the National Socialist German Labour Front, the Ordoliberal project which spans the National Socialist and post-war period, sociological West German debates and finally the student and women’s movements of the New Left as well as conservative efforts to defend *Leistung*. I focus on these specific groups, clustering around guiding questions rather than trying to reconstruct a narrative that seamlessly covers the entire period under consideration.

²¹ Anselm Doering-Manteuffel and Lutz Raphael, *Nach dem Boom: Perspektiven auf die Zeitgeschichte seit 1970* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 10-11; Konrad H. Jarausch, “Verkannter Strukturwandel. Die siebziger Jahre als Vorgeschichte der Probleme der Gegenwart,” in *Das Ende der Zuversicht: Die siebziger Jahre als Geschichte*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 9-23.

²² For examples see Helmut Dubiel, *Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1999); Wehler, *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*; Matthias Frese, Julia Paulus, Karl Tepe eds., *Demokratisierung und gesellschaftlicher Aufbruch: Die sechziger Jahre als Wendezeit der Bundesrepublik* (Munich: Schöningh, 2003); Ulrich Herbert ed., *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland* (Göttingen; Wallstein, 2002); Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried and Karl C. Lammer eds., *Dynamische Zeiten: Die 60er Jahre in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften* (Hamburg: Christians, 2000); Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, *Wie westlich sind die Deutschen? Amerikanisierung und Westernisierung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

While this study is a history of conceptual development within a national unit, first in the form of Third Reich and later in the shape of the Federal Republic, this does not prevent me from adopting a transnational perspective to some extent. The movement of people and the ideas they expressed frequently transcended national boundaries. Faced with persecution in the Third Reich, some of the authors examined here are representatives of that ‘other Germany’ of refugees and exiles. In the post-war period, it is particularly the West German interaction with theories attributed to the United Kingdom and the United States as well as their engagement with the so-called ‘developing world’ that takes centre stage.

That said, it is possible to write a broader history of uses of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* concerned with German-speaking regions of Europe. Indeed some developments in the 1970s point to a shared area of concern spanning Austria, West Germany and Switzerland and some of the authors considered here did live in German-speaking countries outside the FRG. However, the time limits and spacial constraints on this study made such an endeavour impractical. In addition, I would argue that the specificities of Germany’s history in the first half of the 20th century do result in a series of uses of both concepts which display some unique characteristics.

While I believe my findings may be thought-provoking regarding Eastern Germany, the GDR is not included in the study. This is a result of the limits of the scope of my inquiry and the comparatively lengthy time period I consider. For the purposes of my analysis, East Germany features only as “the other” present in West German self-description. Within this remit, the Democratic Republic had considerable impact on the shaping of West German identity, for example, via the distinction between a “capitalist” and a “socialist” meritocracy.²³

This project aims to contribute to the history of terms and concepts of the 20th century. In order to explore some of the methodological assumptions and decisions involved in writing a history centring on concepts or terms, I have drawn on two of the most influential projects in the field since the ‘linguistic turn’: the German discipline of *Begriffsgeschichte* and the contextualist approach of the

²³ “Geburtenrückgang: Wer zahlt die Rechnung?” *Der Spiegel*, 15th September, 1979, accessed 5th May, 2012, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-39868510.html>; “Walter Ulbricht – das sind wir alle.” *Der Spiegel*, 10th May, 1971, accessed 5th May 2012, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-43176364.html>.

Cambridge school. Both have shaped research in their respective national, linguistic communities and beyond to a considerable degree. The following text will provide a brief outline of each project before engaging with the areas of methodological debate pertinent to this thesis.

The project of a *Begriffsgeschichte*, initiated by Reinhart Koselleck, Otto Brunner and Werner Conze, aimed to investigate the relationship between social history and language.²⁴ The outcome was the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, a multi-volume lexicon covering an alphabetically arranged series of so called 'basic concepts', many of which used antiquity as a starting point for their analyses.²⁵ These were employed to explore the transition from pre-modern to modern social and political structures between 1750 and 1850.²⁶ Koselleck became most closely associated with the project and his research has inspired extensive debate. His work adopted a structural and temporal perspective on historical change, using the concepts under investigation to discern social beliefs, experiences and expectations. In so doing he, designated key concepts "in which a complex and diverse cluster of political and social contexts, experiences, and meanings were brought to a particularly intense level of linguistic condensation."²⁷

The label "Cambridge School" has been applied to a group of historians including John G.A. Pocock, Quentin Skinner, Peter Laslett and John Dunn. My interest here lies predominantly in the work of Skinner due to his efforts to develop a methodology for intellectual history. Skinner applies speech act theory to the history of political thought, stipulating that every written or spoken utterance must be viewed as an action carried out in order to achieve a set of intentions.²⁸ In other words, the focus should be on what an agent is doing in employing a specific vocabulary and rhetoric.²⁹ In order to locate an author within existing political and linguistic conventions, and establish his or her acceptance, revision

²⁴ Niklas Olsen, *History in the Plural: An Introduction to the Work of Reinhart Koselleck* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), 178.

²⁵ Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 1, A-D (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1972) and subsequent six volumes.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, xv.

²⁷ Olsen, *History in the Plural*, 179.

²⁸ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Volume I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 120.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

or rejection of these, Skinner stresses the importance of establishing historical context (by, for example, including minor as well as 'canonical' writers in historical research).³⁰

Comparison or even potential co-operation between this Anglophone tradition and the German approach to a *Begriffsgeschichte* is complicated by diverging priorities in each case. Unlike Skinner, Koselleck was not concerned with elaborating a historically embedded linguistic theory. Systematic explorations of how language and context influence each other were thus not part of his agenda.³¹ Nevertheless, recent decades have seen a considerable number of projects which seek to incorporate both approaches into a history of concepts and create updated methodologies tailored to the needs of researchers working on the 20th century rather than the early modern period.³²

One aspect of this ongoing debate has been the relationship between concepts and the words or terms used to describe them. Skinner has pointed out that it is possible to know and use a term without doing the same for the concept it denotes. His solution to this problem is to theorise that the "surest sign that a group or society has entered into self-conscious possession of a new concept is that a corresponding vocabulary will be developed, a vocabulary which can be used to pick out and discuss the concept with consistency".³³ While Skinner is quick to point out that the use of this vocabulary does not necessarily indicate the corresponding concept is being employed, he states that it can "standardly" be taken to do so.³⁴ Koselleck, too, allows that concepts exist beyond the words frequently linked to them, that they are "ambiguous (*vieldeutig*)".³⁵ Yet while

³⁰ Ibid., 86. For further discussion See James H. Tully, "The Pen is a Mighty Sword. Quentin Skinner's Analysis of Politics," in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James H. Tully (Princeton: PUP, 1989), 10.

³¹ Olsen, *History in the Plural*, 181.

³² For examples see Kari Palonen, *Die Entzauberung der Begriffe: Das Umschreiben der politischen Begriffe bei Quentin Skinner und Reinhart Koselleck* (Berlin: LIT, 2004); Iain Hampsher-Monk, Karin Tilmans, Frank Van Vree eds., *History of Concepts: Comparative Perspectives* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998); Martin J. Burkert and Melvin Richter eds., *Why Concepts Matter: Translating Social and Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Peter De Bolla, *The Architecture of Concepts: The Historical Formation of Human Rights* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

³³ Quentin Skinner, "Language and political change," in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, eds. Terrence Ball, James Farr and Russell L. Hanson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 8.

³⁴ Ibid., 8.

³⁵ Brunner, Conze, Koselleck, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, xxii.

Skinner's solution is to focus on vocabularies rather than concepts, Koselleck sees the broad and somewhat elusive scope of concepts as an advantage. He emphasises the need to chart the manner in which concepts gain and lose a variety of meanings as part of a historical process.³⁶ My approach here assumes a comparatively stable relationship between the terms *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* and the concepts they denote, based on the discovery that discrete groups of language users do draw on both with considerable consistency. The thesis is then, as much a history of the words denoting a concept as of the concept itself. I have also attempted to highlight, where possible, the terms that most frequently appear concurrently, such as 'competition' and 'mobility'.

Skinner in particular has questioned whether writing a history of concepts is in fact possible, stressing the dependence of concepts on language.³⁷ In his analysis, any such investigation would quickly become a history of the terms we use to express concepts. Moreover, an undue focus on terms could result in a lack of regard for the agents employing language, the context they produce it in and the restraints embodied by the language itself. At most, Skinner contends, we can write a history of an idea that is a "history of its various uses, and of the varying intentions with which it was used".³⁸ Yet this scepticism does not seem to create a gulf between the practice of a contextualist history of political thought and *Begriffsgeschichte*. Koselleck himself has stressed the importance of exploring the use of language in a unique historical context by groups or individuals for a specific purpose.³⁹ Historical agents and contexts are thus accorded a similar pride of place as they are in the Anglophone approach. In addition, as Melvin Richter has pointed out, Skinner has himself written a history of the state in a volume assessing conceptual change and employs the notion of conceptualisation in his own work. Richter cites his own correspondence with Skinner, in which a history of concepts, provided it explores the various *uses* a concept can be put to,

³⁶ Reinhard Koselleck, "Hinweise auf die temporalen Strukturen begriffsgeschichtlichen Wandels," in *Begriffsgeschichte, Diskursgeschichte, Metapherngeschichte*, ed. Hans Erich Bödecker (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2002), 38.

³⁷ Kari Palonen, *Quentin Skinner. History, Politics, Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 89; John G.A. Pocock, "Concepts and Discourses. A Difference in Culture? Comment on a Paper by Melvin Richter," in *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts: New Studies in Begriffsgeschichte*. GHI Washington Occasional Paper No. 15, eds. Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter (1996), 54.

³⁸ Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Volume I*, 85- 86.

³⁹ Reinhart Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2006), 100.

is depicted as acceptable.⁴⁰ The focus in the following exploration of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* rests equally on who takes up terms as well as what they are used to convey and achieve.

A further bone of contention between both projects has been whether the exploration of terms through or within time should take precedence. Skinner's and Pocock's emphasis on the importance of a contextually developed language and situation results in a preference for synchronic analysis.⁴¹ *Begriffsgeschichte* on the other, seeks to fuse examinations of the specific situation in which a protagonist uses a concept and the diachronic dimension of tracing the meanings of a concept over time.⁴² While this thesis considers change both syn- and diachronically, it is important to note that my time frame is much narrower than that of either approach outlined above. Furthermore, unlike the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* I do not set out to trace the origins of either *Leistung* or *Leistungsgesellschaft*, discussions about both were already well under way by the 1930s.

An additional question that has been raised within this debate concerns the ability of the history of concepts to offer insight into political and social historical processes. Here, both schools agree that a historical account centred on language has a substantive contribution to make. Skinner has clearly outlined the varying ways in which vocabulary plays a role in the constitution of social conventions. To name one example, a change in the type of situation a term is used to describe, or in the (negative or positive) connotations associated with a term indicates a corresponding shift in the attitude of those using the language.⁴³ Koselleck approaches the issue from a different perspective, stressing that conceptual change both registers and affects social, economic or political change.⁴⁴ In asserting the usefulness of a historicised study of language for social and political history, both Skinner and Koselleck reject the notion that these forms of history can be separated, and stress the way in which individuals or groups appropriated

⁴⁰ Melvin Richter, *The History of Political and Social Concepts* (Oxford: OUP, 1995), 133-134.

⁴¹ Pocock, "Concepts and Discourses," 50; Melvin Richter, "Koselleck on the Contestability of 'Grundbegriffe'. A Comparative Perspective," in *Zwischen Sprache und Geschichte: Zum Werke Reinhart Kosellecks*, eds. Carsten Dutt and Reinhard Laube (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013), 88.

⁴² Olsen, *History in the Plural*, 172.

⁴³ Skinner, "Language and Political Change," 17-19.

⁴⁴ Richter, *Social and Political Concepts*, 28-36. See also Olsen, *History in the Plural*, 181.

terms in a bid for legitimacy. The terms under consideration in this thesis were employed as tools by different individuals in a number of ways, ranging from attempts to understand social change, outlines of the economic and social order (National Socialist or West) German society should take, to discrediting critics of proposed programmes and policies. In these contexts the open and flexible idea of what it meant to achieve meant the term was appropriated and adjusted to suit a range of agendas in a shifting historical context. Moreover, both *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* are just as frequently brought into connection with economic and social spheres of life as political ones. That being said, it is important to bear in mind that the texts I am drawing on are overwhelmingly the product of academic or governing elites. As such, they provide insight into the conceptual frameworks of a specific social strata only.

Within this undertaking, the conceptual openness of *Leistung* presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The frequency with which the term appears in discussions of sports, education, economics and many other areas means that framing and separating out an area of investigation becomes difficult. At the same time the flexibility of the term also goes a long way towards explaining its popularity as well as the frustrations some contemporaries felt in dealing with it. As Stoff rightly points out, the term is multifunctional, it “allows the construction of a particular area of knowledge and at the same time transports specific social interests”.⁴⁵ While I do not want to claim the contested label of ‘basic concept’ for either *Leistung* or *Leistungsgesellschaft*, the flexibility of the terms endeared them to a variety of agents in formulating a series of arguments. Achievement can be located in any number of situations, given the power to do so. In the sources discussed here, *Leistung* is employed in a myriad of ways, as the productive output of a worker, the assessed efforts of a student, a value to be imparted to the younger generation, a psychological pressure on a helpless individual and many more. I have attempted to focus on understandings of achieving tied to work, as a very broad category, which still allows the term to bundle the different meanings listed above.

What emerges very clearly in all of these areas is the manner in which *Leistung* as a category and the societal ideal of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* drew lines of

⁴⁵ Stoff, “Das Leistungsprinzip,” 281.

exclusion between 1933 and 1975. Some of these lines shifted around the political break of 1945, most notably because public accounts of *Leistung* no longer contained any overtly racialized language. Others remained excluded by the meaning *Leistung* was invested with throughout. The most obvious group here are women, as achieving was presented as the domain of men, regardless of the realities of female involvement in the workforce and work done domestically both before and after 1945. By the late 1960s this monopolisation of achievement in the name of men was being questioned, at the same time as the value of achieving in and of itself was being interrogated. All individuals in need of support in order to be able to achieve, such as recipients of welfare benefits, or those beyond the working age also presented a problem to those trying to stress *Leistung* as a principle of economic and societal organisation.

Nor did any consensus on whether achieving was a positive or a negative phenomenon emerge. National Socialist accounts strove to present *Leistung* as an empowering force of modernity promoting individual mobility and collective success, yet the concept was employed as part of a larger strategy of exerting immense pressure on the workforce (labour history shows the reaction was to sidestep this pressure). In the West German context, too, the fifties, sixties and seventies were the site of extensive discussions. Contemporaries debated whether a society structured solely through economic achievement was desirable or possible in conjunction with the welfare state, whether socialising children to strive ceaselessly to achieve was advisable and whether the type of achievement being demanded in schools and workplaces was inclusive, healthy and promoting mobility. Within these debates, *Leistungsgesellschaft* was employed both as a concept legitimising existing social structures (including inequality) and, by the sixties, as a summarising term for many of the ills of modern existence.

Despite all these differences, there is a theme that reoccurs in the various accounts of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* considered here: the desire to deal with the challenges of a class society, capitalism and modernity. National Socialism sought to present *Leistungsgemeinschaft* as a step beyond the exploitative capitalism of the past and stress the compatible nature of individual advancement through performance and collective aims. The Ordoliberal project, developed under the influence of global economic crisis and National Socialist

economic policies, sought to generate a societal structure in which achieving in the free market was rewarded. At the same time sociological investigations began to probe the assertion that a *Leistungsgesellschaft* was the natural form for any capitalist, industrial society to take, a process of interrogation that was expanded and radicalised by protestors from the mid-sixties onwards.

Based on these findings, my project supports the contention that the “scientization” (*Verwissenschaftlichung*) of terms used to describe society and the self needs to be part of the study of concepts for the 20th century.⁴⁶ This increasing transfer of concepts, ideas and theories between different disciplines and areas of society has led, Christian Geulen contends, to the spread of knowledge as part of the process. Moreover, this trend works both ways: scientific terminology becomes part of the general social body of knowledge and social experience comes to constitute part of scientific research.⁴⁷ Applied to the concept of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* both terms are certainly affected by the rise of behavioural, sociological and economic research in the twentieth century.

In what follows, the concept of *Leistung* is given the same, if not more, attention and analysis than the term *Leistungsgesellschaft* or *Leistungsgemeinschaft* for a number of reasons. I do not wish to contend that the increasing use of the label “society” to describe particularly post-war West German was insignificant, apolitical or free of tensions.⁴⁸ The sheer number of composite terms involving the word “society” that have been created in attempts to describe Germany in the 20th century such as *Risikogesellschaft*, *Massengesellschaft* or *Freizeitgesellschaft* go a long way towards disproving this claim. Instead my interest lies in exploring *Leistung* as the supposedly sole criteria in allocating socio-economic status and judging the worth of an individual to the social unit. *Leistung*, in my account, presents one specific angle from which to view the society that Germans created

⁴⁶ Christian Geulen, “Plädoyer für eine Geschichte der Grundbegriffe des 20. Jahrhunderts,” *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, Online-edition, 7:1 (2010), accessed on 16th June, 2013, <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/1-2010/id%3D4488>; Alexander Nützenadel, *Stunde der Ökonomen: Wissenschaft, Politik und Expertenkultur in der Bundesrepublik 1949-1974*, Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft 166 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 15.

⁴⁷ Willibald Steinmetz, “Some Thoughts on a History of Twentieth Century German Basic Concepts,” *Contributions to the history of concepts* 7:2 (Winter 2012): 96.

⁴⁸ For a more detailed engagement with the concept of society see Paul Nolte, *Die Ordnung der deutschen Gesellschaft: Selbstentwurf und Selbstbeschreibung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2000), 12.

to understand their surroundings or paint a picture of what kind of life was desirable. It is important to note that not all of the researchers and academics whose works this thesis is based on engaged explicitly with the idea of an achieving society. However, they were all united in viewing achievement as a central analytical category in explaining economic, political and social dynamics, as will be shown. Moreover, the vast majority of the writers under consideration here tied notions of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* primarily to work and education as preparation for later vocational activity.

Rendering the ideas of *Leistung* and a *Leistungsgemeinschaft* in English presents a number of challenges and opportunities for further insight into the various meanings of the term in both languages. The closest direct translation would be *meritocracy*, a system (of government, rule or influence) in which individual status is based on merit. However, this translation omits a number of important dimensions of the German term. Firstly, references to the German *Leistungsgemeinschaft* or a *Leistungsgesellschaft* can be found in 19th century Germany. By contrast, *meritocracy* is a comparatively newer term, created by Michael Young in the UK in 1958 as a concept with negative connotations, with its own history of appropriation and redefinition. Moreover, *meritocracy* refers specifically to a society stratified according to merit, while *achieving society* captures another meaning of *Leistungsgesellschaft*: that of a society in which everyone achieved together. For the purposes of this piece of writing, the terms *meritocracy* and *achieving society* will be used.

Moreover, the terms “merit” and “*Leistung*” are far from synonymous, a difference in language which makes it possible to approach the meaning of the German term “*Leistung*” in a more differentiated fashion. In what follows, I have attempted to hone in on one dimension of *Leistung*: a form of achievement, performance or endeavour on an individual or corporate level, the subject of standardised measurement and assumptions of universal validity.⁴⁹ This meaning of the word comes closest to the English term “merit”. Both words refer to an elusive, subjective quality, open to redefinition according to the speaker’s or author’s overall aim.

⁴⁹ Verheyen, “Unter Druck,” 384.

The project is divided into four chapters. The first investigates the National Socialist model of a *Leistungsgemeinschaft* and more concrete notions of *Leistung* in the Third Reich in order to establish a basis for comparison with the Federal Republic. It places the idea of a National Socialist “achieving community” in the context of the politically charged pre-existing distinction between community and society as well as exploring its relationship with the more prominent idea of a *Volksgemeinschaft*. Set against this backdrop, the chapter posits that one of the most frequently made conceptual links was between *Leistung* and work, thus focusing on the Battle of the Businesses run by the German Labour Front. The analysis rests on the criteria businesses were expected to meet in order to succeed as well as DAF publications on the competition. Within this framework, the concept of achievement in operation was that of an Aryan, male worker, defined by soldierly virtues such as obedience and commitment, spurred on by the competitive structures he inhabited to be ever more productive while never failing in his support for the party. This contrasted sharply with the changing depictions of female achievement, always coloured by a concern with a woman’s racial duty to reproduce and keep house. Yet, as this image was strenuously maintained, it also gradually deepened, coming to include the female worker; albeit as a substitute for missing male labour which required a markedly different working environment and set of professional processes to be productive.

The second chapter spans both the Third Reich and the Federal Republic, although its emphasis is on the post-war period. The piece remains focused on the conceptualisation of *Leistung* as work and its link to a broader model of society in the form of a *Leistungsgesellschaft*. Based on the centrality of economic success to German post-war identity, my analysis centres on the place of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* within the Ordoliberal theory of the social market economy as the dominant narrative device for German post-war prosperity. In this context, the chapter commences with the earliest Ordoliberal writings from 1928 and comes to a close in 1966 when Ludwig Erhard, the most powerful proponent of Ordoliberalism, was ousted from power. I engage with materials including the economic journal *Ordo*, monographs released by Ordoliberal thinkers including Ludwig Erhard, Alfred Müller-Armack, Alexander Rüstow, Wilhelm Röpke and others as well as publications from organisations such as the *Aktionsgruppe Soziale Marktwirtschaft* and the Mont Pèlerin Society. These

sources show that the model of economics developed from the late 1920s onwards included a firm commitment to performance-based competition. This created an area of conceptual overlap with both the regime and the resistance, which some Ordoliberal sought to exploit. In the post-war period, the model was expanded to include a general theoretical commitment to a society in which achievement improved social status. While Ordoliberal theorists had some success in shaping economic policy in the early years of the Federal Republic, they faced challenges from the mid-1950s onwards. Moreover, Ordoliberal views on *Leistung* conflicted with the social market economy's commitment to securing the well-being of those members who were unable to achieve or needed help doing so. It also made itself felt in Ordoliberal warnings regarding the obstructive effect welfare had on motivation to achieve economically. Social policy in the FRG thus increasingly diverged from Ordoliberal ideas on the subject of merit.

The third section of the project examines the way in which West German sociologists as practitioners of a discipline which has been located at the centre of post-war West German cultural and political identity engaged with the model of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* and deepened the concept of *Leistung*. It is based predominantly on the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie* and a range of monographs published by West German, British and American sociologists. British and American sociological works were used by West German scholars to explore the model of an achieving society and the U.S. was interrogated as a potential example to emulate. While West German engagement with these transatlantic ideas was far from uncritical, it contributed to and perpetuated an understanding of the Federal Republic as a modern, industrial, 'western' state in the Cold War. By the late 1960s, West German sociologists started to examine the cost of a social and economic system that overemphasised a very specific version of performance, engaging with factors such as age, health, class and gender. In so doing, the discipline created a precursor and an alternative to the critique of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* expressed by the 68ers.

The final chapter features an analysis of the appropriation of the concept of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* by the New Left and the women's movement from the mid-sixties onwards, trying to establish whether this process differed from previous, and had any effect on subsequent, uses of the concept, which groups drew on the

term and what meaning they invested it with. This chapter charts the next step in the redefinition of achievement and an achieving society as an overwhelmingly negative phenomenon by drawing on the writings of members of the Frankfurt School, *Kursbuch*, publications by various organisations such as the SDS and Kommune 2. A *Leistungsgesellschaft*, to these groups, was a capitalist social system and emotional regime which valued the individual solely as a source of economic performance, generating an imprisoned and impoverished form of human existence. However, attempts to establish ways of learning, working and interacting socially which did not encompass a pressure to achieve quickly floundered. Alongside these developments, the women's movement deepened previously fleeting references to achievement as a male quality by interrogating the role of gender in an achieving society. They did so to establish what true emancipation would mean and came to the conclusion that both men and women were enslaved to *Leistung*, albeit in different ways, calling for radical social change. Nor did the idea of *Leistungsgesellschaft* find its limits in application to the West German situation, it was also utilised as a model to test whether life in socialist countries had transcended the restrictions present in the West German capitalist society. Finally, the chapter closes with an outline of attempts launched by conservative social scientists in the context of debates about value change to refute the claims made by the left and the women's movement.

Chapter One: “Es gibt nur mehr deutsche Volksgenossen und sie werden nur gewertet nach ihrer Leistung.”¹- National Socialist conceptualisations of achievement

I: Introduction

“The Labour Front not only strives to create a people’s community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) but also desires a meritocratic community (*Leistungsgemeinschaft*) of all Germans.”² These are the words of Robert Ley, addressed to the National Socialist Party Congress of 1934 and outlining the mission of the organisation he had been placed in charge of, the German Labour Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront, DAF). Ley was not alone in drawing on the image of a future community in which merit would determine status. Point 20 of the NSDAP programme (1920) stated a commitment to careers open to talent, regardless of background. Hitler made frequent references to a meritocratic social structure including a speech given in May 1937 in which he proclaimed “there are now only German Volksgenossen und they will be judged exclusively according to their *Leistung*.”³ The “Third Reich” drew on the ideal of a community in which status was based on individual merit, regardless of the realities of social mobility.⁴

The prominence of the concept of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgemeinschaft* as a derivative in National Socialist rhetoric has been well established, it features in early attempts by linguists, philologists and historians to compile dictionaries of key phrases in NS speech.⁵ Karl-Heinz Brackmann’s study provides no definition

¹ Speech given by Hitler on May 1st 1937 as quoted in Heinz Müller, *Führerauslese in der Volksgemeinschaft. Festvortrag, gehalten auf der Zweiten Jahrestagung des Reichsverbandes Deutscher Verwaltungs-Akademien am 5. Juni 1937 in Düsseldorf* (Berlin: Industrieverlag Spaeth & Linde, 1937), 33.

² Robert Ley, *Der Durchbruch der sozialen Ehre* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1934), 137.

³ Hitler as quoted in Müller, *Führerauslese*, 33.

⁴ Whether or not National Socialist Germany increased social mobility or even the appearance of it has been the subject of much debate. On this see Schoenbaum, *Social Revolution*; Rüdiger Hachtmann, “...artgemäßer Arbeitseinsatz der jetzigen und zukünftigen Mütter unseres Volkes,‘ industrielle Erwerbstätigkeit von Frauen 1933 bis 1945 im Spannungsfeld von Rassismus, Biologismus und Klasse,“ in *Neuordnung Europas: Vorträge vor der Berliner Gesellschaft für Faschismus- und Weltkriegsforschung 1992-1996*, eds. Werner Röhr, Brigitte Berlekamp (Berlin: Edition Organon, 1996) 231-250; Michael Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003).

⁵ Hans Ulrich Wehler’s assertions on the continuity of a mind-set valuing *Leistung* in National Socialist and Federal Germany deserve mention here. See Wehler, *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 5, 214.

of *Leistung* as an individual concept but dedicates considerable space to various compound nouns based around the term. *Leistungsgemeinschaft* is here defined as “German society viewed under the aspect of *Leistung*; the goal of the DAF.” A brief comment on the idea of performance-based competition (*Leistungswettbewerb*) sheds further light on the concept, stating that “the NS world view saw *Leistung* as a decisive criterion in determining the value of a human being as well as the position he was entitled to in the community.”⁶ Cornelia Schmitz-Berning’s work on the vocabulary of National Socialism highlights the connection between the concept of *Leistung*, work and race. According to her definition, *Leistung* is “a racially defined catch phrase whose main elements generally denote the measures to increase production as part of the four year plan.”⁷

These studies go some way towards showing the importance of the concept of *Leistung/Leistungsgemeinschaft* within a National Socialist world view. Subsequent work on the DAF and working class, the bulk of which was done in the 1980s also explored the status of *Leistung* and its meaning in the “Third Reich”. Studies by Timothy Mason, Carola Sachse, Jürgen Reulecke, Matthias Frese and Tilla Siegel focused on various aspects of labour policy under National Socialism, ranging from negotiations of performance based pay, resistance, support or passivity towards the regime from the working strata of society to examinations of the structure and brief of the DAF itself. Most recently, Rüdiger Hachtmann’s interest in the Labour Front and Jonathan S. Wiesen’s work on the Nazi marketplace have generated a number of useful insights into the meaning of *Leistung* many of which are touched upon in what follows.⁸ Wiesen and

⁶ Karl-Heinz Brackmann, Renate Birkenhauer, *NS-Deutsch: “Selbstverständliche” Begriffe und Schlagwörter aus der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Straelen: Straeler Manuskripte Verlag, 1988), 122.

⁷ Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 384.

⁸ Carola Sachse and Tilla Siegel, Hasso Spode, Wolfgang Spohn ed. *Angst, Belohnung, Zucht und Ordnung: (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1982)*; Carola Sachse, *Betriebliche Sozialpolitik als Familienpolitik in der Weimarer Republik und im Nationalsozialismus. Mit einer Fallstudie über die Firma Siemens* (Berlin: Forschungsberichte des Hamburger Instituts für Sozialforschung 1, 1987); Carola Sachse, *Siemens, der Nationalsozialismus und die moderne Familie. Eine Untersuchung zur sozialen Rationalisierung in Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Ratsch & Röhning Verlag, 1990); Tilla Siegel, “Rationalisierung statt Klassenkampf. Zur Rolle der DAF in der nationalsozialistischen Ordnung der Arbeit,” in *Herrschaftsalltag im Dritten Reich*, ed. Hans Mommsen, (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1988), 97-149; Tilla Siegel, *Leistung und Lohn in der nationalsozialistischen “Ordnung der Arbeit”* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1989); Timothy W. Mason, *Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich: Arbeiterklasse und Volksgemeinschaft* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1977); Jürgen Reulecke, “Die Fahne mit dem goldenen Zahnrad: der

Hachtmann have pointed to the ubiquity of discussions of achievement in speeches, proclamations, professional and party publications.⁹ While both explore *Leistung* in connection with work, they highlight the National Socialist application of concepts of achievement to race and gender, too.¹⁰

This chapter examines the way in which the idea of a *Leistungsgemeinschaft* was employed under National Socialism. As declaring a community to be meritocratic leads to the question of what “merit” is to signify, the main focus will be on the concept of *Leistung* and the meaning it was allotted by the regime. What exactly was being discussed when the term *Leistung* was employed? How did it relate to ideas of National Socialist community? Did this meaning remain consistent? Did the semantic priority granted to such a concept manifest in matters of policy?

In answering these questions, the piece focuses mainly on the Battle of the Businesses (*Leistungskampf der Betriebe*) and to some extent on the National Vocational Competition (*Reichsberufswettkampf*) run by the German Labour Front from the mid-1930s to the end of the war. My reasons for looking at the *Leistungskampf* in particular are twofold. Firstly, a correlate of the supposed NS commitment to a society in which “aptitude, performance and diligence” determined social status was the designation of specific mechanisms to ensure allocation of status based on these criteria.¹¹ The *Leistungskampf* and the *Reichsberufswettkampf* were among the most frequently cited means of guaranteeing mobility to those carefully selected based on merit.¹² As part of this social model, promising individuals were to be selected at a young age and

Leistungskampf der deutschen Betriebe 1937-1939,” in *Die Reihen fast geschlossen: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alltags unterm Nationalsozialismus*, eds. Detlev Peukert and Jürgen Reulecke (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, 1981), 245-273; Rüdiger Hachtmann. *Industriearbeit im Dritten Reich* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1989); Rüdiger Hachtmann, “Chaos und Ineffizienz in der Deutschen Arbeitsfront. Ein Evaluierungsbericht aus dem Jahr 1936,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 53: 1 (2005) 43-78; Rüdiger Hachtmann ed., *Ein Koloss auf tönernen Füßen: Das Gutachten des Wirtschaftsprüfers Karl Eicke über die Deutsche Arbeitsfront vom 31. Juli 1936* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2006); Rüdiger Hachtmann, *Das Wirtschaftsimperium der Deutschen Arbeitsfront, 1933-1945* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012); Rüdiger Hachtmann, “Vom “Geist der Volksgemeinschaft durchpulst,” *Zeitgeschichte online* (Jan. 2010), accessed 6th October, 2013, <http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/thema/vom-geist-der-volksgemeinschaft-durchpulst>.

⁹ Hachtmann, *Industriearbeit*, 17; Jonathan S. Wiesen, *Creating the Nazi Marketplace* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 28.

¹⁰ Hachtmann, *Industriearbeit*, 17; Wiesen, *Creating the Nazi Marketplace*, 35.

¹¹ Albert Schoch, “Das soziale Reich der Deutschen,” *Monatsheft für Sozialpolitik* 8:1/2 (January 1941): 2.

¹² “Jedem die gleiche Chance,” *Der Angriff*, 3rd, May, 3.

prepared for a bigger role in community.¹³ However, efforts to recognise, develop and promote talent did not end here. In the business community, the focus came to rest on initial and further training, measures which company reports, including those submitted as part of the *Leistungskampf*, provided information on.¹⁴ The business as a microcosm of society, the argument went, thus supported the placement of the most talented into positions they were most suited to. To name an example, Bosch GmbH submitted a *Leistungsbericht* to the DAF in the summer of 1941, and the company was praised for allowing the natural needs and inheritance of individuals to assert themselves, acknowledging these and putting them to use in the business.¹⁵ This attitude, it was argued, addressed the natural wish of any labourer to get ahead, see his achievements recognised and get a job he was inclined towards.¹⁶ In a similar vein, the award of *Nationalsozialistischer Musterbetrieb*, the crowning achievement for any business participating in the Battle of the Businesses, was to be given to organisations in which the idea of a community within the business, which contained the ideal of a *Leistungsgemeinschaft*, had been perfectly realised.¹⁷

Secondly, looking beyond the *Leistungskampf* and the definition of an ideal National Socialist business specifically, references to *Leistungsgemeinschaft* played a prominent part in outlining the function of the DAF. Hitler issued an order on October 24th 1934 at Ley's behest (much to the chagrin of other major figures in the party), presenting the nature and aims of the DAF in the following manner: "§2 The aim of the German Labour Front (DAF) is the formation of a real *Volks- and Leistungsgemeinschaft* of all Germans. It (the DAF) is to ensure that each individual can take his place in the economic life of the nation in a mental

¹³ Ibid., 3.

¹⁴ Albert Schoch, "Aufstieg im Betriebe," *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik. Beilage: Der Vertrauensrat* 8:11/14 (June/July 1941): 51.

¹⁵ Of course, the statements made by a business to the DAF and the real conditions in the workplace could very easily be two different things. The focus here is on the version of performance the DAF was trying to construct.

¹⁶ Albert Schoch, "Der Geist im Betriebe," *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik* 8:9/10 (May 1941): 98-99.

¹⁷ See the work of Karl Arnhold, former DINTA member and Albert Bremhorst's predecessor as head of the *Amt für Berufserziehung und Betriebsführung* within the DAF. *Der Betriebsführer und sein Betrieb: Gedanken zum nationalsozialistischen Musterbetrieb* (Leipzig: Verlag Bibliographisches Institut AG, 1937), 27, 34.

and bodily condition which makes him capable of the greatest achievement, thus guaranteeing the greatest possible use to the People's Community."¹⁸

Based on this understanding of the brief of the DAF and the position occupied by the *Leistungskampf* within it, I contend that the concept of *Leistung*, already in existence in Weimar and late Imperial Germany was taken up by National Socialism and the DAF. The concept came to signify a collective, militarised, masculine, racial form of labour designed to fulfil the political aims of the regime which were presented as coterminous with the "common good" of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.¹⁹ Moreover, the concept of *Leistung* was ever-more strongly emphasised as the war went on, coming to denote improved productivity above all else.

Before turning to look at these findings in greater detail, it is important to note that discussions of achieving were almost always tied to ideas of community or *Gemeinschaft*. National Socialism drew on pre-existing positive connotations of community to paint a picture of an ideal world in which egoism was tamed, the common good (however defined) placed above individual self-interest and harmony reigned supreme.²⁰

The elevation of *Gemeinschaft* into the ultimate form of collective existence was rooted in the commonly held distinction between community and society in late Imperial, Weimar and National Socialist Germany. The initial differentiation is generally attributed to Ferdinand Tönnies' 1887 work, which established community and society as sociological types of human existence and interaction.

¹⁸ Walther Hofer ed. *Der Nationalsozialismus: Dokumente 1933-1945* (Frankfurt a. M: Fischer, 1957), 87. This order remained one of only two pieces of legislation on the DAF (if one accepts that Hitler's order came to have the status of a law). The other was the Law on the Organisation of German Work, which attempted to define the powers of the DAF. Both laws have received much attention and form the basis of many analyses which connect the DAF in particular with the concept of a *Leistungsgemeinschaft*. See Mason, *Sozialpolitik*, 193; Günter Morsch, *Arbeit und Brot: Studien zu Lage, Stimmung, Einstellung und Verhalten der deutschen Arbeiterschaft 1933-1936/7*. Europäische Hochschulschriften 546 (Frankfurt a. M: Peter Lang, 1993), 33. See note 5 for further examples.

¹⁹ My findings largely cohere with Rüdiger Hachtmann's research on the concept of work. Hachtmann's study highlights a deliberate reform of the language used to discuss different types of employment, the business, its owner and workers in a bid to replace the terminology traditionally used by the socialist left to describe and criticise the position of the worker in Weimar Germany. "*Arbeit*" thus became a concept laden with similar connotations to *Leistung*. See Hachtmann, "Vom "Geist der Volksgemeinschaft durchpulst".

²⁰ Rüdiger Hachtmann, "Arbeitsverfassung," in *Drei Wege deutscher Sozialstaatlichkeit: NS Diktatur, Bundesrepublik und DDR im Vergleich: Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, ed. Hans Günter Hockerts (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998), 30.

Tönnies used these categories to identify what he saw as problematic trends in contemporary national life. A community, according to him, was a natural and beneficial human bond, to be found in the family or neighbourhood, while society was equated with the artificial, self-interested dimensions of existence.²¹ Tönnies criticised the tendency of a capitalist economic and social order to create a system in which everyone was a merchant, in which social relationships were solely constituted by “a large number of mere persons, who are capable of delivering (leisten) and thus promising something”.²² For Tönnies, the modern age was defined by a trend towards society rather than community, a development which isolated the individual.²³

The notion of society and community as separate, yet connected aspects of life found considerable resonance among contemporaries from the late Imperial period onwards. It featured in the intellectual frameworks developed by Max Weber, Othmar Spann, Hans Freyer and Helmuth Plessner, the *Zentrale für Heimatdienst* (a body charged with disseminating information and promoting education on political matters) in Weimar as well as the expanding and varied youth movements of the early twentieth century.²⁴ However, each of these figures and groups dealt with and defined community and society differently, the appeal of such categories therefore lay in their general and open nature, rather than any specific and fixed meaning. Plessner, for example, stood alone in warning of the potential dangers inherent in over-exalting the community concept and attempting to fuse it with a political system, while Weber’s interest lay not in elevating one over the other but using both to understand social action.²⁵

At the same time, the community concept rapidly acquired the status of a political catch-phrase, in particular in the form of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, or People’s Community. The experience of defeat and failure to forge a national community in the First World lent added strength to a pre-existing distinction. The *völkisch* parties in particular drew on a framework in which society denoted the

²¹ Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie* (1887; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), 3.

²² Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society*, trans. and ed. Charles P. Loomis (1887; repr., Mineola, N.Y.: Dover, 2002), 77.

²³ *Ibid.*, 224.

²⁴ Franz Janka, *Die braune Gesellschaft: Ein Volk wird formatiert* (Stuttgart: Quell, 1997), 135-142, 158.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 135, 152.

pernicious effects of modern existence and community held the cure. “Society” was seen as the embodiment of individualism and rationalism, the product of the increasing influence of economics, as evidenced by the effect of class divisions on all areas of life.

National Socialist uses of community were plentiful, drawing on this well-established and charged distinction. In no particular order Nazi terminology in this area includes a *Volksgemeinschaft*, *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*, *Brotgemeinschaft*, *Frontgemeinschaft*, *Betriebsgemeinschaft*²⁶ and *Leistungsgemeinschaft*. When seeking to establish the meaning of the concept of *Leistungsgemeinschaft* as a point of access to National Socialist self-understanding, it is consequently vital to bear in mind that this community, as well as the promise of a better social order it carried, was one of many. The first, the *Volksgemeinschaft*, or people’s community, was a concept with a history of expansive and varied cross-party use in the Weimar period.²⁷ It has received considerable attention in recent scholarship on National Socialism and its power in generating support for the regime has been hotly contested.²⁸ While a general consensus exists that the term derived much of its status from being flexible and therefore open to a large number of interpretations, it did denote an ideal form of human existence free of social conflict both in Weimar and the “Third Reich”. Like most of the other ideal communities the Nazis discussed, the image of a *Leistungsgemeinschaft* was thus

²⁶ Variations on the idea of community applied to business present a continuity between Weimar and National Socialism. Both conceived of a business and the worker-employee relations it contained not as a contractually regulated feature of society but rather as a supposedly organic community. In the bounds of such a group, both parties should show consideration for each other, a notion that predates National Socialism and can be found in legal theory on labour law prior to 1933. The *Betriebsgemeinschaft* was elevated to the status of a legal phrase by the *Gesetz zur Ordnung der deutschen Arbeit* (AOG) in January 1934, only a few months prior to Hitler’s order on the DAF. Both edict and law are lent added importance by the successive failures of any further attempts to restrain the DAF’s drive to extend its power by setting up a legal framework for the organisation. Among its many provisions, the AOG presented the business owner or manager as the leader of the business and the employees as his *Gefolgschaft*, or following. The implications of such a shift were clear: obedience was now an employee’s primary duty while the employer was to be relied upon to take care of his own, monitored by the so-called Vertrauensräte. See *Ibid.*, 30-31; Hachtmann, “Vom Geist der Volksgemeinschaft durchpulst”.

²⁷ Wildt and Bajohr, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 8.

²⁸ Detlef Schmiechen-Ackermann ed., *“Volksgemeinschaft“: Mythos, wirkungsmächtige soziale Verheißung oder soziale Realität im “Dritten Reich“?* (Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012), 17, 31; Martin Broszat, “Soziale Motivation und Führerbindung des Nationalsozialismus,” 392-409.

also a heavily collective one, the national “good” functioning as the ultimate arbiter of merit.

The *Leistungskampf* or Battle of the Businesses should thus be viewed within the emphatically collective goals it served. The concept for the Battle of the Businesses was developed in 1934 parallel to the National Vocational Competition, a competition among trainees to complete industry-specific tasks and gain better job prospects. Both initiatives aimed to combine areas of social and economic policy. The *Leistungskampf* ran on a number of levels: businesses that were new to the competition could be put forward by local DAF officials compete for a series of smaller awards. These were distributed by the DAF alone all year round in either bronze or silver and included the Award (*Leistungsabzeichen*) for Exemplary Health Care, Accommodation, Training, Supporting *Kraft durch Freude* and many more (Ley was extending the number of awards that could be gained at this level as late as 1942).²⁹ If a business had gained all of these smaller *Leistungsabzeichen* in bronze, it was awarded a Regional Certificate for Outstanding Performance (*Gaudiplom für hervorragende Leistungen*).³⁰ An organisation holding all smaller awards in silver could become a *Musterbetrieb*, the highest honour. The criteria for winning and the distribution of the latter award was determined by the DAF as well as the Chambers of Industry, Commerce and Economics.³¹ With the transition to the award of *Kriegsmusterbetrieb* in 1942, the initial process of having to gain all of the smaller awards fell away and mainly businesses that could show increased productivity were eligible to become *Kriegsmusterbetriebe*.

At the same time, these competitions were not merely a question of improving performance. They offered the DAF an opportunity to expand its remit further into the business community, regulate more aspects of the management of business affairs and gather more information on each participating enterprise.

²⁹ “Der Leistungskampf der Betriebe,” *Amtliches Nachrichtenblatt der DAF* 7:6 (October 1941): 46

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 46.

³¹ Matthias Frese, *Betriebspolitik im Dritten Reich: Deutsche Arbeitsfront, Unternehmer und Staatsbürokratie in der westdeutschen Großindustrie 1933-1939* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1991), 424. For further information on the structure of the DAF see Tilla Siegel and Thomas von Freyberg, *Industrielle Rationalisierung unter dem Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1991), 101 – 104.

Moreover, the *Leistungskampf* was a way of singling out and individualising the worker within the company while at the same time serving as a reminder of the larger connection to the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the company as a whole for which his achievement was undertaken. As such, the concept of *Leistung* became a category used to assert and justify the expansion of the Labour Front's power.

The polycratic nature of policy formation and government control meant that each step made by the Labour Front was contested by its co-competitors for power.³² The *Leistungskampf der Betriebe* should therefore rather be seen as one of a series of attempts made by the DAF to extend its powers and gain greater access to business as well as popularity for its functionaries within businesses by being seen to demand the extension of social measures provided by management.³³ For the purposes of this drive for expanded influence, the concept of *Leistung* was appropriated and its meaning was exploited to serve the DAF agenda.

This assessment of the *Leistungskampf* builds on Carola Sachse's analysis of the ways in which the DAF gained influence on social policy in businesses. Sachse depicts measures adopted by the DAF as a means of combining racial and gender policy, which arose out of earlier discussions of social rationalization.³⁴ Her studies examine a variety of areas of social policy such as healthcare and child support, focussing on their meaning for and understanding of the family. She highlights the intense socio-political regulation women were subject to in the Weimar Republic and during National Socialism as well as their comparatively limited entitlement to more expensive social support.³⁵ Her analysis reveals the fusion of gender, race and labour policy by the DAF.³⁶ While I agree with most of Sachse's findings, my aim here is to build on her insights and achieve a more detailed assessment of the concept of *Leistung* specifically. The latter features in

³² Matthias Frese, "Vom NS- Musterbetrieb zum Kriegs-Musterbetrieb. Zum Verhältnis von Deutscher Arbeitsfront und Großindustrie 1936-1944," in *Der Zweite Weltkrieg: Analysen – Grundzüge – Forschungsbilanz*, ed. Wolfgang Michalka (Munich: Piper, 1989), 387.

³³ Frese, *Betriebspolitik*, 421. As Sachse has shown, an important reason for this focus on social policy within the business was the manner in which the DAF was denied influence on other areas such as wage policy. Sachse, *Siemens, der Nationalsozialismus und die moderne Familie*, 55.

³⁴ Sachse, *Betriebliche Sozialpolitik als Familienpolitik*, 15; Sachse, *Siemens, der Nationalsozialismus und die moderne Familie*, 35.

³⁵ Sachse, *Betriebliche Sozialpolitik als Familienpolitik*, 9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 15; Sachse, *Siemens, der Nationalsozialismus und die moderne Familie*, 42.

Sachse's work but is not engaged with as a theme in its own right, as I attempt to do here, for the purpose of later comparison with the Federal Republic.

The Battle of the Businesses is unique in offering a breakdown of the concept of what it meant to achieve economically in National Socialist Germany. That said, the DAF's version of *Leistung* was not simply accepted wholesale, as the reaction of the various branches of industry and government agencies involved in the competition shows.³⁷ Matthias Frese's work has highlighted that larger businesses in the armaments and heavy industries were generally reluctant to participate in the *Leistungskampf* and no amount of pressure could force them. The regime's need for their co-operation was considerable enough to prevent any kind of DAF drive to strong-arm them into participating from being successful.³⁸ Once the competition had been established and the DAF had agreed to make some concessions (e.g. awarding a prize to a business as a whole rather than an individual branch/local site) some members of heavy industry did participate. Even among those who did take part, attitudes to the DAF could vary widely, fluctuating between co-operation and conflict. Sachse's work has portrayed social policy as a bone of contention between businesses and DAF, with the latter pushing for ever greater influence and seeking to realise a racial ideal, while the former continued to prioritize productivity.³⁹ Sachse argues that larger businesses were able to resist DAF efforts to muscle in, for example by placing their own staff in businesses, for much longer than their smaller counterparts.⁴⁰ While Sachse stresses the discrepancy between DAF and business aims, Neil Gregor's work on Daimler-Benz has shown that the DAF's pre-war push for expanded social policy was in keeping with previous developments in the business. The latter availed itself of the Labour Front on occasion (for example in preventing the conscription of important labourers) and strove to present itself as conforming with regime ideas. However, the business was equally careful to preserve autonomy in setting policy and the outbreak of war heralded rising tensions as the Labour Front tried to muscle its way further into factory

³⁷ For a broader discussion of the relationship between the DAF and the business industry, see David Meskill, *Optimizing the German Workforce: Labor Administration from Bismarck to the Economic Miracle* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), 151ff.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 432.

³⁹ Sachse, *Siemens, der Nationalsozialismus und die moderne Familie*, 245.

⁴⁰ Sachse, *Betriebliche Sozialpolitik als Familienpolitik*, 180.

management.⁴¹ This pattern did not apply to smaller businesses more liable to succumb to DAF pressure and be drawn by the promise of being able to use the prize to promote their own company.⁴²

Assessing the number of businesses involved in these competitions at a regional or national level is at best guesswork. Official estimates released for propaganda purposes, which are to be treated with extreme caution, claimed the number of participating businesses had grown steadily from around 80,500 in 1937/8 to roughly 290,000 in 1940/1.⁴³ A 1942 article claimed that the competition that year had resulted in the designation of 27 *Kriegsmusterbetriebe* and thousands of Regional Awards.⁴⁴ While these figures are highly problematic, some of the statements made in connection with them are plausible. Thus editor of the National Socialist monthly *Journal for Social Policy* Albert Schoch claimed that almost half of the awards dispensed in 1941 had been given to businesses involved in industries important to the war effort, including armaments.⁴⁵ Given the trouble the DAF had in persuading the armaments industry to participate, it does not seem surprising that those who did compete were rewarded.⁴⁶ Schoch also claimed that many of the awards were being won by business employing less than 1,000 people.⁴⁷ Here too, the attractiveness of the competition to smaller businesses who were not being supported by the regime in the same way as major organisations may have been a factor.

The availability of source material for the German Labour Front presents a problem, as the archive for the DAF has been lost and what remains is partial and misleading at best, due to the large amounts of propaganda material that have survived. Moreover, it is not possible to establish the reasoning behind which company was actually awarded a prize within the competition. This study

⁴¹ Neil Gregor, *Daimler-Benz in the Third Reich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 10-11, 163-167. For a discussion of Siemens which outlines similar themes, see Siegel and Freyberg, *Industrielle Rationalisierung*, 379-381. On Osram, see Pamela E. Swett, *Selling under the Swastika: Advertising and Commercial Culture in Nazi Germany* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 132ff.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 440.

⁴³ "Die goldene Fahne für 119 Betriebe," *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik. Beilage: Der Vertrauensrat* 8:9/10 (May 1941): 41.

⁴⁴ Kurt Hirche, "44 Kriegsmusterbetriebe," *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik* 9:23-24 (December 1942):212.

⁴⁵ Schoch, "Goldene Fahne," 41.

⁴⁶ Frese, *Betriebspolitik*, 423.

⁴⁷ Schoch, "Goldene Fahne," 42.

therefore seeks to combine surviving DAF material on the competition, training material circulated within the DAF and press material (specifically the papers *Angriff*, *Arbeitertum* and the *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik*) to trace the version of *Leistung* formulated by a series of influential individuals and groups clustered within the DAF.

II: *Leistung* as a racial concept

The criterion of race was the foundation of a society structured according to *Leistung*, both within the DAF and beyond. Gerhard Wolf has shown that in some occupied territories, the ability to achieve came to be seen as an indication of German descent.⁴⁸ Within the Reich proper, Ley repeatedly discussed the need for unity among all working Germans.⁴⁹ More importantly, he explicitly connected race to achievement within the business and working community. “We see work as an expression of our race”.⁵⁰ When explaining the Labour Front’s mission to educate workers on the National Socialist attitude, thus resolving the social question, Ley referred to “the concepts of race and earth, of leadership, responsibility, authority and discipline, an indissoluble community of fate, of *Leistung*, pride and honour”⁵¹ as key components in their education.

The capacity for *Leistung* was also presented as a specific racial trait unique to the German people. Albert Bremhorst (head of the *Amt für Berufserziehung und Betriebsführung*, a DAF department) linked this allegedly inherent racial feature to the geographical situation of Germany. In his narrative, Germany’s position within Europe meant that the Germanic race had always had to work hard to survive, surrounded by hostile peoples, “he (German man) could only be free through his abilities and achievement.”⁵²

However, Bremhorst did not depict work as an arduous undertaking to be accepted in the name of ‘freedom’. In keeping with Ley, he chose to pair the racially conditioned ability to achieve with a creative urge, thus transforming

⁴⁸ Gerhard Wolf, *Ideologie und Herrschaftsrationalität: Nationalsozialistische Germanisierungspolitik in Polen* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2012), 332.

⁴⁹ Ley, *Durchbruch*, 138; Robert Ley, *Soldaten der Arbeit* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1938) 95, 217; Ley, *DAF: Aufgabe und Werden* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1934), 15.

⁵⁰ Ley, *Durchbruch*, 149.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵² Albert Bremhorst, “Mehr Können, Mehr Leisten,” *Arbeitertum*, February 1942, 5.

work into an ethos, a way of life, rather than a burden.⁵³ The way to achievement accordingly lay in an awareness of race and a communal life that reflected this awareness. Nor was Bremhorst's stance on race and achievement an isolated one, as the materials released for the basic training of DAF staff show. One lecture called upon Germans to pursue greater achievement as the only means of asserting their nation's rightful claim to geographical and political expansion.⁵⁴ This primacy of achievement was not limited to the international stage either. According to these teaching materials authored by Richard Steinle, the earliest forms of Germanic society had featured a leadership of the best and most hard-working.⁵⁵

This racially conditioned leadership of the best was more explicitly linked with the meritocratic ideal of society by Nazi publisher, Lieutenant Commander and later employee of Alfred Rosenberg Eberhard Kautter in a 1938 publication on the *Volksgemeinschaft*. "The racial predisposition demanded a social formation which allotted each individual a place in the life of the people based on combative (kämpferischer) competition and achievement."⁵⁶ Kautter posited that each race had its own understanding of life which had to be permitted to shape its existence. He also offered some insight into what this *Leistung* would be, describing it as the full assertion of personality in cultural, political and economic life. Meritocracy here became an expression of the racial peculiarities of the Germanic people, a necessary feature of social life if said existence was to reflect the true nature of the Aryan race.⁵⁷

Having emphasised this specific understanding of labour as the domain of a Germanic race, the exclusion of the Jewish population is largely implicit in the surviving materials relating to the competition and the training of staff within the DAF. An unreleased speech from 1938/9 states in passing "that Jews are excluded from the competition is a matter of course".⁵⁸ Beyond such fleeting references to

⁵³ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁴ Richard Steinle, *Volksgemeinschaft und Sozialpolitik des NS Staates: DAF Schulung. Referate für die Grundschulung der DAF*. Herausgegeben vom Hauptamt NSBO der NSDAP und Schulungsamt der DAF (Berlin: Schulungsamt der DAF, 1938) 18.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁶ Eberhard Kautter, *Über Volksgemeinschaft zur Wehrgemeinschaft*. Nationalpolitische Aufklärungsschriften 12 (Berlin: Propagandaverlag Hochmuth, 1938), 6.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 5

⁵⁸ "Die Betriebsgemeinschaft im Leistungskampfe" in BArch NS 5 IV, 27.

the anti-Semitic connotations of a racialized understanding of *Leistung*, a circular for all members of the office within the DAF responsible for executing the competition (*Amt für Soziale Selbstverantwortung*) shows the organisers were wary of instituting a procedure that permitted racial labels to be used as a tool by so called “non-Aryan” businesses. An article written by the head of the Department for the *Leistungskampf* exclusively for employees of the department, sought to correct the assumption that a business admitted to the competition could term itself “Aryan”. Leiter Schmidt pointed out that political considerations had made the DAF admit businesses which were still subject to partial Jewish presence in terms of personnel or capital. The political considerations, Schmidt explained, were the desire to gain influence on socio-political measures in businesses by way of the *Leistungskampf*. The department wished to avoid dampening the will of those Aryan businesses who did have some Jewish staff to contribute to social policy. However, he was quick to assure employees that the DAF ascertained in each individual case whether the requisite *Betriebsgemeinschaft* existed in these businesses, denying that such a thing was possible in organisations where the business owner or manager was Jewish.⁵⁹ The message expressed here was clear: while a comparatively small number of Jewish individuals was to be tolerated in a business in the late 1930s, true achievement was the purview of Aryans, a tenet that was to be reinforced by the exclusion of “Jewish” businesses.

However, merely belonging to the desired racial category was insufficient. There was a need to make good on the genetic promise of belonging to a certain race by performing in a commensurate fashion. Cornelia Schmitz-Berning’s work on the vocabulary of National Socialism features a definition of *Leistung* that shows an awareness of this dimension. She cites the writings of the Minister for Food and Agriculture Walther Darré. For him, race needed to be proved by achievement. By extension, heredity was important but not everything, “it is a basic law of life that man should prove himself in the eyes of his own kind through *Leistung* in

⁵⁹ Schmidt in Amt für Soziale Selbstverantwortung ed. *Soziale Selbstverantwortung: Dienstschrift für die Mitglieder der Arbeitskammern und Arbeitsausschüsse 4* (April 1938) in BArch NS 5 IV/205, 6.

keeping with his innate nature... only the performance in keeping with his race proves a man's worth." ⁶⁰

For the DAF as well as the businesses and workers under its remit, this meant that belonging to the "Aryan" race became essential to being part of the meritocratic community, but race alone was not enough. The standards set in terms of productive work had to be met, the right level of achievement had to be provided by the worker in question. Those failing to meet the standard of work expected of "hereditarily healthy Aryans" risked being classified as "insufficiently able to achieve (minderleistungsfähig)".⁶¹

This racially conditioned view of *Leistung* also meant that the traits necessary for achievement were portrayed as biologically inherited, located among different social groups and not currently reflected by the social structure. The dynamic underlying the expansion of capitalism in the previous century was blamed for a social stratification which failed to give credit where it was due. In the words of material issued to speakers by the party *Reichspropagandaleitung*, many groups who were genetically suited to achieve had been forced into reduced circumstances even though "they were often bearers of valuable genetic material, a high level of job skills, a strong intellect and character. From generation to generation they passed on these genetic qualities. The future of the German people depends on the care and development of these traits."⁶²

How far this insight was taken and how it was appropriated varied, from the well-charted racial ideals and policies on marriage within the SS,⁶³ to appropriation by more unlikely groups, such as the *Reichsverband Deutscher Verwaltungs-Akademien*. In a speech addressed to this civil service institution, Heinz Müller argued for higher pay and improved status for the civil service, presenting *Leistung* as the outcome of a careful combination of genetic selection. The result of such a process, in Müller's eyes, would be a social structure in which every professional group was equipped with individuals ideally suited to lead them.

⁶⁰ Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular*, 384.

⁶¹ For an excellent analysis of the NS concept of work see Hachtmann, "Vom Geist der Volksgemeinschaft durchpulst".

⁶² Reichspropagandaleitung der NSDAP ed. *Der Berufswettkampf aller schaffenden Deutschen 1939* (Munich: Eher, 1938), 21.

⁶³ Michael Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten: Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes* (Hamburg: HIS, 2003), 190.

Müller drew on the practices of the SS, pointing to the need to establish a broad strata of families with a talent for leadership drawn from all areas of the population.⁶⁴ He warned of the dangers of simply placing those considered above average in terms of achievement and assertiveness in any leadership position, linking biologically determined potential for achievement to specific professions in each case. Thus, achievement for an artisan or farmer was inherently different from that of a doctor or officer, and the position an individual was placed in needed to be commensurate with their specific abilities. Drawing on the ideas of Minister for the Interior Wilhelm Frick, Müller proclaimed that “National Socialism structures according to genetic material” rather than accepting existing social standing as an indication of worth.

A corollary of this focus on the genetic and social factors that could affect *Leistung* within the workplace was the emphasis on placing each individual in a position to which they were suited. The *Reichsberufswettkampf* presents one important attempt to put this ideal into practice by allowing each participant to achieve their potential. Discussions of this problem tended to centre on three ideas as prerequisite for achievement: predisposition, aptitude, and inclination.⁶⁵ These categories also manifest in the Battle of the Businesses, Walter Buhrow’s handbook for the *Leistungskampf* in the food industry dealt with the issue by arguing that, while inclination might have been fleeting, aptitude was an ideal guide to recruiting a suitable candidate for each position.⁶⁶ However, in Buhrow’s work as in many others, the question of how this aptitude was to be assessed was left open. Nevertheless, the criteria for businesses participating in the *Leistungskampf* did include a section on assessing aptitude in younger employees, which generally seemed to happen in the form of a test upon entering the business.⁶⁷ This was designed to facilitate the placement of each individual in an appropriate position.

⁶⁴ Müller, *Führerauslese*, 32-46.

⁶⁵ for an example see Werner Denckler, *Leistungskampf der deutschen Betriebe 1938/9* (Berlin: DAF, n.d.), 24.

⁶⁶ Walter Buhrow, *Handbuch zum Leistungskampf der deutschen Betriebe Nahrung und Genuß* (Berlin: Verlag DAF, 1940), 23.

⁶⁷ For an example see the section on “Berufserziehung I Jugend” in a 1940 application form included in BAArch NS 5 IV/242, 18.

The arrival of large numbers of forced foreign labourers to address wartime shortages also prompted reiterations of *Leistung* as the domain of Germans. Helmut Schneider-Landmann's 1942 piece in the *Monatsheft* exhorted German workers to be an example to their foreign counterparts who had allegedly volunteered to come to the Reich. Foreign labourers were to see domestic labourers as "decent and superior in terms of performance".⁶⁸ In Schneider-Landmann's account it was the specifically National Socialist understanding of work ("My honour is my performance") and superior training which enabled German workers to outperform foreign nationals. Only by demonstrating "our socialism of achievement" could foreign labourers themselves be persuaded to achieve in turn.⁶⁹ Yet racial distinctions between different groups of labourers from outside the Reich proper were to be preserved. Schneider-Landmann posited that Polish and Eastern European workers were not to be trusted, having already shown themselves to be enemies of the state and people.⁷⁰

While foreign workers were supposedly less able to achieve, their powers were to be exploited as much as possible. An article penned by Oberregierungsrat Wolfgang Stothfang (*Reichsarbeitsministerium*) in January 1942, when labour shortages were becoming ever more acute, described the assessment of POWs in camps on Eastern Europe, an assessment designed to make "the job performance within them" useful to the German economy. While German labourers were subject to ever greater pressure to perform well at work, racial hierarchies served to dehumanise foreign labourers, making them into sources of productivity to be exploited.⁷¹

Race therefore became an essential factor in the concept of *Leistung*. Yet it was insufficient by itself. *Leistung* came to be seen as the performative proof of "sound" racial material. This was combined with a eugenicist understanding of the preconditions for achieving. However, these stipulations on the genetic impact on the ability to achieve never manifested in the criteria for the

⁶⁸ Heinrich Schneider-Landmann, "Der deutsche und der ausländische Arbeiter." *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik* 9:15/16 (August 1942): 140; Robert Ley, "Aufruf zum 1. Mai," *Der Angriff*, 1-2nd May, 1943, 1, also uses language of performance, stressing that Europe is helping Germany fight Bolshevism by providing labour ("Leistungsreserve nie erschöpft")

⁶⁹ Schneider-Landmann, "Der deutsche und der ausländische Arbeiter," 139.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁷¹ Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), 529.

Leistungskampf (although they did have impact on NS policy towards the family more generally).⁷² When it came to applying these racial principles, Jews were excluded as “undesirables” and foreign labourers presented as naturally less capable of achieving. At the same time *Leistungsgemeinschaft* was identified with the “Aryan” racial condition, a social structure required to reflect the peculiarities of German people.

III: Military and masculine *Leistung*

It is striking that, while women were also allotted a racial duty, the bulk of the writings considered above focussed on men. Thus a further important aspect of the way in which work, and the achievement it contained, were conceptualised is the military, masculine dimension they were invested with. As work by Hachtmann has shown, work was presented as the peace time equivalent of the soldierly virtues.⁷³ Ley’s vision was instrumental in setting up this meaning, particularly his 1937 *Soldaten der Arbeit*, in which he outlined his idea of “male socialism”.⁷⁴ *Leistung* played an important part in this fusion of soldier and worker, featuring as one of the virtues both roles encompassed.⁷⁵

Speaking in April 1934 at the opening of the *Reichsberufswettkampf* in Cologne, Ley went so far as to position competition as the peace-time mirror image to war in terms of generating the best performance possible from individuals. This rhetoric employing tropes related to war was common in initiatives to increase productivity from 1933 onwards. Drives organised by the *Kraft durch Freude* or *Schönheit der Arbeit* frequently utilised the idea of battle, as occurred in the case of *Kampf dem Lärm*, for example.⁷⁶

Moreover, in order truly to serve the people, military tenets such as discipline and obedience were depicted as essential.⁷⁷ Speaking at a conference in March

⁷² Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy 1933-1945* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 3.

⁷³ Hachtmann, “Vom Geist der Volksgemeinschaft durchpulst”; Senya Müller, *Sprachwörterbücher im Nationalsozialismus: Die ideologische Beeinflussung von Duden, Sprach-Brockhaus und anderen Nachschlagewerken während des “Dritten Reichs”* (Stuttgart: M & P, 1994), 44.

⁷⁴ Ley, *Soldaten*, 16. In many ways Ley’s outline of the German worker as a soldier presented a fuller formulation of ideas previously expressed in Ley, *Durchbruch*.

⁷⁵ On another example of links between work and manliness see Kiran Klaus Patel, *Soldaten der Arbeit: Arbeitsdienste in Deutschland und den USA 1933-1945*, *Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft* 157 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 17.

⁷⁶ Reulecke, “Die Fahne mit dem goldenen Zahnrad,” 248.

⁷⁷ Ley, *Soldaten*, 18.

1937 and addressing the *Reichsbetriebsgemeinschaft Holz* in Stuttgart, Ley connected the need for a military order in work with the competitive principle expressed in the *Berufswettkampf*, the *Leistungsabzeichen* and *Musterbetrieb* award. In his eyes, a clear military structure would facilitate the identification of those businesses that were at the forefront of their field as well as their elevation to promote leadership by example.⁷⁸

Schneider-Landmann, like Ley before him, connected the image of the domestic labourer with that of the soldier on the front. He did so by claiming that German soldiers had already earned their standing in the eyes of foreigners while the workers were to do so now.⁷⁹ According to such narratives connecting civilian labourers' and soldiers' activities, both groups were united by the possibilities that opened up to a hard-working individual, be it in the army or in a business. Upward mobility was thus depicted as the result of diligence and talent, one of the similarities between soldier and worker was the meritocratic system they inhabited.⁸⁰

IV: Competition and the role of the entrepreneur

A further vital component of the *Leistungsgemeinschaft* envisioned by the DAF lies in the best possible method to guarantee the highest form of achievement possible: competition. The sheer number of competitive initiatives launched by the DAF from the mid-thirties onwards including the *Reichsberufswettkampf*, *Leistungskampf der Betriebe* and *Leistungsabzeichen* are indicative of a commitment to the competitive principle. For Ley, competition was the primary means of making the *Betriebsgemeinschaft* reality, of inspiring production, "livening up" the business.⁸¹

This commitment to competition extended well beyond the confines of the Labour Front, as Jonathan S. Wiesen has shown. Wiesen's work presents competition, performance and entrepreneurial activity as "bourgeois" norms

⁷⁸ Ibid., 28.

⁷⁹ Schneider-Landmann, "Der deutsche und der ausländische Arbeiter," 139.

⁸⁰ Schoch, "Aufstieg," 51. The situation for women was markedly different. Provided they were considered racially "sound", their status was tied closely to motherhood and, secondarily, to work. As Sachse has shown in her case study on Siemens, the wives and daughters of male Siemens employees were more likely to benefit from material support than female Siemens employees. See Sachse, *Siemens, der Nationalsozialismus und die moderne Familie*, 21, 247.

⁸¹ Ley, *Durchbruch*, 97.

which were retained and recast as part of a specifically National Socialist economics of consumption and selling. These norms were endowed with ideological content, aiding the creation of a racial and material ideal society.⁸² Wiesen outlines the ever greater commitment among National Socialists to a capitalist stance which viewed private initiative and thus competition as natural human urges.⁸³ He also touches on the manner in which *Leistung* was wedded to ideas of competition as well as the ultimate goal of a national *Leistungsgemeinschaft*.⁸⁴

The latter certainly holds true in the context of the DAF, competition was presented as the key to unlocking human potential, drawn from the “noble” enterprise of sport.⁸⁵ The fact that assessing achievement in the economic sphere was more problematic than in competitive sports did receive some attention, most prominently in Chief of the Social Office of the Reich Youth Leadership Arthur Axmann’s 1938 work on the *Reichsberufswettkampf*. Like the later theorists of the social market economy, Axmann pointed to the roots of competition in sport, with one important difference: while it was comparatively easy to standardise, measure and consequently judge the performances offered by athletes, the *Reichsberufswettkampf* presented a challenge. Different tasks had to be established according to the degree of training received and there were multiple factors to be taken into consideration when assessing performance. However, Axmann claimed these problems had been overcome and “the idea of competition has today been realised just as perfectly in work as in sports”.⁸⁶ He went further, contrasting the sporting ethos that he claimed the competition had carried into businesses with the “exploitative Stachanow system” of the Soviet Union.⁸⁷ The importance of a uniform standard in measuring performance, was picked up by the *Monatsheft* in 1941. Editor Albert Schoch described a firm where trainees kept a work book and were assessed based on their monthly performance and productivity, a process which was supported by regular contact

⁸² Wiesen, *Creating the Nazi Marketplace*, 5-6.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 28-29, 132.

⁸⁵ Ley, *Soldaten*, 42, 172.

⁸⁶ Arthur Axmann, *Der Reichsberufswettkampf* (Berlin: Juncker & Dünnhaupt, 1938), 29.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

with parents to gain more knowledge about each trainee.⁸⁸ The concept of competition was thus seen as a sporting principle, transferred in its most perfect form, to the world of work, furthering the greatest achievement of the German people.

After the declaration of war, a shared emphasis on competition also became a vehicle for expressing affinity for allies and describing the new European order being created. Thus Schoch praised the youth movement of the Japanese workers' front for instituting work and performance based competitions.⁸⁹ In praising Japan for emulating German initiatives, Schoch was presenting the Third Reich as the most successful incarnation of fascism, a system which, among other things, successfully harnessed the human drive to achieve. Similarly, one of the few contributions penned by a non-German author, Mussolini associate Luigi Contu, narrated the development of the fascist movement in Italy by drawing on *Leistung*. Contu cited Mussolini speaking in 1919, contending that the challenges facing the proletariat as could only be overcome through a combination of "achievement and will".⁹⁰

While the advantages of using competitions to select the best in any field were extolled extensively, writings on the subject were not without tension. To name an example, an unpublished speech from the *Amt für Soziale Selbstverwaltung* from around 1939 asserted that the best were to be located by using competition to free "the creative and formative powers that lie within the personality". Beyond seeing competition as an appropriate means for selecting those most able to achieve, this particular speech portrays the desire to compete as part of the 'Aryan' way of thinking.⁹¹ A draft of a similar release from the same department, again undated, then struggles to maintain the appeal of competition, and the level of achievement expected within it, for businesses that might fail to gain an award. This problem is resolved by claiming that participation is a point of honour, each business involved is following the call for heightened effort and willingness to

⁸⁸ "Aus der Praxis der betrieblichen Begabtenförderung," *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik. Beilage: Der Vertrauensrat* 8:19/20 (October 1941): 85-86.

⁸⁹ Albert Schoch, "Japans Weg zur sozialen Neuordnung," *Monatsheft für Sozialpolitik* 8:7/8 (April 1941): 75.

⁹⁰ Luigi Contu, "Die Entwicklung der Faschistischen Syndikalbewegung in Italien von den Anfängen bis zur gesetzlichen Regelung," *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik* 8:15/16 (August 1941): 173.

⁹¹ Untitled and undated speech in NS5 IV BArch 205, 20.

lead, regardless of the eventual outcome of the competition. Conversely, those businesses who shy away from the strain involved in participating despite being suited to apply, bring shame upon themselves.⁹² In marked contrast to the emphasis on achieving in order to succeed, this version of *Leistung* focused on endeavour, rather than outcome, in defining what it meant to contribute in the form of achievement.

If representatives of the Labour Front did their best to adapt the bourgeois idea of competition and performance for their own ends, the figure of the entrepreneur, equally important to *Bürgerlichkeit* also became the focus of National Socialist attempts at redefinition. The bulk of the literature published and circulated internally with regard to the *Leistungskampf* focused on the performance of employees. The figure of the business manager offers an interesting counterfoil to that of the ideal National Socialist labourer, as the achievement expected from a business manager was markedly different. A series of articles in the *Monatsheft* in the early 1940s struggled to carve out a role for the *Betriebsführer* in the face of increasing state intervention in the economy. This endeavour yielded mixed results, as Schoch, for example, tried to trace the shift from a *Betriebsführer*-ideal in the early National Socialist period to a broader notion of business leadership later on. Schoch contended that the manager had initially been charged with leadership by personality and implementing the social dimensions of the law, an image that overlapped with Ley's understanding of the *Betriebsführer*.⁹³ By 1941 however, the *Betriebsführer* also had to exhibit technical and sales expertise, following the directives of the state as much as his own judgement.⁹⁴ These traits were seen as prerequisites for a business seeking to gain awards in the *Leistungskampf*.⁹⁵ Yet Schoch's depiction of the business manager clashed directly with a 1942 outline by Heinz Richter. The latter asserted that business owners' qualifications proceeded not from specific knowledge of a field, market or capital but from an understanding of workers and

⁹² Ibid., 28.

⁹³ Albert Schoch, "Der Standort des Unternehmers in der gelenkten Wirtschaft," *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik* 8:11/14 (June/July 1941): 123. For Ley see Robert Ley, "Rationalisierung," *Der Angriff*, 10th February, 1942, 1-2.

⁹⁴ Schoch, "Der Standort des Unternehmers," 123.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 123.

the production factor labour.⁹⁶ This commitment to the labourer manifested in a corresponding commitment to social measures, claimed Richter, pointing to Ernst Henkel, newly named “pioneer of labour” as an example.⁹⁷ The model of a business manager formulated against the backdrop of the pressures of wartime production and the desire to maintain the importance of social measures in the business, the traditional remit of the DAF, thus created a contradictory image of what it meant to achieve.

The role and nature of profit in motivating business owners was also the subject of some tension for Schoch. Writing in 1941, he tried to reconcile the increased intervention of the state and anti-profiteering sentiment with the need to provide an incentive to improve performance. Schoch did so by distinguishing between performance based and special profits, designating the latter as unjustly gained. He also contended that the state’s role was to monitor, rather than wholly control, business practice and profits, insisting that the latter continued to be based on *Leistung* and initiative.⁹⁸ Schoch thus stressed the continued importance of performance in determining the success of entrepreneurial activity by claiming that only the framing circumstances of business policy had changed.

Beyond discussions which invested achieving with racial, military and masculine meanings, the writings of DAF members and the organisations institution of initiatives such as the *Leistungskampf* show a commitment to competition as the main mechanism of improving performance. While the roots of competition in the sporting arena were explored, the problem of maintaining motivation to achieve even if one lost in a competition created some tensions in the conceptual framework *Leistung* was part of. Finally, efforts were made at recasting the bourgeois figure of the *Unternehmer* into the role of the National Socialist *Betriebsführer* a figure that achieved in a different way from his materialist, purely profit-oriented predecessor.

⁹⁶ Heinz Richter, “Der vierte Unternehmertyp,” *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik* 9:13/14 (July 1942): 123-124.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁹⁸ Alfred Schoch, “Unternehmer und Unternehmergewinn,” *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik* 8:5/6 (March 1941): 49-51.

V: The ultimate purpose of *Leistung*

Despite these problems in reconceptualising competition and the entrepreneur, the purpose that achievement was meant to serve was clearly delineated. The highest standard of performance was measured in terms of the service to the *Volksgemeinschaft* it provided. In making this argument, I am following Carola Sachse's analysis, which places the DAF between business and state social policy, attempting to link social policy on both levels through its own activities. In so doing, the DAF sought to extend its own power base and incorporate social measures adopted by businesses into National Socialist racial policy.⁹⁹ The following analysis shows how the concept of *Leistung* was instrumentalized in a bid to achieve this end.

As the political agenda of the regime very much determined the "common good", the competitions provided a useful means of making the former coincide with individual or corporate interest in self-advancement. The fact that the ideal business, capable of succeeding in the *Leistungskampf* was described as a practical, reliable political ally of the party and the Labour Front, willing to co-operate with both, further substantiates this development.¹⁰⁰ What is more, the application forms for the competition asked not only for the number of employees and managers, but a breakdown of party and DAF membership as well as evidence of the appropriate positions (such as DAF officials within the business) being staffed.¹⁰¹

The contribution made to the "good" of the people was defined by the regime. Time and time again, DAF publications reiterated the need to motivate workers and educate them to understand that they were labouring as tasked by the people.¹⁰² This logic was also used to limit the validity of any claim to self-advancement conflicting with the overarching aims of the NSDAP and extended

⁹⁹ Sachse, *Siemens, der Nationalsozialismus und die moderne Familie*, p.59 ff.

¹⁰⁰ "Der Nationalsozialistische Musterbetrieb – Wichtigste Beurteilungsgrundsätze" in BArch NS 5 IV/205, 3.

¹⁰¹ BArch NS 5 IV/242, 17.

¹⁰² For an example, see: Gerhardt, *Arbeitspolitik*, 79; Kautter, *Volksgemeinschaft*, 6. The success of this strategy of inciting business to be productive in the name of the racially defined *Volksgemeinschaft* was limited. While I believe Sachse's portrayal of businesses as solely concerned with productivity and the DAF as solely concerned with a racial ideal (see Sachse, *Siemens, der Nationalsozialismus und die moderne Familie*, 246) is overstated, businesses did resist DAF encroachment into their internal affairs and only availed themselves of DAF programmes selectively. See pp. 33 above.

to group interests, such as those of the business. Thus Karl Arnhold, writing on the idea of a perfect National Socialist business in 1937 summarised the limits of merit in defining position in the following manner: "Above all productivity (*Leistung*) is not an end in itself for a financially profitable business. It rather becomes a duty to the entire people."¹⁰³ Furthermore, the legal rights and protection offered to those workers who fell within the remit of the National Socialist community within the business were contingent upon two main elements: political conformity and maximum achievement.¹⁰⁴ Oberregierungsrat Wolfgang Stothfang (*Reichsarbeitsministerium*) contributed a piece to the *Monatsheft* in December of 1941 which revealed the pressure inherent in stressing each individual's obligation to perform for the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Stothfang made the consequences of such an obligation explicit, stipulating that demands and rights made by individuals within this community were only acceptable if they had fulfilled their duties and achieved.¹⁰⁵ The flexibility of the concept of achievement cohered well with the party's attempts to monopolise the power to define what constituted the somewhat elusive "common good". *Leistung* was only valid if it had the purpose of furthering National Socialist ends (assuming that the ends of the party and the DAF overlapped in all major areas).

This dynamic becomes particularly pertinent when viewed against the backdrop of the economic realities of the mid to late 1930s. Matthias Frese has highlighted the importance of the introduction of the Four Year Plan in 1936 for the position occupied and pressures experienced by the DAF. Faced with an increasing shortage of manpower and raw materials, unable to restructure social policy to provide motivation to achieve for fiscal reasons, the regime opted for increased pressure to perform with very little material incentive to do so. The DAF, tasked with converting the community within the business into a National Socialist community of achievement, felt the brunt of this pressure and the competitions it organised, in particular the *Leistungskampf der Betriebe*, were part of its coping mechanisms.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Arnhold, *Musterbetrieb*, 37.

¹⁰⁴ Christian, *Jeder*, 6; Hachtmann, "Vom Geist der Volksgemeinschaft durchpulst".

¹⁰⁵ Wolfgang Stothfang, "Zur Ordnung im europäischen Arbeitseinsatz," *Monatshefte für Sozialpolitik* 8:21/24 (December 1941): 252.

¹⁰⁶ Frese, *Betriebspolitik*, 6.

When a *Leistungsgemeinschaft* was referenced, it was therefore not merely a term used to denote a community in which the status of the individual and business was determined by achievement. Rather, it also denoted a community in which everyone achieved together, working towards a politically defined, national goal (such as war readiness). The entitlement of the individual to a position commensurate with his/her *Leistung* was thus mitigated by the assertion of the primacy of politically defined national aims.

This is not to say that individual and common interests were seen as unavoidably incompatible. Rather, the argument went that the limits of the former were set by the latter. The press secretary of the NSDAP Otto Dietrich, speaking to the Gauverwaltung in Essen in 1936 emphasised the party's understanding that "life without the opportunity and prospect of striving for and attaining higher goals through our personal *Leistung*" would be meaningless.¹⁰⁷ By setting limits that cohered with the common interest, the party was merely protecting "the interests of the individual properly understood."¹⁰⁸ Dietrich went on to emphasise the idea of equality of opportunity while denying any desire to remove natural inequalities in this "socialism of *Leistung*".¹⁰⁹

The *Leistungsgemeinschaft* envisioned by National Socialism was then, a hierarchical structure. An individual's position was determined by race, expressed by achievement as established through competition. Echoing a similar sentiment from Hitler, Ley returned repeatedly to the idea that, in an ideal society, the individual would be placed in a position commensurate with his achievements and the status which fate had determined for him.¹¹⁰ It is unclear whether this fate was the natural inequality that supposedly existed between men, the accident of birth that places men in certain races or something else. How this apparent conflict between an alteration of status according to achievement and a predetermined allotment of position based on an undefined fate was to be resolved, was left unaddressed.

¹⁰⁷ Gerd Rühle ed, *Das Dritte Reich: Dokumentarische Darstellung des Aufbaues der Nation. Mit Unterstützung des Deutschen Reichsarchiv. Das vierte Jahr, 1936* (Berlin: Hummelverlag, 1937), 33.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹¹⁰ Ley, *Durchbruch*, 4. Ley, *Soldaten*, 210.

The situation of the DAF changed with the outbreak of the war, as labour shortages and forced labour became a factor in production and the institution's brief for organising leisure time and beautifying the workplace was pushed into the background.¹¹¹ Correspondence from the Gauverwaltungen points to a shortage of local DAF staff to carry out the necessary assessments within businesses, resulting in a failure to process awards and distribute them.¹¹² Moreover, the ability of the DAF to promote the competition also appears to have been curtailed somewhat, as the measures for the implementation of the 1941/2 competition circulated in the *Amt für Soziale Selbstverwaltung* demonstrate, announcing that "heightened propaganda, especially in the press, is to be desisted from for the duration of the war".¹¹³ The same circular also declared the reintroduction of two of the *Leistungsabzeichen* concerned with social measures (Supporting *Kraft durch Freude* and Homes and Accommodation) while stipulating that these awards had initially been discontinued due to the war and were only to be given out now if a business succeeded in meeting the criteria in these areas within wartime measures, once again demonstrating the primacy of the war effort.¹¹⁴ This shift in focus did not entail a significant reduction in the DAF's influence. As Sachse has pointed out, the organisation's focus on key areas of social policy such as vocational training and the *Vorschlagswesen* meant it played a crucial role in the rationalisation efforts introduced by Speer in 1942.¹¹⁵ My focus here is on the rhetorical, conceptual shift that accompanied these changes and the manner in which they affected the *Leistungskampf*.

Concerns of efficiency, improving performance and rationalisation were now very much at the forefront of policy.¹¹⁶ By the early 1940s it was too problematic to advocate business participation in the *Leistungskampf*, a competition which

¹¹¹ Frese, *Betriebspolitik*, 6.

¹¹² see letter from Gauverwaltung Essen on 30th December 1940 in BArch NS 5 IV/242, 16.

¹¹³ Der Beauftragte für die Durchführung des Leistungskampfes der deutschen Betriebe ed. *Durchführungsbestimmungen für den Leistungskampf der deutschen Betriebe* (Berlin: Verlag DAF, n.d), 26.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹¹⁵ Sachse, *Betriebliche Sozialpolitik*, 176-177.

¹¹⁶ Frese, *Betriebspolitik*, 6. This increased focus on rationalization tied into a long-standing concern with the 'flow' of production in the business community from the 1920s onwards. See Sachse, *Siemens, der Nationalsozialismus und die moderne Familie*, 28-35. Yet previous discussions of rationalization had focussed on adapting humans to work processes in order to maximise profit. In how far business owners were willing to subordinate their own financial gains and concerns to the end of winning the war was another matter.

pressured employers to make material provisions for their employees. The result of this tension was a rebranding of the *Leistungskampf* and the involvement of Albert Speer and his Ministry in its adjudication: from the winter of 1942 the ideal business was no longer a “*Musterbetrieb*” but rather a “*Kriegsmusterbetrieb*”.¹¹⁷ This semantic shift reflected a change in the criteria a businesses had to meet as *productivity* was now officially prioritised over social measures within the perfect Betriebsgemeinschaft.¹¹⁸ The overriding purpose of the competition was to ensure rationalisation.¹¹⁹ This change, however, did not signify the complete disappearance of discussions on how to support and motivate staff. On the contrary, the focus now came to rest on more cost-effective ways of improving performance which cohered with the restrictions of war time but were also presented as evidence of a healthy, well-motivated workforce. *Leistungsfähigkeit* was the key factor to be measured and coverage of the *Kriegsmusterbetriebe* in *Der Angriff* and the *Monatsheft* stressed “leadership (*Menschenführung*)” and “social care” as two ways of getting there.¹²⁰ Concurrently, the *Reichsberufswettkampf* had ceased with the outbreak of war, attention now turned to so-called *Reichsausleselager*, which were instituted to assess young workers according to their performance, ability to perform, political attitude and personality before selecting the best for training.¹²¹ The pressures of a wartime economic and material situation thus challenged the rhetoric of extensive social support in achieving for employees as one of the main aims of the *Leistungskampf* and the *Reichsberufswettkampf*. Instead, *Leistung* was now more openly and directly tied to productivity.

¹¹⁷ Robert Ley, “Leistungskampf der Deutschen Betriebe,” *Amtliches Nachrichtenblatt der DAF* 5:34 (3rd February 1943): 11.

¹¹⁸ “Was ist ein Kriegsmusterbetrieb?” *Der Angriff*, 17th November, 1942, 3.

Ley also attempted to utilise the competition to motivate businesses to help with reconstruction efforts in those areas affected by bombing. An edict issued by him in March 1944 stressed the need to reward those businesses which had made speedy and noteworthy efforts to aid reconstruction. While Ley was loath to create a separate award for such behaviour, he wanted DAF officials to it into consideration and suggested giving the respective business an award that was the next level up from their current status in the competition. See “Auszeichnung von Betrieben, die beim Wiederaufbau im Soforthilfefall Hervorragendes geleistet haben.” *Amtliches Nachrichtenblatt der DAF* 10:1 (April 1944): 14.

¹¹⁹ Ley “Rationalisierung” 2.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2. See also: Hirche, “44 Kriegsmusterbetriebe,” 211-212.

¹²¹ Alfred Schoch, “Reichsausleselager. Ein neuer Weg zur Begabtenförderung,” *Monatsheft für Sozialpolitik* 8:17/18 (September 1941): 201-204. See also “Durch Auslese zur Begabtenförderung.” *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik. Beilage: Der Vertrauensrat* 8:15/16 (August 1941): 72-75.

Shifting the focus of the *Leistungskampf* was part of a much broader set of changes in the DAF, many of which placed even more emphasis on performance. In January 1942, Ley announced the downsizing or elimination of all departments charged with tasks that were not necessary to the war effort. From now on only measures which contributed directly or indirectly to “strengthening the ability to resist” and “improving the performance of the German people” would be pursued.¹²² These areas were defined a little more precisely as measures which maintained health, the ability to work, the will to achieve, discipline at work and improved performance and productivity.¹²³ The demands of a wartime economy thus stripped away many of the more expensive social programmes, generating an ever greater rhetorical and practical emphasis on performance.¹²⁴

Within this general precedence granted to the idea of performing well and improving performance, four sets of measures received particular attention in DAF coverage throughout the war: suggestions for improvement made by employees (*Vorschlagswesen*), training, selecting talented individuals for training and social supervision.¹²⁵ Press coverage frequently tied a businesses’ status as a *Musterbetrieb* (which meant it had competed in the *Leistungskampf* and won an award) to the presence of these initiatives.¹²⁶ Thus *Musterbetrieb* Gebrüder Thiel GmbH was lauded for instituting an office which assessed each employee according to aptitude and placed him or her in the most suitable position. This process, it was claimed would maximise employee performance as it guaranteed intrinsic work satisfaction.¹²⁷ The predominant focus within all of these

¹²² “Anordnung 3/42.” *Amtliches Nachrichtenblatt der DAF* 8:1 (February 1942): 2-4.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²⁴ Ley went so far as to rename departments to reflect the primacy of performance. Robert Ley, “Unsere Welt ist eine Welt des Willens und der Leistung,” *Amtliches Nachrichtenblatt der DAF* 9:1 (December 1942): 103.

¹²⁵ A DAF officer was placed in charge of this in each business, see Robert Ley, “Ernennung von Beauftragten der Deutschen Arbeitsfront für das betriebliche Vorschlagswesen und Bildung von Gau- und Kreisarbeitsgemeinschaften für das betriebliche Vorschlagswesen,” *Amtliches Nachrichtenblatt der DAF* 8:4 (July 1941): 57-58.

¹²⁶ For examples specifically on the *Vorschlagswesen* see Helmut Stein, “Erfahrungen mit meinem Vorschlagswesen III,” *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik* 9:21/22 (November 1942): 202; Edgar Hoffmann, “Erfahrungen mit meinem Vorschlagswesen II,” *Monatsheft für Sozialpolitik* 9:21/22 (November 1942): 200-201. On training see “Leistungsertüchtigungswerk. Fachliche Erwachsenenbildung stark vorangetrieben,” *Der Angriff*, 28th April 1943, 5; Ausbildungswesen eines NS-Musterbetriebs,” *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik. Beilage: Der Vertrauensrat* 8:17/18 (September 1941): 83-84.

¹²⁷ Albert Schoch, “Betriebsbegutachtungsstelle,” *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik. Beilage: Der Vertrauensrat* 8:5/6 (March 1941): 30.

initiatives, however, was to maximise the use of existing labour resources to improve performance and thus productivity.

Despite explicit admissions that considerations of productivity were now the overriding priority, DAF discussions of labour policy continued to insist that the optimal means of securing peak performance was an active social support network within the business. Within this narrative, encouraging businesses to take on social responsibility for their employees resulted in greater productivity by motivating the workforce.¹²⁸ Writing in 1942 in *Der Angriff* Ley was adamant that peak performance and comprehensive social care provided by businesses were compatible and the best way to achieve them was the *Leistungskampf*.¹²⁹ His sentiments were echoed in discussions of the competition in the *Monatsheft*, backed up with a range of examples from different industries which had supposedly succeeded in improving productivity by caring for their workforce in an exemplary manner.¹³⁰ Ley's insistence in this matter is perhaps unsurprising, as the remit of the DAF extended very clearly to social policy but its purview over other areas of labour policy was much more shaky. Moreover, given the regime's concern about discontent among the domestic population in the face of shortages and ever greater demands in terms of working hours etc., the desire to trumpet continued social support such as health care within businesses is lent additional significance. Yet the most strident insistence that improved performance was the result of better social support could not obscure the tension between these two areas.

The Labour Front's desire to retain control of the political agenda set boundaries for the degree of progress that a company or individual could make based on *Leistung*. The *Leistungskampf* functioned as a means of ensuring political compliance, motivated by self-interest, making it very clear that the interests of the collective, of which the party and the DAF were the sole judges, would always

¹²⁸ Robert Ley, "Das will der Leistungskampf," *Der Angriff*, 4th May, 1942, 3.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³⁰ Erich Stolt, "Betriebliche Sozialpolitik im Kriege," *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik Beilage: Der Vertrauensrat* 8:1/2 (January 1941): 1-4; "Betriebliche Sozialarbeit in der Zementindustrie," *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik. Beilage: Der Vertrauensrat* 8:1/2 (January 1941): 6-9. Much of the information used to illustrate continued commitment to social policy stemmed from the pre-war period. Schoch, "Die goldene Fahne," 41-43; "Wie Musterbetriebe ihre Leistungen steigerten," *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik* 9:15/16 (August 1942): 155.

be a priority. This supposed collective interest shifted ever further away from social support and towards increased productivity as labour shortages became a problem. Particularly after the outbreak of war, alterations made to the *Leistungskampf* and changes in the DAF as a whole depict that struggle of the organisation to retain its influence by stressing the link between social policy and *Leistung*, even in the face of the declining importance of the former. Although the DAF's and the NSDAP's monopoly on defining the common good was presented as compatible with individual advancement and fulfilment, they adopted the position of ultimate judge of the validity of any *Leistung*.

VI: *Leistung* as a gendered concept

Leistung has thus far featured as a racial, masculine, military form of achievement to be promoted by competition and placed in the service of the common good. However, this meaning was not monolithic. Within the narrative of achievement, the *Leistung* of women in particular was subject to a significantly different and fluctuating definition,¹³¹ an ambiguity reflecting the general ambivalence of National Socialist policy on the female workforce.¹³² As Sachse has pointed out, the DAF did come to accept and espouse the idea that, at least until after the war, women would be not only mothers but also labourers.¹³³ However, while Sachse dates this acceptance around 1937, I seek to show that the war effort brought with it an intensification of the debate about women as labourers specifically. Whereas Sachse's focus is on attempts to revise legislation protecting mothers in the workplace and DAF efforts to gain control of female social workers in businesses, my interest is in the *Leistungskampf* in particular as a means of exploring this wider debate. The following investigation of the manner in which female labour was depicted in connection with the *Leistungskampf* takes up these

¹³¹ Axmann, in noting the difficulties of assessing achievement within the *Reichsberufswettkampf*, makes reference to a difference between the tasks set for male and female participants, providing one example. See Axmann, *Reichsberufswettkampf*, 29. The criteria for the *Leistungskampf* frequently list women alongside pensioners, wounded veterans and young workers as in need of protection. However, the rationale behind the special treatment given to these various groups was largely different. While women were not to be impeded in their ability to have a family, young workers were to be trained well and kept healthy in order to guarantee their future ability to achieve. See section on "Individueller Arbeitseinsatz" in an application for the *Leistungskampf* in BArch NS 5 IV/242, 19.

¹³² For an excellent outline of policy on women in work see Hachtmann, "Arbeitseinsatz," 231-252.

¹³³ Carola Sachse, *Siemens, der Nationalsozialismus und die moderne Familie*, p. 50.

categories of gender and race, outlining the tensions in the National Socialist vision of the female worker.

Female labourers were present in discussions of the *Leistungskampf* from early on. Thus, in defining the criteria for a National Socialist *Musterbetrieb*, a DAF publication (roughly from 1938) included a series of questions on women in the workplace. Some of these questions give an indication of the problems encountered by the DAF when dealing with women in the workforce. One of the criteria aimed to establish whether newly married women were encouraged to step back from work and the business attempted to train men to replace them. This particular criterion appears to reflect earlier National Socialist policy towards female workers, combining with the campaign against double earners and an emphasis on a women's domestic duties. Subsequent questions in the same publication focus on training given to female workers for household tasks, evidencing the conception of women primarily as mothers, involved in housework. However, the questions also deal with support provided to pregnant employees, signifying that, even though women were ideally to be found only in the home, those that did work should be given every care possible to ensure that their primary responsibility, reproduction, was not obstructed by their professional activity.¹³⁴

Here too, National Socialism was able to draw on a debate in the 1920s about the role of women in the reproduction of the workforce which had resulted in a much more interventionist stance towards the family. Sachse has shown how the model of a female social worker supporting female employees who were pregnant was adapted by the DAF and fused with racist thinking.¹³⁵ My concern here is to map these findings onto the categories used in the *Leistungskampf* and establish what exactly female *Leistung* was meant to consist of.

¹³⁴ Deutsche Arbeitsfront ed., *Nationalsozialistischer Musterbetrieb* (Verlag DAF: Berlin, n.d.), 21. This does not mean that all women were encouraged to have children, a set of pseudo-scientific eugenic principles applied to distinguish those who should from those who should not. See Gisela Bock, "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilisation and the State," in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, eds. Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 271-287; Pine, *Family Policy*.

¹³⁵ Sachse, *Betriebliche Sozialpolitik*, 178-187; Sachse, *Siemens, der Nationalsozialismus und die moderne Familie*. 35.

Labour shortages, compounded by the outbreak of war, made women in the workplace ever more necessary. Two dimensions of their presence here became the focal points: the first were the supposedly 'natural' limits to women's ability to achieve in the workplace. The second was a concern with providing a support system to allow women to carry on their domestic duties, fulfil their "most beautiful task as mothers to coming generations".¹³⁶

An article by Gerhard Starcke in a 1942 edition of *Arbeitertum* outlined the many ways in which most workplaces had had to alter their processes of production and work environments to suit the inherently different way in which women worked.¹³⁷ This difference, Starcke claimed, extended not only to physical constitution, it also encompassed a mentality. Starcke argued women needed time to develop a relationship with the technical instruments necessary for manual labour, a skill that was natural for men. This was one of a series of specifically feminine issues in relation to work. Once again the support given to women to fulfil their "womanly duties"¹³⁸ and the help provided to pregnant women were also among the measures featuring prominently in the article.¹³⁹ The same can be said of the criteria to be met by applicants in the *Leistungskampf*, who were asked to specify whether they employed a *Sozialwalterin/Sozialhelferin* (a kind of social worker specifically charged with helping women in the workplace and at home) and provided families with support payments on marriage and the birth of children.¹⁴⁰

At the same time, the early phase of the war in particular witnessed the constant reiteration of the need to protect women in the work place and support them,

¹³⁶ Denckler, *Leistungskampf 1938/9*, 16. Other publications presented women as reluctant participants in economic life whose main desire it was to keep house and take care of their children, subject to a double burden made necessary by a drive to improve the life of all Germans in the future. For one example see Karl Christian, *Jeder hilft mit an der Gestaltung der Betriebs- und Leistungsgemeinschaft* (Berlin: Lehrmittelzentrale der Deutschen Arbeitsfront, ca. 1940), 8. Even in the midst of war, the drive to maintain a racially sound people by protecting mothers in the workplace seems to have been strengthened. See Hachtmann, "Arbeitseinsatz," 239. For a discussion of other measures put in place to "support" and at the same time monitor and influence labourers who were mothers, see Sachse Carola Sachse, *Siemens, der Nationalsozialismus und die moderne Familie*, 77-90 as well as Sachse, *Betriebliche Sozialpolitik*, 178-189.

¹³⁷ How far these supposed changes actually manifested on the factory floor is another matter, Gregor, *Daimler-Benz*, 154.

¹³⁸ Gerhard Starcke, "Frauen vom Werk betreut," *Arbeitertum* 11 (1942): 7. See also "Planmäßige Anlernung der Frau," *Der Angriff*, 6th May, 1943, 4.

¹³⁹ Starcke, "Frauen," 7.

¹⁴⁰ BArch NS 5 IV/242, 17-20.

especially with regard to increased emphasis on productivity in wartime.¹⁴¹ Within this insistence that women be protected, the concept of achievement was appropriated to allot women their own, gender specific form of *Leistung*. Writing in May of 1941 and advocating shorter working hours, the targeted use of technology as well as social support (*Betreuung*), Albert Schoch stressed that a woman “cannot be weakened or worse prevented from her *Mutterschaftsleistung*”.¹⁴² He explained this prioritisation by stressing that the laws of work were those of capitalism, while those of maternity were biological.¹⁴³ Schoch elaborated further on the allegedly biologically determined specificity of female performance, stating that the measures he was advocating were designed “to spare the biological *Leistungskraft* and show consideration for the wholly different physical *Leistungsfähigkeit* of women”.¹⁴⁴ It should thus never be forgotten that women, while they could take the place of male labourers and do their work if necessary, were in fact not men.¹⁴⁵ This narrative split achieving into two distinct, gendered categories, stressing that women achieved primarily by becoming mothers.

However, it was not denied that women were capable of performing well in the work environment, albeit as an expression of their innate difference from men. To name an example, Schoch’s 1941 piece on the future restructuring of wages in the post war period, denied that women were less capable of achieving in the workplace than men. In fact, Schoch contended, women’s particular aptitude made them capable of performing to the same standard as men in some areas.¹⁴⁶ At the same time their achievements in the world of work were also presented as a substitute for male labour.¹⁴⁷

This concern with the correct allocation of work based on a thorough understanding of female capabilities in the workplace was to be taken into consideration when selecting *Musterbetriebe*. Undersecretary at the Labour

¹⁴¹ Stolt, “Betriebliche Sozialpolitik,” 2.

¹⁴² Albert Schoch, “Der Schutz der weiblichen Arbeitskraft im Kriege,” *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik* 8:9/10 (May 1941): 100.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁴⁶ Albert Schoch, “Der gerechte Lohn,” *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik* 8:3/4 (February 1941): 26.

¹⁴⁷ Albert Schoch, “Lob der Rüstungsarbeiterin,” *Monatsheft für NS Sozialpolitik* 8:7/8 (April 1941): 89.

Ministry Dietrich Kremer exhorted businesses to consider the difference in women's ability to perform mentally and physically when assigning work and stipulated that this would be taken into account when assessing *Musterbetriebe*. Kremer recommended that the warmth of the home be replicated in the workplace for the benefit of female employees whose "natural" role was to be a mother and helpmate.¹⁴⁸

Women were presented as an inferior source of labour to men, as the 1940 application of a manufacturing business to the *Leistungskampf* shows. In a section dealing with maintaining the performance levels of the workforce the company stated the following: "The majority of women work with machines and do purely mechanical work. This greater use of women in the business has freed up men for tasks which women cannot undertake." The application does not specify the tasks that women are unable to undertake, so it remains unclear whether this lack of ability is the outcome of a supposed lack of physical strength or absence of training. What does emerge clearly, is the use of the female workforce as a substitute for and helpmate to, the male workforce. This conceptual dynamic coheres with Annemarie Tröger's contention that female labour was framed overwhelmingly as a service to men and thus the *Volksgemeinschaft*.¹⁴⁹

This emphasis sat somewhat uneasily alongside coverage of female excellence in the work environment. As considerations of efficiency and increasing rationalisation became ever more central in dealing with war time shortages, employee suggestions for improving working procedures were the subject of extensive debate. Businesses were encouraged to institute a *Vorschlagswesen* as a cost free, non-hierarchical way of generating ideas to eliminate waste and maximise efficiency. Here too, the contribution made by female employees was the source of somewhat contradictory reactions. While Edgar Hoffmann, manager of an aeroplane production plant expressed surprise that the best suggestions were coming from female workers even though they had "other interests than men"¹⁵⁰, a 1942 piece in the *Monatsheft* painted a very different picture. The unattributed piece cited the example of Gustel Brandt, an employee of an

¹⁴⁸ D. Kremer, "Schutz der werktätigen Frau," *Monatsheft für Sozialpolitik* 8:11/14 (June/July 1941): 135.

¹⁴⁹ Annemarie Tröger, "The Creation of a Female Assembly Line Proletariat," in *When Biology Became Destiny*, 245.

¹⁵⁰ Hoffmann, "Erfahrungen," 200-201.

electronics company who had shown innovation in her proposals to cut waste. This development was presented as the consequence of inherent “female qualities” such as “intuition, careful observation und well-applied experience of work”, which could replace the thinking of men, in some cases even outstrip it.¹⁵¹ Brandt’s creativity was thus fitted into an explanatory framework which permitted the continued maintenance of a supposedly fundamental biological difference in the way men and women thought and worked.

A section on female participation in the *Reichsberufswettkampf* printed in a collection of material for speakers and not released to the press, provides an interesting insight into the position occupied by women in the workforce by 1938. While the material proclaims that female participation is a given, as “natural (*selbstverständlich*)” as their role in work life, it also points out that the additional of a task on the household in the competition is an indication of the necessity of “training in household matters.”¹⁵² The very act of announcing that a female presence both in work and the competition is self-evident is problematic, as is the subsequent insertion of a comment on women’s domestic responsibilities as another, equally important, feature of their lives.

Within the National Socialist *Leistungsgemeinschaft*, the achievement expected of women was therefore somewhat nebulous. At the top of the ideological agenda stood the German woman as a mother, taking care of her children and a household. However, the realities of an increasingly female workforce due to a lack of men in the labour market, worsened by the war, forced other elements to be given a more prominent role. 1940 to 1942 was a period of particularly acute labour shortages, and thus features in the publications of the DAF as a time of intense engagement with the construct of the female labourer. Perhaps in a bid to ensure compliance from businesses whose resources were ever-more strained, the organization gave greater prominence to these discussions. While the idea of a woman as a labourer and mother had, as Sachse highlights, been condoned as early as 1937, the war thus generated additional focus on the issue, particularly in connection with an increased focus on performance.

¹⁵¹ “Tüchtiger als mancher Mann,” *Monatsheft für Sozialpolitik* 9:17/18 (September 1942):166.

¹⁵² Reichspropagandaleitung der NSDAP ed., *Der Berufswettkampf aller schaffenden Deutschen 1939: Aufklärungs- und Redner Informationsmaterial der Reichspropagandaleitung der NSDAP und des Reichspropagandaamtes der DAF* (Munich: Eher, 1938), 6.

Regardless of the specific position occupied by women in an individual business, one factor remained consistent: women's labour, and consequently their ability to achieve, was always depicted as inferior to and inherently different from that of men. Female labour was to be made as good as possible through a series of measures, and above all never to be allowed to interfere with their primary task of having children.

VII: Conclusion

This analysis of the concept of *Leistung* within the Third Reich has drawn on the *Leistungskampf der Betriebe* and the *Reichsberufswettkampf*, following both Frese and Sachse in understanding these competitions as an instrument to extend and maintain the power of the German Labour Front. It was also a way for the organisation to cope with the pressures of economic strain, in particular the Four Year Plan and the advent of war meant further changes to the competition, bringing an increased focus on productivity and rationalisation.

Sachse's findings in particular have been borne out by many of my own: firstly her contention on the role of DAF as an intermediary body between party and business community, seeking to mould social policy and thus gain power. Secondly her assessment of the interventionist stance the regime adopted on female labourers and the tensions within the National Socialist image of a mother as well as worker. Finally, the increased focus on performance, particularly once the war broke out, did, as Sachse shows tie into earlier debates about rationalisation, though with a different end in mind.

Constructed with reference to this pre-existing research, a clear image of *Leistung* has emerged with reference to the criteria businesses wishing to participate had to meet, training materials as well as published material drawn from the DAF:

The idea of achievement was tied to pre-existing notions of community and altered in five fundamental ways, the first being an insistence that *Leistung* was a prerogative unique to the "Aryan" race, as was a social structure reflecting it. **In seeking to enforce this racial ideal and encroach on the autonomy of businesses, the DAF encountered resistance at times, particularly from larger businesses.** The second change in *Leistung* was the ever more frequently drawn parallel between worker and soldier, which depicted achievement as part

of the military, masculine sphere. The third was constituted by a belief in the virtues of competition as the best tool to promote the highest form of *Leistung*. The fourth dimension, the end of *Leistung* as the good of the community as defined by National Socialist political aims, plainly asserted the Labour Front's right to assess the value of any *Leistung* offered according to its own ultimate standard. Finally, *Leistung* also underwent a division along gender lines, with the military, obedient male achiever as the ideal standard of productive worker. This contrasted sharply with the changeful depictions of female achievement, always coloured by a concern with a woman's racial duty to reproduce and keep house. Yet, as this image was strenuously maintained, it also gradually deepened, coming to include the female worker from 1937 but more so from 1940/41 onwards; albeit as a substitute for missing male labour who required a markedly different working environment and set of professional processes to be productive.

The *Leistung* on which the National Socialist *Leistungsgemeinschaft* rested was thus the concept of an Aryan, preferably male, worker, defined by soldierly obedience and commitment, spurred on by competitive structures he inhabited to be ever more productive while never failing in his support for the party.

Chapter Two: Achieving in the social market economy: Ordoliberal conceptualisations of *Leistung*, 1928-1966

I: Introduction

How different was this National Socialist understanding of *Leistung* and the *Leistungsgemeinschaft* from West German ideas on the subject after the Second World War? In seeking to locate an influential and systematic account of social and economic order after 1945, the social market economy framework looms large. Its continuing impact as an economic ideal on Neoliberal theory and an aspirational image in political discussion has engendered extensive debate on the precise meaning, practical or theoretical use and importance of the concept.¹ The social market economy has both become associated with post-war West German prosperity and closely linked with the history of the period, progressing from a little known ideal to the dominant narrative device of economic success in the mid-fifties to mid-sixties.² Undoubtedly, part of the prominence the concept holds today is the result of a deliberate effort by proponents of the framework to present its history in a favourable light. However, the central importance of economic prosperity to West German post-war identity and the growing influence of economics as a discipline makes the social market economy a useful starting point in seeking to investigate post war West German ideas on *Leistung*.³

This chapter consequently focuses on Ordoliberalism, the theoretical framework associated with the social market economy.⁴ The Ordoliberal project is of particular interest and relevance in assessing post-war ideas of *Leistung* because the school had some influence on policy and was part of an effective domestic and

¹ A. J. Nicholls, *Freedom with Responsibility* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 17.

² As the result of a deliberate campaign. See Mark E. Spicka, *Selling the Economic Miracle: Economic Reconstruction and Politics in West Germany, 1949-1957* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007).

³ Nützenadel, *Stunde der Ökonomen*, 11; Harald Hagemann, "The post-1945 development of economics in Germany," in *The Development of Economics in Western Europe since 1945*, ed. A.W. Bob Coats (London: Routledge, 2000), 121-122.

⁴ Neoliberal theory and the Ordoliberal tradition have become closely linked with the framework of the social market economy in writings on German economic thought in the 20th century, frequently being conflated or equated with each other. I adopt Ralf Ptak's approach, which sees Ordoliberalism as a strand of Neoliberalism in Germany whose historical significance derives from achieving a concrete proposal for social practice within academic and political debate in the form of the concept of the social market economy. See Ralf Ptak, *Vom Ordoliberalismus zur Sozialen Marktwirtschaft: Stationen des Neoliberalismus in Deutschland* (Opladen: Leske & Burdich, 2004), 16-18.

international network or platform which served to influence public debate.⁵ The chapter therefore examines the meaning of the concept of *Leistung* as well as its role in structuring notions of economic and social order offered by German Ordoliberalism. What meaning and importance did these theorists attribute to *Leistung* within and beyond the economic realm? How far could Ordoliberal theory and the social market economy be said to include the concept of *Leistungsgesellschaft* or meritocracy? And what impact did these ideas have on the formulation of economic and social policy?

In answering these questions, I draw on the published works of Ordoliberal authors, the school's journal *ORDO*, debates in the press, legislature and conference records to establish that a number of uses of the concept of achievement feature in attempts to formulate a theory of economic systems made by German Neoliberal thinkers both within and outside Germany from the late 1920s onwards. In this context, it is essential to distinguish between the uses of the concept of *Leistung* within an economic order and the social implications of that competitive economic order.

As the Ordoliberal project developed in the context of changing economic and political frameworks, this chapter considers the period between 1928, when the first Ordoliberal writings were produced and 1966, when Ludwig Erhard left office. It does so in order to trace shifts and continuities in the Ordoliberal stance on *Leistung* over time, which potentially cut across the dividing line of 1945. Commencing with a brief examination of Ordoliberal writings in the late Weimar years and then under National Socialism, the chapter then turns to the changes within the Ordoliberal project under Allied occupation and the Federal Republic as well as assessing the influence of Ordoliberal ideas on economic policy. Finally,

⁵ Recent research has both highlighted the influence of Keynesianism on West German trade cycle policy in the mid-1950s and stressed the impact of ideas other than Ordoliberalism in the development of economic theory. For examples, see Jan-Otmar Hesse, *Wirtschaft als Wissenschaft. Die Volkswirtschaftslehre in der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2010), 17, 25 and Bertram Schefold, "Wissenschaft als Gegengabe. Neugründung und Aktivitäten des Theoretischen Ausschusses im Verein für Socialpolitik, 1949-1973," *Schmollers Jahrbuch* 123:4 (2004): 579-608; Spicka, *Selling the Economic Miracle*; Karl Heinz Roth, "Klienten des Leviathan: Die Mont Pèlerin Society und das Bundeswirtschaftsministerium in den fünfziger Jahren," *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* 2:01 (2001) 13-41; Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe eds. *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

the chapter shifts to considering Ordoliberal visions of social order and social policy, mapping these onto the emerging welfare state in the Federal Republic.

While these theorists agreed on certain core elements of the ideal economic system, they all had different points of emphasis and intellectual affiliations with each other, which are worth bearing in mind when assessing the genesis of Ordoliberal ideas. To that end, this examination covers three different strands within the Ordoliberal movement.⁶ The first, the so-called Freiburg School, was founded by and centred on trained economist and professor of Freiburg University, Walter Eucken and his colleague Franz Böhm. While Böhm remained in Germany but was banned from teaching due to his opposition to the regime's anti-Semitism, Eucken retained his position at the University of Freiburg under National Socialist government. Many of his students, including Leonhard Miksch and Friedrich Lutz, joined the Freiburg School, seeking to further develop the Ordoliberal system. The Freiburg branch of Ordoliberalism concerned itself mainly with the elaboration of an economic order framed by the state in the form of legislation.

The theorists of the second branch of Ordoliberalism, Wilhelm Röpke, Alexander Rüstow and Alfred Müller-Armack, dealt most extensively with the concept's social implications. Both Rüstow and Röpke went into exile in the 1930s, spending four years in Istanbul where they worked and published together. Müller-Armack is the only individual here who joined the Nazi party in 1933 in hopes of persuading the regime to implement his economic model. However, faced with a disappointment of these aspirations, Müller-Armack remained in Germany, publishing very little until the Third Reich had ended. After 1945, he became the primary theorist of the social market economy, well into the 1960s.

While neither Röpke, Rüstow nor Müller-Armack were employed in Freiburg, working in Geneva, Heidelberg, and Cologne or Bonn respectively, they all supported the Ordoliberal project. Like the representatives of the Freiburg school, they were members of the international Neoliberal Mont Pèlerin Society and worked together on the Social Market Economy Action Group.⁷ Moreover, all

⁶ The theorists mentioned here constitute a part of the larger corpus of Ordoliberal thinkers. However, those featured in this chapter are the most illuminating when it comes to relationship of the Ordoliberal project with the concept of achievement.

⁷ Mirowski and Plehwe, *The Road from Mont Pèlerin*, 13.

three theorists belong to a branch of Neoliberal theory, which has been termed sociological or dialectical and concerns itself with the elaboration of an image of society in correlation with the economic order outlined above.⁸ This particular stream of thought highlights the limits of the market economy and stresses the need for a consciously constructed social order. Sociological Neoliberalism depicts the free market as a means to an end that cannot fully be relied upon to create the desired social structure or generate the necessary features of state and cultural life.

The most important figure in the implementation of the social market framework and the Ordoliberal project, Ludwig Erhard, constitutes the third branch. Erhard was vital in popularising Ordoliberal ideas and seeking to make the Ordoliberal system a reality. He had, among other things, worked at an institute focussed on consumer goods during the war, became Director of the Bizonial Economic Administration in 1948, then Economics Minister (1949-63) and finally Chancellor (1963-66). Bernhard Löffler has shown that Erhard established an extensive network of experts as part of a “scientization of economics”.⁹ This network encompassed academic economists, journalists, publishers, business owners and civil servants during his time at the Economics Ministry, a network intended to help him develop, support and propagate his policy ideas.¹⁰

Within this larger network, Erhard drew extensively on the Ordoliberal camp to staff his various ministries and offices. To name a few examples, Leonhard Miksch was Erhard’s most important strategic collaborator in drafting the law to abolish price fixing during his time as Director of the Administration of the Economy.¹¹ Walter Eucken was a member of the Academic Advisory Council of the Economics Ministry, as were Adolf Lampe and Erich Preiser, part of the distinctively Ordoliberal profile of the committee in its early years.¹² Alfred Müller-Armack,

⁸Manfred Wulff, “Die geistigen Grundlagen und Quellen des Ordoliberalismus in den 30er und 40er Jahren,” in *Soziales Denken in Deutschland zwischen Tradition und Innovation*, eds. Jörg-Dieter Gauger and Klaus Weigelt (Bonn: Bouvier, 1990), 157.

⁹ Bernhard Löffler, *Soziale Marktwirtschaft und administrative Praxis. Das Bundeswirtschaftsministerium unter Ludwig Erhard* (Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner, 2002), 85. See also Lutz Raphael, “Die Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen als methodische und konzeptionelle Herausforderung für eine Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22:2 (1996): 165–193, accessed 2nd August, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40185818>.

¹⁰ Löffler, *Soziale Marktwirtschaft*, 70-85, 268-283.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

¹² *Ibid.*, 74.

too, worked with Erhard as an economic advisor from 1948 onwards and a decade later became state secretary for European Affairs.¹³ Götz Briefs was a consultant in the late fifties and Wilhelm Röpke was asked to write a review of economic policy for Konrad Adenauer in 1950.¹⁴ These Ordoliberal policy makers and commentators produced a series of position papers on competition policy and monopolies, the convertibility of German currency and managing the economic cycle, supporting the course set out by Erhard as Economics minister and demanding a strict limitation of state intervention, the freeing up of prices as well as the liberalisation of foreign trade.¹⁵

Beyond the immediate presence of Ordoliberal economists as personnel within the Economics Ministry, research institutes affiliated with universities such as Cologne, Munich and Bonn also generated ideas in line with Erhard's Ordoliberal brief. Günther Schmölder's Institute on Finance in Cologne was one such organisation.¹⁶ Müller-Armack worked closely with the Institute for Global Economics in Essen and a range of other bodies, requesting surveys and assessments from them.¹⁷ Erhard stressed this exchange with academic economists in formulating policy as a means of legitimating his decisions, personally taking part in meetings of the Advisory Council as well as the *Grundsatzabteilung* (a department in charge of establishing guiding principles for economic policy).¹⁸

Outside this elite circle, the Action Group Social Market Economy (ASM) stressed day to day implementation, popularisation and communication, linking academic elite and practical ambitions as well as orchestrating ad campaigns. The Action Group had initially been founded by free market economists, but was rapidly taken over by Ordoliberalism.¹⁹ It campaigned vehemently for the Erhard's policies in his time as Economics Minister, Vice Chancellor and later Chancellor.²⁰ As an institution considered to be representative of the government stance on

¹³ Daniel Dietzfelbinger, "Von der Religionssoziologie zur Sozialen Marktwirtschaft: Leben und Werk Alfred Müller-Armacks," *Politische Studien* 373:51 (September/October 2000): 91-94.

¹⁴ Roth, "Klienten," 26.

¹⁵ Löffler, *Soziale Marktwirtschaft*, 74.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁹ Dieter Haselbach, *Autoritärer Liberalismus und Soziale Marktwirtschaft* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1991), 214. see also Ptak, *Ordoliberalismus*, 260.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 214.

many issues, the ASM's annual meetings received considerable press coverage, providing the group with a solid voice in public debate.²¹ Its engagement with the public took a number of forms aside from conferences. To name an example, the ASM organised an essay competition among secondary school pupils in the autumn of 1957, asking students to explain what the social market economy was in exchange for the chance to win a moped.²²

Moreover, given the limited funding available for advertising, private engagement became a means Erhard employed to promote the social market economy framework.²³ Groups such as the so-called "Brigade Erhard" or the later, slightly more exclusive, "Neuhauser Kreis" included journalists, publishers and business owners favoured by the ministry, supplied with important information and invited to informal get-togethers with civil servants and members of parliament.²⁴ While journalistic figures such as Kurt Steves and Hans-Henning Zencke and papers such as *Die Welt* and the *Handelsblatt* were important, the most central mouthpiece for the Economics Ministry was the *FAZ (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)*. Founded by market-economy-oriented business owners such as Karl Blessing and Alex Haffner and spanning a readership of roughly a third of West German journalists and four fifths of MPS, the paper has been described as "an Action Group Social Market Economy in newspaper form".²⁵ These various links between Ordoliberal theorists and Erhard's ministry form the setting for assessing the impact of economic theory on political practice and the legislative agenda of the post war West German state.

Set against this backdrop, this chapter shows that the late twenties and Third Reich set the tone for the development of the concept of performance-based

²¹ See Günther Schmölders, "Steuersystem und Wirtschaftsordnung im Widerspruch," *Die Zeit*, 26th June, 1958, accessed 10th July, 2015, <http://www.zeit.de/1958/26/steuersystem-und-wirtschaftsordnung-im-widerspruch>; "Das Regime der 300," *Der Spiegel*, 17th June, 1958, accessed on 10th July, 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-41761882.html>; "Jetzt mit dem Pfunde wuchern," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23rd November, 1953, accessed 25th July, 2015, http://www.asm-ev.de/UeU_Historie.html; "Marktwirtschaft in Aktion," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23rd December, 1955, accessed 25th July, 2015, http://www.asm-ev.de/UeU_Historie.html; "Zehnpunkte Programm," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 07th July, 1955, accessed 25th July, 2015, http://www.asm-ev.de/UeU_Historie.html for examples of press coverage.

²² *Ibid.*, 82.

²³ One example was the WAAGE organisation created after the Korean war. For details see Spicka, *Selling the Economic Miracle*.

²⁴ Löffler, *Soziale Marktwirtschaft*, 268-270.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 272.

competition (*Leistungswettbewerb*) by a range of Ordoliberal theorists. For those theorists who remained in Germany, the flexibility of the concept of *Leistung* offered an opening for their ideas within National Socialist policy, or at least co-existence with the regime. After 1945, Ordoliberal theory continued to insist on the importance of *Leistung* in a competitive market economy framed by state policy and fiscal discipline. These ideas manifested in early policy decisions but Ordoliberal ability to influence economic policy-formation and see their understanding of *Leistung* realised, declined throughout the 1950s. Beyond understandings of economic order, the full elaboration of a vision of society in the post-war period encompassed the acceptance of the idea of a *Leistungsgesellschaft*. Ordoliberal insistence that achievement should be prioritised reflected the limited concessions the group was willing to make to the developing West German welfare state, contributing to a peripheral role in social policy formation.

II: Ordoliberalism in the Weimar Republic and under National Socialism

The earliest Ordoliberal writings, produced in the context of global economic crisis in the late 1920s and the changes brought about by National Socialism, consisted of defences of competitive capitalism. They exhibited a belief in the natural balance of the free market and an insistence on the need for a strong state resistant to the pressures exerted by different interests and led by an elite. These ideas were developed by Eucken, Böhm, Rüstow, Röpke, Miksch, Müller-Armack and others both outside and within Germany between 1928 and 1945. Within this corpus of texts lies a commitment to performance-based competition as the central conceptualisation of *Leistung* in the Ordoliberalism of this period. The following segment will explore the meaning of *Leistungswettbewerb*, the implications of a potential conceptual overlap with National Socialist ideas and Ordoliberal efforts to see their ideas implemented.

Franz Böhm's crucial 1933 and 1937 works *Wettbewerb und Monopolkampf* and *Die Ordnung der Wirtschaft*, outlined a competitive economic order centring on the performance principle, ensuring the selection of the most hard-working supplier in a free market shielded by a legal framework.²⁶ Böhm's particular

²⁶ Franz Böhm, *Die Ordnung der Wirtschaft als geschichtliche Aufgabe und rechtsschöpferische Leistung*. *Ordnung der Wirtschaft* 1 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1937), 31, 123. See also Franz Böhm, *Wettbewerb und Monopolkampf* (Berlin: Carl Hehmanns, 1933), 20.

interest, given his background in law, lay in describing the juridical conditions necessary for a competitive order. He asserted that the performance principle was *the* most important legal principle of a competitive order.²⁷

His emphasis on economic competition and performance was shared by his Freiburg colleagues, including Walter Eucken's student, Leonhard Miksch. In his *Habilitationsschrift* of 1937, Miksch contended that "the aim of economic competition (Wettkampf) is to secure the greatest success for the best performance and thus to incentivise performance."²⁸ Ludwig Erhard, too, depicted *Leistungswettbewerb* with reduced state intervention as the most desirable form of economic life. Writing in 1943, Erhard accepted that increased state activity was part of a war economy but insisted on the superior nature of competition based on performance as an organising principle, a system that needed to be reintroduced after the war.²⁹

A consensus regarding the importance of performance and competition, though not on the best way to attain them, extended well beyond the developing Ordoliberal framework to members of the resistance movement.³⁰ To name one example of this broad area of overlap, Carl Friedrich Goerdeler's 1938 review of a work by Franz Böhm lauded the piece for acknowledging "that performance and competition organise the economy in the most perfect way".³¹ Böhm depicted business activity as a battle fought with *Leistung*,³² and Goerdeler supported Böhm's call for a "combative *Leistungswettbewerb*". This order, in Goerdeler's mind, was to be created by limiting state intervention even more severely than Böhm had proposed, permitting a naturally balanced and organic order to

²⁷ Ibid., 123. He did admit that some areas, such as the supply of money, could not be managed through competition, see p. 33.

²⁸ Leonard Miksch, *Wettbewerb als Aufgabe. Die Grundsätze einer Wettbewerbsordnung*. *Ordnung der Wirtschaft* 4 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1937), 12. Miksch drew on the work of Franz Böhm in elaborating on the rules a state had to set in the form of legislation to ensure the full operation of the performance principle. See Ibid. 19.

²⁹ Ludwig Erhard, *Kriegsfinanzierung und Schuldenkonsolidierung. Faksimiledruck der Denkschrift von 1943/44* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1977), 264.

³⁰ For an exploration of the economic ideas of the resistance movement of July 20th 1944 see Daniela Rüter, *Der Widerstand des 20. Juli auf dem Weg in die Soziale Marktwirtschaft: Die wirtschaftspolitischen Vorstellungen der bürgerlichen Opposition gegen Hitler* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002).

³¹ Carl F. Goerdeler, "Die Ordnung der Wirtschaft: Wirtschaftliche Bemerkungen zu dem Buch von Franz Böhm," *Finanzarchiv* 5 (1938): 497.

³² Böhm, *Ordnung*, 107.

emerge.³³ Writing in 1941 and endorsing the value of competition, Goerdeler contended that “man will work all the harder, the clearer the relationship between his performance and his personal fortunes.”³⁴

The case of Jens Jessen is a further, particularly pertinent, example of the conceptual overlap between Ordoliberalism and the resistance. Jessen’s relationship with the National Socialist regime changed over time, progressing from enthusiastic support in hopes of seeing his own ideas implemented to collaboration with the resistance movement of July 20th, 1944. He worked alongside Böhm and Eucken at times.³⁵ By the early 1940s Jessen was availing himself of language that was considered typical of National Socialism such as “battle”, and “selection” in making an argument for the economic importance of competition.³⁶ The “most important component of competition”, he contended, was *Leistung*, a force to be exploited in combatting the problems of modern society, such as de-individualisation.³⁷

This shared language of competition, battle and performance also presented an area of potential overlap with aspects of the National Socialist economic agenda.³⁸ The same choice of terminology does not indicate identical ideas. Böhm, for example, explicitly stated that economic competition was different from war or boxing, since co-competitors used their strength not against each other, but in pursuit of the same goal, while National Socialist ideas about competition presented it as a civilian form of battle.³⁹ Nevertheless, as Ralf Ptak has rightly contended, the presence of elements such as “market economic competition, interpreted as a Darwinian process of selection, independent entrepreneurial initiative and a guarantee of private property” in National Socialist economic policy, alongside the command economy in preparation for

³³ Goerdeler, “Ordnung,” 493

³⁴ Carl F. Goerdeler, “The Elimination of the Collective Economy,” in *Standard Texts of the Social Market Economy*, ed. Ludwig Erhard Foundation (Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer, 1982), 3.

³⁵ Regina Schlüter-Ahrens, *Der Volkswirt Jens Jessen: Leben und Werk* (Marburg: Metropolis, 2001), 76.

³⁶ Jens Jessen, “Wettbewerb als grundsätzliche historisch-politische Frage,” in *Der Wettbewerb als Mittel volkswirtschaftlicher Leistungssteigerung und Leistungsauslese*. Schriften der Akademie für Deutsches Recht. Gruppe Wirtschaftswissenschaften 6, ed. Günther Schmolders (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1942), 8, 58.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁸ For details on Jessen’s life see Schlüter-Ahrens, *Jens Jessen*. For an example of Jessen’s earlier work see Jens Jessen, *Volk und Wirtschaft* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1935).

³⁹ Böhm, *Ordnung*, 124.

and during wartime, presented an opening some Ordoliberalists tried to exploit to gain a foothold for their agenda within the regime.⁴⁰

One example of these efforts lies in the publications of the Working Group on Economics in the Academy for German Law. The Academy had been created in June 1933 and was charged with reshaping German legal life as well as promoting the implementation of the Nazi programme in law and the economy in close collaboration with legislative bodies.⁴¹

In 1942, the Group for Economics published a treatise on competition featuring papers from Böhm, Eucken and Jessen. Most of the contributing authors sought to highlight what they viewed as positive aspects of the war-time economic system. Within this framework, the concept of *Leistung* featured frequently. Günther Schmolders commended recent changes in pricing policy for reintroducing an element of competition, and thus the performance principle, into certain areas of the economy.⁴² For Böhm, too, pricing was an important means of generating and maintaining competition. His piece focussed on the martial economy, aiming to assess whether competition could be used to aid the war effort in economic terms. Böhm's designation of competition as the best means of incentivising productivity drew on the idea that even "asocial and anti-social people" were equally subject to the drive to maintain one's existence, a drive triggered by competition. Despite this advantage, he concluded that competition could at best bring peripheral benefits in the current command economy.⁴³

A particularly detailed and clear engagement with the concept of *Leistung* in the volume was offered by Theodor Beste, business management professor and Jessen's colleague in Berlin. Beste went to great lengths to clarify the meaning of *Leistung* in an economic context, defining both the qualitative and quantitative

⁴⁰ Ptak, *Vom Ordoliberalismus zur Sozialen Marktwirtschaft*, 67. Ptak seeks to address claims that Ordoliberalists were part of the resistance, presenting these claims as part of the way in which Ordoliberalism marketed and continues to market itself in the post war period. See *Ibid.*, 290. For Darwinian connotations of competition, battle and selection see Rüther, *Widerstand*, 12.

⁴¹ See Schlüter-Ahrens, *Jessen*, 48. Some of the Academy's working groups became the focus of the resistance movement, most prominently the Working Group Erwin von Beckerath. See Rüther, *Widerstand*, 7.

⁴² Günther Schmolders, "Vorwort" *Wettbewerb*, 5. See also Graf Yorck von Wartenburg, "Ansätze zum Leistungswettbewerb in der Kriegswirtschaft," in *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴³ Franz Böhm, "Der Wettbewerb als Instrument staatlicher Wirtschaftslenkung," in *Ibid.*, 54-55, 59, 79.

aspects of a business's performance as well as engaging with how it was assessed, generated and so forth.⁴⁴ Here too, competition was seen as the primary means of generating *Leistung*, and its absence needed to be made up for by individual employers.⁴⁵ What measures this would involve on a business level, Beste did not specify, pointing instead to the creation of state bodies such as the National Committee to Improve Performance in January 1939 and the institution of competitions such as the Battle of the Businesses in inspiring improved performance.⁴⁶ In a similar vein, a 1941 article by Leonhard Miksch acknowledged the importance of competition in generating *Leistung* and argued that competition would continue to be the functional social organising principle even if the most important economic and social decisions were transferred to the state.⁴⁷

While these writings are far from a full-throated endorsement of the National Socialist agenda, the overlap extends beyond a shared vocabulary. Böhm, Eucken and Beste sought to use areas of economic policy during the war as a platform for their ideas on competition and performance. That being said, the command elements of the National Socialist wartime economy always limited the space available for Ordoliberal suggestions on policy. Moreover, these observations apply only to those Ordoliberals who remained in Germany after 1933, excluding the likes of Röpke and Rüstow.

A more nuanced picture of potential conceptual affinity with National Socialism lies in Ordoliberal discussions of the entrepreneur. Just as Nazi engagement with the *Unternehmer* as a source of a particular kind of achievement had attempted to recast an essentially bourgeois figure in a more National Socialist light,⁴⁸ Ordoliberal writings also returned repeatedly to the figure of the business owner in connection with *Leistung* both prior to and during National Socialism. In so doing, the majority of Ordoliberals were seeking to defend the entrepreneur as the creator of a specific type of achievement. This endorsement of the *Unternehmer* was part of a broader commitment to *Bürgerlichkeit* for most

⁴⁴ Theodor Beste, "Leistung, Leistungsvermögen, Leistungssteigerung," in *Ibid.*, 131-150.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 155, 170.

⁴⁷ Leonard Miksch, "Brauchen wir noch Unternehmer?" *Die Wirtschaftskurve*, 20:1 (1941): 6.

⁴⁸ See Chapter I of thesis.

Ordoliberal theorists, which became much more explicit in the social order envisaged in the post-war period.⁴⁹

Before 1933, Eucken, Röpke and Müller-Armack depicted the role of the entrepreneur in overcoming the economic crisis as central, drawing on the concept of *Leistung* in making their case.⁵⁰ Writing in 1932, Eucken called into question fears that the daring and innovative business owner was vanishing, making way for an individual altered by state intervention and bureaucracy who played it safe. He contended that the “entrepreneurs in the employment of the state (*verbeamtete Unternehmer*)” existed only in those areas of the economy where competition was absent.⁵¹ Röpke, too, defended business owners in 1931 by pointing out that they fulfilled a social function and were generally selected based on performance.⁵² Alfred Müller-Armack’s work went further, tying entrepreneurial activity more closely to *Leistung* and social mobility. His analysis of the genesis of the class system explicitly rejected Marx’s and Sombart’s theories, asserting that the capitalist class was a stratum through which the upwardly mobile passed (*soziale Durchgangsschicht*).⁵³ Crucially, the personnel composition of this class never remained the same, as entrepreneurial initiative did not run in families. Thus the capitalist class could only be explained through the function served by “entrepreneurial *Leistung*”.⁵⁴ Yet Müller-Armack conceded that an irrational element was present in the manner in which social status was allotted “each epoch only rewards some achievements with social ascent and excludes others.”⁵⁵ Despite this arbitrary element in assessing the achievements of an individual, Müller-Armack remained convinced of the advantages contained in an entrepreneurial class which embodied successful *Leistung*.

⁴⁹ See Section IV of this chapter.

⁵⁰ Although with different ends in mind. Böhm and Eucken sought to defend the capitalist order while Müller-Armack at the time advocated a corporatist model, inspired by Italy. For discussions of the veneration of the entrepreneur as a source of innovation in Ordoliberalism more generally see Ptak, *Vom Ordoliberalismus zur Sozialen Marktwirtschaft*, 53, 106.

⁵¹ Walter Eucken, “Staatliche Strukturwandlungen und die Krisis des Kapitalismus,” *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv* 36 (1932): 298.

⁵² Wilhelm Röpke, “Die Intellektuellen und der Kapitalismus,” in *Gegen die Brandung*, ed. Albert Hunold (1931, repr., Stuttgart: Eugen Rentsch, 1959), 101.

⁵³ Alfred Müller-Armack, *Entwicklungsgesetze des Kapitalismus* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1932), 2, 54.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

This insistence on entrepreneurs as achievers was not incompatible with National Socialist ideas, or so a 1933 work by Müller-Armack indicated. Writing in defence of the fascist corporatist model of the state, he rejected claims that National Socialism was opposed to business owner's initiative, claiming that the maintenance of a "healthy composition of the people" presupposed the existence of "intermediate and upwardly mobile strata (*Aufstiegsschichten*)".⁵⁶ It is worth noting that Müller-Armack is the only Ordoliberal discussed here who joined the NSDAP and intellectually aligned himself so closely to the party, though for a short period of time. In so doing, the shared insistence on valuing the business owner's performance, albeit in very different frameworks, permitted the transition from the developing Ordoliberal framework to broadly corporatist ideas on the structure of state and society.

While Müller-Armack went furthest in this direction, a more typical example of the Ordoliberal position between toleration and co-operation adopted by many is the work of Leonhard Miksch. He contributed regularly to the journal *Wirtschaftskurve*, a paper which engaged with the details of wartime economics. His 1941 piece on *Unternehmer* contended that business owners and the state were now working together to achieve. Miksch predicted that the role of the state would diminish in the future, making way for a greater role to be played by the business community.⁵⁷ In making this argument, Miksch sought to create a version of entrepreneurial *Leistung* which at the very least did not conflict with National Socialist policy. By contrast Erhard maintained that the increased role of the state brought about by war could not be counteracted by business owners. Despite their "initiative and performance", these individuals could do little to re-jig the balance between state and economy.⁵⁸ While Ordoliberal discussions of the *Unternehmer* were virtually unanimous in depicting the entrepreneur as an important generator of *Leistung*, these discussions, too, presented a way into the National Socialist agenda, which only some theorists utilised.

Beyond this endorsement of performance-based competition and the focus on the figure of the business owner, a general commitment to the following principles

⁵⁶ Alfred Müller-Armack, *Staatsidee und Wirtschaftsordnung im neuen Reich* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt, 1933), 47.

⁵⁷ Miksch, "Unternehmer," 10-11, 14.

⁵⁸ Erhard, *Kriegsfinanzierung*, 51-52.

defined Ordoliberal work of the period on an international level: a belief in the value of competition in harnessing a natural urge in man, and the conviction that competition framed by a strong state was the only means of ensuring the performance principle would come into full effect. Political exile Röpke's 1937 textbook on economics took up many of these statements, positing that commitment to the performance principle was the only way of inducing individuals to serve their own needs and by so doing serve the needs of others.⁵⁹ Like Böhm, Eucken and Miksch, Röpke proceeded to outline the harmful effects of monopolies (including collectivism as a form of state monopoly) in distorting the performance principle and subverting man's natural inclination to compete.⁶⁰ A free economy was the only way forward as the full operation of the *Leistungsprinzip* entailed a market responding to consumer needs.⁶¹

The negative social repercussions of endorsing such a commitment to *Leistung* featured only on the periphery of the works considered above. Thus Böhm availed himself of the idea of a *Volksgemeinschaft* in explaining the purpose of an economic order in which the state mitigated social tensions.⁶² He also acknowledged in passing that the distribution of income brought about by performance-based competition might be unjust.⁶³ Ordoliberal theorists in this period elaborated their understanding of *Leistung* almost wholly in connection with the market rather than seeing performance as a factor structuring society. It was the post-war period that witnessed the elaboration on *Leistung* as a societal principle.

Ordoliberal theory between 1928 and 1945 firmly established the notion of performance-based competition at the centre of its vision of economic order, only touching briefly on the social implications of this type of *Leistung*. At the same time the link between broadly construed ideas of competition, battle, and *Leistung* resulted in a shared language spanning National Socialist regime, the resistance and the Ordoliberal camp. Some of those Ordoliberals who remained in Germany exploited this conceptual flexibility, seeking to find space for their

⁵⁹ Wilhelm Röpke, *Die Lehre von der Wirtschaft*. 7th edition (1937, repr., Stuttgart: Eugen Rentsch, 1965), 41.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 43, 216.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 307.

⁶² Böhm, *Ordnung*, 21.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 32.

own policy agenda. National Socialists and Ordoliberalism shared a focus on the *Unternehmer* as an ideal achiever and innovator, an area of overlap that some utilised in embracing or aligning themselves with aspects of the regime while others sought to maintain and defend an essentially bourgeois version of achievement. After the disintegration and defeat of the Third Reich, the experience of occupation, economic destruction and the altered political framework of the Federal Republic was to present the promise of a system more open to Ordoliberal influence.

III: Ordoliberal ideas in post-war period and their implementation

After 1945 the experience of a command economy managed by British, French and American allied forces, featuring price controls, strictly controlled exports and imports, as well as a devalued currency, presented new opportunities for proponents of Ordoliberal ideals. Their position was further strengthened due to the increasing influence of Ludwig Erhard. In this altered context, the group's continued assertion of the superiority of a free market structured by competition, *Leistung* remained a key feature. What exactly was the conceptual content of *Leistung* in these changed circumstances and what impact did it have on policy formation? The focus in the following analysis will rest on exploring Ordoliberal ideas in relation to *Leistung* after 1945 and examining the extent of Ordoliberal influence on the economic policies of occupied and Federal Germany.

Within Ordoliberal theory, one precondition for perfect performance-based competition was the maintenance of the price mechanism as the essence of the market economy.⁶⁴ The function of the mechanism consisted in guiding market participants in their competitive endeavours by indicating the degree of demand to producers and the degree of scarcity to consumers in a flexible fashion.⁶⁵ Price and its value led to a further prerequisite vital to securing the correct operation of performance based competition: a stable currency.⁶⁶ Fiscal policy in regulating

⁶⁴ For some examples, see: Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft e.V., *Vorschläge zur Verwirklichung der Sozialen Marktwirtschaft* (Hamburg: Schlichting, 1948), 9; Wilhelm Röpke, "Die natürliche Ordnung," *Kyklos* 2:3 (1948): 224; Ernst Winkler, Alexander Rüstow, Werner Schmid, Otto Lautenbach, *Magna Charta der sozialen Marktwirtschaft* (Heidelberg - Ziegelhausen; Vita Verlag, 1952), 49.

⁶⁵ Alfred Müller-Armack, *Wirtschaftslenkung und Marktwirtschaft* (Hamburg; Verlag für Wirtschaft und Sozialpolitik, 1947), 90.

⁶⁶ Müller-Armack, "Soziale Marktwirtschaft," in *Handwörterbuch der Sozialwissenschaften* 9, eds. Carl Brinkmann and Erwin von Beckerath et al. (Tübingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), 390.

inflation here constituted the primary means of valuing achievement and performance within the Ordoliberal framework.

When assessing the impact of these Ordoliberal ideas on the formation of policy, one of the most frequently cited and important moments in the period of Allied occupation is the passing of the Guiding Principles Law (*Leitsatzgesetz*) in June 1948. This legislation empowered Erhard in his role as Director of the Economic Administration to remove price controls from specific sets of goods and coincided with the Allied introduction of the *Deutschmark*. As such, it has received considerable attention as the “founding moment” of the social market economy and been positioned within a narrative stressing the proactive role Erhard played in the creation of a free market.⁶⁷ More importantly, one of the most prominent authors of the draft law was Leonhard Miksch and the early version of the Guiding Principles went beyond price policy, extending to economic policy more generally.⁶⁸ In ascertaining Ordoliberal influence on these developments, this analysis will locate the Guiding Principles in the context of Allied policy, domestic German political opinion, and Erhard’s policy as Director, as well as outlining the content and revisions made to the law.

Erhard had been advocating a radically decontrolled approach to the economy prior to his appointment as Director of the Economic Administration in April 1948, an argument made with the backing of Ordoliberal colleagues. During his time as chair of the *Sonderstelle Kredit und Geld*, a group created to advise the Allied forces on currency reform in September 1947, Erhard pushed for deregulated pricing of consumer goods as a means of meeting pent-up consumer demand after the currency reform. He also contended that a reduced money supply would give the working population an incentive to produce more goods.⁶⁹ In making his case for a freer economic system, Erhard drew on the support of Miksch, Eucken and Müller-Armack all of whom were also members of the *Sonderstelle*.⁷⁰ This was the first time many Ordoliberals were directly

⁶⁷ Nicholls, *Freedom*, 212.

⁶⁸ Volkhard Laitenberger, *Ludwig Erhard: Der Nationalökonom als Politiker* (Göttingen: Muster-Schmidt, 1986), 68.

⁶⁹ Nicholls, *Freedom*, 150.

⁷⁰ James C. Van Hook, *Rebuilding Germany* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2004), 158. Röpke also offered advice and contributed to the debate from Switzerland, see Nicholls, *Freedom*, 160.

participating in the creation of economic policy. While this is an important consideration in assessing Ordoliberal impact on policy formation, two factors limiting that effectiveness need to be mentioned here. The first is that a general consensus on the need to guarantee price stability and prevent inflation existed among all members of the *Sonderstelle*, Ordoliberal or not. The contentious issue was whether the Bizonal economy was sufficiently strong for a partial deregulation of prices after a currency reform.⁷¹ More importantly, the proposals produced by the committee were not taken on by the Allied occupation government.⁷²

A more effective focus of Ordoliberal impact was the Advisory Board to the Economic Administration. Here, the presence of Böhm, Miksch and Müller-Armack alongside a number of social democrats such as Karl Schiller, Christian socialists like Oswald Nell-Breuning and moderates including Walter Hallstein permitted Ordoliberal influence to expand. It is important to note that the board had come into being and was staffed by Erhard's predecessor as Director, Johannes Semmler. Its personnel composition was thus the result of Semmler's decision making.⁷³ However, the board became an advocate of Ordoliberal policies under Erhard's tenure, recommending the deregulation of prices as soon as possible.⁷⁴

In both the *Sonderstelle* and the Advisory Board, the issue of price controls was seen as intimately linked with Allied plans for currency reform. By 1948, widespread problems such as hoarding and a booming black market highlighted the problems inherent in centrally-set, unreflective prices based on a devalued currency.⁷⁵ Within the Economic Administration, Erhard's closest Ordoliberal advisor was Leonhard Miksch, head of the department for *Preiswirtschaftliche Grundsatzfragen und Betriebswirtschaft* from 1948 onwards and initially employed in the British economic administration in Minden.⁷⁶ Like his

⁷¹ Van Hook *Rebuilding*, 159-160.

⁷² A. Mierzejewski, *Ludwig Erhard. A Biography* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 59.

⁷³ Van Hook, *Rebuilding*, 161. Mierzejewski, *Erhard*, 62.

⁷⁴ Van Hook, *Rebuilding*, 161. Nicholls, *Freedom*, 206.

⁷⁵ Van Hook, *Rebuilding*, 153.

⁷⁶ Gerhard Mauch, "Miksch, Leonhard," *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, Vol. 17 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1994), 496. Interestingly, Miksch was a member of the SPD. Paired with the partial

Ordoliberal colleagues, Miksch was outspoken in his advocacy of drastic measures to decontrol industry and permit market forces to regulate pricing as soon as possible.⁷⁷

It is thus no coincidence that Erhard collaborated with Miksch in drafting a law that would permit him to deregulate prices on many consumer goods after he had assumed the role of Director of the Economic Administration.⁷⁸ While Erhard's deputy and Müller-Armack commented on the draft, the circle of those involved in preparing the first version of the Guiding Principles appears to have been very small.⁷⁹ Once approved by the Directors of the Bizonal Administration,⁸⁰ the draft was presented to the Economic Council in June 1948 in its original form.⁸¹ Entitled "The Law on Guiding Principles of Economic Policy after the Currency Reform", it called for an abolition of price controls with exceptions to protect the economically weak, to ensure completion of government reconstruction programmes and prevent exploitation of shortages by monopolists.⁸² All of the above were in keeping with Ordoliberal opinion, initiating the process of deregulation of the economy by freeing prices and directing legislative attention to the problem of monopolies.

As yet, however, these ideas were not legislative reality. The SPD in particular raised objections to the bill, stipulating that wages, too, needed to be freed as the proposed increase would be insufficient to match rising prices. This criticism was extended a few days later, when the second reading of the draft occurred. At this point the social democrats within the Council posited the need for a regulatory body to survey Erhard's decision on price controls, a demand that was granted,

endorsement of Ordoliberal ideas by the FDP in the mid to late forties, this shows the broadness of Ordoliberal appeal and fluidity of the party political spectrum pre 1949. See Nicholls, *Freedom*, 212.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁷⁸ Mierzejewski, *Erhard*, 62. The draft was written under considerable time pressure as the introduction of a reformed currency in the Bizone was assumed to be imminent.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 65. Christoph Weisz, Hans-Dieter Kreikamp, Bernd Steger, *Akten zur Vorgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945-1949*, vol. 4, *January to December 1948* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1983), 51. Knut Wolfgang Nörr, *Die Republik der Wirtschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 50.

⁸⁰ "12. Direktorialsitzung in Frankfurt 1. Juni 1948," in *Akten zur Vorgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945-1949*, vol. 3, *June - December 1947*, ed. Günther Plum (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1982), 554.

⁸¹ Mierzejewski, *Erhard*, 67.

⁸² "Antrag des Verwaltungsrats vom 1. 6. 1948: Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die wirtschaftspolitischen Leitsätze nach der Geldreform," in *Wörtliche Berichte und Drucksachen des Wirtschaftsrates des Vereinigten Wirtschaftsgebietes 1947-1949*, vol. 4, *Drucksachen Nr. 1-637*, eds. Christoph Weisz and Hans Woller (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1977), 559.

though the body would only have the power to review decisions.⁸³ More importantly, SPD objections succeeded in reducing the potential scope of the bill, as it was retitled “Law on Guiding Principles for Management and Pricing Policy after the Currency Reform,” thus losing any ties to economic policy as a whole.⁸⁴ Aside from these concessions, the original thrust of the draft was reflected in the law, granting Erhard a range of powers to lift price controls in keeping with the Ordoliberal project of attaining a free market as soon as possible.

The text of the law referred to the idea of performance-based competition only in asserting the need to combat monopolies.⁸⁵ Beyond that, the preamble linked economic and social injustice brought about by the effects of war and the ensuing planned economy, asserting the need for a solution which also addressed both areas of national life.⁸⁶ While references to *Leistung* are thus limited in the text of the law itself, Ordoliberal theory drew on the concept extensively and Erhard certainly availed himself of it liberally when presenting his economic ideas to the Council and the public. Thus his radio address, given the day after the currency reform and the deregulation of prices, claimed to represent popular opinion in contending that “the essential selection cannot be carried out based on any schematic rules, but only through the performance principle.”⁸⁷

When presenting the Guiding Principles Law to the Economic Council, Erhard stressed that the time had come to replace the compulsion of a planned economy with “responsibility and an awareness of responsibility, performance and willingness to perform.”⁸⁸ Moreover, he contended that a just distribution of wealth and a minimum of material security for each citizen could only be achieved through the market.⁸⁹ Similarly, he repeatedly referred to *Leistung* in his first speech as Director to the Economic Council, condemning bureaucracy for

⁸³ Mierzejewski, *Erhard*, 68-9.

⁸⁴ “Antrag des Ausschusses für Wirtschaft vom 17. 6. 1948: Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Leitsätze für die Bewirtschaftung und Preispolitik nach der Geldreform,” in *Wörtliche Berichte und Drucksachen*, 570. See also Nörr, *Republik*, 52.

⁸⁵ “Antrag,” 570.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 570.

⁸⁷ Ludwig Erhard, “Der Neue Kurs,” in *Deutsche Wirtschaftspolitik. Der Weg der sozialen Marktwirtschaft*, ed. Ludwig Erhard (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1992), 65.

⁸⁸ “Wörtlicher Bericht über die 18. Volksversammlung am 17 und 18. Juni 1948,” in *Wörtliche Berichte und Drucksachen des Wirtschaftsrates des Vereinigten Wirtschaftsgebietes 1947-1949*, vol. 2, *Volksversammlungen 1-22*, eds. Christoph Weisz and Hans Woller (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1977), 623.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 623-624.

killing any desire to achieve, a desire that was essential to overcoming the dire economic situation in Germany.⁹⁰ Erhard specifically elaborated on a fiscal understanding of *Leistung*, referring to money as the “legitimation of achievement”⁹¹ and emphasising that an economy that wished to measure, compare and prioritise performance, could not do without fiscal policy (Preispolitik).⁹² Presumably thinking of social democratic objections to his pricing policies, Erhard stipulated that “differences in performance exist on every level and it is always justified to express these in income.”⁹³

The long-term success of policies such as price deregulation contributed to Erhard’s eventual entry into the CDU and influence on the *Düsseldorfer Leitsätze* of July 1949. This party programme famously contained the CDU’s endorsement of the social market economy, a framework which included a commitment to placing the “achievement of free and hard-working people” in the service of economic prosperity and social justice.⁹⁴ The programme also included a commitment to pet Ordoliberal projects such as performance-based competition and an independent control of monopolies.⁹⁵

Leistung therefore continued to play a central role in visions of economic order elaborated by Ordoliberals in the late 1940s, featuring prominently in public explanations of Erhard’s policy decisions and programme. This period can also be seen as the high point in terms of the Ordoliberal impact on the legislation on economic policy, as the group benefitted from ties to Erhard, representation on advisory and policy-making bodies and a cross-party consensus on the need to loosen economic control mechanisms.

However, these changes represented only one part of the larger Ordoliberal project. The ideal of *Leistungswettbewerb* in particular included a range of other elements. Writing in 1947, Müller-Armack contended that one of the advantages of performance-based competition was that it encouraged the individual and the

⁹⁰“Wörtlicher Bericht über die 14. Volksversammlung am 21. Und 22. April 1948 in Frankfurt am Main im Großen Börsensaal,” *Wörtliche Berichte*, vol.2, 441-442.

⁹¹ “18. Volksversammlung,” *Wörtliche Berichte*, vol.2, 625.

⁹² “14. Volksversammlung,” *Wörtliche Berichte*, vol. 2, 442.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 442.

⁹⁴ “Düsseldorfer Leitsätze vom 15. Juli 1949,” in *Dokumente zur parteipolitischen Entwicklung in Deutschland seit 1945*, vol. 2, ed. Ossip K. Flechtheim, (Berlin: Wendler & Co, 1963), 59.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

business constantly to improve their performance. This performance was assessed relative to other participants, driving co-competitors to maintain or improve their position within the market economy, a dynamic beneficial not only to economic growth but to the consumer.⁹⁶ Competition thus continued to pivot on the concept of *Leistung*, in the form of the will to achieve and the constant improvement of performance.⁹⁷

Yet this was not to say that the free market, if left to its own devices, would naturally engender this “perfect competition”.⁹⁸ Eucken’s work was essential in this respect, featuring frequent reiterations of the need for the state to determine the overall form that economic activity should take. The state’s role was to organise the individual parts into a greater whole rather than intervening in the economic process itself.⁹⁹ Government thus created the prerequisites for the human will to achieve and improve within a competitive structure to flourish and, in so doing, benefit the whole.

Having established the primacy of competition based on performance and achievement within a well-functioning market economy, one precondition for the realisation of such a system was the correct measure of state intervention, as excessive interference would upset the natural balance of the market. The challenge with which economic policy as framed by the state was tasked was the organisation and maintenance of competition, a competition based on nothing but performance. Consequently it would become necessary to legislate against cartels, monopolies and other forms that limited competition so that the only way for an individual to prove his worth before the market was to achieve.¹⁰⁰ Röpke referred to the value of free competition based on achievement in ensuring prosperity and freedom. For him, the state’s essential function consisted in organising the economic system to ensure that success could only be gained through the narrow path of better performance for customers, rather than

⁹⁶ Müller-Armack, *Wirtschaftslenkung*, 73.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁹⁹ Eucken, *Wettbewerb*, 7; Walter Eucken, *Unser Zeitalter der Misserfolge: Fünf Vorträge zur Wirtschaftspolitik* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1951), 72.

¹⁰⁰ L. Erhard, *Wohlstand für Alle* (Düsseldorf; Econ, 1957), 2.

through unfair competition.¹⁰¹ In Röpke's analysis, this was the aspect of competition which distinguished the free market from the planned economy found under socialism.¹⁰² He split the achieving competitive order into two categories, one, stimulating performance within the business, was possible in any system, while the other, using competition to serve the consumer alone, was not.¹⁰³

A similar emphasis on the ultimate function of performance-based competition in serving the consumer, was also placed by Rüstow in the form of competition rightly understood as a fair interaction among co-competitors as opposed to the animosity that characterised a battle to be won by any means available.¹⁰⁴ Rüstow argued that a spirit of fair play had to be inculcated into the participants in economic competition, drawing on gendered language to describe an inability to accept that competition would ultimately result in winners and losers as "unmanly" and "soft".¹⁰⁵

Ordoliberal theorists were willing to permit intervention in some areas of industry such as agriculture which were subject to external factors, provided the incentive to improve performance in the form of a rise in the standard of living remained uninhibited.¹⁰⁶ The role of government policy within the Ordoliberal ideal was thus manifold. It was to create the correct prerequisites to achieve. However, state policy also had actively to de-incentivise any conduct which fell beyond the confines of performance rightly understood, achievement serving the correct purpose.

One instance in which these Ordoliberal ideas about ensuring the proper place of *Leistung* had to contend with a variety of alternate approaches is the case of anti-cartel legislation.¹⁰⁷ The decade-long run-up to the passing of the anti-monopoly

¹⁰¹ Wilhelm Röpke, *Die Gesellschaftskrisis der Gegenwart* (Erlenbach – Zurich: Eugen Rentsch, 1948), 171. Wilhelm Röpke, *Jenseits von Angebot und Nachfrage* (Erlenbach – Zurich: Eugen Rentsch, 1958), 47.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁰⁴ Rüstow, *Versagen*, 68.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁰⁶ Müller-Armack, *Wirtschaftslenkung*, 101.

¹⁰⁷ For the most recent discussion of this legislation see Van Hook, *Rebuilding*, 233-288. For full details of the debates surrounding West German anti-cartel legislation, see Rüdiger Robert, *Konzentrationspolitik in der Bundesrepublik: Das Beispiel der Entstehung des Gesetzes gegen Wettbewerbsbeschränkung* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1976); Peter Hüttenberger, "Wirtschaftsordnung und Interessenpolitik in der Kartellgesetzgebung der Bundesrepublik

law (roughly 1947-1957), encompassed a debate on the “proper role of free competition in West German society”,¹⁰⁸ of which *Leistungswettbewerb* was but one model. The following section of this chapter will briefly outline the different groups and positions involved in the discussion, assessing Ordoliberal influence on draft bills and the final version of the law.

In the immediate period after 1945, conflicting Allied opinion on the matter of decartelisation and competition was an important factor. Proceeding from a desire to prevent war readiness and an understanding that tied cartels to National Socialist economics, U.S. and British laws against excessive concentrations of economic power within their zones were in effect from 1947 onwards.¹⁰⁹ While command in economic matters did shift to the German government from OMGUS and later the High Commission, control over the decentralisation of heavy industry, arguably *the* most cartelised and influential part of the business community, remained firmly in Allied hands.¹¹⁰ It was also made clear to the German government that decartelisation legislation was expected to be passed before this control was relinquished.¹¹¹ Erhard and the Ordoliberals agreed, particularly with the American occupying force, that anti-monopoly laws were necessary and in effect took up the mantle once the latter had left. However, US anti-trust theory and West German Ordoliberal advocates proceeded from different premises. While the American antitrust tradition emphasised the importance of competition as an end in itself, Ordoliberal thought stressed the need for competition in creating a competitive order as part of a larger economic and social system.¹¹²

Within this broader setting, the first attempt at an anti-cartel law, the “Josten draft”, was produced without American instigation and presented to Erhard in his capacity as Director of the Economic Administration in 1949. The committee responsible for the draft was run by Paul Josten, head of the Economic Policy and Order Department in the Economic Administration and former member of the

1949-1957,” *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 24:3 (1976):287-307; Volker Berghahn, *The Americanisation of West German Industry 1945-73* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1986).

¹⁰⁸ Van Hook, *Rebuilding*, 235.

¹⁰⁹ Gerber, *Law and Competition*, 268. On divisions between the US, British, Erhard on the deconcentration of heavy industry see Van Hook, *Rebuilding*, 230-268.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 250.

¹¹¹ Gerber, *Law and Competition*, 274.

¹¹² Van Hook, *Rebuilding*, 243.

Cartel Department in Weimar. Crucially, the committee included Franz Böhm, alongside professors Walter Bauer, Bernhard Pfister and others.¹¹³ Böhm was able to exert “considerable influence”¹¹⁴ on the draft, which encompassed many of his ideas. The document called for the prohibition of all cartels as well as the creation of an independent monopolies office to protect performance-based competition and limit undue concentrations of economic power.¹¹⁵ The monopolies office was to have extensive judicial power, including the ability to prevent mergers, impose and enforce fines.¹¹⁶ Based on these stipulations, the Josten Draft was a step towards realising the Ordoliberal ideal of a system of performance based competition framed by the state and serving the consumer.

Yet when the draft was leaked to the economic journal *Handelsblatt*, party political and business responses forced Erhard to shelve it and turn to other ministry figures such as Eberhard Günther to put together a different, more acceptable version.¹¹⁷ From the abandonment of the Josten draft onwards, well over 20 others were considered in the search for politically feasible anti-cartel legislation.¹¹⁸ In part this protracted process was the result of changing Allied priorities as the developing Cold War framework entailed a shift of focus away from points of difference with the West German government, such as decartelisation. More importantly, domestic political objections raised by West German actors restricted Ordoliberal influence on various drafts as well as the eventual form legislation took.

One of the mainstays of opposition to any draft of anti-cartel law along Ordoliberal lines was German industry, particularly heavy industry. Until the mid-fifties, the BDI (*Bundesverband der deutschen Industrie*) stridently opposed an outright ban on cartels, advocating a return to the so called “abuse principle”

¹¹³ Robert, *Konzentrationspolitik*, 103.

¹¹⁴ Knut Nörr, *Die Leiden des Privatrechts* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), 163.

¹¹⁵ Gerber, *Law and Competition*, 273.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 273.

¹¹⁷ Berghahn contends that Erhard dropped the draft as he was in fact less Ordoliberal and more American in his macroeconomic ideas, favouring decartelisation but not deconcentration. Yet the only evidence Berghahn offers is Erhard’s association with industrialists during World War II. While Erhard was perhaps closer to big business than other Ordoliberals and drew his ideas from a range of sources, this association alone is insufficient to call his commitment to Ordoliberalism into question. Furthermore, Berghahn does not engage with Erhard’s extensive use of Ordoliberal theorists to advise and staff the ministry of Economics in the post-war period. Berghahn, *Americanisation*, 157-158.

¹¹⁸ Gerber, *Law and Competition*, 274.

in operation during the Weimar period.¹¹⁹ Under this system, cartels were only illegal if abuse could be demonstrated, a matter in which the burden of proof rested with the plaintiff and a decision would be made by the economics minister, not an independent body.¹²⁰ When confronted with the Josten, and successive drafts of competition legislation, the BDI complained that such a law would hamper economic recovery by interfering with decision making and artificially requiring excessive competition.¹²¹ BDI campaigns sought to align Erhard with unpopular American policies on decentralisation which were seen as harmful, and prolonged negotiations in hopes of postponing a decision on legislation until after the occupying forces had left.¹²²

Furthermore, Ordoliberal ideas on competition had a broad spectrum of domestic party political opinion to contend with, within the Economic Administration and later Economics Ministry, the CDU and other parties. Erhard was by no means sure of CDU or FDP backing, as his idea of a unified, state-controlled economic constitution was to be achieved through this anti-cartel legislation. It would have entailed a radical extension of power for the Economics ministry, encroaching on areas such as transport and finance, thus going well beyond its brief.¹²³ In one instance, Economics Minister for North Rhine Westphalia Artur Sträter opposed a 1951 draft of the law, pointing out that not all cartels were harmful, as did many others, including Eberhard Günther.¹²⁴ Furthermore, Adenauer did not fully support Erhard's stance, particularly when it strained relations with coalition partners such as the *Deutsche Partei*.¹²⁵ Outside the CDU, the SPD was still in favour of further concentration in hopes of aiding socialisation.¹²⁶ Unlike the Guiding Principles Law of 1948, Ordoliberal ideas in this debate about decartelisation could not draw on a broader agreement on the direction policy should take. This lack of underlying consensus severely restricted the ability of advocates of Ordoliberalism to make theory reality.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 251.

¹²⁰ Van Hook, *Rebuilding*, 277.

¹²¹ Gerber, *Law and Competition*, 273.

¹²² Van Hook, *Rebuilding*, 16.

¹²³ Hüttenberger, "Wirtschaftsordnung," 307; Van Hook, *Rebuilding*, 246.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 246; Hüttenberger, "Wirtschaftsordnung," 298.

¹²⁵ Van Hook, *Rebuilding*, 234.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 238.

The law that was eventually passed in July 1957 was a combination of Ordoliberal ideas, U.S. influence and concessions to German businesses. It emphasised the prohibition of restraints on trade with an adverse effect on the competitive order.¹²⁷ However, this legislation did not prohibit restraints on trade as such, the provision that the Josten committee had originally suggested.¹²⁸ Moreover, the law did not apply to transportation, agriculture, insurance, and many other areas, part of a range of concessions Erhard had to make to industrial lobbyists and political opponents. Still, the law created a Federal Cartel Office largely independent of political influence, with considerable power to assess whether trade was being restricted and impose fines.¹²⁹

When gauging the impact Ordoliberal ideas had on the final version of the law, individual reactions indicate how the theorists themselves saw the matter. Böhm disagreed with changes made from the mid-fifties onwards, submitting his own draft of the law featuring an absolute ban on cartels to the Bundestag in March 1955.¹³⁰ Alexander Rüstow saw the process of bargaining as catastrophic for free market economics, predicting dire consequences for the future of the social market economy.¹³¹ One can only imagine that both were displeased with the wave of mergers that took place after 1957, even though cartel levels remained considerably lower than in the 1920s.¹³²

Despite this discontent with the final incarnation of the law, Ordoliberal ideas did exert some influence, particularly in the early period of policy debate. But, in light of later compromises, the original Ordoliberal thrust of the law was significantly weakened. The underlying aim of performance based competition to be guaranteed by strict anti-monopoly legislation as part of a state policy of ring-

¹²⁷ Ibid., 287.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 287.

¹²⁹ Gerber, *Law and Competition*, 278-280.

¹³⁰ Berghahn, *Americanisation*, 181.

¹³¹ Kathrin Meier-Rust, *Alexander Rüstow: Geschichtsdeutung und liberales Engagement* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1993), 93. Wilhelm Röpke generally pushed Erhard to adhere more closely to Ordoliberal economic ideas in setting policy, which, at times, resulted in a somewhat tense relationship between the two men. Hans Jörg Hennecke, "Streiten für diesen Staat. Wilhelm Röpke und die Bundesrepublik," in *Streit um den Staat*, eds. Jens Hacke and Domink Geppert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 29-31.

¹³² Van Hook, *Rebuilding*, 288.

fencing the market, in order to ensure *Leistung* was given its due remit, was not achieved.

If the Guiding Principles Law of 1948 represents the peak of Ordoliberal influence on the legislative process, bringing the Bizone closer to an economic system centring on their notion of *Leistung*, the anti-monopoly law reflects declining Ordoliberal impact throughout the 1950s. Economic policy in the 50s and early 60s was considerably less liberal than the pure theory of Ordoliberalism demanded, hampered by traditional elements in German economic management such as concentration as well as party political and business opposition to its ideas.¹³³ Despite repeated efforts, Ordoliberal ideals of *Leistungswettbewerb*, a competitive economic order scaffolded by the state, shielded by careful fiscal policy and strict anti-monopoly legislation, was far from becoming reality.

IV: Ordoliberalism and the *Sozialstaat*

Ordoliberal theory continued to incorporate a commitment to *Leistung* as a vital principle in structuring economic competition but had a declining impact on the formulation of economic policy between 1945 and 1966. What about the role of *Leistung* in visions of society elaborated by Ordoliberal thinkers in connection with the structure of the market? How consistently committed to the concept of performance were Ordoliberals when it came to social policy and what impact, if any, did their ideas have here? To answer these questions, an outline of Ordoliberal discussions of the ideal social order, equality of opportunity and the welfare state is contrasted with a case study in the development of social policy in the Federal Republic, specifically the pension reform of 1957 in the following section.

Ordoliberals supported the idea of meritocratically structured society, as the natural consequence of the economic achievement principle beyond the economic realm. The foreword of the first issue of the journal *ORDO (Jahrbuch für die Ordnung von Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft)* in 1948 stated the group's commitment to the principle of competition, proceeding to claim that "competition does not tolerate the conservation of social strata. It is an order

¹³³ Gerd Badach, "Krise und Reform der Sozialen Marktwirtschaft. Grundzüge der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung in der Bundesrepublik der 50er und 60er," in *Dynamische Zeiten*, 203.

based on social ascension and decent determined by *Leistung*.”¹³⁴ In this vision, one of the consequences of a perfectly competitive economic order was a society in which achievement was status-determining. Similarly, a contribution made by Ernst Winkler to a meeting of Action Group for the Social Market Economy in 1952 also outlined the need for a society in which status was based on “inclination, aptitude and achievement”,¹³⁵ a structure which would mirror the supposedly natural inequalities of man. The 1958 programme of the same organisation featured a call for a clear overarching programme on social policy which would aim to create a social structure based on merit and ability rather than privilege.¹³⁶ Müller-Armack stressed the importance of the status-allocating role of the market, a process that was based on achievement in competition and measured according to “factual (*versachlicht*)” criteria.¹³⁷

This commitment to a *Leistungsgesellschaft*, however, was not absolute for all Ordoliberalists, as the works of Rüstow and Röpke show. Paul Nolte has assessed the opening lines of the first issue of *ORDO* cited above as a concession to the reality of post-war society, a reality to which older concepts of social hierarchy could not apply.¹³⁸ Yet this supposed discrepancy between new situations and old ideas did not prevent Rüstow or Röpke from trying to get the best of both, generating a “neoliberalism in a conservative shell”, which Axel Schildt has presented as a part of a broader shift in conservative thinking in the 1950s.¹³⁹ Both men elaborated “their ideal of a natural order of society (which) contained certain concrete social microstructures: a *bürgerliche* and agrarian, richly hierarchically organised order with de-conglomerated production based on small and medium businesses of the middle class, with a decentralised, non-urban,

¹³⁴ Preface to *ORDO* 1 (1948), xi. See also Ludwig Erhard, “Der Neue Kurs,” in *Deutsche Wirtschaftspolitik*, 65.

¹³⁵ Ernst Winkler et al eds., *Magna Charta der sozialen Marktwirtschaft* (Heidelberg – Ziegelhausen: Vita Verlag, 1952), 15.

¹³⁶ Aktionsgemeinschaft Soziale Marktwirtschaft, *Aktionsprogramm* (Würzburg: Vogel, 1958), 40.

¹³⁷ Alfred Müller-Armack, “Abhängigkeit und Selbstständigkeit in den Wirtschaftsordnungen,” in *Abhängigkeit und Selbstständigkeit im sozialen Leben*, vol 2, ed. Leopold von Wiese (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1951), 475.

¹³⁸ Paul Nolte, *Die Ordnung der deutschen Gesellschaft*, 295.

¹³⁹ Axel Schildt, *Zwischen Abendland und Amerika: Studien zur westdeutschen Ideenlandschaft der 50er Jahre* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999), 17.

rural or partially rural pattern of settlement, in which the home with a garden was seen as the ideal form of life.”¹⁴⁰

Within this order, both tried to limit the importance and validity of competition and, by extension, the pressure to perform. Rüstow spoke of human existence beyond the material subsistence the economy served to procure,¹⁴¹ an existence which needed to be based around the integrative force of community and solidarity within businesses.¹⁴² Similarly, Röpke, in his *Civitas Humana* (1944) and *Maß und Mitte* (1950), saw the need for moral and social connections beyond the daily measurement of one’s own performance against another’s, in order to avoid social disintegration.¹⁴³

The ideal order both men outlined attempted to combine the principles of a stable social order based on birth with the meritocratic ethos of the market economy. Rüstow stressed that he was not seeking to create an “egalitarian mass society”, emphasising the need for hierarchy. This hierarchy was to be based on *Leistung*.¹⁴⁴ Drawing on an understanding of merit as the inborn trait possessed by a few, Röpke turned to the conservative concept of a natural elite to lead society and an aspirational middle class to provide stability.¹⁴⁵ He explicitly rejected the idea of a purely meritocratic social order due to the degree of state intervention which correcting inequalities would necessitate. “If we like the image of placing each individual in a position and ranking him in a social hierarchy according to an assessment of his achievement and his biological blueprint, we are presupposing a welfare state, which differs from a totalitarian state in nothing more than name.”¹⁴⁶ Röpke’s image of a natural elite found little resonance within or outside the Ordoliberal camp, the *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte* mocked his ideal society as a kind of “Neon-Biedermeier”.¹⁴⁷ While Rüstow did not agree with all aspects of Röpke’s model, he too saw an economy

¹⁴⁰ Helmut P. Becker, *Die soziale Frage im Neoliberalismus: Analyse und Kritik* (Heidelberg: F.H. Kerle, 1965), 45.

¹⁴¹ Rüstow, *Versagen*, 93.

¹⁴² Rüstow, *Kapitalismus*, 41; Alexander Rüstow, “Soziale Marktwirtschaft als Gegenprogramm gegen Kommunismus und Bolshevismus?,” in *Wirtschaft ohne Wunder*, ed. Albert Hunold (Erlenbach – Zurich: Eugen Rentsch, 1953), 102.

¹⁴³ Röpke, *Jenseits*, 131. Röpke, *Civitas*, 193.

¹⁴⁴ Alexander Rüstow, “Sozialpolitik,” 23.

¹⁴⁵ Röpke, *Civitas*, 210.

¹⁴⁶ Röpke, *Maß*, 71.

¹⁴⁷ Mooser, “Liberalismus,” 150.

based on small and medium property owners as desirable.¹⁴⁸ This area of agreement between the two theorists expresses a central concern in Ordoliberal thought: the ideal of an independent, property-owning middle class as the healthy core of society.¹⁴⁹ It was through ideas about middle class property ownership and values that “liberal ideas about social advance due to meritocracy were to some extent reconciled with considerations of natural hierarchy.”¹⁵⁰

Enabling the average worker to accumulate enough capital to develop sufficient property holdings for economic independence became one of the key tenets of Ordoliberal programme. They also depicted property as an incentive to perform, a way of counteracting the “Vermassung” of modern society and as a means of furthering social mobility.¹⁵¹ This elevation of independence drew on its status within bourgeois society of the 19th century,¹⁵² attempting to counteract the problems of modernity by referring to an idealised past society. Independence here denoted not only the ownership of private property but a personal dimension, a deliberate decision to help oneself rather than drawing on state assistance.¹⁵³ In Röpke’s and Rüstow’s case, this appeal to a distinctly *bürgerlich* value was paired with the designation of elements of an even more idealised and remote feudal society as the solution to the problems of modernity. While Ordoliberal opinion did not take on the feudal dimension and the restriction of *Leistung* favoured by Rüstow and Röpke, the image of a society of small-scale property holders, economically independent and able to help themselves, is a recurrent theme throughout the Ordoliberal corpus from the 1930s to 1966.

As most Ordoliberals accepted *Leistung* as the guiding factor in social stratification, discussion in the post war period increasingly came to centre on whether it was the state’s task to place each individual in an equal starting

¹⁴⁸ Rüstow, *Kapitalismus*, 47.

¹⁴⁹ This idea was of course not unique to the Ordoliberal project. For its role in the liberalism of the previous century see James J. Sheenan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 32.

¹⁵⁰ Ptak, “Neoliberals,” 106.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 106. Rüstow, *Kapitalismus*, 47; Röpke, *Jenseits*, 49; Erhard, *Wohlstand*, 149; Walter Eucken, “The Social Question,” in *Standard Texts of the Social Market Economy*, 275.

¹⁵² Manfred Hettling, “Die persönliche Selbstständigkeit,” 59; Eley, “Liberalism, Europe and the bourgeoisie 1860-1914,” 303.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 61.

position relative to other co-competitors (*Startgerechtigkeit*) and guarantee equality of opportunity (*Chancengleichheit*). Here too, the general idea of equal starting conditions and equality of opportunity was accepted by Rüstow, Erhard, Müller-Armack, the *Action Group Social Market Economy* and others.¹⁵⁴ Yet most Ordoliberals saw a certain degree of inequality as necessary for stimulating economic growth and performance.

When it came to education as a factor influencing equality of opportunity, Rüstow was at the forefront of the debate, frequently calling for reform. He did not advocate state-funded education, claiming there was no need to “socialise” education.¹⁵⁵ He merely posited that the existing system of grants and funds, currently run on a private basis, needed to be extended. He thus favoured access to education based on talent rather than universal education.¹⁵⁶ Rüstow was not alone in championing support for gifted students, this was one of the few elements of equality of opportunity that a large number of Ordoliberals agreed on.¹⁵⁷ In accepting the need for greater access to education as part of equality of opportunity, Ordoliberals extended the achievement principle into the realm of education, viewing it as part of economic activity.

However, Rüstow alone engaged with the problem of assessing merit, a factor he divided into intellectual and personality-based abilities.¹⁵⁸ In a note on his 1949 text *Capitalism and Communism*, he highlighted a problem inherent in assessing merit. Rüstow drew a distinction between *Leistungsbegabungen*, the talents connected to achieving, and *Testbegabungen*, the talents connected to performing well in exams.¹⁵⁹ For Rüstow, the essence of talent and character necessary to achieve lay beyond the features a test could assess, yet he provided no alternative suggestion. His scepticism on testing candidates to determine their suitability for education has radical implications for the rest of his theory. Education, as well as

¹⁵⁴ Winkler, *Magna Charta*, 15; “Aktionsprogramm”, 32; Erhard, *Wohlstand*, 145.

¹⁵⁵ Rüstow, *Kapitalismus*, 49.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 50, Friedrich A. Lutz, “Einwände gegen die Wettbewerbsordnung,” *ORDO* 5 (1953): 250; F.A Hayek, “Gleichheit, Wert und Verdienst,” *ORDO* 10 (1958): 15. Röpke constitutes the one exception, see Röpke, *Jenseits*, 253.

¹⁵⁸ Alexander Rüstow, “Sozialpolitik diesseits und jenseits des Klassenkampfes,” in *Soziale Sichterheit*, eds. Bernhard Külp and Wilfried Schreiber (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1971), 23.

¹⁵⁹ Rüstow, *Kapitalismus*, 71.

the qualifications gained from it as a means of succeeding in economic life, were potentially meaningless, failing to reflect those qualities of intellect and personality which permitted individual success in the form of economic achievement. Rüstow's observations, though not taken up by Ordoliberal colleagues, were reflected in sociological debates on the environment, upbringing and assessment that enabled children to achieve.¹⁶⁰

Rüstow went even further, extending his argument beyond the issue of education to include inheritance law. As early as 1940, he advocated a limit on the amount of property any individual could inherit.¹⁶¹ The implementation of his proposal, which Rüstow acknowledged as idealistic and requiring considerable change, would serve to generate a society where envy and resentment towards others due to their material advantages would be wholly absent. Individual endeavour alone would determine status and possessions.¹⁶² A sense of workmanship would permit co-competitors to acknowledge and respect the superior achievements of their colleague.¹⁶³ *Leistung* here denoted not only the will to achieve but, under the right conditions, became a factor capable of supporting social harmony.

These proposals on limiting inheritance met with staunch opposition from Ordoliberal commentators much of which drew on a specific understanding of the importance of *Leistung*. Röpke stressed that such a cap would remove an important incentive to achieve and encourage state intervention to a "socialist" degree.¹⁶⁴ Beyond that, property redistribution was inconsistent in a state that permitted private property but prohibited an individual's descendants to benefit from it.¹⁶⁵ Friedrich Lutz acknowledged that the argument for equality of

¹⁶⁰ See Chapter III of thesis.

¹⁶¹ Alexander Rüstow, "Zu den Grundlagen der Wirtschaftswissenschaft," *Revue de la Faculté des sciences économiques de l'Université d'Istanbul* 2 (1940/1), 410; Rüstow, *Kapitalismus*, 50, 53. In questioning the absolute right of any individual to inherit theoretically unlimited wealth and benefit from these in terms of education, Rüstow also responded to an argument made by Hayek who had stated that heirs of extensive wealth benefitted from having parents who were more intelligent or conscientious. Rüstow's response was to dissociate the achievement of the parents from that of the heir in question, thus removing any claim to elevated social position by virtue of familial, rather than personal achievement. See F.A. Hayek, "Individualism: True or False," *ORDO* 1 (1948): 46. On Rüstow's radicalism see Haselbach, *Autoritärer Liberalismus*, 215.

¹⁶² Rüstow, *Kapitalismus*, 53-54.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁶⁴ Hans Ilau, "Marktwirtschaft und sozialer Friede, Entscheidung für die Freiheit," *Aktionsgruppe Soziale Marktwirtschaft Tagungsprotkoll 1* (Ludwigsburg, 1953), 96; Haselbach, *Autoritärer Liberalismus*, 215 and 264.

¹⁶⁵ Röpke, *Jenseits*, 293.

opportunity would appear to arise logically from the ideal of a competitive order but he, too, pointed out that the abolition of inheritance was inconsistent with this very order.¹⁶⁶ Making such a change would choke one of the strongest incentives to achieve, care for the future of one's family.¹⁶⁷ While Röpke was thus opposed to the expansion of state powers involved, Lutz emphasised the need to ensure economic growth, driven by individuals motivated to achieve, among other things, by the wish to care for their family. Others agreed with him. Only a small tax on inheritance was seen as permissible, provided it did not remove an incentive to achieve in the form of a desire to care for the future of one's family and the accumulation of capital.¹⁶⁸ The latter was significantly more important than any aspiration of social justice or equality. In this particular instance, Ordoliberal ideas were never put to the test, as legislation on inheritance tax remained largely unaltered throughout the 1950s.¹⁶⁹

Röpke also claimed that the constant search for opportunity in a radically equal society would have detrimental psychological effects, remoulding the individual into a nervous and dissatisfied nomad irreversibly drawn into the tide of excessive mobility, deprived of any feeling of belonging.¹⁷⁰ Equality of opportunity would enhance social disintegration by generating resentment among the lower social strata, as those who were left behind would no longer be able to refer to social injustice or low birth in explaining their disadvantaged position. Rather, their defects in intellect and personality would be starkly revealed.¹⁷¹ As these gifts of intellect and character were only given to few, a minority would benefit from equality of opportunity, while the majority would be even unhappier. This outline of the devastating potential inherent in systematically implementing equality of opportunity assumed that the capacity to achieve and succeed was limited to a small number of individuals and fixed at birth. Once again Röpke occupies the extreme end of the Ordoliberal spectrum,

¹⁶⁶ Lutz, "Einwände," 250.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 250.

¹⁶⁸ Kurt Schmidt, "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer Finanzpolitik des sozialen Ausgleichs," *ORDO* 10 (1958): 330, 334; Norbert Kloten, "Finanzpolitik, Einkommensgestaltung und Vermögensschichtung," *ORDO* 10 (1957): 209.

¹⁶⁹ Jens Beckert, *Unverdientes Vermögen. Die Soziologie des Erbrechts* (Frankfurt; Campus, 2004), 276.

¹⁷⁰ Röpke, *Maß*, 315-316.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 317.

embracing a highly pessimistic version of human potential; one that conflicted with the more optimistic ideas expressed by others such as Rüstow.

The remaining aspect of ensuring equality of opportunity, introducing income taxation, was the subject of agreement among the majority of Ordoliberals, particularly as many acknowledged that income did not necessarily reflect achievement alone, also containing elements of luck, or, in the case of civil servants, factors completely removed from the market mechanism.¹⁷² This acknowledgement of the limits of the achievement principle in determining income, led to support for the taxation of income.¹⁷³ However, the important limitation of not interfering with the incentive to achieve was once again put in place, leading to the rejection of a steep income tax.¹⁷⁴

Ordoliberalism thus generally accepted the need to secure equality of opportunity as logical within the framework of performance-based competition. While a general consensus on the need to extend access to education based on talent existed, Rüstow stands alone among Ordoliberals in interrogating the talents necessary for an individual to achieve. Proposals to limit inheritance, tax it extensively and impose a steeply progressive income tax were rejected based on the need to maintain an incentive to perform and achieve. The version of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* the Ordoliberals were espousing encompassed at most a limited desire to equalise starting conditions and opportunities, clearly prioritising the need to motivate economic performance over concerns regarding equality.

Outside the discussion of equality of opportunity and starting conditions, Ordoliberal theory also had to contend with the realities of increasing state spending on welfare measures. These provisions, including raised childcare benefits in 1954 as well as social support and pension reform in 1957, effectively aligned the development of a welfare system in West Germany with many other European countries,¹⁷⁵ promoting an increasingly vehement insistence by

¹⁷² Franz Böhm, *Grundsatzfragen der Wirtschaftsordnung* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1954), 145. For details of Ordoliberal debates on income tax see Jens Beckert, *Erben in der Leistungsgesellschaft* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2013), 12.

¹⁷³ Beckert, *Die soziale Frage*, 249.

¹⁷⁴ Schmidt, "Möglichkeiten," 325; Kloten, "Finanzpolitik," 209.

¹⁷⁵ Werner Abelshauser, *Die langen fünfziger Jahre: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949-1966* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1987), 33.

Ordoliberals on the need to limit welfare expenditure. Within this opposition to welfare expenditure, the concept of achievement served as an important vehicle for expressing criticism as invectives on state spending were presented as efforts to maintain the primacy of *Leistung*.

At a general level, the Ordoliberal construct recognised the state's responsibility not only for correctly framing the economic process but also for the well-being of its citizens, in keeping with the social market economy's emphasis on the need for "social balance".¹⁷⁶ Most frequently the response was to point to the overall increase in wealth that would result from a healthy competitive system, which would raise living standards across the board.¹⁷⁷

In the eyes of Müller-Armack, arguably the key proponent of the social market framework, a free competitive order framed by the state would permit both the unimpeded operation of a competitive structure as well as measures for redirecting income.¹⁷⁸ However, he also expressed concern, indicating that the line between measures that could coexist with the market and ones that might damage it was easily crossed.¹⁷⁹ What the principle used to distinguish between market compatible and incompatible social measures was remained unclear.¹⁸⁰ Despite Armack's insistence that indirect measures such as contributions to rent payments did not obstruct the competitive mechanism, they would affect consumption levels. Altered demand would interfere with the market and, by extension, the achievement principle it contained.

An insistence on the need to limit state responsibility for welfare as far as possible was common in Ordoliberal theory. The Action Group Social Market Economy was eager to restrict the welfare principle to a temporary measure only justified when an individual's, family's or community's ability to support their own failed.¹⁸¹ A further oft-repeated warning was that fairness and equality should

¹⁷⁶ Müller-Armack, "Soziale Marktwirtschaft," in *Handwörterbuch*, 390.

¹⁷⁷ Erhard, *Wohlstand*, 234.

¹⁷⁸ Müller-Armack, "Soziale Marktwirtschaft," 390.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 391.

¹⁸⁰ This tension was the subject of debate, even within the Neoliberal camp, Friedrich von Hayek referred to the "social" in the social market economy as an "adjectival frill" devoid of any real content. For an outline of Hayek's objections see Alan Peacock and Hans Willgerodt eds., *German Neo-Liberals and the Social Market Economy* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

¹⁸¹ "Aktionsprogramm der Aktionsgemeinschaft Soziale Marktwirtschaft," *Aktionsgemeinschaft Soziale Marktwirtschaft* 1 (1958), 39.

not be confused, “the principle of care (*Versorgung*) should not replace the performance principle”.¹⁸² This concern was expressed by employers’ unions, who warned of the dangers of losing sight of *Leistung* as the main factor in allotting material wealth.¹⁸³

Most importantly, these Ordoliberal groups highlighted the dangers of excessive material security dispensed by an over-powerful state in undermining the relationship between achievement and its monetary rewards.¹⁸⁴ Röpke joined them, expressing the fear that the sheer extent of welfare measures was choking incentives to achieve at an individual level,¹⁸⁵ which would eventually force the state to compel individuals to work, as, he posited, had occurred in the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁶ The West German state’s over-generous distribution of welfare was reducing the responsibility of the individual for their own fate, with disastrous consequences for the principle of achievement: “What does it mean for production if the individual is exempted from the consequences of underperformance on the one and deprived of the incentives for performing well on the other hand, particularly those performances which are associated with risk?”,¹⁸⁷ asked Röpke. He concluded that the welfare state was not only endangering West Germany’s economic performance but also the ethos needed to motivate achievement. Erhard expressed a similar stance, contending that nothing was more asocial than a welfare state which caused a decline in an individual’s achievement and sense of responsibility.¹⁸⁸

Röpke extended his assessment to include not only the danger of an over-generous and powerful state but also the presence of an “unrestrained striving for equality”, a deliberate campaign which aimed to remove everything “that dares to tower above the average in terms of income, fortune or achievement.”¹⁸⁹ This development had generated a move away from the original intention of welfare: that of aiding the individual in need with no community to draw on.

¹⁸² Volkswirtschaftliche Gesellschaft e.V., *Vorschläge zur Verwirklichung*, 4-5.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁸⁵ Wilhelm Röpke, *Grenzen und Gefahren des Wohlfahrtsstaates*, Schriftenreihe der Industrie- und Handelskammer Frankfurt am Main (Frankfurt a. M: Hauserpresse, 1955), 19.

¹⁸⁶ Röpke, *Maß*, 169.

¹⁸⁷ Röpke, *Jenseits*, 224.

¹⁸⁸ Erhard, “Über den ‘Lebensstandard’,” *Deutsche Wirtschaftspolitik*, 393.

¹⁸⁹ Röpke, *Jenseits*, 212

Instead, both Rüstow and Röpke claimed that the poorest often lost when it came to welfare and spending was increasingly being funded by taxing not only highest income groups but also those that welfare measures were designed to assist.¹⁹⁰ Once again Erhard cited similar concerns, railing against the “overblown equalisation/levelling (*Gleichmacherei*) of incomes”.¹⁹¹

In seeking an alternative method for allocating welfare, Ordoliberals introduced the “principle of subsidiarity”,¹⁹² as a system for distributing responsibility, first set out in Pius XI’s social encyclopaedia *Quadragesimo anno* of 1931. The principle of subsidiarity maintained “that, which the individual person can achieve out of his own initiative and powers may not be taken away from him and designated as a social area of action (*Gesellschaftstätigkeit*),” as the aim of society was “to support the limbs of the social body, it may never destroy or absorb them”.¹⁹³ This particular aspect of Catholic social ethics implied a specific image of man as a person, defined by the social relationships existent within a community. The principle was designed to provide a counterbalance to the idea of man as an individual driven by economic ends. Within a society structured according to subsidiarity, a sphere protecting the freedom of each person was delineated from the bottom up, while emphasising a corresponding obligation to help from the top of the social structure downwards.

Ordoliberal thinkers employing the idea of subsidiarity cast aside its association with a corporatist idea of state and society. But they engaged with the notion of helping the individual to help (her- but predominantly) himself.¹⁹⁴ Rüstow focussed on the notion of distributing responsibility for social concerns from the bottom up, rather than the top down.¹⁹⁵ This system was based on the conviction that the individual was best situated to determine his or her own powers and needs, followed by the family, the community, the parish and so on up to the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 215; Alexander Rüstow, “Die weltpolitische Dringlichkeit einer durchgreifenden Erziehungsreform,” in *Die geistige und politische Freiheit in der Massendemokratie*, Schriftenreihe der Friedrich Naumann Stiftung zur Politik und Zeitgeschichte 1 (Stuttgart, 1960), 73.

¹⁹¹ Ludwig Erhard, *Wirken und Reden* (Ludwigsburg: Martin Hoch, 1966), 189.

¹⁹² Karl P. Hensel, “Ordnungspolitische Betrachtungen zur Katholischen Soziallehre (im Sinne der Päpstlichen Enzyklen *Rerum Novarum* und *Quadragesimo Anno*),” *ORDO* 2 (1949): 230.

¹⁹³ The *Quadragesimo anno* as quoted in Christoph Sachße, “Subsidiarität: Leitmaxime deutscher Wohlfahrtsstaatlichkeit,” *Wohlfahrtsstaatliche Grundbegriffe: Historische und aktuelle Diskurse*, ed. Stefan Lessenich (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2003), 193.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 194.

¹⁹⁵ Rüstow, “Wohlfahrtsstaat,” 5. See also Peacock and Willgerodt, *German Neo-Liberals*, 110.

state.¹⁹⁶ Erhard, too, referred to the principle as the best method in determining the allocation of social welfare provision.¹⁹⁷ Crucially, discussions of subsidiarity also took place in non-Ordoliberal advisory bodies to the CDU in connection with social policy. The so-called *Rothenfelser Denkschrift*, a piece of research commissioned by Adenauer to explore options in reforming social policy also availed itself of the principle. However, the abstract nature of the ideas discussed within the piece was the subject of criticism, an objection that applied just as much to Ordoliberal ideas on the subject.¹⁹⁸

The West German debate surrounding proposals for pension reform clearly illustrates this impracticability of Ordoliberal ideas as well as demonstrating the discrepancy between them and the developing welfare state. It also highlights the limits of Ordoliberal influence on the formation of social policy and the restrictions on Erhard's power in this area.

The need to reorganise and systematise welfare provision for the broad range of individuals (injured or bereaved during the war etc.) receiving support was the subject of extended debate in the 1950s. By 1953 an estimated 20% of the German population received some sort of assistance, state or private.¹⁹⁹ As party-political pressure from the Social Democrats mounted with an election looming,²⁰⁰ Adenauer focussed on social care more generally, an aspiration that proved too ambitious. In scaling down the reform agenda, pensions became the focal point of the debate, partly as the growing prosperity of the decade highlighted the relative deprivation of those who had retired.²⁰¹

Broadly speaking, some Christian conservatives adopted a stance that was in part similar to Ordoliberal opinion. Both groups emphasised the danger of weakening the incentive to provide for oneself through overgenerous welfare provision as well as the danger inherent in creating an attitude of expectation regarding

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹⁹⁷ Ludwig Erhard, "Selbstverantwortliche Vorsorge für die sozialen Lebensrisiken" *Versicherungswirtschaft* (Jan. 1956)," *Deutsche Wirtschaftspolitik*, 304.

¹⁹⁸ Hans Günther Hockerts, *Sozialpolitische Entscheidungen im Nachkriegsdeutschland* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1980), 303.

¹⁹⁹ Nicholls, *Freedom*, 350.

²⁰⁰ A draft proposing to fund pensions through taxation rather than employee contributions had been introduced by the SPD in 1952. See Hockerts, *Sozialpolitische Entscheidungen*, 353.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 350, 352,

benefits.²⁰² In the context of the pension debate, the Minister for Labour and Social Affairs, Anton Storch, reflected these views, advocating means-testing as the basis for welfare payments.²⁰³ Rüstow made the same suggestion in the same period, though not limiting himself to the matter of pensions: “Provided the Rechtsstaat at least acknowledges and protects property acquired through achievement, it can only sanction a one-sided entitlement to money that is neither your own, nor a payment based on performance as part of an economic exchange, when the person in question finds himself in dire straits which his own strength will not permit him to cope with.”²⁰⁴

Erhard’s role in this particular area of legislation was limited, not least because his ideas clashed with Adenauer’s quite significantly.²⁰⁵ Although Erhard was part of a ministerial committee the Chancellor convened in 1955 to discuss social reform, the central figures in the pension debate were Anton Storch and Finance Minister Fritz Schäffer. As Erhard was the most consistent and powerful advocate of Ordoliberal ideas in policy-making circles, these restrictions of his influence reflect the weakness of the Ordoliberal cause when it came to social policy and the changing political landscape of the mid to late 1950s.

Erhard’s objections to the proposed legislation were reflective of an Ordoliberal attitude and shared by other groups. His criticism centred on two areas: the suggested introduction of “dynamic”, indexed pensions which were to be adjusted on an annual basis to reflect changes in wages and prices, and the effect of pension reform on individual self-reliance. Aside from the considerable increase in public expenditure, Erhard’s main concern was the effect on inflation such a reform would have.²⁰⁶ He rejected the argument that these adjustments would allow pensions to account for inflation, contending that pensions would be increased to anticipate inflation, thus making matters worse.²⁰⁷ In arguing his case, Erhard drew on the support of Ordoliberal colleague Günther Schmolders who, in his capacity as director of the Institute of Fiscal Research in Cologne,

²⁰² Hockerts, *Sozialpolitische Entscheidungen*, 230.

²⁰³ Nicholls, *Freedom*, 351.

²⁰⁴ Alexander Rüstow, “Wohlfahrtsstaat oder Selbstverantwortung,” *Wirtschaftspolitische Mitteilungen* 5:8 (May 1956), 9.

²⁰⁵ Hockerts, *Sozialpolitische Entscheidungen*, 407.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 328; Mierzejewski, *Erhard*, 142. Also Manfred G. Schmidt, *Sozialpolitik in Deutschland: Historische Entwicklung und internationaler Vergleich* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1998), 84.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

echoed Erhard's concerns about inflation.²⁰⁸ Once both SPD and CDU had released draft legislation and it became clear that pensions would be indexed, Erhard focussed on revising how any increase would be determined. Instead of tying pensions to GNP, he advocated a connection with genuine increases in productivity on a national level. In a manner reflective of the emphasis placed on self-reliance in Ordoliberal and CDU circles, Erhard saw the independent ability to cope with risk in life as a basic element of independence in a free economic and social order. This manifested in general criticism of the proposed legislation and in vehement opposition to the inclusion of self-employed individuals in a compulsory pension scheme.²⁰⁹

Aside from Schmölder's warnings about inflation, a clear outline of Ordoliberal reactions to these plans for reform is given by the *Action Group Social Market Economy*. In 1956, after the government's draft bill had been circulated publicly, the *Group* released a book on the subject, based on a conference, featuring contributions from business owners, government officials and of course, the likes of Rüstow. Rüstow opened the proceedings by arguing that the current pension reform would choke the individual drive underlying self-care and help, simultaneously creating a total state.²¹⁰

While clear instances of Ordoliberal agreement with and influence on Erhard's objections can thus be found, it would be misleading to suggest that Ordoliberals were the only group to argue against the proposed reform, or indeed the only ones to use these particular arguments. Unsurprisingly, the Federal Bank raised similar concerns about inflation and currency stability, as did Schäffer in his capacity as Finance minister. The bill had to contend with a range of objections from employers' associations, white collar-workers' unions and many more.²¹¹

Ordoliberal or not, these objections were made to little avail. The bill passed in January 1957, linking pensions to wages and enshrining an understanding of pensions as security for status acquired during ones working life in law. "The norm of state distributive justice was tied to rights, rather than each citizen's level

²⁰⁸ Hockerts, *Sozialpolitische Entscheidungen*, 339.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 330.

²¹⁰ Aktionsgemeinschaft Soziale Marktwirtschaft, *Das Problem der Rentenreform* (Ludwigsburg: Martin Hoch, 1956), 9.

²¹¹ Hockerts, *Sozialpolitische Entscheidungen*, 339.

of need.”²¹² Aside from reflecting a failure of Ordoliberal theorists and organisations to influence the genesis of social policy formation, the pension reform was a further step in the gradual expansion of state welfare measures. As such it continued a trend which Ordoliberals saw as highly problematic and detrimental to incentivising performance.

On the whole, Ordoliberals endorsed the notion that performance should determine social status, taking on Rüstow and Röpke’s emphasis on the importance of widely distributed property ownership as part of a bourgeois conceptualisation of independence. However, Ordoliberals were unwilling to condone most measures to generate equal starting conditions as a correlate of this commitment to making *Leistung* the arbiter of social position. Instead, most emphasised the importance of inequality in incentivising economic achievement. Similarly, while most Ordoliberals embraced the idea of social balance within the social market economy in theoretical terms, they also refused to support the increased welfare spending of the West German state, expressing this refusal through references to achievement or the performance principle. Ordoliberal insistence on adherence to these ideas excluded the group from any significant impact on the making of social policy, as the pension reform shows. This dynamic also played a broader role beyond the reform of pensions, stopping Ordoliberal thought and practice from accommodating the developing model of West German welfare state.

V: Conclusion

Between 1928 and 1966 Ordoliberal theory advanced the following understanding of *Leistung*: prior to 1945, performance was conceptualised as the outcome of a number of competitors’ efforts in a market that had been structured, through legal measures, to favour free competition and select the best performer. In this context, Ordoliberals dealt with the social implications of this type of *Leistung* only in passing. After the Second World War, their understanding of *Leistung* as one of the most important components of competition continued to be the core of the theory, stipulating the need for a ban on cartels, a stable

²¹² Josef Mooser, “Liberalismus und Gesellschaft nach 1945: Soziale Marktwirtschaft und Neoliberalismus am Beispiel von Wilhelm Röpke,” in *Bürgertum nach 1945*, ed. Manfred Hettling and Bernd Ulrich (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2005), 158.

currency, free prices and a carefully balanced stance on state intervention in ensuring the accurate genesis, valuation and guarantee of *Leistung*.

This version of *Leistung* in an economic context was expanded to include the idea that performance should determine social status. Nevertheless, when it came to enabling everyone to achieve by providing them with equal opportunities and starting conditions, most Ordoliberalists balked at the suggestion that increased equality could incentivise performance beyond a certain, basic level. In a comparable vein, intense Ordoliberal criticism of rising welfare expenditure was expressed, in part, by referring to the disincentive to achieve constituted by such extensive material provision for the less well off. The commitment to guaranteeing performance thus clashed with the “social” market economy label, and Ordoliberal theorists, on the whole, sided with the need to generate *Leistung* and insisted on the benefits of a rising GNP for everyone.

In terms of offering an opportunity to influence policy, the broadness and ambiguity of the concept of *Leistung*, as well as its affiliation with ideas on competition and battle, meant that its use spanned the resistance movement, the members of the Ordoliberal camp who had remained in Germany (whose position towards Nazism was quite mixed) and the National Socialist regime. The concept’s opacity was helpful in creating a space for Ordoliberal theory in the Third Reich. Authors such as Böhm, Eucken, Müller-Armack and Miksch used this conceptual affinity in efforts to contribute policy suggestions in the Third Reich. While I do not argue that Ordoliberalists fully supported the regime, this overlap and attempt to piggyback on Nazi policies goes some way towards explaining why many of those Ordoliberalists who remained in Germany during the Third Reich were able to continue publishing and working.²¹³ While the Darwinian implications of selection that National Socialism espoused were not accepted by Ordoliberalists, they attempted to use Nazi commitment to the principle of economic competition to their advantage, albeit in the context of a planned economy none of them could endorse. National Socialists and Ordoliberalists shared a focus on the *Unternehmer* frequently tied to an understanding of *Leistung*, a fact

²¹³ For details on Miksch, Eucken, Müller-Armack and Erhard’s activities in connection with National Socialism see Ptak, *Ordoliberalismus zur Sozialen Marktwirtschaft*, 65

that some used in expressing affinity or toleration for the regime's policies in this area, while others strove to defend the business owner as bourgeois.

In the post-war period, early Ordoliberal efforts to mould economic policy benefitted from a range of factors. Erhard's intellectual proximity to the school, his increasing personal influence and policy of involving Ordoliberals as academic experts in the policy-making process should not be underestimated. Moreover, the broad political consensus on the need to relax economic control binding together Allied and domestic German leaders functioned as a basis on which Ordoliberal ideas could build with some success. Throughout the 1950s, no such shared foundation existed when it came to implementing another tenet of Ordoliberal theory: anti-monopoly legislation. Here, Erhard's influence and that of Ordoliberals such as Böhm proved insufficient to counter the pressure exerted by the business community and political parties. Decisions like the pension reform revealed just how sharply curtailed any Ordoliberal impact on social policy was, even when exerted through pressure groups such as the *Action Group Social Market Economy* and the figure of Erhard. This trend towards declining levels of influence on policy formation in the Federal Republic highlights the limited extent to which Ordoliberal ideas on *Leistung* were translated into legislative reality and thus practical policy. The dynamic confirms that the Ordoliberal idea of society and, by extension, their notably bourgeois understanding of achievement, was out of sync with a successful market economy that speeded up societal and cultural change.²¹⁴

With the ousting of Erhard in 1966, the creation of a Grand Coalition and the Republic's first exposure to an economic downturn in 1965, the priorities and framing ideas of policy changed. Even though economic policy in the fifties and early sixties had hardly been a mirror image of Ordoliberal theories, there had been a greater chance of success given the ties with Erhard's ministry and person. The later sixties witnessed a turn to much more Keynesian overall control and reform of the social market economy focusing on stable prices, full employment, a balance of imports and exports and growth. The arrival of the Brandt government heralded a period in which competition was to be synthesised with

²¹⁴ Mooser, "Liberalismus," 160.

overall control, signalling the final demise of Ordoliberal hopes of shaping the Federal Republic into their economic and social ideal. ²¹⁵

²¹⁵ Gerd Badach, "Krise und Reform der Sozialen Marktwirtschaft. Grundzüge der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung in der Bundesrepublik der 50er und 60er," in *Dynamische Zeiten*, 201, 213-216.

Chapter Three: Turning westwards and critiquing capitalism: *Leistungsgesellschaft* in sociological debates, 1945-1975

I: Introduction

Ordoliberal understandings of *Leistung* and their endorsement of the achieving society had a limited impact on the formation of economic and social policy in the Federal Republic. But, vital as economic activity and success was to West German identity,¹ the post war period witnessed a further aspect of what has been termed the “scientization of the social”.² The social sciences emerged as a crucial discipline in providing cultural self-assurance for the new state and its democratic politics.³ Paul Nolte has employed the idea of a *Leitdisziplin* to describe the predominance, first of sociology in the 1950s and 60s and then of psychology and pedagogy in the 70s and 80s.⁴ It is certainly true that sociological texts enjoyed increasing popularity from 1950 onwards, as a result of more widespread study of and debate surrounding the subject.⁵ The following chapter is dedicated to examining the understandings of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* expressed by West German sociologists between 1945 and 1975.⁶

To that end it draws on one of the most-read publications in the field, the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*⁷ as well as German and English

¹ Nützenadel, *Stunde der Ökonomen*, 11.

² Lutz Raphael, “Die Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen,” 177.

³ Paul Nolte, “Soziologie als kulturelle Selbstvergewisserung. Die Demokratisierung der deutschen Gesellschaft nach 1945,” in *Soziale Konstellation und historische Perspektive: Festschrift für Rainer M. Lepsius*, eds. Steffen Sigmund, Gerd Albert, Agathe Bienfait, Matheus Stachura (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008), 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵ To name an example, Rene König’s 1958 lexicon *Sociology* went through 400,000 copies and Ralf Dahrendorf’s *Homo Sociologicus* went through eight print runs in the 1960s. See Christoph Weischer, *Das Unternehmen “Empirische Sozialforschung”: Strukturen, Praktiken und Leitbilder der Sozialforschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2004), 245.

⁶ While my research did include material from 1945 onwards, discussions of *Leistungsgesellschaft* and *Leistung* did not feature prior to the early 1950s, for two reasons. Firstly, the bulk of American research which shaped the West German debate was not completed or published before 1950. Secondly, economic experts took centre stage in the immediate post-war period due to the importance of reconstruction. These experts did engage with the idea of an achieving society, as the previous chapter has shown.

⁷ Alongside *Soziale Welt*, the *Kölner Zeitschrift* was the largest publication in the field. Weischer, *Das Unternehmen “Empirische Sozialforschung”*, 186. There have been various efforts to discern post-war ‘schools’ of sociology e.g. clustered around the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt and the university and research bodies in Cologne. For the purpose of this chapter, no such distinction between different groups of sociologists has been made, as a concern with *Leistung* appeared to span the discipline as a whole.

monographs. Aside from the prominence of the *Kölner Zeitschrift*, the city of Cologne had become a centre for the study of and research on sociological subject matter in the post war period, featuring the Institute for Sociology and the UNESCO Institute for Social Sciences, alongside a university with a flourishing number of sociology students.⁸ This chapter uses the research published in the *Kölner Zeitschrift* to answer the following questions: Where did the conceptual language of an achieving society and achievement originate from? Was the label of *Leistungsgesellschaft* accepted as an accurate description of West German society? What exactly did sociologists mean when they employed the term and its correlate, *Leistung*? What role did *Leistung* play in the broader framework of society laid out by German and international sociological scholars?

The increasing influence of *Wissenschaft* and the rising figure of the expert are both evident in the manner in which *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* were discussed and analysed between 1945 and 1975 in West Germany. Sociologists contributed to and experienced changes in the way the social sphere was studied from 1940s to the 1970s. Empirical social research emanating from the US and reaching the Federal Republic in the 1950s affected the way research was conducted and understood. Over the next two decades, this change manifested in a broader field of inquiry including opinion surveys and studies of social attitudes as part of a version of sociology which saw itself as both democratic and capitalist.⁹ This shift is reflected in discussions of performance and the achieving society, as sociological investigations drew on American research. They did so to probe the meaning and significance of *Leistung* in a society frequently labelled as 'industrial', 'modern' and thus supposedly defined by a high degree of mobility.

Within this area of debate, the conceptual openness of both terms meant they featured heavily in interdisciplinary work fusing sociology with economics, anthropology, psychology and pedagogical research. Frequently located at this juncture of sociology with other disciplines, *Leistung* was utilised to express a range of analytical categories: a concept involved in self-assessment with an impact on confidence, a pressure external and internal to the individual, a link between economic structure of industrial society and its social order, an

⁸ Weischer, *Das Unternehmen "Empirische Sozialforschung"*, 92.

⁹ Raphael, "Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen," 177.

operational mechanism structuring status allocation in society, a role expectation to which individual responded, a norm guiding behaviour and a psychological drive constructed through socialisation.

In exploring these varied uses of *Leistung* and engagement with the model of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* the chapter commences by analysing the impact of American ideas on and the depiction of the U.S. as an achieving society in West German sociological research. It then briefly turns to consider the use of both concepts in relation to the East German state before outlining the various elements (class, gender, health, youth) of the frequently implicit model of the ideal achiever that began to be contested from the late 1950s onwards. Finally, the chapter closes by assessing the state of West German research on the achieving society in 1975.

In the period between 1945 and 1975 the sociological literature reveals a series of parallel developments relating to the intellectual integration of the FRG into the 'West' in the context of the Cold War. However, these emphases shifted from the late 1960s onwards and, rather than continuing to offer assessments of how well West Germany could compete, the human cost of a capitalist system increasingly became the focus of debates around *Leistung*.

II: The influence of American and British sociology

In a range of sociological publications released in the Federal Republic between 1945 and 1975, *Leistungsgesellschaft* was generally taken to mean the following: an industrial society in which status was predominantly determined by achievement. *Leistung* influenced the individual's ability to alter his social position, affecting social mobility. On the whole, West German sociologists traced the use of achievement as a category and the achieving society as a model back to their American and British colleagues. Establishing this intellectual link, however, did not insulate both concepts from criticism. Instead, West German scholars differed in their reactions, which spanned acceptance, revision and rejection of these American and British understandings of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft*.

Debates surrounding the model of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* can thus be mapped onto the broader process of ‘westernisation’ of the Federal Republic.¹⁰ Faced with the collapse of the Third Reich, discredited national traditions and the hostile opposition of East and West in the developing context of the Cold War, West German sociologists turned to *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* as ideas derived from an American and British model of social order.

‘Westernisation’ describes the influence of North America and Europe on each other from the 18th century onwards.¹¹ It refers to shared political and ideological thought about the order of society, politics, economics and culture.¹² This particular framework is quite wide in its historical outlook, focusing on modernity as a broader category and charting the crystallisation of a shared order of values in societies on each side of the North Atlantic.¹³ After 1945, ‘westernisation’ describes the integration of West Germans and Europeans into a cultural bloc united against the ‘totalitarianism’ of Communism and its claim to global validity.¹⁴ Yet this was not a question of simply implanting specific ideas into West German, or more generally European minds, rather certain concepts and traditions became part of public debate as well as being incorporated into an international framework of values.¹⁵ As Julia Angster has highlighted, West German agents played an active role, engaging with, weighing and revising the ideas they were confronted with as part of a process of “productive appropriation”.¹⁶ The West German sociologists who grappled with the model of an achieving society and the concept of *Leistung* more generally most certainly did not merely ape British and American research or ideas. Despite the numerous objections they raised, however, their writings contributed to the construction of

¹⁰ Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, *Wie westlich sind die Deutschen?* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999); Julia Angster, *Konsenskapitalismus und Sozialdemokratie: Die Westernisierung der SPD und DGB* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003); Detlef Junker and Philipp Gassert, *Die USA und Deutschland im Zeitalter des Kalten Krieges 1945-1990* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001); Konrad Jarausch and Hannes Siegrist, *Amerikanisierung und Sowjetisierung in Deutschland 1945-1970* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1997); Gudrun Kruij, *Das ‘Welt’ – ‘Bild’ des Axel Springer Verlags: Journalismus zwischen westlichen Werten und deutschen Denktraditionen* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999).

¹¹ Doering-Manteuffel, *Wie westlich sind die Deutschen?*, 12.

¹² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁴ Angster, *Konsenskapitalismus und Sozialdemokratie*, 16.

¹⁵ Doering-Manteuffel, *Wie westlich sind die Deutschen?*, 10.

¹⁶ Angster, *Konsenskapitalismus und Sozialdemokratie*, 17; Johannes Paulmann, “Internationaler Vergleich und interkultureller Transfer. Zwei Forschungsansätze zur europäischen Geschichte des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 267: 3 (Dec 1998): 674.

a 'western modernity' defined by industrialism and social mobility in which the Federal Republic was firmly embedded.

Labelling this dynamic 'Americanisation' requires a more differentiated approach. The former has frequently been presented in conjunction with discussions of 'westernisation' and has come to denote cultural transfer, the taking up of influences (institutions, practices, symbols and so forth) from the U.S. in other countries in the 20th century.¹⁷ While these American impulses were integrated into pre-existing orders, their point of origin remained recognisable and was noted by contemporaries.¹⁸ As such, Anselm Doering Manteuffel presents Americanisation as a one way process, increasing in intensity with the consolidation of the status of the United States as a global power.¹⁹ While West German sociologists frequently tied the model of an achieving society to American research and social structure, discussions surrounding the *Leistungsgesellschaft* from the later 1960s onwards treated it as a feature of modern life more generally. At the same time it is certainly worth noting that a steady pattern of trips by West German scholars to the US, and vice versa, did exist.²⁰ To name a few examples, Renate Mayntz studied and worked in the US (and elsewhere) in the 1950s and 60s, as did Gerhard Kleining.²¹ In addition, American methods on opinion surveys, sampling and interpreting standardised data were undoubtedly influential in the discipline.²² America, therefore, shaped both the methods and biographies post-war West German sociologists to a considerable degree. However, to describe these developments as part of a one-way process would be a misrepresentation, as West German scholars also contributed to the conceptualisations of achievement and their dissemination in the U.S.²³

¹⁷ Philipp Gassert, "Amerikanismus, Antiamerikanismus, Amerikanisierung. Neue Literatur zur Sozial-, Wirtschafts- und Kulturgeschichte des amerikanischen Einflusses in Deutschland und Europa," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 39 (1999): 532, accessed, 7th January, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27632366>.

¹⁸ Doering-Manfeuffel, *Wie westlich sind die Deutschen?*, 11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁰ Weischer, *Das Unternehmen "Empirische Sozialforschung"*, 50.

²¹ Renate Mayntz, accessed 2nd April, 2016, http://www.mpifg.de/people/rm/lebenslauf_en.asp; Gerhard Kleining, accessed 2nd April, 2016, <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/555>.

²² Weischer, *Das Unternehmen "Empirische Sozialforschung"*, 209.

²³ The best example here is Hans Dieter Seibel, who worked in the US and published on the achieving society as applied to the U.S. Hans Dieter Seibel, *The Dynamics of Achievement: A Radical Perspective. The Bobbs-Merrill Studies in Sociology* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974)

For sociological research in the Federal Republic, the works of three American social scientists in particular were of crucial importance. The first was anthropologist Ralph Linton's distinction between 'acquired/achieved' and 'ascribed' criteria for status allocation and the second was sociologist Talcott Parsons' idea of 'achievement-orientation'. The third was the product of a collaboration between Parsons and economist Neil J. Smelser to create a sociological analysis of economic systems, allotting the notion of performance a central role in the sociological deconstruction of any societal structure. The following section is dedicated to briefly outlining their ideas before focussing on the various reactions of West German sociologists.

One of the earliest theorists to employ the concept of achievement under consideration here, Ralph Linton's 1936 *The Study of Man* aimed to establish a mechanism for describing how individuals within a given society reached their respective positions. In the course of so doing, Linton made the following distinction between 'ascribed' and 'achieved' statuses: "Ascribed statuses are those which are assigned to individuals without reference to their innate differences or abilities. They can be predicted and trained for from the moment of birth. The achieved statuses are, as a minimum, those requiring special qualities, although they are not necessarily limited to these. They are not assigned to individuals from birth but are left open to be filled through competition and individual effort."²⁴

Talcott Parsons, an internationally renowned American proponent of sociological functionalism, took up Linton's distinction in his own work from the early 1950s onward, theorising that, in modern industrial society, especially the U.S., achieved status dominated.²⁵ Achievement, defined as an "actual or expected specific performance"²⁶ in relation to the various roles an individual was expected and socialised to fulfil, was the most important mechanism in determining an individual's status. Authority, property and income gained their initial

²⁴ Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man: An Introduction* (London: Appleton-Century, 1936), 115.

²⁵ Renate Mayntz, "Begriff und empirische Erfassung des sozialen Status in der heutigen Soziologie," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 10:1 (1958): 66; Neil J. Smelser, *The Sociology of Economic Life*, Foundations of Modern Sociology Series (Englewood Cliffs N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), 92.

²⁶ Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), 94.

significance from being “visible consequences of personal achievement”.²⁷ Parsons thus established the basic model of a society structured around achievement, which West German contemporaries would adopt, adapt and criticise.

Parsons went further than asserting the primacy of ‘achieved’ criteria in determining status. He developed a typology of value patterns defining role-orientations within different societies, using achievement as one of the five main variables.²⁸ Within this typology, Parsons designated what he termed a ‘universalistic achievement pattern’, best exemplified by the United States.²⁹ In such a system the main focus was progress rather than any ideal state to be attained while the goals pursued by individuals or collectives were left open to choice, provided they furthered this progression in some way.³⁰ Moreover, a ‘universalistic’ standard for measuring achievement was in operation across society and all of its sub-systems, treating every individual in the same manner.³¹ As part of his work on developing a theory integrating both sociology and economics, Parsons, in collaboration with Neil J. Smelser, asserted later that this included the economy and the performances actors carried out within it.³² Both aspects of Parsons’ work, the emphasis on achieved criteria and universalistic achievement orientation, focussed on structures external to the individual. Achievement, for Parsons, was a mechanism and force within society and affecting a person’s behaviour and its assessment, rather than the other way around.

Alongside these American research projects, some German academics attempted to continue distinctly National Socialist lines of thought about social stratification. In 1956 Karl Valentin Müller, who had advised on and taught racial theory in the Third Reich, released a monograph on the distribution of talent in German society. He argued that genetic inheritance ultimately determined the

²⁷ Mayntz, “Begriff,” 66.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 107.

³⁰ Parsons’ colleague and collaborator Neil J. Smelser stressed the convergence of an emphasis on achievement with individual rather than collective mobility. For details see Smelser, *Sociology*, 91.

³¹ Parsons, *Social System*, 108.

³² Talcott Parsons and Neil J. Smelser, *Economy and Society: A Study in the Integration of Economic and Social Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), 6-9.

amount of talent a child had, contending that social elites were there due to a biologically rooted functional superiority.³³ Müller's theory was not taken up by many contemporaries and received rather critical reviews.³⁴ West German researchers were unwilling to embrace frameworks insisting on a supposedly natural system of stratification and turned to American research as a viable alternative.

A considerable number of West German sociologists simply applied American concepts in discussing a range of subjects throughout the 1960s. Heidrun and Wolfgang Kraupen employed Parsons' ideas to demonstrate that German universities were being too slow to embrace an understanding of education more aimed at preparation for work than a humanist ideal of *Bildung*.³⁵ Writing in 1964 and again in 1966, Hans Jürgen Daheim used Parsons' idea of a universalistic way of measuring performance to assess mobility within West Germany, concluding that intergenerational mobility had in fact improved.³⁶ Prodosh Aich drew on the distinction between industrial, 'advanced' societies in which performance was prioritised and measured in a specific way and non-industrial nations to track the changes in the political attitudes of foreign students in West Germany.³⁷ Other studies simply accepted the model of a society in which achievement was the predominant principle determining status, such as Eckhart D. Kroenlein's examination of mobility in industrial businesses. Kroenlein stated that processes within the business organisation mirrored mobility in society as a whole, permitting "the acquisition of social status according to the principle of achievement".³⁸ West German theories on elite formation put forward in the early 1960s likewise did not view *Leistung* as particularly problematic, engaging with

³³ Karl V. Müller, *Begabung und soziale Schichtung in der hochindustrialisierten Gesellschaft*, Schriftenreihe des Instituts für empirische Soziologie 1 (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1956) 14, 19.

³⁴ Renate Mayntz, "Review of *Begabung und soziale Schichtung in der hochindustrialisierten Gesellschaft*, by Karl V. Müller," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 9:1 (1957): 491-494.

³⁵ Heidrun und Wolfgang Kaupen, "Der Einfluss gesellschaftlicher Wertvorstellungen auf die Struktur der Deutschen Studentenschaft," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 16:1 (1964): 131.

³⁶ Hansjürgen Daheim, "Berufliche Intergenerationen-Mobilität in der komplexen Gesellschaft," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 16:1 (1964): 92-123.

³⁷ Prodosh Aich, "Soziale Determinanten der politischen Einstellung der afrikanischen und asiatischen Studenten in Deutschsprachigen Ländern," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 18:3 (1966): 482-515, particularly 487, 492.

³⁸ Eckhart D. Kroenlein, "Vertikale und horizontale Mobilität im Industriebetrieb," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 13:1 (1961): 70.

it as a correlate of industrial society, a structuring mechanism and a behavioural norm.³⁹ To these scholars, the American models of achievement and a society structured around it provided a useful analytical tool.

Yet there was also a strand of more critical reception of Linton's, Parson's and Smelser's ideas. In a 1957 article, sociologist (and later founder of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies) Renate Mayntz highlighted some of the problems inherent in the idea of a "universalistic standard of measurement for achievement".⁴⁰ How a type of achievement was assessed depended on the point of reference, so criteria such as the extent to which a certain profession contributed to maintaining social stability or aiding social development could prove to be contradictory.⁴¹ Moreover, it legitimated the current distribution of privilege in society to claim that these privileges were the outcome of achievement.⁴² Yet it failed to answer the question of who had distributed these privileges in the first place. A certain degree of exploitation and monopolisation would presumably have played a role here.⁴³ Mayntz questioned the accuracy of Parsons' framework as well as its ability to aid the comprehension of social reality in its unrevised form. Similarly, Hans P. Dreitzel pointed out that attributing social status entirely to achievement was primarily an ideological contention, one which obscured the tenuous relationship between achievement and success.⁴⁴

While Mayntz criticised Parsons for failing to accurately grasp systemic mechanisms, Ralf Dahrendorf, writing a year later, criticised Linton's work by taking the position of the individual into consideration. He pointed out that Linton's distinction between ascribed and achieved criteria was far from clear cut. Dahrendorf also stipulated that simply assuming the individual had the space to make choices in modern society did not mean *positions* were determined by an act of individual choice. Instead, organisations and institutions such as schools had a monopoly on certifying and assessing *Leistung*, steadily diminishing the possibilities open to any one person. The societal system could thus very quickly

³⁹ Wolfgang Schluchter, "Der Elitebegriff als soziologische Kategorie," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 15:2 (1963): 246-251; Hans P. Dreitzel, *Elitebegriff und Sozialstruktur*, Göttinger Abhandlungen zur Soziologie 6 (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1962)

⁴⁰ Mayntz, "Begriff," 58-73

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 65-66.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁴ Dreitzel, *Elitebegriff*, 100.

go from being experienced as a source of support to being a limiting structure.⁴⁵ For Dahrendorf, the manner in which Linton's work had previously been interpreted had created a misleading image of social reality, overemphasising the positive connotations of achieving and failing to describe some of its dimensions.

Dahrendorf flatly designated the notion of an achieving society as a harmful, ideological construct. In a 1961 monograph, he was highly critical of what he termed the 'myth' of industrial society and one of its sub-categories, the achieving society.⁴⁶ He berated his colleagues for uncritically accepting that the conditions of modern economic and social life tended towards a more equal and just society.⁴⁷ One of the elements of this construct, alongside a levelling-out of classes and other features, was achievement as the determinant of social position.⁴⁸ Dahrendorf contested the image of industrial society as a harmonious form of collective and individual existence.⁴⁹ Instead, the construct of the industrial society and the notion of achievement it contained helped the middle classes, managers, experts and bureaucrats who wished to remain invisible to retain their position as the ruling strata.⁵⁰ To do so, they employed ideology under the name of sociology to make continued inequality palatable.⁵¹

The vehemence and intellectual origins of Dahrendorf's criticism of the model of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* sets him apart from his contemporaries. This is partly due to Dahrendorf's engagement with the ideas of British sociologist and Labour politician Michael Young in his work.⁵² Young had coined the term "meritocracy" in a 1958 essay satirising the British education system by painting a picture of a dystopian future society based solely on merit (IQ and effort).⁵³ While later West German commentators availed themselves of Young's work once *Leistung* had become the subject of more widespread criticism,⁵⁴ Dahrendorf alone expressed

⁴⁵ Ralf Dahrendorf, *Homo sociologicus: Ein Versuch zur Geschichte, Bedeutung und Kritik der Kategorie der sozialen Rolle* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1958), 43-44.

⁴⁶ Ralf Dahrendorf, "Soziologie und industrielle Gesellschaft," in *Gesellschaft und Freiheit*, ed. Ralf Dahrendorf (Munich: Piper & Co., 1961), 22.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 18, 22, 23.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 19-21.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 25-26.

⁵³ Michael Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (1958; repr., London: Transaction, 1994), 4, 11-12.

⁵⁴ For an example see Gertrud Nunner-Winkler, *Chancengleichheit und individuelle Förderung. Eine Analyse der Ziele und Konsequenzen moderner Bildungspolitik* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1971), 109ff.

a highly critical stance in line with Young's ideas this early on in the West German debate. Others simply rejected Young's writings, mistaking his satirical outline for sociological analysis.⁵⁵ However, his work shows an important distinction between British and American research on *Leistung* as the works produced on the achieving society in the US at this point were generally positive. The virulence of Dahrendorf's criticism of the *Leistungsgesellschaft* was thus the exception rather than the rule at this early point in the debate.

As the decade drew to a close, criticism of Linton's, Parsons' and Smelser's ideas became more widespread. Critics adopted a range of positions towards American research. Bernd Buchhofer, Jürgen Friedrichs and Hartmut Lüdtke continued to draw on Parsons but argued that a system wholly based on 'achieved' criteria was not in operation. They examined the role of age in an allegedly achievement focused society and found that, measured against reality, the contention that all positions in society were essentially open to anyone was "an ideological correlate of the achievement orientation in industrial society."⁵⁶ In their analysis, factors such as sex, age, education and social background still determined the chances an individual had access to. At the same time, the importance of ascribed criteria was declining due to the "dynamic of social change" and "the dominant orientation according to achievement."⁵⁷

While the study cited above merely contested the accuracy and comprehensiveness of Parsons' and Linton's categories, others flatly denied that they were of any use. Gerhard Kleining's 1971 and 1975 analyses sought to examine status and prestige mobility from the 1830s to present day West Germany.⁵⁸ He concluded that, while the class structure had changed considerably in that period, the system of status allocation remained closely linked to inheritance. Kleining attributed this lack of mobility to the repressive tendencies of a system of domination which refused to make education accessible

⁵⁵ See Hans P. Dreitzel, *Elitebegriff und Sozialstruktur*, 99.

⁵⁶ Bernd Buchhofer, Jürgen Friedrichs and Hartmut Lüdtke, "Alter, Generationsdynamik und soziale Differenzierung," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 22:2 (1970): 319.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 319.

⁵⁸ Gerhard Kleining, "Soziale Mobilität in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland II: Status- oder Prestige-Mobilität," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 27:2 (1975): 276-289; Gerhard Kleining, "Struktur- und Prestigemobilität in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 23:1 (1971): 11, 29.

to all and maintained the mechanism of inheritance.⁵⁹ Most importantly, he noted that this state of affairs was at odds with a highly industrialised society which at least appeared to allot status “according to ‘achievement’ or other acquired, not inherited, criteria.”⁶⁰

To sum up, from the 1950s onwards, West German sociologists engaged with the model of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* and an exploration on the role of achievement in social dynamics as American and British concepts. In so doing, a considerable number of researchers simply accepted ideas circulated by the likes of Parsons and Linton. However, critical voices, present since the late 1950s came to dominate the debate towards the end of the 1960s and continued to do so well into the ‘70s. They questioned the accuracy of American and British analytical categories and stressed the ideological agenda behind the propagation of ideas of achievement and the *Leistungsgesellschaft*.

III: The United States as a model

Alongside this engagement with *Leistungsgesellschaft* as a conceptual framework that was seen to emanate from Britain and the United States, America was frequently cited as *the* embodiment of an achieving society, a ‘western’, industrial society in which mobility was extensive and premised on performance.

American scholars participated in the creation of this image of the U.S. as the ultimate *Leistungsgesellschaft*, and their works were circulated among German scholars, as their translation and publication in the *Kölner Zeitschrift* indicates. In a 1958 article, American professor of sociology at the University of Michigan, Morris Janowitz assessed the degree of mobility in West German society measured against the benchmark of the U.S. When discussing the basic values of society, Janowitz asserted that the US and Germany had become more similar: “Like other highly industrialised western societies, the West German one is increasingly becoming a society, in which social stratification rests on personal achievement.”⁶¹ In such a system universal criteria for social differentiation and

⁵⁹ Kleining, “Soziale Mobilität,” 288.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁶¹ Morris Janowitz, “Soziale Schichtung und Mobilität in Westdeutschland,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 10:1 (1958): 17; Seymour M. Lipset, “Kanada und die Vereinigten Staaten – eine vergleichende Betrachtung,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 17:1 (1965): 660.

consensus were based on the conviction that everyone had an equal chance to succeed.⁶² Janowitz flatly denied that this was a “utopian goal”, positing that the importance of other criteria such as social background was declining, while individual effort and education took centre stage.⁶³ Janowitz was willing to admit that the close relationship between access to education and class meant the preconditions for mobility based on achievement were not fully met in the German case.⁶⁴ But, on the whole, he insisted, increased mobility had contributed to social stability and cohesion.⁶⁵

Among German scholars too, comparisons with and references to the U.S. in terms of achievement abounded. How far these comparisons were taken varied. A 1960 study of the self-image of different social groups in West Germany simply stated that its social structure was roughly the same as that of the US.⁶⁶ Heidrun and Wolfgang Kraupen compared the German understanding of higher education to the U.S., stipulating that the latter was more advanced in adjusting education to the requirements of industrial society.⁶⁷ Others focussed on the importance of equality of opportunity in American society.⁶⁸ What united these various studies was their assumption that the Federal Republic and the United States were both progressing along the same developmental path as ‘industrial societies’. Part of this trajectory was an increasing prioritisation of *Leistung* (though Germany was seen as lagging behind).

These assumptions were made explicit in the application of the model of an achieving society to the world as a whole. A number of American scholars attempted to stratify the global order in terms of achievement in the early 1960s. Everett Hagen and Harvard-based psychologist David C. McClelland championed an interdisciplinary approach in a bid to explain why some countries were more economically advanced than others, locating the need to achieve at the centre of their explanatory models. In so doing, both men were furthering the notion of

⁶² Janowitz, “Soziale Schichtung,” 17.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁶ Harriett Moore and Gerhard Kleining, “Das soziale Selbstbild der Gesellschaftsschichten in Deutschland,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 12:1 (1960): 91.

⁶⁷ Kraupen, “Der Einfluss gesellschaftlicher Wertvorstellungen,” 132.

⁶⁸ Kurt B. Mayer, “Klassenstruktur in zwei egalitären Gesellschaften,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 16:3 (1964): 660-679.

'western superiority' in a dual sense. Firstly, their theories suggested that the greatest degree of achievement was to be expected in capitalist societies, substantiating the American claim to superiority in the Cold War. Secondly, these theories created a fault line between industrially 'developed' and 'under-developed' nations. Here, the assumption was that all countries should aspire to emulate not only a particular model of economic activity but also the values and form of society that came with it.

A group of scholars clustered around McClelland produced a series of studies of human motivation with particular regard for achievement throughout the 1950s and into the early '60s.⁶⁹ In 1961, McClelland published the latest in the series, a work entitled *The Achieving Society*, designed to test the hypothesis that there was a link between individual motivation to achieve and national economic growth around the globe.⁷⁰ The meaning McClelland connected with the term "achieving society" differed considerably from that allotted to the term by most sociologists up to that point. He used the term to "refer to societies which are developing more rapidly economically".⁷¹ This definition contained no explicit reference to the idea that achievement would determine individual status in society. As part of this new use of the framework of an achieving society, McClelland's study sought to establish whether the need to achieve was communicated as part of a child's upbringing. He did this by investigating terminology connected to achieving in folk tales and interviewing or testing children and parents in a broad range of sample countries, including Germany.⁷² Another area of research was dedicated to establishing the need for achievement and "entrepreneurial behaviour" exhibited by successful businessmen.⁷³ McClelland drew on Weber's Protestant ethic in formulating his hypothesis, investigating a possible link between religious denomination and a drive to achieve.⁷⁴ More generally, he investigated the link between economic success, the

⁶⁹ For some of the work by the group surrounding McClelland see David C. McClelland, J.F. Sturr, R.H. Knapp and H.W. Wendt, "Obligations to self and society in the United States and Germany," *Journal of abnormal social Psychology* 56 (1958): 245-255; D.C. McClelland, J. W. Atkinson, R.A. Clark, E.L. Lowell, *The Achievement Motive* (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1953); D. C. McClelland, A.L. Baldwin, *Talent and Society* (Princeton N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1958).

⁷⁰ D. C. McClelland, *The Achieving Society* (Free Press: New York, 1961), vii.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 57, 59.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

status this entailed and the drive to perform well. *Leistung* here, was seen as the outcome of a specific psychology, generated by the 'correct' socialisation of an individual.

McClelland treated achievement as the potential driving force of all economic success, a knowable, quantifiable human urge which required closer study and could be imparted culturally as a value. This emphasis was picked up and extended by political scientist and economist Everett E. Hagen. Championing an interdisciplinary approach to explain economic growth, he posited that creative individuals could occasionally emerge out of traditional societies or change could be initiated through contact with outsiders.⁷⁵ In establishing the type of personality necessary for innovation Hagen focussed, among other things on a need to achieve. This need, Hagen theorised, caused an individual to find satisfaction in "the process of solving problems, in manipulating effectively by the exercise of his judgement and abilities a situation containing elements he has not previously dealt with, in attempting something difficult, facing a test of his capability."⁷⁶

While both McClelland and Hagen faced extensive criticism in the U.S. regarding their theories,⁷⁷ many West German commentators on McClelland's work in the 1960s (*The Achieving Society* was published in German in 1966) were much less inclined to be critical, merely noting the controversial nature of his claims and applauding his attempt to integrate socio-cultural and psychological factors into a broader economic framework.⁷⁸ Others even went so far as to claim that, by connecting a drive to achieve with economic growth, McClelland had created an

⁷⁵ Everett E. Hagen, *On the Theory of Social Change: How Economic Growth Begins* (Homewood Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1962), 30.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁷⁷ Benjamin Higgins, *Economic Development: Principles, Problems and Policies*. Revised Edition (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1968), 243, 257. See also George Kantona, "Review of *The Achieving Society*, by David C. McClelland," *The American Economic Review* 52:3 (1962): 580-583, accessed 22nd October, 2014, <http://0-www.jstor.org.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/stable/1810584>; Harry J. Crockett, "Review of *The Achieving Society*, by David C. McClelland," *Social Forces* 41:2 (1962): 208-9, accessed 22nd October, 2014 <http://0-www.jstor.org.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/stable/2573612>; Bert F. Hoselitz, "Review of *The Achieving Society*, by David C. McClelland," *American Journal of Sociology* 68:1 (Jul. 1962): 129-130, accessed 22nd October, 2014, <http://0-www.jstor.org.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/stable/2774194>.

⁷⁸ For an example, see Gerd Fleischmann, "Review of *The Achieving Society*, by David C. McClelland," *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftspolitik* 11 (1966): 220-330.

area any study of economic development needed to consider.⁷⁹ In accepting the broader model of development McClelland had put forward, sociologists in the Federal Republic were endorsing his establishment of a West that was supposedly superior due to its ability to achieve and included the West German state.

Despite this acceptance of both the U.S. as the embodiment of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* and the notion of a world stratified through achievement, criticism also characterised the West German response from the late 1950s and more heavily the late 1960s onwards. Frequently those objecting referred to the ideological importance of the concept of achievement-based mobility. Sociology lecturer Karl Martin Bolte claimed that the debate on whether mobility had increased was central to American society.⁸⁰ In the U.S., influential work such as that of Martin Seymour Lipset followed a framework which stressed the removal of pre-existing barriers to social competition.⁸¹ Renate Mayntz, too, emphasised the impact of an ideological agenda on assessments of mobility in the U.S. She pointed to the work of Kingsley Davis and emphasised that, in being connected to “the selection of the best” mobility was frequently seen as positive, accompanied by the silent assumption that everyone was equally able to achieve.⁸² Mayntz criticised a lack of intellectual rigor, citing Parsons as evidence that researchers frequently limited themselves to the assertion that achievement rather than birth-derived factors determined status. Mayntz also directed her criticism at fellow West German scholars, attacking Helmut Schelsky’s claim that mobility was the general developmental law of any modern society. These assessments, in her eyes, created a series of problems. They fostered a one-dimensional understanding of status and exaggerated the independence of the modern individual from groups or organisations. They also placed the responsibility for mobility on the individual, claiming that the only factor necessary for mobility was a drive to succeed.⁸³

⁷⁹ Günter Albrecht, “Review of *Urban Migration and Economic Development in Chile*, by Bruce H. Herrick,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 21:2 (1969): 385.

⁸⁰ Karl Martin Bolte, “Vom Umfang der Mobilität in unserer Gesellschaft,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 10:1 (1958): 49.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁸² Renate Mayntz, “Die soziologische Problematik umfassender Mobilitätsuntersuchungen,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 10:2 (1958): 226.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 227.

Having criticised American research heavily, Mayntz and Bolte suggested that German work on the subject of mobility was rather different, questioning both the link between mobility and modernity as well as the positive connotations of performance based changes in status. Mayntz pointed to research that saw mobility as a feature of structural change in any society, allowing that preindustrial systems had experienced it too.⁸⁴ Researchers such as Heinz Kluth had argued that increased social mobility was accompanied by a loss of confidence regarding status in modern society.⁸⁵ In discussing these alternate theories, both Bolte and Mayntz highlighted the ideological importance of stressing achievement-based mobility in the U.S. They also underscored the more negative findings research on performance based mobility had produced to show the limits of American research.

From the later 1960s onwards, unfavourable assessments of the U.S. as a model and American research became more common. Thus Wieland W. Jäger raised methodological and analytical concerns regarding McClelland and David G. Winter's attempts to train people in acquiring achievement motivation and measure the outcome in terms of business success.⁸⁶ Hans Dieter Seibel criticised a 1969 publication by Bernard Rosen and others encompassing a collection of articles on achievement written in the U.S. over the past twenty years for failing to discuss any functional equivalents to *Leistung*.⁸⁷ Seibel pointed out that all of the contributors appeared to see achievement orientation as an absolute necessity in the functioning of American society, by implication designating anyone who did not exhibit an orientation focused on achievement as marginal.⁸⁸ Udo Michael Krüger presented American schools and the society they were located in as a system that valued nothing but performance and presented dropouts as the "victims of the dysfunctions" of such a system, criticising it for trying to force pupils who left school early to adapt to its demands.⁸⁹ Krüger

⁸⁴ Ibid., 228.

⁸⁵ Bolte, "Umfang," 50-54.

⁸⁶ Wieland W. Jäger, "Review of *Motivating Economic Achievement*, by David C. McClelland and David G. Winter," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 23:2 (1971): 379.

⁸⁷ Hans Dieter Seibel, "Review of *Achievement in American Society*, eds. Bernard Rosen, Harry Crockett Jr. and Clyde Z. Nunn," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 22:3 (1970): 823.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 823.

⁸⁹ Udo Michael Krüger, "Review of *The Dropouts*, by Lucius F. Cervantes," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 32:1 (1971): 147-148.

identified American schools as “an institution of competition, pressure to achieve and authority”, a circumstance which was acutely felt by those pupils whose unconscious sexual and aggressive impulses had given rise to personality conflicts.⁹⁰ For Krüger, the American education system had come to centre too heavily on performance, to the detriment of many of its charges. For these critics, American society not only stressed achievement too heavily but American research was also blinded by its prominence.

By the 1970s, this more negative understanding of achievement had led to research on the consequences of an overt emphasis on achievement in professional life and a West German society structured around performance. A 1970 study questioning unskilled metal workers in Bavaria on their attitude to and engagement in political life revealed the exclusion mechanisms within an achieving society. Ruth Lockhaus attributed the political apathy of these workers to a self-image defined by little confidence in their own judgement.⁹¹ This self-image had been formed in interaction with the environment surrounding the workers questioned, and impacted behaviour to a considerable degree. The societal environment was that of an “achieving society” which “generally imparted a comparatively heightened feeling of self-worth to the individual through the possession of an education and the experience of success tied to this fact.”⁹² Lockhaus located her findings within Dahrendorf’s contention that education and training were prerequisites for any person to take advantage of other rights, including political ones.⁹³ For Lockhaus, the premium placed on achievement in education, particularly in connection with work had contributed to the formation of an entire social group who had little confidence in their own capacity to be functioning members of political life.

Others saw a yet more dangerous trajectory inherent in the existence of a *Leistungsgesellschaft*. German sociologist Hans Mathias Kepplinger emphasised the potential for political radicalism based around the degree of performance

⁹⁰ Udo Michael Krüger, “Review of *The Dropouts. A Treatment Study of Intellectually Capable Students Who Drop Out of High School*, by Solomon O. Lichter,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 32:1 (1971): 148.

⁹¹ Ruth Lockhaus, “Ein Beitrag zur Analyse politischer Apathie,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 22:3 (1970): 524.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 524.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 524-5.

orientation present in modern societies. He posited that a minority of the population in any “highly differentiated industrial society” would always exhibit a predisposition to political violence and collaboration with revolutionary forces due to the mechanism of “performance-oriented mobility”.⁹⁴ Kepplinger’s study, released in 1974, aimed to explain why the political radicalism and violence of the Baader Meinhof group had any support from sympathisers in the West German population. He concluded that individuals who were unable to meet the expectations of others in their social environment and in turn found their own expectations regarding status frustrated could turn to seeking radical social change in an effort to solve the problem.⁹⁵ In Kepplinger’s analysis, these individuals were distributed among all social strata, as each social group encompassed people who diverged very noticeably from the average standard of their group. No targeted set of measures could eliminate this problem, rather the risks and opportunities inherent in a “performance-oriented society” meant it would always exist.⁹⁶ Kepplinger argued that the small number of individuals likely to fall into this category and the obvious advantages of a meritocratic social structure meant no change was necessary. His study, while attempting to minimise the problem, did admit and hinge upon the idea that a focus on performance came at a certain cost.

The notion that the self-proclaimed ‘western’ way of achieving was the only way to success nationally was called into question by Samuel Kodjo in 1974. He argued for the need to reassess education policy in underdeveloped or developing countries by claiming that the sole focus of current policy was generating enough expertise within an industrial pattern.⁹⁷ Such an approach did not take the extent to which this qualified expertise met the culturally specific needs of each country into consideration.⁹⁸ A focus on quantity over quality ignored the fact that gaining qualifications did not lead to higher achievement or

⁹⁴ Hans Mathias Kepplinger, “Statusdevianz und Meinungsdevianz. Die Sympathisanten der Baader-Meinhof Gruppe,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 26:4 (1974): 796.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 772.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 796.

⁹⁷ Samuel Kodjo, “Bildungsqualität als Schwerpunkt künftiger entwicklungstheoretischer Diskussion und Forschung,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 26:2 (1974): 289.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 289.

encourage mobility.⁹⁹ In stressing the need to take national difference into consideration when seeking to promote economic growth, Kodjo was questioning the idea that ‘underdeveloped’ countries had to catch up with the rest of the world.

American studies had played a crucial role in circulating ideas of achievement and *Leistungsgesellschaft*. At the same time, the acceptance and depiction of the U.S. as an achieving society *par excellence* was also a feature of West German sociological research. This concern with finding the best form of society must, in part, be attributed to a desire to not only see the Federal Republic as a ‘western’ state but also to prove the superiority of the anti-Soviet bloc. Many scholars accepted American efforts to establish an image of the world order that placed a ‘western’ way of achieving at the top. Here too, however, early criticism grew into a more widely held sceptical attitude towards the status of *Leistung* in American society and the world as a whole. Yet, even after the US had been rejected as the ideal society to emulate, a fundamental consensus on certain similarities between both societies existed. No one contested the idea that the US and Germany were both defined by a ‘western’, industrial modernity.

IV: A ‘western’ model in a socialist world?

By the early 1970s *Leistungsgesellschaft* and *Leistung* continued to be understood as ‘western’, despite growing criticism. This underlying consensus was reinforced when scholars in the Federal Republic resorted to both terms in dealing with the challenge of analysing a socialist ‘other’, the GDR. In conjunction with a thaw in German-German relations in the early 1970s, a series of sociological studies released between 1969 and 1975 assessed the GDR and compared it to the Federal Republic. All of the studies in question examined some aspect of education or youth in the East German state, drawing on *Leistung* as a tool for analysis and comparison.¹⁰⁰ While the backdrop of these research projects was a desire to find some common ground with the GDR, the differences between the two states were never left out of the equation.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 291.

¹⁰⁰ This focus on youth was part of a more widespread preoccupation that spanned both German states and international research. Very limited funds were available for research into the over 50s.

At times, a focus on achievement was seen as something that united both societies on a very basic level. East and West German systems operated by measuring “achievement in a universalistic framework”, asserted Walter Jaide and Barbara Hille, employing Parsons’ and Daheim’s terminology.¹⁰¹ Similarly, a doctoral thesis by Jürgen Miksch asserted that a framework of development as “modern industrial societies” meant that FRG and GDR shared a focus on performance, an orientation towards growth and modernisation. Both were characterised by the increasing importance of research, science, education and training.¹⁰² A 1970 study of how East and West German teenagers conceptualised their futures established that, in keeping with the societies they inhabited, achievement was the main priority of the 15 year olds surveyed.¹⁰³

Others saw the beginnings of an achieving society forming east of the wall. Hartmut Vogt’s examination of changes in schools in the GDR claimed that education was moving away from ideological dogmatism and coming to embrace the practical requirements of education in an industrial society.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Horst Siebert identified a clash between the legitimation of social status according to the performance principle from the younger generation and more traditional legitimation according to ideological reasoning as the source of considerable social tension. He referred to the “technocratic tendencies of an achieving society ridding itself of ideology”.¹⁰⁵ The state’s decision to strengthen political and ideological education was a response to this problem. Miksch agreed with this depiction of the GDR as a society moving towards an achievement orientation and structure. He saw this dynamic as part of the growth of petit-bourgeois norms in the East, contending that the revolutionary phase of the state was over.¹⁰⁶ “There is a tendency towards a socialist achieving society in which

¹⁰¹ Walter Jaide and Barbara Hille, “Über Probleme und Möglichkeiten interkultureller Vergleiche bei Jugendlichen in der Bundesrepublik und der DDR,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 27:3 (1975): 396.

¹⁰² Jürgen Miksch, *Jugend und Freizeit in der DDR*, Beiträge zur soziologischen Forschung 8 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1972), 31.

¹⁰³ Yves van den Auweele, “Zukunftsvorstellungen von 15jährigen in der DDR und der BRD,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 27:3 (1975): 592-596. While the study was published in 1975, it was conducted in 1970 and 1971.

¹⁰⁴ Hartmut Vogt, *Bildung und Erziehung in der DDR: Sozialistisch-industriegesellschaftliche Curriculum- Reform in Kindergarten, Schule und Berufsbildung* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1969), 9.

¹⁰⁵ Horst Siebert, *Erwachsenenbildung in der Erziehungsgesellschaft der DDR* (Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann Universitätsverlag, 1970), 296.

¹⁰⁶ Miksch, *Jugend und Freizeit*, 161.

the level of qualification decides on ranking, repute and participation in society.”¹⁰⁷ In these assessments, the increasing movement towards a social structure centred on performance presented a potential for consensus between both German states.

Notwithstanding the cautious designation of potential shared ground by some analysts, they also outlined continuing differences between East and West Germany. Thus Yves van der Auweele’s study of teenagers’ ambitions for their future contended that, in the GDR, the pressure placed on teenagers was greater. This meant that East German teenagers placed more emphasis on *Leistung* than their western counterparts. Conversely, the former were also more interested in leisure time as a respite from these pressures. In the Federal Republic, the importance allotted to the individual in society resulted in less achievement orientation, as well as a more critical and aggressive attitude.¹⁰⁸ Van der Auweele’s findings were mirrored in assertions by other researchers that, despite a shared focus on *Leistung*, the motivation and pressure to achieve was different in each society.¹⁰⁹ More importantly, differences in terms of economic structure, social policy and political aims based on world view continued to exist.¹¹⁰ Rolf Heyen argued that the way to success under socialism was to conform to the system and participate in the structures put in place by the state. Unlike the state of affairs in the FRG, “...professional performance alone in connection with at least a neutral attitude towards political and societal conditions is not enough. Social and professional mobility in the GDR requires constant participation in societal and political life as well as taking on responsibilities in this area alongside technical qualifications.”¹¹¹ Based on this assessment, only the FRG could lay claim to the title of *Leistungsgesellschaft*.

In drawing on *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* to understand the German Democratic Republic, researchers sought to stress that, in some ways, both states were at long last developing along similar lines. This transfer of concepts was partly necessitated by a lack of resources. West German analysts were working

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 150.

¹⁰⁸ Van der Auweele, “Zukunftsvorstellungen,” 607.

¹⁰⁹ Jaide and Hille, “Probleme und Möglichkeiten interkultureller Vergleiche,” 397.

¹¹⁰ Miksch, *Jugend und Freizeit*, 30.

¹¹¹ Rolf Heyen, *Jugend in der DDR: Auf dem Weg zur sozialistischen Leistungsgesellschaft* (Darmstadt: Neue Darmstädter Verlagsanstalt, 1972), 11.

with very limited information, frequently resorting to material published by the SED to construct their accounts. However, the application of terms such as *Leistungsgesellschaft*, which had firmly been established as part of the Federal Republic's 'western' identity, replicated a familiar framework to make an entirely different system and society intelligible. Depicting the GDR as an industrial society centred on performance and coming to merit the title *Leistungsgesellschaft*, meant that the former was becoming more like its western neighbour. The outcome was a body of research that assessed in how far the GDR was becoming more like West Germany and thus the 'West' as a whole. While this created the possibility of acknowledging some basic similarities, it also meant that the larger differences between both societies were never lost sight of.

V: Education

Regardless of the impact German-German relations had on uses of the model of a *Leistungsgesellschaft*, the trend towards ever more criticism of the concept in West Germany emerged from a variety of areas of research. The following sections will explore these different areas. Within the sociological model of a society defined by achievement, education as a means of social mobility played a crucial role. It did so by moulding an individual oriented towards achievement and selecting those most able to achieve for further education and thus higher status and more influential jobs.¹¹² As such, the connection between education system and social mobility was the subject of considerable research.¹¹³ In fact social stratification and mobility was an area of international concern with a comparatively long history within sociology; the committee on precisely this subject area, chaired by Ralf Dahrendorf, was the oldest group in operation

¹¹² Dahrendorf, "Soziologie," 21. For some examples of this widespread assertion, see Janowitz, "Schichtung," 9; Ernest Zahn, "Wirtschaftliche Entwicklung und gesellschaftliche Erwartungen. Streifzüge im Grenzgebiet von Wirtschaftswissenschaft und Soziologie," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 19:2 (1966): 231; Alex Stöbe, "Die berufliche Mobilität der Abiturienten eines Abendgymnasiums," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 20:1 (1968): 78; Buchhofer, Friedrichs, Lütcke, "Alter," 323.

¹¹³ For some examples of these international studies and their reception in Germany see Renate Mayntz, "Review of *Social Class and Educational Opportunity*, by Jean E. Floud," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 9:1 (1957): 491-496; Charlotte Busch, "Review of *Les héritiers: les étudiants et la culture*, by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 19:1 (1966): 168-170.

within the framework of the World Congress for Sociology, established in 1950.¹¹⁴

Set against this international backdrop, two developments in particular spurred contemporaries on to examine how pupils and students achieved in the Federal Republic. The first was Helmut Schelsky's contention that West Germany in the 1950s was no longer defined by class and a state of considerable mobility had been achieved. The second was Georg Picht's declaration of a crisis in education (*Bildungskatastrophe*) with regard to issues such as funding and the structure of secondary education in 1964. Writing in 1953, Schelsky claimed that West Germany had become a levelled-out society of the middle strata (*nivellierte Mittelstandsgesellschaft*) due to the equalising influence of industrial development.¹¹⁵ In the debate Schelsky's assertion provoked, West German sociologists used international scholarship to emphasise that not only did a class structure continue to exist but a middle-class bias was present in education and thus, the achieving society. As the 1960s wore on, these critical voices became more numerous and stressed the social injustice of such favouritism as well as the harm done to children who could not conform to the standards set. As sociologists engaged with this aspect of achievement and started to pick it apart, the image of the ideal achiever as middle class emerged.

The work of two British and American researchers from the mid to late fifties in particular informed the German debate. Basil Bernstein had established that language as a socio-cultural factor could limit or enhance school performance.¹¹⁶ Based on the contention that different social groups emphasised different possibilities inherent in language, Bernstein distinguished between a 'public' and a 'formal' language.¹¹⁷ Working class children learned only the 'public' kind while middle-class children learned both types and schools predominantly employed the 'formal' version.¹¹⁸ The conceptual and grammatical elements of each

¹¹⁴ "Report on Sixth World Congress for Sociology," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 18:4 (1966): 845.

¹¹⁵ Helmut Schelsky, "Elements of Social Stability," *German Social Science Digest* (Hamburg: Claassen, 1955): 115.

¹¹⁶ Basil Bernstein, "Sozio-kulturelle Determinanten des Lernens. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Rolle der Sprache," in "Soziologie der Schule," ed. Peter Heinz, special issue 4, *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* (1959): 60-62.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 64, 66-69.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 66-69.

language influenced the cognitive range of the child in question.¹¹⁹ In this respect, Bernstein saw performance as the outcome of a certain language use as well as the cognitive skills tied to it. His theory had arisen, in part, from his engagement with the research of Bernard C. Rosen, an American sociologist who outlined an “achievement syndrome” in the late 1950s. Rosen tried to explain why social mobility was greater among middle class children by distinguishing between motivation to achieve and a value orientation which prioritised achievement.¹²⁰ According to his analysis, the drive to compete and do well was insufficient to produce achievement, a variety of factors such as a lack of skill and cultural dimensions could intervene.¹²¹ The crucial element in achieving was a set of values which defined the goal to be pursued and generated action with a motive in mind.¹²² Rosen concluded that the vital combination of both of these elements was much more present in middle class children as a result of their socialisation.¹²³

While a shared research interest connected both men, their understanding of achievement was different to some extent. Rosen’s agenda was not to offer a fundamental critique of the manner in which the education system and society more generally functioned. Instead the concept of achievement he constructed denoted an action generated by a psychologically ‘correctly’ constituted individual, a person whose emotional, verbal and cultural conditioning had led to a specific outcome. Rosen’s sole focus was on achievement as a positive force, underlying his use of the concept was the assumption that achievement in education was tied to mobility. Bernstein treated performance as something that could potentially be separated from, but was also conditioned by, linguistic development and its impact on cognitive skills. Yet both agreed that middle class children were placed in a much better position to achieve in terms of their personality structure and way of thinking. It was this area of consensus that West German scholars tapped into, citing both men’s works in their efforts to

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 69.

¹²⁰ Bernard C. Rosen, “The Achievement Syndrome. A Psychocultural Dimension of Social Stratification,” *American Psychological Review* 21:2 (April 1956): 203-211, accessed 25th July, 2014, <http://0-www.jstor.org.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/stable/2088523>.

¹²¹ Ibid., 204.

¹²² Ibid., 206.

¹²³ Ibid., 211.

understand and draw attention to the middle class bias of the education system in the Federal Republic.¹²⁴

Utilising Rosen, Bernstein, and other British and American authors, sociological commentators established that the education system was skewed towards the middle classes in a number of ways from the late 1950s onwards. The earliest of these analysts was Charlotte Lützens. In a 1959 piece, she argued that the veneration shown to academics as well as the emphasis placed on attaining qualifications as visible proof that education cut across a societal ideal centred on performance.¹²⁵ Lützens claimed that education was not simply about securing excellence in performance, it was about a middle class concern with obtaining certificates which legitimated social status and belonging. Ralf Dahrendorf made a similar claim in 1965. He rejected Schelsky's argument and highlighted the low numbers of children from a working class background attending higher education in West Germany.¹²⁶ In the mid 1960s, only five per cent of children higher education were from working class families.¹²⁷ Dahrendorf employed Michael Young's outline of a meritocracy, equating it with an achieving society "which allocates individual positions solely on the basis of the assessment of talent in IQ, reports and diplomas" and posited this was a far cry from the state of affairs at West German universities.¹²⁸ Dahrendorf proceeded to argue that a number of highly subjective factors impeded the accurate assessment of pupils' suitability for further or higher education.¹²⁹ Instead of focusing on performance, teachers honed in on factors such as personality traits and social background when making recommendations to universities.¹³⁰ Added to that, many working class parents did not have sufficient access or information on higher education,

¹²⁴ See Peter M. Roeder, Artur Pasdzierny and Willi Wolf, *Sozialstatus und Schulerfolg: Bericht über empirische Untersuchungen* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1965), 14; Klaus Heinemann, "Soziale Determinanten des Leistungserfolges in Gymnasien," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 21:4 (1969): 837; Gertrud Nunner-Winkler, *Chancengleichheit und individuelle Förderung*, 19; Jan Raspe, *Zur Sozialisation proletarischer Kinder* (Frankfurt: Verlag Roter Stern, 1972), 60.

¹²⁵ Charlotte Lützens, "Die Schule als Mittelklasseninstitution," in "Soziologie der Schule," 33

¹²⁶ Ralf Dahrendorf, *Arbeiterkinder an deutschen Universitäten*, *Recht und Staat* 302/3 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1965), 8, 12.

¹²⁷ Gerd Geißler, "Bildungs- und Schulpolitik," in *Deutsche Zeitgeschichte von 1945 bis 2000. Gesellschaft – Staat – Politik. Ein Handbuch*, eds. Clemens Burrichter, Detlef Nakath, Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan (Berlin: Dietz, 2006), 927.

¹²⁸ Dahrendorf, *Arbeiterkinder*, 12.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

frequently wanting their offspring to pursue careers similar to their own.¹³¹ The main thrust of Dahrendorf's argument was that working class children were equally capable of performing well at school. It was the structure of the education system itself which was preventing that performance from being acknowledged. Both Lütken and Dahrendorf denied that West German society was structured according to *Leistung*, pointing to a middle class monopoly over educational opportunity.

Dahrendorf and Lütken were not alone in seeing the education system as a force that stabilised social stratification rather than permitting mobility based on performance. Another work from 1965 by pedagogical expert Peter Martin Roeder concluded that the type of school a child attended was determined by a range of factors alongside performance.¹³² Like Dahrendorf, he drew on British and American scholarship to make his argument, bemoaning the lack of German research on important subject areas such as the influence of parental attitudes on a child's success in school.¹³³ For Roeder this lack of equality of opportunity was an issue that affected all 'western' societies.¹³⁴

As a self-proclaimed member of the 'West', German anxieties about Soviet competitiveness tied to the successful launch of Sputnik lent new fervour to debates about education, as did Georg Picht's declaration of a crisis in education in 1964.¹³⁵ Alongside the lack of equal access to education, researchers also focused on the tension between the traditional mission of the university and a modern approach. The two main purposes of education were seen as the Humboldtian ideal of *Bildung* and a pragmatic training designed for future professional activity. The latter was explicitly tied to the model of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* and the need for achievement-oriented study and attitudes. Cultural scientist Paul Luchtenberg, speaking in January 1964, stressed the need to make these two goals harmonise to secure "academic leadership resources in the modern achieving society".¹³⁶ Others were less sanguine on the compatibility

¹³¹ Ibid., 20-24.

¹³² Roeder et. al., *Sozialstatus*, 7.

¹³³ Ibid., 9-11.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹³⁵ Anne Rohstock, *Von der "Ordinarienuniversität" zur "Revolutionszentrale"?* (Munich; R. Oldenburg, 2010), 18.

¹³⁶ Hans Norbert Fügen, "Review of *Strukturprobleme unserer wissenschaftlichen Hochschulen*, by Gerhard Hess et al.," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 18:3 (1966): 585.

of these two aims. Heidrun and Wolfgang Kraupen's 1964 survey of the attitudes of students at the University of Cologne led them to conclude that Germany was woefully behind the U.S. in terms of the values guiding its higher education.¹³⁷ Instead of adjusting to the conditions of industrial society, the university was propagating an outdated ideal of education, which conflicted with the need for work centred-training.¹³⁸ Alex Stöbe's 1968 research on professional mobility made the same point. Stöbe stated that values of educational institutions and the workplace could diverge, meaning that, although both emphasised individual performance, the meaning of this performance was different depending on the situation, as were the role expectations in each context.¹³⁹ Within the debate on the ability of the university to meet the demands of industrial life lay the concern that it was producing individuals unsuited to working in an achieving society. Education reform from the mid-sixties onwards tried to address the shift in the type of knowledge and training required.¹⁴⁰

By the late 1960s, scholarship had moved on from diagnosing the problem of middle-class prejudice to analysing these attempts at West German education reform and making suggestions for future programmes. Here, too, the notion that the *Leistung* was defined by the middle strata of society persisted, with one important addition: contemporaries were increasingly discussing the harm that could be done to working class children by forcing them to achieve along standardised lines. In a 1969 contribution to the *Kölner Zeitschrift*, Klaus Heinemann argued that simply placing more working class children into grammar school without truly understanding how willing they were to achieve and what they were capable of achieving would not solve any problems.¹⁴¹ Heinemann contended that working class children sought to emulate without truly understanding the achievement norms they encountered at school. He tied these norms and the behaviour preferred by schools to the middle classes, centring on a high drive to achieve, enjoyment of personal responsibility, a capacity for delayed gratification and control of emotions and aggressions.¹⁴² If

¹³⁷ Kraupen, "Der Einfluß gesellschaftlicher Wertvorstellung," 132-134.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹³⁹ Stöbe, "Berufliche Mobilität," 85.

¹⁴⁰ Doering-Manteuffel and Raphael, *Nach dem Boom*, 38.

¹⁴¹ Heinemann, "Soziale Determinanten," 831.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 840.

working class children internalised these norms, their home social lives among peers from the same strata would become problematic. Heinemann's solution to the problem was to suggest that multiple forms of achievement existed and could be permitted to co-exist in the realm of education.¹⁴³ His work featured a complex understanding of *Leistung* which operated on multiple levels. On the one hand *Leistung* functioned as a norm external to some and internal to other pupils along class lines. On the other there were at least two different ways of achieving depending on what the aim set by the system and the individual was. Beyond these categorical complexities, Heinemann's work, like many others, asserted that the version of *Leistung* favoured by schools was middle-class in nature.

A more extreme alternative was offered by later Red Army Faction member Jan Raspe's 1972 study on the socialisation of proletarian children. Raspe set out to examine the familial, social and school environments which working class children experienced and determined that education in particular was defined by "the performance oriented norms of the middle classes".¹⁴⁴ Incorporating Rosen's findings, he concluded that the qualities promoted in the upbringing of working class children were incompatible with the standards and methods of teaching and success in schools.¹⁴⁵ Strikingly, Raspe contrasted the individual achievement demanded by the school environment with the collective performance he believed working class children to be capable of.¹⁴⁶ Yet the children were unable to explore this historically conditioned trait due to the restrictions put in place by a capitalist class society.¹⁴⁷ The problem for Raspe was thus not the notion of performance itself, like Heinemann he saw different types of *Leistung* as possible. Instead Raspe objected to the content with which a society dominated by the middle-classes and moulded by capitalism had endowed the idea.

This search for a more multi-faceted way of achieving continued well into the 1970s. By 1974 Walter R. Heinz, whose research focussed on transitions between education, training and employment, was criticising predominantly American research. For Heinz, these studies were simply propagating "diffuse ideologies of success, achievement principles and social virtues", rather than focusing on

¹⁴³ Ibid., 844.

¹⁴⁴ Raspe, *Zur Sozialisation proletarischer Kinder*, 6.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 15, 56, 59-60, 63.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 68.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 64.

structuring education to centre on the needs of families.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, compensating for the disadvantages some children had experienced early on by simply replacing traditional socialisation priorities with “the pressure for social recognition and performance that can be tested within a framework of external rewards”, stunted the development of vital capabilities.¹⁴⁹ It was thus not enough simply to focus on bringing lower strata children up to the same level as their more privileged peers, there was need to help them process the experiences that had caused damage in the first place.¹⁵⁰ A book on behavioural disorders released the same year postulated that an industrial achieving society demanded ever more difficult, versatile and speedy processes of adaptation from the individual. The minimal *Leistung* expected of a child or teenager was thus ever higher and the author, Egon Pickert, called for increased tolerance towards children who had not been equipped to deal with this challenge. For Heinz, as for Raspe, Pickert and Heinemann, forcing every child into a certain achievement mould was insufficient, even harmful. Instead, the broad variety of children’s personalities and their developmental challenges had to be acknowledged and catered for by the education system in order to enable everyone to achieve.

The dangers of overemphasising achievement in the education system extended beyond primary and secondary, well into higher education, it was argued. Thus Alexander Mitscherlich, speaking at the West German Rectors’ Conference in 1972, underscored the risk of elevating *Leistung* to a fetish. He did so by stipulating that performance was only meaningful to the individual if it aimed at a particular goal and focussing too excessively on *Leistung* would, paradoxically, negatively impact performance. Mitscherlich drew on a Marxist understanding of alienation, arguing that such a tendency would estrange the individual from him or herself, with problematic psychological consequences.¹⁵¹ In a similar vein, Michael Lukas Moeller, a psychoanalyst, stressed the link between psychological

¹⁴⁸ Walter R. Heinz, “Sozialisierungsforschung – Auf der Suche nach Theorie,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 26:1 (1974): 145.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁵¹ Gerald Grünewald and Wolfgang Kalischer eds., *Die Hochschulen und ihre Leistung in der Gesellschaft: Referate sowie Diskussion der 97. Plenarversammlung der Westdeutschen Rektorenkonferenz, Hamburg, 29. Mai 1972* (Bonn- Bad Godesberg: Dokumentationsabteilung der Westdeutschen Rektorenkonferenz, 1972), 18.

processes, the exam setting and the negative consequences this generated.¹⁵² Moeller suggested that the exam situation activated unconscious conflicts within both examiner and examinee, a dynamic which fundamentally undermined capacity of an exam to create an appropriate environment for assessment, as the fears brought to the fore in the exam situation were wholly unrelated to concerns about failing to achieve intellectually.¹⁵³ Moeller linked these issues to the recent outbreak of student unrest across Europe, making a case for integrating emotional and intellectual development into university education.¹⁵⁴ In Moeller's analysis, the achievement students were being pressured to deliver was eluding educators due to problematic assessment procedures and a failure to address students' emotional needs.

From the mid 1950s onwards, West German sociologists continued to incorporate research by British and American colleagues to explore the middle class bias of the education system. In revealing the ideal achiever to be from the middle strata of society, researchers rejected theories about the dissolution of class boundaries. They responded to fears that the West German education system was failing by focussing on the need for schools and universities to adjust their goals to suit the changing demands of the economy in an achieving society. Furthermore, sociologists emphasised the need to accept that education was not just about performance and that, even where *Leistung* was assessed, it could take a variety of different shapes. In making these varied arguments, they all assumed that the Federal Republic was part of the 'West' and the *Leistung* was very much a social reality.

VI: Gender

A further characteristic of the ideal achiever that emerged as West German sociologists started to interrogate concepts of performance and *Leistungsgesellschaft* was masculinity. The gendered understanding of *Leistung* was often implicit, particularly where notions of achievement were tied to work. Despite this underlying consensus that the ideal achiever was male, female

¹⁵² Michael Lukas Moeller, "Die Prüfung als Kernmodell psychosozialer Konflikte," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 21:1 (1969): 355-361.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 355.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 355, 360.

achievement did become the subject of discussion from the early 1950s onwards, primarily in debates about women's role in the workforce and the family. In these contexts, there was a gradual move to acknowledging that women were able, willing and should be permitted to achieve in the workplace.

The general assumption that *Leistung* was a male activity manifested in the decisions made by sociologists when conducting their research projects. With a few exceptions,¹⁵⁵ the vast majority of studies focussed on men as the main breadwinners and thus conveyors of status in a social system, and boys as the future leaders or professionals of a society. To name a few examples, Rosen's research on the achievement syndrome only considered (white) male high school sophomores.¹⁵⁶ McClelland's research for the achieving society only involved women in their role as mothers, all children tested for the extent of achievement motivation were male and so were the business people sampled.¹⁵⁷ Harriett Moore and Gerhard Kleining's study of the self-image of different social strata focused only on men, contending that the smallest social unit, the family, had its place in society determined by its adult male members, while female stratification reflected that of men.¹⁵⁸ Contemporaries were aware of this tendency to some extent. Particularly among those who drew on the idea of ascribed status, gender was frequently referenced as a factor determining social position. Thus Smelser as well as others acknowledged that gender could interfere with an achievement based social system.¹⁵⁹

This exclusion of women from analyses of *Leistung* is in line with the maintenance of an idealised version of family life in which women's primary sphere of activity was the home in the 1950s.¹⁶⁰ In this understanding of women's contribution to society, their function as mothers and caregivers to the future workforce of the Federal Republic played an important role. Robert Moeller points to Helmut

¹⁵⁵ Dorothee Neff-Pakusch, "Von der Leistungsgesellschaft exkommuniziert? Soziologische Anmerkungen," in *Älter – doch dabei! Ruhestand in der Leistungsgesellschaft – zwischen Krise und Möglichkeiten*, Dienst an der Gemeinde 1, ed. Karl Friedrich Bäcker (Stuttgart: Ehrenfried Klotz, 1972), 35.

¹⁵⁶ Rosen, "The Achievement Syndrome," 211.

¹⁵⁷ McClelland, *The Achieving Society*, 40, 46, 60.

¹⁵⁸ Harriett Moore and Gerhard Kleining, "Das soziale Selbstbild," 93.

¹⁵⁹ Smelser, *Sociology*, 92.

¹⁶⁰ Robert G. Moeller, "Reconstructing the Family in Reconstruction Germany: Women and Social Policy in the Federal Republic, 1949-1955," in *West Germany under Reconstruction*, ed. Robert G. Moeller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 110.

Schelsky's writings as part of a discussion among sociologists and social theorists which elevated the status of the family in West German society, stressing the need to protect both it and women as the core of family life.¹⁶¹ In making his argument and outlining the changing roles of the sexes, Schelsky also drew on the concept of *Leistung*, contending that, while women were certainly capable of achieving in the same way as men, they no longer had the desire to do so.¹⁶²

Schelsky did allow that men had previously been the main achievers in society, but claimed that industrial development had gradually driven women into the work place. He identified two entirely different processes pushing women to seek work and a life beyond the confines of the family. Previous attempts at attaining education and work had been derived from an urge to construct a meaningful identity, manifesting as a willingness to achieve, in order to compensate for dissatisfaction with the familial role.¹⁶³ Yet this was no longer the case. Instead, the apparent independence of women in contemporary society was being driven by the heightened demands of the family.¹⁶⁴ Women worked because their husbands' "economic performance and income" was frequently insufficient. This change had also altered the nature of marriage as the pressures of modern life forced couples to approach marriage as a "social and economic community of achievement in the battle of life".¹⁶⁵ So, rather than finding a remit for individuality in achieving, women were now driven to do so by a sense of group solidarity, by the very ties that bound them to their family.¹⁶⁶ For working class families, this had always been the case, but in the levelled out society of the post-war era, it was becoming a universal pattern.

The conclusions Schelsky drew from this framework were highly contentious. He argued that many women would happily give up the insecurity and monotony of working life as it had ceased to be a means of personal empowerment and independence. Instead, women were merely being integrated into the

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 118-9.

¹⁶² Helmut Schelsky, *Wandlungen der Deutschen Familie in der Gegenwart*. (1952; repr., Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1967), 338.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 335. See also Helmut Schelsky, "Die gegenwärtige Problemlage der Familiensoziologie," in *Soziologische Forschung in unserer Zeit. Ein Sammelwerk Leopold von Wiese zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Karl Gustav Specht, 282-296 (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1951).

¹⁶⁴ Schelsky, *Wandlungen*, 337.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 340.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 338.

depersonalising mechanisms of industrial life later than men. Emancipation had thus become an additional pressure on women, as the final respite from competition, the home and the family, was no longer a refuge.¹⁶⁷ This argument had far reaching implications for Schelsky's account of *Leistung*. In his eyes, women's ability to achieve was never called into question. Rather, he posited that the drive to do so was detrimental to their happiness and by implication equally so to the felicity of men. This understanding of female labour, which stressed women as the bedrock of the family and shared by others such as Gerd Mackenroth and Hans Achinger emphasised the need to protect women and restore them to the home and the nuclear family, retaining the dependence of their status on their husband's.¹⁶⁸

While these restrictive tendencies were certainly a feature of women's lives in the Federal Republic, Christine von Oertzen has pointed out that part time work of married women and mothers alongside housework was by no means uncommon.¹⁶⁹ Part-time work for married women had become widespread by 1959, spurred on by a shortage of labour.¹⁷⁰ This activity outside the home was understood as part of a female need to work and desire to earn a supplementary income. However, in framing female labourers as a "special case" in need of protection and designating a specific format of professional activity, the hierarchy of the sexes was reproduced. Nevertheless, for von Oertzen, considerable change came about between the mid-fifties and mid-sixties.¹⁷¹ This dynamic is reflected in discussions of female achievement from the late 1950s onwards.

Individual researchers started calling for women's presence in the labour market and the role achieving played in their lives, to be acknowledged. Helge Pross, a researcher working with Adorno and Horkheimer at the Institute of Social Research, estimated that 8 million women were actively involved in working

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 338-9, 342-344.

¹⁶⁸ Robert G. Moeller, *Protecting Motherhood: Women and Family in the Politics of Postwar West Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 120-121, 134.

¹⁶⁹ Christine von Oertzen, *Die Lust am Zuverdienen: Geschlechterpolitik und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Westdeutschland 1948-1966* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 12.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 351.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 12-14.

life.¹⁷² Pross criticised Christian and bourgeois claims on a woman's supposedly natural disposition and traits. Encouraged to emulate these ideals, most women found themselves in a contradictory situation as a consequence. The femininity they were seeking to embody was no longer feasible. For Pross, women's presence in the labour market was a primary example of this dynamic.¹⁷³ She rejected claims such as Schelsky's that women were disinterested in work or saw it as an interim stage before marriage. On the contrary, they located a source of validation in the achievement of work.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, Edith Hinze's 1960 monograph on working women rejected Schelsky's contention that working life prior to marriage was a monotonous experience for them, defined by insecurity and competition. Quite the opposite, she stated, even at the level of factory floor work, many women found satisfaction in connecting with their co-workers. Hinze was also quick to point out that the *Leistung* of women as housewives and mothers was not acknowledged, despite the economic importance of such activities in the social order.¹⁷⁵ For both Pross and Hinze achieving in the workplace was a positive source of identity. At the same time the distorted perception of how women did and should live was causing a lack of social recognition for the work they did.¹⁷⁶

A correlate of this lack of acknowledgement of female *Leistung* was a deficit of confidence emanating from women themselves. Pross attributed women's unease at recognising their own achievements to an ideologically constructed image of women as weak and inferior to men.¹⁷⁷ A study surveying 900 married, working women conducted by Elisabeth Pfeil also theorised that the majority of women were uncomfortable admitting to any desire for recognition and achievement in the workplace. Most of the women Pfeil surveyed listed the need for additional, or indeed any, income as their reason for working. In Pfeil's

¹⁷² Helge Pross, "Die gesellschaftliche Stellung der Frau in Westdeutschland," *Deutsche Rundschau* 84:1 (Jan. 1958): 29.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁷⁵ Edith Hinze, *Lage und Leistung erwerbstätiger Mütter* (Cologne: Carl Heymanns, 1960), 245, 288.

¹⁷⁶ A similar point was made by Hans Anger and Hermann Vetter. Their research focussed on the university context and depicted performance as something of which both genders were equally capable. It was being inaccurately assessed among women at universities due to gender-bias painting women as less able or suited to achieving. See Hans Anger, *Probleme der deutschen Universität* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960); Hermann Vetter, "Zur Lage der Frau an den Westdeutschen Hochschulen," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 13:4 (1960): 644-660.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

analysis, only women with an academic background felt comfortable expressing such a wish to achieve outside the home. She theorised that women were more comfortable seeing their work as part of a shared way of life with their partners, perceiving it as a supra-personal task.¹⁷⁸ This kind of unease, for Pross and Pfeil, was evidence of the way in which women had internalised a social image of femininity at odds with *Leistung* in the workplace.

However, by the late 1960s the presence of married women in the workforce had been largely accepted, albeit with some limitations.¹⁷⁹ A study commissioned by the head of the government (*Ministerpräsident*) of North-Rhine Westphalia in 1965 argued that concern about the negative effects of married women entering the workplace was outdated and misplaced.¹⁸⁰ A balanced interchange of phases of working and not working generally had a positive effect both on the individual woman and family life. However, special cases such as an individually conditioned, strong professional orientation could cause severe problems.¹⁸¹ Kätsch thus allowed for female achievement in the workplace, though her analysis saw an excessive focus on *Leistung* as detrimental to a woman's role as wife or mother. By 1968, the focus had also come to rest on women in leading roles in business. Heinz Hartmann established that the 52 female entrepreneurs he surveyed showed confidence in their own achievements and felt they generally attained social recognition for them from a wide number of sources.¹⁸²

While the early 1950s were thus dominated by accounts that stressed the need to shield women from the pressure to achieve in the workplace and permit them to function as the centre of the family, the later fifties and sixties witnessed some change. Female researchers started depicting achievement in the workplace as a source of a feeling of self-worth. Concurrently, they criticised a social ideal of femininity that neither acknowledged female *Leistung* in the home nor permitted

¹⁷⁸ Elisabeth Pfeil, *Die Berufstätigkeit von Müttern: Eine empirisch-soziologischer Erhebung an 900 Müttern aus vollständigen Familien* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1961), 121-125.

¹⁷⁹ This can be seen as part of the broader process of dismantling a consensus around the male breadwinner model, which permitted female work only in times of necessity and only as a helpmate. See Karin Hausen, "Erwerbstätigkeit und erwerbstätige Frauen. Anmerkungen zur historischen Forschung," in *Frauen arbeiten: Weibliche Erwerbstätigkeit in Ost- und Westdeutschland nach 1945*, ed. Gunilla-Friederike Budde, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1997), 21.

¹⁸⁰ Elke Maria Kätsch, *Langfristige Bestimmungsgründe für die Erwerbstätigkeit verheirateter Frauen: Forschungsberichte des Landes NRW* (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1965), 92.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁸² Heinz Hartmann, *Die Unternehmerin: Selbstverständnis und soziale Rolle* (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1968), 24.

women to express a desire to achieve outside it. By the late 1960s, achieving in the workplace was acceptable for married women, with the caveat that family life should not suffer. It was also seen as a source of self-esteem for the female elite of entrepreneurs. The implicit ideal of a male achiever was thus starting to fade under the pressure of labour shortages. Yet it is important to bear in mind that some change in the discussion of single and married female labourers did not signify a fundamental shift in gender norms. Female achievement was seen as permissible within very strict parameters only.

VII: Health

Alongside the understanding that the achieving society favoured individuals who were both middle class and male, a third element of the ideal achiever started to surface in the later 1960s: health. The increasingly negative assessments of the achieving society arose not only from the rejection of American ideas and models but from discussions which linked society's focus on performance to poor health.

This dynamic was part of a longer-term development in the post war period. Patrick Kury has established that, in the 1950s and 1960s, medical practitioners and researchers used the diagnosis of a *Managerkrankheit*, in part, to critique the pressure to perform inherent in the era of reconstruction, economic growth and developing mass consumerism.¹⁸³ Moreover, in designating this illness an issue experienced predominantly by elite, male figures (despite evidence and insistence to the contrary), doctors contributed to the reinforcement of class and gender hierarchies.¹⁸⁴ As the 1960s wore on, *Leistung* as a source of illness regardless of social status increasingly became the subject of discussion. Here, the problematization of *Leistung* became part of the "psychological turn"¹⁸⁵, a shift of focus inwards to the individual rather than socio-structural analyses. In a spectacular popularisation of psychological knowledge, self-help groups

¹⁸³ Patrick Kury, *Der überforderte Mensch: Eine Wissensgeschichte vom Stress zum Burnout* (Frankfurt a. M: Campus, 2012), 118-126.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 124, 135.

¹⁸⁵ Paul Nolte, "Von der Gesellschaftsstruktur zur Seelenverfassung. Die Psychologisierung der Sozialdiagnose in den sechziger Jahren," in *Psychoanalyse und Protest: Alexander Mitscherlich und die 'Achtundsechziger'*, ed. Tobias Freimüller (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008), 70. The increasing popularity of psychological approaches up to the mid-seventies as part of an emotionalisation and reconceptualization of the self has also been described as a "Psychoboom", see Maik Tändler and Uffa Jensen, "Psychowissen, Politik und das Selbst. Eine neue Forschungsperspektive auf die Geschichte des Politischen im 20. Jahrhundert," in *Das Selbst zwischen Anpassung und Befreiung: Psychowissen und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Maik Tändler and Uffa Jensen (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012), 10.

encompassed roughly half a million participants by 1970.¹⁸⁶ As part of this broader change, the psychological and related physiological consequences of a systemic focus on achievement were discussed by sociologists, psychoanalysts and social psychologists from the mid-1960s onwards. The model of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* was no longer at the forefront of demonstrating 'western' superiority. Rather, it became a synonym for the human cost of a capitalist economy and society. These debates ran parallel to the much more radical critiques of a society focussed on performance expressed by the activists of the 1960s.

In this regard, the work of Alexander Mitscherlich, expert in psychosomatic medicine and promoter of psychoanalytical research, professor of psychology at the University of Frankfurt from 1966 to 1973, is particularly noteworthy.¹⁸⁷ Writing in 1966, he claimed that each society generated its own illnesses through material conditions and guiding images which determined affective behaviour.¹⁸⁸ Mitscherlich contended that a third to half of patients seeking medical assistance did so because of psychological experiences causing symptoms such as nausea, high blood pressure and headaches. In modern society, an individual's own wishes clashed so violently with the prohibitions and temptations of his or her environment that conflicts arose which outstripped a person's mental capacity to resist. Mitscherlich pointed to the *Managerkrankheit* as one example, theorising that "the existence and spread of such socially conditioned illnesses shows that the excessive ritualization of achievement in the achieving society brings new forms of endangerment of life."¹⁸⁹ *Leistungsgesellschaft*, in Mitscherlich's vocabulary, had little to do with the model of a society stratified through performance. Rather, the term denoted an overt preoccupation with *Leistung* on a broad scale.

This understanding was shared by a number of Mitscherlich's contemporaries, both West German and American. These included individuals such as Tobias

¹⁸⁶ Sven Reichardt, *Authenzität und Gemeinschaft: Linksalternatives Leben in den siebziger und frühen achtziger Jahren* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2014), 784.

¹⁸⁷ For details of Mitscherlich's life, see Freimüller ed., *Psychoanalyse und Protest*; Liliane Weissberg, "Das Unbewusste der Bundesrepublik. Alexander Mitscherlich popularisiert die Psychoanalyse," *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* 5:3 (2011): 45-64.

¹⁸⁸ Alexander Mitscherlich, *Krankheit als Konflikt*, Studien zur psychosomatischen Medizin 1 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1966), 13.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

Brocher, one of the primary advocates of group therapy, Otto von Mering, a social anthropologist employed by the University of Pittsburgh and Klaus Horn, later head of Social Psychology at the Sigmund-Freud-Institute in Frankfurt and Professor at the University of Frankfurt. A collection of writings on illness published in 1967 was edited by all four colleagues. While most of the contributions were reprinted pieces of work from other publications, the selection of material and headings it was presented under are of interest. To give one example, Talcott Parsons' work on defining the sick role in a specifically American context featured here. More importantly, an entire section was dedicated to examining "the achieving society as a pathogenic field".¹⁹⁰ The subject areas chosen provide us with some insight into what the consequences of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* were seen to be by Mitscherlich and his co-editors. Thus the section was composed of writings on hospitalism, the impact of noise on the psyche, a psychosomatic analysis of working women and industrial society as a psychosocial environment.¹⁹¹

The claim that over-emphasising *Leistung* as a society could lead to unhealthy responses was particularly reflected in discussions of alcoholism. Bremen-based researcher Stefan Wieser, in a study of German drinking behaviour, divided motivation for drinking into "hedonistic" and "achievement-oriented" categories. He associated this achievement orientation with those people who viewed life as a task to be fulfilled, even if this meant temporary discomfort.¹⁹² Wieser asserted that hedonistically oriented individuals were much more likely to favour inebriation and view it as acceptable.¹⁹³

Yet he was not the first to formulate a theory which connected a drive to achieve with alcohol consumption. British psychological anthropologist Margaret Bacon's 1965 study established a typology of the aims imparted to individuals through socialisation which also encompassed achievement. Bacon suggested that some societies exerted constant pressure on teenagers in order to overcome the

¹⁹⁰ Alexander Mitscherlich, Tobias Brocher, Otto von Mering and Klaus Horn eds., *Der Kranke in der modernen Gesellschaft*, Neue Wissenschaftliche Bibliothek 22: Soziologie (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1967), 155-218.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 155-218.

¹⁹² Stefan Wieser, *Das Trinkverhalten der Deutschen. Eine medizin-soziologische Untersuchung* (Herford: Nicolai, 1973), 104.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 97.

dependence of children, using social control to demand achievement and independence.¹⁹⁴ Precisely these societies, typified by the U.S., were more likely to produce alcoholics.¹⁹⁵ Alcohol offered relief to those who felt burdened by the tension between their need for dependence and care on the one hand and the demands of society on the other. For Bacon, then, a focus on achievement was *more* likely to lead to excessive alcohol consumption, not less likely as Wieser argued.

In the West German context, Wieser's assertion that hedonism, rather than a focus on achievement led to excessive alcohol consumption did not remain uncontested. Aldo Legnaro, later social scientist specialising in addictive behaviour and criminal sociology, questioned Wieser's conclusions in 1973. Legnaro pointed to Wieser's own survey, which indicated that of those who drank regularly and had a positive attitude towards inebriation, the majority were achievement oriented. Like Bacon, Legnaro hypothesised that alcohol helped bridge the gulf between the demands individuals made of themselves and the expectations they had been socialised to have of society and real chances in life, making this incommensurability dissolve. In Legnaro's analysis, the only way to truly understand the function of alcohol in an achievement oriented industrial society was to allow for the fact that domination (*Herrschaft*) played a very real part in the subjective experience of daily life.¹⁹⁶ A series of interviews Legnaro conducted with alcoholic patients at the Rheinisches Landeskrankenhaus Düsseldorf revealed a further achievement related dimension of alcoholism, an emphasis on *Leistung* in conjunction with an insecure masculinity.¹⁹⁷ Legnaro concluded that, in a society which tolerated and even condoned a range of addictions, those who were designated as addicts had a tough role to play as their manner of dealing with reality did not rest on social consensus.¹⁹⁸ This conclusion has far reaching implications for the achievement-oriented set of norms imparted by socialisation Legnaro saw as existent in society. It implied the possibility that

¹⁹⁴ Margaret Bacon and Mary Brush Jones, *Teen-Age Drinking* (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell, 1968), 98-201.

¹⁹⁵ Wieser, *Trinkverhalten*, 98. See also Margaret K. Bacon, Herbert Barry III, Irvin L. Child and Charles Synder, "A Cross-cultural Study of Drinking," *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 3 (1965): 78-90.

¹⁹⁶ Aldo Legnaro, "Soziologische Aspekte des Alkoholismus," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 25:1 (1973): 404.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 414.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 417.

other forms of addiction were equally responses to a pressure to achieve and a divergent reality, even if they were more socially acceptable.

An individual who did not struggle with addiction as a result of excessive achievement-orientation was also prone to suffer emotionally under the pressure to perform in everyday life. Psychologist Edith Zundel's assessment of the need for changes in social work in businesses stated as much. When explaining that more than half the employees she surveyed listed health concerns as their primary issue with regard to social care in the workplace, Zundel referenced both Parsons and Mitscherlich, adding that a preoccupation with health could also be the result of "the stress of calls for achievement and flexibility in the business," as well as a wish to be able to act as a consumer and experience different things in private life.¹⁹⁹ She suggested that social workers specialise on health issues in a manner reminiscent of psychiatric social workers in the U.K., in order to be able to uncover and treat the psychological and social background of health problems.²⁰⁰

The psychological problems that pressure to achieve and compete in the workplace could generate in people whose psychological development had already made them vulnerable was a further area of concern. Dietrich Fischer categorised both of these pressures as a factor contributing to an identity crisis in individuals whose socialisation processes had not gone smoothly, creating a disposition for such crises.²⁰¹ More specifically, he gave examples of two patients who had been forced to change jobs due to restructuring in the coal and steel industry. These patients (one male, one female and both middle-aged) had had to adjust to new, unfamiliar and rationally organised areas of activity or other ways of communicating and cooperating which pushed aside more immediate and lived forms of relating to colleagues.²⁰² Fischer linked psychological crises to external performance monitoring and the pressures to adapt in a new work environment.²⁰³ However, this stress was not equally harmful to everyone.

¹⁹⁹ Edith Zundel, "Sozialarbeit im Betrieb," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 24:2 (1972): 290.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 299.

²⁰¹ Dietrich Fischer, "Psychischer Zusammenbruch und Arbeitssituation," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 25:1 (1973): 451.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 452.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 457.

Rather, Fischer's model seems to assume that individual socialisation predisposed each person to deal with the pressure to achieve in a different way. Only those whose socialisation had been 'problematic' experienced problems as a result of the pressure to perform and performance monitoring.

These problems were not limited to Germany, it seems. West German sociologists, aside from drawing on British and American research in examining a societal focus on achievement, also moved away from the idea that the US was worth emulating in this regard. Writing on the U.S. in 1974, Hans Dieter Seibel warned of the dangers inherent in the clash between an ideology centring on achievement, a social system claiming to be structured in accordance with performance and a personality socialised into an orientation towards *Leistung*.²⁰⁴ In his eyes, the contradiction between both ideology and socialisation stressing achievement, and the lived social reality the individual experienced led to alienation, mental illness, even suicide. As the average American could not understand what factors determined their status in society, being raised to believe it was determined by achievement but experiencing a jumble of other criteria in allocation, a sense of alienation ensued. Frequently, this was also accompanied by a tendency to blame oneself, feel powerless and deprived of meaning.²⁰⁵ For Seibel, the strain of constantly attempting to make a reality that fell short when compared to the achieving ideal turned the individual against himself.

From the mid-sixties to the late seventies, *Leistung* was imbued with psycho-medical meaning. This process revealed a further characteristic implicit in the image of an ideal achiever in the form of sound health. *Leistung* became closely tied to psychological and physical illness experienced by every strata of society, contributing to alienation, alcoholism, psychological crises and other more socially accepted addictions. These health issues were caused by a pressure to achieve in the workplace or society more generally, an emphasis placed on *Leistung* in socialisation from an early age and the discrepancy between the ideal of achievement and the social reality. At the same time, the researchers formulating these theories, too, assumed that West German were living in a

²⁰⁴ Seibel, *The Dynamics of Achievement*, 5,7-8.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

'western', capitalist *Leistungsgesellschaft*, a system which was taking its toll on the population. This body of research called theories stressing the empowerment of the individual in a society defined by performance based mobility into question. In so doing, it was providing a call for reform rather than fundamentally questioning the system, as the critique of social structures promoting *Leistung* offered by many student and socialist activists did.²⁰⁶

VIII: Age

Youth was the final element of the ideal achiever that was revealed through the growing criticism of both *Leistungsgesellschaft* and *Leistung* from the mid-1960s on. As has been established, *Leistung* was predominantly tied to an understanding of work, or education as preparation for work, by the majority of West German sociologists. By extension, those who reached retirement age or whose advancing age interfered with their ability to achieve were placed outside the *Leistungsgesellschaft*. Implicitly, the ideal achiever was young and able-bodied as well as intellectually and psychologically in good condition. While this set of assumptions went largely unquestioned until the mid-1960s, an expanding debate about the connection between ageing, *Leistung* and the place of workers over the age of forty and pensioners in the *Leistungsgesellschaft* took shape.

One of the first to engage with the challenge of ageing in West Germany as a *Leistungsgesellschaft* was Dutch sociologist Ernest Zahn, who studied the impact of rising prosperity on European lifestyles.²⁰⁷ Writing in 1966, he drew on Parsons and Young to establish that "the state of full economic development is a meritocracy". Zahn immediately pointed out that "this condition, though embraced by naïve ideology, has problematic consequences." Disadvantaged groups were no longer those who were born and remained poor. Rather the dependence of each person's standard of living on age- and education-related ability to perform led to underprivileged phases of life, a dynamic which had fuelled the development of the welfare state.²⁰⁸ Based on Zahn's logic, age and performance were linked and the dynamics of an achieving society could not be

²⁰⁶ See Chapter IV.

²⁰⁷ On Zahn, see Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, "Youth, Consumption and Politics In the Age of Radical Change," in *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980*, ed. Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried (Oxford: Berghahn, 2006), 31

²⁰⁸ Zahn, "Wirtschaftliche Entwicklung," 222.

relied upon to secure the well-being of anyone whose age interfered with working life.

That advancing age brought with it a reduced capacity to achieve was not unquestioningly accepted. Studies commissioned by the Federal Government from the mid-1960s onwards sought to assess how long older individuals could remain a viable part of the workforce. These pieces began to revise the idea of a steady decline in ability to perform brought on by ageing. In particular, research conducted by psychologists Hans Thomae and Ursula Lehr stressed that ability to perform was only impacted by age to a limited degree, and factors such as education, practising existing skills, stimulation through the environment, personal attitude to performance and setting goals were more important.²⁰⁹ They also contended that the nature of *Leistung* had changed in the workplace, coming to include a new dimension of mental, rather than physical strain.²¹⁰ In this analysis, the social construction of old age and its psychological impact on the individual replaced a narrative of declining physical ability as a feature of growing older.²¹¹ Important as these findings were, their impact appears to have been limited.²¹² Sociological studies continued to focus on the ideal of a youth in connection with achievement in the workplace.²¹³

In 1970, Bernd Buchhofer, Jürgen Friedrichs and Hartmut Lütke used Linton's distinction between achieved and ascribed criteria to criticise the exaggeration of the levelling tendencies of industrial life.²¹⁴ For them, achieved and ascribed criteria interacted, as occurred when specific positions were reserved for older candidates due to the experience they required or, conversely, given to younger applicants because they had been educated in newer technologies.²¹⁵ Despite designating West Germany a *Leistungsgesellschaft*, Buchhofer et.al. stressed that both achieved and ascribed criteria such as age determined status. In their

²⁰⁹ Hans Thomae und Ursula Lehr ed., *Altern: Probleme und Tatsachen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1968); Hans Thomae and Ursula Lehr, *Berufliche Leistungsfähigkeit im mittleren und höheren Erwachsenenalter* (Göttingen: Otto Schwarz & Co, 1973), 76.

²¹⁰ Thomae and Lehr, *Berufliche Leistungsfähigkeit*, xiii.

²¹¹ Ursula Lehr, "Älterwerden – psychologisch gesehen," in *Älter – doch dabei!*, 20.

²¹² Other than one review, I have found little evidence that large numbers of West German researchers took up the idea of investigating *Leistung* in connection with later life.

²¹³ This was due to the limited funds available for projects focussing on subjects who were middle-aged or older. The discipline of gerontology was still in its infancy at this time.

²¹⁴ Buchhofer, Friedrichs, Lütke, "Alter," 300-301.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 319, 323.

description of the position occupied by pensioners, the authors theorised that young people were socialised to be part of the *Leistungsgesellschaft*, “adolescent age groups impart behavioural patterns of status acquisition through their forms of competition and can thus prepare for adequate behaviour in the achieving society”. By contrast people beyond working age “compensate for the relative instrumental lack of function and its social consequences through emotional solidarity and substitutive activities”.²¹⁶ For Buchhofer et. al., achievement-oriented behaviour was a central part of life until retirement, and not all job roles followed the pattern of marginalisation with increasing age. Yet the absence of achievement after retirement was not equated with meaninglessness: instead social interaction with an age cohort became the source of emotional support and meaningful activity.

The achieving society continued to be seen as a social structure that excluded anyone above retirement age well into the 1970s. Commentators such as psychologist Dorothee Neff-Pakusch described the fault line between elderly and younger drawn by the ideology of productivity and consumerism that, in her eyes, defined a *Leistungsgesellschaft*.²¹⁷ Writing in 1974, Ursula Lehr stressed that for many pensioners, their job had presented the only path to individual achievement. Relinquishing work could easily be accompanied by a sense of loss of self-worth.²¹⁸ She advised communities to invest in pre-retirement counselling to help pensioners adjust to their new lives.²¹⁹ Karl Friedrich Bäcker emphasised the capacity of pensioners to experience retirement in a much more positive fashion if the achieving society would stop casting them as elderly and devoid of purpose.²²⁰ Increased involvement in family life and meaningful leisure pursuits were part of a more fulfilling life after work.²²¹

The ideal of a young, middle-class achiever, contributing to national productivity by working to his best physical and mental ability thus remained the implicit core of the achieving society well into the 1970s. But, in the context of a need for an

²¹⁶ Ibid., 313. The authors once again drew on Parsons’ work, here on socialisation, when referring to achievement.

²¹⁷ Dorothee Neff-Pakusch, “Von der Leistungsgesellschaft exkommuniziert? Soziologische Anmerkungen,” in *Älter – doch dabei!*, 35.

²¹⁸ Lehr, “Älterwerden,” 27.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 28.

²²⁰ Karl Friedrich Bäcker, “Einleitung,” in *Älter – doch dabei!*, 12.

²²¹ Lehr, “Älterwerden,” 28.

expanded workforce, studies attempted to revise the assumption that increased age meant a decline in the ability to perform and that ageing always resulted in marginalisation in the labour market. At the same time, the model of the achieving society was employed to describe and engage with the exclusion of pensioners from large swathes of social life. By the seventies, psychologists and sociologists were trying to construct a version of retirement that provided meaning without stressing achievement.

IX: German models in the mid-seventies

The growing focus on the exclusion of specific groups from the achieving society and the engagement with the detrimental effects of an excessive focus on performance throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, resulted in a turn away from the concept of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* after 1975. The mid-1970s present a cut-off point for sociological engagement with the term.²²² The work of two researchers in particular demonstrates this dynamic.

The first body of work was from Freiburg-educated Hans Dieter Seibel who defined an achieving society in much the same way as others had before him, as a social structure which allotted status according to desirable abilities.²²³ But, unlike his colleagues, he attempted to dissociate the model of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* from an industrial society in the 'West' and applied his ideas to countries such as Nigeria. In Seibel's analysis, the achieving society was a problem-solving mechanism which emerged and vanished as the historical situation necessitated in any country, capitalist or socialist. Drawing on Linton's *Study of Man*, Seibel posited that if a society was under threat, it needed to draw on its problem solving capacity (reserves of talent, knowledge, and ability etc.) to deal with the issue.²²⁴ Once the problem had been resolved, a social structure based on achievement was no longer necessary and disintegrated.

²²² This does not mean that the discussion about *Leistung* ended. Rather, the *sociological* debate wound down.

²²³ Hans Dieter Seibel, "Problemlage und Schichtungssystem. Eine allgemeine Theorie der Entwicklung," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 27:4 (1975), 733. Seibel had been developing this theory from the late 1960s onwards, see also Günter Schröder and Hans Dieter Seibel, *Ethnographic Survey of Southeastern Liberia: The Koran and the Sapo* (Liberian Studies Association Monographs, 1968); Hans Dieter Seibel, "Leistung in vorindustriellen Gesellschaften," *Africa Spectrum* 3 (1972): 5-20; Hans Dieter Seibel and Ukandi G. Damachi eds., *Social Change and Economic Development in Nigeria* (New York: Praeger, 1973); Hans Dieter Seibel, *The Dynamics of Achievement*.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 734-735.

Applied to the contemporary world, Seibel argued, this meant the U.S. and the FRG were merely defined by “achievement ideologies which are geared towards the legitimation and maintenance of class privileges”.²²⁵ As recently as the decade after 1945, Germany had come close to being an achieving society but as technological and economic development moved forward, it had slowly shifted into being a non-achievement one again. Now achievement was merely one of a host of criteria determining the social situation of the individual and the allocation of job roles.²²⁶ Seibel’s understanding of an achieving society was not received favourably by the academic community.²²⁷ To all of his contemporaries, the concept of *Leistungsgesellschaft* remained firmly tied to a ‘western’, industrial way of life, its use could not be altered or extended.

The work of Michael Széplábi in 1974 also demonstrates that the model of an achieving society had passed its zenith as a tool in sociological research.²²⁸ Széplábi distinguished between three different versions of a *Leistungsgesellschaft*. The first was clustered around the macroeconomic principle of maximal economic growth of a society, the second drew on the socio-psychological principle of achievement as a motivator for economic performance and the last pivoted on the micro-sociological principle of achievement as a mechanism of status distribution.²²⁹

Széplábi used these models to engage with objections to the performance principle raised by student protestors and their intellectual figureheads such as Herbert Marcuse as well as incorporating the works of a wide range of theorists from Max Weber to David McClelland.²³⁰ His main interest lay in the third meaning of a *Leistungsgesellschaft*, the idea of using achievement and the rewards it generated to organise society. Széplábi built a hypothetical model of this kind of social system. Based on problems such as defining and measuring achievement and the limited nature of status, he concluded that it was impossible to construct

²²⁵Hans Dieter Seibel, “Problemlage und Schichtungssystem. Eine allgemeine Theorie der Entwicklung,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 27:4 (1975): 736.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 734.

²²⁷ Gerd Spittler, “Review of *Africana Collecta*, ed. Dieter Oberndörfer,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 22:3 (1970), 608-610.

²²⁸ Michael Széplábi, “Leistungsgesellschaft in der Diskussion. Zum soziologischen Gehalt der Auseinandersetzung,” *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 3:3 (1974), 296.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 295.

²³⁰ For details on Marcuse, see Chapter IV.

a consistent model on the ideal of using *Leistung* as the basis for allocating social standing.²³¹ This finding was the first of its kind. No other sociological commentator had ever tested the possibility of a coherent and consistent societal model of an achieving society in this way.

Széplábi also debunked any alleged links between the operation of the achievement principle and the mechanism of a free market.²³² He stated that the market mechanism was frequently identified with the operation of the achievement principle and *Leistungsgesellschaft* referred to as the overarching social model of order. However, the mechanism used to allot rewards was not achievement but supply and demand.²³³ The market value was thus declared the achievement value, the competitive model which was based on the principle of success declared this to be the achievement principle.²³⁴ This analysis has far reaching implications for the connection between the free market and a *Leistungsgesellschaft* so painstakingly established by Ordoliberalism in the aftermath of the Second World War. It called the frequently asserted connection between social and economic order into question, opening up the possibility of status being allotted on a basis other than performance. It was here that the ideological function of the concept began to feature. Széplábi argued that the reason the connection between the achievement principle and the market order kept being made was that the social problems of economic competition were painted over with the image of equality and justice associated with the *Leistungsgesellschaft*. The concept legitimised the existing social order, a risky strategy as logical or empirical reasoning could easily lead to destabilisation.²³⁵ By showing the tenuous link between *Leistung* and social as well as economic ideals, he was effectively jettisoning large swathes of conceptual language centring on *Leistung* and the *Leistungsgesellschaft* developed prior to the 1970s. Széplábi stressed that the claims of social justice through economic growth made in the era of the economic miracle were misleading, theorising they had led to social unrest in the late 1960s. Despite the comprehensive nature of his analysis, Széplábi's work received little response from his colleagues. Although the path he

²³¹ Széplábi, "Leistungsgesellschaft," 295, 302-204.

²³² Ibid., 306-307.

²³³ Széplábi accused Offe of making this mistake in his analysis.

²³⁴ Ibid., 306-307.

²³⁵ Ibid., 307-308.

had taken was different, the conclusions he reached were not new. The impracticability and ideological importance of stressing achievement had already been extensively debated among sociologists, as well as featuring prominently among activists on the radical Left.

X: Conclusion

In their post-war search for models of social order West German sociologists made use of American and British concepts of performance and *Leistungsgesellschaft*. In so doing they rejected efforts at continuing National Socialist depictions of social stratification based on racial, biological superiority and positioned the Federal Republic within the 'West'. While the late fifties and mid-sixties were generally characterised by the acceptance of Linton's and Parsons' ideas, the later 1960s were the site of increasing criticism of American and British concepts of achievement and the achieving society. West German commentators focussed on the ideological agenda behind claims of a just social order and the limited ability of American and British categories to further sociological insight.

This turn away from American and British ideas is reflected in a rejection of the U.S. as an exemplary society to emulate and theories of global order which rested on a supposedly superior stance towards achievement. In the early 1970s, West German commentators tried to adjust the category to suit the demands of *Ostpolitik*. Beyond this use of performance as a tool for comparison, researchers came to emphasise the exclusion and risks inherent in structuring a society around performance. Even within this criticism, a process of westernisation remains evident, as the models that were being critically appropriated were seen to emanate from the U.S.

Leistungsgesellschaft thus emerges as a model which reflected many of the political priorities and lived realities of the Federal Republic in the 1950s and 1960s: an ideal of an industrialised, internationally competitive and patriarchal society defined by the Cold War. These priorities are mirrored in this person of the ideal achiever: a young, male, healthy, middle-class individual capable of determining his own status through achievement in education and work.

However, these emphases shifted from the late 1960s onwards and, rather than honing in on West Germany competitiveness, the strain of a capitalist system increasingly became the focus of debates around *Leistung*. This concentration on the negative aspects of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* was the result of sustained engagement with different facets of both concepts.

Sociologists exploited international research to deny that West German society had become a classless entity. They criticised the education system for accepting and pushing students to emulate a version of achievement tied to the middle-classes, failing to aid those students whose socialisation had left them unable to meet standards set and pursuing achievement at the cost of all other goals. Furthermore, they responded to concerns about the competitiveness of the West German economy by discussing the type of achievement a modern economy required, and a university should enable students to offer.

Alongside this criticism, the impact of gender bias in assessing the contribution women made to the economy increasingly became the subject of debate from the late 1950s onwards. By the late 1960s, female *Leistung* in the workplace had become accepted to some extent, though still ringfenced by the image of a woman as a mother and carer. While women were, to some extent, included in the inner circle of those who achieved, psychologists and sociologists highlighted the marginalisation and exclusion increasing age brought with it in the *Leistungsgesellschaft*. This was accompanied by efforts to revise an understanding of ageing which stressed mental and physical decline as well as discussions of how a meaningful life could be led after retirement had placed a person outside the workplace and thus the achieving society.

The negative consequences of a focus on performance for psychological and physical wellbeing also entered into the debate from the late 1960s on. Illness as the perceived outcome of an excessive emphasis on performance featured prominently here, as part of a medicalised understanding of the achieving society. It foreshadowed a socialist theory of alienation that incorporated *Leistung* into the factors forcing an individual to turn against him or herself.

All of these aspects of an individual's ability to achieve and thus supposedly influence his/her own mobility came under scrutiny. The result was the image of a society in which ascribed and acquired criteria intermingled as health, age and

gender were found to play a role in the ability to perform and the societal perception of said performance. The damaging effects of focussing too intensely on *Leistung* as a society increasingly took centre stage and became synonymous with the dangers of life in an industrial society. As a consequence, efforts made to apply the model of an achieving society to new ground in the mid-1970s met with little success and the first systematic sociological study dedicated entirely to the model elicited virtually no response. *Leistungsgesellschaft* had been heavily invested with notions of 'western', economic productivity and Cold War competitiveness in West German society of the 1950s and '60s. As the more problematic repercussions of capitalism came to the fore in the late 1960s and 1970s, both concepts were subjected to extensive attacks.

There was a gradual revision of the model of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* and deepening of the idea of achievement in education, work and society more generally from the late 1950s onwards. It indicates that attention had already turned towards the potentially negative implications of both before and alongside the critique of *Leistung* voiced by the 68ers.²³⁶

²³⁶ Stoff dates this shift towards criticising *Leistung* around 1970, a finding which my research has not borne out. Stoff, "Das Leistungsprinzip," 299.

Chapter Four: The “almighty achievement principle”¹ – The critique of the concept of achievement between 1965 and 1975

I: Introduction

The criticism of the achieving society expressed by West German sociologists had continued to draw on the idea of the Federal Republic as a ‘western’ nation. This critique must be placed alongside a further important development in discussions of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* in the 1960s. The sixties and arguably their most prominent feature, the student movement and the New Left, have been the subject of much debate. A few areas of consensus have emerged, regarding the highly international character of the movement as well as the New Left’s multiple ideological and activist strands. Recent scholarship has done much to emphasise that, far from witnessing an abrupt outburst of discontent between 1967 and 1969, many of the issues being publicised by the Extra-Parliamentary Opposition (APO) and German Socialist Students’ Association (SDS), such as the Nazi past, had been the subject of debate since the later 1950s, though less widely so before the height of student discontent.² More recently, the role of the seventies as a “structural break”, marking the declining importance of the established institutional order and ways of behaving as well as initiating a period of transition has come to the fore of scholarly interest.³

This chapter aims to assess how the concept of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* was appropriated by members of the New Left, which groups drew on the term and what meaning they invested it with as well as trying to establish whether this appropriation had any effect on subsequent uses of the concept. To that end, the chapter draws on various collections of material including issues of the journal *Kursbuch*, one of the most important mouth pieces for the extra-parliamentary opposition with a circulation of roughly 50,000 in 1968, between 1965 and

¹ Herbert Marcuse, “Die Revolte der Lebenstrieb. Vortrag auf den 6. Frankfurter Römerberggesprächen über ‘Die Angst des Prometheus’, 19 Mai 1979,” In *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung: Von der Flaschenpost zum Molotowcocktail. 1946-1995*, vol. 2, *Dokumente*, ed. Wolfgang Kraushaar (Marburg: Rogner & Bernhard, 1998), 826.

² See Thomas Etzenmüller, *1968 – Ein Riss in der Geschichte?* (Konstanz: UVK, 2005), 5; Schildt, Siegfried and Lammers, *Dynamische Zeiten*; Simon Kießling, *Die antiautoritäre Revolte der 68er. Postindustrielle Konsumgesellschaft und säkulare Religionsgeschichte der Moderne* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006).

³ Doering-Manteuffel and Raphael, *Nach dem Boom*, 10-11; Jaraus, “Verkannter Strukturwandel,” 9-23.

1975.⁴ In addition, an edited collection of documents charting the relationship between the Frankfurt School and the student movement and material released by Jürgen Habermas, Oskar Negt, Herbert Marcuse, Reimut Reiche as well as publications by various organisations such as the Socialist Patients Collective, Kommune 2 and members of women's groups will be considered.

From the mid-sixties to the late seventies, a critique of *Leistungsgesellschaft* forms a unifying factor in the highly diverse 'New Left'. In writings stemming from the intellectuals of the Frankfurt School, the working and basis groups formed by protestors, communes, autonomous groups and movements such as feminism, the concept of *Leistung* frequently reappeared. 'New Left' is hardly a precise term, however, it expresses these various collectives' efforts to find an alternative to the established Left and the parliamentary system of the Federal Republic. Within this shared orientation there was considerable range in focus: some groups were anti-authoritarian, others adhered very closely to established socialist orthodoxy, or focussed specifically on issues such as sexuality, while yet others sought to move way from socialist labels entirely. Despite this plethora of ideological positions, these groups sought to carve out an autonomous way of life to address the sense of alienation they felt when confronted with state and society of the Federal Republic.

Sven Reichardt and Detlef Siegfried have employed the concept of a "milieu" to describe the alternative scene after 1970 and into the 1980s. In so doing, both have sought to draw attention to the patterns of behaviour and lifestyle, the material situation, forms of communication and social relationships and shared symbolic actions uniting the "scene", which generally eschewed fixed structures in its focus on small-scale, democratic and project-based work.⁵ In what follows, the term 'New Left' has been employed to denote the various groups mentioned above, primarily as this chapter dedicates considerable space to discussing not only those who sought to put theoretical insight into practice and thus constitute

⁴ Gerrit Dworok, "Review of 1968 und die '68er' – Ereignisse, Wirkungen und Kontroversen in der Bundesrepublik," H-Net Reviews, accessed 30th March, 2016, <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=34666>.

⁵ Sven Reichardt and Detlef Siegfried, "Das Alternative Milieu. Konturen einer Lebensform," in *Das Alternative Milieu: Antibürgerlicher Lebensstil und linke Politik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Europa 1968-1983*, ed. Sven Reichardt and Detlef Siegfried (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010), 10.

part of the milieu, but also those who created theory with little connection to experimental lifestyles (e.g. Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas).

The story of uses of *Leistung* in this context is intimately intertwined with the rise and disintegration of the SDS as well as the increasing fragmentation of the New Left more generally. The following outline is thus intended to provide a brief overview of the trajectory of the New Left from the mid -1960s to the late 1970s as a backdrop for many of the developments discussed in this chapter. Starting with the Extra-Parliamentary Opposition (APO) and the Socialist Students' Association (SDS), the grievances being raised by (predominantly student) protestors covered considerable terrain, including domestic political issues such as the draft emergency laws, allegations of fascism, a failure to confront the fascist past, a lack of parliamentary opposition due to the Grand Coalition and the continuing existence of authoritarianism. Western involvement in the Vietnam War and a need for university reform also constituted some of the main loci of protest.⁶ While easily one of the most vocal bodies of the movement, the SDS was by no means a large-scale organisation. Even at its peak in 1968, membership was only just over 2,000 people, but the SDS was the "single most important focus of theoretical debate and discussion".⁷ After increasingly intense clashes with police, the passing of the Emergency Law, mounting internal divisions and the advent of a social-liberal coalition to power, the SDS disbanded in 1970. At this point a series of groups (such as Kommune 1 and Kommune 2) had already broken away from the SDS or formed outside it (such as the Socialist Patients' Collective) to explore issues they considered central. The New Left grew increasingly fragmented, splitting in a number of different directions. These included the so-called K-groups, predominantly Maoist or Leninist cadre organisations who sought to mobilize the working masses. As part of this work, students left universities and formed so called *Basisgruppen* or grass-roots groups to foster democratic processes. A second group, including the infamous Red Army Faction, fully embraced the use of violence turning to terrorism. A further option was to retreat from the political activism of the SDS or mainstream politics and attempt to create an alternative version of society by initiating

⁶ Nick Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and Democracy* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 101.

⁷ Andrei Markovits and Philip S. Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 51.

personal transformation, for example by joining communes or autonomous groups. By the early 1970s gay and women's groups seeking to move beyond the male, heteronormative agenda of the student protest coalesced around issues such as decriminalising homosexuality, abortion and combatting the stigmatisation of gays and lesbians. In the mid-1970s, citizens' initiatives formed to address issues ranging from environmentalism to nuclear proliferation, starting to lay the foundations for the Greens.⁸

Within this broader historical development of the New Left, the anti-capitalist critique of society offered by the Frankfurt School as well as the (various shadings of) socialist, autonomous and radical feminist proponents of the movement drew on the concept of a *Leistungsgesellschaft*. However, unlike the majority of Ordoliberalists, the narrative offered here presented the achieving society not as a means for realising potential, but as a mechanism of exclusion and disempowerment. In so doing, these activists were radicalising and extending the earlier censure of *Leistungsgesellschaft* expressed by West German sociologists.

This redefinition of the achieving society can be subdivided into a five distinct areas. The first is the use of the concept of an "authoritarian achieving society" by exponents of the Frankfurt School, a term linked to but conceptually separate from the second area of investigation, the "achievement principle" believed to be in operation in West German society. The third section examines conceptualisations of a pressure to achieve within this framework, as expressed by student protestors and activists concerned with broader social issues. The fourth engages with practical attempts to move beyond the achievement principle in the form of group or collective organisations. The final section deals with the appropriation and extension of the concept of achievement and the achieving society by the women's movement.

The achieving society and the principles it contained were overwhelmingly portrayed as a negative phenomenon in West Germany between 1965 and 1975. Far from being limited to the critique offered by the anti-authoritarian elements of the student movement, the pressure to achieve as a social phenomenon manifesting in areas as diverse as medical and educational practice. Both

⁸ Ibid., 52-80.

intellectuals and activists employed the concept to describe the oppressive, isolating and harmful features of a capitalist system. In so doing, many created textual explorations of the various emotional and psychological consequences of capitalism, contributing to the genesis of a 'new subjectivity' in the 1970s. However, attempts to move beyond achievement or performance as a factor structuring group work and human interaction were riddled with difficulties, not least the lack of workable and constructive alternatives.

II: The Achieving Society, the achievement principle and the Frankfurt School

The concept of *Leistung* (including a *Leistungsgesellschaft*, *Leistungsprinzip*) was used to characterise the economic, political and social order of West Germany by members of the Frankfurt School throughout the late 1960s and into the mid to late 1970s. Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas and Oskar Negt were the three most prominent figures affiliated with the School to employ the term, doing so by equating the model of an authoritarian achieving society with a capitalist order in which the achievement principle reigned supreme. The concepts fulfilled a dual function for all three theorists: they were used to reveal the repressive truth of the West German system but also served to summarise the ideology covering it up, a complex of ideas rooted in the psychology of the individual and a collective bourgeois mentality.

Before engaging with the specific uses the concept of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* was put to by these theorists, a cursory description of the Frankfurt School as well as the differing relationships each thinker had with the student protest movement will offer a broader context for these ideas. The "school", perhaps a misleading term considering how many different projects and approaches it covers, was closely associated with the Institute of Social Research, which was founded in the interwar period, moved to the US during the Third Reich and re-opened in Frankfurt in 1951. It accommodated a group of scholars who were critical of traditional interpretations of Marxism as expressed by many Communist parties and wished to offer an account of the development of capitalist systems in the twentieth century. The Institute was also the birthplace of Critical Theory, an approach devised by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. Broadly speaking, the theory aimed to offer a critique of society which was self-aware and sought

to examine its own assumptions. The result was an intellectual tradition striving to reveal the capitalist mechanisms which intervened in and changed human interaction while presenting themselves as natural. The Frankfurt School came to denote a Neo-Marxist approach drawing on areas as diverse as psychoanalysis and philosophy in explaining capitalist systems.⁹

Each of the three theorists within the school had a different relationship with the student protests. Despite the influence Jürgen Habermas held as a role model, and the sympathy he exhibited for the students' concerns, he soon became concerned as to the trajectory of protests, cautioning activists against "left-wing fascism" by June 1967. Although Habermas subsequently distanced himself from this terminology, the protestors, in turn, did not unquestioningly follow and endorse his views, disrupting his seminars and publishing caricatures of him in the magazine *Konkret*.¹⁰ Herbert Marcuse's relationship with the protestors was somewhat less problematic, perhaps due to his decision to remain in the U.S., which permitted him to avoid the tension returning émigrés faced in the post-war republic and altered his attitude to West German democracy.¹¹ Moreover, Marcuse continued the School's work in Critical Theory in a manner different from his colleagues, who increasingly emphasised the distinction between theory and practice when pressured by the student movement.¹² The publication of Marcuse's 1964 work *The One Dimensional Man* marked his ascent to one of the key intellectual figures for student protestors on both sides of the Atlantic.¹³ Oskar Negt had studied with Adorno and Horkheimer and was working as Habermas' assistant in 1967. During his time as a student and subsequently, he was a member of the SDS and APO, taking up a position as professor of sociology in 1970. Negt worked to ensure the collaboration of trade unions and the socialist

⁹ Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), xvii, 3, 81, 86.

¹⁰ Detlef Horster, *Jürgen Habermas* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1991), 108-109; Stefan Müller-Doohm, *Jürgen Habermas* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2008), 34.

¹¹ Claus-Dieter Krohn, "Die westdeutsche Studentenbewegung und das 'andere Deutschland'," in *Dynamische Zeiten*, 699, 705.

¹² *Ibid.*, 707.

¹³ John Abromeit, "The Limits of Praxis: The Socio-Psychological Foundations of Theodor Adorno's and Herbert Marcuse's Interpretations of the 1960s Protest Movements," in *Changing the World, Changing Oneself: Political Protest and Collective Identities in West Germany and the U.S in the 1960s and 1970s*, eds., Martin Klimke and Carla MacDougall (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 13-38.

left and was among those attacking Habermas for his accusations of “left-wing fascism” in 1968, a decision Negt later apologised for.¹⁴

Autoritäre Leistungsgesellschaft

Each theorist’s use of the concept highlighted different dimensions of the West German system, though a shared core of the term can be established among all three. Most importantly, their use of the concept “authoritarian achieving society” strove to examine and present the mechanisms of oppression and exploitation that were operating in West German society.

For Negt, the *autoritäre Leistungsgesellschaft* was defined by the absence of parliamentary government encompassing a genuine opposition. Speaking just after the shooting of Benno Ohnesorg in June 1967, Negt interpreted Ohnesorg’s killing as a further step in the stabilisation of an authoritarian achieving society.¹⁵ Negt added depth to the concept a few months later when speaking at a socialist conference, charting a trend towards the authoritarian achieving society, in which monopolistic and state decision making power increasingly sought to displace political discussion, parliamentary control and compromises between different interests as unnecessary procedures in a society run much like a business.¹⁶ Negt’s use of the concept was not restricted to these brief months in 1967, he published two editions of a longer analysis of “the ideology of the authoritarian achieving society” between 1970 and 1972.¹⁷

Habermas’ analysis of the authoritarian achieving society overlapped with that of his assistant Negt: in a speech on the political role of students in the Federal Republic given in June 1967, Habermas outlined the threat posed by the *autoritäre Leistungsgesellschaft* to the remaining freedoms present in university life. He asserted the need to avert the complete integration of universities into the social system of labour in order to increase productivity. Rather, the political

¹⁴ Horster, *Habermas*, 110; Müller-Doohm, *Habermas*, 35.

¹⁵ Oskar Negt, “Benno Ohnesorg ist das Opfer eines Mordanschlags. Kundgebung auf dem Frankfurter Römerberg. 8 Juni 1967,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 242.

¹⁶ Oskar Negt, “Politik und Protest, Referat auf einer sozialistischen Arbeitskonferenz, 28. Oktober 1967,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 297.

¹⁷ Oskar Negt, “Gesellschaftsbild und Geschichtsbewußtsein der militärischen und wirtschaftlichen Führungsschichten. Zur ideologie der autoritären Leistungsgesellschaft,” in *Der CDU Staat 2: Analysen zur Verfassungswirklichkeit der Bundesrepublik*, ed. Gert Schäfer and Carl Nedelmann (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1972), 359-424.

public sphere needed to be rooted in the institutions of higher education.¹⁸ Both Habermas and Negt's concerns reveal their conviction that an authoritarian achieving society focused exclusively on productivity, eliminating any right to or need for the involvement of the public in the process of political debate and decision making.

Unlike Habermas and Negt's concern with the impact of an authoritarian achieving society on political activism and culture, Herbert Marcuse highlighted a different dimension of oppression in the concept. In a speech given at the Freie Universität in Berlin in 1967, Marcuse availed himself of the concept of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* to offer an explanation of the student movement, which could not be defined as Marxist or socialist in any traditional sense, eluding class-based definition. Marcuse characterised the unusual composition of the opposition as a reaction to the "authoritarian-democratic *Leistungsgesellschaft*", the "one-dimensional society".¹⁹ This particular system was, Marcuse argued, mainly defined repressive tolerance. It integrated the ruled classes on a material basis of controlled and satisfied needs, which reproduced monopoly capitalism. In this system consciousness was both manipulated and repressed. Opposition to these mechanisms came from outsiders, whose needs capitalism/the achieving society either could not or did not wish to satisfy or from the privileged few whose consciousness and instincts could break through social control mechanisms. Education here was the means permitting the latter group to recognise the true state of affairs. Marcuse thus treated the term *Leistungsgesellschaft* as a blanket concept, summarising his critique of society and expressing its repression.

Negt invested the concept with another feature: the absence of fair allocation of individual opportunity. Rather than being limited to the problems posed by the Grand Coalition, the class society underlying the authoritarian achieving society prevented any "just distribution of individual opportunities in life according to the principle of achievement".²⁰ Negt is the only member of the Frankfurt School

¹⁸ Jürgen Habermas, "Rede über die politische Rolle der Studentenschaft in der Bundesrepublik," Referat auf dem Kongreß "Bedingungen und Organisation des Widerstandes in Hannover, 9. Juni 1967," in *Frankfurter Schule*, 248.

¹⁹ Herbert Marcuse, *Studentenbewegung –und was danach?* (Berlin: Argument Verlag, 1979), 2.

²⁰ Negt, "Politik," in *Frankfurter Schule*, 297.

to refer to the achievement principle as a mechanism that continued to determine social position.²¹ His comment is worth dwelling on, as it implies that a genuine application of this mechanism would generate a just social structure. The problem with West Germany as an achieving society was its class basis and authoritarianism, not the dimension of achievement it contained. However, given that the principle was not correctly applied and tied to the capitalist system, it needed to be rejected. This juxtaposition of class society and achieving society was not taken on in the language of the student movement and subsequent groupings deriving from it. Nor did Negt make any further comments indicating a potentially positive structure generated by consistently applying achievement as a standard to allot social status. The term most commonly denoted political and social manipulation and oppression for economic, exploitative ends.

III: From society to principle: *Leistungsprinzip* – its historical roots, status and effect on West German society

While these references to an achieving society were common enough in Negt's and Habermas' works in particular, their focus also rested extensively on the notion of a *Leistungsprinzip* or an ideology valuing *Leistung*, an area where their approach differed from Marcuse's. The following section will be dedicated to exploring all three men's uses of these concepts, the alternatives they offered and the influence their ideas exerted on the radical left more broadly.

Marcuse's use of the concept of an achieving society was much more cursory than Habermas and Negt's. To my knowledge, he only employed the term once, in his speech at the FU and then merely as a synonym for his ideas on repression as expressed in the *One Dimensional Man*. This work has generally been credited as the piece of writing that secured him the admiration of American and European students.²² Yet, when it comes to his ideas on performance, the vital piece of work is his *Eros and Civilisation*, which was originally published in English in 1955 and, in 1957, in German.²³ The work was written and released in English for a range

²¹ Habermas's student Claus Offe had also engaged with the idea that performance determined status but had rejected it as a myth. Claus Offe, *Leistungsprinzip und industrielle Arbeit: Mechanismen der Statusverteilung in Arbeitsorganisationen der industriellen 'Leistungsgesellschaft'* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1970), 18.

²² John Abromeit and W. Mark Cobb eds., *Herbert Marcuse: A critical reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 2.

²³ Although Marcuse had been developing some of the main ideas in *Eros and Civilisation* since the mid-1940s, his earlier writings include no reference to the achievement principle. For

of reasons, not least as Marcuse as living in the U.S., where there was a large audience for psychoanalytical text, and the book was based on a series of lectures given at the Washington Institute of Psychiatry.²⁴ Combined with Marcuse's later popularity both in the U.S. and Europe, the publication also indicates that the critique of performance the work contained extended beyond Germany. In *Eros and Civilisation*, Marcuse aimed to develop a historical understanding of the psychoanalytical categories Freud had outlined in his later work to expose the problematic mechanisms in operation in contemporary society.²⁵ The notion of a *Leistungsprinzip* played a central role, encapsulating a repression so absolute that it structured the individual psyche as well as society. It is this particular version of the performance principle which exerted considerable influence on the radical left, in particular Reimut Reiche, Kommune 2 and the group *Subversive Aktion*. Given the importance of psychoanalysis to many 68ers, the resonance of Marcuse's argument and approach is perhaps not all too surprising.²⁶

Marcuse undertook to examine the notion of progress and civilisation underlying Freud's work, questioning the idea that all cultural progress was inherently based on the denial, repression or restraint of basic human urges. According to Freud, this process occurred via the operation of a "reality principle", which was "the sum of norms and values, which are required as hegemonic, normal conduct in an existing society."²⁷ At this point in his analysis, Marcuse intervened in the Freudian model, grafting the concept of performance to that of the reality principle. He argued that Freud had been insufficiently aware of the historically conditioned nature of the reality principle, positing that the "performance principle" was "the reigning historical form of the reality principle"²⁸ and was

beginnings of ideas developed in *Eros and Civilisation* see Herbert Marcuse, "Some Remarks on Aragon," in *Technology, War and Fascism. Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, ed. Douglas Kellner (London: Routledge, 1998) 199-214.

²⁴ Thomas Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School in Exile* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 285.

²⁵ Herbert Marcuse, *Triebstruktur und Gesellschaft: Ein philosophischer Beitrag zu Sigmund Freud*, Herbert Marcuse Schriften, vol. 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 9.

²⁶ Pascal Eitler, "Die 'sexuelle Revolution' – Körperpolitik um 1968," in *Handbuch 1968: Zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Studentenbewegung*, eds. Martin Klimke, Joachim Scharloth, (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2007), 243.

²⁷ Herbert Marcuse, "'Ökologie und Gesellschaftskritik,' Vortrag vor Studenten der kalifornischen Naturfreunde-Bewegung," in *Frankfurter Schule*, 796.

²⁸ Marcuse, *Triebstruktur*, 38.

composed of “the production of surplus value, positivism, efficiency and competition.”²⁹

Marcuse went further, explicitly equating performance with work by stating that the scarcity of resources on earth meant that “every possible satisfaction requires labour”.³⁰ Individuals were thus forced to suppress their urges for the majority of their adult lives in order to secure their limited gratification.³¹ However, the manner in which people worked in contemporary society was not designed to minimize need or maximize satisfaction, it was rather a means of perpetuating the power of an elite.³² Thus performance did not empower the individual, aiding self-realisation. The individual had no choice in performing, it was the only way to survive. Marcuse argued that repression had gone beyond the most basic form of control necessary to preserve society. Instead, “surplus repression”, had developed to ensure the perpetuation of power structures based on the exploitation of alienated labour.³³

The notion of performance was thus essential to introducing a historical dimension to the Freudian psychoanalytical vocabulary. It was employed to illuminate the extent to which the individual psyche of each member of society had been permeated by a wholly economic understanding of life and mode of behaviour. For Marcuse, individual conduct was subsumed under and dictated by these essentially economic criteria, a set of normative behavioural standards that left no space for any other type of fulfilment or reflection.³⁴

The performance principle meant that “society is stratified according to the competing economic performances of its members”, but this was merely part of a much bigger problem.³⁵ Marcuse’s focus was on the effect of the performance principle of the individual mind and social dynamics it reflected.

By 1962, his analysis was being applied in the student paper *Subversive Aktion*. An anonymous article supported his assertion that the performance principle

²⁹ Herbert Marcuse, “‘Marxismus und Feminismus,’ Diskussionsvorlage für eine Diskussion mit Frankfurter Frauen im Institut für Sozialforschung, 29. Juni 1974,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 781.

³⁰ Marcuse, *Triebstruktur*, 38.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

³² *Ibid.*, 39, 46.

³³ *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁴ This included the subordination of sexuality. For an interesting discussion of this idea see Karin Schrader Klebert, “Die kulturelle Revolution der Frau,” *Kursbuch* 17 (June 1969): 35-36.

³⁵ Marcuse, *Triebstruktur*, 45.

was the central category in understanding the ideology of a bourgeois capitalist system, Marcuse's framework was used to reveal the commodification and objectification of human beings inherent within capitalism.³⁶

This performance-centred interpretation was also taken up by members of the SDS and extended further. SDS activist and sociology student Reimut Reiche critiqued Freud's construction of the reality and achievement principles generated by the oedipal complex throughout human history. Reiche stated that the achievement principle Freud had presented as a perennial human trait was in fact a distinctly bourgeois phenomenon. For Reiche, the achievement principle was "only possible and necessary" in a "commodity-producing society, which is built on competition and capital."³⁷

In an explanatory note, Reiche expanded his outline of the achievement principle. He admitted that it was present in pre-industrial societies. However, the ethos developed by the bourgeoisie from the outset of industrialisation constituted a particular "collective manner of processing libidinous desires", stringently censoring children in what Freud termed the "anal phase" and thus aversely influencing their development.³⁸ Reiche not only took on Marcuse's assertion that the achievement principle was the dominant category regulating human behaviour in West German society, he tied it even more closely to capitalism and the rise of the middle classes.³⁹

A further feature of Marcuse's analysis which was to have a lasting impact derived from his juxtaposition of achievement and sexuality. The performance principle, Marcuse posited, was inherently hostile to sexuality.⁴⁰ Drawing on Wilhelm Reich's assertion that a capitalist economy was based on the denial of the sex

³⁶ "Abrechnung', Subversive Aktion, Dezember 1962," in *Frankfurter Schule*, 162-163.

³⁷ Reimut Reiche, "Ist der Ödipuskomplex universell?" *Kursbuch 29* (September 1972): 164. There appears to have been some change here in Reiche's ideas. He had previously contested Marcuse's understanding of the reality principle, as well as his designation of the performance principle as its form. See Heide Berndt/ Reimut Reiche, "Die geschichtliche Dimension des Realitätsprinzips," in *Antworten auf Herbert Marcuse*, ed. Jürgen Habermas (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1968), 108.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

³⁹ Marcuse's work was criticised for trying to historicise Freud's abstract concepts. See Harald Wieser und Jochen Beyer, "Psychoanalyse, Kapitalmystifikation und Ideologie," *Kursbuch 29* (September 1972): 125-156.

⁴⁰ Marcuse, *Triebstruktur*, 48.

drive with devastating consequences for the individual and collective psyche,⁴¹ Marcuse criticised the limited version of sexuality that was currently socially accepted. His use of Reich's analysis of the need for sexual liberation dovetailed with the anti-fascism of many of the student protestors. They saw turning to Reich's works, among others, as part of recovering a tradition destroyed by National Socialism. Moreover, their study of his calls for sexual liberation was part of their revolt against the sexual conservatism of the fifties which they saw and misunderstood as a continuation of fascist sexual politics.⁴² Marcuse's mid-fifties criticism of the understanding of sexuality in operation in western societies contributed to the emerging politics of the body which were to prove so central to '68'.⁴³ Within this critique, a liberated, heteronormative sexuality was contrasted with a focus on performance.

In Marcuse's analysis, the body and mind had become the instruments of alienated labour, so a sexuality focused on anything other than reproduction was highly problematic.⁴⁴ If viewed as an end in itself, sexuality offered a source of pleasure outside the reality principle. The sex drive was a force which could threaten the precarious social stability of a society based on repression.⁴⁵ Instead, the body was desexualised, all of the libido was focused on one part of the body, the genitals, leaving the rest free for work.⁴⁶ All other forms of sexual understanding, which rebelled against the performance principle, were labelled as perversions.⁴⁷ Marcuse went further than Reich's original framework, constructing a definition of sexuality which extended beyond intercourse and orgasm, encompassing the entire body and a freed mind.⁴⁸ In Marcuse's opinion, *Leistung* was opposed to this widened understanding of sex, which was tied to the pleasure principle as the source of erotic enjoyment.

⁴¹ Wilhelm Reich, *The Sexual Revolution: Toward a Self-Regulating Character Structure* (1936; repr., New York: Farrar, Status & Giroux, 1974), 3. On the importance of Reich's views for 68 see Eitler, "Körperpolitik," in *Handbuch 1968*, 237.

⁴² Dagmar Herzog, "Antifaschistische Körper. Studentenbewegung, sexuelle Revolution und antiautoritäre Kindererziehung," in *Nachkrieg in Deutschland*, ed. Klaus Naumann (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001), 542; Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism* (Princeton: PUP, 2005), 142, 159.

⁴³ Eitler, "Körperpolitik," in *Handbuch 1968*, 237.

⁴⁴ Marcuse, *Triebstruktur*, 81.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 134,173,191.

Here too, Reimut Reiche, agreed with and elaborated upon Marcuse's assessment of the sexual oppression and repression perpetrated by the capitalist system. In *Sexuality and Class Struggle*, Reiche outlined the manipulation of sexuality, including the narrow focus on a heterosexual monogamy, in a society dominated by the performance principle and centring on economic exploitation. For Reiche, the compulsions of the world of work and consumption were transferred to the realm of sexual activity, manifesting in a "pressure to achieve" sexually and a sense that, ultimately, the *Leistung* offered here was just as meaningless as performance in the workplace.⁴⁹ As the president of the SDS, Reiche was particularly important in popularising the works of both Reich and Marcuse.

Marcuse's understanding of the erotic went beyond discussions on sexuality such as those offered by Reiche. Eroticism was not tied exclusively to sexuality; instead it denoted a basic human urge to seek pleasure and gratification, which generated unmitigated and real enjoyment of life.⁵⁰ It was within the pleasure principle and its ties to eroticism, eternally struggling with the performance principle, that Marcuse located the potential for a radically different human future.⁵¹ He argued that the very pervasiveness which characterised the performance principle had laid the foundation for a world free of it. It was now possible to envision a future in which people worked less, providing them with ample time to dedicate to other pursuits.⁵² In a world without surplus repression, the pleasure principle would be rediscovered, the human body and mind would be re-eroticised and no longer understood as a tool for alienated labour.⁵³ Instead, pleasure would be installed in its rightful place, a pleasure which Marcuse took to mean not merely sexual gratification, but also creativity and imagination, dissolving the division between reason and the senses that performance had generated.⁵⁴ His ideal world would thus be a living embodiment of the absence of performance, free of the stranglehold *Leistung* currently exerted over the human mind, body and the relationships among individuals.

⁴⁹ Reimut Reiche, *Sexualität und Klassenkampf: Zur Abwehr repressiver Entsublimierung* (Frankfurt: Verlag Neue Kritik, 1968), 8, 39, 44, 106.

⁵⁰ Douglas Kellner, "Marcuse and the Quest for Radical Subjectivity," in *Marcuse*, 86.

⁵¹ Marcuse, *Triebstruktur*, 116, 134.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 137.

⁵³ Kellner, "Marcuse," in *Marcuse*, 88.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 88; Marcuse, *Triebstruktur*, 124, 139, 160. See also Herbert Marcuse, "Befreiung von der Überflussesgesellschaft," *Kursbuch* 16 (March 1969): 193.

Despite the degree of attention Marcuse gave to elaborating a vision of life without performance, he was unclear on how it was to be implemented. Yet his belief in the need to move beyond performance was shared by others. However, vagueness characterised many of these designs, too. To cite but one example, a reader's response to a call for utopian proposals for future societies, published in *Kursbuch* in 1968 stated that the achievement principle should be replaced by a principle which "was based on the real needs of people living in a rational society."⁵⁵ The need to move beyond the performance principle also continued to feature in discussions of sexuality. Thus Günter Amendt's 1970 emancipatory sexual education book for teenagers referred to the "sexual compulsion to perform" as something to be avoided in the search for sexual equality between men and women as well as the integration of sexuality and tenderness.⁵⁶

The influence of Marcuse, Reich and psychoanalysis on the radical left with regard to *Leistung* is best illustrated by Kommune 2's efforts to make these ideas reality in combining "pleasure and performance principles", finding new sources of pleasure through collective sessions in which individual members were psychoanalysed by the rest of the group and "eroticising" the experience of work.⁵⁷ The group went beyond Marcuse's ideas, talking of their utopian vision of a new *Leistungsprinzip* not based on the repression of sexual desires and needs but their integration, to give life an erotic character.⁵⁸ They also connected the pressure to perform to an understanding of sexuality based around genital intercourse, instead of tenderness more generally, a problem they believed men to be more prone to.⁵⁹

Parallel to Marcuse's investigation of the achievement principle and his search for a life without it, Jürgen Habermas charted the rise to prominence of an ideology centring on the "industrial achievement principle"⁶⁰ within capitalism.

⁵⁵ Géza Kirchknopf, Reinhold Oberlercher, Rolf Schwendter, Heinz R. Sonntag and Hans M. Enzensberger "Dossier 3: Konkrete Utopie. Zweiundsiebzig Gedanken für die Zukunft," *Kursbuch* 13 (June 1968): 140-141.

⁵⁶ Sven Reichardt, "Von 'Beziehungskisten' und 'offener Sexualität'," in *Das Alternative Milieu*, 284.

⁵⁷ *Kommune 2, Versuch der Revolutionierung des bürgerlichen Individuums: Kollektives Leben mit politischer Arbeit verbinden!* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1971), 150, 160, 129.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 131, 136, 139; Häberlen and Smith, "Struggling for Feelings," 622.

⁶⁰ Reimut Reiche, "'Verteidigung der 'neuen Sensibilität,' aus: Die Linke antwortet Jürgen Habermas 1968," in *Frankfurter Schule*, 434.

Significantly, he also offered an account of the historical roots of the principle, attaching it to the development of capitalism and the middle classes. Habermas, and some of his students, too, argued that the ideology of achievement had become porous through the development of late capitalist systems.⁶¹ The extent of wealth in society and the complex technical as well as organisational conditions which produced this wealth made it ever more difficult to present the allocation of status as the result of a mechanism that evaluated *Leistung*. Thus the “ideology of an achieving society” had essentially been “structurally hollowed out”.⁶² Despite Habermas’ changing relationship with the student protestors throughout the late 1960s, he continued to present their protest as a resistance against this ethos of achievement until at least 1970.⁶³

While both theorists agreed on the effects and role of the achievement principle, they approached it from different angles. Marcuse viewed the concept as a psychological factor, a norm defining behaviour and thought processes, while Habermas repeatedly used the term ‘ideology’ in connection with the achieving principle. Regardless of this distinction, their conclusions were the same in that both emphasised the simultaneous prominence and increasingly precarious position occupied by the achievement principle.

The role of the student movement here became pivotal. Speaking in August 1968, Habermas stipulated that the majority of student protestors came from affluent families who were not concerned with climbing the social ladder. Consequently, these students were not to be swayed or placated by the promise of additional measures in social policy designed to improve their access to careers or improve the position of their families. Rather, they were objecting to the mechanism of compensation itself, unable to understand why the ethos of competition and achievement in attaining status persisted, when it no longer served any purpose.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Peter Brückner, “Die Geburt der Kritik aus dem Geiste des Gerüchts,” aus: Die Linke antwortet Jürgen Habermas 1968,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 248.

⁶² Jürgen Habermas, “Bedingungen für eine Revolutionierung spätkapitalistischer Gesellschaftssysteme,” Vortrag auf der Sommeruniversität Korčula zum Thema Marx und die Revolution, 14-24 August 1968,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 452; Offe, *Leistungsprinzip*, 18.

⁶³ Jürgen Habermas, *Protestbewegung und Hochschulreform* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), 15.

⁶⁴ Habermas, “Bedingungen,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 451.

Other observers and activists, too, framed the student protests with reference to the concept of achievement and its social application. Hannover-based psychology lecturer and SDS associate Peter Brückner presented the protest movement as a revolt against “decency, morality and a fetish for achievement”.⁶⁵ Oskar Negt’s 1968 outline of the ethos motivating student protestors also drew on the rejection of achievement it contained. He emphasised the inability of traditional political mechanisms to bring about any real change in the issues the students wished to address (such as the Vietnam War). Consequently, the movement relied on a form of activism beyond the system which broke the established connection between “certifiable performance, rewards and compromises” by refusing to perform, in the political arena and beyond, constituting a new morality.⁶⁶

Similarly, Reimut Reiche located one of the problems of the movement in its struggle with the achievement principle. Drawing on Freud, Marcuse and Habermas, Reiche agreed that the reigning reality principle was that of achievement, and had been since the early phase of capitalism, commanding “individual as well as collective subordination”. Yet, while students were able to rationally explain their relationship with and rejection of the achievement principle, they were unable to emotionally distance themselves from it, lacking a new reality to mirror their sentiments.⁶⁷

An account of the *Arbeitsgruppen* in the ‘active strike’ of 1969 among students at the university of Frankfurt, published in the *Frankfurter Studentenzeitung*, and penned by a group of students including Robert de Clerk, E. M. R. Roth and R. Dombois, expressed a similar problem, though in slightly different terms. It attempted to explain why many students had not participated in the strike and identified the position occupied by *Leistung* as one source. The authors argued that many students viewed studying as a transitional state, necessary for a certain career or profession and were thus willing to put up with irrational achievement based demands and competition. Furthermore, adherence to *Leistung* meant that the students in question interpreted any attack on the principle as a personal one

⁶⁵ Brückner, “Geburt,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 425.

⁶⁶ Negt, “Politik und Protest,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 299.

⁶⁷ Reiche, “Verteidigung,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 434-435.

and thus refused to participate.⁶⁸ This line of argument was partly based on practical concerns. The student protest relied on its members' active refusal to participate in university life or their deliberate efforts to subvert it in order to exert pressure on the university administration. However, the extent of the attack on achievement also indicates the much larger role played by the term.

The achievement principle was presented as a factor structuring the world view and conditioning the behaviour of the public in the capitalist system of 1960s West Germany. Beyond that, theorists and activists depicted as well as conceived the student movement as a revolt against these achievement-centred standards, a fact that both drove the movement and posed obstacles.

Beyond Marcuse and Habermas' writings the late 1950s onwards, and protestors' on ideas on *Leistung* in the 1960s, there is evidence to suggest that both theorists continued to view the concept of achievement as an increasingly outdated feature of the oppressive capitalist system until well into the seventies. In an open letter to Kurt Sontheimer, critiquing his latest book in 1977, Habermas pointed out that recent surveys showed that popular adherence to ideas of *Leistung* and career was weakening. Marcuse gave a speech in Frankfurt in 1979 positing that a cultural revolution was underway, causing the norms which governed the conduct of the population to disintegrate. He specifically designated a puritanical ethos of work, viewing human existence as a means of production, bourgeois sexual mores, in short "the achievement principle in general" as the focus of this change.⁶⁹ Marcuse saw citizens' initiatives, the students' and womens' movements as participants in this process alongside working class involvement via sabotage, absenteeism and increased demands for shorter working hours.⁷⁰

Yet while Marcuse and Habermas continued to predict that a performance-centred behavioural code and ideological commitment was crumbling, not all commentators agreed. Sociologist Ellen von Friedeburg offered a portrait of the middle class which placed achievement at the very centre of its group identity, to the detriment of all other characteristics. Von Friedeburg argued that an

⁶⁸ Robert de Clerk, R. Dombois, E. M. R. Roth and L. Voegelin, "Arbeitsgruppen im aktiven Streik. Emanzipation unter politischem und wissenschaftlichem Leistungsdruck, Mai 1969," in *Frankfurter Schule*, 611.

⁶⁹ Marcuse, "Die Revolte der Lebenstrieb," 834.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 834.

excessive focus on achievement, on being useful and employing one's time gainfully had pushed aside most other middle class occupations, such as cultivating leisure time and forming one's own opinion on cultural matters. Instead, she described the bourgeoisie as "high-performance (*leistungsstark*)", accumulating property which was then hidden in a fearful manner while being lauded as a sign of hard work. Children were trained in the "profit and achievement centred thinking" of their parents from a young age, even though these parents refused to follow such an ethos through to its logical conclusion by assenting to social change which would permit everyone to get what their achievements deserved.⁷¹

The concept of *Leistung* therefore continued to form a cornerstone in the critique of society offered by proponents of the Frankfurt School and the New Left well after the immediate outburst of activity contained in the student movement had ended. Regardless of whether the decline of achievement as a structuring ideological and behavioural pattern was being predicted, the quintessentially negative quality *Leistung* was invested with remained unaltered between 1965 and 1975.

IV: The problem of *Leistungsdruck*

Regardless of their affiliation with or rejection of the ideas of Marcuse, Habermas, Negt or any members of the Frankfurt School, the material released by various strands of the New Left presented a pressure to achieve or perform as an integral feature of the capitalist system. It is important to note, as Joachim Häberlen and Jake P. Smith have, that activists "did not so much analyse an existing 'emotional regime', but created one through the act of descriptive explication".⁷² I do not mean to imply that any emotional distress such as fear or isolation was imagined, but rather wish to highlight the active role played by protestors in outlining and criticising the society they lived in. Moreover, this malign aspect of contemporary life had to be addressed as it had far-reaching consequences for the psychological balance of the individual, the way he or she related to fellow human beings and the structure of society as a whole. References to a pressure to achieve continued

⁷¹ Ellen von Friedeburg, "Bürgerliche Attrappen," *Kursbuch* 42 (December 1975): 15-17.

⁷² Joachim C. Häberlen and Jake P. Smith, "Struggling for Feelings: The Politics of Emotions in the Radical New Left in West Germany, c.1968-1984," *Contemporary European History* 23:4 (Nov. 2014), 617.

throughout the late 1960s and well into the 1970s, forming a cornerstone of the critique of society offered not only by the anti-authoritarian elements of the SDS but the *Arbeits-* and *Basisgruppen* formed in the second phase of the student movement, Kommune 2, the Socialist Patients' Collective and the women's movement.

The institutional structures and norms of conduct governing universities constituted one of main points of student frustration, a discontent which was frequently vocalised with reference to the concept of *Leistung*. Thus an anonymous strategy paper released as part of the 'active strike' referred to the "pressure to achieve"⁷³, the compulsion to study in a rigid, inflexible manner. This criticism formed part of an overarching attack on the way in which knowledge was characterised, imparted and acquired, espoused by the student movement. In the search for a new form of "critical research" (*Wissenschaft*), the accepted format of lectures, seminars, tests and the status of the professor was called into question. Within this critique the pressure to perform played an important role. It was depicted as a factor preventing students from engaging critically with the knowledge they were confronted with and prevented political activism.⁷⁴

Moreover, a series of position papers and articles released by students in Frankfurt presented this focus on achievement as perpetuating oppressive reflexes of thought and behaviour. These were inculcated into students at home and at school "cutting off collective consciousness via a compulsion to achieve and competition."⁷⁵ The pressure to achieve isolated students, ensuring they would compete with each other and live in permanent fear of being unable to meet the "norms of achievement" set by professors.⁷⁶ These norms resulted in a "conscience of achievement" which compelled each individual to strive to perform. However, even those who were able to meet the standards set did so at a cost, they gained confidence by aggressively silencing others in discussions. This silenced group failed to meet the expectations generated by their conscience

⁷³ "Mögliche Erfolgskriterien für den studentischen Kampf in der gegenwärtigen Phase der Auseinandersetzung an der Hochschule," Strategiepapier für Überlegungen zur Fortführung des Aktiven Streiks, 22 Januar 1969," in *Frankfurter Schule*, 542.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 542.

⁷⁵ Monika Steffen, "Was die Studenten in Frankfurt gelernt haben," Positionspapier, 25. January 1969," in *Frankfurter Schule*, 547.

⁷⁶ de Clerk et al., "Arbeitsgruppen," in *Frankfurter Schule*, 609.

and felt even guiltier when hearing their peers speak.⁷⁷ While the main focus of the material considered above was the university setting, there are clear references to the world beyond the university: a concern with the process of socialisation undergone by the students at home and at school, as well as the depiction of the university as a preparation for life in society as a whole underlies the critique vocalised here. Therefore, the pressure to perform as well as its pernicious consequences for individual and collective psychology and conduct constituted a fundamental problem in the societal system the students believed they were living in.

This broader relevance of the critique is reflected in an article published in the SDS paper *Neue Kritik* in April 1969. Two SDS members argued that institutions of higher education were themselves subject to pressure from an “authoritarian achieving society”. Said society was losing patience with the inefficient training offered to future members of the administrative cadre by the traditional university. This impatience had resulted in the introduction of technocratic reforms. The university had to reject these in order to avoid becoming an institution at which learning happened efficiently, but no discussion or independent thought took place.⁷⁸ The focus on performance at universities was thus indicative of an overarching social and systemic obsession with achievement. It was reflected, for example, in the drive to introduce a *numerus clausus* for all courses of study. In the eyes of SDS members Antonia Gruneberg and Monika Steffen, this hurdle to entry was designed to prevent pupils who had already rebelled against “irrational and authoritarian compulsions to achieve” at school from entering university. Intermittent tests served a similar purpose, rooting out those students who for political or psychological reasons were not adapted, constituting an “imposed test of performance.”⁷⁹ The focus on achievement in the university system was thus symptomatic of a broader societal phenomenon. The university was conceived as a training site charged with

⁷⁷ Ibid., 609.

⁷⁸ Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund, “Frankfurt: Kritische Wissenschaft – langfristige Reaktion oder: wo bleibt die Praxis?” Positionspapier, 25 Januar 1969,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 544.

⁷⁹ Antonia Gruneberg and Monika Steffen, “Technokratische Hochschulreform und organisierter Widerstand,” Artikel im SDS Bundesorgan *Neue Kritik*, April 1969,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 594.

moulding those with whom it came into contact into pliant participants in a system which valued performance above all else.

The increasing fragmentation of the New Left after the passing of the emergency laws did not dilute this vehement opposition to the achievement principle. Rather, *Leistung* continued to be seen as an integral element of any capitalist society and its accompanying bourgeois system of values, featuring in the publications of a wide range of the groups spawned by the shift of momentum away from the SDS.

Pedagogical expert Donata Elschenbroich, writing in *Kursbuch* in 1973, offered an analysis of the role of toys in the socialisation of children. She depicted the manner in which toys were employed and conceptualised as both class specific and historically contingent, pinpointing the importance of a concept of achievement in this early stage of human development. Elschenbroich located a shift in the way toys were viewed in the creation of a distinctly and consciously bourgeois class, which differentiated itself from the nobility with reference to *Leistung*. This preoccupation was reflected in toys, as it became important for them to productively and constantly occupy children. Instead of providing a respite from the pressure to achieve in school, these objects were employed to prepare a child for its role in the workforce.⁸⁰ Thus, for Elschenbroich, the value placed on achievement in the economic process was also a cornerstone of bourgeois identity as well as being reflected in the objects of everyday life among bourgeois children.

Others asserted that the focus on achievement started early and permeated many areas of life, existing irrespective of which socio-economic class a child came from, or so Rosemarie Kamp and Julie Merten's account of their experiences as socialist activist primary school teachers in West Berlin seems to show. Both women described the pressure of performance reviews and the demands made by parents on them. Moreover, the compulsion to deliver extended to children in the form of tests, most importantly the examination designed to assess whether children should go to a school for special needs pupils. These tests were criticised by Merten and Kamp for assessing momentary ability to achieve rather than

⁸⁰ Donata Elschenbroich, "Spielen und Spielzeug," *Kursbuch* 34 (December 1973): 58-60.

engaging with potential for future development. Measuring performance was equally problematic in class tests. In a manner similar to that of Frankfurt students, Merten and Kamp described the frustrations of trying to generate any form of solidarity among children in the face of such external compulsion to perform well, a factor that was assessed on an individual basis.⁸¹

The very structures which these children were being raised to unthinkingly emulate and embrace were causing extensive and potentially irreversible psychological damage, or so the Socialist Patients' Collective (SPK) argued. Founded in 1970 and dissolved just over a year later, the SPK understood illness as the result of the contradictions inherent in capitalism and sought fundamental change to the medical system as a whole and the personalisation of the doctor-patient relationship.⁸² Jürgen Roth's 1972 piece on the Collective, published a year after its dissolution, outlined the brutality and discipline with which patients were treated in conventional psychiatry, framing these features as an inevitable outcome of the "economic process of performance". For Roth, treatment was framed as a necessary step in meeting the social demand that patients be reintegrated into productive life as quickly as possible. Such a demand could only be met by subjecting patients to "military and moral chastisement/discipline (Zucht)".⁸³ At the same time, the success individuals were encouraged to strive for in a capitalist system was a lie, a means of ensuring continued compliance with the existing order, claimed the SPK. Doing as well or better than others according to the principles of performance and competition served to engender a feeling of gratitude towards those institutions which had granted success and misdirected the focus of the individual towards amassing goods and status.⁸⁴

Yet such a procedure was inherently counterproductive, or so a further publication by Renate Wolff and Klaus Hartung in the same edition of *Kursbuch* argued. Their study employed literature published by psychiatric experts to demonstrate that "the destruction of the rebellious subconscious in the name of

⁸¹ Rosemarie Kamp and Julie Merten, "Grund-Schulung," *Kursbuch* 40 (June 1975): 12-18.

⁸² Cornelia Brink, *Grenzen der Anstalt: Psychiatrie und Gesellschaft in Deutschland 1960-1980* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010), 437.

⁸³ Jürgen Roth, "Psychiatrie und Praxis des Sozialistischen Patientenkollektivs," *Kursbuch* 28 (July 1972): 107.

⁸⁴ Sozialistisches Patienten-Kollektiv, *Aus der Krankheit eine Waffe machen* (Munich: Trikont, 1972), 82.

the state remains the focus of psychiatry.”⁸⁵ While making their case, they touched upon patients who were readmitted, having failed to bear up under societal pressure. Wolff and Hartung criticised medical practice in harsh terms, berating it for neglecting to show patients that failing at work was not fail as a human being. Quoting the writings of Kurt Heinrich, head of a psychiatric institute in Düsseldorf, Wolff and Hartung highlighted the importance of *Leistung* in contemporary society: “It is to be assumed that disabled individuals will sink to a lower level in terms of status and income or be disqualified as unable to compete if they do not meet the required norms of conduct in the modern industrial society which is based on adaptation and *Leistung* and in which the released patient seeks to gain recognition.”⁸⁶ Thus, society valued the individual not as human being but solely as a source of *Leistung*. Once again, the concept of achievement and the pressure it generated in wider social structures and interactions constituted a vital element in the critique expressed by another group on the left.

Far from being limited to the critique offered by the anti-authoritarian elements of the student movement, the pressure to achieve as a social phenomenon manifesting in areas as diverse as medical and educational practice and private early childhood development was the subject of consideration throughout the late 1960s and into the 1970s. These accounts of the concept of achievement treated it as a uniformly negative factor, pushing the individual to behave in a manner destructive to health and happiness in striving to emulate a pattern set by social convention. In tying *Leistung* to a problematic, bourgeois way of life, and pointing to the mental health effects of prioritising *Leistung*, these groups were establishing a link that West German sociologists had already made from the late 1950s onwards. However, unlike these predecessors, the likes of the Patients’ Collective sought to fundamentally remake society and establish a way of life freed from such systemic oppression.

V: Trying to move beyond *Leistung*

Given this pervasive presence of the pressure to achieve, a number of attempts were made at transcending the problems created by it. A series of emotional

⁸⁵ Renate Wolff and Klaus Hartung, “Psychische Verelendung und Politik der Psychiatrie,” *Kursbuch* 28 (July 1972): 62.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

practices were developed by members of working groups, communes and consciousness raising groups, designed to overcome problems such as isolation and fear.⁸⁷ Most of the groups developing these practices quickly came to express the belief that overcoming the achievement principle as an organising factor in a group and a guiding principle of behaviour was hardly easy.

Within the groups emanating from the university setting, both *Arbeitsgruppen* and *Basisgruppen* were created from 1969 onwards to further new forms of working together in an academic environment and include the working classes in laying the foundations for radical social change.

The academic *Arbeitsgruppen* were designed to combine both political activism and a new way of working academically. However, the pressure generated by this dual set of aims soon made matters just as problematic as the pressures extant within the traditional university environment.⁸⁸ An SDS position paper published in January 1969 highlighted a similar issue, positing that a certain amount of *Leistungsdruck* was essential to succeeding in the struggle with authoritarian society. Establishing egalitarian communication and freedom from pressure to achieve were simply not immediately actionable aims. Instead, when trying to independently organise research (*Wissenschaft*) it was “important to replace the alienated or independent scientific discipline of achievement with the recognition that in order to attain emancipatory goals, depriving oneself of what one wants (*Lustversagungen*) is unavoidable”.⁸⁹ Therefore, the overwhelmingly negative characterisation of *Leistungsdruck* could not be followed through to its logical conclusion, as a certain amount of *Leistung* was seen as necessary for success in revolutionary endeavours.

Pressure to achieve or perform was not perceived as unique to the SDS, rather it was presented as part of the history of socialist agitation, most prominently in the case of the Leninist cadre organisation. SDS member and Adorno student Hans-Jürgen Krahl was among those making this connection. In a discussion held in Frankfurt in September 1968, he contrasted the situation in Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution and the wider economic conditions surrounding it with the

⁸⁷ Häberlen and Smith, “Struggling for Feelings,” 617.

⁸⁸ de Clerk et al, “Arbeitsgruppen,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 608.

⁸⁹ Studentenbund, “Frankfurt,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 545.

state of affairs faced by West German socialism in 1968. Krahl posited that a balance between authoritarian pressure to achieve on the one hand and the generation of a collective solidarity on the other, was a typical principle in the division of labour exhibited by communist organisations. This approach was particularly valid in Russia, which was still industrialising at the time and thus had not yet been permeated by an “authoritarian achievement principle”, making it necessary to institute such a principle within the organisation. Krahl’s analysis depicts the pressure to achieve as a standard mechanism in bodies furthering the socialist agenda while at the same time tying the achievement principle to a capitalist code of conduct. Despite the negative consequences an all-encompassing achievement ethos could have, Krahl did allow that *Leistungsdruck* could have positive effects, even be necessary for activism to succeed.⁹⁰ A markedly similar account of Leninist organisation principles can be found in the writings of Oskar Negt, for example.⁹¹

This positive version of a pressure to achieve becomes more explicit in Krahl’s discussion of the course of action the student movement should adopt. He claimed that West Germany was the exact opposite of Tsarist Russia and therefore the authoritarian achievement principle had become superfluous in society as a whole, particularly in the SDS. Krahl thus concluded that adopting Leninist principles was unfeasible. Modern day socialism required autonomous individuals who were able to place *themselves* under revolutionary *Leistungsdruck*. For Krahl, then, a pressure to achieve could serve the revolutionary aims of the movement, provided it was not imposed externally but rather willed by each and every individual activist as well as being combined with a drive to attain autonomy.⁹²

However, not all SDS members viewed a pressure to achieve as a potentially positive force, if generated and employed in the right manner. SDS member Monika Steffen expressed concern with the dynamic of the SDS. She traced the

⁹⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, Frank Benseler, Ludwig von Friedeburg, Jürgen Habermas, Werner Hofmann, Hans Heinz Holz, Hans-Jürgen Krahl, Kurt Lenk and Karl-Dietrich Wolff, “Autoritäten und Revolution,‘ Podiumsdiskussion im Haus Gallus. 23. September 1968,“ in *Frankfurter Schule*, 46.

⁹¹ Oskar Negt, “Nicht nach den Köpfen, sondern nach den Interessen organisieren!‘ from Links 4:39, Dezember 1972” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 765.

⁹² Adorno et al., “Autoritäten,“ in *Frankfurter Schule*, 463.

trajectory of the student protest movement, pausing to analyse its development after the passing of the emergency laws to note that the traditional compulsion to achieve was reinstated at universities and extended to a “‘leftist’ compulsion to perform” in which the politically active part of the student body wanted to keep fighting oppression by continuing to accumulate and consume “critical knowledge”.⁹³ These battles about who could produce this critical type of awareness were adjudicated by the leaders of the revolt and leftist professors.⁹⁴ For Steffen, *Leistungsdruck* or *-zwang* continued to be negative forces, causing individuals to misdirect their energies towards the attainment of ultimately futile aims.

The pressure to achieve was consequently at best viewed as a somewhat double-edged sword. The *Arbeitsgruppen* certainly appear to have adhered to the more widespread, negative understanding of the concept of *Leistung*, even though their attempts at approaching academic learning without an excessive focus on performance also floundered. The most commonly experienced issue seems to have been rooted in a recognition of the complications generated by focusing on achievement but a lack of ability to translate this theoretical insight into a genuinely different practice.⁹⁵ Thus one account published in the *Frankfurter Studentenzeitung* in May 1969 detailed efforts to deal with the needs of every member of the group, allotting time for everyone to speak. However, this structure did nothing to address the problems some members had when asked to speak, experiencing a pressure to perform. Quite the reverse, the pressure was reinforced, as was the desire to remain silent. The students recognised this problem in their analysis of the group and conceptualised it in terms of *Leistung*, stating that, rather than creating the practical conditions in which members could reflect on and formulate their interests in order to break their silence, a new repressive authority demanding “emancipatory performance” was established.⁹⁶ While this particular account stipulated that all authoritarian demands regarding *Leistung* had to be relinquished and the group had to proceed from the skills and

⁹³ Steffen, “Was die Studenten,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 549.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 549.

⁹⁵ On frustrated efforts to remove communication hierarchies see Nina Verheyen, “Diskussionsfieber. Diskutieren als kommunikative Praxis in der westdeutschen Studentenbewegung,” in *Handbuch 1968*, 214.

⁹⁶ de Clerk et al., “Arbeitsgruppen,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 615.

possibilities inherent in each member of the group, they provided no practical guidance on how this was to be done.⁹⁷ The problems of this *Arbeitsgruppe* illustrate the difficulties encountered when student protestors attempted to act on the theoretical insight into *Leistung* as a negative force and overcome it.

A very different approach to overcoming the problematic effects of a world view centred on achievement was made by the anti-authoritarian *Kinderläden* which emerged from 1967 onwards.⁹⁸ These were specifically conceptualised to combat the evils of the bourgeois world, including “envy, competition, jealousy, a way of thinking focused on hierarchies and achievement”, to create a genuine fresh start with and for children.⁹⁹ At the same time, the anti-authoritarian aim in subverting traditional education according to “the competition, adaptation and performance model” attempted to raise children who were able to function in societies still controlled by existing mechanisms while also working to alter them.¹⁰⁰

A different response to the pressure to perform within the SDS features in the inception of Kommune 2 by its members. Christel Bookhagen, Eike Hemmer, Jan-Carl Raspe¹⁰¹ and Eberhard Schulz referred to the isolating experience of competition within bourgeois society as one of the reasons for their attempt to create a different, more collective form of life.¹⁰² Rather than treating every individual as a co-competitor to whom one could not show weakness, they strove to share problems with each other. Furthermore, this “compulsion to persevere in competition” was also located within the SDS by the members of the Kommune as “the demand to achieve/perform as we had experienced it in the political discussions of the SDS”.¹⁰³ Such a dynamic caused the individual to ignore his or

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 615.

⁹⁸ For a description and broader historical assessment of the impact of the *Kinderläden* on understandings of childhood development see Miriam Gebhardt, *Die Angst vor dem kindlichen Tyrannen. Eine Geschichte der Erziehung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2009), 173-195; Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 163-174.

⁹⁹ Wolfgang Kraushaar, *Achtundsechzig: Eine Bilanz* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2008), 131.

¹⁰⁰ Regine Dermitzel, “These zur antiautoritären Erziehung,” *Kursbuch* 17 (June 1969): 182.

¹⁰¹ Raspe was to later join the RAF. I have only found occasional references to *Leistung* in RAF materials. A draft of a speech to be given by Astrid Proll with comments by Ulrike Meinhof from October 1973 interpreted the depression and illness of students and pupils and their “inability to perform” as a symptom of the contradictions rife in the capitalist system. See Ulrike Meinhof, “Entwurf Astrid-Rede,” October 1973, accessed 9th September, 2013.

<http://www.socialhistoryportal.org/raf/5378>, 24,

¹⁰² Kommune 2, *Versuch*, 10,112.

¹⁰³ This rejection of the jargon and attitude displayed in the SDS was common to many of the groups formed outside the latter, including the women’s movement. See Timothy Scott Brown,

her own wishes as well as making them aggressive towards others.¹⁰⁴ For the members of Kommune 2 the pressure to achieve or perform had bled into the SDS from the bourgeois structures surrounding it, necessitating a deliberate break with the organisation as well as a reconceptualization of communal, pressure-free life.

The Kommune offered its own, positive concept of a collective performance. When the group moved into its new flat in August 1967, it did so in hopes of creating a “Leistungs-Kommune” to produce something together.¹⁰⁵ Visiting member Hans-Werner Sass went so far as to theorise that the commune was a *Leistungsgemeinschaft* designed to help those members who had problems achieving.¹⁰⁶ But this group, too, was confronted with the problem of putting theory into practice, mainly in the form of a clash between individual and collective interests. They experienced a pattern in which certain members did most of the work on a given project, while others struggled to find a way to contribute, until some members started questioning whether a *Leistungs-Kommune* was really what they had intended to create. Again the problem of leadership surfaced, some members adopted or were given the role of authority figure, which in turn generated pressure to perform.¹⁰⁷

The dissolution of the SDS did not put an end to discussions of *Leistungsdruck* within the increasingly fragmented organisations of the New Left. Instead, the problem continued to be experienced in other forms of political activism and personal exploration. By the mid-1970s participation in so-called ‘consciousness raising’ groups had expanded hugely, coming to include many individuals who had no history of political activism and simply wished to use the groups as forums to discuss experiences and problems of everyday life.¹⁰⁸ Even though consciousness-raising groups were in many cases short-lived and had high membership turnover, they were among the most important form of self-help

West Germany and the Global Sixties: The Antiauthoritarian Revolt, 1962-1978 (Cambridge: CUP, 2013), 289.

¹⁰⁴ Kommune 2 (Christel Bookhagen, Eike Hemmer, Jan Raspe, Eberhard Schulz), “Kindererziehung in der Kommune,” *Kursbuch* 17 (June 1969): 153.

¹⁰⁵ Kommune 2, *Versuch*, 112.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 112, 122, 124, 125, 193.

¹⁰⁸ Markovits and Gorski, *The German Left*, 91.

groups of the so-called “psycho-boom”¹⁰⁹ of the seventies a reaction against the overt rationalism and intellectual aggression of the New Left.¹¹⁰ This development contributed to changing attitudes on experiencing and expressing emotions. Both Frank Biess and Sven Reichardt have traced the emergence of a ‘new subjectivity’ in the 1970s ‘after the Boom’, a move away from the specific forms of activism and communication espoused by the student protestors. Instead, new forms of introspection focussed on the individual’s body and mind as sounding boards for emotions as well as seeking to defend the subject from threats to physical and psychological safety (such as nuclear weapons, economic instability and illnesses).¹¹¹ As part of this search for a more authentic way of existing, self-exploration and life within a community were seen as key.¹¹² These changes formed the basis for the political actions of the new social movements of the seventies and eighties. Yet problems centring on *Leistung* continued to hound these experiments in seeking psychological help from groups of peers and expressing a broad register of emotions. Lothar Binger, a member of an autonomous group which followed no specific ideological dogma, writing in *Kursbuch* in 1974, offered an account of the experiences gained, in which problems expressed in terms of achievement again loomed large.

Binger located the origins of autonomous groups in a dissatisfaction with both SDS and Marxist-Leninist organisations, neither of which had provided sufficient space for the emancipation of the individual. Many of the autonomous group’s members had thus joined because “they could no longer bear the *Leistungsterror* and the impersonal political work.” Binger traced the tension between wanting to change the outside world and getting to grips with oneself in a manner that appears similar to the problems experienced by the *Arbeitsgruppen* in 1969. Autonomous and undogmatic groups thus hoped to provide what other organisations could not: “It is meant to be a substitute, a compensation for all the

¹⁰⁹ See Chapter III for details.

¹¹⁰ Reichardt, *Authenzität und Gemeinschaft*, 783-784.

¹¹¹ Frank Biess, “Die Sensibilisierung des Subjekts. Angst und ‘Neue Subjektivität’ in den 1970er Jahren,” *Werkstatt Geschichte* (49): 53-4, 59, 62.

¹¹² Reichardt and Siegfried, “Das Alternative Milieu,” 17; a desire to live without the pressure to perform spanned the alternative milieu more generally. See Sven Reichardt, “Inszenierung und Authentizität. Zirkulation visueller Vorstellungen über den Typus des linksalternativen Körpers,” in *Bürgersinn mit Weltgefühl. Politische Moral und solidarischer Protest in den sechsziger und siebziger Jahren*, ed. Habbo Knoch (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), 236.

frustrations one experiences in the achievement-centred groups.”¹¹³ Once again, one of the stumbling blocks experienced by the group took the shape of *Leistung* in that a type of hierarchy based on ability to perform was established. Crucially, Binger saw this process as reflective of a *natural* dynamic present in society as a whole. He made no reference to a capitalist logic underlying such a development, merely stating that “a process that is typical, natural in society is repeated in the political groups.” Binger stands alone among the activists and theorists of the New Left examined here in depicting a ranking order based on some form of achievement as an innate feature of human society.¹¹⁴

Yet Binger’s outline of the fate of the self-made leaders of the groups also echoed assertions made by SDS members in connection with the *Arbeitsgruppen*. He highlighted the isolation their focus on performance, and thus competition brought as well as their inability to engage with the purely human element of conversation and collective work. Moreover, those positioned as underachievers were no closer to overcoming their problems. They continued to experience difficulty expressing themselves in group discussions and were frightened of the collective.¹¹⁵ Once again, designating *Leistung* as a detrimental factor in individual and group development on a theoretical level did not prevent the development of structures centring on and conceptualised in terms of achievement as late as 1974.

Michael Klein’s 1974 commentary on the international congress for group psychotherapy in Zurich highlighted similar problems with so called ‘encounter groups’ (a form of therapy designed to increase self-awareness and social sensitivity, including through expressing emotion) by referring to achievement. Klein portrayed contemporary society as inhuman, destructive to communication and inter-personal relationships as well as the self.¹¹⁶ He saw encounter groups as based in “the turn away from an achieving society which ties even the escape

¹¹³ Lothar Binger, “Kritisches Plädoyer für die Gruppe,” *Kursbuch* 37 (October 1974): 4-5.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹⁶ Michael Klein, “Wem nutzt schon Psychoanalyse? Kritische Anmerkungen zum Internationalen Kongreß für Gruppenpsychotherapie in Zürich,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 26:2 (1974): 439. On the increasing popularity of group therapy see Maik Tändler, “Therapeutische Vergemeinschaftung. Demokratisierung, Emanizpation und Emotionalisierung in der ‘Gruppe’ 1963-1976,” in *Das Selbst zwischen Anpassung und Befreiung*, 141-167.

from suffering to the performance (*Leistung*) of language and reflexion” as well as “resignation regarding the possibility of communicating oneself and being understood in this communication.”¹¹⁷ Not everyone had the ability to speak and be understood by others so the conditions making communication possible first had to be created in group therapy.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, Klein tied the limits of group therapy to certain social classes, claiming encounter groups were currently being used by the middle strata only, thus failing to affect areas of society where the psychological misery and the destruction of communicative behaviour were greatest.¹¹⁹

Communication difficulties, group therapy and the alienation associated with an achieving society also featured in Herbert Berger’s discussion of the treatment of alcoholics within a therapeutic community at the State Hospital Düsseldorf. Berger traced the notion of community underlying this approach to therapy back to Tönnies’ distinction between community and society, not only contesting the accuracy of Tönnies’ original analysis but also criticising its application in a socio-medical environment.¹²⁰ The former’s notion of community was romanticised, historically and empirically inaccurate, generating an misleading ideal of a socially harmonious community. This meant that the concept of community, applied to medical theory, was wholly unsuited to “an analysis of the true problem of alienation in an industrial achieving society”.¹²¹

According to Berger, this clash between community ideal and reality manifested in a number of ways, including a subversion of the alleged practice of free discussion within the therapeutic group. Amongst other things, the therapists within the group remained superior to patients, despite the stated aim of equality.¹²² Berger pointed to the Heidelberg Socialist Patients’ Collective as evidence that equitable discourse could be established within a therapeutic community. He also posited that the social structure of the groups at the State

¹¹⁷ Klein, “Wem nutzt schon Psychoanalyse?” 440.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 441. This is similar to the argument presented in discussions of the middle class bias in education. Language was seen as a factor conditioning the ability to achieve. It also constituted an achievement in and of itself. See Chapter III, section V.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 440.

¹²⁰ Herbert Berger, “Eine Alkoholikerabteilung als ‘therapeutische Gemeinschaft’. Beobachtungen auf der Station Männer des rheinischen Landeskrankenhauses Düsseldorf,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 25:1 (1973): 422.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 422.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 424.

Hospital negated the promise of free discussion, and thus could never hope to be devoid of traditional power dynamics. Even when a consensus existed on the need to address *Leistung* as a problematic behavioural component, researchers continued to draw on the concept in assessing the problems experienced by different models of therapy.

In the search for an alternative mode of life beyond the pressure to perform within a capitalist system, countries claiming to be socialist also failed to provide any prospect of radical change. Contemporary analyses of these nations often used the concept of an achieving society as a benchmark for measuring the successful development of better ways of existing. An analysis of the Republic of North Korea published in a 1972 edition of *Kursbuch* perceived the country's national symbol (a mythical horse) as "the embodiment of a modern achieving society". The article provided a detailed assessment of education, military training, sexual relationships, the cult of the leader, and the focus on achievement in every aspect of national life, using psychoanalytical concepts and heteronormative, even homophobic language. Author Horst Kurtnitzky concluded that "a socialist organisation of society is under no circumstances possible in the form of a patriarchal, latently homosexual achieving society", as such a structure oppressed the population and made the liberation of its productive powers impossible.¹²³ *Leistungsgesellschaft* thus remained a concept loaded with negative meaning in this assessment, featuring as the antithesis of a liberated, alternative form of communal life.

Freie Universität doctoral candidate Klaus Laermann came to a similar conclusion in his assessment of everyday life in Eastern Europe published in 1975. He noted that, instead of striving to be markedly different from capitalist countries in ethos and practice, socialist countries were trying to overtake capitalist ones in terms of productivity, wealth. Laermann argued that this was a misdevelopment which needed to be acknowledged, stipulating that changes to everyday life had to become an aim in socialist policy in order to liberate the minds of the average man and woman instead of striving to create "a new socialist

¹²³ Horst Kurtnitzky, "Chollima Korea. Ein Besuch im Jahre 23," *Kursbuch* 30 (December 1972): 98, 111.

thinking based on achievement (*Leistungsdenken*) which outstrips the capitalist type in perfection and discipline".¹²⁴

Laermann and Kurtnitzky's disappointment at the continuing centrality of performance in socialist countries was echoed by Renate Damus, political scientist and subsequent member of the Greens. She attempted to assess whether work in socialist countries was still wage labour and came to the discouraging realisation that the structure of needs experienced by labourers in socialist countries was the same as in capitalist ones. She cited East Germany as an example in arguing that needs continued to be satisfied in the private sphere rather than being met in public life. Thus workers' efforts continued to be geared at "transporting as large a slice from the communal pie as possible into the private sphere via performance" or adapting to the hierarchical manner in which life was run.¹²⁵ The concepts of achievement and an achieving society therefore functioned as a kind of benchmark in assessing the success of a socialist country in moving away from the contradictions and pitfalls that characterised life in a capitalist system. To the chagrin of Laermann, Kurtnitzky and Damus, *Leistung* remained a central feature of life in socialist states.

The pattern established by the SDS and continued in the *Arbeitsgruppen*, *Kommune 2* and all the way into the autonomous groups of the mid 1970s was therefore clear: one of the motivations for breaking away and forming a new organisation was discontent with an excessive focus on performance. Yet, to those involved and contributing to the emergence of a 'new subjectivity', this focus seemed to naturally replicate itself in the newly established groups, despite hopes either for a complete absence of performance, or a more positive, collective version. By the late 1970s many activists criticised the depoliticising effects of this turn towards individual therapy, losing faith in emotional change as a route to political change.¹²⁶ They moved on to more conventional forms of politics, while others embraced new strategies to find themselves.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Paul Schuster, "Würde man meine Schwiegermutter fragen. Alltag – aus (nichtalltäglicher) rumänischer Sicht," *Kursbuch* 41 (September 1975): 188.

¹²⁵ Renate Damus, "Ist die Arbeit im Sozialismus Lohnarbeit?" *Kursbuch* 38 (December 1974) 92.

¹²⁶ Reichardt, *Authenzität und Gemeinschaft*, 788.

¹²⁷ Häberlen and Smith, "Struggling with Feelings," 619.

VI: The appropriation of the concept by the women's movement

Within the critique of *Leistung* offered by members of the SDS, the theorists of the Frankfurt School and members of the autonomous collectives, lay a depiction of *Leistung* as a male phenomenon, a dimension which was taken up and expanded by the women's movement from late 1968 onwards. Scattered references to achievement as a specifically masculine trait can be found in the publications of the SDS, such as Monika Steffen's paper of January 1969. Steffen commented on negative effects produced by "a course of study defined by reactionary, male criteria of achievement". Kommune 2 painted a picture of men as more liable to be affected by the pressure to perform, as their socialisation had led them to be.¹²⁸ These types of reference persist throughout the early 1970s, and also appear in Binger's account of life in an autonomous group, written in 1974. He engaged with the position of women in mixed groups, stating that the only way female activists had found of continuing to work in such a group was by adapting to "the criteria of achievement determined by men".¹²⁹

Despite the similarity of these designations of achievement as a male trait, 1968 marked the beginning of a considerable shift in the self-awareness and position of women in the New Left. In the mid-sixties, the revolutionary politics of the SDS, while dominated by concerns for liberation and the overthrow of repressive structures, were also characterised by inequality of treatment and opportunity based on gender. Much of the press coverage generated by student protests objectified women, and the drive to revolutionise and free sexual behaviour paid little attention to female perspectives on sexuality. By and large, men dominated protests, constituting their face and voice (with a few exceptions) as well as exhibiting a stance that was frequently sexist and heteronormative.¹³⁰

Even groups that were created specifically to overcome the issues experienced within the SDS, including the relationship between the sexes, struggled to resolve this problem. In 1971 Kommune 2 published an account of life in the commune written by its members after its dissolution (which had occurred in mid-1968), a

¹²⁸ Kommune 2, *Versuch*, 139.

¹²⁹ Schrader Klebert, "Die kulturelle Revolution," 2.

¹³⁰ Thomas, *Protest Movements*, 225-229; Aribert Reimann, "Zwischen Machismo und Coolness. Männlichkeit und Emotion in der westdeutschen Kulturrevolution der 1960er und 1970er Jahre," in *Die Präsenz der Gefühle: Männlichkeit und Emotion in der Moderne*, ed. Manuel Borutta and Nina Verheyen (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010), 232, 242-243.

piece of writing which repeatedly refers to problems centring on gender, connecting them to the concept of performance.¹³¹ While the group claimed to have successfully transcended the division of household labour along gender lines, doing the same in political work proved more complicated. Here, the women in the group continued to experience the same problems they had in the SDS, being relegated to the position of helper and undertaking work which lacked a personal dimension.¹³² The women in the group argued that working collectively involved accepting male ideals, “political work carried out under pressure to achieve”, which led to a competitive situation they did not want.¹³³ This equation of performance with masculinity was reiterated throughout the text and reflected in the group’s efforts to conduct collective sessions inspired by psychoanalysis. Thus Kommune member Marion Steffel-Stergar’s progress in being able to discuss the divide between her “characteristic female behaviour” and “simulated intellectual performance principle” was the subject of joy in the group’s records of the session.¹³⁴ Moreover, looking back on its experience, the Kommune posited that the repression of women was rooted in their upbringing. Attempting to change patterns of social interaction and communication had proved insufficient to address the underlying problem.¹³⁵

Christel Bookhagen’s contribution to the Kommune’s publication is particularly illuminating here, offering a female perspective, one which drew on the concept of performance to explain the problems experienced by female members of the Kommune. Bookhagen problematized the “norms of performance established by men”,¹³⁶ postulating that the men in the Commune had been able to overcome the individualised form of the performance principle by working together and living together.¹³⁷ This had enabled them to have relationships and find a way of being

¹³¹ The fact that this account was first published in 1971, when the women’s movement was already underway and that the group was reflecting on a past experience does of course affect the analysis offered and concepts utilised to describe life in the Commune and its problems. However, as has been shown elsewhere, the Commune also drew on the concept of performance in pieces written while it was still active (see p.162 onwards).

¹³² Kommune 2, *Versuch* 118, 129.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 272.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 129.

productive in a more positive fashion. Yet women remained frustrated by the structures they inhabited.

For Bookhagen, as for many women involved with organisations of the New Left, the root of this issue was that the Kommune was trying to solve problems for the individual rather than adopting a gender-specific approach, which had obscured the problem of women's emancipation. In her eyes, women's problems were fundamentally different from those experienced by men and could not be solved with and through them. Bookhagen's insight into the position of women in the group was shared by its other female members. They drew parallels between the development of the New Left more generally and the fate of their own particular endeavour to live collectively. In both cases, women had continued to experience themselves as individuals, rather than as part of a social group. As such, they had remained the subjects of domination, unable to collectively recognise and articulate their domination by men.¹³⁸ Kommune 2 thus employed the concept of performance as a specifically male norm of conduct, explaining their inability to accommodate the wishes and needs of the group's female members.

The Kommune's experiences were therefore in keeping with increasing female dissatisfaction in the SDS as a whole, highlighting the clash between a rhetoric preaching individual liberation from oppressive structures and the domination of a male led and defined version of freedom. This tension was one of the deepest contradictions within the student movement, leading to the creation of the *Aktionsrat zur Befreiung der Frauen* by discontented female activists in May 1968.¹³⁹ The organisation attempted to implement alternative structures for childcare and education, also serving as a starting point for feminist agitation on issues such as abortion and contraception.

A significant part of the critique of existing gendered hierarchies and relationships espoused by the emerging women's movement was framed by drawing on the concept of an achieving society. SDS member and Aktionsrat

¹³⁸ Ibid., 130.

¹³⁹ Nick Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany*, 228. These groups were of course not the first site of female activism in post-war Germany. The anti-nuclear movement and the peace movement are two examples of such activism well before "68". However, the Aktionsrat and later feminists appear to have been the first women to use the concept of performance or achievement, presumably as the language was so widespread in the radical left. See Lottemi Doormann, "Die neue Frauenbewegung: Zur Entwicklung seit 1968," in *Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, ed. Florence Hervé (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1982), 237.

founder Helke Sander's speech to an SDS Delegates Conference in 1968 asserted the achievement principle was exerting a dual tyranny, over men who were able to operate within society in the public sense and over women who were still mainly restricted to a more limited sphere of activity.¹⁴⁰

Sander also stressed the respective roles each gender was expected to fulfil in what she termed an "achieving society". Similarly, a contribution to *Kursbuch* penned by sociologist Karin Schrader Klebert in 1969 elaborated a set of ideas common among socialist feminist groups. She placed achievement at the crux of what distinguished men and women in a capitalist order. Her work appears to have been highly influential in the expanding women's movement, for example. It featured on most reading lists compiled by women's groups in Munich.¹⁴¹ Schrader Klebert posited that male identity was defined by *Leistung* in connection with labour. She argued that men exhibited a "*Leistungsbewußtsein*", a drive to achieve which actually served the very forces oppressing and destroying them. Going even further, she placed this *Leistungsbewußtsein* at the core of male identity, asserting that said identity would collapse if men came to question the structures they inhabited. Moreover, this *Leistungsbewußtsein* expressed itself in consumption, the individual only differed from others by getting more numerous and beautiful things for his performance.¹⁴²

The focus on the products achievement could procure permitted men to differentiate themselves from women. For Schrader Klebert, women occupied the other end of this scale, as they were not encouraged to work and thus could derive no such identity from the purchasing power they gained. In the course of outlining this gendered distinction based on consumption and labour, Schrader Klebert offered a definition of *Leistung* in Marxist terminology which was widely used at the time, describing it as the "alienated character of labour". This is the only explicit definition of *Leistung* offered in the material examined here. It serves to explain Schrader Klebert's insistence that all achievements in a capitalist

¹⁴⁰ The following analysis is based on an online edition of Sander's speech which is not paginated, accessed 5th November, 2012, http://hdg.de/lemo/html/dokumente/KontinuitaetUndWandel_redeSanderZurNeuenFrauenbewegung/index.html.

¹⁴¹ Christine Schäfer and Christiane Wilke, *Die Neue Frauenbewegung in München 1968-1985: Dokumentation* (Munich: Buchendorf, 2000), 110.

¹⁴² Schrader Klebert, "Die kulturelle Revolution," 18-20.

system are merely “formal” i.e. devoid of any meaningful content as they denote an alienated human capacity.¹⁴³ *Leistung*, in her analysis thus features as the ultimately hollow service rendered by men to the very structures which oppressed them as well as constituting the basis upon which men were encouraged to differentiate themselves from women.

While both Sander and Schrader Klebert used their arguments relating to achievement to insist on the need for a women’s movement separate from men, this was not the only path advocated by feminism. English-Austrian journalist and author Hazel Rosenstrauch (pseudonym Hazel E. Hazel) called for a resistance against the *Leistungsgesellschaft* which spanned both sexes.¹⁴⁴ Like Sander and Schrader Klebert, she objected to the roles and expectations allotted to each gender. However, in particular contrast to the latter’s calls for women to unite as a separate class until they had learned to understand themselves as independent subjects, Rosenstrauch offered a much more sympathetic approach to the position occupied by men. For her *Leistung* was a pressure placed on men by the system, a trait attributed to them by an external force they were unaware of as part of an ideal of strength. Within this system, women were made to serve men so that they could perform better. Rosenstrauch argued that any female emancipation also presupposed the emancipation of men. She called for “the destruction of this achieving society which makes him the assistant of oppression”.¹⁴⁵

This diversity of opinions regarding the course activism should take was reflected in the broad range and types of organisations that developed within the women’s movement after 1968. With the collapse of the anti-authoritarian student movement, an increasing number of problems in the *Kinderläden* movement and the advent of a social-liberal coalition in government which tried to accommodate some of the students’ demands in its reform agenda, the women’s movement split.¹⁴⁶ One strand, the *Aktionsrat* among its number (renamed the *Sozialistischer Frauenbund West Berlins*) turned to the Marxist classics and the proletarian women’s movement in a bid to study the oppression of women using Marxist

¹⁴³ Ibid., 19-21.

¹⁴⁴ Hazel E. Hazel, “Unwissenschaftliche Betrachtungen eines weiblichen Monsters,” *Kursbuch* 17 (June 1969): 49.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 48.

¹⁴⁶ Doormann, “Neue Frauenbewegung,” in *Geschichte*, ed. Hervé, 239.

analyses of society to develop strategies for female emancipation.¹⁴⁷ The other major strand, influenced by women's movements in the U.S. and the rest of Europe and their major texts, continued where the middle class women's movements of the 19th century had ceased. They generated a radicalised feminism, embracing the theory of patriarchy and developed new strategies such as consciousness-raising (*Selbsterfahrung*), project groups and women's centres.¹⁴⁸

Many of these groups participated in a sustained campaign to legalise abortion, an endeavour which commenced in 1971 and was struck down by the Federal Constitutional Court in 1975. A limited version of the abortion legislation that had initially been proposed was made law in 1976. At the same time the issue of abortion challenged the idea of sexism as a 'secondary contradiction' which many socialist women's groups ascribed to, confronting members with a choice between feminism and socialism. In addition, a growing number of lesbian groups were emerging out of the budding gay liberation movement from 1973, choosing to separate from homosexual men to better explore their own concerns and broader contribution to women's liberation.¹⁴⁹ Public debate, as well as controversy, on and coverage of women's issues increased from 1975 onwards, women's publishing houses and literature became more widespread and more women joined the movement.¹⁵⁰

The manner in which *Leistung* was conceptualised and problematized here calls similar statements by the working groups of the late sixties and the mixed autonomous groups to mind. One women's group was based in Munich and followed the principles of a grass-roots group (*Basisgruppe*). Founded in 1971, it consisted of eight to ten women (ex-students and professional women from the Trikont publishing house) who joined the local Siemens plant to examine the

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 241.

¹⁴⁸ Kristina Schulz, "Frauen in Bewegung. Mit der Neuen Linken über die Linke(n) hinaus," in *Handbuch 1968*, 250-253; Ilse Lenz, "Das Private ist Politisch?! Zum Verhältnis von Fraubewegung und alternativem Milieu," in *Das Alternative Milieu*, 377-378.

¹⁴⁹ Gabriele Dennert, Christiane Leidinger, Franziska Rauchut, "Lesben in Wut – Lesbenbewegung in der BRD der 1970er Jahre," in *In Bewegung bleiben. 100 Jahre Kultur, Politik, Kultur und Geschichte von Lesben*, eds. Gabriele Dennert, Christiane Leidinger, Franziska Rauchut, (Berlin: Querverlag, 2008), 34-38. This generated some tension in the gay liberation movement Craig Griffiths, "Gay activism in Modell Deutschland," *European Review of History* 22:1 (2015): 62-3.

¹⁵⁰ Schulz, "Frauen in Bewegung," 244.

conditions under which women worked.¹⁵¹ In 1973, the group minutes encompassed a list of reasons women had for joining political groups, including psychological motives for political engagement.¹⁵² Among the list was a desire to be accepted, “without having to meet any norms of achievement” and the urge to avoid structures of authority in leftist male organisations.¹⁵³ It is unclear whether these norms centring on performance were seen as deriving from the workplace, a male environment or society more generally, although the socialist stance of this particular group would make an equation of one with the other seem likely. What is clear is that an excessive focus on and drive towards performance was seen as defining individual behaviour by the women in this group.¹⁵⁴

In a manner similar to the *Arbeitsgruppen*, communes and autonomous groups, the women’s groups, formed around the ideal of ongoing discussion, found themselves replicating what they saw as the power structures of society. The groups were based on the assumption that every woman had something valuable to contribute and that women could help each other to overcome their inhibitions and feelings of inferiority. They also strove to establish equality among their members, as competition was seen as specifically male trait and mechanism.¹⁵⁵

German author Ursula Krechel, commenting on this format of group interaction, noted that there was less “pressure to perform”, facilitating communication.¹⁵⁶ At the same time, she dealt with the issue of authority figures emerging in each group. According to Krechel, the loudest and most confident members tended to dominate, causing more passive members to overestimate the extent of their activities and feel resentful. At the same time, the less active members cast the emerging leaders in the role of the “mother”, based on their own experiences at school and work until the mental image of the proactive leaders in their groups

¹⁵¹ Schäfer and Wilke, *Frauenbewegung München*, 119.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁵⁴ Men’s groups formed around 1974 with the aim of creating a pro-feminist, emotionally expressive masculinity also seem to have struggled with the replication of social hierarchies and what they termed the continuing centrality of “performance and competition”. Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, 699-710.

¹⁵⁵ Ingeborg Wegehaupt-Schneider, “Das Private ist politisch. Selbsterfahrungsgruppen,” in *Der große Unterschied: Die neue Frauenbewegung und die siebziger Jahre*, ed. Kristine von Soden (Berlin: Elefant Press, 1988), 17.

¹⁵⁶ Ursula Krechel, *Selbsterfahrung und Fremdbestimmung: Bericht aus der neuen Frauenbewegung* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1975), 72.

bore very little resemblance to the actual person.¹⁵⁷ The new leaders, once made aware of their status, reacted to the expectations of the group by “demanding ever more performance from themselves”. This was a reaction defined by a fear of being unable to fulfil the role they had been allotted and of being seen in the same negative light as they themselves previously saw authority figures. They pushed for new activities but were also anxious about falling into “male” patterns of behaviour.

Once again, the concept of performance or achievement lay at the heart of the problem when analysing group dynamics, as it had among other groups on the New Left from 1968 onwards. The one notable difference here was that many feminists considered the issue of *Leistung* within the group to be the effect of a male ethos dominating social interaction. Moreover, in marked contrast to early experiments seeking to avoid replicating societal power structures, solutions to the problem were offered. Krechel posited that it was necessary to establish what authority was based on.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, those individuals who had been cast in the role of leader by the group needed to make it clear that they did not match the image the group had generated of them.¹⁵⁹ Finally, tasks were to be allotted according to skill as authority structures could only emerge if permitted.¹⁶⁰

Leistung as a factor guiding behaviour was thus seen as a problem, one many believed could only be addressed in groups segregated along gender lines. Proceeding from their experiences, rather than theoretical exposition, a group of five women discussed their lives prior to and as part of the student and women’s movements. They agreed that men, like women, should work together in groups to overcome destructive forms of behaviour, listing competitive and achievement centred behaviour as examples.¹⁶¹ Underlying this consensus was the assumption that men and women were equally prey to the behaviour inspired by the

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 74.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 74.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 75.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 75.

¹⁶¹ Anna, Laura, Louise, Mary, Wera, “Die Sache der Frauen. Ein Gespräch,” *Kursbuch* 35 (April 1974): 85.

achievement principle, even though they were best served by dealing with its consequences in separate groups.

Yet this emphasis on escaping or overcoming performance as a behavioural streak was accompanied by increasing awareness of the paucity of ambition fostered by the upbringing of young women and girls in the 1970s. Within these studies it was frequently argued that women were not encouraged to see themselves as capable of achieving or performing to a high standard. Pedagogical expert Hannelore Faulstich-Wieland highlighted the growing frequency and popularity of research into how young people chose jobs and were trained for them. One such study stated that “the normative attitude of boys and girls are different. For girls the realisation of ‘non-material values’ like ‘helping others’, ‘serving humanity’ and the realisation of content-based interests is important. Both of these determine the prestige of the profession for girls. Recognition of social concerns is more important to them than recognition of their achievements”.¹⁶² The source of this fundamental difference in values was not elaborated upon further, perhaps because it was assumed to be an innate difference in male and female dispositions. However, this presentation of women as insufficiently encouraged and able to embrace notions of achievement stands in stark contrast with efforts to overcome performance as principle guiding behaviour in women’s groups. This clash could be seen as the outcome of applying notions of performance to different areas of a woman’s life: while performance and ambition were beneficial in the workplace, they should not be permitted to affect social interaction among women.

Ursula Krechel explained such gender based differences in vocational aspiration by drawing on class and gender specific socialisation when it came to values of performance. She posited that middle-class children were much more likely to be encouraged in offering “independent *Leistungen*”, understanding and embracing the norms they were being confronted with by their parents while lower-class children were raised to be subordinates. However, middle-class girls were destined to find their ambitions curtailed as they approached adulthood: “A girl’s greater desire to make decisions, be independent and focus on performance

¹⁶² Hannelore Faulstich-Wieland, “Mädchen in Männerberufen,” in *Unterschied*, 70.

comes to nothing: most of the time they become the assistants, secretaries, underprivileged helpers of the men in their social strata.”¹⁶³

Beyond a need to change the upbringing and professional prospects of girls and women, the possibility of genuine emancipation within the existing system of an achieving society was also the subject of debate among feminist activists in the late sixties and beyond. Schrader-Klebert and Hazel Rosenstrauch insisted that emancipation and *Leistungsgesellschaft* were incompatible.¹⁶⁴ Gains such as equal access to employment and parity in terms of legal status as a spouse were illusory progress as “each form of adaptation to this society in which the authoritarian principle of achievement operates could make her oppression worse, doubling it”. Equal access to employment would expose women to the same exploitation as men, adding a further dimension of exploitation to that already experienced by women in the private sphere.¹⁶⁵ Even those women who did succeed in gaining an influential, highly visible role had to sacrifice more than men in order to meet the requirements of the principles of achievement and competition.¹⁶⁶ A 1975 article by sociologist Ellen von Friedeburg appeared to confirm this fear, touching on the position of supposedly emancipated women and analysing the state of the West German bourgeoisie. Von Friedeburg outlined the detrimental effect the claim to be living in a just society in which “everyone gets what one’s *Leistung* merits” on the position of bourgeois women. For them, emancipation had not meant liberation but rather the imposition of a double burden: keeping house and raising children while also engaging in at least the pretence of a profession in order to avoid being seen as stupid or subordinated.¹⁶⁷ The achieving society was here treated as a synonym for the abuse of labour by a capitalist system, an abuse which was blind to gender and would frustrate any attempts at moderation that did not also aim to change the systemic structure.

The idea that women would simply become equals as victims of exploitation made repeated appearances in the works of Herbert Marcuse throughout the 1960s and ‘70s. Thus in a 1962 conversation with Peter Furth published in *Das Argument*, Marcuse also denied that it was possible to speak of genuine

¹⁶³ Krechel, *Selbsterfahrung*, 28-29.

¹⁶⁴ Hazel, “Unwissenschaftliche Betrachtung,” 50.

¹⁶⁵ Schrader Klebert, “Die kulturelle Revolution,” 43.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁶⁷ von Friedeburg, “Bürgerliche,” 15-16.

emancipation for women in a repressive society.¹⁶⁸ This assertion was still present in his work in 1974, with one important addition. By 1974 Marcuse was presenting the inclusion of women in the exploitative practices of the capitalist workplace as fodder for a system fuelled by the performance principle.¹⁶⁹ He went so far as to present the successful inclusion of women in the drive for a socialist utopia as the key to counteracting the focus on achievement, outlining “the revolutionary function of the feminine as the antithesis of the performance principle.”¹⁷⁰ He derived this argument from a depiction of capitalist society as “governed by the performance principle”, a concept he defined as masculine.¹⁷¹

Not only did these traits characterise the capitalist order, they also threatened to assert themselves in Marxist socialism as evidenced by the emphasis on ever more development of production and the exploitation of nature.¹⁷² However, Marcuse located a redeeming power in the traits that had traditionally been considered the domain of women, such as sensitivity. If freed and permitted to influence the formation of a future society, women could perform a vital service in preventing the renewed assertion of the achievement principle.¹⁷³ Lothar Binger touched upon a similar concept, also portraying women as more able to rise above the dictates of achievement, stating that those rare mixed autonomous groups in which a woman was in charge were defined by an ability to reject “abstract demands for achievement”.¹⁷⁴ For both Marcuse and Binger, women constituted a redemptive force and a potential locus of radical social change. Rather than trying to meet the standards set by a system which valued achievement, female resistance to the norm contained the potential for liberation from precisely this system.

Marcuse’s work in particular provoked a mixed reaction in feminist circles,¹⁷⁵ much of which mirrored the varying approaches and divisions adopted by

¹⁶⁸ Herbert Marcuse, “Emanzipation der Frau in der repressiven Gesellschaft. Ein Gespräch mit Peter Furth in der Zeitschrift ‘Das Argument’ 4:4, Juli 1962,” in *Frankfurter Schule*, 152.

¹⁶⁹ Marcuse, “Marxismus und Feminismus,” 783.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 782.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 781.

¹⁷² It is not clear where Marcuse is taking these examples from.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 783.

¹⁷⁴ Binger, “Plädoyer,” 14.

¹⁷⁵ And continues to do so to this day. Trudy Steuernagel recently criticised Marcuse for “essentialising women”, and endowing them with an identity formed not by independent decisions but in opposition to the persona generated for men by the establishment. See Trudy Steuernagel, “Marcuse, the Women’s Movement, and Women’s Studies,” in *Marcuse: From the*

different groups in the mid-seventies: "Once again women are to be colonised for an idea that is only partially theirs. Marcuse does not say what socialism offers oppressed women, but what oppressed women can offer socialism," wrote Krechel in 1975.¹⁷⁶ She pointed to a number of problems with Marcuse's approach, not least his failure to take women's wishes into account or consider their situation in the existing socialist countries.¹⁷⁷ Crucially however, she did not object to his equation of capitalism with a certain mentality encompassing the performance principle. While Krechel questioned the merits of Marcuse's blueprint for the liberation of society through a particular kind of feminine power, she did not contest his portrait of the problem of performance in capitalist societies.

Women's groups in Berlin and Munich also published responses to Marcuse's analysis of the radical potential within femininity. Vitally, none of those group rejected his designation of the performance principle as the core of a capitalist system and society.¹⁷⁸ However, the version of femininity he had outlined, and the uses he thought it could be put to, were contested by both groups. While the Berlin group took issue with the assertion that traditionally feminine qualities could be useful beyond internal work with other women, the Munich group focused on finding a way to apply these characteristics, which were partly seen as the result of historical oppression, to political activism in the struggle against capitalism.¹⁷⁹ Both groups acknowledged that traits such as sensitivity and emotionality had been pushed aside by a "male rationalism", yet disagreed on the promise of a changed world they contained.¹⁸⁰ Marcuse's analysis, it seemed, was not useful in providing a plan for action. Yet the picture of contemporary society he had painted appears to have resonated with both groups in question, as did the concept of *Leistung* it contained.

New Left to the Next Left, eds. John Bokina and Timothy J. Lukes (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1994), 93.

¹⁷⁶ Krechel, *Selbsterfahrung*, 85.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁷⁸ "Was ist Weiblichkeit. Protokoll zur Diskussion Münchener Frauengruppen mit Herbert Marcuse – Über Marcuses Aufsatz 'Feminismus und Sozialismus'," *Schwarze Protokolle* 11 (June 1975): 121-128, accessed on 5th November, 2013, <http://protest-muenchen.sub-bavaria.de/artikel/2047>.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 122, 124.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

From the late 1960s onwards, a considerable number of women phrased their problems with the radical left in terms of the effects of an achieving society and a masculine performance principle. However, many alternative female groups struggled with similar problems overcoming *Leistung* in groups as the *Arbeitsgruppen* and autonomous mixed groups had experienced previously. Simultaneously, a growing body of literature bemoaned the lack of confidence in women's own ability to achieve and the rewarding nature of achievement. Some questioned whether genuine emancipation was even possible within an achieving society. Despite this criticism, Marcuse's hopes for the feminine as a locus of radical social change by virtue of its very opposition to the performance principle received a muted response. The women's movement perceived *Leistung* as a male, capitalist category and value, functioning as a mechanism of gender-based exclusion. Yet opinion was divided on whether the best course of action was to promote radical social change and move beyond performance or encourage women to appropriate the concept for their own empowerment.

VII: In defence of *Leistung*

The onslaught of criticism expressed by sociologists, protestors, intellectuals and feminists provoked a number of responses, predominantly from social scientists, from the mid-1960s onward. These efforts to offer a reposte can be seen as part of a desire to reclaim terms that had been 'occupied' by the New Left and to limit the influence of the theoretical jargon many conservatives associated with it on political debate.¹⁸¹ Such replies were also embedded in a broader diagnosis of a 'value change' and formed part of a trend towards using the social sciences to deal with and comprehend societal issues.¹⁸² On the whole, the responses insisted that, despite recent criticism, *Leistung* was both a necessary and a positive component of national life.

In explaining the far reaching social changes of the 1960s, such as increasing affluence, rising levels of education, the liberalisation of sexual norms and alterations in forms of political participation and family structure,

¹⁸¹ Martin H. Geyer, "War over Words: The Search for a Public Language in West Germany," in *Political Languages in the Age of Extremes*, ed. Willibald Steinmetz (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 293-295, 318.

¹⁸² Doering-Manteuffel and Raphael, *Nach dem Boom*, 57, 61-5.

contemporaries pointed to a shift in attitudes and beliefs among the population.¹⁸³ One of the most prominent advocates of this theory of ‘value change’ was political scientist Ronald Inglehart. He sought to establish an empirical basis for this sense of far-reaching change in behaviour and argued a “silent revolution” in values had taken place in all highly industrialised, ‘western’ countries. This shift was expressed in a changing emphasis, from a focus on material survival for those who had grown up prior to an era of economic upswing and the firm entrenchment of the welfare state, to prioritisation of values such as self-expression, realisation and freedom.¹⁸⁴ While Inglehart’s theories were intensely debated, subsequent research on value change served to enhance the notion of a shift in those values prioritised in modern life. Sociologist Helmut Klages, for example, claimed that a rapid change in attitudes had taken place between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s, leading to greater emphasis on autonomy and self-development than duty.¹⁸⁵ Set in the context of this broader debate, a series of conservative researchers identified *Leistung* as a value at risk of being lost, especially among the younger generation. In the course of so doing, they stressed the problematic consequences that could result from such a development.

Inglehart’s theory of generational change was hardly groundbreaking in focussing on the younger members of society. As teenagers and young adults had increasingly become the focus of attention in their role as consumers, trendsetters, and bearers of political counterculture throughout the 1960s, many of the studies trying to determine whether West Germans had in fact turned away from *Leistung* focussed on the young. As Detlef Siegfried’s assessment of youth culture in the 1960s has shown, surveys of magazine readers painted a picture of a younger generation open to a more ‘hedonistic’ way of life. However, those questioned also exhibited a strong desire to have a task, to achieve something in the course of their lives. This “strange symbiosis” elicited a somewhat confused

¹⁸³ Ulrich Herbert and Lutz Raphael eds., *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2002), 48.

¹⁸⁴ Inglehart, “Changing Values,” 130; Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution* (Princeton: PUP, 1977).

¹⁸⁵ Helmut Klages, “Verlaufanalyse eines Traditionsbruchs,” in *Staat und Parteien*, ed. Karl-Dietrich Bracher (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1992), 542. See Rödder and Elz eds., *Alte Werte-neue Werte*; Dietz, Neumaier and Rödder, *Gab es den Wertewandel?* for examples of historical research that seek to integrate these empirical findings into their own work.

response from sociological commentators in the late 1960s as enjoyment and achievement were perceived as opposing ends of the behavioural spectrum.¹⁸⁶ By the 1970s social scientists were announcing that *Leistung* was under attack and rushed to defend the importance of achievement.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of these studies, too, focussed on the younger generation and the New Left in particular. In a 1971 study on anti-authoritarian education, pedagogical expert Jakob-Robert Schmid conceptualised the protest voiced by the youth movement as an objection to a *Leistungsgesellschaft*.¹⁸⁷ Aside from criticising Marcuse for leading young people astray by propagating the false notion that the root of all unhappiness was socially constructed, Schmid argued that “drop-outs” and “layabouts”, were using the critique of alienation produced by the achieving society to indulge in unrestrained sexual pleasure and drug abuse.¹⁸⁸ He defended the achievement principle, depicting *Leistung* as a vital feature in the progress of human civilisation while admitting that an excessive focus on material achievement was problematic.¹⁸⁹ Schmid also argued that measures had been taken to reduce the pressure on young people to achieve in education and stated that it was dangerous to raise children without any expectation of failure or strain.¹⁹⁰

Sociologist Helmut Schoeck mounted a more vociferous defence of *Leistung* in the same year, accusing leaders of the New Left of misleading the younger generation by encouraging them to refuse to achieve.¹⁹¹ Their ideas, Schoeck contended, were also taken up by lazy youths who failed to understand that their much-touted need for self-realisation was only possible because others did their duty and achieved, securing national prosperity.¹⁹² He also rejected the notion that there was no respite from the pressure to achieve, claiming a desire for *Leistung* was a natural human urge expressed by playing and competing.¹⁹³ Schoeck's

¹⁸⁶ Siegfried, *Time Is On My Side*, 9, 56.

¹⁸⁷ Jakob R. Schmid, *Antiautoritäre, autoritäre oder authoritative Erziehung?* (1971; repr., Stuttgart and Bern: Haupt, 1975), 23.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 69-72, 90-91.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁹¹ Helmut Schoeck, *Ist Leistung unanständig?* (Zurich: Edition Interfrom, 1971), 7, 12.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 53, 68.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 7, 21. There is some evidence that this defence of *Leistung* extended beyond Germany, to other German-speaking parts of Europe. Max Haller has cited both Noelle-Neumann's and Schoeck's work in his discussion on value change in Austria in the 1960s and 1970s. Haller highlights both authors' concern with *Leistung* as particularly pertinent to the idea of value

work, entitled *Is Achievement Indecent?*, enjoyed considerable popularity, going through six editions by 1978.¹⁹⁴ In asserting the continued need to prioritise *Leistung*, Schoeck was denying that any of the alternative attitudes in existence in West German society had any validity or future.

This increasing thematization and perceived increase in criticism of the *Leistungsgesellschaft* also resulted in an Allensbach survey from the summer of 1972. Surveying 981 adults across West Germany, the study attempted to not only establish what the term meant to those surveyed, but also to gauge its popularity and applicability to the future. Here, conservative concerns initially appeared unfounded. Over a third of those questioned saw a *Leistungsgesellschaft* as a society in which professional performance was acknowledged and individual advancement prevailed. Almost a further third understood the term to denote a society in which everyone worked together for the common good. A mere twelve per cent thought an achieving society drove individuals to continue working even if they did not have the capacity to do so and seven per cent endorsed the meaning established by protestors. To this last group, a *Leistungsgesellschaft* was a system which forced everyone to work for the profit of those who owned property.¹⁹⁵ The achieving society was still generally seen a positive phenomenon, as 63 per cent supported what they understood a *Leistungsgesellschaft* to be. Based on these figures, the likes of Schmid and Schoeck had little to worry about.

However, when assessing general support for the achieving society among the public, only about half of those questioned thought most people endorsed the model, while twenty per cent assumed that most people were against it and roughly another fifth thought society was divided on the matter. This more pessimistic image was given further depth when participants were asked about the future of the achieving society. Here, only 37 per cent thought most people

change. Max Haller, "Auf dem Weg zur mündigen Gesellschaft? Wertewandel in Österreich 1986-2003," in *Österreich zur Jahrhundertwende: Gesellschaftliche Werthaltungen und Lebensqualität 1986-2004*, eds. Wolfgang Schulz, Max Haller, Alfred Grausgruber (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2005), 36. What is more, both Schoeck's and Noelle-Neumann's works were published by Interfrom, a publishing house in Zurich. Finally, Schmid was a born in Switzerland and partly educated there, working as a professor of pedagogy in Bern. Franziska Rogger Kappeler, "Schmid, Jakob-Robert," *Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse*, accessed 12th February, 2016, <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D9069.php>.

¹⁹⁴ Schoeck, *Ist Leistung unanständig?*, ii.

¹⁹⁵ "Leistungsgesellschaft," in *Jahrbuch der öffentlichen Meinung*, vol.5, 1968-1973, ed. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann and Erich Peter Neumann (Allensbach: Verlag für Demoskopie, 1974), 346.

would support it in a few years time, while another third believed fewer would do so (the last third did not know).¹⁹⁶

Based on these concerns for the future of an achieving society, one of the founders of the Allensbach Institute, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann sought to defend *Leistung*, continuing the tradition of seeing achieving as a distinctly middle class quality. Noelle-Neumann, a colleague of Schoeck's at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, released a series of highly controversial articles in June 1975 in which she decried the "proletarianisation" of the middle classes. She posited that, in an era of increased material security for all members of West German society, those values which had traditionally been associated with the middle classes were in decline and a working-class ethic was spreading.¹⁹⁷ A belief in the value of *Leistung* and confidence that performance would be rewarded with corresponding social status and success, that social mobility was both possible and just, were all listed in her catalogue of values previously adhered to by white-collar workers from the eighteenth century onwards.¹⁹⁸

However, between 1967 and 1972 these values had been called into question, threatening social cohesion and economic prosperity as, she argued, working class values including a desire to minimize or avoid work and "status fatalism" (a lack of trust in a societal system of just rewards for endeavour) had crept in.¹⁹⁹ Noelle-Neumann went so far as to describe 1975, when this decline of middle class values continued, as a "silent revolution".²⁰⁰ She explained the development by arguing that revolutions were usually preceded by periods of economic growth, until an unexpected setback caused a discrepancy between expectations and outcomes.²⁰¹ More importantly, she connected this general decline of an ethos valuing work with an increasing belief that the performance principle had become obsolete.²⁰² Noelle-Neumann drew on an understanding of *Leistung* as a

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 346.

¹⁹⁷ Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, *Werden wir alle Proletarier? Wertewandel in unserer Gesellschaft* (Zurich: Interfrom AG, 1978), 12.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 8.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 21.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 43.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 54.

²⁰² Ibid., 59.

motivator in behaviour and a structural principle in society to express a deeply pessimistic view of the future of West German society.

Catholic social theorist Hermann Josef Wallraff shared her scepticism on the future of the Federal Republic. Writing in 1975, he noted that the “concept of an achieving society has been converted into an indictment”, contrasting this more recent use with enthusiasm for *Leistung* in the period of economic reconstruction after the Second World War.²⁰³ His reaction to the criticism of *Leistung* expressed by students was to emphasise that no community could survive without achievement and stipulate that individuals should be compelled to achieve to a minimal level, something that needed to be made clear to “the young people”.²⁰⁴ Wallraff did acknowledge that emphasising performance excluded those unable to achieve (the sick, disabled etc.) and stigmatised them in public opinion. Moreover, the concept failed to sufficiently take account of the fact that the advantages that accrued from a high level of achievement were also enjoyed by groups or persons who had not contributed to national productivity.²⁰⁵ Despite all of these problems, Wallraff still insisted on the essential function the achievement principle performed in the market and for the common interest.

As the 1960s and '70s became the site of a debate about changes in contemporary values and attitudes, conservative authors stressed the continued importance of achieving to the social, political and economic wellbeing of the Federal Republic. As Schmid's, Schoeck's and Wallraff's writings in particular show, societal change and the alleged turn away from *Leistung* were generally identified with younger generations. Moreover, the criticism expressed by student protestors and their intellectual figureheads was rejected as misguided and harmful.

²⁰³ Hermann Josef Wallraff, “Die Belastungen des Leistungsbegriffs,” in *Wirtschaftsordnung und Staatsverfassung: Festschrift für Hans Böhm zum 80. Geburtstag*, eds. Heinz Saueremann and Ernst-Joachim Mestmäcker (Tübingen: J.C. B. Mohr, 1975), 625-626.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 627.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 627. Wallraff acknowledged problems in assessing economic achievement, including an uneven burden of taxation, the impact of chance shifts in production which happened to coincide with rapidly changing demands of the customer, varying degrees of ability to gain credit, and the different situation in different branches of industry all complicated assessment. See Ibid., 629, 631-632.

VIII: Conclusion

A critique of *Leistungsgesellschaft* and the concept of *Leistung* more generally was fairly widespread among the student protestors and the New Left in the aftermath of the student movement. At the same time it is important to bear in mind that the protestors constituted only a small minority of the West German population. In their capacity as an elite, however, the protestors were not the first to raise concerns about achievement and the achieving society. From the late 1950s, and more emphatically from the late 1960s onwards, a parallel, though less far-reaching, set of concerns had been expressed by West German sociologists. At the very least, disparagement of both concepts was a shared practice among certain parts of the West German elite. Moreover, as the Allensbach surveys indicate, the model of a *Leistungsgesellschaft* was certainly known to the general public and anxieties about its future did feature in opinion surveys.

The intellectual figureheads of the student movement associated with the Frankfurt School used the model of an authoritarian achieving society to reveal the repressive truth of the West German system while also employing the term to denote to ideology masking it. Within this overarching social critique, Herbert Marcuse drew on Freud to depict the achievement principle as a behavioural code based on economic criteria dictating acceptable conduct. Jürgen Habermas adopted a different approach, treating the *Leistungsgesellschaft* and the *Leistungsprinzip* as an ideology generated and espoused by the bourgeoisie. However, both theorists saw the achievement principle as outdated due to the advanced development of capitalism.

The New Left was thus conceptualised as a refusal to perform or endorse achievement as a norm which was important to the *Leistungsgesellschaft*. The protestors initially employed the concept of pressure to achieve in their critique of the university and the way it produced and transmitted knowledge. Furthermore, they viewed the university as an institution which threatened to complete its transformation into an extension of the authoritarian achieving society by submitting to the wrong kind of reform. But the concept of a pressure to achieve was also applied to other areas of society, characterised throughout as an obstruction to a fulfilling, harmonious collective life and work.

However, precisely this pressure was replicated in the SDS and the organisations it inspired, giving rise to alternatives such as Kommune 2 and autonomous groups. These participants in the “psychological turn” believed that achievement re-emerged as a structuring principle of interaction and individual behaviour, despite their hopes of avoiding it or creating a positive, collective version of *Leistung*.

Alongside these processes, the women’s movement deepened previously fleeting references to achievement as a male quality by interrogating the role of gender in an achieving society. They did so in order to establish what true emancipation would mean and came to the conclusion that both men and women were enslaved to *Leistung*, albeit in different ways, calling for social change.

Throughout these simultaneous and frequently overlapping developments, the concept of *Leistung*, regardless of whether it was seen as a characteristic of society, a principle dictating behaviour, a pressure on the individual or a determining factor in relationships with others, was overwhelmingly seen as a pernicious force derived from a capitalist system, impoverishing and restricting the lives of those it affected. By the early 1970s, a group of conservative social scientists was seeking to rebut this criticism, equating it with the New Left and the younger generation. Conservative champions of achieving sought to salvage the more positive understandings of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* by outlining the dangers inherent to national well-being in a turn away from both.

Conclusion

What pattern of use of the concepts of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* emerges between 1933 and 1975? Given the objections to both ideas expressed in the 1960s, early 1970s and more recent discussions of the “fetishization of work” or our inability to accept our own flaws, it is tempting to paint a picture of the gradual rejection of the terms *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft*.¹ Such an image would be too simplistic. The continued reliance on these concepts in political discourse shows that at the very least they still have considerable clout.² Angela Merkel, discussing the government’s agenda for the coming months in a debate in the German Bundestag in March 2010, stated the coalition’s commitment to a “*Leistungsgesellschaft*” and its intention of expanding support for education, postulating that “*Leistung* must be worthwhile”.³ A survey conducted by former President Richard von Weizsäcker against the backdrop of debates on party platforms in 2006 revealed that “Germans want a *Leistungsgesellschaft*, in which social differences are mitigated by the state”⁴. Instead of an incremental turn away from ideas of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft*, the pattern that emerges between 1933 and 1975 is defined by increasing use of and conflict over both terms, peaking in the late 1960s and 1970s.

This pattern manifested in a more extensive application and mounting criticism of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* from Third Reich to Federal Republic. The National Socialist stress on *Leistung* within a *Leistungsgemeinschaft* was part of the DAF’s bid to encourage workforce productivity by emphasising the chance for mobility of the male, Aryan labourer served the people’s community by competing. Ordoliberals too, stressed achieving in a market defined by competition from the 1920s on. But they became increasingly hamstrung by their adherence to *Leistung* as an interventionist welfare state developed during the

¹ Sabine Höckling, “Wir sind auf Fehler fokussiert,” *Die Zeit*, 15th August, 2015, accessed 5th January, 2016, <http://www.zeit.de/karriere/beruf/2015-08/positives-denken-karriere-job>; Patrick Spät, “Sagen sie alle Termine ab!,” *Die Zeit*, 7th August, 2015, accessed 5th January, 2016, <http://www.zeit.de/karriere/2015-07/faulheit-recht-leistungszwang>; Peter Leusch, “Leben in der Leistungsgesellschaft,” *Deutschlandfunk*, 1st April, 2010, accessed 5th January, 2016, http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/leben-in-der-leistungsgesellschaft.1148.de.html?dram:article_id=180536.

² Peter Carstens, “Merkel droht mit Ausschluss aus der Euro-Zone”.

³ *Ibid.*, n.p.

⁴ “Der Traum von der sozialen Leistungsgesellschaft”.

1950s. Sociologists employed the concept of the achieving society and notions of performance in the integration of the Federal Republic into the 'West', a process which included extensive criticism as the 1960s wore on. The achieving society was increasingly seen as an ideological construct and 'achievement' as a problematic category in research. Beyond that, sociological criticism of a societal obsession with *Leistung* foreshadowed the more radical and far reaching critique expressed by protestors and the women's movement from the late 1960s onwards. Despite this aversion to the pressure to achieve, late 1960s activists partly attributed the failure of their attempts at restructuring social interaction and work patterns to the continued presence of *Leistung* in their lives and minds. The critical voices of the 1960s and 1970s were not left unanswered. Conservative advocates in particular responded by warning that what they perceived as the denigration of *Leistung* in the workplace and in everyday life would have disastrous consequences. In the course of so doing, they stressed the continued importance of achieving for the Federal Republic as a whole and its citizens.

Against this backdrop of increasing criticism and efforts at defending achievement, a set of clear breaks around 1945 does exist with reference to *Leistung*. Any emphasis on a link between racial 'purity' and achieving largely vanished from post-war public debate. That is not to say that considerations of race were absent from discussions of *Leistung*. As the concept was applied within an increasingly global framework, the sociological and economic models which depicted non 'western' countries as 'under-developed' rested on the notion that industrial nations were in some way superior and thus more able to achieve. They also supposedly conformed more to the model of an achieving society, a model which all countries were encouraged to emulate. However, this understanding of the connection between race and performance is strikingly different from the National Socialist assertion that *Leistung* was a racially unique, German attribute. In this regard, 1945 does represent a clear break in 20th century German discussions of *Leistung*.

A further shifting element in discussions around *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* was the relationship between individual and collective entities such as state and society. The individual in the National Socialist period

was obliged to achieve or face being placed outside the narrow confines of the *Volks-* and *Leistungsgemeinschaft*. It had to accept the primacy of achieving to further the national good as defined by the DAF in an attempt to expand its own power. After 1945, there was a move away from any idea of community in connection with achieving, and 'society' became the framework in which achievement would take place. Beyond this difference, Ordoliberalists stressed the individual opportunity and choice inherent in allowing a competitive economy to be structured by performance, positing that national advancement would follow if every individual engaged in productive behaviour. By the 1950s sociologists set about assessing how far the opportunities provided by the market actually extended. Some embraced the idea that social stratification indeed allowed the best individuals to progress professionally, permitting society as a whole to prosper. Others uncovered the systemic pressure and bias inherent in supposedly objective assessments of individual performance. This criticism was soon taken further by New Left activists. Along with Frankfurt School theorists, they argued that performance was a problematic feature of the capitalist system that required radical change. They raised awareness of the extensive systemic pressure that can be placed on the individual by consistently emphasising the need to achieve. Depicting performance as *the* source of social success placed the responsibility for social status squarely on the shoulders of the individual rather than the societal structures surrounding him/her. Concurrently, the women's movement redefined both contemporary understandings of who was affected and what this collective pressure was. Finally, conservative defences of achievement denied the validity of such criticism, referring back to the need to promote individual performance for the collective wellbeing and prosperity of the Federal Republic.

In addition, the post-war period also encompassed the expansion of a medicalised understanding of achievement. *Leistungsmedizin*, as part of an endeavour to secure peak performance from workers and athletes alike, had been a presence from the Nazi era onwards, but from the mid-1960s, the "psychological turn" also affected discussions of performance. Studies of addictive behaviour and psychoanalytical practitioners increasingly conceptualised their issues by referring to the problems an emphasis on *Leistung* generated as did activists casting about for a better way of life. This psycho-medical understanding was

shared by radical and mainstream commentators alike, though with very different agendas. Moreover, the conclusions each side garnered from their analysis differed considerably. Underlying the manner in which radical socialist protestors drew on psychoanalytical ideas in their experiments was the notion of a changeable psyche and the ambition of not only altering the individual but also society as a whole.⁵ Yet, while many psychoanalysts agreed with and lauded student engagement with problems such as alienation, their ideas diverged from here. As work by Anthony Kauders has highlighted, establishment psychoanalysts criticised protestors' motives and aims.⁶ Given that psychoanalytic therapy had only been made part of state sponsored health care provision in 1967, their reluctance to embrace a more radical agenda can be seen as an attempt to retain recently achieved security.⁷ They thus rejected the protestors' claims of a need to completely overhaul West German societal and state structures, focusing instead on aiding the individual in adjusting to social realities. What united these varied groups was their conceptualisation of *Leistung* and a society that placed it at the centre of formations of the self as a malignant force, pushing the individual to behave in a manner destructive to health and happiness in striving to emulate a pattern set by social convention.

The openness of both terms also meant that *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* were attributed to a range of different points of origin. National Socialism attempted to claim *Leistung* as part of a racially understood national identity. In so doing, the Nazis were asserting that to achieve was uniquely German and a meritocratic society reflected this supposedly inimitable quality. The Ordoliberal project made no such claim, asserting that to achieve was part of human nature and positioning *Leistung* as an urge to be gainfully exploited in the market on an individual and collective level. West German sociologists frequently viewed achievement as a feature of an industrial modernity, turning to the United States as the embodiment of achievement-based social mobility. Where the U.S. was held up as an example to emulate or criticise, it was seen as the epitome of a trend that existed throughout all industrial societies. Mobility based on performance, in this narrative, was a feature of modernity itself. This modernity was

⁵ Anthony D. Kauders, "Wie viel Politik verträgt die Psychoanalyse? Eine bundesrepublikanische Debatte, 1968-1990," in *Das Selbst*, 195.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

understood to be specifically 'western' and, though their incorporation into a Cold War liberal sociology, concepts of *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* became part of the integration of the Federal Republic into the 'West'. Sociological research tried to draw on both concepts in describing potential similarities with the GDR in the context of *Ostpolitik* from the early 1970s onward. However, *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* were loaded with connotations of 'western' superiority over the Soviet system, which made it difficult to depict the GDR as an achieving society. Alternate sociological accounts stressed the importance of *Leistungsgesellschaft* as a myth to obscure inequality and generate loyalty, claiming the source of such constructs were the elites in a society. By the late 1960s, *Leistung* was traced back to the exploitative practices and restrictive mind-set of capitalism. To critical sociologists, and more so to socialist activists, *Leistungsgesellschaft* was synonymous with West German society during the economic miracle.

A continuity that outlasts the caesura of 1945 is the enduring importance of gender in drawing lines of exclusion when it came to discussing *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft*. Achieving was overwhelmingly understood as the domain of men from 1933 until well into the 1960s. This masculine version of *Leistung* manifested in the National Socialist veneration for the physical strength of the soldier and the labourer as his civilian counterpart. It also expressed itself in Ordoliberal admiration for the unceasing efforts of the entrepreneur to gain an economic advantage under competitive conditions of gentlemanly fair play. If, as occurred under National Socialism, women within the people's community were seen as achieving, it was as mothers or, at most, as a substitute labour force whose would only receive support from the regime if they continued to produce racially "valuable" stock.⁸ In the post-war period, women were frequently left out of the picture completely, be it in sociological studies of status allocation which only considered male wage earners, economic definitions of an inability to cope with the rigours of competition as 'unmanly' or socialist invectives against the pressures of capitalism and a bourgeois mind-set in the 1960s and 1970s. By the late 1960s, women's performance in the workplace and the home had attained some, if limited, acknowledgement. In the early 1970s, the women's movement

⁸ Sachse, *Siemens, der Nationalsozialismus und die moderne Familie*, p. 88.

was highlighting this continued dynamic of marginalisation, demanding an expanded understanding of *Leistung* or its rejection.

Within discussions of the achieving society and performance, *Bürgerlichkeit* also features as a recurring point of reference.⁹ The period before 1945 witnessed efforts to recast norms of competition and achievement, which were perceived as quintessentially bourgeois, to fit the National Socialist programme and world view. At the same time Ordoliberal theory retained a commitment to *Leistung* that was, in many ways, consistent with a bourgeois understanding of independence and status. The Ordoliberals endorsed *Leistung* and a society structured around it as a correlate of this broader bourgeois programme, yet exhibited unease at the prospect of potentially unlimited social mobility, resorting to bourgeois ideas of a propertied order to allay these fears. By the late 1950s, sociological observers were noting what they believed to be a problematic middle class dominance when it came to defining achievement and being able to achieve. This frequently critical stance on the connections between *Leistung* and *Bürgerlichkeit* was radicalised and extended by the anti-capitalism voiced by members of the Frankfurt School, the student protestors and female activists. They stressed the repressive and harmful tendencies of a focus on performance that was not only inherent in a capitalist society, but epitomised by what they defined as bourgeois lifestyles and mentalities. But this component of *Leistung* did not break down and vanish. Rather, conservative social scientists rose to defend the concept from the early 1970s onwards, rejecting these criticisms and emphatically denying that a future for any society was possible without *Leistung*.

Moreover, both *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* were tied to an endeavour to define and understand modernity. The increased importance of performance in a society based on a capitalist mode of production was one of the features of this modernity. Identifying with and exploring it often involved setting up a series of clear 'others': in the form of a pre-capitalist, feudalistic society in which mobility based on performance was supposedly extremely limited; a socialist state which provided none of the freedoms that purportedly came with achieving; or 'non-western' and allegedly 'under-developed' countries. In being defined as a

⁹ Regardless of whether *Leistung* was in fact rooted in bourgeois understandings of how to live and work. Verheyen, "Unter Druck," 386.

Leistungsgesellschaft, the Federal Republic was included in the mental map of the highly advanced, industrialised 'West'.

The search for an alternative to class society and tension, experiences that defined contemporary understandings of modernity, was also part of engagement with the model of an achieving society in the Third Reich and the Federal Republic. *Leistung* emerges as an alternative structuring mechanism to 'class' that could help overcome allegations of injustice in stratification by making an individual quality the arbiter of social status. Given the bitter class conflicts that had defined the Weimar Republic and 19th century Germany, this alternative understanding of social stratification was probably a welcome tool in public debate. Yet this promise of *Leistung* as a means of promoting social harmony did not last. *Leistung* instead of class, was no longer accepted by many citizens by the 1970s.

Moreover, the increasing influence of *Wissenschaft* and the rising figure of the expert are both evident in the manner in which *Leistung* and *Leistungsgesellschaft* were discussed and analysed between 1933 and 1975. This process did not commence in 1933,¹⁰ but the period under consideration here straddles two phases of Lutz Raphael's "scientization of the social", a development stretching from the 19th century to the present day.¹¹ However, as Christian Geulen has highlighted, it is not simply a case of scientific research advancing further and further into the social arena. Within the broader process outlined by Raphael, concepts and ideas are transferred between different disciplines and areas of society.¹² While sociological research alone systematically interrogated the notion of an achieving society, the notion of *Leistung* became the subject of research in economics, psychology, sociology, political science and pedagogy. As such, *Leistung* was taken to be a number of different things ranging from a social norm or value to a measurable outcome of effort.

Debates among West Germans about achieving and *Leistungsgesellschaft* thus do not reflect a story of overall decline. Rather, both terms incur greater use and

¹⁰ Ibid., 382-390.

¹¹ Raphael, "Verwissenschaftlichung," 177.

¹² Christian Geulen, "Plädoyer für eine Geschichte der Grundbegriffe des 20. Jahrhunderts." See also Nützenadel, *Stunde der Ökonomen*, 15.

become increasingly conflicted. The 1960s and 1970s are the culmination of this trend. Proponents and opponents alike saw *Leistungsgesellschaft* as a key term defining West German identity, encapsulating the economic miracle and the 'western' alliance or the flaws of capitalism and its effects on the fragile individual.

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