LESBIAN FEMINIST COLLABORATION IN INFORMAL WOMEN'S NETWORKS IN EAST GERMANY (1978-1989)

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the collaboration processes between lesbian and feminist historical actors and groups in women's networks in East Germany between 1978 and 1989, asking how this collaboration created new dialogues, knowledge, and networks. East German women's groups had gathered informally in private friends' circles since 1978. However, women began organising more visibly in March 1982 after the People's Chamber passed a military service law that included the conscription of able-bodied women between the ages of 18 and 50. At the same time, in February 1982, the Protestant Evangelical Church sponsored the first public discussion of homosexuality within the church, prompting the formation of several gay and lesbian working groups.

The existing historical literature does not centre differences between feminist and lesbian activist perspectives, nor has collaboration between lesbian and feminist groups been examined in detail. Based on materials from three archival institutions, this thesis explores the shared activities between lesbian and feminist activists and groups. The thesis dedicates a chapter to the lesbian group *Lesben in der Kirche*, whose members are argued to have adopted an American radical lesbian feminist perspective. A series of oral history interviews with former East German lesbian and feminist activists from the *Frauenforschungs, Bildungs, und Informationszentrum Archive* (FFBIZ Archive, Berlin) are analysed concerning each activist's childhood, gender socialisation, friendships, and reflections on the women's and lesbian movement since the Reunification of Germany between 1989 and 1991.

By contrast to the existing literature, this thesis recognises lesbian and feminist activists and groups' agency in producing new discourses regarding gender and sexuality, responding to the first secretary of the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (East German Socialist Unity Party, SED), Erich Honecker's social reforms, including the so-called *Muttipolitik*, since 1971. Lesbian and feminist activists represented a minority of women in East Germany and were predominately white, urban, and middle-class. Therefore, their discourses represented the interests of their specific social group but not those of racialised, working-class, or rural women in East Germany.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgement is made in the form of bibliographical reference. I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:
Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc): 35,862 words.
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Signed: Florence Bourdillon

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1. Introduction

1.1 A Brief Overview of the East German Gay and Lesbian Movement

When the Berlin Wall opened on 9 November 1989, a vibrant gay and lesbian movement existed in East Germany. However, this had not always been the case: from the East German state's conception in 1949 to the mid-1980s, the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (Socialist Unity Party, SED) sought to remove all traces of same-sex intimacy from public life.[1] Pro-natalist policies enforced heterosexuality in East Germany, emphasising the "German family" in the post-war era.[2] Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the East German police prosecuted public displays of same-sex intimacy between men.[3] Prosecutions were supported by paragraph 175, a provision of the German legal code adopted under the German Empire in 1871.[4] The statute criminalised gay men and was broadened by the Nazis, who increased the number of men punished under paragraph 175.[5] It was one of the only Nazi-era laws that remained in West Germany. East Germany reverted to the pre-Nazi version of the statute in 1949.[6] In 1968, the SED removed paragraph 175 from the East German legal code, meaning that male homosexual acts over 21 were no longer criminalised. This was partly in response to the relatively eased social climate in the Eastern Bloc since the death of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR, Josef Stalin, in 1953.[7] In 1957, his replacement as General Secretary, Nikita Khrushchev, instructed Soviet judges and prosecutors to stop investigating cases of consensual same-sex encounters.[8]

Furthermore, the SED had achieved relative economic stability and thus popular support by the end of the 1960s.[9] Therefore, it sought to address citizen concerns that did not threaten the regime's legitimacy or longevity.[10] These concerns were typically related to one's fulfilment in their private life, a need which took on increasing importance to the SED throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[11]

[1] Scott Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989' (Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Urbana, Illnois, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2019), 2.
[2] Harrison, 4.
[3] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 6.
[4] Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 11.
[5] McLellan, 12.
[6] McLellan, 12.
[7] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 116.
[8] Harrison, 116.
[9] McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism*, 10.
[10] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 117.
[11] Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 3, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199208845.001.0001.

After the decriminalisation, gay-friendly bars and clubs emerged in Prenzlauer Berg, East Berlin, which West Germans gays and lesbians frequently visited on a day trip.[12] In West Germany, the gay liberation movement began in 1971 in response to the high persecution of gay men by the authorities.[13] Gay West Germans shared pamphlets and books with gay East Germans about the ideologies of the gay liberation movement.[14] This prompted a wave of East German gay and lesbian activism institutionalised in the form of the *Homosexuelle Interessengemeinschaft Berlin* (Homosexual Interest Group, Berlin, HIB), formed in 1973.[15] HIB was created by a group of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people who met in a museum on the outskirts of Berlin belonging to one member, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf. The group arranged events throughout the 1970s that welcomed between 100 to 200 people.[16] The group used and developed the language of Western gay liberation to argue that homosexual emancipation was necessary for the success of socialism.[17] The group used *Eingaben* (petitions) to request state recognition and funding to construct their meeting space in East Berlin.[18] The Ministry for Health responded positively, although it refused support to the group, while the Politburo ordered the *Stasi* (State Security) to gather information about the group for its dismantling.[19]

In 1978, HIB member Ursula Sillge organised a state-wide gathering of lesbians, inviting over 500 women through letter invitations and phone calls to the Von Mahlsdorf Museum.[20] Just days prior, the Stasi questioned Sillge about the event, which she claimed would occur at a private residence. The Stasi permitted her to proceed, but the police still obstructed over 100 participants from getting to the event, stationing themselves at the nearby train station.[21] Von Mahlsdorf was banned from using her residence as a regular meeting place, and the organisers had to find another permanent location for their group.[22] After further denial of state funding for a permanent meeting place, the group disbanded in 1979.[23] Nonetheless, the impetus of the movement continued into the 1980s as several members of the HIB later formed gay and lesbian groups.

[12] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 118.
[13] J. McLellan, 'Glad to Be Gay Behind the Wall: Gay and Lesbian Activism in 1970s East Germany', *History Workshop Journal* 74, no. 1 (1 October 2012): 107, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbs017.
[14] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 120.
[15] McLellan, 'Glad to Be Gay Behind the Wall', 105.
[16] Raelynn J. Hillhouse, 'Out of the Closet behind the Wall: Sexual Politics and Social Change in the GDR', *Slavic Review* 49, no. 4 (1990): 587, https://doi.org/10.2307/2500548.
[17] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 124.
[18] Harrison, 130.
[19] Harrison, 134.
[20] McLellan, 'Glad to Be Gay Behind the Wall', 123.
[21] McLellan, 124.
[22] McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism*, 124.
[23] McLellan, 'Glad to Be Gay Behind the Wall', 124.

Gay and lesbian groups began gathering again in 1982, but now under the protection of the Protestant Church. The East German Protestant Evangelical Church had been harbouring new social movement groups since the late 1970s, including human rights, pacifist, and environmental groups throughout the state.[24] In 1985, partially in response to the growing gay and lesbian movement, the state sought to end discrimination based on sexual and emotional orientation.[25] Since Honecker took power in 1971, the SED enacted policies recognising the importance of individual self-fulfilment in society. This view was supported by new interpretations of Karl Marx's writings in the early 1980s by East German Marxist theoreticians. These interpretations emphasised that people could find fulfilment not just through their labour but in their social and cultural lives additionally.[26] Subsequently, the state structures of media, criminal law, academia, and the state youth organisation supported citizens in defining their identity.[27] In 1987, the SED began a campaign that positively addressed homosexuality, seen in articles in major publications, including the state health magazine *Visite*.[28] From 1986, the most popular East German youth radio station, DT64, regularly broadcasted interviews and testimonials featuring gay and lesbian East Germans, demonstrating the isolation and societal exclusion felt by gay and lesbian East Germans.[29] At the end of each broadcast, the presenter called for each listener to dismantle homophobia in East Germany actively.[30] The *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (Free German Youth, FDJ) encouraged local chapters of the organisation's lesbian clubs.[31] Following this shift in state policy, some homosexual groups split from the church, and newly formed homosexual groups began meeting in non-church spaces, such as bars, restaurants, and state youth clubs. The groups that met outside the church were connected to some degree to the state youth organisation, FDJ.[32] The groups that met in youth club spaces required the consent of the local arm of the FDJ to use the location and discuss specific topics. Therefore, the groups meeting outside the church in 1985 were much more likely to follow a Marxist-Leninist framework in their campaign for homosexual integration into socialism.[33]

[24] Hillhouse, 'Out of the Closet behind the Wall'.
[25] Hillhouse, 585.
[26] Hillhouse, 586.
[27] Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*, 7.
[28] Hillhouse, 'Out of the Closet behind the Wall', 589.
[29] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 219.
[30] Harrison, 220.
[31] Hillhouse, 'Out of the Closet behind the Wall', 589.
[32] Jochen Kleres, 'Gleiche Rechte im Sozialismus: Die Schwulen- und Lesbenbewegung der DDR', *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 13, no. 2 (1 June 2000): 54, https://doi.org/10.1515/fjsb-2000-0208.
[33] Maria Bühner, '"(W)Ir Haben Einen Zustand Zu Analysieren, Der Uns Zu Außenseitern Macht." Lesbischer Aktivismus in Ost-Berlin in Den 1980er-Jahren', *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* (blog), 2017, https://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-1702.

The East German gay and lesbian movement of the 1980s was constituted by many different groups that occupied different political positions. Between 1982 and 1985, most gay and lesbian groups met in Protestant churches and church community rooms.[34] Despite gathering in the church, not all homosexual groups saw themselves as religiously motivated.[35] Instead, the church offered a safe space to meet and organise. Some groups sought the integration of homosexuals into the socialist society; others opted for a more radical re-imagining of socialism that would include gay and lesbian citizens. Some groups, such as *Lesben in der Kirche*, were influenced by the ideas of the Western homosexual emancipation movement and received literature from West Germans on the topic.[36] Mixed homosexual groups often split into distinct gay and lesbian groups, and these lesbian groups would often meet with feminist groups to discuss perceived mutual interests.[37] The shift in state policy from 1985 meant that gay and lesbian groups began forming and meeting outside the church, either in local youth clubs or public spaces.

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the thesis. Following this section that outlined the evolution of the East German gay and lesbian movement, sections 1.2 and 1.3 reviews the historiography of the East German gay and lesbian movement and East German women's movement. Section 1.4 discusses the author's positionality and motivations for the research. 1.5 presents the sources of the thesis, followed by an explication of the methodological and theoretical framework in section 1.6. Section 1.7 presents the thesis chapter outline.

1.2 The Historiography of the East German Gay and Lesbian Movement

The historiography of East Germany in the early to mid-1990s was "top-down, politically inflected, often morally accusatory and triumphalist".[38] The histories of gay and lesbian activism in East Germany reflected this approach, and a totalitarian framework of power relations in East Germany shaped monographs published in the 1990s.[39] An example of

[34] Ursula Sillge, *Un-Sichtbare Frauen: Lesben Und Ihre Emanzipation in Der DDR* (Berlin: LinksDruck Verlag, 1991), 19.
[35] Sillge, 19.
[36] Maria Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s', in *The Politics of Authenticity: Countercultures and Radical Movements Across the Iron Curtain, 1968-1989* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018), 153, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781789200003-009.
[37] Lisa Baldez, 'Women's Movements and Democratic Transition in Chile, Brazil, East Germany, and Poland', Comparative Politics 35, no. 3 (2003): 253, https://doi.org/10.2307/4150176.
[38] Andrew I. Port, 'The Banalities of East German Historiography', in *Becoming East German*, ed. Mary Fulbrook and Andrew I. Port (New York: Berghahn Books, 2022), 1, https://doi.org/10.1515/9780857459756-003.
[39] Denis M. Sweet, 'A Literature of "Truth": Writing by Gay Men in East Germany', *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature* 22, no. 1 (1 January), https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.1439; Denis M. Sweet, 'The Church, the Stasi, and Socialist Integration:: Three Stages of Lesbian and Gay Emancipation in the Former German Democratic Republic', *Journal of Homosexuality* 29, no. 4 (27 November 1995): 351–68, https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v29n04_04; Hillhouse, 'Out of the Closet behind the Wall'.

this is the work of American historians Denis Sweet and Raelynn Hillhouse, who argued that rivalry with the West German state forced the SED to become more sensitive to the needs of its citizens and thus enforce liberal policies on homosexuality, which ignores the importance of gay and lesbian activism in changing the SED's stance on homosexuality.[40] The historians positioned the gay and lesbian movement as critical of socialism and hence a threat to the government. Sweet and Hillhouse minimise the agency of gay and lesbian activists and groups in changing the social world of East Germany, which follows the logic that power in East Germany was totalitarian and did not allow for individual expression. Scott Harrison contended that this gay and lesbian historiography was shaped by the social climate of the 1990s, following the absorption of East Germany into the West, writing that; "the [unified] German public craved either the shiny history of opposition to the SED or sensational tales of intrusion into citizens' private lives, both of which pigeonholed the GDR as an unjust, illegitimate state."[41] Therefore, the stories of gay and lesbian activists, who sought to improve rather than overthrow socialism, were left untold.[42]

In the late 1990s, a social history approach to East Germany developed, which looked at social developments and the experiences of social groups.[43] This approach focused on everyday East Germans' experiences and the possibilities of their agency.[44] Historians began examining East and West German history through the lens of sexuality. American historian Dagmar Herzog's book *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* was published in 2005 and compared the history of sexuality in East and West Germany.[45] Herzog asserted that by the late 1960s, East Germany had achieved a state-driven sexual evolution, in contrast to the West German citizen-led sexual revolution.[46] She also stated that the SED's female-friendly reforms throughout the 1950s to 1960s, such as liberalising divorce and abortion laws, access to the birth control pill, and state-run day-care facilities, gave citizens autonomy in the private sphere.[47]

In 2009, British historian Mark Fenemore criticised Herzog for a top-down understanding of power in East Germany and for accepting the SED's claim that they had liberated women from domestic gender relations.[48] Fenemore argued that East Germany was

[40] Hillhouse, 'Out of the Closet behind the Wall'; Sweet, 'A Literature of "Truth"'; Sweet, 'The Church, the Stasi, and Socialist Integration'.
[41] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 20.
[42] Harrison, 20.
[43] Port, 'The Banalities of East German Historiography', 2.
[44] Port, 2.
[45] Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
[46] Herzog, 3.
[47] Herzog, 15.
[48] Mark Fenemore, 'The Recent Historiography Of Sexuality In Twentieth-Century Germany', *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 3 (September 2009): 776, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X09007559.

"far more interesting, multi-layered, and conflict-ridden" than Herzog implied, adding that gender inequality was highly resistant to the state's solutions.[49] In 2011, British historian Josie McLellan further challenged Herzog's claims in her book *Love in the Time of Communism*.[50] McLellan argued that Herzog's claim that the East German state created the conditions for citizens to have satisfying sex lives is only partially convincing.[51] *Love in the Time of Communism* examined how East Germans initiated a "sexual revolution" by studying how citizens interpreted and remade the state's policies through their sexual subjectivities.[52] McLellan included a chapter on gay and lesbian life in East Germany, which subsumed gay and lesbian activism into the "growing disillusion and opposition in the 1980s, culminating with communism's collapse in 1989".[53] McLellan's chapter, while providing vital information on gay and lesbian activists and groups, assumes that activists wanted to replicate a Western-style sexual revolution. Moreover, by viewing gay and lesbian activism with a totalitarian perspective of state socialism, McLellan ignored crucial ideological differences between activists and groups.

Since 2011, several historians have closely examined East German gay and lesbian activists. American historian Scott Harrison's 2019 PhD dissertation, *The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989,* goes against the existing historiography to argue that the gay and lesbian movement was geographically diffuse and highly fragmented.[54] Harrison contends that participants in the actions did not fight for an "identity-based politics of gay liberation, but rather for their fellow citizens to acknowledge that one could be both a socialist and gay and that the two were not mutually exclusive."[55] Harrison's oral history interviews with activists and archival evidence led him to conclude that a lack of a public gay scene in East Germany did not mean that queer life and activism were unvaried.[56]

Maria Bühner is a PhD candidate at the Universität Leipzig. She is the first scholar to examine East German lesbian activism specifically. Bühner's body of work since 2015 has looked at different aspects of lesbian activism, most notably writing about *Lesben in der Kirche* in her text "The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s".[57] Bühner argued that lesbian activism in East Germany predominately consisted of

[49] Fenemore, 776.
[50] McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism*.
[51] McLellan, 12.
[52] McLellan, 13.
[53] McLellan, 'Glad to Be Gay Behind the Wall', 105.
[54] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 2.
[55] Harrison, 2.
[56] Harrison, 283.
[57] Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s'.

consciousness-raising activities, facilitating the production of what she termed "authentic" subjectivities that challenged the regime.[58] Bühner wrote that lesbian activism "questioned the paradigm of the socialist personality and socialist politics in general".[59] She argued that the lesbian movement had been ignored in studies of the East German opposition and that the lesbian political practices contributed to the fall of the Berlin Wall.[60] In this text, Bühner subsumed *Lesben in der Kirche*'s and other lesbian groups' political position towards the state as simply oppositional. She echoes Josie McLellan, who collapsed East German gay and lesbian activism into broadly oppositional political work, which, in my opinion, is a misreading of *Lesben in der Kirche*'s activism.

These works are valuable in detailing information about sexual subjectivities, including gay and lesbian activism in East Germany. These also demonstrate a pattern in the field which I hope to challenge in this thesis. I am referring to the pattern of depicting gay and lesbian activists and groups as monolithic and analysing isolated groups or events. This collapses all gay and lesbian activism under the umbrella of "opposition" and positions their activism as building towards the fall of East German socialism in 1989. In contrast, I highlight that activists and groups formed networks with one another and formed unique opinions about the SED and the possibilities for gay and lesbian life in East German socialism. I believe it is reductive to assume that lesbian groups can be broadly categorised as oppositional to the state, and this thesis demonstrates that East German lesbian groups had various political ideologies.

1.3 The Historiography of the Women's Movement

Historians have debated the extent to which an East German *Frauenbewegung* (women's movement) existed. Some scholars have argued that feminism in East Germany existed only in literature and never developed into a real movement.[61] German political science professor Christiane Lemke argued that women's literature was so popular because there was no East German women's movement.[62] British historian Mary Fulbrook commented in *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* in 2008 that discourses about

[58] Bühner, 167.
[59] Bühner, 167.
[60] Bühner, 167.
[61] Eva Maleck-Lewy and Bernhard Maleck, 'The Women's Movement in East and West Germany', in *1968: The World Transformed*, ed. Carole Fink et al., 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 373–96, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139052658.015; Lisa DiCaprio, 'East German Feminists: The Lila Manifesto', *Feminist Studies* 16, no. 3 (1990): 621, https://doi.org/10.2307/3178022; Christiane Lemke, *Die Ursachen Des Umbruchs 1989*, Schriften Des Zentralinstituts Für Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung Der Freien Universität Berlin (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1991), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-97019-0; Brigitte Young, *Triumph of the Fatherland: German Unification and the Marginalization of Women* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.15217.
[62] Lemke, *Die Ursachen Des Umbruchs 1989*.

feminism in East Germany were limited to the circle of a few "feminist intellectuals".[63] Other historians believe that a feminist movement only developed in 1989 when the political conditions prompted the mass mobilisation of women.[64]

Western-centric definitions of feminism can explain the lack of historical research into the East German women's movement. Allaine Cerwonka argued that feminist theories modelled on Western realities do not apply to Central and Eastern European women's movements, leading these movements to appear underdeveloped by comparison.[65] Women's activism has taken a different form in Central and Eastern Europe than in Western Europe and has been labelled as non-existent or conservative by Western scholars.[66] For example, instead of suburban domesticity, women in Central and Eastern Europe were encouraged to work by the state in the name of their emancipation.[67] In East Germany, women had access to divorce, abortion, and contraception, some of the demands of Western feminist movements.[68] East German women's demands generally consisted of a change to gender norms and stereotypes, particularly in recognition of how these expectations affected the SED's women's policy. Therefore, the demands and practices of the East German women's movement were distinct from Western feminist movements, leading to debate over the extent to which the East German women's movement can be labelled a "feminist" movement.

In East Germany, the "women's question" was the domain of the state.[69] The state carried out an active campaign against "bourgeois feminism" that sought to discredit the language of feminism, depicting Western feminists as self-centred and anti-male.[70] However, women's groups began gathering in 1982 to criticise gender norms and expectations, although only some of these activists and groups labelled themselves as feminists. These groups had various interests and ideologies, including women's peace groups, women's ecological groups, lesbian groups, and feminist groups. Some women's groups, such as *Lesben in der Kirche*, explicitly described themselves as feminists.[71] In contrast, others, such as *Frauen für den Frieden*, considered themselves "woman-focused" or having "gender-specific" approaches to

[63] Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (Yale, Connecticut: Yale University Press), 142.
[64] Ferree, Myra Marx, 'Aufstieg und Untergang der "Muttipolitik": Feminismus und deutsche Vereinigung', 1992, https://doi.org/10.25656/01:6701; Myra Marx Ferree, '"The Time of Chaos Was the Best" Feminist Mobilization and Demobilization in East Germany', *Gender and Society* 8, no. 4 (1994): 597–623.
[65] Allaine Cerwonka, 'Traveling Feminist Thought: Difference and Transculturation in Central and Eastern European Feminism', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 33, no. 4 (June 2008): 814.
[66] Cerwonka, 814.
[67] Cerwonka, 815.
[68] Jane Freeland, *Feminist Transformations and Domestic Violence Activism in Divided Berlin, 1968-2002*, British Academy Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 144.
[69] Georgina Paul, 'Feminism in the German Democratic Republic: The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeois Literary Tradition', *Oxford German Studies* 45, no. 1 (2 January 2016): 62, https://doi.org/10.1080/00787191.2015.1128651.
[70] Ferree, Myra Marx, 'Aufstieg und Untergang der "Muttipolitik"', 97.
[71] 'Arbeitspapier Des Arbeitskreis "Homosexuelle Selbst-Hilfe Berlin"', November 1983, GZ-MKr-03_54-68, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.

peace.[72] Women's groups debated their attitude towards *feminismus* (feminism), for example, in *Frauen für den Frieden*, where activists were divided, with some thinking that there was "too much" feminism in the group and others "not enough".[73]

Maria Bühner asserted that the East German women's movement was a feminist movement and referred to women's groups as "feminist groups" doing "feminist activism" throughout her work.[74] Scott Harrison argued in his dissertation that East Germany's "unmistakably patriarchal" culture resulted in women, both gay and straight, forming a GDR-wide feminist movement in the mid-1980s.[75] He added that historians have failed to discuss the feminist movement in detail.[76] German historian Jessica Bock's 2020 PhD dissertation researched women's organising in Leipzig between 1980 and 2000.[77] Bock contended that many women's groups distanced themselves from the term *feminismus* (feminism), believing it to be a Western bourgeois concept. Nonetheless, Bock alleges that feminism was redefined for the East German context, with working groups using terms such as "feminist theology" or "feminism" for their name.[78] Bock asserted that despite differences, all women's groups were critical of power and related state power with gender relations.[79] British historian Jane Freeland's book *Feminist Transformation and Domestic Violence in Divided Berlin*, published in 2022, supported Bock's argument, contending that East German feminist activists drew upon, translated and developed Western feminist approaches by reading key Western feminist texts and maintaining contact with activists across in West Germany.[80]

Clearly, the question of whether the East German women's movement was "feminist" or whether there was a women's movement at all is a theme in the historiography. Scholars such as Christiane Lemke and Mary Fulbrook questioned whether East Germany had a feminist movement but had different interpretations for why this was the case. By contrast, historians such as Maria Bühner, Jessica Bock, and Scott Harrison argued that the East German women's movement was, in fact, a feminist movement.

I contend in this thesis that the East German women's movement was a feminist movement. I rely upon historian Shelia Rowbotham's 1992 definition of feminism to justify

[72] Irena Kukutz, interview by Friederike Mehl, Transcript, 24 May 2019, Oral Her*story Project, FFBIZ Archiv Berlin.
[73] Kukutz.
[74] Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s'; Bühner, '"(W)Ir Haben Einen Zustand Zu Analysieren, Der Uns Zu Außenseitern Macht." Lesbischer Aktivismus in Ost-Berlin in Den 1980er-Jahren'; Maria Bühner, 'Kontinuität des Schweigens: Das Gedenken der Ost-Berliner Gruppe Lesben in der Kirche in Ravensbrück', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 29, no. 2 (1 August 2018): 111–31, https://doi.org/10.25365/oezg-2018-29-2-6.
[75] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 18.
[76] Harrison, 18.
[77] Jessica Bock, *Frauenbewegung in Ostdeutschland* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2020).
[78] Bock, 231.
[79] Bock, 217.
[80] Jane Freeland, *Feminist Transformations and Domestic Violence Activism in Divided Berlin, 1968-2002*, British Academy Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 134.

this decision, "the use of the term 'feminism' served to highlight women's specific oppression in relation to men, preventing from this being submerged, amid all other unequal relationships in society… In practice, however, women's actions, both now and in the past, often have been against interconnecting relations of inequality and have been involved in many aspects of resistance around daily life and culture that are not simply about gender."[81] I argue that the different East German women's groups can be understood as feminist for several reasons, firstly because they were usually borne out of frustration with the gendered dynamics of other civil society groups and recognised that such dynamics were limiting their potential effectiveness.[82] Secondly, although not all women's groups focused solely on women's liberation but on ecology and peace, they incorporated different understandings of gender and feminism. For example, *Frauen für den Friedan* proclaimed the unique responsibility of the female sex in promoting and aiding peace, which can be understood as a feminist ideology that stresses the difference of women rather than seeking equality.[83] By contrast, a group such as *Lesben in der Kirche* asserted the primacy of female subordination to men, thus demanding the overthrow of patriarchal society, which can be understood as a radical lesbian feminist perspective.[84] As my research demonstrates, lesbian and feminist groups often worked together, indicating that lesbian groups were generally interested in combatting gender inequality and critiqued East German society through a feminist lens.

I hope to expand upon Scott, Bock, and Bühner's assertions by pointing out that feminist groups were not homogenous in their attitude towards the state and the "women's question". This thesis seeks to clarify that the East German women's movement had various ideologies, interests, and approaches and engaged in multiple activities. However, I argue that the movement was feminist because, to my knowledge, each group was, to some extent, critical of established gender relations and, in East German feminist activist Gabi Zekina's words, "critical of power".[85]

1.4 Sources

The primary sources used in this thesis comprise materials created by lesbian and feminist actors between 1982 and 1989 by various lesbian and feminist groups and individuals.

[81] Shelia Rowbotham, *Women in Movement* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1992), 6.
[82] Bock, *Frauenbewegung in Ostdeutschland*, 12; Freeland, *Feminist Transformations and Domestic Violence Activism in Divided Berlin, 1968-2002*, 140.
[83] Susanne Kranz, 'Frauen Fur Den Frieden - Oppositional Group or Bored Troublemakers?', *Journal of International Women's Studies* 16, no. 2 (2015); Rowbotham, *Women in Movement*, 9.
[84] 'Arbeitspapier Des Arbeitskreis "Homosexuelle Selbst-Hilfe Berlin"'.
[85] Gabriele Zekina, interview by Friederike Mehl, Transcript, 1 June 2019, Oral Her*story Project, FFBIZ Archiv Berlin.

For these materials, I relied upon three Berlin-based archives, the Spinnboden Lesbian Archive and Library, which has documented East and West German lesbian activist groups; the FFBIZ Archive, which has recorded women's movements in East and West Germany since 1968; and the Robert Havemann Society, where the *GrauZone* collection holds grey materials relating to East German opposition groups. I obtained the oral history interviews from the FFBIZ Archive and the archival materials from the Robert Havemann Society and the Spinnboden Archive and Library. These materials include the *Frau Anders* magazine issues, questionnaires, reading lists, working papers, invitations to events, newsletters, private letters, and published texts from the lesbian and feminist actors since the German Reunification in 1990.

The materials I analyse are taken from the activism of lesbian and feminist groups. In the final analytical chapter, I examine *Frau Anders* (Miss Different), a lesbian magazine which shared information about many different groups and generally refrained from one tone or perspective due to the variety of contributors. *Frau Anders* contained drawings and games, anecdotal stories, and advice, as well as personal essays and organisation information of a formal tone. Invitations, working papers, and newsletters were circulated within and outside of women's groups and sought to share information about each group's interests and activities. The working documents I analyse have a formal writing style, while invitations and newsletters were informal and friendly. One or more authors signed the working papers representing a group's political aims and concerns. Therefore, although the documents sought to recruit new members for the group, they also acted as a feminist manifesto, a "means of knowledge transfer, and political debate, allowing minority groups to participate in political discourse."[86]

Three publications that lesbian activists produced after the Reunification period also form part of my source material. This includes Ursula Sillge's 1991 *Un-sichtbare Frauen: Lesben und ihre Emanzipation in der DDR* (Invisible Women: Lesbians and their Emancipation in the GDR), Samirah Kenawi's 1996 *Frauenbewegung in der DDR* (Women's Movement in the GDR), and the proceedings of a 2015 conference titled *Das Übersehenwerden hat Geschichte* (The Overlooked Have a History).[87] Ursula Sillge is a former East German lesbian activist who, as a member of HIB, organised the first state-wide lesbian meeting in 1978 and later founded the *Sonntags Club* (Sunday Club). This mixed sexuality group met outside of the church.[88] *Un-Sichtbare Frauen* follows the format of East German lesbian samizdat, which attempted a form of scientific objectivity while writing exclusively from one's experience and

[86] Gudrun Ankele, *Absolute Feminismus* (Berlin: Orange Press, 2010), 15.
[87] Sillge, *Un-Sichtbare Frauen: Lesben Und Ihre Emanzipation in Der DDR*; Samirah Kenawi, *Frauengruppen in Der DDR Der 80er Jahre* (Berlin: Heft, 1996).
[88] McLellan, 'Glad to Be Gay Behind the Wall', 123.

interactions with different groups. It details the development of the lesbian and feminist movement in East Germany and a personal account of her and her cohort's activism experiences in the 1980s. Although Sillge's text offers a selected experience of the East German women's and lesbian groups, it provides crucial details on group interactions.

Samirah Kenawi's *Frauenbewegung in der DDR* details over 100 women's groups. Kenawi, a former East German lesbian activist, began travelling through East Germany in 1988, persuading women to hand over documents relating to their activism. This was the origin of the *Grauzone* collection at the Robert Havemann Society. In 1991, she published documentation of the movement, which describes the origins, activities, and connections between over 100 women's groups. Kenawi and Sillge's texts have been significant in providing details for the historiography of East German women's and lesbian groups.[89]

The *Das Übersehenwerden hat Geschichte* conference was sponsored by the Gunda-Werner Institute of the Heinrich-Böll Foundation in 2015 and featured lectures on lesbianism and lesbian activism in East Germany and the Reunification period. The conference heard from several former lesbian activists, including Samirah Kenawi, Barbara Wellbraun, and Bärbel Klässner, as well as the two most prominent contemporary scholars of the topic, Jessica Bock and Maria Bühner. The proceedings offer reports of the papers presented by the participants, which include critical reflections on the historiography of lesbianism in East Germany thus far.

The sources I consult do not reflect the experience of all women in East Germany or all lesbian and feminist activists. This is apparent for several reasons. Firstly, the women's and lesbian movement only involved a small number of all women and lesbians in East Germany. Although the number of those engaged in activism rose rapidly between 1985 and 1989, those involved remained a minority. Women who lived in rural areas were much more isolated and thus less likely to join a political group. As discussed in Chapter Three, five of the six most influential activists in the women's movement were children of party officials and thus were of closer proximity to socialist political vocabularies and ideas, which benefitted their later political activism. Secondly, some women's and lesbian groups are better documented than others, including *Lesben in der Kirche* and *Frauen für Friedan.* These groups had more opportunities to preserve grey literature because more of it was produced and is thus easier to trace. From my experience, smaller or less well-connected women's and lesbian groups existed

[89] Bock, *Frauenbewegung in Ostdeutschland*; Bühner, 'Kontinuität des Schweigens'; Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s'; Maria Bühner, 'How to Remember Invisibility: Documentary Projects on Lesbians in the German Democratic Republic as Archives of Feelings', in *Sexual Culture in Germany in the 1970s: A Golden Age for Queers?*, ed. Janin Afken and Benedikt Wolf, Genders and Sexualities in History (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 241–65, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-27427-6_11; Freeland, *Feminist Transformations and Domestic Violence Activism in Divided Berlin, 1968-2002*.

that are much more difficult to trace in the archives. Therefore, lesbian and feminist groups not preserved in archives are not represented in the already limited historical narratives of the East German feminist movement.

An example of such exclusion is evident in the East German Black women's feminist and lesbian groups.[90] Historians have overlooked or been unaware of the experiences of migrants and racialised people within the East German women's movement, assuming it to be comprised exclusively of white individuals. Stella Bolaki and Sabine Bröck-Sallah's 2015 *Audre Lorde's Transnational Legacies* discussed Audre Lorde's work and mentorship's impact on Black women from East and West Germany and how Lorde shaped the Black feminist movement.[91] Scholar Maisha Eggers proclaimed at the *Das Übersehenwerden hat Geschichte* conference that groups for Black women and lesbians began gathering in 1987 in Leipzig, Dresden, and East Berlin.[92] This was the first research into Black feminist groups in East Germany. Eggers asserted that further research was necessary to address racist and anti-Semitic discrimination experienced by members of East German women's and lesbian groups.[93]

1.5 Author Positionality

Before presenting the rest of the thesis, and in the spirit of self-reflexivity, I acknowledge my standpoint as a white British woman. I recognise how I benefit from various power structures, including, but not limited to, the privilege of writing a lengthy text in my first language. Furthermore, how my British citizenship and whiteness positively shaped my experiences at the archives in Germany and the university environment. I acknowledge how my thesis fails to discuss the experiences of racialised people and thus does not represent the entirety of the East German women's movement.

I offer my analysis and ideas as one possible interpretation of the individuals' experiences. My research seeks to call attention to and analyse an under-theorised aspect of the East German women's movement. My interest in doing so arose during my first visit to the Robert Havemann Society Archives in Berlin in June 2022. As I looked through the archival sources of the feminist and lesbian movements, I noticed that many key social actors from both movements were in contact with one another and worked together on various initiatives. It was

[90] Daniela Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, '"Das Ubersehen Hat Geschichte" Lesben in Der DDR Und in Der Friedlichen Revolution' ('Das Ubersehen hat Geschichte' Lesben in der DDR und in der friedlichen Revolution, Halle: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung und dem Gunda-Werner-Institut, 2015), 71.
[91] Stella Bolaki and Sabine Bröck-Sallah, eds., *Audre Lorde's Transnational Legacies* (Amherst, Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015).
[92] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, '"Das Ubersehen Hat Geschichte" Lesben in Der DDR Und in Der Friedlichen Revolution', 71.
[93] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, 91.

clear to me that lesbian and feminist groups were in close contact, which was surprising because I had not come across any historiography that discussed the two movements' close relationship. Therefore, I became interested in exploring further the relationship between the two movements and understanding how this collaboration came into being.

1.6 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This thesis will focus on the concept of collaboration as articulated in 2006 by scholars Benson and Nagar, exploring how processes of collaboration between East German lesbian and feminist historical actors and groups in the women's networks of East Germany allowed for the creation of new dialogues and knowledge.[94] The central question this thesis will ask is, how did collaboration between lesbian and feminist activists enable the development of new dialogues and the formation of new networks? The thesis follows Eyerman and Jamison's definition of social movements:

> A social movement is not one organisation or one particular special interest group. It is more like a cognitive territory, a new conceptual space that is filled by dynamic interaction between different groups and organisations… and although movements usually involve the creation of organisations or the renovation of institutions, it is important not to mistake one for the other. Organisations can be thought of as vehicles or instruments for carrying out or transporting or even producing the movement's meaning. But the meaning, we hasten to add, should not be reduced to the medium. The meaning, or core identity, is rather the cognitive space that the movement creates, a space for new kinds of ideas and relationships to develop.[95]

This definition is beneficial for analysing the women's movement and civil society, as it highlights the dynamism and interactions between groups and the sharing of information that characterised the 1980s in East Germany. It also emphasises the knowledge produced and shared rather than solely focusing on the result of the movement.

The third chapter of the thesis focuses on six oral history interviews with lesbian and feminist activists conducted in 2019. The core theoretical approach regarding the interviews is queer feminist oral history, drawing upon Nan Alamilla Boyd's 2008 "Who Is the Subject?".[96]

[94] Koni Benson and Richa Nagar, 'Collaboration as Resistance? Reconsidering the Processes, Products, and Possibilities of Feminist Oral History and Ethnography', *Gender, Place & Culture* 13, no. 5 (October 2006): 587.
[95] Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach*, Reprinted (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 5.
[96] Nan Alamilla Boyd, 'Who Is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 2 (2008): 177.

Boyd acknowledges that in the history of sexual identities, the meaning of an interviewee's self-disclosure is always constructed around historically specific norms and definitions.[97]

Therefore, it is nearly impossible for oral history interviews to use language outside the parameters of modern sexual identities as stable subject positions.[98] Thus, the voices of oral history interviews must be read as a more extensive process of reiteration, where identities are constantly restructured around a limited set of meanings.[99] The oral history chapter will critically reflect upon the narratives of lesbian and feminist activism in East Germany during the Reunification to better understand the construction of personal records.

The fourth chapter focuses on *Lesben in der Kirche*, a lesbian feminist group based in East Berlin between 1982 and 1989. Discourse analysis as a theoretical and methodological approach is used in this chapter to analyse how group members interpreted feminist concepts in their working papers. I rely upon linguist Paul Baker's 2001 assertion that linguistic patterns can help us "make sense of the way that language is used in the construction of discourses".[100] Therefore, analysis of the language *Lesben in der Kirche*'s working papers will reveal how feminist concepts were interpreted and adapted for the East German context. This analysis is particularly effective as the group was inspired by Western feminist literature and referenced American feminist concepts in their writing. This chapter argues that finding consistency between the interpretation of concepts will reveal the group's ideology, defined as "a set of ideas, arguments and principles which make up the rationale for the movement's existence".[101]

The fifth chapter explores three women's festivals between 1985-1987, organised by Karin Dauenheimer of *Lesben in der Kirche* and the *Dresdner Arbeitskreis Homosexualität*. I argue that these festivals can be understood as "subaltern counterpublics"; spaces of discourse that challenged the dominant public sphere by bringing together members of subordinated social groups to form counter-discourses.[102] These counterpublics widened the field of discursive contestation in the feminist and lesbian movements by bringing forth issues that the dominant public sphere overlooked or ignored. The chapter examines the role of these festivals in East Germany, emphasising the international outlook and ability to bring together local and global ideas. It argues that these festivals should not be seen as "dissident" or "collaborative" spaces but as cognitive spaces that allow for exchanging ideas and debates among different

[97] Boyd, 181.
[98] Boyd, 181.
[99] Boyd, 181.
[100] Paul Baker, *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis* (Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006), 1.
[101] Maren Lockwood Carden, *The New Feminist Movement* (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1974), 10.
[102] Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990), 56.

groups and individuals while forming broader communities and demonstrating to the official public sphere that counter-discourses existed.

The sixth and final analytical chapter examines several editions of lesbian-feminist samizdat, *Frau Anders* (Miss Different), produced in 1989. The chapter utilises the 1988 concept of 'interpretative repertoires", coined by Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter. This analytical concept seeks to capture "culturally familiar and habitual lines of argument comprised of recognisable themes, common places and tropes."[103] Interpretative repertoires allow for flexibility of the core concepts referencing different ideologies, traditions, and thoughts.[104] This concept will be used in my study of Frau Anders to characterise the different understandings of lesbianism in 1989. It will illuminate the different ideas about the nature of lesbianism and its political possibilities, highlighting the increasing fragmentation of the lesbian movement in East Germany between 1985 and 1989.

1.7 Thesis Outline

Chapter Two provides the historical background to the thesis. Here, I argue that Erich Honecker's social reforms initiated in 1971, including *Muttipolitik*, developed the SED's response to the women's question. I contend that women's literature served as an alternative public sphere in which authors praised and critiqued the SED's policy towards women and that women became more cognizant of sexism through reading this literature. Additionally, I argue that the 1978 Church-State Agreement enabled the Church to act as an autonomous institution in East German society without directly conflicting with the state's interests. Women's groups developed from civil society ecology and peace groups, and lesbian groups often split from broadly homosexual groups. I state that the shared church space facilitated meetings for these groups, prompting a network of women's groups.

In Chapter Three, I examine six oral history interviews with former East German lesbian and women's activists, focusing on the common themes of childhood, friendships, lesbian identity, and post-reunification reflections. I analyse how each woman came to understand and challenge gender norms in society and how friendship networks could be pivotal in connecting individuals and ideologies. The lesbian interviewees demonstrated how the *Lesben in der Kirche* provided them with a new language for conceptualising themselves

[103] Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter, 'Discourse Analysis and the Identification of Interpretative Repertoires.', in *Analysing Everyday Explanation: A Casebook of Methods* (London: Sage Publications, 1988), 5.
[104] Wetherell and Potter.

and their pasts, which challenged their negative perception of their sexual preference. Finally, I conclude that historical narratives of East German dissent and civil society have marginalised the East German women's and lesbian movement.

Chapter Four focuses on a self-described radical feminist group, *Lesben in der Kirche*. I examine the group's formation in 1982 and trace its development until 1989. I state that the group members read Western feminist literature and adopted American radical feminist methods to suit the East German context. I analyse the group's essays and show that the group had a lesbian feminist perspective, which asserted that lesbians and feminists needed to overcome patriarchy. Members of *Lesben in der Kirche*, including Christian Schenk, Marinka Körzendörfer, Marina Krug, and Karin Dauenheimer, were influential in the women's networks, further propagating the group's ideology.

Chapter Five analyses three women's festivals in Dresden between 1985 and 1989. I interpret the festivals as "subaltern counterpublics", in which the participants generated a dialogue about issues affecting women. I contend that the festivals sought to enhance women's self-esteem, create solidarity among attendees, and gain a critical perspective of gender relations in East Germany. I maintain that the festivals established shared leisure activities as prefigurative politics, which emphasised humour, pleasure, and joy as essential to feminist politics, and reflected established socialist traditions. Additionally, lesbian and heterosexual women were present at the festivals, meaning that the organiser, Karin Dauenheimer, sought to demonstrate lesbians and heterosexuals as equal feminist subjects.

Chapter Six analyses six editions of the only lesbian samizdat magazine, *Frau Anders*, which circulated in 1989. The chapter asserts that the magazine was a public forum to discuss lesbianism and identifies three interpretative repertoires. The three repertoires included two interpretations that advocated for lesbian and heterosexual collaboration and a third one that espoused that lesbians should have their own movement. The analysis here demonstrates the increasing fragmentation of women's and lesbian activities in 1989.

Lesbian and women’s groups in East Germany in the 1980s critiqued and challenged the SED’s response to the “women’s question”. In doing so, activists formulated and produced new discourses around gender and sexuality. This thesis centres on the collaboration between lesbian and women’s groups. It seeks to understand how and why this collaboration occurred, thus intending to add a richer depiction of the different groups and ideologies of the East German gay and lesbian and feminist groups to the existing historiography.

2. Historical Background

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the historical background to the thesis. Section 2.1 provides an overview of the chapter. Section 2.2 focuses on Erich Honecker's social policy, including his approach to *Muttipolitik*. Honecker was the leader of the East German Central Committee between 1971 and 1989. Section 2.3 explores how women's literature acted as an outlet for women's concerns and responses to the state's policy and how this mobilised feminist consciousness. Finally, section 2.4 examines the origins of the civil society groups in the late 1970s and early 1980s, examining the church's role in facilitating interactions between the different groups, which enabled the spread of a critical language based upon mutual experiences and concerns. 2.5 concludes the chapter.

2.2 Honecker's Social Policy

Walter Ulbricht's leadership between 1950-1971 was socially conservative, which enforced reproductive heterosexuality from above.[105] Compared to other countries in the Eastern Bloc, East Germany was relatively affluent, and the state was more committed to direct action on behalf of women.[106] The East German Communist Party (SED) proclaimed women's successful emancipation through equal rights policies. Due to the state's ideological commitment to women's equality, Ulbricht sought to bring women out of the home and into productive work with procedures such as affirmative action programs for high-level qualifications and the expansion of kindergartens and childcare facilities, enabling women to take full-time jobs.[107] The 1950 "Law for the Protection of Mother and Child and the Rights of Women" also provided benefits such as child allowances, special health centres and pregnancy leave.[108] However, access to contraception and abortion was limited, although the contraceptive pill became available in 1965.[109]

Furthermore, the Ten Commandments of Socialist Ethics and Morals, revealed by Ulbricht in 1958, required citizens to "live cleanly and decently and respect your family", implying a commitment to reproductive heterosexuality.[110] The state did not assume that

[105] Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 7.
[106] Myra Marx Ferree, 'The Rise and Fall of "Mommy Politics": Feminism and Unification in (East) Germany', *Feminist Studies* 19, no. 1 (1993): 101.
[107] Donna Harsch, 'Society, the State, and Abortion in East Germany, 1950–1972', *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 1 (1 February 1997): 54, https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/102.1.53.
[108] Donna Harsch, 'Society, the State, and Abortion in East Germany, 1950–1972', 55.
[109] McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism*, 64.
[110] McLellan, 64.

gender inequality would automatically vanish with the implementation of communism. Instead, it sought to implement policies to promote women's emancipation actively. The SED based its policies on the ideas and theoretical precedents developed by Marx, Engels, Bebel and Zetkin in the 19th-century German Workers' Movement.[111] Although the state took measures to address the "women's question", the women's movement criticised the fact that the state did not challenge gender norms.

Erich Honecker became General Secretary of the SED in 1971. He asserted that his main task was to "raise the material and cultural standard of living of the people".[112] He initiated a series of reforms that offered a liberalisation of society.[113] These included investing in private and social consumption (such as higher wages and pensions, tax cuts, housing, consumer goods and price subsidies), increasing women's participation in the labour force, expanding educational opportunities, and improving access to healthcare.[114] These measures sought to bring East Germany closer to its Socialist Bloc neighbours and demonstrate the state's commitment to gender equality.[115] Donna Harsch argued in 2015 that these reforms were an inevitable aspect of economic change: the East German society became more differentiated and autonomous as the economy modernised.[116] Socialist states had to accept "the unexpectedly complex interaction of social and economic issues".[117]

In 1972, Honecker expanded the state *Frauenpolitik* (women's policies) and introduced his pro-natalist program, *Muttipolitik* (Mommy Politics). The guidelines addressed the plummeting birth rate while requiring women's productive labour.[118] Nonetheless, liberal policies towards contraception and abortion did not directly benefit the East German economy and can be understood to have been motivated by a commitment to gender equality. *Muttikpolitik* allowed women to combine motherhood with paid employment, offering supportive measures such as paid housework, a "baby year" (one year leave for first-time mothers, with increased time for later births), and paid leave for the care of sick children.[119] In 1965, the contraceptive pill and abortion were made more accessible, and in 1972, Honecker introduced abortion on demand.[120] This decision was in response to the growing abortion rights

[111] Eva Kaufmann, 'DDR-Schriftstellerinnen, Die Widersprüche Und Die Utopie', *Women in German Yearbook* 7 (1991): 110.
[112] Donna Harsch, 'Between State Policy and Private Sphere: Women in the GDR in the 1960s and 1970s', *Clio. Women, Gender, History,* no. 41 (31 May 2015): 57, https://doi.org/10.4000/cliowgh.893.
[113] Donna Harsch, 'Between State Policy and Private Sphere: Women in the GDR in the 1960s and 1970s', *Clio. Women, Gender, History,* no. 41 (31 May 2015), 90.
[114] Harsch, 91.
[115] Harsch, 'Society, the State, and Abortion in East Germany, 1950–1972', 57.
[116] Harsch, 'Between State Policy and Private Sphere', 57.
[117] Harsch, 57.
[118] Ferree, 'The Rise and Fall of "Mommy Politics"', 93.
[119] Myra Marx Ferree, 'The Rise and Fall of "Mommy Politics": Feminism and Unification in (East) Germany', *Feminist Studies* 19, no. 1 (1993): 90.
[120] Ferree, 94.

movement in Western nations and the introduction of visa-free travel from East Germany to Poland, where abortion was already legal.[121] Other Eastern Bloc countries had liberalised their abortion laws in the late 1950s.[122] Lower rents and subsidised necessities meant that women could provide for themselves and their children.

Honecker's reforms improved the material conditions for women, particularly mothers. However, scholars have argued that cultural and social gender expectations persisted, and women grappled with the "double burden" of being a worker, wife, and mother.[123] The East German state relied upon the classical Marxist conceptualisation of the "worker" as a man freed of responsibility for reproductive labour.[124] Honecker's policies reinforced the notion that women had a natural propensity towards reproductive labour. Therefore, *Muttipolitik* idealised feminised forms of paid and unpaid labour. Women's ambitions were expected to remain proportionate to their "natural" proclivity to motherhood and marriage.[125] Male colleagues rationalised sexist discrimination in employment and promotion as the price women had to pay for their "special benefits".[126]

Marx-Ferree has suggested that the critiques of *Muttipolitik* radicalised women, as they recognised the lack of political avenues available to express their dissatisfaction.[127] Women's fiction published in the 1970s and 1980s had an additional radicalising effect. This literature was centred around female subjectivities and documented the difficulties of motherhood and womanhood, which connected the individual struggles of women to broader state policy. East German women's groups and activists in the 1980s criticised Honecker for failing to address cultural forms of gender inequality. Women reported that the baby year was a painful period of social isolation, leading some women to join mother support groups that met in the church.[128] Women in these groups were often connected to the feminist, women's and lesbian groups that began gathering in 1982.[129] Therefore, women in mother's groups received invitations and newsletters that informed them of political women's groups, and some joined the meetings of these groups.[130]

[121] McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism,* 7.
[122] Harsch, 'Society, the State, and Abortion in East Germany, 1950–1972', 59.
[123] Hildegard Maria Nickel, 'Women in the German Democratic Republic and in the New Federal States: Looking Backwards and Forwards', *German Politics & Society,* no. 24/25 (1991): 34.
[124] Ferree, Myra Marx, 'Aufstieg und Untergang der "Muttipolitik"', 92.
[125] Irene Dölling, Karen A. Storz, and Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres, 'On the Development of Women's Studies in Eastern Germany', *Signs* 19, no. 3 (1994): 748.
[126] Ferree, 'The Rise and Fall of "Mommy Politics"', 95.
[127] Ferree, 95.
[128] Baldez, 'Women's Movements and Democratic Transition in Chile, Brazil, East Germany, and Poland', 255.
[129] Baldez, 264.
[130] Baldez, 264.

2.3 The Origin of Feminist Discourses

While state measures improved women's self-esteem and material circumstances, male standards and gender norms remained the norm.[131] Scholars have argued that East German women's literature was the foundation of critical discourse surrounding gender relations in the state.[132] The SED's cultural policy used literature to support and advance socialism.[133] Literature was also one of the few domains of the public sphere where authors could voice societal conflicts and contradictions.

A new era of East German literature commenced in 1968, which included a new generation of female writers. The Bitterfeld Conference of 1959 was crucial in determining the new period of literature. The conference was a meeting of writers and party officials that discussed the future of socialist culture.[134] The conference prompted the introduction of the *Zirkel schreibender Arbeiter* (Circle of Writing Workers), in which writers voluntarily discussed their literature with workers, leading to a new generation of authors who professed faith in the system but initiated contemporary discourses surrounding socialism that challenged simple apodictic truths.[135] The conference was part of an initiative that sought to bridge the gap between literary elitism and the reality of the working classes.[136] The new generation included authors such as Christa Wolf and Brigitte Reimann, who demonstrated interest in topics such as the individual as a subject in socialist society, the role of the reader in literature, and Marxist sociology, topics that writers discussed as an attempt to relieve literary theory from the dogmas of Marxist Leninist orthodoxy.[137]

The 1970s saw a rise in experimentation in East German literature, with fragmented voices and episodical organisation allowing writers to explore "alternative perspectives and diverse discourses".[138] Western interpretations often divide East German literature into "dissenting" and "collaborative", though many works contain elements of both criticism of and alliance with the state.[139] Literature was often a vehicle for expressing new socially critical ideas but not necessarily pursuing a political agenda. Writing by female authors reflected this

[131] Kaufmann, 'DDR-Schriftstellerinnen, Die Widersprüche Und Die Utopie', 111.
[132] Eva Kaufmann, 'DDR-Schriftstellerinnen, Die Widersprüche Und Die Utopie', *Women in German Yearbook* 7 (1991): 109–20; Georgina Paul, 'Gender in GDR Literature', in *Rereading East Germany: The Literature and Film of the GDR*, ed. Karen Leeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 106–25; Dölling, Storz, and Joeres, 'On the Development of Women's Studies in Eastern Germany'.
[133] Brigitte Rossbacher, *Illusions of Progress: Christa Wolf and the Critique of Science in GDR Women's Literature*, vol. 13 (Peter Lang Pub Incorporated, 2000).
[134] Colin Barr Grant, *Literary Communication from Consensus to Rupture* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 32.
[135] Grant, 32.
[136] Grant, 32.
[137] Grant, 33.
[138] Grant, 33.
[139] Dara Kaye Bryant, 'Locating the Lesbian Socialist Subject: Absence and Presence in East German Fiction, Sex Discourse, and Personal Narratives' (Michigan, Michigan State University, 2005), 98.

duality, as it discussed the advantages of socialism but also recognised how specific policies perpetuated gender inequalities.

Christa Wolf and Irmtraud Morgner were the most renowned East German female authors. Wolf was born in 1929 in Landsberg an der Warthe. Her first writing success was with *Der geteilte Himmel* (Divided Heaven, They Divided the Sky, 1963). Her subsequent works included *Nachdenken über Christa T*. (The Quest for Christa T, 1968), *Kindheitsmuster* (Patterns of Childhood, 1976), *and Kassandra* (Cassandra, 1983). Morgner was born in 1933 in Chemnitz and studied literature at the University of Leipzig. She worked as a freelance author from 1958, publishing *Hochzeit in* Konstantinopel (Wedding in Constantinople, 1968), *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura* (The Life and Adventures of Trobadora Beatrice as Chronicled by her Minstel Laura, 1974), and *Geschlechtertausch* (Gender Swap, 1980). Both progressive socialists, Morgner and Wolf, used their works to contribute to the development of East German socialism critically while also drawing attention to the status of women.[140] Through their writing, these authors sought to re-imagine social relations and explore women's desire for self-fulfilment and expression.[141] Central female characters in these works highlighted the state's achievements for women while critiquing inherited gender norms and the alienation of individuals under patriarchy. Wolf, in particular, highlighted the restrictions placed on men in public life due to their gender while also emphasising the potential of female friendship to provide a utopic form of freedom.[142]

In the late 1970s and 1980s, authors such as Helga Königsdorf, Helga Schubert, and Rosemarie Zeplin published prose fiction centring on women's everyday experiences, focusing on working motherhood, abortion, housework, and illness.[143] These stories highlighted women's desire for self-fulfilment and self-expression and articulated their private concerns as politically and socially constructed.[144] In 2022, Jane Freeland compared East German women's literature with the transnational women's movements of the 1960s, where the assertion of one's dissatisfaction served as the starting point for a women's movement based on shared experiences of gendered oppression.[145] Nevertheless, East German female authors frequently sought to distinguish themselves from Western feminism, arguing for the emancipation of both sexes from established gender roles, thus critiquing American feminism's separatist

[140] Paul, 'Gender in GDR Literature', 118.
[141] Paul, 118.
[142] Friederike Eigler, 'Rereading Christa Wolf's "Selbstversuch": Cyborgs and Feminist Critiques of Scientific Discourse', *The German Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (2000): 409, https://doi.org/10.2307/3072759.
[143] Paul, 119.
[144] Paul, 119.
[145] Jane Freeland, *Feminist Transformations and Domestic Violence Activism in Divided Berlin, 1968-2002*, British Academy Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 134.

tendencies.[146] In a 1978 essay published in *Neue Deutsche Literatur*, one of the most popular East German literary magazines, Christa Wolf asserted that the official discourse of the East German state neglected Marxist thinkers that discussed personal autonomy and sexuality, such as Alexandra Kollontai.[147] Additionally, Wolf criticised feminism in Western societies for posing no threat to the imperialist system, as the movement failed to abolish capitalist production and social relations.[148]

Women's literature was an alternative public sphere in which authors addressed the SED's response to the "women's question". The literature contributed to the establishment of the women's movement of the 1980s. By addressing their lived experiences of Honecker's Muttipolitik and the state's approach to the "Women's Question", these female authors' writings paved the way for future women's concerns. Female authors engaged with new discourses surrounding socialism, exploring its benefits and limitations for women, such as its potential to improve their socio-economic standing and its failure to address issues of gender stereotyping. The authors frequently criticised Western models of feminism, particularly those that promoted feminist separatism, instead advocating for a society that considers the detrimental effects of patriarchy on people of all genders. Feminist and lesbian activists expressed these ideas in the 1980s when the East German women's movement began.

2.4 The Development of Civil Society

Dissidence movements focusing on civil society and human rights were widespread throughout East Central Europe during the 1970s and 1980s.[149] However, these groups varied regarding social structure, strategies, political visions, and mobilising capacity, precisely, the degree of organisation within the groups, and their attitudes towards socialism, whether rejection or reformist.[150] Civil society groups began gathering in East Germany in the late 1970s. The interest groups were focused on two central themes: peace and human rights, and ecology.[151] Due to a lack of organisational and political resources, these groups typically met in the East German Protestant Evangelical church.[152] Although the church experienced significant repression between 1945-1955, the relationship between the church and the East

[146] Paul, 'Gender in GDR Literature', 120.
[147] Christa Wolf, 'Berührungf: Maxie Wanters Guten Morgen, Du Schöne', *Neue Deutsche Literatur*, 1978.
[148] Wolf.
[149] Steven Pfaff, 'The Politics of Peace in the GDR: The Independent Peace Movement, the Church, and the Origins of the East German Opposition', *Peace & Change* 26, no. 3 (2001): 281.
[150] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 16.
[151] Steven Pfaff, 'Collective Identity and Informal Groups in Revolutionary Mobilisation: East Germany in 1989', *Social Forces* 75, no. 1 (September 1996): 92.
[152] Pfaff, 92.

German state improved as the regime consolidated its power.[153] As Erich Honecker came into power in 1971, his early church policy was tolerant, bolstered by signing the Helsinki Agreement in 1975. The Helsinki Agreement was a document signed at the end of the third phase of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which aimed to improve relations between East and West.[154] It was signed by all then-existing European countries (excluding Albania and Andorra), the United States and Canada.[155] The Helsinki Agreement contained provisions that supported religious freedom, civil liberties, and the easing of international travel.[156] Accordingly, the East German Church pushed for the full implementation of the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Agreement.

In 1978, Honecker signed the Church-State Agreement, granting churches more freedom of action in exchange for their commitment to a "church within socialism".[157] The agreement meant the state gave the church more autonomy in exchange for political neutrality.[158] As the only semi-independent institution in East Germany, following the church-state agreement, the church was integrated into and kept a critical distance from the socialist system. Therefore, the church could offer a space for civil society groups to gather and use church facilities. Thus, the church became integral to developing civil society in East Germany. Church-based events such as church days, music festivals, and peace workshops became essential networking events for different civil society groups. Additionally, the church had access to printing machines, meaning that groups could produce samizdat materials, including invitations, newsletters, and essays that circulated information to the different groups.

Steven Pfaff argued in 2001 that East German interest groups were formed by collective identities within small-scale social networks, shaping one's expectation of social solidarity.[159] Small to medium-sized political groups provided a unique identity and an expectation of trust, encouraging collective action.[160] Civil society groups developed and reframed the SED's narratives of social justice and popular will to include their interests.[161] Personal networks became politicised through flexible networks and interpersonal loyalty.[162] Women who attended mother's support groups, usually in their paid time off from work, accessed materials

[153] Pfaff, 284.
[154] Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1.
[155] Snyder, 2.
[156] Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2.
[157] Richard V. Pierard, 'Editorial—Religion and the East German Revolution', *Journal of Church and State* 32, no. 3 (1 July 1990): 503.
[158] Pfaff, 'The Politics of Peace in the GDR', 284.
[159] Pfaff, 285.
[160] Pfaff, 'Collective Identity and Informal Groups in Revolutionary Mobilisation: East Germany in 1989', 99.
[161] Pfaff, 102.
[162] Pfaff, 100.

from other groups that gathered in the shared space, such as women's peace, lesbian, or feminist groups.[163] The spread of materials enabled the spread of critical ideas. Groups that needed a women-only space could learn a critical language to explore their topic further. Women's theology and peace groups, including *Frauen für den Frieden*, developed feminist perspectives on their concerns as they came into contact with other groups.[164] The female-only interest groups often derived from male-dominated groups focused on peace or ecology because of the experience of feeling marginalised due to the persistence of gendered norms within the civil society movement.[165] Women's groups had in common the desire to question gender structures and inequalities and to promote women's self-determination.[166]

Additionally, several lesbian groups split from mixed sexuality groups, despite remaining in contact with gay male groups for collaborative action. The first lesbian group to break from a broader homosexual group was *Lesben in der Kirche*, which separated from the *Arbeitskreis Homosexuelle Selbsthilfe Berlin* (The Working Group for Homosexual Self Help, Berlin, AK) in 1982.[167] The schism was because of the male-centred leadership of the AKs, which failed to critique East German patriarchy and heterosexism.[168] Samirah Kenawi, one of the central members of *Lesben in der Kirche,* recalled that gay men excluded women from leadership positions in the AKs and refused to acknowledge the role of lesbian activists in fostering the church-based homosexual movement.[169]

From the mid-1980s, lesbian groups increased in number. The proliferation of lesbian groups developed a lesbian network based on personal connections and entangled within women's peace, theology, and feminist groups.[170] In 1985, a group of lesbians led by Karin Dauenheimer split away from the *Arbeitskreis Homosexualität Dresden* (Homosexual Working Group, Dresden) to form their group. Dauenheimer organised three women's festivals between 1985 and 1987, and in 1988 became one of the four central editors of the *Frau Anders* working group. The reason why such groups split from mixed homosexual groups differed, although activists often expressed that they felt that lesbians and gay men had little in common.[171] Importantly, lesbian activists and groups were closely connected to the informal women's movement, and activists discussed lesbianism in some women's groups.[172]

[163] Baldez, 'Women's Movements and Democratic Transition in Chile, Brazil, East Germany, and Poland', 256.
[164] Kranz, 'Frauen Fur Den Frieden - Oppositional Group or Bored Troublemakers?', 150.
[165] Freeland, *Feminist Transformations and Domestic Violence Activism in Divided Berlin, 1968-2002*, 61.
[166] Freeland, 61.
[167] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 181.
[168] Harrison, 209.
[169] Harrison, 209.
[170] Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness', 156.
[171] Bühner, 156.
[172] Bühner, 157.

2.5 Conclusion

The status of women in East Germany underwent significant changes under socialism, with the state pursuing policies to improve women's socio-economic and legal standing. Women's literature from the mid to late 1960s was essential in fostering "female self-awareness" and voicing women's grievances. The church provided a space for dissidents to gather, and interest groups focused on peace, ecology and human rights developed throughout the 1980s. Lesbian groups also emerged, supported by the informal women's groups, providing a space to discuss their experiences of marginalisation. These developments highlighted the potential of civil society to challenge the state and create a space for critique and dissent. Despite the limitations of East German socialism, the state's policies towards women and the emergence of civil society groups enabled women to critique gender norms, paving the way for the women's movement of the 1980s.

3. Personal Narratives of Former East German Lesbian and Feminist Activists

3.1 Introduction

In 2019, historian and archivist Frederike Mehl conducted a series of oral history interviews at the *Frauenforschung-bildungs-und-informationszentrum* (Women's Research, Education, and Information Centre, FFBIZ) archive in Berlin, Germany. Through the project entitled *Berlin in Bewegung! Das digitale Zeitzeuginnen-Project* (Berlin on the Move! The Digital Contemporary Witnesses project), Mehl documented the women who have shaped Berlin politically in both the East and West German women's and lesbian movements since 1968. The project has interviewed 23 people since December 2014, including six women between 2014 and 2019, 24 to 29 years after Germany's Reunification.

This chapter focuses on interviews from *Berlin in Bewegung* of six self-identified feminist women who were influential in the East German women's networks; two of whom identified as lesbian, Katja Koblitz (b. 1946) and Marinka Körzendörfer (b. 1953) and four as heterosexual, Irena Kukutz (b. 1950), Astrid Landero (b. 1954), Tatjana Böhm (b. 1954), and Gabriele Zekina (b. 1965). All interviewees were born between 1946 and 1965 and were involved in the women's networks of East Germany in the 1980s. The six women were also influential in feminist groups during the Peaceful Revolution of 1989/1990. The interviewees were individually involved in different women's groups, but four worked together in 1989 to form the *Unabhängiger Frauenverband* (Independent Women's Association, UFV). These interviews do not, however, reflect the experience of East German lesbians and feminists who were not involved in political activism, particularly those living in rural areas, although a variety of other factors are considered, such as age, location of upbringing, and parental status. Through these interviews, we gain an insight into the social life of East Germany in the 1970s and 1980s, with particular attention dedicated to the women's self-recognition and coming out processes, their families and friendships, their communities, and their political activism. This chapter asks the following question: what can the 2019 FFBIZ oral history interviews tell us about the similarities and differences between lesbian and feminist activists, and how these shaped the East German women's movement of the 1980s?

The first section, 3.1, introduced the origin of the interviews and the interviewees. 3.2 provides a background to the political work of the interviewees. 3.3 introduces queer feminist oral history as the methodology of the chapter and discusses the factors that have shaped the interviewee's responses. Section 3.4 analyses the childhood and gender socialisation of the interviewees, and 3.5 looks at the two lesbian interviewees' experiences of *Lesben in der*

Kirche. 3.6 examines the role of friendships in the interviewees' experience of the East German women's movement. 3.7 analyses how the interviewees describe the Reunification of Germany in 1989 and 1990 and how this process shaped the memory of the East German women's movement. Finally, 3.8 provides the conclusion to the chapter.

3.2 Background of the Interviewees

The two lesbian interviewees, Körzendörfer and Koblitz, were both primarily involved in *Lesben in der Kirche*, although at different times. Marinka Körzendörfer joined *Lesben in der Kirche* in 1983, taking a leadership position in the group until 1988.[173] She was crucial in the group's commemoration trips to Ravensbrück Concentration Camp in 1984.[174] She was the primary organiser of the group's meetings.[175] Meanwhile, Katja Koblitz joined *Lesben in der Kirche* in 1989 while making her documentary "Viel zu Viel Verschwiegen" (Far too much concealed) for the Deutscher Fernsehfunk (German Television Broadcasting, DDF), the East German state television, released in 1992.[176] The documentary explored various aspects of East German women's networks, with Koblitz visiting numerous women's groups for her research.

Irena Kukutz was a founding member of East Berlin's *Frauen für den Frieden* (Women for Peace) in 1982.[177] Joining her close friend from university, Bärbel Bohley, Kukutz criticised the state's *Friedenspolitik* (Politics of Peace) through an approach focused on gender.[178] This strategy made *Frauen für den Frieden* the largest and most influential informal women's group in East Germany.[179] Astrid Landero, working for the state youth organisation between 1980-1988, was also a part of an unnamed informal women's group in East Berlin.[180] Meanwhile, Tatjana Böhm was researching women's social and population policy at the *Akademie der Wissenschaften's* (Academy of Sciences) newly founded in 1978 *Institut für Soziologie und Sozialpolitik* (Institute for Sociology and Social Policy).[181] Feeling frustrated by the lack of academic freedom at the Institute, Böhm and her colleagues in women's studies decided to form a group to discuss the limited research conditions.[182] In September 1989, Böhm joined the

[173] Marinka Körzendörfer, interview by Friederike Mehl, Transcript, 24 May 2019, Oral Her*story Project, FFBIZ Archiv Berlin.
[174] Bühner, 'Kontinuität des Schweigens', 113.
[175] Bühner, 117.
[176] Katja Koblitz, interview by Friederike Mehl, Transcript, Undated, Oral Her*story Project, FFBIZ Archiv Berlin.
[177] Kukutz, interview.
[178] Kukutz.
[179] Kranz, 'Frauen Fur Den Frieden - Oppositional Group or Bored Troublemakers?', 141.
[180] Astrid Landero, interview by Friederike Mehl, Transcript, 29 May 2019, Oral Her*story Project, FFBIZ Archiv Berlin.
[181] Hans Bertram, ed., *Soziologie und Soziologen im Übergang: Beiträge zur Transformation der außeruniversitären soziologischen Forschung in Ostdeutschland*, KSPW: Transformationsprozesse 23 (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1997); Böhm Tatjana, interview by Friederike Mehl, Transcript, 1 June 2019, Oral Her*story Project, FFBIZ Archiv Berlin.
[182] Tatjana, interview.

Sozialistischen Fraueninitiative (Socialist Women's Initiative, SOFI).[183] Finally, Gabriele Zekina studied at the Humboldt University German department in the mid to late 1980s, where she first encountered feminist literature.[184] In 1988, she joined the *Fennpfuhl Frauengruppe* (women's group) in East Berlin. She occasionally joined meetings of *Lesben in der Kirche*.[185]

3.3 Methodology

Berlin in Bewegung is the first public collection of oral history interviews with feminist and lesbian activists from the former East Germany. Historians have substantially marginalised the East German women's and lesbian movement since 1989, and the collection's publication seeks to fill these historical gaps in knowledge.[186] The FFBIZ Archive in Berlin emphasised the value of the interviewees' memories and encouraged them to construct communicable political narratives of their lives. The archive's website describes the interviewees as politically influential figures, specifically in the women's and lesbian movements.[187] In doing so, the site's description of their involvement in the women's and lesbian movements underlines their close connection. The stated purpose of the interviews is to preserve the different women's knowledge and heritage, an aim reflected in the interviews' chronological approach, beginning in childhood, then progressing to their political activism, before ending with their experiences of German Reunification.[188] Oral historian Wendy Rickard commented in 1998 that, "In interviewing the 'less powerful' whose narratives have been shaped by hegemonic discourses, the interviewer is not just working with, but also against, this existing framework".[189] As Mehl conducted the interviews in 2019, the interviewees are negotiating with historical narratives established since the 1990s.

Both feminist and queer oral history, which strive to tell stories from below, are methods of understanding how gender shapes memory.[190] Both disciplines seek to open space for suppressed and marginalised voices, although gendered narratives are often excluded from marginalised histories.[191] For example, the historiography of civil society in East Germany needs to address the gendered narratives of the movement. In the case of oral history, the

[183] Tatjana.
[184] Zekina, interview.
[185] Zekina.
[186] 'Berlin in Bewegung', FFBIZ Archiv, 2019, https://www.berlin-in-bewegung.de/.
[187] 'Berlin in Bewegung'.
[188] 'Berlin in Bewegung'.
[189] Wendy Rickard, 'Oral History- "More Dangerous than Therapy"?: Interviewees' Reflections on Recording Traumatic or Taboo Issues', *Oral History* 26, no. 2 (1998): 41.
[190] Boyd, 'Who Is the Subject?', 177.
[191] Nan Alamilla Boyd, 'Who Is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 2 (2008): 177.

interviewee may present stories that fit transmitted narratives and accepted teleologies of gay and lesbian life: tales of hardship and discrimination, stories of coming out, and of increasing visibility and acceptance, for example.[192] However, memory is not a static construct, and the past is rewritten to make sense of the self in the present.[193] When researchers examine past sexual identities through the voices of historical actors, they must recognise that these narratives are formed within the boundaries of historically specific norms and meanings.[194] Consequently, oral histories rarely leave the accepted parameters of modern sexual identities as stable subject positions.[195] Instead, such testimony should be read as a reminder of the continual process of restructuring identities through a limited set of meanings related to sexual desire.[196]

Therefore, several historical and contemporary factors shape these interviews. Western European and North American concepts of community, (in)visibility, and "authentic" gayness have shaped global discourses of queerness since the 1980s.[197] This language has been adopted in Eastern and Central Europe during and after the transition from state socialism to capitalism to describe queer identities and experiences.[198] This broader discourse has impacted scholarly research on the history and how people engaging in same-sex practices verbalise their experiences.[199] East German gay and lesbian culture was absorbed into West German society after the East German state's dissolution, which created a narrative of liberal democratic progress that emphasised socialism as repressive of sexuality.

Consequently, the FFBIZ interviews are not “mere retellings of the past” but rather a reinterpretation of memory through dialogue around public historical accounts of gay and lesbian life in East Germany, relying upon transnational language that describes gender and sexuality. FFBIZ Archive's interviews reflect the norms and terms regarding lesbianism in East Germany, emphasising hiding, invisibility, and fear.

3.4 Childhood and Gender Socialisation

[192] Boyd, 179.
[193] Alessandro Portelli, ‘The Peculiarities of Oral History*’, *History Workshop Journal* 12, no. 1 (1 October 1981): 97, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/12.1.96.
[194] Boyd, ‘Who Is the Subject?’, 180.
[195] Boyd, 183.
[196] Boyd, 184.
[197] Mia Liinason, ‘Challenging the Visibility Paradigm: Tracing Ambivalences in Lesbian Migrant Women’s Negotiations of Sexual Identity’, *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 24, no. 2 (2 April 2020): 113, https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2019.1623602.l
[198] Katharina Wiedlack, ‘In/Visibility and the (Post-Soviet) “Queer Closet”’, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 24 May 2023, 4, https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2023.2214886.
[199] Boyd, ‘Who Is the Subject?’, 180.

The oral history interviews with the six East German women reveal their experiences of gender norms and expectations within East German society during the late 1970s and 1980s. The oral history interviews began with questions about each interviewee's childhood. Five out of six interviewees (Kukutz, Körzendörfer, Landero, Zekina, and Böhm) were raised with relatives involved in political affairs. Zekina and Böhm's mothers were central to the state women's organisation, the Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands (Democratic Women's League Germany, DFD). The interviews demonstrate several shared experiences, including the realisation that gender expectations were socially constructed and the challenges of overcoming the gender bias embedded in East German state politics and university structures. The interviewees described moments of recognition when they questioned gender norms and expectations and how the interviewees experienced and resisted these norms later. Christa Wolf's literature inspired Marinka Körzendörfer to challenge gender norms, while Gabi Zekina and Tatjana Böhm found their early feminist education in university studies. Irena Kubutz's awareness of gender norms and expectations emerged when the East German People's Chamber passed the military service law in 1982.

Marinka Körzendörfer was born in 1953, in Prenzlauer Berg, East Berlin. Until she was five, she resided in a *Wochenheim*, or Children's Home, a state institution that allowed working parents to have their children taken care of during the weekdays.[200] Despite the "gender-equal environment" of her childhood in a *Wochenheim*, she experienced sexism and gender bias in her youth and adulthood.[201] However, it was not until she read Christa Wolf's 1973 *Selbstversuch* (Self Experiment) as a young adult that her experiences were confirmed. She commented, "Dieses Buch war mir total wichtig."[202] She commented that she realised that gender is socially constructed, and sex is not a biological fact.[203] This novel, published in 1973, follows a young female scientist offered the unique opportunity to participate in a biochemically induced sex-change experiment. Through her research report, which the central character writes as part of the experiment, she critically analyses her experience. The character delivers a feminist critique of the scientific discourse surrounding gender and sex, exploring the social and cultural elements perpetuating gender bias in the scientific and social discourses.[204] The interviewer, Friederike Mehl, asked Körzendörfer, "Hat Sie dieses Buch für

[200] Körzendörfer, interview.
[201] Körzendörfer.
[202] Körzendörfer. "This book was really important to me." (My translation).
[203] Christa Wolf, *Selbstversuch* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1973); Körzendörfer, interview.
[204] Friederike Eigler, 'Rereading Christa Wolf's "Selbstversuch": Cyborgs and Feminist Critiques of Scientific Discourse', *The German Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (2000): 404, https://doi.org/10.2307/3072759.

die Idee geöffnet "wie man sein soll?"[205] Körzendörfer responded that the book made her realise that "Ich könnte in eine andere Indentität schlüpfen als die, dir mir gegeben wurde."[206] Körzendörfer insisted that the novel did not initiate any new thoughts but rather confirmed her own.[207] Körzendörfer's experience reflects this thesis' assertion that East German feminist discourses began in women's literature in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as discussed in Chapter Two. Her description of events states that stories of fictional East German women's lives highlighted forms of inequality that were otherwise accepted and thus invisible. Female authors demonstrated to their audience that their experiences were not isolated or random but specific patterns that indicated gender inequality. Therefore, Körzendörfer described this moment as a "confirmation" rather than an "awakening" to avoid Mehl's idea that this moment had imposed new knowledge upon her. Instead, Wolf's book gave her the confidence to understand her experiences as she had suspected, as a product of gender inequality.

Irena Kukutz was born in 1950 in Parchau, a small village outside Magdeburg. Later in her childhood, she moved to East Berlin. Her father worked in the Ministry for State Security, and her mother served as chief secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture. The repression of the 1968 Prague Spring created tension between her and her parents, as her parents supported the East German state's decision to aid the suppression of the uprising in Czechoslovakia.[208] She noted that this was when she first noticed the contradiction between what she termed the "Ostdeutsche Ideologie vs Realität".[209] Kukutz studied art in East Berlin from 1969 to 1974, later working as a freelance ceramicist. In the late 1970s, she became involved with environmental projects in Prenzlauer Berg, East Berlin, to improve the surroundings in which she was raising her son.[210] Kukutz described the motive behind these projects as, "Wir wollten die Ungleichheit verringern, indem wir Veränderungen an der Umwelt vornehmen und uns um sie kümmern."[211]

Kukutz became interested in peace-related activities in response to the SED's acceleration of military education in schools in the late 1970s, at the end of détente. In 1978, military education was made a formal component of the education curriculum for the ninth and tenth grades in East Germany.[212] Until 1978, youth military training had been voluntary as part

[205] Körzendörfer, interview. "Did this book open you up to the idea of "how to be"?" (My translation).
[206] Körzendörfer. "I could slip into an identity other than the one I had been given." (My translation).
[207] Körzendörfer.
[208] Kukutz, interview.
[209] Kukutz. "East German social ideology versus reality." (My translation).
[210] Kukutz.
[211] Kukutz. "We wanted to reduce inequality by making changes to and caring for the environment." (My translation).
[212] Kranz, 'Frauen Fur Den Frieden - Oppositional Group or Bored Troublemakers?', 145.

of the state youth organisation, the Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth).[213] Kukutz commented, "Wir waren alle besorgt über einen Atomkrieg, besonders die Mütter."[214]

In 1982, when the People's Chamber passed a military service law that included conscription for women, Kukutz initiated *Frauen für den Frieden* with a close friend from university, Barbel Böhley. Kukutz explained that her first months in the group highlighted for her for the first time the shared experiences among East German women.[215] However, Kukutz asserted that she and Böhley did not establish *Frauen für den Friedan* on "feminist" principles. She stated:

> Ursprünglich waren wir eine gemischtgeschlechtliche Gruppe, aber wir wurden von Männern dominiert und so wurden wir zu einer weiblichen Gruppe. Wir haben die Gruppe nicht nach feministischen Grundsätzen gegründet, sondern sahen uns als eine überwiegend friedensorientierte Gruppe mit einem Fokus auf Frauen.[216]

However, the group began to discuss "women-specific" topics such as abortion in the late 1980s due to the decrease in nuclear threat and the organiser's increasing awareness of gender inequality.[217] Women within *Frauen für den Frieden* began forming individual groups.[218] She stated, "Treffen wurden zu einem Ort des Erfahrungsaustauschs und der Gestaltung gemeinsamer Aktionen. Wir diskutierten über die Natur des Feminismus innerhalb und außerhalb der Gruppe."[219] Founding a women's group showed Kukutz that women had shared experiences and could function as a political group. Kukutz's experience contrasts with Körzendörfer's, who recalled that literature provided the awareness that women in East Germany had a pattern of shared experiences.

Gabi Zekina and Tatjana Böhm attributed their freedom from gender constraints to their mother's influence.[220] Both women were the daughters of two *Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands* district chairwomen (Democratic Women's League Germany, DFD). In March 1947, the SED established the Democratic Women's League in East Berlin as an independent organisation formed from the anti-fascist women's committees established at the end of World

[213] Kranz, 145.
[214] Kukutz, interview. "We were all worried about nuclear war, particularly the mothers." (My translation).
[215] Kukutz.
[216] Kukutz. "Originally, we were a mixed-gender group, but we became male-dominated and so we became a female group. We didn't start the group on feminist principles but saw ourselves as a predominately peace-orientated group focusing on women." (My translation).
[217] Kranz, 'Frauen Fur Den Frieden - Oppositional Group or Bored Troublemakers?', 151.
[218] Kukutz, interview.
[219] Kukutz. "Meetings became a place for exchanging experiences and designing joint actions. We discussed the nature of feminism inside and outside the group." (My translation).
[220] Zekina, interview; Tatjana, interview.

War II.[221] The organisation's purpose was three-fold; to raise political awareness, instil ideological re-education in women, and encourage them to enter the paid labour force.[222] It was also responsible for initiating legislation on behalf of women.[223] Under Honecker, the organisation also aimed to ease the burden of women with full-time jobs and families, for example, by opening information centres to collect data on the availability of household products and food to force the local state to improve the situation for women.[224]

Tatjana was born in 1954 in Karl Marx-Stadt (now Chemnitz), while Gabi was born in 1965 in Bernau. Half Bulgarian and half German, Zekina's maternal grandfather chaired the Communist Youth League of Bernau in the 1930s. The Nazis persecuted her grandfather, which made the "DDR-Mythos vom antifaschistischen Widerstandskämpfer" accurate in her family.[225] The two women studied at the Humboldt Universität in East Berlin, where Gabi studied German, English and education, and Tatjana studied Sociology. Zekina realised that the East German state's professed efforts towards women's emancipation were contradicted by the unequal power dynamics at the university, where the department was primarily filled with male party members.[226] The East German state limited what topics could be studied, which prompted an unofficial women's group at the university, which read Western feminist literature received from contacts in West Germany.[227] The German Studies department where she was enrolled was at the time "entwickelte sich zu einer feministischen Literaturwissenschaft", giving her further opportunity to join feminist critical discussions.[228] Böhm's encounter with gender-based pressure from her university peers pushed her to join women's discussion groups to read and discuss feminist theory.[229] She stated of her peers, "Sie wollten nach dem Abschluss heiraten und Kinder bekommen, aber meine Ziele waren andere."[230] This realisation forcing her to consider how such plans were socially constructed. Zekina and Böhm's university learning experiences gave the two women different roads to women's groups and feminist ideas. However, both arose from feeling different and seeking to find others that felt the same way.

[221] Ursula Schröter, Renate Ullrich, and Rainer Ferchland, *Patriarchat in Der DDR: Nachträgliche Entdeckungen in DFD-Dokumenten, DEFA-Dokumentarfilmen Und Soziologischen Befragungen* (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag Berlin, n.d.), 12; J. Madarász, *Conflict and Compromise in East Germany, 1971–1989: A Precarious Stability* (Springer, 2003), 73.
[222] Schröter, Ullrich, and Ferchland, *Patriarchat in Der DDR: Nachträgliche Entdeckungen in DFD-Dokumenten, DEFA-Dokumentarfilmen Und Soziologischen Befragungen*, 12.
[223] Schröter, Ullrich, and Ferchland, 12.
[224] Madarász, *Conflict and Compromise in East Germany, 1971–1989*, 75.
[225] Zekina, interview. "GDR myth of anti-fascist resistance struggle." (My translation).
[226] Zekina.
[227] Zekina.
[228] Zekina. "Developing into feminist literary studies." (My translation).
[229] Tatjana, interview.
[230] Tatjana. "They wanted to marry and have children upon graduation, but my goals were different." (My translation).

It is essential to consider how access to political vocabularies and ideas through family members might have impacted the political activism of the five interviewees. Several interviewees mentioned that their parents instilled confidence in them, positively affecting their future self-expectations. Böhm and Zekina, whose mothers worked for the DFD, had the confidence to question gendered power structures in their workplace and university, which led them to feminist political activism. Their mothers acted as role models at work and in personal relationships with their children. Furthermore, the five interviewees' parents' position in socialist politics might have demonstrated the opportunities for positive political reform and adaptation, which led them to believe in the possibilities of reform for socialism.

Additionally, as Kukutz, Böhm, Zekina, and Landero mentioned, family political debates might have taught women a political vocabulary and reasoning from an early age. Therefore, it is no coincidence that five of the central women's activists of the 1980s and Reunification were the children of party officials. The experiences of Körzendörfer, Böhm, Zekina, Landero and Kukutz also demonstrate that, while common backgrounds may have shaped their upbringing, gender stereotypes impacted them differently as they navigated adulthood. All were shaped by their socialist familial influences and remained a self-identified socialist, except Kukutz. Moreover, their varying responses to gender norms did not follow a predetermined path of suddenly becoming conscious of and acting upon feminist thoughts. All five women encountered gender norms in youth and adulthood and responded accordingly, some encountering feminist literature and forming women's groups at university, sometimes joining other political groups, and gradually incorporating feminist topics into their activities.

3.5 Lesben in der Kirche

Marinka Körzendörfer and Katja Koblitz used the concept of sichtbar/unsichtbar (invisible/visible) in their interviews to describe their experiences with and around their sexuality.[231] Visibility in this context refers to the available representation of gays and lesbians, including the lack of acceptable role models and representations.[232] Both women explained that lesbianism was not visible in their childhoods and youth in East Germany, neither amongst their friends, family and communities, in media, nor public discourses. The lack of visibility alienated the two women from their sexuality, as they had not yet realised that lesbianism was a possibility. Körzendörfer and Koblitz inferred that their sexuality was not an inevitable aspect

[231] Körzendörfer, interview; Koblitz, interview.
[232] Anna Borgos, 'Secret Years: Hungarian Lesbian Herstory, 1950s–2000s', *Aspasia* 9 (2015): 96, https://doi.org/10.3167/asp.2015.090106.

of their identity. Instead, it was their choice to embrace it. It was a choice in the sense that they chose to accept and integrate their lesbianism into their lives. Körzendörfer and Koblitz demonstrated that their experiences in *Lesben in der Kirche* played a crucial role in this integration process. Firstly, the group helped to remove the negative emotions associated with lesbianism. Secondly, the group provided an opportunity to develop a new self-image by learning new narratives about oneself and their sexuality. The new narrative helped to reconcile their past identity with their new one.

Körzendörfer and Koblitz emphasised the invisibility of lesbianism as they began to have romantic and sexual relationships in their youth and adulthood. In her twenties, Körzendörfer dated and had sex with men, stating, "In Ostdeutschland war es nicht schwer, Sex zu bekommen oder zu geben; oder wie auch immer man es nennst. Das war normal."[233] She commented that dating and having sex with people of the opposite sex did not create problems for her until she desired to fall in love.[234] At 29, falling in love became important to Körzendörfer, and she realised this would be impossible with a man.[235] At this point in the interview narrative, Körzendörfer connected the appearance of romantic love in her life with the visibility of lesbianism. As she began questioning with whom she could fall in love, lesbianism became apparent to her. Nonetheless, she remained unconvinced of the legitimacy of her sexuality: stating that after her first romantic experience with a woman, she doubted whether she was attracted to *one* or *all* women.[236] This doubt changed as she joined *Lesben in der Kirche* at age 30.

Katja Koblitz was in a heterosexual marriage when she realised that she was a lesbian. She recalled, "Während dieses Mal war ich lethargisch. Ich wartete auf eine Veränderung, die Schließlich zu meiner Scheidung und der Entkenntnis meiner Sexualität führte."[237] Koblitz's son was born in 1985, and she became divorced in 1988. In 1989, Koblitz began working on a state television documentary called "Viel zuviel Verschwiegen" (Much too much concealed) which examined the growth of women's and lesbian groups in East Germany.[238] The research took her to many different women's groups, and in July 1989, she attended an author reading at a meeting of *Lesben in der Kirche*.[239] Koblitz recalled that, "Es war das erste Mal, dass ich

[233] Körzendörfer, interview. "In East Germany, sex was not difficult to get or give, or whatever you call it. That was normal." (My translation).
[234] Körzendörfer.
[235] Körzendörfer.
[236] Körzendörfer.
[237] Koblitz, interview. "During this time, I was lethargic. I was waiting for change which eventually became my divorce and realisation of my sexuality." (My translation).
[238] Koblitz.
[239] Koblitz.

lesbische Frauen traf, und ich begann über die Möglichkeit nachzudenken, als Lesbe zu leben."[240] The presence of other lesbian women made apparent her sexual preferences to her.

Koblitz and Körzendörfer described how joining *Lesben in der Kirche* gave them emotional support and a sense of solidarity with other members.[241] These positive experiences and relationships enabled them to change their emotions towards their sexuality. Both women felt fear and confusion, which changed to more positive feelings, including excitement and happiness. Shortly after joining *Lesben in der Kirche* in July 1989, Koblitz was invited to a lesbian mother summer holiday organised by a women's group in Erfurt.[242] The trip involved some members of *Lesben in der Kirche.* She commented, "Es war eine einzigartige Erfahrung, im Gegensatz zu meiner isolierten Erfahrung als alleinerziehende Mutter als „entfremdeter Lebensstil."[243] The group holiday experience offered her a sense of community and togetherness, unlike the isolated motherhood experiences she had experienced before.

The vacation featured shared responsibilities and leisure activities while providing a space for feminist discussions, demonstrating to Koblitz a communal way of living.[244] Lesbian motherhood had been "unsichtbar und damit unvorstellbar" to Koblitz, but being in the company of these women showed her that bringing these two aspects of her identity together was possible and even desirable.[245] This realisation helped her release guilt and fear about her sexuality. She commented that this lesbian mother summer holiday imparted hope and excitement for her future as a lesbian mother, supported by her new friendships on the trip and her bi-monthly attendance of *Lesben in der Kirche*.[246]

A friend of Marinka Körzendörfer invited her to her first meeting of *Lesben in der Kirche* in 1983, where she experienced being among a group of lesbians for the first time. She described feeling "nervös und unsicher" of herself initially.[247] However, she quickly felt comfortable due to the conversations shared with the members of the group, who became a source of friendship to her.[248] She became a core organising group member shortly after joining in 1983. She organised meetings and trips for the group and led coming-out evenings, where open lesbians would answer questions and advise an audience. Her position as group organiser and role model gave Körzendörfer a sense of legitimacy in her identity, allowing her to feel

[240] Koblitz. "It was my first time meeting lesbian women, and I began considering the possibility of living as a lesbian." (My translation).
[241] Körzendörfer, interview; Koblitz, interview.
[242] Koblitz, interview.
[243] Koblitz. "It was a unique experience, in contrast to my isolated experience of single motherhood as an alienated lifestyle." (My translation).
[244] Koblitz.
[245] Koblitz. "Invisible and thus unimaginable." (My translation)
[246] Koblitz.
[247] Körzendörfer, interview. "Nervous and unsure." (My translation).
[248] Körzendörfer.

pride in her sexuality. Acting as a role model to the *Lesben in der Kirche* attendees encouraged her to be proud of her openness and acceptance of herself and feel further positive emotions regarding her sexuality. Her friendships were crucial to maintaining her pride and excitement regarding her newfound identity. Körzendörfer described the intimacies of the group, remarking, "Wir arbeiteten zusammen, lebten nah beieinander und miteinander, liebten, stritten, und hassten uns… wir hatten eine Intimität in der Gruppe, die ich nie wieder erlebt habe und die ich heute manchmal vermisse."[249] The close and loving dynamics between the group members offered an environment through which Körzendörfer could encounter and challenge her negative perception of her sexuality.

Identity is a central aspect of lesbian and feminist politics, in which sharing experiences can act as a means for developing theory and building up a movement.[250] A crucial aspect of changing one's identity is developing a new narrative about oneself and one's experiences. Upon their first visits to the group, Körzendörfer and Koblitz described spending time listening to how other members described their identity, their experiences, and how other members responded to this storytelling. Additionally, monthly consciousness-raising exercises provided opportunities for their newfound lesbian identity.[251] These exercises attempted to challenge negative emotions associated with one's sexuality and self-expression and, in doing so, provided a narrative for thinking about and describing one's life experiences and identity. Conceptualising each woman's subjectivity as shaped by the same patriarchal forces fostered a shared subject position. The group's shared sexual subjectivity gave attendees a new subject position through which they could speak about desire.

Consequently, the activities of *Lesben in der Kirche* encouraged attendees to reflect upon their past to reconcile their past identity as a "straight" woman with their new identity as a "lesbian" woman.[252] Lesbian consciousness-raising and narrative building can involve "remembering differently", giving significance to events or feelings deemed insignificant in a traditional life trajectory towards heterosexuality, marriage, and motherhood.[253] Emphasis towards experiences that encapsulate non-conformity to standards of femininity can signal discontinuities between biological sex, gender identity, and sexuality.[254] As such,

[249] Körzendörfer. "We worked together, lived close together and with each other, loved, argued, and hated each other… We had an intimacy in the group that I have never experienced again and sometimes miss today." (My translation).
[250] Bonnie Zimmerman, 'The Politics of Transliteration: Lesbian Personal Narratives', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 9, no. 4 (July 1984): 663, https://doi.org/10.1086/494092.
[251] Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s', 153.
[252] Maria Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s', in *The Politics of Authenticity: Countercultures and Radical Movements Across the Iron Curtain, 1968-1989* (Berghahn Books, 2018), 155.
[253] Biddy Martin, 'Lesbian Identity and Autobiographical Difference[s]', in *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography*, ed. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), 85, https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501745560-007.
[254] Martin, 84.

"remembering differently" was evident as Koblitz stated that her first lesbian relationship gave her the tools to "re-imagine life"; to reflect on her past experiences with a new narrative.[255] Koblitz recalled, “Meine erste romantische Beziehung mit einer Frau gab mir die Gelegenheit, mir das Leben neu vorzustellen und über meine Erfahrungen mit einer neuen Erzählung nachzudenken.”[256] Both interviewees recalled moments in their youth that made their homosexuality obvious, although it was unclear to them then. Koblitz recalled, in retrospect, her intense female friendships in her youth. Körzendörfer remarked that she never cared to share breakfast or a conversation with her male lovers and that she had always found women far more interesting than men.

Additionally, Körzendörfer described a curiosity towards homosexuality, despite not recognising same-sex attraction in herself.[257] She stated that in her early 20s, she heard a rumour about a lesbian in her friendship circles and was curious to discover who it was and how a lesbian looked. She recalled that she was surprised that the lesbians at the first *Lesben in der Kirche* meeting all looked different from one another. In 2019, Koblitz and Körzendörfer narrated their life experiences as a journey towards their recognition of their lesbianism. The interviewees posited that their sexual identity existed within them but was invisible to them and others due to a lack of public representation of lesbianism. Lesbianism was not an option in how they imagined their future lives. Therefore, the community of *Lesben in der Kirche* offered the opportunity to change the group attendees' emotions towards their homosexuality and develop a new language to describe themselves and one's life history. The sense of shared sexual subjectivity gave Koblitz and Körzendörfer a chance to de-alienate themselves from their homosexual desire and establish lesbianism as a positive and viable lifestyle.

3.6 Politics and Friendships in the Women's Networks

A crucial aspect of the interviews were the friendships and friendship circles of the East German women's network. Political sentiments are often expressed and developed through friendships, fleeting discussions, and intimate and informal communications.[258] Looking at friendships can reveal how progressive communities shared campaigns and common identities and how solidarity can be formed within, across, and beyond political boundaries.[259] The

[255] Koblitz, interview.
[256] Koblitz. “My first romantic relationship with a woman gave me an opportunity to reimagine life and reflect on my experiences with a new narrative.” (My translation).
[257] Körzendörfer, interview.
[258] Laura Forster, ‘Radical Friendship’, *History Workshop* (blog), 10 June 2020, https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/activism-solidarity/radical-friendship/.
[259] Forster.

FFBIZ oral history interviews reflected the importance of friendships and friends. Each interviewee joined one or more women's groups at different times throughout the 1980s and at different times in their lives. However, friendship was a central theme in the interviews with lesbian and feminist activists in providing emotional and tangible support and opportunities to meet new people and join new political groups. Felizitas Sagebiel's 1997 study of female friendship in East Germany found that friendship between women frequently supported women's needs between work, child-rearing, and household duties.[260] Women shared goods and services that were difficult to obtain.[261] Friendship was often gained through close and friendly relationships in the workplace, meaning that female workers had the opportunity to raise their self-esteem through both labour and friendships.[262]

The interviewees demonstrated that friendships could be political by reinforcing each other's interests and curiosity and bringing new ideas and perspectives. Zekina's entry into women's groups showed her that politics could be personal; she learnt that she could "Theorie und Literatur mit persönlichen und alltäglichen Themen kombinieren".[263] She belonged to a feminist group of lesbian and heterosexual women in Fennpfuhl, East Berlin.[264] She commented that she connected to her friends through the shared desire to remove patriarchal structures and to end inequality and underrepresentation.[265] Her friends affirmed her experiences of injustice and helped her find a "label" for their shared experiences.[266] These interactions gave her a sense of belonging and made her friendships more meaningful. Astrid Landero recalled that her women's group was predominately comprised of female writers and women with foreign husbands, who offered global perspectives on the group's discussion topics.[267] These friends offered her new insights into topics that interested her and shared new political philosophies.

Additionally, Körzendörfer reflected upon how her friendships within the women's networks were based on mutual curiosity, leading to conversations beyond the group meetings.[268] She commented, "Nach einer Veranstaltung zusammen etwas zu trinken, war in Ostdeutschland normal. So verbanden sich die Menschen."[269] This practice, common in East Germany, was an opportunity for gatherings in private apartments or public venues like bars

[260] Felizitas Sagebiel, 'Frauen-Freundschaften in Ostdeutschland', in *Ein bißchen feministisch? — Anwendungsorientierte Sozialforschung*, ed. Sibylle Reinhardt, Volker Ronge, and Felizitas Sagebiel (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1997), 165.
[261] Sagebiel, 165.
[262] Sagebiel, 166.
[263] Zekina, interview. "Combine theory and literature with personal and everyday topics." (My translation).
[264] Zekina.
[265] Zekina.
[266] Zekina.
[267] Landero, interview.
[268] Körzendörfer, interview.
[269] Körzendörfer. "Getting a drink together after an event was normal in East Germany. That was how people connected." (My translation).

or pubs, where conversations could expand to more intimate topics. Körzendörfer argued that this was vital to the development of groups and individuals. She noted that dialogue at *Lesben in der Kirche* meetings and outside of them helped create mutual understanding between heterosexual and lesbian women, enabling them to form relationships and work together in the future.[270] Landero and Kukutz mentioned lesbian-heterosexual friendship and noted that women's groups usually included women of different sexualities. Kukutz argued that this mixing stimulated discussion between friends and brought new perspectives to topics, as heterosexual women and lesbians often had different experiences. Although the interviewees did not mention conflicts between lesbian and heterosexual women, it is assumed that this was, at least to some degree, present. Conflict between the lesbians and heterosexuals is discussed in more detail in the sixth chapter of this thesis.

As well as offering new ideas and perspectives, friendships functioned to ease the networking of people and ideas between groups. Irena Kukutz recalled that she and Barbel Böhley leveraged their friendship networks to expand the membership of *Frauen für den Frieden*.[271] Kukutz recalled, "Wir haben uns durch Freundschaftskreise und Arbeitsbeziehungen erweitert."[272] They sought to include women of different backgrounds, such as mothers, single women, and lesbians. *Frauen für den Frieden* relied upon friends abroad, requiring new members to contact friends in West Germany and further procure feminist literature.[273] Originally a women's peace group, friends and visitors to members of *Frauen für den Frieden* shared their feminist ideas and debates occurring in other women's groups, leading *Frauen fur den Frieden* to incorporate feminist themes in their meetings.[274] Comparatively, several members of *Lesben in der Kirche* had friends in West Berlin who could send books for the feminist library that members of *Lesben in der Kirche* established in 1988.

Astrid Landero's semester abroad in Moscow in 1975 had already given her connections with fellow exchange students across the Eastern Bloc, Soviet Central Asia, and the United States.[275] These friends broadened her perspective and were able to send her feminist literature upon her return to East Berlin.[276] She commented,

> Meine Freundschaften in Moskau waren sehr international, ich hatte Kontakt zu Menschen aus der ganzen Welt. Nach meiner Rückkehr nach Berlin habe ich versucht,

[270] Körzendörfer.
[271] Kukutz, interview.
[272] Kukutz. "We expanded through friendship circles and workplace relationships." (My translation).
[273] Kukutz.
[274] Kranz, 'Frauen Fur Den Frieden - Oppositional Group or Bored Troublemakers?', 150.
[275] Landero, interview.
[276] Landero.

> diese Dynamik in meinen Freundschaften wiederherzustellen. Tatsächlich bestand die Frauengruppe, an der ich beteiligt war, hauptsächlich aus Schriftstellerinnen und Frauen mit ausländischen Ehemännern, insbesondere chilenischen Männern.[277]

However, friendships between women did not guarantee ideological unity. Zekina stated that the East German women's movement inevitably resulted in individual interest groups because "Frauen als Katergorie geht nicht weit."[278] East German women had mutual interests and a shared language for discussing pervasive gender norms that shaped expectations at home and work, facilitating cooperation and collaboration between different groups.[279] Notably, Zekina noted that the women's network shared a critical perspective of power. However, the growth of distinct interest groups was inevitable because women had different "Persönliche Inspirationen" that helped them to feel empowered.[280] Zekina concluded that, "Das grundlegende feministische Verständnis ist, dass Weiblichkeit eine übergreifende Kategorie ist. Allerdings handelt es sich bei Weiblichkeit um ein bürgerliches westeuropäisches Konzept, das sich im Kontext des Kapitalismus entwickelt hat."[281] Zekina argued that feminist movements can exist based upon a singular shared experience of womanhood alone.[282] She explained that in East Germany, women's groups separated because there was no overarching experience of being a woman. Kukutz reflected that ideological difference between women's groups was frequent, made most apparent when many groups came together to discuss a topic.[283] These meetings usually split groups into smaller groups as women realised their interests. One of the most crucial topics of discussion was the nature of feminism and its place in East Germany. Kukutz stated that many discussions in *Frauen für den Frieden* were divided between members that thought there was too much feminism and those that thought there was not enough of it in the group.[284] Therefore, disagreements and ideological differences often accompanied friendships, sometimes separating groups and friends.

Ultimately, by exploring the interlinked networks of friendship, the East German women's groups exemplify how social ties connected individuals and ideologies. Friends offered new perspectives and shaped ways of seeing. Friendship acted as a catalyst for bringing

[277] Landero. "My friendships in Moscow were very international, I was in contact with people from all over the world. After my return to Berlin, I tried to restore this dynamic in my friendships. In fact, the women's group I was involved with consisted mostly of women writers and women with foreign husbands, especially Chilean men." (My translation).
[278] Zekina, interview. "Woman as a category does not go far." (My translation).
[279] Zekina.
[280] Zekina. "Personal inspirations" (My translation).
[281] Zekina. "The basic feminist understanding is that femininity is an overarching category. However, femininity is a bourgeois Western European concept that developed in the context of capitalism." (My translation).
[282] Zekina.
[283] Kukutz, interview.
[284] Kukutz.

together different groups of women, stimulating collective action and private conversations. These friendships boosted women's self-esteem and affirmed their interests and opinions. The women involved in the East German women's networks formed new relationships through their shared desire for a reformed society, emboldening shared solidarity and support.

3.7 The Reunification and Reflections

Five interviewees were involved in three women's groups during the Peaceful Revolution: the UFV, the *Lila Offensive* (Purple Offensive) and the *Sozialistische Fraueninitiative* (Socialist Women's Initiative, SOFI). In October 1989, Marinka Körzendörfer and Gabriele Zekina co-founded the Lila Offensive. Composed of friends from different women's groups, it aimed to involve women in the political transformation and connect them with the international women's movement.[285] Its members were Marinka Körzendörfer, Gabriele Zekina, Kathrin Rohnstock, Ute Großman, Christian Schenk, and Walfriede Schmitt.[286] The members' mission of a non-totalitarian socialist society articulated themes of gender equality, ecology, democracy, multiculturalism, and social justice.[287] Also established in 1989, the SOFI was a socialist feminist group headed by Tatjana Böhm. Like the Lila Offensive, SOFI sought to include women's voices in the Peaceful Revolution and sought democratic reform within the socialist state.[288] Later, in December 1989, Tatjana Böhm, Astrid Landero, Marinka Körzendörfer and Gabriele Zekina jointly founded the *Unabhängiger Frauenverband* (Independent's Women's Association, UFV), whom Böhm represented with Ina Markel at the Central Round Table between February and April 1991. The Central Round Table was a forum between 1989 and 1990 where members of the East German state-aligned organisations and representatives of the new citizen's movements could discuss reforms in East Germany.[289] The UFV was a political association formed by the participants of the women's congress in East Berlin to participate in the Round Table.[290] The UFV viewed itself as an umbrella representative of the different groups of the East German women's movement.[291]

[285] Körzendörfer, interview.
[286] Christoph Stamm, 'Lila Offensive', *Digitales Deutsches Frauenarchiv* (blog), n.d., https://www.digitales-deutsches-frauenarchiv.de/akteurinnen/lila-offensive-ev.
[287] Heide Fehrenbach, 'Working Paper Defining Our Position: Women's Initiative "Lila Offensive"', *Feminist Studies* 16, no. 3 (1990): 628, https://doi.org/10.2307/3178023.
[288] Barbara Einhorn, 'Where Have All the Women Gone? Women and the Women's Movement in East Central Europe', *Feminist Review* 39, no. 1 (November 1991): 29, https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.1991.37.
[289] Jasiński Łukasz, 'Die Wege Zum Runden Tisch in Polen Und Der DDR 1989', *Historie. Jahrbuch Des Zentrums Für Historische Forschung Berlin Der Polnischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften*, 2021, 101.
[290] Eva Sänger, *Begrenzte Teilhabe. Ostdeutsche Frauenbewegung Und Zentraler Runder Tisch in Der DDR* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2005), 12.
[291] Sänger, 12.

The UFV, SOFI, and Lila Offensive leaders formed the groups in response to the increasing unrest and emergence of opposition groups in East Germany in 1989.[292] The group members understood that women's issues were not adequately represented in the newly founded opposition groups such as *Democracy Now*, *Neue Forum* (New Forum), and the *Initiative Frieden und Menschenrechte* (Initiative for Peace and Human Rights).[293] The Lila Offensive and SOFI were pro-reform socialist groups. At the same time, the UFV, with its large membership base, was more complex and difficult to classify with one political ideology, although its members explicitly identified themselves as feminists.[294] Nonetheless, the organisation recognised the rights that East German socialism granted women. Therefore, the five interviewees were not involved in East German opposition groups; their political activism sought to reform socialism. In the 2019 interviews, the interviewees criticised the Reunification process and the absorption of East Germany into the West. Their goal of reformed socialism was not achieved, and many rights guaranteed to women in East Germany were lost in the unified German state.

Zekina, Körzendörfer, Landero, and Böhm expressed disappointment over the outcome of 1989, stating that East German women had been the "losers" of the Reunification. Böhm argued that, "Im heutigen Deutschland, herrscht kaum Bewusstsein für die Bedeutung der ostdeutschen Frauenbewegung."[295] Böhm stated that "Die Medien stellen Westdeutschland als Ursprung des Feminismus dar und schließen dabei die ostdeutsche feministische Bewegung aus."[296] Descriptions of life under state socialism represent women as passive witnesses to the system's workings, and socialist women's actions are not seen as "feminist" as they do not correspond to Western feminist notions of agency and free will.[297] Zekina asserted that the public discourse surrounding East German women in unified Germany is demeaning, portraying them as "Ignorant, arm, und unterdrückt".[298] Böhm similarly asserted that the successes of socialism for women had been forgotten, including its high employment and education rates and access to abortion.[299] Landero reiterated this belief, stating that state socialism gave women a "Vorsprung" through full-time employment.[300] She stated that,

[292] Gisela E. Bahr, 'Out of the East German Upheaval: The Independent Women's Association', *NWSA Journal* 3, no. 3 (1991): 436.
[293] Bahr, 437.
[294] Bahr, 440.
[295] Tatjana, interview. "There is little awareness in contemporary Germany of the significance of the East German informal women's movement." (My translation).
[296] Tatjana. "The media portray West Germany as the origin of feminism, which excludes the East German feminist movement." (My translation).
[297] Magdalena Grabowska, 'Bits of Freedom: Demystifying Women's Activism under State Socialism in Poland and Georgia', *Feminist Studies* 43, no. 1 (2017): 141.
[298] Zekina, interview. "Ignorant, poor and oppressed." (My translation).
[299] Tatjana, interview.
[300] Landero, interview. "Headstart." (My translation).

"Frauen in Ostdeutschland erhielten die grundlegende feministische Ideologie der Selbstbestimmung, die Frauen in kapitalistischen Ländern nicht erhielten."[301] Nonetheless, the narrative of East German women lacking individual freedoms and free thought remains.

3.8 Conclusion

Out of the six individuals interviewed, five had parents who had held state positions in East Germany, which the interviewees said had a positive effect on their self-confidence and professional goals—according to Körzendörfer, Böhm, Zekina and Landero, their parents' association with socialism also had a profound influence on their political views. The interviews illustrated that each of the women could pinpoint a moment in which they became increasingly aware that gender expectations were socially constructed and began questioning gender norms and expectations. However, these women had various paths to understanding and challenging gender norms in East German society, from Marinka Körzendörfer being affected by Christa Wolf's *Selbstversuch* (Self Experiment) to Gabi Zekina and Tatjana Böhm finding early feminist education through university studies to Irena Kukutz learning about gender norms and expectations through her founding of *Frauen für den Frieden.* Notably, the oral history interviews highlight the commonalities in experiences between lesbian and women's group activists. As white and middle-class urban women, the interviewees experienced pressures and expectations due to their gender. The interviewees demonstrated how friendship networks could be pivotal in connecting individuals and ideologies. Friendship was a central theme in the oral history interviews, with individuals gaining emotional and tangible support and the chance to join new political discussions and groups. Furthermore, friends could bring new ideas, perspectives, and resources like literature, which proved essential in forming and progressing groups. Although women's groups had ideological differences regarding feminism and socialism, Zekina suggested that the most essential shared perspective was a critical perspective of power.

For both Marinka Körzendörfer and Katja Koblitz, visibility was a critical issue. These two women, as the only lesbian interviewees, had specific experiences that the heterosexual interviewees had not. The two women described the process of coming to terms with and choosing to accept their sexual identity. In doing so, they asserted that their sexual identity changed the structure of their lives. Through a shared group subjectivity, *Lesben in der Kirche*

[301] Landero."Women in East Germany received the basic feminist ideology of self-determination that women in capitalist countries did not receive." (My translation).

provided emotional support, helping them to accept and integrate their lesbianism. Furthermore, the group offered opportunities to share experiences and develop a language to describe their newfound sexual identities, which, when accepted, provided a source of pride for both women.

Reflecting upon the 30 years since the Reunification of East and West Germany, the interviewees demonstrated that historical narratives of the East German civil society movement have marginalised the significance of the East German feminist and lesbian movement. East German women have been unfairly portrayed in public discourse as passive and lacking individual freedoms or free thought. The interviewees suggest this was not the case and that the SED's policies gave these women equal standing in many aspects of society.

4. Lesben in der Kirche

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the work of *Lesben in der Kirche* (Lesbians in the Church, LiK), a lesbian feminist group active in East Berlin between 1982 and 1989. *Lesben in der Kirche*, also known as the *AK Homosexuelle Selbsthilfe für Frauen and Lesbengruppe Gethsemane* (Working Group, Homosexual Self-Help for Women and Lesbian Groups, Gethsemane, AKHS), was the first independent lesbian group in East Germany. Before *Lesben in der Kirche's* formation, lesbians congregated in mixed-homosexual groups. *Lesben in der Kirche* developed in conjunction with the AKHS, East Berlin, a mixed homosexual group, though the group split in July 1983 into two groups, one for lesbians and one for gay men. *Lesben in der Kirche* was the pioneering organisation to detach from a larger homosexual collective and form an autonomous lesbian group.

The chapter aims to answer the question: how did *Lesben in der Kirche* integrate feminist concepts into their lesbian political work? The chapter draws upon archival material, oral history interviews, and monographs to examine the origins and goals of the East German lesbian feminist group *Lesben in der Kirche* and to analyse the group's theoretical framework. This chapter relies upon discourse analysis as a theoretical and methodological approach. As stated in the introduction, I rely upon linguist Paul Baker's 2001 assertion that linguistic patterns can help us "make sense of the way that language is used in the construction of discourses".[302] Analysis of the language used in *Lesben in der Kirche*'s working papers will reveal how feminist concepts were interpreted and adapted for the East German context. I will analyse the group's working papers to find consistency between the interpretation of concepts. This will reveal the group's ideology, defined as "a set of ideas, arguments and principles which make up the rationale for the movement's existence".[303]

Section 4.1 has provided an overview of the chapter. Section 4.2 looks at the origins of the group in 1982. Section 4.3 addresses the East Berlin Peace Workshop in 1983. In section 4.4, I analyse the central concepts of two working papers produced in 1983 and 1984. Section 4.5 discusses the monthly activities of the group and considers how these activities reflected the theoretical framework established in the group's working papers. Section 4.6 looks at two specific projects that members of Lesben in der Kirche were involved in, the production of a

[302] Baker, *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*, 1.
[303] Lockwood Carden, *The New Feminist Movement*, 10.

feminist library and, later, an archive. Section 4.7 discusses the conflicts within the group, and section 4.8 concludes the chapter.

4.2 The Origins of the Group in 1982

Aside from the Catholic church in Poland, the Protestant Evangelical church in East Germany experienced the most autonomy of any nonstate institution in the Eastern Bloc.[304] The East German Protestant church harboured new social movement groups from the late 1970s, including nearly 200 human rights, pacifist, gay and lesbian, and environmental groups throughout the state.[305] In 1982, the East German Protestant church initiated a public discourse on homosexuality with the Berlin-Brandenburg Evangelical Academy discussion.[306] Before this event, conversations about homosexuality had been limited to personal contexts between churchgoers and staff.[307] The Evangelical Academy was established in 1945 as a Protestant institution designed to promote contemporary social, economic, political, and scientific discussions.[308] This was intended to encourage the re-engagement of Christians who had become alienated from the church and to "rectify the moral collapse" of National Socialism.[309] The institution spread throughout East and West Germany, and the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy was established in 1951.[310]

Elisabeth Adler, head of the Berlin-Brandenburg Evangelical Academy since 1967, chose the event's theme, entitled "Theological Aspects of Homosexuality".[311] It took place on 9 February 1982. A state-wide church newspaper printed a debate report, generating strong reactions from the church community.[312] After the discussion, several working groups were created to discuss the topic further. Two mixed gay and lesbian working groups were formed in East Berlin and one in Leipzig.[313] The groups were also known as the *Arbeitskreis - Homosexuelle Selbsthilfe* (AKHS) (The Working Group- Homosexual Self Help). This event began the political mobilisation of gay and lesbian identities, which led to the formation of *Lesben in der Kirche*.

[304] Hillhouse, 587.
[305] Hillhouse, 587.
[306] Hillhouse, 588.
[307] Hillhouse, 'Out of the Closet behind the Wall'.
[308] Peter Paul Schwarz, *Mitöffentlichkeit: Zur Deutsch-Deutschen Arbeit Der Evangelischen Akademie Berlin-Brandenburg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 2.
[309] Schwarz, 2.
[310] Schwarz, 3.
[311] Sillge, *Un-Sichtbare Frauen: Lesben Und Ihre Emanzipation in Der DDR*, 11.
[312] Sillge, 12.
[313] Sillge, 12.

One of the AKHS East Berlin groups was led by Christian Pulz and Eduard Stapel, two former theology students from Leipzig.[314] Pulz and Stapel faced a challenge in 1982 as they searched for a permanent meeting location for the group.[315] Pulz noted in an interview in 2007 that the AKHS East Berlin's political work had appeared too radical and thus faced opposition from church congregations.[316] He explained that these congregations found it hard to comprehend that the gay minority wished to form a political claim for equal rights with the heterosexual majority, which would break a public taboo that had kept them invisible.[317] As a result, the churches were unwilling to provide housing for the group's activities. The group requested the assistance of another civil society group, the *Friedensarbeitskreis der Samaritergemeinde* (Peace Working Group of the Samaritan Community), to secure a permanent meeting space at their church in East Berlin.[318] The church council ultimately rejected the request, contending that they already hosted various politically contentious groups and could not risk another. Nonetheless, the Peace Working Group of the Samaritan Community advocated for the AKHS – East Berlin to attend the Peace Workshop the following year.[319]

While the Berlin-Brandenburg Evangelical Academy discussion prompted the formation of gay and lesbian groups in February 1982, women's and lesbian groups were politicised in March 1982 by the People's Chamber passing a conscription statute.[320] From 1979 to 1985, the Cold War saw a resurgence of tensions, along with a sharp rise in the arms race between the two superpowers, which helped to spur the growth of social movements to advocate for peace and disarmament.[321] This period of hostility was triggered by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 and the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in 1980, signalling a shift in Western foreign policy away from détente (1969 to 1979).[322] As mentioned in the thesis's third chapter, in 1978, military education was made a formal component of the education curriculum for the ninth and tenth grades in East Germany.[323] Until 1978, youth military training had been voluntary as part of the state youth organisation, the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (Free German Youth).[324] In 1979, the West German

[314] Sillge, 13.
[315] Christian Pulz, 'Lieber Ein Warmer Bruder Als Ein Kalter Krieger', *Horch Und Guck Zeitschrift Der Gedenkstätte Museum in Der Runden Ecke Leipzig*, 2007, 57 edition.
[316] Pulz.
[317] Pulz.
[318] Pulz, 'Lieber Ein Warmer Bruder Als Ein Kalter Krieger'.
[319] Pulz.
[320] Kranz, 'Frauen Fur Den Frieden - Oppositional Group or Bored Troublemakers?', 148.
[321] Kranz, 148.
[322] Kranz, 149.
[323] Kranz, 'Frauen Fur Den Frieden - Oppositional Group or Bored Troublemakers?', 149.
[324] Kranz, 150.

government agreed to station Perishing II and other cruise missiles on West German land. Consequently, the Soviet Union declared the stationing of further SS-20 missiles on East German territory.[325] In East Germany, the state justified the stationing of additional weapons through the rhetoric of the *Friedenspolitik* (Politics of Peace), whereby the presence of weapons would protect the peace.[326]

On 23 March 1984, the East German state parliament passed a statute that conscripted all able-bodied women between the ages of 18 and 50 for military service should the necessity of significant military engagement arrive. This was in direct response to the heightened tensions of the Cold War in the 1980s, which the East German Ministry of Defence labelled *Imperialistische Bedrohungspolitik* (Imperialist politics of threat).[327] Additionally, this statute was a realisation of gender equality as expressed in the East German constitution. Approximately 150 women signed an *Eingabe* (petition) addressed to Erich Honecker, arguing that the requirement for military service was not an expression of equality but a contradiction of "women's nature".[328] Upon passing the statue, a handwritten leaflet circulated in the informal East Berlin lesbian and peace scenes.[329] On 25 March 1982, Ramona Dreßler's apartment was selected to host a meeting of lesbians. Dreßler was a peace activist active in the East Berlin lesbian bar scene since 1979.[330] This was the first formal gathering of lesbians outside the Berlin bar scene since the HIB's dissolution in 1979.

The meeting in Ramona Dreßler's apartment sparked the first conversations that led the core members of *Lesben in der Kirche* to realise their shared goal of making lesbians more visible in East German society.[331] Later that year, in November 1982, sixteen friends gathered in a private apartment in East Berlin for the first meeting of *Lesben in der Kirche*.[332] The gathering was interrupted by the entrance of the Stasi, who forced their way into the flat.[333] The group of lesbians began working with the AKHS – East Berlin and was, for a short while, a group of mixed lesbian and gay people.

4.3 The 1983 Peace Workshop in Rummelsburg, East Berlin

[325] Kranz, 145.
[326] Kranz, 145.
[327] Kranz, 147.
[328] Kranz, 'Frauen Fur Den Frieden - Oppositional Group or Bored Troublemakers?', 147.
[329] Bühner, 'Kontinuität des Schweigens'3.
[330] Maria Bühner and Stephanie Kuhnen, 'Lesbe, Lesbe, Lebse. Ein Wort Mit Kampfpotential Mit Stachel, Mit Courage', in *Lesben Raus! Für Mehr Lesbische Sichbarkeit* (Berlin: Querverlag, 2017).
[331] Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s', 154.
[332] Bühner, 154.
[333] Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s', 154.

The first Peace Workshop convened on 27 June 1982 at the Erlöserkirche in Rummelsburg, East Berlin, hosted by a consortium of civil society groups, including environmental, peace, and human rights organisations.[334] The workshops were organised by Martin Michael Passauer, a city youth pastor for East Berlin between 1976 and 1984, who focused on youth and integrative community work.[335] He was engaged with the church peace movement, organising civil society events in various East Berlin churches.[336] The organisers of the Peace Workshop aimed to unite different interest groups to explore the significance of peace through presentations.[337] It also allowed groups to establish connections with one another. The Workshop attracted over three thousand visitors.[338] The Workshop continued yearly until 1987 when a permanent exhibition space was established at Bartholomäuskirche.

On 3 July 1983, the second Peace Workshop saw a delegation from the AKHS East Berlin participate in the event and contribute to the dialogue about the connection between peace and sexual minorities.[339] The group included Marina Krug, Marinka Körzendörfer, and the group leaders, Christian Pulz and Eduard Stapel.[340] The group members could establish connections with other civil society organisations and were interviewed by journalists from gay and lesbian magazines such as *The Body Politic*, Canada, and *Gay Pied*, France.[341] Most importantly, Vicar Walter Hykel of Philippus Kapelle, Hohenschönhausen, East Berlin, approached the group, offering his church as a permanent location for the group to meet.

In July 1983, the AKHS held two meetings at their new venue in the Philippus Kapelle, Hohenschönhausen, East Berlin, before splitting into distinct groups based on sexual orientation.[342] The homosexual male group began meeting at the Evangelische Kirchengemeinde Treptow in East Berlin. By contrast, the lesbian group, now known as *Lesben in der Kirche*, assembled every two weeks at the Phillipus-Kapelle. In 1985 the group moved its meetings to the Gethsemane Church in Prenzlauer Berg, East Berlin. Initially, the group was asked by Vicar Walter Hykel to make prayer and religious focus a central aspect of the group, but this was relaxed over the years.[343] Samirah Kenawi, one of the group's core members since

[334] Sillge, *Un-Sichtbare Frauen: Lesben Und Ihre Emanzipation in Der DDR*, 15.
[335] Pulz, 'Lieber Ein Warmer Bruder Als Ein Kalter Krieger'.
[336] Sillge, *Un-Sichtbare Frauen: Lesben Und Ihre Emanzipation in Der DDR*, 16.
[337] Pulz, 'Lieber Ein Warmer Bruder Als Ein Kalter Krieger'.
[338] Sillge, *Un-Sichtbare Frauen: Lesben Und Ihre Emanzipation in Der DDR*, 81.
[339] Sillge, 17.
[340] Sillge, 18.
[341] Pulz, 'Lieber Ein Warmer Bruder Als Ein Kalter Krieger'.
[342] Sillge, *Un-Sichtbare Frauen: Lesben Und Ihre Emanzipation in Der DDR*, 19.
[343] Samirah Kenawi, Sexuelle Emanzipation gehörte nicht zum Programm der Arbeiterbewegung, interview by Veronica Kracher, Undated, L.Mag.

the Autumn of 1983, recalled that the group's original goal was to boost lesbian visibility, break out of the subculture, and challenge the existing social structures.[344]

The group's main leader was Karin Dauenheimer.[345] A coordinating committee of ten individuals was established, with up to sixty participants attending each meeting.[346] This core group was made up of not just lesbians but at least two bisexual women.[347] The group was subject to frequent change as core members and attendees emigrated to West Germany, Austria, Denmark, and Spain.[348] This meant that it was challenging to organise the group. Korzendörfer stated that the group often had to repeat specific topics many times, which she found frustrating, as she felt the group struggled to progress past the introductory ideas.[349]

4.4 Radical Lesbian Feminist Manifesto

This chapter section evaluates the group's ideology through a 15-page working paper.[350] In November 1983, Marina Krug and Gabi Baum shared with the group this working paper, which acted as a manifesto for the group.[351] It was printed with the church press and discussed at the group meeting on 20 May 1984.[352] The working paper is written in a scientific, authoritative manner, referring to *lesben* (lesbians), *die lesbische frau* (the lesbian woman), or *frauen* (women), rather than "we" or "us".[353] The paper follows a tradition of feminist manifestos as a "means of knowledge transfer and political debate, allowing minority groups to participate in political discourse."[354]

This chapter critically examines the central concepts of the working paper, analysing how the authors interpret and apprehend the concepts to formulate their framework. In doing so, the authors of the text defined their position towards the state and outlined the framework for the group's future actions. This paper and the group's ideology were influenced by North American lesbian personal narratives published during the second-wave feminist movement. This is evident in Krug and Baum's usage of North American-specific lesbian feminist language, which the authors appropriated within the context of East Germany in 1983.

[344] Christina Kardstädt, *Viel Zu Viel Verschwiegen* (Berlin: Hoho-Verlag, 1996), 150.
[345] Bühner, 'Kontinuität des Schweigens', 112.
[346] Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s'.
[347] Bühner, 60.
[348] Körzendörfer, interview.
[349] Körzendörfer.
[350] 'Arbeitspapier Des Arbeitskreis "Homosexuelle Selbst-Hilfe Berlin"'.
[351] Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s', 161.
[352] Bühner, '"(W)Ir Haben Einen Zustand Zu Analysieren, Der Uns Zu Außenseitern Macht." Lesbischer Aktivismus in Ost-Berlin in Den 1980er-Jahren', 3.
[353] 'Arbeitspapier Des Arbeitskreis "Homosexuelle Selbst-Hilfe Berlin"'.
[354] Ankele, *Absolute Feminismus*, 22.

Members of *Lesben in der Kirche* acquired American, British and West German feminist philosophy and lesbian personal narratives through contacts in West Germany, Finland, and the Netherlands.[355]

The emergence of an American lesbian feminist politics of experience and identity in the 1970s placed value upon a shared life history.[356] This connects one's self-worth, identity, and sense of community into a cohesive narrative, assimilating individual experiences into the group's history.[357] Collections of personal narratives were an extension of the American second-wave practice of "consciousness-raising".[358] Women's groups in post-revolutionary China originated the concept of "consciousness-raising", a practice which sought to awaken class consciousness on a mass scale and thus lay the foundations for women's liberation.[359] Socialist feminists in New York adopted the practice in the 1960s before spreading to other women's groups across the US in the 1970s.[360] Consciousness-raising was a method for developing theory, and a strategy for building up a new movement, summarised in the slogan, "The personal is political".

Personal narration creates narrative coherence by selecting one event over another to narrate. Importantly, these lesbian narratives are couched in political rhetoric. Personal experience was justified for the political experiences learned from it. In other words, political theory was not induced from personal experience, but personal reality was reshaped per shared political theory and language.[361]

A critical concept of the working paper is *coming out*, which the authors repeatedly use and do not translate from English to German. The phrase "coming out" originated in the United States in the early twentieth century by gay men, who used it to denote a personal acknowledgement of their own sexuality to themselves and other gay men.[362] "Coming out" was borrowed from debutante society, where elite young women entered high society. However, the concept changed meaning – where "coming out" initially meant entering a new world, it later changed meaning to "exiting the oppression of the closet".[363] The development of a gay and lesbian political movement in the 1960s in the United States was accompanied by

[355] Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s', 161.
[356] 'Arbeitspapier Des Arbeitskreis "Homosexuelle Selbst-Hilfe Berlin"'.
[357] Bonnie Zimmerman, 'The Politics of Transliteration: Lesbian Personal Narratives', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 9, no. 4 (July 1984): 664.
[358] Zimmerman, 665.
[359] Christina Van Houten, 'Simone de Beauvoir Abroad: Historicizing Maoism and the Women's Liberation Movement', *Comparative Literature Studies* 52, no. 1 (2015): 121.
[360] Van Houten, 122.
[361] Zimmerman, 667.
[362] Abigail Saguy, *Come Out, Come Out, Whoever You Are* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 14.
[363] George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*, 2. trade paperback edition (New York: BasicBooks, 2019), 55.

the spread of consciousness-raising exercises and support groups, which encouraged the term "coming out of the closet".[364] Leaving the closet was necessary for becoming socially organised, gaining equality, and living a happy and free existence.[365] The authors of the working paper cited Sharon M. Raphael's *"Coming Out" The Emergence of the Movement Lesbian*, published in 1974, a text containing 40 oral history interview transcripts with American lesbians living in California in the early 1970s, detailing their lives and emphasising the "coming out" processes of each woman.[366]

Krug and Baum described the coming out process of an East German lesbian woman. The authors defined it as an individual process which necessitated overcoming negative emotions surrounding one's sexuality. Nonetheless, they acknowledged that those that had "come out" were still plagued by insecurity and dissatisfaction due to a lack of homosexual *sichtbarkeit* (visibility) in East German society. Until 1985, when the SED began its campaign to destigmatise homosexuality in East Germany, there were few media representations of homosexuality and almost no public contact points or meeting places for homosexuals.[367] Before 1961, homosexual East Germans could travel to West Berlin to visit their homosexual subcultural spaces, but this became impossible after building the wall.[368] A few pubs and restaurants in East Berlin acted as unofficial meeting places, but affection between people of the same sex was generally not tolerated.[369] Outside of the capital, there were almost no subcultural spaces. The working paper's authors criticised the few East Berlin subcultural homosexual spaces, remarking that such spaces preoccupied lesbian and gay people with gossip, alcohol, and short-term relationships, failing to bring about solidarity between homosexual people. Their criticism reflected the stories documented in Sharon Raphael's *Coming Out* text, which detailed the "self-loathing" that drove many American lesbians to self-destructive behaviour when they remained "in the closet".[370]

Baum and Krug's text indicated that "coming out" had two functions. Firstly, to reconcile oneself with one's "wahre sexualität" (true sexuality).[371] The authors stated, "Coming-out hat die Funktion, sich mit der wahren Sexualität zu versöhnen und authentisch zu leben"[372] This statement reflected Sharon Raphael's narrative structure, which positioned

[364] Saguy, *Come Out, Come Out, Whoever You Are*, 15.
[365] Wiedlack, 'In/Visibility and the (Post-Soviet) "Queer Closet"', 1.
[366] Sharon M Raphael, '"Coming Out" The Emergence of the Movement Lesbian' (Cleveland, Ohio, Western Reserve University, 1974).
[367] Hillhouse, 'Out of the Closet behind the Wall', 587.
[368] McLellan, 'Glad to Be Gay Behind the Wall', 109.
[369] Bühner, '"(W)Ir Haben Einen Zustand Zu Analysieren, Der Uns Zu Außenseitern Macht." Lesbischer Aktivismus in Ost-Berlin in Den 1980er-Jahren', 3.
[370] Raphael, '"Coming Out" The Emergence of the Movement Lesbian'.
[371] 'Arbeitspapier Des Arbeitskreis "Homosexuelle Selbst-Hilfe Berlin"'.
[372] 'Arbeitspapier Des Arbeitskreis "Homosexuelle Selbst-Hilfe Berlin"'. "Coming out has the function of reconciling oneself with true sexuality and living authentically." (My translation).

lesbian women as on a journey to realise their authentic sexuality, which coming out was a crucial step of. Secondly, Baum and Krug asserted that coming out made lesbianism more visible in East German society, which made it a political decision. In an oral history interview in 2019, Marinka Körzendörfer, one of the group's core members, commented, "Wir sahen uns als radikal und unsere Homosexualität auch als politische Entscheidung."[373] The authors argued that being a visible lesbian in a society with little lesbian visibility made one's coming out political. Therefore, the authors conveyed that coming out was emotionally satisfying and politically necessary.

However, not all lesbians or homosexual groups in East Germany saw their homosexuality as a political choice. Before 1985, meeting in a church space was integral to the survival of civil society groups.[374] Although church-gathering groups were seen as radical, not all those who met viewed themselves as dissidents. From 1985, partially in response to the growing gay and lesbian movement, the state began a ban to end discrimination based on sexual and emotional orientation.[375] Following this shift in state policy, some homosexual groups split from the church, and newly formed homosexual groups began meeting in non-church spaces, such as bars, restaurants, and state youth clubs.[376] The groups that met outside the church were connected to some degree to state organisations including the FDJ.[377] The groups that met in youth club spaces required the consent of the local arm of the FDJ to use the space and discuss specific topics. Therefore, the groups that began meeting outside of the church in 1985 were much more likely to integrate a Marxist-Leninist framework in their activities.[378] A former member of HIB, Ursula Sillge formed the *Sonntags Club* (Sunday Club) in 1986.[379] The *Sonntags Club* were seen as aligned with the state, as the group's strategies sought to improve the living conditions of gays and lesbians in East Germany.[380] Both the *Sonntags Club* and *Lesben in der Kirche* viewed gays and lesbians as on the margins of society, but rather than seeking a radical rupture with the status quo, as *Lesben in der Kirche did*, the *Sonntags Club* sought to bring them into the fold by integrating them into the existing system. Nonetheless,

[373] Körzendörfer, interview. "We saw ourselves as radical, and our homosexuality also as a political decision." (My translation).
[374] Hillhouse, 'Out of the Closet behind the Wall', 586.
[375] Hillhouse, 585.
[376] Sillge, *Un-Sichtbare Frauen: Lesben Und Ihre Emanzipation in Der DDR*, 43.
[377] Kleres, 'Gleiche Rechte im Sozialismus', 54.
[378] Bühner, '"(W)Ir Haben Einen Zustand Zu Analysieren, Der Uns Zu Außenseitern Macht." Lesbischer Aktivismus in Ost-Berlin in Den 1980er-Jahren', 5.
[379] Jan Dobler, 'Sonntags Im Club', *Lernen Aus Der Geschichte* (blog), 20 January 2015, http://lernen-aus-der-geschichte.de/Lernen-und-Lehren/content/11666.
[380] Bühner, '"(W)Ir Haben Einen Zustand Zu Analysieren, Der Uns Zu Außenseitern Macht." Lesbischer Aktivismus in Ost-Berlin in Den 1980er-Jahren', 5.

members of the *Sonntags Club* complained of tensions due to the interventions from the FDJ, Stasi, and SED, who attempted to give the group a more socialist orientation.[381]

A second critical concept in the working paper is *patriarchat* (patriarchy). The feminist concept of patriarchy was first systematically set out in 1970 by white American feminist Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics*.[382] However, it was not new to political theory. Millett argued that patriarchal power is so universal and ubiquitous that it was invisible until named by feminists.[383] The term proliferated in North American feminist consciousness-raising groups to connect political, employment, sexual and family experiences as a pattern of male power.[384] Millett's analysis of the term "patriarchy" was of critical and lasting importance.[385] Millett's discussion of the term patriarchy in 1970 has since been criticised for being simplistic and reflecting a white, Western, and middle-class agenda.[386] The term was adopted and interpreted by feminists of different sensibilities, and this chapter argues that *Lesben in der Kirche* adopted a specifically American radical lesbian feminist perspective of East German society.

Emerging in the 1970s in the United States in response to marginalisation within the gay liberation and second-wave feminist movements, lesbian feminism originated as a new political language for thinking about sexuality.[387] Drawing on the principles of radical feminism, lesbian feminism broadly critiqued the enforcement of unequal gender relations by heteronormativity.[388] The ideology insisted on the inseparability of feminism from lesbian politics.[389] Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, lesbian feminism was the dominant ideology of white, middle-class North American, Western European and Australasian lesbians.[390]

Members of *Lesben in der Kirche* acquired several radical feminist texts in 1983 that discussed the term patriarchy. The group discussed Mary Daly's 1978 *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* at a meeting in 1983.[391] This radical feminist text argued that patriarchy functioned "like a religion" to oppress women through various practices throughout history.[392] Baum and Krug read another text, Phyllis Chester's 1972 *Women and Madness,* which took a psychoanalytical perspective on patriarchy, arguing that patriarchal conditions

[381] Kleres, 'Gleiche Rechte im Sozialismus'.
[382] Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); Valerie Bryson, '"Patriarchy": A Concept Too Useful to Lose', *Contemporary Politics* 5, no. 4 (December 1999): 311, https://doi.org/10.1080/13569779908450014.
[383] Millett, *Sexual Politics*, 3; Bryson, '"Patriarchy"', 311.
[384] Bryson, '"Patriarchy"', 311.
[385] Bryson, 312.
[386] Bryson, 315.
[387] Sonja J. Ellis and Elizabeth Peel, 'Lesbian Feminisms: Historical and Present Possibilities', *Feminism & Psychology* 21, no. 2 (May 2011): 199, https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353510370178.
[388] Kath Browne, Marta Olasik, and Julie Podmore, 'Reclaiming Lesbian Feminisms: Beginning Discussions on Communities, Geographies and Politics', *Women's Studies International Forum* 56 (May 2016): 113, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2016.01.007.
[389] Ellis and Peel, 'Lesbian Feminisms', 199.
[390] Ellis and Peel, 198.
[391] Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (London: Beacon Press, 1990).
[392] Daly, 11.

created the symptoms of what is termed neurosis or madness in women.[393] Both Chesler and Daly are considered radical feminists, and Daly as a self-described radical lesbian feminist. Their perspectives are reflected in Baum and Krug's treatment of the term patriarchy.

Baum and Krug asserted the primacy of patriarchy throughout time, asserting, "Die Herrschaft der Männer über Frauen ist die ursprünglichste Form der Ungleichheit."[394] Baum and Krug argued that East German patriarchy results in women having low self-esteem, which inhibited their career goals and aspirations, and made heterosexual marriage and children appear as the only viable option.[395] They asserted that gender conditioning encodes heterosexuality and is imposed by socialisation in the family and institutions such as school. Therefore, the authors contended that patriarchal socialisation asserts that one does not just learn to be a woman but a heterosexual woman. Baum and Krug argued that characteristics and traits of womanhood were essentially defined in relation to the male, providing the skills he lacks, and vice versa.

Evidently, Baum and Krug demonstrated the negative effects of patriarchy upon both heterosexual and lesbian women. Reflecting Chester's psychoanalytic perspective, the authors asserted that East German patriarchy affected women through physical and mental violence that shaped women's self-esteem and image of themselves, resulting in forced heterosexuality. Furthermore, the authors interpreted patriarchy as a form of domination that had existed in all societies through time and in various violent practices. This was a statement crucial to Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology*. Therefore, it's clear that *Lesben in der Kirche* members Gabi Baum and Marina Krug read American radical (lesbian) feminist literature and interpreted its messages for the East German context, shaping the trajectory and aims of the group.

4.5 Group Activities

In the final section of the working paper, Baum and Krug outlined their goals. The document explains that they must accept help from the church, even though it offers limited space.[396] They aimed to be a communication centre, offering support, and educating people on lesbianism.[397] Therefore, their two main goals were self-help and formulating a political group identity. The organisers of *Lesben in der Kirche* held bimonthly meetings with group discussions, question and answer sessions, lectures, collaborative events and social occasions;

[393] Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 2018).
[394] 'Arbeitspapier Des Arbeitskreis "Homosexuelle Selbst-Hilfe Berlin"'. "Male domination over women is the most primal form of inequality." (My translation).
[395] 'Arbeitspapier Des Arbeitskreis "Homosexuelle Selbst-Hilfe Berlin"'.
[396] 'Arbeitspapier Des Arbeitskreis "Homosexuelle Selbst-Hilfe Berlin"'.
[397] 'Arbeitspapier Des Arbeitskreis "Homosexuelle Selbst-Hilfe Berlin"'.

childcare was provided for members with children.[398] Attendees were encouraged to suggest relevant topics.[399] Among the activities were a visit from Audre Lorde in 1985, several visits to Ravensbrück concentration camp to commemorate lesbian victims of fascism, and collaborative events with other lesbian, peace, feminist and homosexual groups, including three women's festivals between 1985 and 1987, a lesbian workshop in 1988, the creation of a feminist library in 1988, and the yearly Peace Workshops in East Berlin between 1983 and 1987.[400] *Lesben in der Kirche* was represented at AKH monthly staff meetings from 1983 and an AIDS support group and theory group from 1988. The group leader, Karin Dauenheimer, also organised the lesbian feminist samizdat publication *Frau Anders* in 1989.

The bimonthly meetings at the church provided an educational and social space for attendees. Coming out evenings, where core members discussed their stories of accepting their sexualities and telling the people around them, followed by Q&A sessions, was a frequent event. Other topics included heterosexual and lesbian emancipation, happy childhoods and happy sexuality, and the place of women in the church.[401] Men were usually welcome at social events, but discussion evenings were typically free of men. These events served to normalise experiences and express difficult emotions associated with being a woman and lesbian, thus helping to overcome the stigma of one's identity.[402] The event entitled "Happy Childhoods-Happy Sexuality?" addressed different members' experiences of sexual experiences, sexual education, and menstruation.[403] This functioned to help members realise that their experiences were not purely individual but a result of specific social conditions that produced such feelings of isolation and self-loathing.[404] In doing so, the group members developed a political self-awareness as a group of people with similar experiences and desires in life.

Besides discussion groups, the group organised lectures, readings, and performances. Two female writers, Irmtraud Morgner and Inge Berndt, had readings from their novels and answered questions from the attendees.[405] There was also a performance from openly lesbian East German singer Maike Nowak and her band Kieselsteine.[406] Social events included chatty evenings, bike tours, meals together, and summer parties.[407] These events were also crucial to the group's functioning, as women often joined the group to find friends and potential partners.

[398] Kenawi, Sexuelle Emanzipation gehörte nicht zum Programm der Arbeiterbewegung.
[399] Kenawi.
[400] Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s', 161.
[401] 'Programm Des AK Homosexuelle Selbsthilfe Der Gethsemane-Gemeinde Berlin- Lesben in Der Kirche', 1984, GZ-MKr-03_137-138, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.
[402] Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s', 161.
[403] Bühner, 161.
[404] Bühner, 162.
[405] 'Programm Des AK Homosexuelle Selbsthilfe Der Gethsemane-Gemeinde Berlin- Lesben in Der Kirche'.
[406] 'Programm Des AK Homosexuelle Selbsthilfe Der Gethsemane-Gemeinde Berlin- Lesben in Der Kirche'.
[407] 'Arbeitskreis Homosexuelle Selbsthilfe: Zusammentreffen Programm', 1984, GZ-MKr-06_5, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.

Meeting and befriending other lesbians helped attendees feel less stigma surrounding their identity and begin to imagine a happy life as a lesbian.[408]

In 1984, Audre Lorde, a Black American lesbian, feminist, and activist, was invited to teach a course on Black American female poets in West Germany.[409] Her work was already familiar to some West German feminists thanks to Dagmar Schultz, who had published a translated collection of her and Adrienne Rich's works in 1983.[410] Lorde frequently visited West Berlin between 1984 and 1992, where she was a crucial influence on the Afro-German movement.[411] In 1985, Audre Lorde visited East Berlin and met with the members of *Lesben in der Kirche*.[412] She was accompanied by the staff from the West German Orlanda Publishing House, and *Lesben in der Kirche* was gifted literature from the Orlanda Publishing House. After Lorde's visit, Marina Krug, a core member of *Lesben in der Kirche*, stated that the group became more aware of racism and held lectures, readings, and discussions on the topic.[413]

4.6 Feminist Library

Samirah Kenawi, a member of *Lesben in der Kirche*, Kenawi founded a women's library in cooperation with other members of *Lesben in der Kirche* in 1988.[414] Kenawi asked the East Berlin parish council for the use of a community room at the Eliaskirche. This request was rejected, and the group could not find a permanent location for the library, so it operated from Ingrid Ewald's apartment in Leipzig.[415] Several illegal libraries opened in East Germany in 1985, most notably the Environmental Library in East Berlin's Zion Church, which hosted art exhibitions, lectures, and film showings and distributed the samizdat magazine Umweltblätter (Environmental Sheets).[416]

The library was entirely funded by private donations, making transnational contacts essential. Contributions came from the International Gay and Lesbian Association and activists in the Netherlands and West Germany.[417] An article in West German *Taz* newspaper in August 1989 asked for book donations, emphasising the difficulties of establishing the library.[418] Non-church gathering gay and lesbian group Sonntags Club asserted in their newsletter, "The book

[408] 'Arbeitspapier Des Arbeitskreis "Homosexuelle Selbst-Hilfe Berlin"'.
[409] Jennifer Michaels, 'The Impact of Audre Lorde's Politics and Poetics on Afro-German Women Writers', *German Studies Review* 29, no. 1 (2006): 22.
[410] Michaels, 23.
[411] Michaels, 28.
[412] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, '"Das Ubersehen Hat Geschichte" Lesben in Der DDR Und in Der Friedlichen Revolution', 22.
[413] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, 22.
[414] Kenawi, *Frauengruppen in Der DDR Der 80er Jahre*, 45.
[415] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, '"Das Ubersehen Hat Geschichte" Lesben in Der DDR Und in Der Friedlichen Revolution', 24.
[416] Sillge, *Un-Sichtbare Frauen: Lesben Und Ihre Emanzipation in Der DDR*, 29.
[417] Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s', 170.
[418] 'Frauenbibliothek in Ost-Berlin', *Taz Zeitung*, 28 August 1989.

shop already exists, even if the 'shop' does not exist yet", thanking West German publishers and feminists for their solidarity.[419] Körzendörfer had a contact in West Germany, whose friend in Finland was able to supply 30 requested books of feminist literature, including Alice Schwarzer's *Der kleine Unterschied und seine großen Folgen* (The Small Difference and its Great Consequences) and Verena Stefan's *Hautungen* (Shedding), both from West German feminist authors.[420] On 4 September 1989, Margaret Krammich of the European Parliament wrote to the library requesting contact information, as she wanted to make a private donation.[421] Furthermore, she had ties to the Women's Environmental Network and was planning a women's conference in Poland in 1991 and was looking to bring together feminists from East and West Europe.[422]

By August 1989, the women's library had roughly 500 books.[423] It operated by mail order and distributed a list of available books to feminist and lesbian groups. It included fiction and non-fiction works, and volunteers created reading lists that addressed lesbian issues. The library offered a catalogue for ordering and loaning books and accepted requests for texts and topics members wanted to learn more about.[424] The information sheet of the library outlined the rules of usage and noted that the library relied on donations, so books must be handled with care due to the high cost of purchasing books in the East, even more in the West.[425]

The library had a diverse range of authors from the United States, Russia, France, Poland, West Germany, and the United Kingdom.[426] The librarians particularly sought texts about female artists like Linda Kögel, Eugenie Sommer, Kathe Kollwitz, Marianna Geselschap, and Maria Slavona, as well as women's rights activists such as Matilda Joslyn Gage and Robin Morgan. The library also requested British feminist texts, like Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, and American radical feminist works, such as Colette Dowling's *The Cinderella Complex*, Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology*, and Phyllis Chesler's *Women and Madness*.[427] The library stock reflected a broad range of feminist ideologies from different regions, particularly North American radical feminist literature. It included a mixture of critical feminist literature and literature about women and their achievements. Clearly, the group

[419] 'Sonntags Club Newsletter', 1986, GZ-SK-06_109-113, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.
[420] Körzendörfer, interview.
[421] Margaret Krannich, 'Brief von Margaret Krannich Zum Frauen Bibliothek', 4 September 1989, GZ-SK-07_112, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.
[422] Krannich.
[423] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, '"Das Ubersehen Hat Geschichte" Lesben in Der DDR Und in Der Friedlichen Revolution'.
[424] 'Benutzungordnung Für Die Frauenbibliothek', 1989, GZ-SK-07_52, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.
[425] 'Benutzungordnung Für Die Frauenbibliothek'.
[426] 'Liste von Für Die Frauenbibliothek Gesuchten Autor/Inn/En Und Büchern', 1989, GZ-SK-07_26-28, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.
[427] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Hardback 2020, 2020, https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/34213/a-vindication-of-the-rights-of-woman-by-wollstonecraft-mary/9780241382622; Collette Dowling, *The Cinderella Complex* (New York: Pocket Books Nonfiction, 1982); Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*; Chesler, *Women and Madness*.

members viewed themselves as feminist and wished to offer women in their network the opportunity to read feminist literature.

The library also stocked fiction, biographies, autobiographies, and poetry from East German authors. This included authors such as Christa Wolf, Irmtraud Morgner, and Brigitte Reimann. This thesis' argued in the second chapter that East German feminist discourses were first initiated in the 1970s and played a crucial role in developing feminist consciousness in the activists of the East German women's and lesbian movement of the 1980s. These authors discussed feminist topics such as marriage, family, and sexuality, creating a space for feminist ideas and alternatives. Therefore, the stocking of these texts in the feminist library demonstrates that its organisers recognised the potential of East German women's literature in fostering critical discourses regarding gender and sexuality.

The library organisers also sought East German non-fiction literature about the status of women in society, including Irina Liebmann's *Berliner Mietshaus* (Apartment Building in Berlin), Herta Kuhrig's *Wie Emanzipiert sind die Frauen in der DDR?* (How emancipated are the women in East Germany?), and Renate Wiggershaus's *Geschichte der Frauen und der Frauenbewegung in der BRD und DDR* (The History of Women and the Women's Movement in East and West Germany).[428] These texts offered a historical-sociological perspective of women in East Germany, showing that the library organisers recognised themselves East German women as a social group with a shared history. Furthermore, they indicated an interest in how East and West German sociologists and writers interpreted the status of women in East Germany.

4.7 Conflicts within the group

Civil society groups that met in the church debated whether they aligned themselves with church values and if gathering there was a political statement of opposition to the state.[429] Therefore, it would be inaccurate to say that groups that met inside the church were in line with its values and opposed the socialist state, while those that gathered outside did not. Meeting in the Church provided numerous advantages, including access to Western media and literature, technology to produce grey literature, financial aid, and service visas to travel to Western countries.[430] Its association with the World Council of Churches allowed the group to

[428] Irina Liebmann, *Berliner Mietshaus* (Berlin: Berliner Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002); Herta Kuhrig, *Wie Emanzipiert Sind Die Frauen in Der DDR?* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag, 1979); Renate Wiggershaus, *Geschichte Der Frauen Und Der Frauenbewegung* (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1979).
[429] Körzendörfer, interview.
[430] Sillge, *Un-Sichtbare Frauen: Lesben Und Ihre Emanzipation in Der DDR*, 17.

participate in international talks.[431] The church's misogynistic history and ideology caused tension within lesbian and feminist groups that met there, and there was often conflict between church representatives and civil society groups over the content of their meetings.[432] Specific feminist theology groups were formed to address this debate, and in 1981, five East German women travelled to a conference on gender and the church in Sheffield, England.[433]

Lesben in der Kirche also debated their use of church space.[434] In the first year of their meeting, the group was obligated to pray and discuss religious topics, but this later became less important.[435] LiK held several events where feminist theology and the relationship of women and lesbians in the church were discussed. Bettina Dziggel of *Lesben in der Kirche* and Michael Eggert of *Schwule in der Kirche* (Gays in the Church) organised a two-day workshop in East Berlin on April 14th and 15th, 1984.[436] In addition to discussing lesbian-gay solidarity, they addressed whether they sought representation or emancipation in society.[437]

Marinka Körzendörfer of *Lesben in der Kirche* argued that lesbian work was a form of political work and the only way to criticise society in East Germany was from within the church.[438] Although she identified as an atheist, she was not troubled by the idea of meeting in a church. She argued that they didn't meet there for religious reasons but because it provided a safe meeting space.[439] Some members argued they met in the community room, not the church.[440] Lesben in der Kirche stated they were anti-utopian, aiming to alter society, not overhaul it.[441] Therefore, the group gained from meeting in the church yet did not consider themselves as opposed to the state. The church had a complex position in the group, being significant enough to be discussed but usually accepted due to the protection it provided.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the first and one of the most influential lesbian groups in East Germany and argued that the group reproduced an American radical lesbian feminist outlook in the group's documents and their political praxis. Through analysis of the group's working paper in 1983, this chapter analysed the two central concepts of the paper, "coming

[431] Sillge, 17.
[432] Sillge, 30.
[433] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, '"Das Ubersehen Hat Geschichte" Lesben in Der DDR Und in Der Friedlichen Revolution', 77.
[434] Körzendörfer, interview.
[435] Kenawi, *Frauengruppen in Der DDR Der 80er Jahre*, 45.
[436] 'Arbeitskreis Homosexuelle Selbsthilfe: Zusammentreffen Programm'.
[437] Körzendörfer, interview.
[438] Körzendörfer.
[439] Körzendörfer.
[440] Körzendörfer.
[441] 'Arbeitspapier Des Arbeitskreis "Homosexuelle Selbst-Hilfe Berlin"'.

out" and "patriarchy", I found that the authors Baum and Krug interpreted these concepts to the East German context, asserting that East German society negatively affected lesbian and heterosexual women by practices that lowered their self-esteem and thus shaped their life choices. The authors argued that a system of heterosexuality was forced upon all people, which made coming out as a lesbian a political decision. Furthermore, the authors interpreted coming out was emotionally satisfying and necessary for realising one's "wahre sexualität".

The group member's two main goals were self-help and creating a political identity. The ideas expressed in the working paper were reflected in the group's activities in the 1980s, as they offered support and social events in their group meetings, which functioned as political and emotional work. Furthermore, the group members extended their outreach by committing themselves to other projects, including the feminist library and Dauenheimer's women's festivals.

5. Women's Festivals, 1985-1987

5.1 Introduction

Karin Dauenheimer of *Lesben in der Kirche* and *Dresdner Arbeitskreis Homosexualität* (Dresden Homosexual Working Group) organised three nationwide women's festivals, which were held in the centre of Dresden in June 1985, October 1986, and October 1987. The first two festivals were at the ruins of a rectory and community centre bombed in World War II. The third festival was at Versöhnungskirche (Church of Reconciliation). *Frauen für Friedan Dresden* (Women for Peace Dresden), *Lesbische Gruppe Jena* (Lesbian Group Jena), and members of the Fennpfuhl women's group in East Berlin helped to organise the festival.[442] Attendees received invitations circling through friendship and political groups and could attend as individuals or with their political groups. There was attendance from around the country at each festival, between 200 to 300 women.[443]

Subaltern counterpublics are "discursive arenas that develop in parallel to the official public spheres, where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs".[444] Nancy Fraser coined this phrase in 1990, which combines Gayatri Spivak's "subaltern" and Rita Felski's "counterpublic" to argue that the counterpublics are formed as a response to exclusion from dominant publics.[445] Fraser argued that there is never one unitary public; instead, the public sphere is always composed of conflicting publics. These counterpublics widen the field of discursive contestation, bringing forth issues that the dominant public may overlook, purposely ignore, or suppress. This chapter seeks to answer the following question: to what extent can these festivals be understood as "subaltern counterpublics"?

In section 5.2, I discuss the importance of festivals in East Germany, including the significance of the Protestant Church in facilitating these festivals. 5.3 looks at the first East German women's festival, notably how it established itself within the Nueva Canción Chilea counterpublic. Section 5.4 examines the second women's festival and its theme of women and productive labour. 5.5 looks at the final festival, which was focused on "Macht in

[442] Jane Freeland, *Feminist Transformations and Domestic Violence Activism in Divided Berlin, 1968-2002*, British Academy Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 137.
[443] Maria Bühner, 'The Rise of a New Consciousness: Lesbian Activism in East Germany in the 1980s', in *The Politics of Authenticity: Countercultures and Radical Movements Across the Iron Curtain, 1968-1989* (Berghahn Books, 2018), 155. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781789200003-009.
[444] Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere'.
[445] Fraser, 56.

Beziehungen" (power in relationships), namely domestic violence. Section 5.6 analyses the festival's leisure activities through the lens of Carl Bogg's 1977 concept of "prefigurative politics". Finally, section 5.7 concludes the chapter.

5.2 Festivals in East Germany

Historians have interpreted certain festivals as a departure from the norm, representing a moment of individual and unhindered lived experience.[446] Festivals are social gatherings convening in specific locations; they are ephemeral and infused with gaiety, conviviality, and cheerfulness.[447] The term festival encompasses a broad range of celebrations throughout the Eastern Bloc, including East Germany, including film, sports and music festivals, rural community-based festivals, and festivals centred around a specific holiday. These festivals include both regional and transnational events. Local festivals, such as the Dresden Music Days, lasted one week a year and promoted socialist realist music from East Germany and other Soviet Bloc countries.[448] The Thuringian Festival of Contemporary Music, held in Weimar from 1952, performed music by leftist West German musicians to demonstrate the appeal of socialist realist music in both German states.[449] Performing halls, factory clubrooms, and outdoor venues hosted amateur music festivals, offering workers an escape from the everyday.[450]

Large-scale festivals served as a platform to demonstrate the connections between the Eastern Bloc states and beyond. In 1964, the SED hosted a three-day festival in East Berlin that attracted more than half a million East German youth and 25,000 West German visitors.[451] This nine-day event featured music performances, art exhibitions, sports, and political discussions.[452] West German newspaper *Der Spiegel* labelled the festival "sun, sex, and socialism".[453] Moreover, The World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) has hosted the World Festival of Youth and Students regularly since 1947 as an event of global youth solidarity against war and imperialism. This event was held worldwide, including places inside

[446] Katharine White, 'East Germany's Red Woodstock: The 1973 Festival between the "Carnivalesque" and the Everyday', *Central European History* 51, no. 4 (December 2018): 585.
[447] Alessandro Falassi, *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 3.
[448] Jesse Freedman, 'Political Participation and Engagement in East Germany Through Chilean *Nueva Canción*', *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 54, no. 1 (July 2022): 2, https://doi.org/10.1017/ytm.2022.4.
[449] Freedman, 2.
[450] Freedman, 3.
[451] Anna von der Goltz, 'Making Sense of East Germany's 1968: Multiple Trajectories and Contrasting Memories', *Memory Studies* 6, no. 1 (January 2013): 55.
[452] von der Goltz, 55.
[453] von der Goltz, 55.

the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc, like Prague, East Berlin, Moscow, and Budapest.[454] This festival invited young workers, students, intellectuals, artists, athletes, and political activists to participate. International festivals acted as a vehicle for individuals, ideas, and cultural expressions, without being restricted by Cold War geopolitical divisions.

A notable example is the 1973 World Festival of Youth and Students in East Berlin, held under the banner of "anti-imperialist solidarity, peace, and friendship".[455] Peter Tatchell from the *Homosexuelle Interessengemeinschaft Berlin* (HIB) acted as a representative of the group. HIB was the first gay interest group in East Germany and collaborated with the British Gay Liberation Front at the festival to distribute 5000 leaflets encouraging gay liberation.[456] Tatchell gave a speech on this topic at the festival, calling for gay liberation.

Churches in East Germany provided an invaluable venue through which diverse gatherings such as the *Kirchentag* (Church Day) and Peace Workshops could take place. The *Kirchentag* was held yearly from 1962 and covered topics ranging from theological debates to civil society issues such as nuclear disarmament and ecological protection. Beginning in 1982, the Erlöserkirche in East Berlin started to host the yearly Peace Workshops, where people of diverse backgrounds could come together to discuss, debate, and form connections that proved integral in helping to develop social movements. Civil society groups in East Germany emerged as a form of resistance to exclusion from the dominant public. The Peace Workshop was an early example, representing a collective effort to foster new counterdiscourses and disrupt existing norms. Yet, the establishment of East German women's festivals took this further, presenting an assertion of feminist struggle that transcended previous forms of resistance. These festivals provided a space for expressing women's needs, experiences, and identities and a platform for discussing gendered issues within East German society.

Furthermore, the Dauenheimer chose to hold the first two festivals not in the church but at the ruins of a community centre bombed in World War II. The decision to have the gathering in a non-church space reflected the shifting attitude of the SED towards the homosexual emancipation movement from 1985. Increasing tolerance of homosexual interest groups meant gatherings did not have to occur in church spaces but in broader public areas. Nonetheless, the final festival in 1987 was held at a church community centre but explicitly invited Christians and non-Christians, highlighting the ambiguous role that church spaces held. Church

[454] White, 'East Germany's Red Woodstock', 587.
[455] J. McLellan, 'Glad to Be Gay Behind the Wall: Gay and Lesbian Activism in 1970s East Germany', *History Workshop Journal* 74, no. 1 (1 October 2012): 116, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbs017.
[456] McLellan, 117.

community centres or rooms were not seen as strictly "religious spaces" and could function simply as a neutral place for discussion offered by the church.[457]

5.3 The First Women's Festival in June 1985

The first women's festival occurred between the June 14 and 16, 1985 at the Lukasplatz Ruins in Dresden. The topic for the event was "Lesbische Liebe in der Literatur" (Lesbian Love in Literature).[458] The invitation invited all women and any of their children to the event, offering childcare for the entire two days.[459] The location was the ruins of a rectory and community centre, bombed in World War II, and adult tickets cost 15 marks. The evening of the June 14 began at 17.00 with dinner and tea, followed by a lecture and discussion on lesbian love in literature at 20.00.[460] The invitation to the festival indicated that the *Dresdner Arbeitskreis Homosexualität* male members would participate in Friday evening's events.[461] The extension of an invitation to the gay male members of the *Dresdener Arbeitskreis Homosexualität* demonstrates that the lesbian members of the group, the organisers of the festival, considered gay men to be a feminist subject, whose solidarity would be valuable to the feminist effort.

The next day's events (June 15) ran from 10.00 to 20.00 and included a lecture dedicated to Chilean culture. "Chile, mein Land" (Chile, my country) introduced Chilean culture with music, images, and speeches by Chilean women in exile.[462] The subsequent discussion was about women in Latin America. There were also activities, including painting or a city walk. Finally, the Chilean women offered a bazaar, and at the same time, they ran a movement workshop entitled "Ich erfahre meinen Körper" (I experience my body) was run.[463] The festival organisers expressed solidarity with feminist struggles abroad through their interest in women's issues in Latin America and Chilean culture. By integrating the struggle of Chilean and Latin American women into their East German-specific festival topics, the festival organisers showed the festival attendees that their problems were not individual. This emphasis on solidarity was in keeping with the East German state's stance on the struggle for socialism in Chile and other third-world countries. In September 1973, the coup d'état of Augusto

[457] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, '"Das Ubersehen Hat Geschichte" Lesben in Der DDR Und in Der Friedlichen Revolution', 41.
[458] 'Einladung Zum Dresdner Frauenfest', 1985, GZ-MKr-06_97, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.
[459] 'Einladung Zum Dresdner Frauenfest'.
[460] 'Einladung Zum Dresdner Frauenfest'.
[461] 'Einladung Zum Dresdner Frauenfest'.
[462] 'Einladung Zum Dresdner Frauenfest'.
[463] 'Einladung Zum Dresdner Frauenfest'.

Pinochet against democratically elected Chilean President Salvador Allende prompted a mass exodus of 200,000 people, including 7,000 people, to Germany.[464] Of these, 3,000 were granted political asylum by the SED, which strongly condemned the Pinochet regime, demonstrating their solidarity with third-world revolutionary struggles by providing the refugees with housing and between 2,500-5000 marks.[465] Although most migrants had returned to Chile by 1980, around 300 remained, throughout the 1980s, settling primarily in East Berlin.[466] To further express their support for third-world revolutionary movements, the East German cultural policy promoted the works of several socialist Chilean poets and writers and *Nueva Canción Chilena* (New Chilean Song), a genre of Chilean folk music with a socialist political theme, which had been essential in the election of Salvador Allende and expressed socialist ideals.[467] In the words of Jesse Freedman, "As a concept, site, people, and music, Chile entered East German political and cultural life as an index for revolutionary identity".[468]

The SED compared *Nueva Canción Chilena* to East German folk song. Although traditional German folk had nationalist and fascist associations lasting from World War II, the East German state attempted to create a revival of the genre that emphasised collective identity orientated around anti-fascist ideology.[469] The *Festival des Politischen Liedes* (Festival of Political Songs) was a yearly East German festival between 1970 and 1990.[470] From 1978, *Nueva Canción Chilena* bands performed alongside German folk bands, with songs in Spanish and German. Singers of *Nueva Canción Chilena* and German Folk music expressed socialist ideals and solidarity while critiquing the restriction and surveillance of the East German authorities.[471] *Nueva Canción Chilena* became popular throughout East Germany, and concerts and singing clubs emerged in universities, schools, and workplaces, singing folk songs, workers' songs, and international folklore.[472] The shows and singing clubs were a space of listening, reflection, and artistic and political discussion, distinct from traditional and commercial musical events.[473] Political songs provided forms of engagement with political participation, creating a counterpublic that could not be said to be either standing "with" or "against the" state.[474] Solidarity became a meaningful source of East German political

[464] Kim Christiaens, 'European Reconfigurations of Transnational Activism: Solidarity and Human Rights Campaigns on Behalf of Chile during the 1970s and 1980s', *International Review of Social History* 63, no. 3 (December 2018): 417. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859018000330.
[465] Christiaens, 417.
[466] Christiaens, 417.
[467] Freedman, 'Political Participation and Engagement in East Germany Through Chilean *Nueva Canción*', 4.
[468] Freedman, 20.
[469] Freedman, 5.
[470] Freedman, 6.
[471] Freedman, 6.
[472] Freedman, 7.
[473] Freedman, 10.
[474] Freedman, 10.

participation and engagement within the community.[475] Therefore, *Nueva Canción Chilena* established subaltern counterpublics where people could gather and discuss socialism as a form of political participation, circulating counterdiscourses.

The first women's festival expanded upon the pre-existing subaltern counterpublic but added a gendered focus. Combining talks about women in Chile with discussions of Chilean culture and music made it clear that such a focus on gender was necessary for any discussion of Chilean culture. The Chilean women speakers' presentations also included their experience as women of Chilean culture. The festival responded to both the dominant state discourse surrounding Chilean culture and the establishment of a counterpublics that engaged with Chilean culture and music as a means of political participation. The first women's festival added a gender dimension to the discourses that surrounded the topic. The festival offered an intervention to, and consciously reflected upon, the discourse of gender in the counterpublic established by Chilean solidarity. Notably, the politicised understanding of Chile offered an aesthetic opportunity through which attendees could discuss feminist and socialist solidarity. Moreover, it demonstrates a genuine interest in the heritage of an East German minority community.

5.4 The Second Festival in October 1986

On October 24 to 26, 1986, the second East German women's festival was held at the Lukasplatz Ruins in Dresden. The overarching theme was "Die berufstätige Frau zwischen Job und Selbstverwicklung" (The worker woman between work and self-realisation).[476] The organisers proposed the festival as a time of shared experiences and self-reflection. They invited attendees to bring written reflections, songs, pictures, and music to stimulate and inform the discussion.[477] Unlike the previous festival, the second Dresden women's festival focused primarily on discussion, with shared meals and a reflection talk at the end of the final day. The opportunity to bring one's materials, including poems and photography, suggests a blending of the leisure and educational aspects of the festival. Discussion groups were encouraged to relate feminist theory with their personal experiences directly. Rather than keeping "educational" and "personal reflection" activities distinct, the organisers of the second festival combined them into one activity. This format offered a departure from the lecture and seminar-style of the first

[475] Freedman, 10.
[476] 'Einladung Zum 2. Dresdner Frauenfest', 1986, GZ-KD-07_3-4, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.
[477] 'Einladung Zum 2. Dresdner Frauenfest'.

festival. Participants were asked to indicate their areas of interest upon registration and were then organised into six discussion groups prepared to discuss each topic before returning as one.[478] This organisation allowed each woman to contribute to the festival's success. The organisers' reflection upon the organisation of the first festival indicates a reciprocal dynamic between the festival and the attendees, in that the women's festival as a subaltern counterpublic acted as both a collective experience and site of critical reception.[479]

The second festival focused on Simone de Beauvoir's 1949 *The Second Sex.* The text was translated into German in 1951 and published in West Germany under the title *Das Andere Geschlecht,* where it sold 14,000 copies in five years.[480] The book was published in East Germany by Volk and Welt in 1989.[481] The book was influential in the West German women's movement, and West German activists shared the text with contacts in East Germany from 1951.[482] Irene Selle, a scholar active in the East German women's networks, commented that women in East Germany had been reading the text since 1951.[483] Still, interest increased in the women's movement of the 1980s. She asserted that women in East Germany had more rights (specifically with gainful employment) than women in West Germany but still suffered from traditional female stereotypes and the associated inequalities.[484]

The festival organisers asserted that de Beauvoir emphasised the importance of paid employment to bolster women's self-development and promote equitable partnerships.[485] Subsequently, the second East German women's festival topics included working mothers, women in men's professions, housewives, women in managerial positions, women in creative careers, and choosing not to have a family for the sake of one's career. The focus on different aspects of working women's life engaged with more traditional East German feminist topics than the first festival. East German feminist discourses in the 1970s and 1980s typically focused on balancing one's work and home life duties, including motherhood, and cultural gender norms and expectations that shaped one's life and relationships.[486]

The second festival drew attention to the unequal roles of East German women in the workplace and at home by emphasising the tension between the pursuit of career and personal

[478] 'Einladung Zum 2. Dresdner Frauenfest'.
[479] Leanne Dawson and Skadi Loist, 'Queer/Ing Film Festivals: History, Theory, Impact', *Studies in European Cinema* 15, no. 1 (2 January 2018): 16, https://doi.org/10.1080/17411548.2018.1442901.
[480] Sylvie Chaperon, 'The Reception of the Second Sex in Europe', *Encyclopédie d'histoire Numérique de l'Europe* (blog), 2020, https://ehne.fr/en/encyclopedia/themes/gender-and-europe/feminisms-and-feminist-movements/reception-second-sex-in-europe.
[481] Chaperon.
[482] Imke Schmincke, 'Wie "Das Andere Geschlecht" Zu Einer "Bibel" Des Feminismus Wurde', *Bundeszentrale Für Politische Bildung* (blog), n.d., https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/302119/wie-das-andere-geschlecht-zu-einer-bibel-des-feminismus-wurde/.
[483] Irene Selle, 'Zur DDR-Rezeption von Das Andere Geschlecht. Ein Erfahrungsbericht':, *Die Philosophin* 10, no. 20 (1999): 115, https://doi.org/10.5840/philosophin1999102025.
[484] Selle, 115.
[485] 'Einladung Zum 2. Dresdner Frauenfest'.
[486] Selle, 'Zur DDR-Rezeption von Das Andere Geschlecht. Ein Erfahrungsbericht', 120.

fulfilment. The festival highlighted the state's failure to adequately address the restrictive gender roles imposed on women, which limited their professional and social opportunities while reinforcing their domestic and maternal roles. The various discussion topics suggest that women can feel a tension between their work and personal fulfilment, as women with or without children, as a woman in an artistic profession, or in a male-dominated field.[487] Therefore, the discussions suggest that the festival organisers wanted to emphasise that the gender-based labour division in the home and workplace led to unsatisfying choices for women, not that labour caused a lack of fulfilment. Consequently, the festival's topic sought to engage in a cultural critique of the responsibilities and choices associated with being a woman.

Drawing on the foundations of existentialism, De Beauvoir argued that there is no intrinsic joy or suffering inherent in the experience of being a woman; instead, women are forced to accept the definitions of their experiences as assigned by a patriarchal society.[488] She asserted that every subject defines itself in terms of an object, and it needs an Other to assert itself as essential.[489] Therefore, female embodiment has been constructed and defined by men. De Beauvoir discussed typical courses of female socialisation, differences in upbringing, experience of sexuality, marriage, motherhood, and social conventions presented as fate. Ultimately, she claimed that inequality is not necessary or inevitable but only realised in existence, asserting that the woman is "determined neither by her hormones nor by mysterious instincts."[490]

The second Dresden Women's Festival provided a space for approximately 200-300 women to come together and share ideas and experiences, broadening and enriching existing East German feminist discourse. This dialogue was something never witnessed in East Germany. This festival highlighted the state's failure to adequately address the restrictive gender roles imposed on women, which limited their professional and social opportunities while reinforcing their domestic and maternal roles. Through discussion and personal reflection, the festival participants were able to critique the cultural definitions of womanhood across an array of lifestyles, all to address the experiences and opportunities available more equitably to women. As a subaltern counterpublic, the second Dresden women's festival featured a longstanding feminist critique of East German women's policy established in the women's literature of the 1970s and 1980s. By establishing a festival centred on this theme, the organisers demonstrated that the same problem persisted and called for attention.

[487] 'Einladung Zum 2. Dresdner Frauenfest'.
[488] Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010).
[489] De Beauvoir, 12.
[490] De Beauvoir, 892.

5.5 The Third Festival in October 1987

Dauenheimer focused the third East German women's festival on "Macht in Beziehungen" (Power in Relationships).[491] The organisers held it from October 2 to 4, 1987, and, unlike the previous two festivals, it was held on Versöhnungskirche (Church of Reconciliation) in Dresden town centre.[492] For the first time, the invitation explicitly invited lesbian, heterosexual, Christian and non-Christian women.[493] For the lesbian attendees, members of *Lesben in der Kirche* offered a group conversation led by Karin Dauenheimer, discussing the social pressures faced by lesbians. For the organisers, it was necessary to "Formen und Folgen der Machtausübung in persönlichen Beziehungen, am Arbeitsplatz und in der Gesellschaft erkennen."[494] In preparation for the festival, organisers asked participants to consider their experiences of coercion and power, where and how they exercised authority, and what consequences there were for them. These reflections formed the festival's focus groups, which examined various power issues, including dependence and subordination in intimate relationships, family violence, and language violence.[495] Several of the lectures and discussions were open to men, including family members and husbands of the female attendees. Besides group discussions and lectures, the festival organisers offered meditation exercises, and it was encouraged to arrange an individual conversation with a counsellor from the church counselling service.[496] Therefore, the festival included feminist discussions, consciousness-raising activities, and practical advice for women in violent relationships.

The third women's festival responded to how the SED handled domestic violence. The East German state's narrative of domestic violence blamed bourgeois capitalist gender norms or failed socialist consciousness.[497] The SED considered domestic violence shelters unnecessary because socialism had created the conditions for a humane existence where men and women could live peacefully.[498] There was little critical public debate about domestic violence in East Germany, and women were not encouraged to discuss their experiences of abuse.[499]

[491] 'Einladung Zum 3. Dresdner Frauenfest "Macht in Beziehungen"', 1987, GZ-KD-07_14-15, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.
[492] 'Einladung Zum 3. Dresdner Frauenfest "Macht in Beziehungen"'.
[493] 'Einladung Zum 3. Dresdner Frauenfest "Macht in Beziehungen"'.
[494] 'Einladung Zum 3. Dresdner Frauenfest "Macht in Beziehungen"'."To recognise the forms and consequences of the exertion of power in personal relationships, at work and in society." (My translation).
[495] 'Einladung Zum Dresdner Frauenfest'.
[496] 'Einladung Zum 3. Dresdner Frauenfest "Macht in Beziehungen"'.
[497] Freeland, *Feminist Transformations and Domestic Violence Activism in Divided Berlin, 1968-2002*, 139.
[498] Monika Schröttle, *Politik Und Gewalt Im Geschlechterverhältnis: Eine Empirische Untersuchung Über Ausmaß, Ursache, Und Hintergründe von Gewalt Gegen Frauen in Ostdeutschen Paarbeziehungen Vor Und Nach Der Deutsch-Deutschen Vereinigung* (Bielefeld: Kleine Verlag, 1999), 5.
[499] Freeland, *Feminist Transformations and Domestic Violence Activism in Divided Berlin, 1968-2002*, 111.

Honecker's social reforms from 1971 pushed for greater equality between husband and wife, which meant that women could quickly obtain a divorce. The rising divorce rate in the 1970s led to academic studies on the causes of separation, of which assault, alcoholism, and violence were the most common reasons.[500] The East German Ministry of Health declared in 1976 and 1977 that domestic violence was the most cited reason to visit a family and marital counselling centre.[501]

Member of the *Dresdner Arbeitskreis Homosexualität*, Ines Walter, gave the festival's keynote address on Friday, October 2, in which she tackled common assumptions around domestic violence.[502] Jane Freeland's 2022 research found that Walter criticised the SED and state institutions for failing to protect women, arg, "at "Many people see the abuse of women as an individual problem… it is important to counter this false view." [503] Walter argued that it was a social problem, not just that of a "few sick men". Walter called for "places of protection" where women experiencing domestic violence could be supported in their decision-making, find information on their legal rights, and be encouraged to value "their bodily autonomy more than prevailing norms."[504] There was a raffle to raise funds for the proposed places of protection the following day.[505] Walter's speech and the festival's ethos challenged the state's approach because it viewed violence against women as a systematic issue reflective of broader gender inequality throughout East Germany.

The third Dresden women's festival acted as a subaltern counterpublic to the official state discourses on gender because domestic violence disproportionately affected women. The festival invented and circulated a counter-interpretation of women's needs: the need for protection against domestic violence. By inviting men and other family members, the festival organisers demonstrated that violence against women could only end with the education and cooperation of all members of society. The festival conveyed that power dynamics existed in all relations, as the attendees were encouraged to consider their exertions of power in different aspects of their lives. Reflecting on one's experiences also made the attendees more aware of how power dynamics could be manipulated and exaggerated. This reflection helped to de-legitimise the state's assertion that domestic violence was caused by capitalism and instead posited it as an extreme version of a previously existing power dynamic.

[500] Schröttle, *Politik Und Gewalt Im Geschlechterverhältnis: Eine Empirische Untersuchung Über Ausmaß, Ursache, Und Hintergründe von Gewalt Gegen Frauen in Ostdeutschen Paarbeziehungen Vor Und Nach Der Deutsch-Deutschen Vereinigung*, 6.
[501] Schröttle, 6.
[502] Freeland, *Feminist Transformations and Domestic Violence Activism in Divided Berlin, 1968-2002*, 138.
[503] Freeland, 139.
[504] Freeland, 140.
[505] Freeland, 140.

Furthermore, this philosophy illustrated violence against women as a structural problem, challenging the state's belief that the materialisation of socialism would eliminate the social inequalities that exacerbated violence. By examining different renderings of violence, such as in language, against sexual minorities, or in romantic or familial relationships, the festival asserted that the image of domestic violence that the state circulated was limiting. The invitations reaffirmed this message as they explicitly called for women of different sexualities, Christians and non-Christian women. Thus, violence could affect women of all social characteristics. Therefore, the third Dresden women's festival simultaneously acted to help women gain self-confidence and awareness regarding the topic of violence while also signalling that the state's stance was failing and there was a need for greater protection of women. This message was reaffirmed by producing feminist alternatives to state-subsidised protection for women, such as the "places of protection", the church counselling services and the festival itself. By establishing these safe places to discuss domestic violence and offer help to victims of violence, the third Dresden women's festival demonstrated what the state's policy towards women lacked.

5.6 Civil Leisure

Coined by Carl Boggs in 1977, "prefigurative politics" refers to modes of organisation and social relationships that strive to reflect the future society being sought by a political group.[506] Boggs argued that political orientations can be based on the premise that the ends of the social movement are achieved by the means it employs, thus meaning that alternative or experimental social arrangements can be created.[507] The East German women's movement had multiple goals and a variety of practices, processes, and means. The three Dresden women's festivals were one practice through which the activists employed prefigurative politics.

The three festivals were voluntary occasions that blurred the boundaries between leisure and politics. Besides lectures, debates, and educational workshops, the East German women's festivals had leisure activities such as music, walks, dancing, shared meals, and artistic workshops. Festivals have "civil leisure" elements, which organisers can use to engender social change.[508] Civil leisure is a realm of leisure that incorporates political activism, particularly

[506] Carl Boggs, 'Marxism, Prefigurative Communism, And The Problem Of Workers' Control', *Radical America*, November 1977; Luke Yates, 'Rethinking Prefiguration: Alternatives, Micropolitics and Goals in Social Movements', *Social Movement Studies* 14, no. 1 (2 January 2015): 1, https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2013.870883.
[507] Boggs, 'Marxism, Prefigurative Communism, And The Problem Of Workers' Control', 1.
[508] Tasmin Coyle and Louise Platt, 'Feminist Politics in the Festival Space', in *The Routledge Handbook of Festivals*, ed. Judith Mair (London: Routledge, 2018), 274.

regarding dialogue and decision-making. This public activity is grounded in shared space, seeks to resist the hegemonic order, and creates space for political, economic, social and environmental discussion.[509] Therefore, although the festival's leisure activities were a respite from the more emotionally and intellectually challenging activities, the leisure activities also had a political role. The leisure acts are a form of "prefigurative politics".

Leisure activities connected women through collaborative endeavours, emphasising humour, pleasure and joy as crucial to articulating feminist politics. As previously established in the third chapter, friendship was a key source of self-esteem for East German female activists. Friendships facilitated networking between groups, dispersing ideologies and visitors, and providing emotional support. Through participating in leisure activities, women were able to form bonds of friendship which aided them in creating a solid network of support. Not only did leisure provide a social forum for women to bond with each other, but it also allowed them to become involved in activities such as art projects and hiking, which helped build upon the strength of their friendship. Artistic endeavours and meditative exercises encouraged self-reflection and self-expression, the most central themes of the festivals. By connecting the philosophical themes of the festival with leisure activities, the festival organisers further blurred the boundaries of the political and personal and between the individual and collective. These themes were evident in the first festival's focus on *Nueva Canción Chilena*, which established music as a site of pleasure and political participation. Listening and dancing brought the listeners into a participatory frame in which the attendees could reflect and critique new creative, political, and revolutionary possibilities. Meals, drinks, and shared accommodation also encouraged a sharing and communal spirit.

The festivals' prefigurative politics were not always entirely "new" visions of feminist solidarity; for example, free all-day childcare was an established tradition in East Germany of state-subsidised childcare. Furthermore, the centrality of women's work and labour to the second and third festival topics reflected the importance of women's careers as a source of pride, self-esteem, and friendly relationships. Consequently, the prefigurative politics of the women's festivals were neither dissident nor state-collaborative; instead, their prefigurative politics were connected to their function as a subaltern counterpublic. Prefigurative politics continued socialist traditions yet encouraged women to critically assess their position within the system, acknowledge its benefits, and widen the field of discursive contestation through discussion and debate.

[509] Coyle and Platt, 276.

5.7 Conclusion

Dauenheimer and the Dresden Women's Festivals organisers were united by an ideological vision of empowering women and emancipating them from patriarchal gender norms. Much like Western feminist consciousness-raising groups, the Dresden women's festivals demonstrated the belief that interpersonal communication, self-reflection, and group sharing would help women to become aware of patriarchal gender relations. The festival allowed heterosexual and lesbian feminists to come together and discuss the implications of gender norms in East Germany. The festivals had an explicit focus on lesbian topics to emphasise further the shared experiences of both sexualities and their struggles against existing gender roles. Moreover, the third festival demonstrated that all members of society were responsible for enacting gender equality by inviting gay male subjects and heterosexual male partners and family members to attend. The festival acted as a platform where interaction between interest groups produced new dialogues and connections. These were not "dissident" or "collaborative" spaces but cognitive spaces where different individuals and groups shared ideas and held debates. The women's festivals had an international outlook and brought together local and global concepts.

Consequently, the festivals formulated "counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs." [510] The first women's festival focused on Chilean solidarity to generate dialogue about socialism, political power, and gender politics. The festival responded to the *Nueva Canción Chilena* counter-public and critiqued the gender-blind focus of these spaces. By contrast, the second festival reacted directly to the state's response to the "woman question". The diversity of topics highlighted to the attendees that women of all positions, including single mothers, women without children, housewives, and women in male-dominated professions, were affected by unfair burdens. By drawing upon de Beauvoir's anti-essentialist understanding of womanhood, the festival organisers highlighted the same problem critiqued by East German feminist literature since the late 1960s. The third women's festival challenged the state's attitude to domestic violence and circulated a counterdiscourse that emphasised the social nature of the problem of violence against women. It simultaneously sought to help women gain self-confidence regarding violence while demonstrating a need for greater protection of women. These counterpublics widened the

[510] Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere'.

discursive contestation surrounding the case of women in East Germany, bringing forth issues that the state overlooked or purposely ignored. The formation of a yearly women's festival that incorporated feminist and lesbian themes challenged the East German state's conviction that they had resolved "the woman question".

This chapter argues that the women's festivals, as subaltern counterpublics, reflected on and critiqued existing feminist discourses and identified points of expansion. The women's festivals had an international outlook and brought together local and global ideas. This chapter does not understand them as "dissident" or "collaborative" spaces; instead, they were cognitive spaces that shared ideas and debates amongst different groups and individuals. These festivals formed broader communities while demonstrating to the official public sphere that counterdiscourses existed and should be taken seriously by established and informal discourses. The formation of a yearly women's festival that incorporated feminist and lesbian themes challenged the East German state's conviction that they had resolved "the woman question".

6. Frau Anders, 1989

6.1 Introduction

Frau Anders (Miss Different, or Woman Different) was a self-described lesbian-feminist samizdat publication which circulated from January 1989 until January 1993.[511] This chapter looks solely at the copies of the magazine from 1989. The working group behind *Frau Anders* was headed by Kerstin Gömmel and Bärbel Klässner, a couple that lived openly as lesbians with two daughters.[512] The two were also the lead organisers of the *Arbeitskreis Homosexuelle Liebe* (Homosexual love working group) in Jena. Gömmel and Klässner were known in Jena and experienced homophobia almost daily from strangers.[513] Such discrimination inspired Gömmel to increase the "visibility" of East German lesbians and challenge the homophobia that persisted in East Germany.[514]

Karin Dauenheimer of the *Dresdner Arbeitskreis Homosexualität* (Dresden Homosexual Working Group) organised a *lesben werkstatt* (lesbian workshop) in Jena in 1988. Dauenheimer also organised the women's festivals in Dresden between 1985 and 1987. Participants of the lesbian workshop discussed the importance of establishing lesbian-only archives, publications, and libraries.[515] All four of the editors of *Frau Anders* (Bärbel Klässner, Kerstin Gömmel, Kerstin Rösel, and Karin Dauenheimer) attended the lesbian workshop.[516] The workshop called for female-only spaces to discuss feminism and same sex-love, establishing a working group for a publication of this nature.[517] In a letter to fellow lesbian activists in 1988, Klässner argued that producing an independent lesbian magazine was essential, as the state-funded women's magazines did not allow lesbian and heterosexual female readers to consider gendered power.[518] Therefore, it's clear that *Frau Anders'* principal goal was to make readers aware of gendered power dynamics.

The magazine took a great deal of effort to prepare. The *Evangelische Frauenwerk Weimar* (Evangelical Women's Work, Weimar) provided the working group with a copier, so long as the *Frau Anders* working group provided their own toner and paper.[519] Contacts in

[511] Bärbel Klässner, 'Gruppen Jena Vorstellung', *Frau Anders*, January 1989, GZ_S_01_194, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.
[512] Gunter Grau, ed., *Lesben Und Schwule: Was Nun?* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1990), 131.
[513] Grau, 131.
[514] Grau, 132.
[515] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 265.
[516] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, '"Das Ubersehen Hat Geschichte" Lesben in Der DDR Und in Der Friedlichen Revolution', 65.
[517] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 265.
[518] Maria Bühner, 'In Bewegung: Netzwerke Der Lesbengruppe in Der DDR in Den 1980er-Jahren', *Digitales Deutsches Frauenarchiv* (blog), 2018, https://www.digitales-deutsches-frauenarchiv.de/themen/bewegung-netzwerke-der-lesbengruppen-der-ddr-den-1980er-jahren.
[519] Daniela Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, '"Das Ubersehen Hat Geschichte" Lesben in Der DDR Und in Der Friedlichen Revolution' ('Das Ubersehen hat Geschichte' Lesben in der DDR und in der friedlichen Revolution, Halle: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung und dem Gunda-Werner-Institut, 2015), 66.

West Berlin and Cologne sent the toner and paper.[520] The magazine was limited to 100 copies per issue due to insufficient materials.[521] The magazine working group passed copies from hand to hand, and then the issues moved from group to group.[522] The working group specifically targeted lesbians who lived in rural areas.[523] The magazine editors decided to publish it in Jena as a way to de-centre the lesbian movement from large cities such as Berlin, Leipzig and Dresden and to signal collaboration between lesbians all over East Germany.[524] The core editorial staff were comprised of a social worker, a psychology student, a theatre worker, and a journalist.[525] Dauenheimer had a degree in theology, which meant that the articles she wrote had a theological focus. Karin Dauenheimer invited members of *Lesben in der Kirche* to contribute to *Frau Anders*, including Christian Schenk and Marinka Körzendörfer.[526]

Frau Anders received financial support from the group *Künstler für andere* (Artists for Others). A circle of friends formed This group in Jena in 1986.[527] *Künstler für andere* organised solidarity events of readings, concerts, theatre, and exhibitions highlighting East German artists, with the proceeds going to global and East German projects.[528] For example, the group raised money to fund the formation of the dissident environmental library in East Berlin. The group platformed East German artists whose work the state did not allow to show outside church spaces. Therefore, *Künstler für andere* gave the working group behind *Frau Anders* material support, encouragement, and publicity.

In the first edition of the magazine in 1989, Kerstin Rösel outlined the purpose of the magazine:

> "Wie es schon in unserer Konzeption stand, wünschen wir uns, dass "Frau Anders" die Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Lesbengruppen verbessern hilft. Mit unserem Blatt möchten wir ein Stück Hinterland für das Selbstverständnis und Selbstbewusstsein lesbischer Frauen geben, vor allem auch den Frauen, die neu in die Gruppen kommen, das Hineinwachsen in die Bewegung erleichtern. Wir wollen Raum und Anregung geben zur wissenschaftlichen/theoretischen Bearbeitung von Themen, die uns angehen."[529]

[520] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, 66.
[521] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, 66.
[522] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, 66.
[523] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, 66.
[524] Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 266.
[525] Elizabeth Mittman, 'Gender, Citizenship, and the Public Sphere in Postunification Germany: Experiments in Feminist Journalism', *Signs* 32, no. 3 (2007): 766, https://doi.org/10.1086/510922.
[526] Marinka Körzendörfer, 'Berlin Gruppenvorstellung', *Frau Anders*, March 1989, GZ_S_01_206, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.
[527] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, 64.
[528] Zocholl and Susanne Diehr, 65.
[529] Kerstin Rösel, 'Einführung Des Herausgebers', *Frau Anders*, January 1989, GZ_S_01_192, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin. "As was already stated in our conception, we hope that "Frau Anders" will help to improve the cooperation between the lesbian groups. With our magazine we want to give a piece of *hinterland* for the self-understanding and self-confidence of lesbian women, especially to make it easier for women who are new to the groups to become part of into the movement. We want to give space and stimulation for the scientific/theoretical treatment of topics that concern us." (My translation).

In German, *hinterland* typically refers to a piece of land behind the coast, on the fringe areas of a town or city.[530] However, the word also has had a range of symbolic interpretations. A psychoanalytic perspective denotes the *hinterland* as "the area lying beyond what is visible and known", a repressed place to explore.[531] A hinterland can be a projected space, a metaphorical land on which political thought, knowledge and conviction can be built.[532] In using this term, Rösel acknowledged the absence of lesbian representation and knowledge in East Germany and tried to develop a repository of resources for East German lesbians. A crucial aspect of formulating the magazine as a repository of resources was the various contributions from different lesbian and women's groups and activists across East Germany.

German historian Eva Sänger argued in 2005 that *Frau Anders* was a forum for criticism of the state and patriarchal power relations and created an alternative public sphere catered to women and lesbian groups.[533] The magazine included contributions from women's groups that identified themselves as feminists and others that did not identify themselves as such. Therefore, *Frau Anders* documents collaborations and tensions between lesbian and heterosexual women. The two categories of "lesbian" and "heterosexual" were the ubiquitous concepts of sexuality in the East German women's movement, a binary which the contributors of *Frau Anders* reproduced.

The different contributing writers drew upon different ideological traditions and thus interpreted concepts from different interpretative angles.[534] The writers echoed knowledge from Western women's studies and feminist theory, as well as the socialist and Marxist political traditions in East Germany. The different voices of the magazine demonstrate the increasing fragmentation of the lesbian and feminist movement since 1982 when the movement began, and the difficulties activists faced in defining feminist concepts.

Consequently, this chapter will use the notion of "interpretative repertoires" as an analytical tool for the text of the magazine. Interpretative repertoires understand "discourse as the vehicle through which the self and the world are articulated, and how different discourses enable different versions of selves and reality to be built".[535] Therefore people can use language

[530] Dominika Ferens, 'Hinterlands: Cultural and Literary Perspectives' (Hinterlands: Cultural and Literary Perspectives, Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022), 1.
[531] Ferens, 1.
[532] Ferens, 1.
[533] Eva Sänger, '"Lieber Öffentlich Lesbisch Als Heimlich Im DFD" -- Die Samisdat-Publikation "Frau Anders" in Der DDR 1988/89', in *Öffentlichkeiten Und Geschlechterverhältnisse: Erfahrungen, Politiken, Subjekte*, ed. Susanne Lettow, Ulrike Manz, and Katja Sarkowsky (Sulzbach am Taunus: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 2005), 175; Harrison, 'The State of Belonging: Gay and Lesbian Activism in the German Democratic Republic and Beyond, 1949-1989', 266.
[534] Zorica Siročić, 'Something New, Something Old and Something Borrowed: Post-Yugoslav Millennial Feminists in Search for Interpretative Repertoires', *Women's Studies International Forum* 77 (1 November 2019): 3, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2019.02.014.
[535] Kimmo Tuominen, Sanna Talja, and Reijo Savolainen, 'Discourse, Cognition, and Reality: Towards a Social Constructionist Metatheory for Library and Information Science', in *Emerging Frameworks and Methods* (Fourth International Conference on Conceptions of Library and Information Science, Seattle, Washington: Libraries Unlimited, 2002), 273.

to construct different versions of the social world or different versions of the same event.[536] Nonetheless, accounts of the same phenomenon will contain the same "relatively internally consistent bonded language units" that Wetherell and Potter called "interpretative repertoires".[537] The term refers to "culturally familiar and habitual lines of argument comprised of recognisable themes, common places and tropes".[538] Unlike ideologies in discourse analysis, interpretative repertoires allow for flexibility of the core concepts that can reference different ideologies, traditions and thoughts.[539]

This chapter asks what the central interpretative repertoires that engaged with the concept of lesbianism were and what these repertoires can reveal about the nature of the East German's lesbian and feminist movement in 1989.

6.2 East German Samizdat

The term "samizdat" was first used by Russian poet Nikolai Glaskov in the late 1950s.[540] The word derives from *samesbyaizdat*, meaning "publishing house for oneself".[541] Samizdat refers to the unofficial production and distribution of text-based material in typed, mimeographed, xeroxed or printed form, which could span a range of formats and topics. Samizdat includes literature like novels and poetry, news reports, official documents, and even pornography.[542] Although it originated in the Soviet Union in the 1950s, samizdat began circulating widely in the 1970s in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.[543] It became essential for opposition individuals and groups to articulate their ideas and forge political and social relationships. Historians have debated the scale of samizdat production in East Germany. However, it is known that people shared samizdat materials between East and West Germany before the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961.[544]

Unlike other countries in East Central Europe and the Soviet Union, East German artistic and political samizdat were distinct from one another.[545] In the 1980s, over 30 literary magazines and graphic artist books were printed by the independent artistic and literary

[536] Pamela J. McKenzie, 'Interpretative Repertoires', in *Theories of Information Behaviour: A Researcher's Guide*, by Karen E Fisher, Sandra Erdelez, and Lynne McKechnie (Medford, New Jersey: Information Todayd, 2005), 2.
[537] Wetherell and Potter, 'Discourse Analysis and the Identification of Interpretative Repertoires.', 172.
[538] Wetherell and Potter, 'Discourse Analysis and the Identification of Interpretative Repertoires.'; Siročić, 'Something New, Something Old and Something Borrowed', 4.
[539] Wetherell and Potter, 'Discourse Analysis and the Identification of Interpretative Repertoires.'
[540] Gordon Johnston, 'What Is the History of Samizdat?*', *Social History* 24, no. 2 (May 1999): 116, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071029908568058.
[541] Johnston, 116.
[542] Johnston, 'What Is the History of Samizdat?', 120.
[543] Johnston, 120.
[544] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczuk, *Freiheit Und Öffentlichkeit. Politischer Samisdat in Der DDR 1985-1989* (Berlin: Robert Havemann Gesellschaft, 2002), 1.
[545] Kowalczuk, 1.

community of East Germany.[546] Although these works often challenged state aesthetic censorship, they were published in such small numbers that the state tended not to intervene.[547] In the late 1980s, the authorities began to collect these artistic magazines and books in state libraries.[548] These publications were usually only distributed within groups and occasionally sent to contact partners in other cities.

The increase in civil society interest groups from 1982 resulted in the growth of political samizdat. From 1985 onwards, 175 publications of political samizdat circulated in East Germany, mainly in East Berlin and Leipzig.[549] The rapid increase in interest groups in the mid-1980s triggered a proliferation of political samizdat on topics such as the environment, relations between the state and church, peace, human rights, democratisation, glasnost, and perestroika.[550] The East Berlin Environment Library published the *Umweltblätter* (Environment Pages), which expressed a "grassroots-democratic, radically ecological and anarchistic" philosophy.[551] Samizdat production entailed a lengthy and labour-intensive process, often involving West German paper, ink and wax donations. The new publications were more prominently featured at events and meetings compared to early 1980s samizdat, with booklets on tables at church gatherings and in peace and environmental libraries.[552]

Since 1982, women's and lesbian groups, including *Lesben in der Kirche* and *Frauen für den Frieden,* circulated samizdat literature. The organising teams of both groups produced essays, newsletters, and invitations to distribute within and outside their groups. The group members sought to educate group members and prompt discussion with this material.[553] Group members shared samizdat material with friends and contacts in other women's and lesbian groups to demonstrate their group ideology and potentially attract new members. *Frau Anders* was the only known samizdat magazine focused on lesbian issues that circulated in the East German women's movement.

6.3 The First Interpretative Repertoire in *Frau Anders*

The first interpretative repertoire identified in *Frau Anders* argues that heterosexuals and lesbians should work together due to a shared experience of womanhood. This repertoire relies upon the idea that women share innate female qualities, meaning that separation from

[546] Kowalczuk, 1.
[547] Kowalczuk, 2.
[548] Kowalczuk, 2.
[549] Sänger, '"Lieber Öffentlich Lesbisch Als Heimlich Im DFD" -- Die Samisdat-Publikation "Frau Anders" in Der DDR 1988/89'.
[550] Kowalczuk, *Freiheit Und Öffentlichkeit. Politischer Samisdat in Der DDR 1985-1989.*
[551] Kowalczuk, 3.
[552] Kowalczuk, 3.
[553] Bühner, 'Kontinuität des Schweigens', 114.

men in political work is necessary. Group members presented themselves through a *Gruppenvorstellung*, or group introduction essay, to outline their origins and values. 1-2 group members typically wrote the *Gruppenvorstellung*. The *Gruppenvorstellung* revealed the critical questions and tensions between different groups and activists. The various group members wrote the introductions authoritatively. The magazine editors sought to provide information to reach women living rurally, women in the closet, and women not involved in any political group.[554] Therefore, those essays helped give readers a comprehensive idea of the women's movement and guidance in accurately deciding which group depicts their ideology.

In the opening article of the magazine's first issue, Bärbel Klässner recounted her first involvement in the lesbian movement with the *Arbeitskreis Homosexeulle Liebe, Jena* (Homosexual Love Working Group, Jena) a mixed group of lesbians and gay men. She recalled, "Ich war noch keine bewusste Frau und der Unterschied zwischen weiblicher und männlicher Homosexualität war mir noch kein bisschen klar, dennoch fühlte ich mich nur unter Schwulen nicht ganz wohl".[555] She further expressed her delight upon attending the Dresden Women's Festival in 1985, recalling that, "nie vergesse ich dieses überwältigende Glücks und Geborgenheitsgefühl, zum ersten Mal unter so vielen Frauen, so vielen Lesben zu sein!"[556] Her decision to create a separate lesbian group from the *AK Homosexuelle Liebe* was a result of "Ich hörte auf meine Gefühle, und die waren eben natürlich, selbstverständlich." Finally, addressing the impetus behind the separate lesbian group's formation, she commented, "Das Bedürfnis erwachte, etwas Eigenständiges von Frauen für Frauen zu tun, obwohl wir im Schwulen-AK integriert schienen, eben als Weibliche Minderheit."[557]

As an authoritative figure in the magazine, Klässner's narrative was particularly significant for the magazine's wide readership. Klässner portrays two different versions of herself: before the mixed sexuality group split into a gay and lesbian group and after they had done so. Before the separation, she was aware of her lesbianism but unaware of the "difference" between male and female homosexuals. She understood this difference through her participation in a majority female space and chose to form a group divided along gender lines. This decision made her a "conscious woman" who was acutely aware of the need for separation between lesbians and gay men. Klässner conveyed this decision as a natural, necessary

[554] Sänger, '"Lieber Öffentlich Lesbisch Als Heimlich Im DFD" -- Die Samisdat-Publikation "Frau Anders" in Der DDR 1988/89', 175.
[555] Klässner, 'Gruppen Jena Vorstellung'. "I was not yet a conscious woman, and the difference between female and male homosexuality was not yet clear to me, but I still didn't feel entirely comfortable around gay men." (My translation).
[556] Klässner. "I will never forget the overwhelming happiness and feeling of security of being among so many women, so many lesbians for the first time!" (My translation).
[557] Klässner. "The need arose for women to do something for themselves, although we appeared to be integrated into the gay working group as a female minority." (My translation).

progression, suggesting lesbian and homosexual difference as innate and objectively real rather than chosen or enacted. Klässner's use of words like *natürlich* and *selbstverständlich* emphasised the necessity of separating lesbians and gays rather than her making a personal decision. She compared her pleasure among women with her discomfort among gay men, suggesting the similitude between lesbian women.

Veronika of the *Dresdener Arbeitskreis* also engaged with this interpretative repertoire. She stated, "An den Abenden fühlte ich mich ziemlich verloren und auch von den anderen Frauen durch die Überzahl der Männer isoliert. Frau muss oftmals gute Augen haben, um bei ca. 80% Männern Frauen überhaupt wahrzunehmen."[558] She realised that she had fundamental differences with the gay men in her group, which meant that the topics of discussion were not relevant for her. She commented, "So wuchs in mir und vielen anderen Frauen der Wunsch nach einer Gesprächsmöglichkeit unter uns, um frei zu werden zum Gespräch, uns selbst finden zu lernen und frauenspezifische Fragen zu besprechen."[559] Like Klässner, Veronika indicates that her time in a mixed sexuality group demonstrated to her that gay men and lesbians had intrinsic differences, which meant that working together was unproductive for lesbians. Veronika argues that lesbians needed to address *frauenspezifische* topics. In this statement, Veronika emphasised that political groupings should be interpreted as arising from natural differences between individuals and demonstrated the similarity between lesbian and heterosexual women based on their common qualities and knowledge of being a woman.

6.4 The Second Interpretative Repertoire in *Frau Anders*

Closely related to the first interpretative repertoire, the second asserted that lesbianism was a political identity and that lesbians share experiences with heterosexual women, necessitating the collaboration between lesbian and heterosexual women. However, by contrast to the first repertoire, shared experiences were not a result of an innate female quality but rather due to social conditions that meant that women were disadvantaged because of their gender, which affected both lesbian and heterosexual women.

As established in the fourth chapter, *Lesben in der Kirche* was a church-gathering women's group that adopted Western models of radical and lesbian feminism. Marinka Körzendörfer wrote the *Lesben in der Kirche Gruppenvorstellung* and described the group as

[558] Veronika, 'Dresdner Arbeitskreis Gruppenvorstellung', *Frau Anders*, March 1989, GZ_S_01_212, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin. "In the evenings I felt quite lost and also isolated from the other women, due to the majority of men (women often have to have good eyesight to even see women in around 80% of men)." (My translation).
[559] Veronika, 'Dresdner Arbeitskreis Gruppenvorstellung'. "This is how the desire grew in me and many other women for an opportunity to talk among us, to be free to talk, to learn to find ourselves and to be discuss women-specific issues." (My translation).

Radikal feministisch (radical feminist), aiming for lesbischen Emanzipation (lesbian emancipation).[560] She noted that the group separated from its original mixed sexuality format after the third evening of discussion: "Doch nach dem dritten Abend zu einem Lesbenthema, bei dem die Schwulen in der Diskussion über uns Lesben voll das Wort an sich rissen, bestanden wir auf Trennung"[561] She continued, "Wie kann frauen mit ihrer Ablehnung von männerorientierten Herrschaftsstrukturen und ihrem Widerwillen gegen Bürokratie und eingebimster Ordnung, Chaos, und Doppelarbeit vermeiden und eine effektive, aufeinander aufbauende Arbeit leisten?"[562] Körzendörfer stated that this separation helped avoid male domination in group conversations and power structures.[563] In contrast to Bärbel Klässner's view that separating the *Arbeitskreis Homosexuelle Liebe* was based on natural differences between gay men and lesbian women, Körzendörfer posited that for *Lesben in der Kirche*, their separation from gay men was motivated by socially constructed power dynamics, which, in her perspective, would have hindered the progress of the group. In *Frau Anders'* sixth issue in November 1989, *Lesben in der Kirche* members Christian Schenk and Marinka Körzendörfer wrote an essay that referenced the United States' second-wave feminist movement to assert the political identity shared by lesbian and heterosexual women. They wrote:

> "In besondere der Aufschwung des Feminismus in den 70er Jahren unseres Jahrhunderts in den USA brachte spürbare Impulse für die Lesbenforschung. Frauen begannen über sich selbst wissenschaftlich zu arbeiten, ihre Geschichte, ihre Situation, ihre Sozialisation, ihre Lebensweise, und ihre Sexualität aufzuarbeiten und zu begreifen."[564]

Schenk and Körzendörfer authoritatively claimed that the American second-wave feminist movement had lifted (white, middle-class) lesbians out of invisibility and helped lesbians to gain knowledge of themselves. This assertion did not position collaboration as a natural inclination between heterosexual and lesbian women. Later in the article, the authors argued for the political usefulness of lesbian-feminist collaboration, emphasising that American feminism did not homogenise women of all sexualities into one feminist subject. In their opinion, the feminist movement worked to illuminate lesbians, highlighting the need for

[560] Körzendörfer, 'Berlin Gruppenvorstellung'.
[561] Körzendörfer. "But after the third evening about a lesbian issue, where the gays took the floor in the discussion about us lesbians, we insisted on separating." (My translation).
[562] Körzendörfer. "How can women with their rejection of male-oriented power structures and their aversion to bureaucracy and innate order, avoid chaos and double work and do effective, uplifting work?" (My translation).
[563] Körzendörfer.
[564] Marinka Körzendörfer and Christian Schenk, 'Frauenbewegung', *Frau Anders*, November 1989, GZ_S_01_277, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin. "In particular, the rise of feminism in the USA in the 1970s brought clear motivation for research on lesbianism. Women began to do scholarly work about themselves, to process and understand their history, their situation, their socialization, their way of life, and their sexuality." (My translation).

more knowledge of lesbians.[565] The authors' reference to American feminist politics indicates the effect of American feminist literature, which had educated them on the topic. Although the authors noted that feminism did not homogenise lesbian and heterosexual women, they hinted at the shared social position of women. They described feminism as bringing about a *spürbare Impulse* for research on lesbianism. They implied that the American feminist movement illuminated women's disadvantaged role in society and thus brought to light the invisibility of lesbians. Lesbian struggles were part of a broader woman's struggle because heterosexuals and lesbians were in the social category of "women". Unlike the first repertoire, Schenk and Körzendörfer asserted that the social category of women was based upon shared experiences of discrimination and inequality, rather than an intrinsic female quality. To make their argument for lesbian feminist collaboration convincing, Schenk and Körzendörfer assume that the American feminist and lesbian movements were homogenous, and do not mention class or race in the movements. Naturally, they were wrong in assuming this, because divisions based upon class and race were clear in the United States' movements.[566] Since the early 1970s, Black and women of colour articulated criticised white feminists and lesbians who considered sexism the primary or most destructive oppression.[567]

In the magazine's fifth issue in September 1989, the editors published two letters from two readers who critically discussed the events of the 1989 Leipzig *Kirchentag* (Church Day).[568] Kathleen Behnke from Magdeburg and Christiane from Gera addressed the roundtable entitled *Wenn Frau liebt eine Frau* (When a woman loves a woman). Behnke criticised the ignorance of heterosexual women, who questioned whether society "needed" homosexuality, and if it could be "solved" through scientific research. She asserted, "Irgendwie habe ich bei heterosexuellen Frauen immer das Gefühl, hier wird von mir eine Rechtfertigung für mein eigentlich normales, nur eben seltenes Anders-sein verlangt."[569] She questioned the "moralnormen, Wertorientierungen und Vorurteile" (moral norms, values, and prejudices) between lesbian and heterosexual women, asking "Wie können diese Grenzen abgebaut werden?" (How can these boundaries be broken down?)[570] Although Behnke criticised heterosexual women's ignorance about lesbianism and implied that it hinders the women's and lesbian movement, she also asserted a wish for heterosexuals and lesbians to break down the

[565] Körzendörfer, 'Berlin Gruppenvorstellung'.
[566] Becky Thompson, 'Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism', *Feminist Studies* 28, no. 2 (2002): 339.
[567] Thompson, 342.
[568] 'Frauenkirchentagstreff - Leipzig', *Frau Anders*, n.d., GZ_S_01_262-263, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.
[569] 'Frauenkirchentagstreff - Leipzig'. "Somehow, I always have the feeling with heterosexual women that I am being asked to justify my actually normal, just rare, otherness." (My translation).
[570] 'Frauenkirchentagstreff - Leipzig'.

boundaries that led them to misunderstand one another. She labelled these boundaries as moral norms, values, and prejudices, implying that such a division was not inevitable but the product of socialisation. Therefore, her criticism contained the belief that solidarity between lesbians and heterosexual women was necessary.

Christiane's letter affirmed this perspective. She criticised the condescending attitude of heterosexual women, commenting, "Wo bleibt der produktive Streit, z.B. zwischen Lesben und Hetero-Frauen um gemeinsame feministische Positionen?"[571] In this question, Christiane expressed her frustration at the discussions between women, asserting that awareness of shared experience would help conversations move forward and take further action. Despite criticism, Christiane believed that lesbian and heterosexual women shared mutual feminist positions, which should be worked towards through productive discussion.

6.5 The Third Interpretative Repertoire in *Frau Anders*

The fourth issue of the magazine, published in July 1989, featured a series of letters from readers who responded to magazine articles, as well as women's and lesbian events that the magazine advertised. These featured a third interpretive repertoire that stressed lesbianism as a political identity, but not one that should be part of the women's movement. These contributions did not reject the idea that lesbians were marginalised and invisible in East German society but rejected that lesbian activism should be part of the women's movement. I found the third interpretative repertoire as reader-submitted letters or essays directly addressing the magazine's themes. A number of different people engaged with this repertoire and used different reasoning to argue for their position. Kerstin from Jena criticised the events of the Jena Women's Group Meeting, which had occurred earlier that year in May, which symbolised for her that the women's and lesbian movements had grown too close.[572] She commented,

> "Am deutlichsten hängengeblieben ist bei mir der Konflikt zwischen Lesben Frauen und männerliebenden Frauen. Er bahnte sich schon in der Vorbereitungsphase des Treffens an gipfelte Samstag/Sonntag in solchen Äußerungen: ‚Die Lesben knutschen sich nur rum und haben ansonsten nicht beizutragen' ‚Heterosexuelle Frauen sind manchmal echt zum Kotzen'".[573]

[571] 'Frauenkirchentagstreff - Leipzig'. "Where are the productive debates, for example, between lesbians and heterosexual women about a shared feminist position?" (My translation).
[572] 'Leserinnenzuschriften', *Frau Anders*, July 1989, GZ_S_01_251, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.
[573] 'Leserinnenzuschriften'.: "The most obvious thing that stuck with me was the conflict between lesbian women and women who love men. It started already in the preparatory phase of the meeting and culminated in statements like this on Saturday/Sunday: 'The lesbians only make out and otherwise have nothing to contribute', or 'Straight women sometimes really suck'" (My translation).

Kerstin asserted in her letter that lesbians and heterosexuals had different priorities, meaning that group collaboration inevitably resulted in tensions. Kerstin viewed heterosexual women and lesbian women as two different social groups. Because women and lesbians had different life experiences, they struggled to understand each other.[574] Kerstin drew directly from conversations that she had heard at the *Kirchentag*, stating that collaboration between lesbian and heterosexual women resulted in ill feelings between them. Furthermore, these collaborations were unproductive because the women continued to misunderstand one another. Therefore, Kerstin criticised the first and second interpretative repertoire, drawing upon her experiences to contend that lesbian feminist collaboration was doomed to fail. Specifically, Kerstin criticised the idea that because lesbians and feminists were women, they had a natural or political proclivity towards collaboration.

The third repertoire was also discernible in the magazine's fifth edition, in September 1989, where a lesbian woman named Beate wrote about her experience at a meeting of the *Brandenburg Arbeitskreis* (Brandenburg Working Group). The group of lesbians and gays was formed in Brandenburg in 1988. Beate stated:

> "Hier war ich nicht allein, alle die dort saßen, hatten etwas mit mir gemeinsam, die Homosexuelle Veranlagung. Mir was es völlig egal, dass es in der Mehrzahl Männer waren und sich die Anzahl der Frauen auf 5 beschränkte. In der Zwischenzeit entwickelte sich ein gutes Verhältnis zu allen und ich fühle mich schon seit langem nicht mehr neu. Zu unserem Männern habe ich eine Beziehung, die ich als kumpelhaft bezeichnen könnte, hilfreich, vertraut, aber auch streitbar. Ich meine damit Diskussionen über uns selbst die zum wechselseitigen Verständnis beitragen. Ich fühle mich wohl bei Ihnen."[575]

Beate seemingly addresses the interpretative repertoire of lesbianism established in earlier issues of *Frau Anders* by defying the expectation that she would feel uncomfortable with gay men. Instead, she described her relationship with them favourably: chummy, helpful, and trusting. However, she also added that group relationships were at times contentious, highlighting those differences among the group members added to the understanding of one another. Therefore, Beate avoided positioning differences between group members as natural or political. The differences were an opportunity for further discussion, not the separation of the genders into different groups. This assertion contradicted the *Gruppenvorstellungen* of

[574] 'Leserinnenzuschriften'.
[575] Beate, 'Brandenburg Gruppenvorstellung', *Frau Anders*, September 1989, GZ_S_01_260-261, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin.: "Here I was not alone, everyone sitting there had something in common with me, the homosexual disposition. I didn't care that the majority were men, and the number of women was limited to 5. In the meantime, I've developed a good relationship with everyone, and I haven't felt new for a long time. I have a relationship with our men that I could describe as chummy, helpful, trusting, but also contentious. I mean discussions amongst us that contribute to mutual understanding. I feel comfortable with them." (My translation).

Lesben in der Kirche and the *Arbeitskreis Homosexuelle Liebe, Jena,* whom both asserted that conflicts with gay male members resulted in the decision to separate groups. Beate suggests that lesbians and gay men belonged together, because of their shared homosexuality.

An unnamed reader wrote into the magazine's final issue of 1989 in November to criticise the frequent magazine articles that provided a feminist critique of East German society. The reader wrote,

> "Seid Ihr eine Lesben- oder Feministinnen Zeitschrift? Eure blätterte ich mehrmals durch und siehe da – letzte Seite ganz unten steht's > Info-Blatt für Lesben<. Aber wo seid Ihr Lesben? Es strotzt vor Feminismus (gibt es so wenige Probleme?) und nicht wenige lesbische Frauen können damit nichts anfangen, trotz des Nachdenkens. Man könnte annehmen, dass Feminismus mit Lesbisch sein zu tun hat oder umgekehrt."[576]

The letter writer questioned the magazine's assertions that lesbian and feminist politics were closely related. She saw the two as distinct issues, and *Frau Anders* should only discuss lesbianism. The writer suggested that the magazine's editors found so few lesbian topics to discuss that they had turned to feminist topics. In contrast to the first repertoire, the letter shows that its writer did not feel a natural affinity with heterosexual women. Her opinion was a minority in the magazine and was the only letter that directly criticised the magazine. Nonetheless, it cannot be assumed that this was a minority opinion in lesbian circles outside of the magazine.

Another letter from a reader, named K, in the November 1989 issue of *Frau Anders* stated that:

> "Homosexualität ist für mich kein Problem mehr. Zumindest keins, für das ich mit wehen- den Fahnen auf die Straße müsste. – Ja, es ist ein wenig beschämend, sich zurückzuziehen, wenn man den Partner für sich gefunden hat; aber im Prinzip praktiziere ich doch meine Lebenseinstellung: Auf friedlichem Wege demonstrieren, dass gleichgeschlechtliches Miteinanderleben möglich ist."[577]

K argued that a radical conceptualisation of lesbianism positioned homosexuality as a problem to be addressed rather than an identity to embrace. She asserted that the approach of

[576] K, 'Leserinzuschrift', *Frau Anders,* November 1989, GZ_S_01_280, Robert Havemann Gesellschaft Berlin. "Are you a lesbian or feminist magazine? I leafed through your pages several times and lo and behold – at the bottom of the last page is > Info sheet for lesbians<. But where are you lesbians? It oozes feminism (are there so few problems?) and quite a few lesbian women can't relate to it, despite thinking about it. One might assume that feminism has to do with being a lesbian or vice versa." (My translation).

[577] 'Leserinzuschrift'. "Homosexuality is no longer a problem for me. At least not one for which I would have to take to the streets with waving flags. – Yes, it's a bit embarrassing to withdraw once you've found your partner; but in principle I practice my attitude to life: demonstrate in a peaceful way that same-sex coexistence is possible." (My translation).

women's and lesbian groups disenfranchised men and heterosexuals and heightened the marginalisation of homosexuals in society.[578] K acknowledged that loneliness had been a recurring theme for her, which dissipated when she met her partner. Therefore, although she recognised the loneliness that lesbians in East Germany faced, K espoused an assimilationist view, suggesting that "Warum lasst Ihr Mädchen Euch nicht die Haare wachsen, kleidet Euch feminine, seid zärtlich in der Öffentlichkeit zueinander und bekundet so der Welt: Lesbisch zu lieben ist schön"[579] to make lesbianism more visible.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the different language used to interpret lesbianism and feminism in *Frau Anders* in 1989 and found that three central interpretations existed. The magazine reflected a broad range of political positions in East German society in 1989. Importantly the magazine editors chose to publish various voices and opinions, which sometimes contradicted each other, reflecting broader conflicts in women's and lesbian groups. As stated by Eva Sänger, the magazine acted as a public forum. Therefore, the different ideologies and ideas highlighted that by 1989, the number of women's, gay, and lesbian groups had dramatically increased, and the movements had become increasingly fragmented. I asserted that these repertoires relied upon the common sense understanding that lesbians were invisible and marginalised in society. Thus, each contributor interpreted the possibilities for lesbianism, and put forth their idea of the best action to lessen lesbian marginalisation. The first two repertoires sought a political alliance with heterosexual women, and the third repertoire rejected the women's movement and feminism. The contributors engaged with the third repertoire criticised the feminist perspectives in *Frau Anders* and argued that the lesbian movement should be distinct from the women's movement. This analysis has enriched the image of the East German women's movement in 1989 by highlighting collaborations and tensions between the groups and activists, emphasising the increasing fragmentation that occurred as activists established more women's groups throughout the 1980s.

[578] 'Leserinnenzuschriften'.
[579] 'Leserinzuschrift'. "Why don't you girls grow your hair out, dress feminine, be affectionate to each other in public, and tell the world that loving as a lesbian is beautiful." (My translation).

7. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored the processes of collaboration between East German lesbian and feminist historical actors and groups in the women's networks of East Germany between 1978 and 1989 and how this collaboration allowed for the creation of new dialogues and knowledge.[580] This thesis centred on the collaborations between lesbian, feminist and women's activists while acknowledging tensions and ideological differences between groups and activists. The central question this thesis asked was, how did collaboration between lesbian and feminist activists enable the development of new dialogues and the formation of new networks?

My conclusions from my findings asserted that lesbian and feminist activists and groups generally acknowledged the benefits that East German socialism granted them but articulated frustrations with the gender norms and expectations that persisted. Lesbian and feminist activists did not need to fight for the right to work, the right to abortion, or access to the contraceptive pill, as in other feminist movements, but argued that nonetheless that stagnant understandings of gender in East Germany produced norms and expectations of women's roles that were limiting. As demonstrated throughout the thesis, lesbian and feminist activists often articulated a shared social status, emphasising that these expectations affected both heterosexual and lesbian women. Therefore, much of the lesbian feminist collaboration in the informal women's network of East Germany in the 1980s was facilitated by discourses emphasising how sexism negatively affected heterosexual and lesbian women. These women did not represent the broader population of women and lesbians in East Germany but rather a minority consisting of white, middle-class urban women. Therefore, their discourses represented their specific worldview, which, to my knowledge, assumed middle-class, white East German women to be the norm. More specifically, their interests, expectations, and concerns about feminism were shaped by their white, middle-class upbringing and usually failed to consider race and class in their analyses.

This thesis aimed to highlight lesbian feminist collaboration as a crucial aspect of the East German women's movement. To answer the thesis question, I examined archival materials, including newsletters, essays, letters, and invitations from women's and lesbian groups held at three different archival institutions. Additionally, I dedicated a chapter to a series of six oral history interviews with women, feminist, and lesbian activists conducted as part of

[580] Koni Benson and Richa Nagar, 'Collaboration as Resistance? Reconsidering the Processes, Products, and Possibilities of Feminist Oral History and Ethnography', *Gender, Place & Culture* 13, no. 5 (October 2006): 587.

the *Berlin in Bewegung* public access project in 2019 at the *Frauenforschung-bildungs-und-informationszentrum* (Women's Research, Education, and Information Centre, FFBIZ) archive in Berlin, Germany. My analysis of these materials led me to the following findings and allowed me to make the following arguments:

Chapter Two provided historical background to the thesis question, arguing that Erich Honecker's social reforms from 1971, including *Muttipolitik*, developed the SED's response to the women's question. I contended that women's literature was an alternative public sphere in which authors praised and critiqued the SED's policy towards women. I argued that women became more aware of sexism by reading this literature. Finally, I argued that the 1978 Church-State Agreement ensured that the church could act as an independent institution in East German society without directly contradicting the state's interests. Women's groups developed from civil society ecology and peace groups, and lesbian groups often split from broadly homosexual groups. I argued that the shared church space made meeting easier for groups, prompting a network of women's groups.

In Chapter Three, I examined six oral history interviews conducted by Frederike Mehl at the FFBIZ Archive with former East German lesbian and women's activists, focusing on the common themes of childhood, friendships, lesbian identity, and post-reunification reflections on the women's movement. I analysed how each woman came to understand and challenge gender norms in society. The interviewees demonstrated how friendship networks could be pivotal in connecting individuals and ideologies. Friendship was a central theme in the oral history interviews, with individuals gaining emotional and tangible support and the chance to join new political discussions and groups. The lesbian interviewees demonstrated how the meeting of *Lesben in der Kirche* provided them with a new language for thinking about themselves and their pasts, which challenged their negative perception of their sexual preference. Finally, the interviewees demonstrated that historical narratives of East German dissent and civil society have marginalised the East German women's and lesbian movement.

Chapter Four focused on a self-proclaimed radical feminist group, *Lesben in der Kirche*. I examined the group's formation in 1982 and traced its development until 1989. My analysis of the sources showed that the group members read Western feminist literature and adopted American radical feminist methods to suit the East German context. I analysed the group's essays and argued that the group had a radical lesbian feminist perspective, which asserted that lesbians and feminists needed to overcome patriarchy. Members of *Lesben in der Kirche,* including Christian Schenk, Marinka Körzendörfer, Marina Krug, and Karin

Dauenheimer, were influential in the women's networks, further spreading the group's ideology.

Chapter Five analysed three women's festivals in Dresden between 1985 and 1989. I interpreted the festivals with Nancy Fraser's 1990 concept of "subaltern counterpublics", in which the participants generated a dialogue about issues affecting women. I argued that the festivals sought to increase women's self-esteem, create solidarity among attendees, and gain a critical perspective of gender relations in East Germany. I also argued that the festivals established shared leisure activities as prefigurative politics, which emphasised humour, pleasure, and joy as crucial to feminist politics and reflected established socialist traditions. Additionally, lesbian and heterosexual women were present at the festivals, meaning that the organiser, Karin Dauenheimer, sought to convey lesbians and heterosexuals as equal feminist subjects.

Chapter Six analysed six editions of the only lesbian samizdat magazine, *Frau Anders,* which circulated in 1989. The chapter asserted that the magazine was a public forum to discuss lesbianism and identified three interpretative repertoires. The three repertoires included two interpretations that advocated for lesbian and heterosexual collaboration, and the third espoused that lesbians should have their own movement. This analysis was significant because it demonstrated the increasing fragmentation of women's and lesbian activities in 1989.

The thesis could have been more extensive in several ways. A fundamental limitation was the lack of archival sources and secondary literature broadly addressing racialised people in the East German women's networks and civil society. As discussed in the introduction, the current literature assumes that the East German women's networks did not include racialised people. Future research could investigate racialised women in the women's and lesbian networks and how racial dynamics played out amongst activists and women's groups. This research would strengthen, develop, or challenge this thesis's conclusions.

There were also significant themes within the women's networks that I did not draw on. A future researcher could extend the scope of discussion to the small-scale domestic violence activism that Jane Freeland addressed in *Feminist Transformations and Domestic Violence in Divided Berlin.*[581] I only included women's and feminist groups that discussed lesbianism and collaborated with lesbian groups. Future studies could include feminist and women's theology groups or women's peace groups. Additionally, I did not discuss in detail male homosexual activists and groups from which the lesbian groups I studied had separated.

[581] Freeland, *Feminist Transformations and Domestic Violence Activism in Divided Berlin, 1968-2002*.

Lesbian Feminist Collaboration in the East German Women's Networks, 1978-1989 joins the small body of literature that seeks to highlight the significance of the East German women's movement and challenge the idea that women under socialism in East Germany were, in Tatjana Böhm's words, "ignorant, poor and oppressed".[582] I hope to contribute to this field by highlighting the significant collaboration between lesbian and feminist activists and groups. Furthermore, this thesis aimed to demonstrate that gay and lesbian groups were not monolithically opposed to socialism but constituted a wide range of attitudes and ideologies regarding the possibilities for gay and lesbian life in East German socialism. Additionally, this thesis relied upon Sheila Rowbotham's 1992 definition of feminism to assert that the East German women's movement was feminist and highlighted that a variety of feminist ideologies existed and attitudes towards socialism in East Germany in the 1980s.[583] By analysing activists' interactions, this thesis recognised East German feminist and lesbian activists in the 1980s as crucial to East German women's and gender history.

[582] Tatjana, interview.
[583] Rowbotham, *Women in Movement*, 6.

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