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Tracking German Education: An Examination of Three Postwar Periods

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

"TRACKING" GERMAN EDUCATION:
AN EXAMINATION OF THREE POSTWAR PERIODS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY
JENNIFER HART
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
MAY 2016

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ABSTRACT

This study examines tracking policies in the German education system in three postwar time periods in order to learn more about the practice of tracking in German schools and how it has evolved and changed over time. I specifically seek to answer this research question: How were tracking policies in the German education system reshaped or addressed in education reforms after the end of World War I, World War II, and post-reunification? This is a historical study; thus, the data I collected came from a variety of primary and secondary sources relevant to the subject with the aim of compiling a relatively comprehensive corpus of sources. My research, albeit as comprehensive as possible, is only intended to examine tracking policies during these three times, and will be strictly regulated to the policy of tracking alone.

THESIS

“TRACKING” GERMAN EDUCATION: AN EXAMINATION OF THREE POSTWAR PERIODS

Introduction

Academic differentiation, known as tracking, has long been practiced in the Federal Republic of Germany. I seek to learn about tracking policies in the German education system, because I want to find out how the system of tracking in German schools has evolved and changed over time; and furthermore, I wish to use the history of tracking in German schools to provide an educated forecast and recommendations regarding tracking's future in Germany's education system in the twenty-first century.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research project is to learn about the history of German education tracking policies. I specifically want to learn how tracking in German schools has developed or changed over time (and perhaps about its consistencies), namely over the course of three distinct postwar time periods: post-World War I, post-World War II, and post-reunification. The postwar reconstruction setting is particularly significant since a unique spirit of rebuilding and rebirth accompanies it. Through this historical study, I hope to be able to offer insights on tracking's potential in German schools.

Research Question

How were tracking policies in the German education system reshaped or addressed in education reforms after the end of World War I, World War II, and post-reunification?

Nature of Study

This is a historical study. My study is historical in nature because it examines a particular educational policy (i.e., tracking) in three distinct, historical postwar periods and how that policy varied or remained consistent during times of renewal and reconstruction.

Data Sources

The data I collected comes from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources I utilized are those that aided in my understanding and my conceptualization of tracking in the German school system during these three postwar periods. The secondary scholarship I used provided a variety of angles from which one can examine tracking through a historical lens.

Academic Contribution

Academic differentiation, specifically tracking, has received increasing attention recently and with Germany's rigid education system, investigating its background provided a greater understanding of the practice. Tracking greatly impacts students' educational experiences and can be influenced by a variety of factors. Thus, it is important to understand the background of tracking during these three pivotal times in German history. These postwar periods provided a spirit of reformation in the wake of tumultuous wars, which made the post-World War I, post-World War II, and post-reunification time periods significant

opportunities of study. It is my understanding that there have been no previous studies conducted of this kind.

Limitations

Political and social change often follow in the aftermath of war; hence, my rationale in choosing these three critical postwar time periods. However, this study was only intended to look at the state of tracking in the German education system during these three periods. It did not look at any of the other political or social changes happening in education or other aspects of society during these times. Therefore, my research, albeit as comprehensive as possible, was only intended to examine tracking policies during these three times, and was strictly regulated to tracking alone.

Literature Review

Definitions

Tracking: Differentiating students by perceived ability into different ability groups and schools where students have similar academic backgrounds and perceived capabilities.

GDR: German Democratic Republic. The communist government of the former East Germany.

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development

What is Tracking

Tracking in German schools has been a tradition of the German school structure for a long time. LeTendre, Hofer, and Shimizu (2003) seek to examine the system of tracking and differentiating students, including how students are placed in public K-12 schools in Japan, Germany, and the United States. Their

article directly addresses the issue of tracking in Germany and some of the cultural notions that surround it, while offering a comparative view with the United States and Japan. My study builds on these cultural notions that surround tracking in German society and examines how deeply engrained the practice is in order to understand the policy more fully.

These authors address a deeper issue related to tracking and that is inequality. Their article does not study this practice directly, like other studies do, which I will later mention; however LeTendre, Hofer, and Shimizu (2003) note that “[e]ducational tracking has been identified as a major mechanism through which inequality of educational opportunity is transmitted or maintained.”¹ This corresponds to the consideration I make in my study with regard to the future of tracking in the German education system.

There is not a historiographic component to the LeTendre, Hofer, Shimizu study, which sets it apart from my own. Additionally, the emphasis of their study lies in examining the cultural expectations that accompany tracking policies in Germany, the United States, and Japan. This has helped me to understand the cultural component of tracking in Germany better, but does not parallel my study with its historical essence.

A study conducted by Donald Hirsch (1994) examines the middle years of schooling for students in eight European countries. Regarding German students’ experiences in the middle grades, he addresses the established *Orientierungsstufe*,

¹ LeTendre, Gerald K., Barbara K. Hofer, and Hidetada Shimizu. "What is tracking? Cultural expectations in the United States, Germany, and Japan." *American Educational Research Journal* 40, no. 1 (2003): 43-89. P. 45.

or transition school between fourth and seventh grades. Hirsch (1994) argues that the *Orientierungsstufe* “is a useful transitional mechanism to make Germany’s segregated secondary school system work more smoothly.”² He not only discusses this transition program, but also discusses more specifically the purposes of the different schools that students are placed into for secondary schooling. Although this study, like the LeTendre, Hofer, Shimizu (2003) piece, does not assess tracking policies vertically through time, he does look at tracking’s purpose and manifestations in a single time period (the early 1990s), which is helpful to my study of the post-reunification German tracking policies. Therefore, Hirsch’s (1994) article assists me by providing information regarding the state of tracking shortly after Germany reunified. Furthermore, Hirsch’s piece does not have a historiographic angle to it either, but it provides a concise snapshot of tracking in the early 1990s.

My study is unique in that it examines tracking, an education policy fairly thoroughly studied, from a historical perspective with the intention of understanding the practice better through its history; yet, I also wish to offer insights regarding its potential future in German education. These studies I have mentioned thus far examine tracking but not in the historiographic way I intend to study it.

Postwar Education Reform

Periods that follow in the wake of war are often opportune times for renewal, rebirth, and importantly, reform. Noah Sobe’s chapter, “American

² Hirsch, Donald. "Schooling for the Middle Years: Developments in Eight European Countries." (1994). P. 51.

Imperatives, Educational Reconstruction and the Post-Conflict Promise”

beautifully highlights the rationale behind my decision to study these three critical postwar periods in German history. In his introductory chapter, Sobe argues that “the dawn of a post-conflict era is often construed as a moment of opportunity- an opportunity for emancipation from the past, for wide-scale social reengineering, and for laying the foundations of a stable, peaceful post-conflict order.”³ For this reason, I have chosen the post-World War I, post-World War II, and post-reunification time periods to study the structural reform of the German education system, specifically as it relates to tracking policies. Sobe’s chapter lays the foundation for why post-conflict time periods are an educated time for reform, hence its necessity to my own work. However, Sobe’s chapter does not discuss the German education system, but provides the foundation upon which my study is built.

Gerald Read’s paper, “The Revolutionary Movement in Secondary Education Throughout the World” emphasizes the push toward universal secondary education across nations; however, he points out, as I believe Sobe would agree, that dramatic structural reforms occur in response to various post-conflict forces (e.g., social, political, historical). Read’s paper supports the notion of post-conflict periods as opportunities for education reform, which is one of the useful components of his paper. Additionally, Read expresses what he believes comprehensive education reform would ask of Germans, at least as he saw it in the 1970s; however, despite the age of his paper, Read’s analysis has a timeless

³ Noah W. Sobe. *American post-conflict educational reform: from the Spanish-American War to Iraq*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. P. 5.

nature to it, which I find useful in considering the path I believe education reform in Germany will take.

History of Tracking in Germany

Paul Bodenmann published an article in 1976, which highlights the basic structure and function of the education system in West Germany during the time it was written. "The Educational System of the Federal Republic of Germany" is a fairly objective report on the status of German education during the mid-1970s. As such, Bodenmann does not necessarily express a stance on issues, but rather reports his findings. Bodenmann's report is helpful to my study when he briefly highlights the historical origins of the policies of German education at that time, relating policies back to the Weimar Republic and the influences of the Allied occupation in the post-World War II era. Bodenmann only briefly mentions the historical significance of certain structures still present (in the 1970s) in the German education system. He discusses finer points such as the financing of education, the grading system, and enrollments, to name a few. These are particulars of the education system, which I do not discuss in my study; however, his report is helpful in that it corroborates information regarding the structural foundations of the German education system (including tracking policies) and points to some of their historical backgrounds.

Dissimilar to Bodenmann's report on the West German education system in the 1970s, Detlef Müller wrote a chapter (translated by Fritz Ringer) tracing the systematization of the German secondary school system. His chapter is highly historical in nature, tracing the steps of the secondary school system's progress starting in its infancy. He argues that there has been an increasing

systematization of German secondary schools, such that the secondary schools went from being disjointed institutions in the early 1800s to increasingly systematized institutions at the end of the same century. His study is similar to others in its address of the historical components of the German education system in its early stages, yet is different in that he takes a detailed approach. Müller's chapter is beneficial to my study in that it discusses the beginning of the highly tracked system. Müller continues by discussing the secondary schools in the nineteenth century, and only minimally the beginning of the twentieth century, which is one of the many features of his study. This is one piece of Müller's chapter, which is quite different from my own research. However, the background he provides on the origins of the *Hauptschule* and *Realschule*, for example offer insights to my own work.

James Tent wrote a cornerstone book on the reeducation and denazification process in German education in the post-World War II time period. His work, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany*, is a pillar piece of historical literature on this topic, such that nearly all of the secondary literature written after the 1980s cites Tent's book. Like several other studies mentioned here, Tent details the process of restarting Germany's education system and the various efforts implicated to reestablish a brainwashed education system. Tent goes into great detail in his 318-page book including a discussion of the reforms and condition of education in each *Land* of the American-occupied zone. His study is so detailed, unlike any other piece of literature on this topic that I read, that he designates an entire chapter to the postwar cultural battle that took place in the state of Bavaria. Tent's book was

vastly helpful to my learning of the education reform process in Bavaria and West Berlin, although his examination has much more depth and breadth than my own work. While I restrict my study to tracking in the German school system, Tent took on a ghastly beast of the entire German school system in the American zone.

For a study that examines the historical relationship between the state and community in the German school system, I turn to Gert Geißler's 2005 study. Geißler provides a detailed summary of the history of the German education system. He begins the study in the time of the Holy Roman Empire and continues to the twenty-first century. However, since Geißler covers such a massive amount of history in a relatively short article, none of the time periods are discussed in great depth. Hence, this article is intended to give an overview of the state vs. local relationships in the German school tradition during all of these time periods, but only does so at the surface level. Geißler's article is helpful to my own research when he analyzes the reforms of the Weimar Republic, specifically the introduction of compulsory schooling. However, Geißler repeatedly discusses the status of teachers and the delineation of power in the education system. This feature alone makes Geißler's study far different from my own, in addition to the lack of a discussion on the tracking policies in German education.

Charles Dorn's 2005 article "Evaluating Democracy: The 1946 U.S. Education Mission to Germany" evaluates and analyzes the relative success of the U.S. education mission in light of their primary goal of democratizing German education. This article is very similar to an article that Dorn and Brian

Puaca published in 2009, which also focuses on evaluating the post-World War II state of education in American-occupied Germany. Dorn's 2005 article though is helpful to my own study through his analysis of the mission's findings and recommendations. Similarly, Dorn's 2007 book, *American Education, Democracy, and the Second World War*, analyzes the state of education and the American education officials' remarks on German education in the post-World War II era. This book is similarly helpful to his 2005 article, but the book briefly also discusses the structure of the German education system (i.e., the tracking policies) around the end of the war. Although Dorn's two pieces aid in my own understanding of the German education system in the post-World War II time period, his studies are strictly limited to post-World War II, and do not horizontally investigate German education policies across time. Thus, my study is quite different in that it examines one policy across three time periods, even though Dorn's works have been very meaningful to my research.

Charles Dorn and Brian Puaca, two authors who have written extensively on the German education system, collaboratively published a chapter in 2009. Their chapter examines the post-World War II German education system in the American Zone of Occupation. They focus their chapter on the U.S. education officials' attitudes toward education reconstruction in the postwar era. Related to the U.S. education officials' attitudes, Dorn and Puaca discuss the concept of "reeducation" in the context of postwar German education- a topic discussed by several authors (e.g., Benita Blessing, 2006). This chapter details the state of post-World War II German education institutions, similar to Blessing. Dorn and Puaca discuss in relative depth the purging of Nazi-affiliated teachers and the

conditions within schools, including the lack of supplies and clothing, just to name a few. This chapter is alike to Benita Blessing's 2006 book; however, Dorn and Puaca's chapter was particularly interesting and helpful after reading *The Report of the U.S. Education Mission to Germany*. Dorn and Puaca analyze this report, especially as it relates to the tracking practices in German schools and the battle with the American officials that resulted. Blessing's book, *The Antifascist Classroom: Denazification in Soviet-Occupied Germany, 1945-1949*, is different from the Dorn and Puaca chapter most obviously because Blessing examines the post-World War II school system in the Soviet Zone of Occupation, as opposed to the American zone. The topics they discuss are similar though; thus, both add greater detail to my own study since they examine very different regions of postwar Germany. Since both Dorn and Puaca and Blessing's studies discuss an array of components and reforms to the German education system, neither is as narrow as my own study, which strictly explores the tracking policies in German education. My study is also unique from these two studies in that mine looks at three critical postwar time periods, whereas these two studies only examine the post-World War II period.

Brian Puaca wrote *Learning Democracy: Education Reform in West Germany, 1945-1965*, which illustrates the ways that Germany reformed its education system after the Allied occupation. Puaca argues that although it seems as if the period after World War II was a period of "stagnation," many reforms manifested after Germany regained sovereignty. Puaca's book corroborates information noted in other sources, such as Bodenmann's aforementioned report, which references Germany's return to the education traditions of the Weimar

Republic. Puaca also discusses the materialistic issues German schools faced in the post-World War II era, as Blessing's book also very similarly highlights in detail. Puaca's piece discusses some of the history behind the German education system (e.g., the four-year primary school, the tripartite secondary school system in the Weimar Republic); however, its focus remains on the post-World War II period and the decades after West Germany's reestablishment during the Cold War. Thus, Puaca's study is supportive of my own findings during the post-World War I and post-World War II periods, yet, is limited to primarily the post-Nazi period. It does not discuss Germany's education system into the later future, as my own study does. Puaca's book is supportive of my research, yet limited in scope compared to the more modern realities of the German education system that my study examines.

Continuing with the theme of the evaluation and analysis of *The Report of the U.S. Education Mission to Germany*, Masako Shibata wrote *Japan and Germany under the U.S. Occupation: A Comparative Analysis of the Post-War Education Reform*. Her book includes a particularly pertinent chapter to my research, which examines the reform initiatives in the American Zone of Occupation in post-World War II German schools. She details the denazification process and the recommendations of the U.S. education officials, which is similar to several other studies I examined. Although my findings remain quite similar to these, Shibata discusses several different reforms and not only in the elementary and secondary schools but also in higher education. Post-secondary education is an area my project does not examine. Shibata's chapter on postwar education reform in

Germany corroborates the information I read in a variety of other sources, which I have previously mentioned, and that is invaluable to my work.

For a historical study that provides contrast to the previously mentioned pieces, in 1983 Kurt Jürgenson wrote a paper on the re-education policies in the British Zone of Occupation. His piece aided me in comparing the British policies of education reconstruction to those of the Americans, which proved to be somewhat disparate. Jürgenson's paper is only mildly useful to my research for its broad features; the case study I examine features Berlin (occupied by all four Allies in the postwar time) and Bavaria, which was situated in the American zone. Hence, Jürgenson's work offers a different angle to the approach of postwar education reconstruction, but is not a pivotal resource to my research.

For two historical studies on the development of education in Berlin in the post-World War II time, see Gregory Wegner's 1995 piece "In the Center of the Cold War: The American Occupation of Berlin and Education Reform, 1945-1952," and similarly a 1985 paper by Karl-Hans Füssel and Christian Kubina, "Educational Reform Between Politics and Pedagogics: The Development of Education in Berlin After World War II." Both similarly historiographically analyze the development of education reforms in postwar Berlin. These have aided me through my case study examining the city-state of Berlin and the reforms instituted after World War II during Allied occupation. Füssel and Kubina discuss with some detail the *Einheitsschule* in East Berlin but also delve into details on Berlin's education reforms in later periods, such as the 1960s and 70s. In contrast, Wegner's article strictly focuses on Berlin's education reforms in the immediate post-World War II period, specifically 1945-1952. Wegner's paper

analyzes the traditions present in the education system during the Weimar Republic and also briefly examines Berlin's schools under Hitler's regime. All of this is to say, these two articles have many similarities between their analyses of the Berlin school system after the fall of the Third Reich, but their approaches are quite different. Both articles, however, are helpful to my own analysis of the postwar Berlin school system and the reforms that resulted. Yet, my brief case study of the Berlin school system after World War II is a relatively small portion of the greater project, and not its sole focus, as in these authors' works.

David Phillips has written fairly extensively on post-reunification German education. Pertinent as a segue between post-World War II education reform and post-reunification reform is Phillips' piece, "Reconstructing Education in Germany: Some Similarities and Contrasts in the Postwar and Post-Unification Rethinking of Educational Provision." Phillips looks at the reconstruction of German education after World War II, and compares and contrasts those provisions to the modernization of German education once East and West Germany were reunited in the early 1990s. The primary purpose of this particular 2013 article is to examine the similarities between the two periods of rebuilding to see how "instructive" the comparison can be. This is a key similarity to my own paper, even though in this article Phillips only examines the post-World War II and post-reunification periods, and omits the post-World War I period. Phillips also wrote a much earlier 1992 article, "Transitions and Traditions: Educational Developments in the New Germany in their Historical Context." This piece is a foundational work to his aforementioned 2013 article. Similar to his 2013 piece, in his 1992 paper he seeks to historically situate the

education reforms of post-reunification Germany. In this 1992 paper, he discusses in relative detail the delineation of the school tracking reforms of 1991 in the new, eastern *Länder* of Germany. The emphasis of this paper is to examine the transition of education systems between East and West Germany as they came together, which is particularly helpful to the final substantive section of my own paper.

Similarly from the historical perspective, Dietmar Waterkamp discusses in his 2009 piece whether or not fragments of the GDR education policies remain in the present German education system. His study of these former East German policies found that “[s]ome components of the GDR system were kept in the new states and eventually transferred to the Western states.”⁴ This article is relevant to my research as it discusses education policies after the reunification of Germany, which includes tracking, since it was not a policy used in the GDR. Waterkamp’s 2009 article provides detail to the state of tracking and the education system in Germany after reunification and even into the twenty-first century. He articulates specific structures of the school system such as “[i]n the GDR this cycle [the university-bound track] had twelve years of schooling, whereas in West German states it was thirteen years. The first four years were spent in primary schools in both systems; therefore, the difference is within secondary and upper secondary schooling.”⁵ This study elucidates the convergence of East and West German schools and policies after reunification;

⁴ Waterkamp, Dietmar. "Education in Germany: Twenty Years After the End of the German Democratic Republic." *European Education* 41, no. 4 (2009): 8-23. P. 20.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

however, it strictly focuses on this time period. It does not mention any other historical time periods or discuss tracking's history in German education. Thus, this study supports my understanding of the post-reunification state of tracking in German schools, which I then compare to the other time periods.

When Germany's school systems reunified, West German policies predominated the reforms. Stephanie Wilde's 2002 study questions if positive policies and knowledge were lost and possibly muted as a result of the GDR's political affiliations. The article focuses mainly on interviews Wilde conducted with 18 teachers from three different schools within the state of Brandenburg, Germany; yet, Wilde allots several pages to introduce the reader to the context. For example, Wilde notes that the "traditional tripartite structure in western Germany consists of the Gymnasium, Hauptschule and Realschule."⁶ She discusses how this tripartite system was not present in the GDR school system and how it was "simply transferred to the eastern states."⁷ Therefore, although Wilde's study emphasizes the experiences and perceptions of the former East German teachers, she provides significant detailed information regarding the transition to a reunified school system. This information is informative to my research. She does not discuss any other time periods, so there is not a historical or comparative element to this piece, but it certainly provides key background information necessary to my study regarding the post-reunification era in Germany.

⁶ Wilde, Stephanie. "All Change? Secondary Schools in Eastern Germany." *German Life and Letters* 55, no. 3 (2002): 282-295. P. 284.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 243.

Together, Val and Diane Rust wrote *The Unification of German Education*, which is a detailed analysis of the collapse of the East German education system and the reunification of East and West German education. The Rusts illustrate the political reconstruction of the eastern German *Länder* and the decision made by each *Land* in their movement to develop school structures more alike to the western *Länder*. This study examines the reunification of German education from a macro level (i.e., it discusses the topic somewhat generally), while also going into depth on a variety of school-system features (e.g., teacher education, secondary education, vocational education, higher education, the Hamburg Treaty of 1964). Thus, the Rusts' book is far different from my own study in that they delve very specifically and solely into the post-reunification period, while discussing a variety of structural and social impacts on the education system in the eastern *Länder*. Although their study is much different from my own, their analysis is deeply helpful to my own analysis of the post-reunification period of German education history.

Like Val and Diane Rust, Rosalind Pritchard wrote a paper, "Was East German Education a Victim of West German 'Colonisation' after Unification?" Her micro-level analysis of the reunification of the East and West German education systems is similar to Wilde's and Waterkamp's papers in their level of specificity; yet, her analysis of a colonization effect present during East Germany's assimilation to the West German education system is dissimilar. She argues that the East German *Länder* were less victimized than it may seem, which offers a useful perspective in my own analysis of the meshing of the two education systems. Her study is quite specific and only examines the post-

reunification time period in German history; thus, my study helps to highlight the changes of this post-reunification period, while addressing other historical relevancies from the post-World War I and post-World War II reformation periods.

For a micro-level analysis of the repercussions of reunifying the German education system after the Cold War, I turn to the Marsh, Köller, Baumert study of 2001, which examines the Big-Fish-Little-Pond Effect (BFLPE) on academic self-concept. This effect is defined as “students attending academically selective schools or classes where other students are particularly bright are likely to experience lower academic self-concepts than equally able students who are educated in a comprehensive setting.”⁸ This concept applies to the situation of integrating the East and West German education systems, since East German schools were entirely comprehensive; thus, when they combined and were then differentiated, the BFLPE on academic self-concept was observed.

This study by Marsh, Köller, Baumert is distinct and dissimilar to my own study, because they specifically examined how the students were affected by the integration. My paper will use the valuable information provided from this study regarding the logistics of integrating the two school systems. Similar to the other pieces of literature in this section, this article supports my study with the information it provides regarding the post-reunification status of tracking in German schools; however, this case is divergent in that it is not a historical study,

⁸ Marsh, Herbert W., Olaf Köller, and Jürgen Baumert. "Reunification of East and West German school systems: Longitudinal multilevel modeling study of the big-fish-little-pond effect on academic self-concept." *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 2 (2001): 321-350. P. 322.

nor is it comparative in nature. Therefore, quality information can be derived, but the essence of this particular study is quite different from my own.

Social Influences and Repercussions of Tracking

Although track placement in German schools is determined primarily by academic achievement, studies such as the one conducted in 2002 by Schnabel, Alfeld, Eccles, Köller, and Baumert shed light on the other factors, which influence track placement. The purpose of their study was to investigate the mechanism behind the correlation between parental education, socioeconomic status, and offspring educational outcomes. The researchers found that “more highly educated parents tend to maximize their children’s exposure to a more demanding curriculum, which, in turn, yields substantial competence down the road.”⁹ This study goes into depth regarding the differences between the German and United States secondary school systems, and their tracking practices. This piece helps me to conceptualize the present-day German education system and tracking’s role in it, which helps ground my recommendations of tracking’s future in the German education system. This article is far different from the study I conducted, particularly since it is not historical, but rather focuses on the modern-day repercussions of tracking in German society. This study is, however, comparative in nature, which is a similarity to my own work.

Relatively similar to the 2002 Schnabel, et al. article, Schnepf (2002) presents a case studying the effect that early tracking has on Germany’s OECD

⁹ Schnabel, Kai U., Corinne Alfeld, Jacquelynne S. Eccles, Olaf Köller, and Jürgen Baumert. "Parental influence on students' educational choices in the United States and Germany: Different ramifications—Same effect?." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 60, no. 2 (2002): 178-198. P. 180.

placement. The purpose of this paper is to look at whether tracking students at the transition from elementary to secondary school is a contributing factor to Germany's low ranking among OECD countries in the PISA results. Like the aforementioned case in this section, this case is quite different from my research. This study differs in that it examines whether or not early tracking is essentially a negative factor in German students' overall academic achievement, and ultimately in its ranking among other OECD countries. Therefore, there is not a historical component, yet this study draws many comparisons, which is a similarity to my own work. This article offers a great deal of potential foresight into the future of tracking in the German education system. Schnepf argues that "the early selection of children into different types of learning environments in Germany is striking in comparison to other OECD countries where comprehensive schooling over a longer period of time tends to be the norm."¹⁰ Thus, Schnepf's study offers clues into what could potentially be a part of tracking's future role in German education policy.

Similar to Schnepf's study, Schütz, Ursprung, and Wößmann (2005) studied the social effects of tracking in German schools. More specifically, the purpose of their research was to measure the equality of education in a variety of countries. Similar to the other studies in this section, the Schütz, Ursprung, Wößmann article is not historical and it is also not emphatically comparative either. It examines the effects of pre-school enrollment and family background effects, among other influential factors of a child's educational opportunities.

¹⁰ Schnepf, Sylke Viola. *A sorting hat that fails?: the transition from primary to secondary school in Germany*. Florenz: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2002. P. 7.

Ludger Wößmann wrote in 2005, “International Evidence on School Tracking: A Review.” This paper highlights the negative effects of early tracking on students and he argues that early tracking breeds inequality. Wößmann’s piece is particularly intriguing as it examines the early tracking procedures in the different German *Länder*. The primary focus of this article is the inequality of later life experiences (e.g., educational opportunities, job prospects) that result when students are tracked at an early age, like students in Germany are. Wößmann’s findings are useful as I consider the repercussions of the history of tracking in German education; similarly, his findings aid me as I forecast possible future education reforms in Germany and offer recommendations.

Comparable to the Schütz, Ursprung, Wößmann study, Freitag and Schlicht (2009) examined the social impacts of early tracking in the German education system. Similarly, they study a variety of factors such as availability of early childhood education, and the timing of institutional tracking (i.e., the onset of academic differentiation), which influence tracking’s inequalities. Like the previous cases, this study does not examine tracking in a historical manner, as my study does; however, this is another article, which provides me with a greater understanding of the social implications of tracking in German society. Thus, it may help elucidate tracking’s potential in German school policy.

Building on the ideas present in Wößmann’s 2005 paper, Elke Lüdemann and Guido Schwerdt discuss the disadvantages immigrant children face in highly tracked education systems, like Germany’s. Lüdemann and Schwerdt found that due to second-generation immigrants’ traditionally lower socioeconomic status, these students face a disproportionate disadvantage at the

transition to secondary school. This study helped me to further understand the various implications of tracking on students, which is particularly important in a country, such as Germany, with a large population of immigrants. Similar to the previously discussed papers, I use this study to support my recommendations for education reform in Germany's future.

Studying the equality of education and social repercussions of tracking in German schools benefits my research; I not only have a historical understanding of tracking in German education, but I also have a working understanding of its modern-day implications.

Methodology

Procedure

To conduct this study, data will be collected through the examination of various books, published journal articles, and any primary source materials that are relevant to the topic. The resources collected will be evaluated for authenticity by cross checking references and identifying the authenticity of primary source documents. As an additional method to ensure reliability of the information found, I will corroborate as much information as possible to establish consistencies and differences among the data collected. Data will not only be collected regarding the historical structure of schools, as it pertains to student differentiation, but also the present-day implications of tracking in German schools. One of the goals of this study is to uncover patterns and nuances of the past, while looking forward to the future of German public education.

Analysis

To analyze and synthesize my data, as I began to collect information I first used the interim analysis method to “develop a successively deeper understanding of [my] research topic and to guide each round of data collection.”¹¹ By frequently reflecting on and analyzing my data as I collected it, my data collection was more deliberate and tailored.

The Background of Tracking

In education, the practice of tracking can take many forms, but tracking is, put plainly, grouping students by ability. Students may be grouped within a school, which is common in the United States, or they may be grouped more rigidly between different schools. By this I mean students on different tracks with allegedly different abilities attend different schools.¹² Tracking can also be seen as a form of organization in schools. In U.S. secondary schools, which are most often not self-contained classrooms, students are grouped by ability within the schools, but not within the classroom necessarily.¹³ However, within self-contained classrooms, such as in U.S. elementary schools, students are often

¹¹ Johnson, Burke, and Larry Christensen. *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches*. Sage, 2013. P. 588.

¹² Brint, Steven G. *Schools and societies*. Stanford University Press, 2006. P. 33. See also Hallinan, Maureen T. "Tracking: From theory to practice." *Sociology of Education* (1994): 79-84. P. 347.

¹³ Barr, Rebecca, and Robert Dreeben. "READING 14 How Schools work." *Schools and Society: A Sociological Approach to Education* (2014): 127. P. 130.

grouped within the classroom. Reading groups in elementary classrooms is one example.¹⁴

Within school tracking, which is the most common form of tracking in the United States, is only one form of tracking found in the industrialized nations of the world.¹⁵ The United States' education system is academically natured, meaning separate vocational tracks and academic tracks do not exist. A student may choose to take vocational courses in combination with their other classes, or a student may choose to take more academic courses and no vocational classes. Generally though, these students attend the same school, which has a variety of course offerings. Conversely, in the German education system, children are placed into one of the three secondary school tracks at a young age, and a large proportion of students utilize the separate vocational tracks offered.¹⁶

Most commonly in the German education system, students are placed into their secondary school track at the age of ten. The three secondary school types are "stratified by academic prestige."¹⁷ The *Hauptschule* is intended to prepare students to work in blue-collar jobs, particularly various trades and service jobs. The *Realschule* is intended to prepare students for work in routine white-collar fields. The most famous and rigorous academic track is known as the

¹⁴ LeTendre, Gerald K., Barbara K. Hofer, and Hidetada Shimizu. "What is tracking? Cultural expectations in the United States, Germany, and Japan." *American Educational Research Journal* 40, no. 1 (2003): 43-89. P. 48.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Brint, Steven G. *Schools and societies*. Stanford University Press, 2006. P. 43.

¹⁷ Ibid., 43.

Gymnasium, which prepares students for university-level studies in intellectually challenging fields and managerial positions. Some of the *Länder* have instituted *Gesamtschulen*, or comprehensive schools, but track within the schools, similar to the United States.¹⁸ In the *Gesamtschulen*, the three different schools (i.e., *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, and *Gymnasium*) are brought under one roof.¹⁹ Although the *Gesamtschulen* appear to be comprehensive and integrated, the segregated system persists.

The early-onset tracking practices of the German education system can be seen as a contentious issue. In a 2003 study conducted by LeTendre, Hofer, and Shimizu, these researchers found that “the legitimacy of the early specialization of German schools is linked to dominant cultural beliefs that children’s abilities can and should be identified... and that schools have a legitimate role in assigning a ‘place’ for everyone in German national society.” Proponents of tracking argue, which supports this cultural notion, that grouping students by ability fosters efficiency and mastery of the material.²⁰ Although tracking can be argued by some as “good” practice and can be argued by others as “bad” practice, a general cultural rationale of productivity and proficiency for tracking in German society exists and has propelled this tripartite system.

¹⁸ Brint, Steven G. *Schools and societies*. Stanford University Press, 2006. P. 44

¹⁹ “Basic Structure of the Educational System in the Federal Republic of Germany,” [kmk.org](http://www.kmk.org/information-in-english/the-education-system-in-the-federal-republic-of-germany.html), last modified December 2014, <http://www.kmk.org/information-in-english/the-education-system-in-the-federal-republic-of-germany.html>. P. 2.

²⁰ LeTendre, Gerald K., Barbara K. Hofer, and Hidetada Shimizu. “What is tracking? Cultural expectations in the United States, Germany, and Japan.” *American Educational Research Journal* 40, no. 1 (2003): 43-89. P. 77.

The tiered education system in German society has been a long-standing tradition, dating back to the nineteenth century.²¹ As I look forward to examining the postwar periods of post-World War I, post-World War II, and post-reunification, it is important to mark the beginnings of the system that largely still exist in the twenty-first century. The *Realschule* was developed to serve the middle class, and function to educate students in the vocations. The *Realschule* of the 1800s was the “first successful attempt to offer an alternative to bourgeois and artisan families who did not want to send their sons to the university, but were dissatisfied with the absence of vocational training.”²² Students could continue their studies in what was seen as more practical work, which they would later implement in their work. The existence of the *Realschule* in the nineteenth century is important to note at this point, as I now proceed in examining the state of the stratified system after the conclusion of World War I.

Post-World War I Education Reform

Post-conflict eras are windows of opportunity for reform. In post-conflict years, a society is relieved of the past, where social reform and revolution become opportunistic and available as a means to establish a peaceful and stable, post-conflict state.²³ The German education tradition is just that- highly traditional. The German federal government has some authority over education,

²¹ Schnepf, Sylke Viola. *A sorting hat that fails?: the transition from primary to secondary school in Germany*. Florenz: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2002. P. 4.

²² Van Horn Melton, James. *Absolutism and the eighteenth-century origins of compulsory schooling in Prussia and Austria*. Cambridge University Press, 2003. P. 54.

²³ Noah W. Sobe. *American post-conflict educational reform: from the Spanish American War to Iraq*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. P. 5.

while the states have held significant autonomy. The history of authority in education allocated to the states originates in the pre-Weimar era of the Empire (1871-1918), where education was the responsibility of the individual states and not the national government.²⁴ The tradition of the states' responsibility for education affairs is worth noting at this point, due to the consistency it has maintained through a significant amount of German history. The Weimar Constitution "affirmed the principle of state supervision of schools; introduced universal obligatory schooling."²⁵ While the German education system is one filled with tradition, the post-World War I period did not evolve devoid of education reforms. Various authors, including Müller,²⁶ would agree with me that the institution of universal compulsory elementary school was the most notable reform of the post-World War I period.

While the history of compulsory schooling in Germany originated nationwide in the early nineteenth century, obligatory elementary school was not officiated until the Weimar Republic.²⁷ The traditional structure of the German education system, which was again reinstated after the conclusion of World War II, consists of an optional preschool, "a common four-year primary school

²⁴ Bodenman, Paul S., and Washington, DC. Office of Education (DHEW). 1976. "The Educational System of the Federal Republic of Germany." *ERIC, EBSCO host* (accessed January 6, 2016). P. 4.

²⁵ Geißler, Gert. "The interrelationship between the state and the local community in the German school tradition." *European Education* 37, no. 1 (2005): 62-82. P. 68.

²⁶ Müller, Detlef, Fritz Ringer, and Brian Simon. *The rise of the modern educational system: structural change and social reproduction 1870-1920*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

(*Grundschule*), and a secondary school with three major tracks.”²⁸ The *Grundschule* was compulsory for all children; the secondary school remained voluntary. Article 145 of the Weimar Constitution specifically articulates that mandatory, universal elementary school was established, while many students continued after the four years of elementary school for another four years.²⁹ Furthermore, article 146 of the Weimar Constitution notes that the secondary schools were based upon the common elementary school. The structured organization of the secondary schools served to educate students for a “variety of occupations, [and] for the acceptance of a child into a school [of] his talent and inclination.”³⁰ The secondary schools provided education for specific tasks on a student’s life course. Secondary schools functioned to educate for the three main divisions of labor. These distinct functions- “the intellectual (creative and guiding), the managerial (arranging) and the motor- were to define the school types: the academic type (humanistic education), the (productive) middle-class type (modern or ‘realistic’ education) and the popular education type.”³¹ The delineation of the tracks of schools was prescribed by societal needs. As remains today, the *Gymnasium* was the school for the most academically talented,

²⁸ Bodenman, Paul S., and Washington, DC. Office of Education (DHEW). 1976. “The Educational System of the Federal Republic of Germany.” *ERIC, EBSCO host* (accessed January 6, 2016). P. 7.

²⁹ “The Reich Constitution of August 11th 1919 (Weimar Constitution) with Modifications (1),” last modified 2002, http://www.zum.de/psm/weimar/weimar_vve.php. Art. 145.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Art. 146.

³¹ Müller, Detlef, Fritz Ringer, and Brian Simon. *The rise of the modern educational system: structural change and social reproduction 1870-1920*. Cambridge University Press, 1989. P. 39.

university-bound students within the greater secondary school system;³² yet at that time, the *Gymnasium* only admitted about five percent of students, while the rest of the students attended the *Volksschule*.³³

The rationale behind tracking students into the different sections of secondary school was to prepare students to work and function in society. The belief was that if students were trained for a particular job (e.g., artisan, commerce, governmental work, academia), the students would be better prepared for their future employment; and in so doing a societal need would be filled by having a well-trained work force.³⁴ However, this rationale existed for the secondary schools. In order to have students enter the secondary schools, they must first complete primary school, and if the society was to have a well-functioning economy, they must first be appropriately trained (i.e., educated in their field). Education requirements continued to grow; meaning, a job one could attain with one level of education, now required a higher level of education for the same position.³⁵ Thus, elementary school became a necessity.

As post-World War I Germany was reestablished under the Constitution of the Weimar Republic, collaboration and coordination were primary foci of

³² Müller, Detlef, Fritz Ringer, and Brian Simon. *The rise of the modern educational system: structural change and social reproduction 1870-1920*. Cambridge University Press, 1989. P. 45.

³³ Puaca, Brian. *Learning democracy: education reform in West Germany, 1945-1965*. Vol. 27. Berghahn Books, 2009. P. 19.

³⁴ Müller, Detlef, Fritz Ringer, and Brian Simon. *The rise of the modern educational system: structural change and social reproduction 1870-1920*. Cambridge University Press, 1989. P. 32.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

creating a unified postwar nation. The various German *Länder* were now required to collaborate on school policies. Standardizing the basic function of the school system (e.g., compulsory primary education) affirmed the aims of German education and allowed the school system to work synergistically.³⁶ Meaning, now that each *Land* was required to provide the same primary education, the nation could function more effectively as a whole. Educating the nation was a hallmark goal of this education movement and so establishing a cohesive and collaborative education system was of utmost importance during the Weimar Republic.

In twenty-first-century American society, the severe tracking of students into, essentially, societal roles may seem harsh and classist. Yet, in early twentieth-century German society, the public viewed the “harmonious correspondence of educational institutions to the aptitudes of pupils, as well as to the functional needs of society” as logical and efficient.³⁷ The public did not find the system problematic or subservient. The education system of the Weimar Republic served the public and society in a relatively functional manner.

In the post-1945 period, educators looked to the Weimar Republic as a starting point for postwar reform. The most influential post-World War I reform on the post-World War II reformers was the establishment of the compulsory, four-year elementary school. The appeal of this particular reform to post-World War II officials existed in the purpose behind these reforms: “to erode the elitism they identified in Germany’s schools” and to “bridge over the chasm that had

³⁶ Geißler, Gert. “The interrelationship between the state and the local community in the German school tradition.” *European Education* 37, no. 1 (2005): 62-82. P. 69.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

separated working-class people and the educated class in Germany for centuries.'"³⁸ In the aftermath of the calamity of World War II, attempting to unite the classes of German society and working to eliminate such severe hierarchy within schools appealed to many educators. For this reason, the period following in the wake of Germany's surrender in the spring of 1945 was a time of dramatic educational reform.

Concluding Thoughts

In post-World War I Germany, the outlook of education and its purpose took a new form. The states, although they largely controlled their own schools, were mandated to work collaboratively and cooperatively together, such as in the case of the compulsory *Grundschule*. The establishment of obligatory elementary schooling served a variety of purposes. Historically, Germany had a very elitist school system, which drew a sharp divide between the social classes. Thus, by making elementary school mandatory, education officials hoped to create a more egalitarian education system. The secondary school system remained quite hierarchical, but was rationalized and marketed as a tailored and efficient method of educating students. Theoretically, each student received the same basic, elementary education, and from there was placed on a track that allegedly suited his or her talents the best. By tracking students into schools most befitting of their aptitudes and pragmatically training students for future work in society, the education students received would properly equip them for life outside of school. As we will see in the upcoming section, the return to the

³⁸ Puaca, Brian. *Learning democracy: education reform in West Germany, 1945-1965*. Vol. 27. Berghahn Books, 2009. P. 19.

egalitarian tone of the Weimar Republic while retaining tradition became appealing in the reforms of the post-World War II period.

Nationwide compulsory, common elementary schooling was the hallmark reform of the Weimar Republic; however, the secondary school consisted of three main tracks, which were highly stratified. The German people viewed the tiered secondary school, which was optional though many students continued their studies after elementary school, as a practical approach to education. The purpose of the secondary school was to educate students for future work and train them in specific fields, hence the pragmatic appeal.

Reunification was a prominent theme in post-World War I Germany and in order to achieve that, officials argued that the education system must function in concert. Therefore, common and compulsory elementary school standardized the first years of children's education. This enabled the country to act in a more cohesive and efficient manner.

Post-World War II Education Reform

After Germany's surrender in 1945, the Allied powers occupied Germany, and efforts to overhaul many of Germany's systems began. However, in the education system, post-World War II Germany was not the tabula rasa one might have expected,³⁹ despite the post-surrender period being labeled Germany's zero hour.⁴⁰ The period of National Socialism so deeply impacted the German people

³⁹ Phillips, David. "Reconstructing Education in Germany." *Democratizing Education and Educating Democratic Citizens: International and Historical Perspectives* 8 (2013): 51. P. 56.

⁴⁰ Tent, James F. *Mission on the Rhine: "Reeducation" and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany*. University of Chicago Press, 1984. P. 40.

such that moving forward in the postwar period in part meant acknowledging Germany's culture and history in order to proceed in a democratic fashion. The gravity of the horror of the National Socialists called the Allies to emphatically focus on denazification, particularly in German schools, and to re-educate. The old German education system was not to be completely eradicated and started anew, but instead to "be so controlled as completely to eliminate Nazi and militarist doctrines and to make possible the successful development of democratic ideas."⁴¹ Eliminating Nazi and militaristic propaganda and teachings from German education came first in the wake of the reformation; reorienting the German people, and particularly their education system, toward democratic ideologies was the essence of "reeducating."⁴²

Germany's economic and industrial systems, in addition to its education system, were just a few of the systems that were being rebuilt. Notably, the education system returned to the traditions of the Weimar Republic.⁴³ The reform toward a more egalitarian school system with compulsory primary education and a pragmatic secondary school structure, traditions of the post-World War I period, aimed at educating students according to their own aptitudes and futures, which was particularly appealing. The attraction to the days of the

⁴¹ "Protocol of the Proceedings of the Berlin Conference." *The International Law Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (1947): 415-32. P. 418.

⁴² Dorn, Charles, and Brian Puaca. "'The Appeal to the German Mind': Educational Reconstruction in the American Zone of Occupation, 1944-49." *American Post-Conflict Educational Reform: From the Spanish-American War to Iraq* (2009): 105. P. 109.

⁴³ Puaca, Brian. *Learning democracy: education reform in West Germany, 1945-1965*. Vol. 27. Berghahn Books, 2009. P. 19.

Weimar Republic and the education reforms that occurred during that time was due in large part to the traditional features of German education during the days of the Weimar Republic.⁴⁴ During a time full of uncertainty, in this case the post-World War II period, romanticizing over the days of the Weimar Republic was exactly the view many educators had.

The Postwar State of Education

In the immediate postwar period without a central government, the zonal commanders assumed control of many policy issues, which included education policy issues.⁴⁵ With the country divided into four zones of occupation and the capital likewise divided, the education policy reforms were imagined differently from one occupation zone to the next.

Around the start of World War II, students began their school careers at the age of five or six, most of whom attended preschool or *Kindergarten* before beginning *Grundschule*. After the fourth grade, at the age of ten, children were tested for secondary school; the results of that examination generally determined the track into which one was placed. Approximately ten percent of students were admitted to the university-bound track, which included the *Gymnasium* and the *Oberrealschule*, while the other 90 percent were admitted to the vocational track,

⁴⁴ Puaca, Brian. *Learning democracy: education reform in West Germany, 1945-1965*. Vol. 27. Berghahn Books, 2009. P. 14. Also summarized in Bodenman, Paul S., and Washington, DC. Office of Education (DHEW). 1976. "The Educational System of the Federal Republic of Germany." *ERIC, EBSCO host* (accessed January 6, 2016). P. 4.

⁴⁵ Tent, James F. *Mission on the Rhine: "Reeducation" and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany*. University of Chicago Press, 1984. P. 32.

which included the *Volksschule* and the *Realschule*.⁴⁶ The Nazi regime greatly simplified the complicated secondary school system. The Third Reich collapsed the variety of secondary schools into three schools, namely the classical *Gymnasium*, *Oberrealschule*, and the *Aufbauschule*; however, like in earlier years, the *Gymnasium* was reserved for the most scholarly students, and had greatly limited its enrollment.⁴⁷

Postwar Reform Recommendations

The United States sent a group of education officials to assess the state of the German education system within the American Zone of Occupation, including the American sector of Berlin. As a result of the United States Education Mission, the education officials crafted a response to what they observed, which was appropriately titled *The Report of the United States Education Mission to Germany*. In the report the education officials offered many recommendations for education reform in addition to the observations they witnessed.

One observation of the education officials was, they argued, that the German education system did not provide or allow the possibility of a common cultural or social school experience to all children; furthermore, they argued that the structure of the school system reinforced the basis of a class society. This

⁴⁶ Dorn, Charles. "Evaluating Democracy The 1946 US Education Mission to Germany." *American Journal of Evaluation* 26, no. 2 (2005): 267-277. P. 273. See also Dorn, Charles. *American education, democracy, and the Second World War*. Macmillan, 2007. P. 164. See also Dorn, Charles, and Brian Puaca. "'The Appeal to the German Mind': Educational Reconstruction in the American Zone of Occupation, 1944-49." *American Post-Conflict Educational Reform: From the Spanish-American War to Iraq* (2009): 105. P. 117.

⁴⁷ United States, and George Frederick Zook. 1946. *Report of the United States Education mission to Germany*. Washington: Govt. Print. Off. P. 18.

observation they found highly problematic because it did not align with the democratic principles they wished to establish.⁴⁸ As such, the mission sought to impose a comprehensive, American-like system on the Germans' education system, which condensed all of the tracks into one, unified elementary and secondary school system.⁴⁹ The common elementary school consisted of *Kindergarten* and then a six-year *Grundschule*, which led into the comprehensive secondary school.⁵⁰ The establishment of a comprehensive education system was paramount to the education officials.

Fostering democratic principles was a critical objective of education reform in postwar Germany for the American education officials. They believed the American-style system was better suited to cultivate the democratic principles they sought than the traditional stratified system was.⁵¹ This notion explains the need to discuss the denazification mission in German schools; it was directly related to the push for a comprehensive school system and the erasure of authoritarian values in the German education system. Thus, in order to promote the democratization of German society, the hierarchical education system, which

⁴⁸ United States, and George Frederick Zook. 1946. *Report of the United States Education mission to Germany*. Washington: Govt. Print. Off. P. 19.

⁴⁹ Dorn, Charles, and Brian Puaca. "'The Appeal to the German Mind': Educational Reconstruction in the American Zone of Occupation, 1944–49." *American Post-Conflict Educational Reform: From the Spanish-American War to Iraq* (2009): 105. P. 118. See also United States, and George Frederick Zook. 1946. *Report of the United States Education mission to Germany*. Washington: Govt. Print. Off. P. 20.

⁵⁰ United States, and George Frederick Zook. 1946. *Report of the United States Education mission to Germany*. Washington: Govt. Print. Off. P. 22 and 25.

⁵¹ Dorn, Charles. "Evaluating Democracy The 1946 US Education Mission to Germany." *American Journal of Evaluation* 26, no. 2 (2005): 267-277. P. 273.

promoted superiority and authoritarian leadership, had to be dissolved into a common school with a common cultural and social experience, the mission argued.⁵²

For the sake of comparison as a juxtaposition of the mission's recommendations, the British approached "reeducation" in Germany quite differently than the other Allies. The British did not alter the system of education in their zone. Instead, their actions were in the form of advice. The British favored the comprehensive, *Einheitsschule*, but did not even advise it, because it was not the system that was already in place and would have been an imposition.⁵³ The example of the British approach is simply worth noting at this point to illustrate how the governments of the different occupation zones chose to approach the issue of education policy reform after World War II.

German Resistance

Due to a lack of guidance from the American education officials and the stark opposition from the Germans to the comprehensive secondary school system, the result was little change. Meaning, the tripartite secondary school system remained largely unmodified.⁵⁴ One of the reasons for this is many

⁵² Dorn, Charles. *American education, democracy, and the Second World War*. Macmillan, 2007. P. 165.

⁵³ Jürgensen, Kurt. "BRITISH OCCUPATION POLICY AFTER 1945 AND THE PROBLEM OF 'RE-EDUCATING GERMANY'." *History* 68, no. 223 (1983): 225-244. P. 241. See also Wegner, Gregory. "In the Center of the Cold War: The American Occupation of Berlin and Education Reform, 1945-1952." *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 11, no. 1 (1995): 39-66. P. 50.

⁵⁴ Dorn, Charles, and Brian Puaca. "'The Appeal to the German Mind': Educational Reconstruction in the American Zone of Occupation, 1944-49." *American Post-Conflict Educational Reform: From the Spanish-American War to Iraq* (2009): 105. P. 122.

American officials argued that in order for successful education reform to grow in the new Germany, the German people must lead the reform movement and incorporate their own cultural nuances.⁵⁵ If the postwar reforms were to persist and remain successful, the task was impossible without the leadership and the support of the German people. Thus, since the Germans in the western zones did not want reforms to their education system from foreign models under foreign military occupation, little change occurred. They feared the changes would degenerate their culture and argued the recommendations lacked understanding of the role of education in German society.⁵⁶ The vast majority of German people were averse to the reforms, but the educated Germans opposed the American-style reforms the most vehemently of all.⁵⁷ Instead, the Germans wanted to rebuild and reeducate themselves through internal school reform. Similarly, many German educators and administrators were skeptical regarding the relevance of the United States' education recommendations.

Once Germany became a sovereign country again in 1955 after the Allied powers relinquished control, the Germans were able to reexamine and resolve the issues in their education system themselves.⁵⁸ Later in the mid-1960s, a pivotal piece of legislation, *The Hamburg Agreement*, was established and

⁵⁵ Tent, James F. *Mission on the Rhine: "Reeducation" and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany*. University of Chicago Press, 1984. P. 29.

⁵⁶ Shibata, Masako. *Japan and Germany under the US occupation: A comparative analysis of post-war education reform*. Lexington books, 2005. P. 118 and 121.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁵⁸ Shibata, Masako. *Japan and Germany under the US occupation: A comparative analysis of post-war education reform*. Lexington books, 2005. P. 134.

articulated the three tracks of secondary schooling (i.e., the *Hauptschule*, the *Realschule*, and the *Gymnasium*) as the mainstream secondary school pathway.⁵⁹

I now turn to examine two contrasting cases in postwar Germany's battle with education reform: Bavaria and Berlin. To begin, the United States' sector included these five *Länder*: Bavaria, Hesse, Baden-Württemberg, the Bremen Enclave, and the Berlin Sector. Berlin, having been divided among all of the Allies, one of which was the Soviet Union, was a particularly special case in instituting education reforms in the post-World War II period. Conversely, Bavaria, lying within the American zone in the southeastern corner of Germany, was historically and continued to be a very conservative state. Thus, in the following two sections, I will compare and contrast the education reforms of Bavaria and Berlin, given that the education reforms in these two regions were quite disparate.

Bavarian Structural Reform

Approximately a year and a half after the Germans surrendered, a new constitution was drafted in Germany's southeastern state of Bavaria. The new Bavarian Constitution articulated that the state shall supervise the education system, and elementary schools and vocational schools (if not attending the *Gymnasium*) were compulsory. Perhaps most interestingly, the Bavarian Constitution drafted in 1946 stated that the school offerings should reflect the occupations one may have later in life. Furthermore, article 132 noted that the

⁵⁹ Bodenman, Paul S., and Washington, DC. Office of Education (DHEW). 1976. "The Educational System of the Federal Republic of Germany." *ERIC*, EBSCO *host* (accessed January 6, 2016). P. 7.

school or track placement of each child should reflect his/her aptitudes and inner vocation, instead of the child's parents' socioeconomic standing.⁶⁰ The notion of merit-based track placement in Bavarian schools was fairly new at this point in history; however, the rigid placement of students into schools based on later study or an occupation was reminiscent of the post-World War I period.

Shortly after Bavaria's new constitution was drafted, the new Minister of Education, Alois Hundhammer, was elected.⁶¹ As the United States occupied Bavaria in 1946, the American education staff expected resistance to reforms in this highly conservative state.⁶² Alois Hundhammer, known for his traditionalist educational ideologies, proposed the first school reform, which did not adhere to the recommendations given by the American education officials. Instead of submitting a proposal including the institution of the comprehensive school, Hundhammer's proposal endorsed the multi-track system.⁶³ The American officials in Bavaria submitted several school reform plans, but many were met with resistance, particularly those plans that tried to instate a comprehensive or more egalitarian school structure. Although the American education officials

⁶⁰ "Constitution of the Free State of Bavaria," 2 December 1946, http://www.taxi-muenchen-online.de/programme/bavarian_const.pdf. Art. 132.

⁶¹ Tent, James F. *Mission on the Rhine: "Reeducation" and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany*. University of Chicago Press, 1984. P. 156.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 124.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 129.

continued to try throughout their occupation in Bavaria to institute reforms, deadlock persisted.⁶⁴

The United States tried to impose a single-track system because, they argued, the multi-track system created and reinforced a caste system within society. As mentioned earlier, the American education staff recognized, however, that in order to successfully implement lasting education reforms German initiative and cooperation were critical.⁶⁵ Without the support and cooperation of the Germans, no actual long-term reforms would prevail. Even though the establishment of more egalitarian education reforms was met with strong resistance in Bavaria, the unwavering attachment to traditional educational structure was atypical in the other *Länder* of American occupation.⁶⁶ To that end, I turn to the case of Berlin and the structural reforms implemented near the beginning of the Allied occupation.

Berlin Structural Reform

Berlin, divided into four sectors, each controlled by a different government, was a special case in the German story of post-World War II education reform. By the time the British, French, and Americans arrived in Berlin in the summer of 1945, the Soviets had already occupied Berlin for two

⁶⁴ Tent, James F. *Mission on the Rhine: "Reeducation" and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany*. University of Chicago Press, 1984. P. 132.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 162.

months and the schools were already back in session.⁶⁷ The new school, particularly in the Soviet zone, was believed to be a panacea: to correct all of Germany's previous mistakes and faults.⁶⁸ The Berlin School Law, which legislated the establishment of the *Einheitsschule*, was passed in the Soviet zone on June 26, 1948. The *Einheitsschule* was a unified school that included a common eight-year elementary school for all children. However in West Berlin, the German educators, who taught in the *Gymnasium* opposed the *Einheitsschule* because they believed the eight-year, compulsory elementary school posed a threat to the *Gymnasium* and its traditional structure, where students entered the track after the fourth school year.⁶⁹

Equality of educational opportunities in the new Berlin school system was an unprecedented concept in German education.⁷⁰ The Berlin School Law was intended to provide an egalitarian school system with an eight-year *Grundschule*, or elementary school, which then led into a vocational track and an academic track.⁷¹ The three-year vocational branch followed the *Grundschule*, while similarly the four-year *Oberschule* was the track for the most academically gifted

⁶⁷ United States, and George Frederick Zook. 1946. *Report of the United States Education mission to Germany*. Washington: Govt. Print. Off. P. 21.

⁶⁸ Blessing, Benita. "The Antifascist Classroom: Denazification in Soviet-Occupied Germany, 1945-1949." *Palgrave Macmillan* (2006). P. 14.

⁶⁹ Wegner, Gregory. "In the Center of the Cold War: The American Occupation of Berlin and Education Reform, 1945-1952." *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 11, no. 1 (1995): 39-66. P. 51.

⁷⁰ Tent, James F. *Mission on the Rhine: "Reeducation" and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany*. University of Chicago Press, 1984. P. 241.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 243.

students, who were educated in preparation for the university.⁷² The *Oberschule* functioned quite similarly to the traditional *Gymnasium*. Thus, students remained untracked until the beginning of their ninth year of schooling and the *Oberschule*, unlike the vocational track, while it was elite, was also optional.⁷³ On June 1, 1948, the Berlin School Law went into effect and was the first comprehensive school law to be enacted in any American-occupied territory.⁷⁴

The Americans and the Soviets were at the helm of the reforms achieved in Berlin, which were quite disparate from the reforms in the other *Länder*. Furthermore, the Berlin School Law did not establish a trend that developed elsewhere, as noted for example in Bavaria. The Germans' perception of Berlin was that the reforms established there were unique to the split city.⁷⁵ The *Einheitsschule* in Berlin won public acceptance because of its early German roots to Wilhelm von Humboldt in the early 1800s and the Weimar Republic. It was not considered Moscow's implementation.⁷⁶ The new school aimed to culturally unify the nation by providing all citizens the same education. Interestingly though, the unity these new schools in Berlin created was unity in the Soviet

⁷² Tent, James F. *Mission on the Rhine: "Reeducation" and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany*. University of Chicago Press, 1984. P. 240.

⁷³ Blessing, Benita. "The Antifascist Classroom: Denazification in Soviet-Occupied Germany, 1945-1949." *Palgrave Macmillan* (2006). P. 37.

⁷⁴ Tent, James F. *Mission on the Rhine: "Reeducation" and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany*. University of Chicago Press, 1984. P. 247.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 249-250.

⁷⁶ Blessing, Benita. "The Antifascist Classroom: Denazification in Soviet-Occupied Germany, 1945-1949." *Palgrave Macmillan* (2006). P. 40.

zone but it also resulted in disconnecting Germans in the Soviet zone from the Germans in the western zones.⁷⁷

The unified, comprehensive, untracked *Einheitsschule* of East Germany, including East Berlin, paved a way toward the communist rule of the German Democratic Republic. This was due in part to the great division and disparate nature of the East German schools and West German schools.⁷⁸ Although the common, compulsory *Einheitsschule* was accepted in the east, West Germans criticized it for taking time away from secondary schools, and for being substandard academic instruction, among other issues.⁷⁹

After May 10, 1951, the *Einheitsschule* was replaced with a different, new school: the *Berliner Schule*, or the Berlin School System. The *Berliner Schule* acquired a similar structure to the schools in West Germany, with the three-tiered system preceded by the four-year elementary school. However, Berlin did not digress completely. A compromise was reached between the eight-year elementary school of the *Einheitsschule* and the four-year elementary school of the west. The result of the compromise was a six-year elementary school.⁸⁰ The

⁷⁷ Blessing, Benita. "The Antifascist Classroom: Denazification in Soviet-Occupied Germany, 1945-1949." *Palgrave Macmillan* (2006). P. 8-9.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁸⁰ Füssl, Karl-Hans, and Christian Kubina. "Educational reform between politics and pedagogics. The development of education in Berlin after World War II." *History of Education Quarterly* (1985): 133-153. P. 138.

reason for the *Berliner Schule* and the compromise was due to a growing sense of isolation from the Federal Republic.⁸¹

Concluding Thoughts

After the calamity that was World War II and the Allies took control of Germany, the chief focus in education, among other sectors of society, was to purge the country of National Socialism and militaristic doctrine. The result was what is commonly referred to as a process of “reeducation.” The process of denazification and reeducation was the responsibility of the Allies. As I have argued here, the Americans and the Soviets took particularly dominant roles in this process. Immediately following the conclusion of World War II, at the conclusion of elementary school, students were generally placed at the age of ten into a secondary school based upon a high-stakes examination that largely determined their future path. As the United States obtained relative power in the American Zone of Occupation, they vehemently sought to eliminate the stark tracking practices in the secondary school system and institute a comprehensive school structure. However, this movement propelled by the Americans was met with passionate resistance, particularly in Bavaria.

I have aimed to illustrate that the examples of postwar education reform in Berlin and Bavaria are radically different. Berlin, most obviously, took a different shape due to the four zones of the city; however, Berlin provides a contrast in the context of the structural reforms instituted in the education

⁸¹ Wegner, Gregory. "In the Center of the Cold War: The American Occupation of Berlin and Education Reform, 1945-1952." *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 11, no. 1 (1995): 39-66. P. 52.

system. The *Einheitsschule* was a remarkable institution, since it established a common eight-year elementary school, which enabled all children to attend the same school for eight years (and theoretically receive the same education during that time). This is an example of a return to an ideology present during the Weimar Republic; meaning, this is a return to the egalitarian tone of schooling. Even though a vocational track and academic track remained after the eight-year *Einheitsschule*, this was a large step toward comprehensive education. Because the German public generally felt that the egalitarian *Einheitsschule* was a return of old German traditions, it was largely accepted. I suspect if Germans had sensed this as an implementation from Moscow, the reforms would not have gained as much public acceptance. A prime example of this, to which I now turn, is the resistance in Bavaria to the American reforms.

The American education officials, who reported back to the United States on the condition of postwar education in Germany, emphasized the rigidity of the tracking system and the social hierarchy they believed it fostered. As a result the American officials repeatedly and steadfastly tried to institute a comprehensive school system across the American zone, but were staunchly combated most severely in Bavaria. Since the paramount goal of the Allies was to denazify and reeducate, the Americans believed that the surest way to instill democratic principles in German youth was to establish a comprehensive school system. By doing so, the comprehensive school system would level any authoritarianism or supremacy in the education system. However, this recommendation was unsuccessful, because the German public viewed it as an intrusion; it was not seen as a reform constructed by Germans and did not seem

to relate to any past policies. The Americans tried to implement a much too progressive reform movement in a very traditional section of the country. It is not surprising that the American education recommendations were blocked.

The primary social promise that came with the postwar education reforms was that Germany would be freed of its Nazi and militaristic doctrines and be placed on a path toward democracy, at least in the West German zones. In the Berlin school system and in the American education recommendations, the overarching theme was equality; common schooling, it was argued, would release Germany from its rigid and class-based social structure and would enable social mobility. Yet, the Germans in some areas (e.g., Bavaria) felt these education reforms were being imposed on them instead of collaboratively created for successful implementation. Even though the education reforms in the American zone were intended to be democratic in principle, the Americans recognized that in order for democratic reforms to take root and grow, they must be self-initiated, not forced. Thus, Bavaria ultimately retained a highly stratified secondary school structure, but managed to rid itself of the militaristic propaganda of the Third Reich.

Post-Reunification Education Reform

On 9 November 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell, a turn known as *die Wende* was upon the Germans- easterners and westerners. *Die Wende* marked the crumble of the Iron Curtain and the reinstatement of democracy.⁸² As East Germany and West Germany reunited to reshape the geopolitical Federal

⁸² Pritchard, Rosalind M. O. "Was East German Education a Victim of West German 'Colonisation' after Unification?." *Compare* 32, no. 1 (2002): 47-59. P. 47.

Republic of Germany, one might think that there would be mutual respect and compromise between the two sides. Similarly, one might think that this would be Germany's second "zero hour" - a time to reset and renew vows between the East and West; however, as harmonious as that may sound, the reality did not result in building a new Germany based on finding a happy medium between the two. Instead, what resulted was an ironic example of imposition and acquiescence.

The German Democratic Republic (here forth referred to as the GDR) had a unified, comprehensive school system, beginning in elementary school on up through the grades. As has been mentioned before, it was called the *Einheitsschule*.⁸³ The comprehensive *Einheitsschule* of the GDR was quite a disparate system compared to the tripartite system of West Germany. Thus, when the two reunified, drastic changes were in store for the eastern education system. East Germany, having been controlled by a communist regime that essentially disallowed progress, was seen as inferior to West Germany upon reunification. It should come as little surprise then, that the model of education in the West became the prototype by which the eastern states would reestablish their education system.⁸⁴ The new, eastern states acquiesced and opted to adopt renditions of the traditional system, which existed in the Federal Republic. Interestingly, the traditional tripartite system was, as we have now seen,

⁸³ Pritchard, Rosalind M. O. "Was East German Education a Victim of West German 'Colonisation' after Unification?." *Compare* 32, no. 1 (2002): 47-59. P. 52.

⁸⁴ Phillips, David, and Michael Kaser, eds. *Education and economic change in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union*. Triangle Books, 1992. P. 8. See also Marsh, Herbert W., Olaf Köller, and Jürgen Baumert. "Reunification of East and West German school systems: Longitudinal multilevel modeling study of the big-fish-little-pond effect on academic self-concept." *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 2 (2001): 321-350. P. 330.

reestablished in the American, French, and British zones post-World War II. This came at a time “when the Germans eschewed all pressure to adopt the models of the Western Allies and took refuge in the familiar system in operation during the Weimar Republic.”⁸⁵ Thus, it is ironic that the West Germans would impose their education system on the easterners, when they themselves less than a half-century earlier did not want to adopt the models of those in a position of greater power.

Despite the peculiar historical coincidence behind the traditional tripartite structure, the decision to “mesh” or “dovetail” the systems was decided quickly in the post-reunification period.⁸⁶ Upon reunification, the new states, which made up the eastern half of Germany, were instructed to construct their own education systems, and develop a partnership with a state in the former West Germany, as a type of big-brother program. In forming a paternal relationship with a western state, the new eastern state would then restructure to model after the partner state’s system.⁸⁷ Thus, through this partnership, the structures and policies of the western states were essentially transferred to the new states.⁸⁸ There was a covert message being sent to the new states: the “West is Best.” This notion discredited

⁸⁵ Phillips, David, and Michael Kaser, eds. *Education and economic change in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union*. Triangle Books, 1992. P. 8.

⁸⁶ Phillips, David. "14 Transitions and traditions: educational developments in the New Germany in their historical context [1992]." *Education in Germany: Tradition and reform in historical context* (2013): 243. P. 123.

⁸⁷ Rust, Val Dean, and Diane Rust. *The unification of German education*. Vol. 32. Taylor & Francis, 1995. P. 24.

⁸⁸ Wilde, Stephanie. "All Change? Secondary Schools in Eastern Germany." *German Life and Letters* 55, no. 3 (2002): 282-295. P. 282.

any positive aspects of the GDR's *Einheitsschule*, which had potential to contribute positively to the restructuring of education during this time of renewal.⁸⁹ Unfortunately nearly all of the valuable contributions the GDR schools could have made were undermined by the ideology that the East had nothing good to offer.

Even though by early 1991, the reform initiatives of the new *Länder* resembled the tripartite model greatly, the new states did have some autonomy.⁹⁰ Instead of adopting the western model verbatim, most of the new states created their own hybrid structures, which were unique to each state. All of the new states, with the exception of Brandenburg, created a bipartite structure, instead of the traditional tripartite structure. The new bipartite system included the *Gymnasium* and one other secondary school, which was less academically oriented.⁹¹ It is worth noting that the only state, which adopted the traditional three-tiered model without modification was Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The rest of the new, eastern states all developed some flavor of the bipartite structure. Thus, in the rest of the new states, the *Gymnasium* remained a school for the elite,

⁸⁹ Wilde, Stephanie. "All Change? Secondary Schools in Eastern Germany." *German Life and Letters* 55, no. 3 (2002): 282-295. P. 282.

⁹⁰ Phillips, David. "14 Transitions and traditions: educational developments in the New Germany in their historical context [1992]." *Education in Germany: Tradition and reform in historical context* (2013): 243. P. 123.

⁹¹ Pritchard, Rosalind M. O. "Was East German Education a Victim of West German 'Colonisation' after Unification?." *Compare* 32, no. 1 (2002): 47-59. P. 52. See also Wilde, Stephanie. "All Change? Secondary Schools in Eastern Germany." *German Life and Letters* 55, no. 3 (2002): 282-295. P. 284.

and the *Hauptschule* and the *Realschule* were condensed into one track.⁹² Some states call the alternative secondary school *Sekundarschule* or *Regelschule* or *Mittelschule* or even *Gesamtschule*. These alternative schools are known for being the “schools for the majority.”⁹³ Unfortunately, sometimes these schools are also referred to colloquially as *Restschulen*, meaning the school for the leftovers.

An unexpected coalescence of the western states to the eastern states was that in the GDR, the elementary and secondary school system lasted twelve years, while the western states followed a thirteen-year structure. Interestingly, all of the sixteen German states adopted the twelve-year system (albeit slowly) after the reunification.⁹⁴ This is the most impactful example of an education policy from the former GDR persisting into the new Federal Republic, and even being adopted by the western states.

Although some policies, such as the twelve-year structure were maintained, most eastern policies were not. Many East Germans, especially the teachers, believed that much of the good of the East German education system was systematically altered simply in order to fit a mold similar to that of the western German states, which for them was not a credible reason.⁹⁵ Despite the

⁹² Rust, Val Dean, and Diane Rust. *The unification of German education*. Vol. 32. Taylor & Francis, 1995. P. 195.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁹⁴ Waterkamp, Dietmar. "Education in Germany: Twenty Years After the End of the German Democratic Republic." *European Education* 41, no. 4 (2009): 8-23. P. 10. See also Rust, Val Dean, and Diane Rust. *The unification of German education*. Vol. 32. Taylor & Francis, 1995. P. 197.

⁹⁵ Phillips, David. "14 Transitions and traditions: educational developments in the New Germany in their historical context [1992]." *Education in Germany: Tradition and reform in historical context* (2013): 243. P. 123. P. 134.

hard feelings felt by many for the imposition of the traditional system, reinstating the *Gymnasium* was an irresistible political gesture. By this I mean, if the tiered structure, which included the *Gymnasium*, "had been disallowed, there can be little doubt that East Germans would have felt deprived and resentful."⁹⁶ If the structured system had not been reestablished, the East Germans would have felt inferior, deprived, and bitter toward the West Germans.

I now turn to the developments in the system, which appear relatively progressive for the traditional German education structure. The introduction of the *Orientierungsstufe*, or orientation stage, exists in several states as the fifth and sixth year of schooling. The intention is to transition the children who may not be ready for secondary school yet, or for those students whose track placement was less obvious;⁹⁷ the *Orientierungsstufe* gives those children a chance to develop and find their niche. It is designed to be an exploratory process and to later place the students more accurately in a secondary school. As mentioned earlier, the *Hauptschule* has developed in more recent years a connotation as the school for leftovers, *Restschule*; the connotation that the *Hauptschule* serves less of a purpose in modern German society is a fairly ubiquitous perception by Germans.⁹⁸ I argue at this point, that if the *Hauptschule* in the western states has seen a dramatic

⁹⁶ Pritchard, Rosalind M. O. "Was East German Education a Victim of West German 'Colonisation' after Unification?." *Compare* 32, no. 1 (2002): 47-59. P. 52.

⁹⁷ Hirsch, Donald. "Schooling for the Middle Years: Developments in Eight European Countries." (1994). P. 49-51.

⁹⁸ Phillips, David. "14 Transitions and traditions: educational developments in the New Germany in their historical context [1992]." *Education in Germany: Tradition and reform in historical context* (2013): 243. P. 124.

downturn in its success, and interestingly that none of the eastern states (with the exception of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) adopted this school as a part of their system, then perhaps “the whole notion of a tripartite structure is thrown into question.”⁹⁹ Thus, if the *Hauptschule* is no longer working, as intended in the western states, and it is essentially not being used in the eastern states, it appears written on the wall that its future may be collapsing.

Concluding Thoughts

In 1989 as East and West Germany reunited, dramatic structural changes occurred yet again in the newly reformed education system. Unlike the new beginning after World War II, the two countries did not approach the merger from a level points. West Germany viewed itself as far more progressed and superior to East Germany, which was seen as outdated. Hence, West Germany viewed its education system as admirable, which was largely why the eastern states were challenged to assimilate. The *Einheitsschule* and the nature of the GDR school system was essentially liquidated and forced to restructure into something similar to the established western system. However, most states did not simply adopt the traditional tripartite structure, but instead compromised and formed a bipartite secondary school model. That structure included the traditional *Gymnasium* and an alternative secondary school. Additionally, the eastern states created an intermediate stage called the *Orientierungsstufe*, which allowed students two additional years of elementary school (comprising grades

⁹⁹ Phillips, David. "14 Transitions and traditions: educational developments in the New Germany in their historical context [1992]." *Education in Germany: Tradition and reform in historical context* (2013): 243. P. 124.

five and six) in order to receive more appropriate placements into a secondary track.

The progress that the GDR disallowed was confronted upon reunification, when the “West is Best” mentality permeated the country. By encouraging the eastern states to adopt western education practices, it signaled a return to the traditional German education structure. Furthermore, as the eastern states partnered with a western state, the paternal relationship between the two *Länder* instilled a sense of promise that the eastern state would modernize like its western counterpart. Progress was seen as favorable; thus, encouraging and supporting the eastern states to “catch up” was similarly desirable to the westerners. Pragmatically, it is sensible that Germany wanted to not only reunite politically and geographically, but also socially. If Germany could reunite its school system so that all states structurally functioned similarly, this would enable deeper unity through the nation. Thus, the bipartite secondary school model in most of the eastern states was similar enough to the tripartite model in the west, such that reunification could be achieved.

Conclusion and Looking Ahead

Postwar periods are times of reformation, rebirth, and renewal, but each instance is unique and the cases of postwar German education reform presented in this study are indicative of that. Given the history drawn here, I must return to my original question: How were tracking policies in the German education system reshaped or addressed in education reforms after the end of World War I, World War II, and post-reunification? Post-World War I and the Weimar Republic were marked with progress. Germany took a baby step in its turn away

from the classist education system previously in place by instating compulsory primary education. This leveled the playing field for the first four years of students' academic careers and enabled them to pursue further education. Although secondary education was not compulsory at this point, many students continued into one of the secondary school tracks. The tracks were pragmatically designed to educate students by training them in preparation for their future career fields. Although the tiered secondary education system was unlike the structure of the common elementary school, it appealed to the German people because it was seen as efficient and practical.

Unique in its postwar realizations, post-World War II was especially unusual. Each of the four Allies took a different approach to the crucial goals of denazifying and reeducating. The Americans and the Soviets took the most intense approaches. The Americans were met with staunch gridlock in Germany's most conservative and traditional state, Bavaria. The Bavarians disagreed with the Americans' recommendation to establish a comprehensive school structure and ultimately retained their traditional tripartite secondary school structure. In contrast, Berlin established the comprehensive *Einheitsschule*, which comprised grades one through eight. Public acceptance enabled the *Einheitsschule*; meaning, the Berliners viewed the *Einheitsschule* as a return to the days of the Weimar Republic and an attempt to create a more egalitarian elementary school. The American recommendations to the Bavarian school system were dissimilarly viewed as an American imposition and not a plan created by Germans for Germans. The American education officials recognized

that in order for reforms to be successful, the process must be collaborative and self-initiated, not forced and ironically undemocratic.

After the Cold War ended and Germany reunified into the Federal Republic of Germany, not only did the two states reunite, but the nations sought to reunite as well. After decades of communist control, West Germans viewed East Germany as inferior and in need of modernization; thus, the East German *Länder* were called to dismantle the *Einheitsschule* of the GDR and restructure their education system to resemble the structure of the western *Länder*. Most of the newly minted states created school systems that had a common elementary school (usually up to fourth grade) and then a two-tiered secondary school. The *Orientierungsstufe* was established for grades five and six as an option for students to prolong their elementary school, which was a distinct characteristic of the education system in the eastern *Länder*. Although, it may appear that East Germany was “colonized” by West Germany upon reunification, if the easterners had not restructured their education system, many would have potentially felt left behind, inferior, and resentful toward the West Germans.

Similarities and remarkable differences shine through upon examination of these three postwar periods. A similarity between all three periods, at least in part, is the retention of the common, compulsory elementary school, and the tiered secondary school. Students attended elementary school, most often up through grade four, although sometimes (e.g., in the case of post-World War II Berlin) elementary school continued through grade eight and even grade six (e.g., in the case of the *Orientierungsstufe* after reunification). Some form of a tracked secondary school was retained through these three periods as well. After

World War I, three main tracks divided the secondary school system. Post-World War II was a mixed bag. In the Soviet-controlled section, comprehensive schooling was established; whereas, in the American-controlled zone a struggle ensued between the Germans and Americans officials, but ultimately the tripartite secondary school structure remained. As for the post-reunification period, assimilation was largely the descriptor for the East Germans. The comprehensive school of the GDR was undone. Most eastern states created a bipartite secondary school, somewhat dissimilar to the tripartite system, but very akin to it.

If there were two words that most appropriately describe the transformation of the German education system through the twentieth century, I would pick tradition and progress. Tradition is befitting because many hallmarks of the German education system have been retained through the ebbs and flows of cultural, social, and political change across the twentieth century. Yet, progress is also fitting; through the extreme vicissitudes of the twentieth century, Germany achieved some progressive reforms. For example, in the post-World War I period, common, compulsory elementary school; in the post-reunification period, the bipartite structure of the eastern education system, and the establishment of the *Orientierungsstufe*. Although Germany's education system is filled with tradition, the progress that has been achieved is certainly notable.

Implications

Throughout this study, I have tried to show how the structure of Germany's education system has developed over the course of the twentieth century, while retaining much of its traditional tripartite features. My goal in

these final two sections is to highlight some of the consequences of early tracking in education systems and to conclude by looking ahead into what may be Germany's educational future.

When referring to the education policy, "tracking" often connotes a negative stigma, at least in twenty-first century America.¹⁰⁰ Not everyone views tracking as a negative policy, particularly in Germany, but still many do. A de-tracking initiative is even taking place in some American schools. There is a good reason for it. Many studies, a few of which I will highlight here, have found a correlation between early tracking and increasing inequality of student performance.¹⁰¹ When we consider immigrant students, this issue exacerbates. Meaning, in education systems with early tracking, the chasm of achievement between natives and immigrant children widens dramatically in the stage between primary and secondary education.¹⁰² Thus, when considering the opportunities offered to non-native and second-generation students, this becomes highly problematic in countries, such as Germany, with large immigrant populations.

¹⁰⁰ See for example LeTendre, Gerald K., Barbara K. Hofer, and Hidetada Shimizu. "What is tracking? Cultural expectations in the United States, Germany, and Japan." *American Educational Research Journal* 40, no. 1 (2003): 43-89. P. 74.

¹⁰¹ For case examples of the negative impacts of tracking on student performance see Wößmann, Ludger. "INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE ON SCHOOL TRACKING: A Review." *growth* 6 (2009): 7. See also Schütz, Gabriela, Heinrich W. Ursprung, and Ludger Wößmann. "Education policy and equality of opportunity." *Kyklos* 61, no. 2 (2008): 279-308.

¹⁰² Lüdemann, Elke, and Guido Schwerdt. "Migration background and educational tracking: is there a double disadvantage for second-generation immigrants?." (2010). P. 2.

In the previous section on post-reunification tracking policies, I aimed to show how nearly all of the *Länder* in the former East Germany chose to develop a two-track secondary education system. Interestingly, in these *Länder* with the *Gymnasium* and one other form of secondary school, Ludger Wößmann found that in these less tracked regions, the equality of opportunity increases.¹⁰³ Another point worth repeating is that in most of the eastern *Länder*, the students are not placed into a secondary school until the end of sixth grade, instead of traditionally fourth grade. Thus, if students are grouped into more comprehensive schools, and are tracked at a later age, the chances of the students having more equal opportunities increases.

A student's family background also plays a large role in his/her educational trajectory. Gabriele Schütz, Heinrich Ursprung, and Ludger Wößmann found in their 2008 study that the earlier a country tracks students by ability into different types of schools, the greater the influence one's family background has.¹⁰⁴ As previously noted, this becomes increasingly problematic when considering students from immigrant backgrounds or students with parents of lower academic attainment. Thus, the educational and in turn social mobility is dramatically constricted. When students are tracked at a young age, there is less information and evidence of students' abilities and potential; hence,

¹⁰³ Wößmann, Ludger. "INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE ON SCHOOL TRACKING: A Review." *growth* 6 (2009): 7. P. 32.

¹⁰⁴ See pages 2, 22, and 23 for examples in Schütz, Gabriela, Heinrich W. Ursprung, and Ludger Wößmann. "Education policy and equality of opportunity." *Kyklos* 61, no. 2 (2008): 279-308.

when there is more uncertainty in making the track placement, generally a more conservative recommendation is made. Thus, when conservative decisions are made, teachers tend to rely more on students' parental backgrounds as a guide for the track-placement decision.¹⁰⁵ As a result, this is another example how the family background effect is often exacerbated in students' academic futures.

Proponents of tracking argue that differentiating students by ability allows for more tailored instruction and allows students of like academic ability to learn from each other; yet, early tracking does not even have a positive effect on the most elite students.¹⁰⁶ Instead, what can have a positive effect on all students is a comprehensive system that provides early-childhood education. These two components can dramatically "increase the equality of educational opportunity for children from different family backgrounds."¹⁰⁷ Even at this point in the twenty-first century though, Germany is still a long way off from a comprehensive education system. I turn now to conclude by summarizing where I see Germany's education system reforming in the future and what an alteration of the German education system would demand of its people.

¹⁰⁵ Schnabel, Kai U., Corinne Alfeld, Jacquelynne S. Eccles, Olaf Köller, and Jürgen Baumert. "Parental influence on students' educational choices in the United States and Germany: Different ramifications—Same effect?." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 60, no. 2 (2002): 178-198. P. 193-194.

¹⁰⁶ Wößmann, Ludger. "INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE ON SCHOOL TRACKING: A Review." *growth* 6 (2009): 7. P. 29.

¹⁰⁷ Schütz, Gabriela, Heinrich W. Ursprung, and Ludger Wößmann. "Education policy and equality of opportunity." *Kyklos* 61, no. 2 (2008): 279-308. P. 3.

Recommendations

Throughout the turbulence of the twentieth century, Germany has retained much of its traditional tripartite design; however, it has also undergone ebbs and flows of relatively minor alterations. Given that much of the traditional three-tiered structure continues to function today, I do not forecast that the German education system will dissolve into a comprehensive education structure, like that of the United States for example. Instead, what I see happening, given the history I have illustrated, is much like what happened in the post-reunification era in the eastern German states; meaning, with the growing dysfunction of the *Hauptschule* and its lack of existence in the eastern half of the Federal Republic, I hypothesize that many German states (with the exception of Bavaria perhaps, for its commitment to tradition) will collapse the *Hauptschule* and *Realschule* into one alternative form of secondary school in conjunction with the everlasting *Gymnasium*.

As in the United States, the education system in Germany is deeply a part of its national character. Therefore, if I were to recommend that Germany overhaul its education system to include comprehensive schooling for all children, free of tracking practices, I would be asking the German people to revolutionize one of the most fundamental components of their national identity.¹⁰⁸ That seems like an insurmountable task, and also not a recommendation I wish to make, unlike the education officials in the U.S. occupation zone after World War II. Moreover, I do not suggest that Germany

¹⁰⁸ Read, Gerald. "The Revolutionary Movement in Secondary Education Throughout the World." *NASSP Bulletin* 55, no. 353 (1971): 13-24. P. 18.

abolishes all of its traditional tripartite features, but a recommendation I feel is more reasonable to suggest and more feasible to implement is to postpone tracking students until their academic talents have been more fully developed.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, if Germany were to delay tracking its students until perhaps the ninth grade and then place students into either the *Gymnasium* or the second, secondary school, I believe placements would be more appropriate and more equitable. If these more just alterations were made, I do not believe it would require a sacrifice of the German spirit or an extreme overhaul of the system that currently exists, but would provide positive and fair reform to an antiquated education system.

¹⁰⁹ Freitag, Markus, and Raphaela Schlicht. "Educational Federalism in Germany: Foundations of social inequality in education." *Governance* 22, no. 1 (2009): 47-72. P. 66.

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VITA

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Starting in the fall of 2010, Hart began teaching high school German, levels one through Advanced Placement. She continued teaching to the end of the 2013-2014 school year, when she then began her studies at Loyola University Chicago in the fall of 2014. Due to her background and interest in the German language and culture, Hart chose to focus her academic studies on German education policies.

Hart plans to return to teach high school German, with a greater understanding of the German education system and an added depth of content knowledge, which will prove beneficial in her instruction. She currently resides in Chicago, Illinois with her husband.