

## **Ph.D. Candidates in the Humanities in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Berlin, London and at the Columbia University, New York**

Daniel Hardegger

### ***Project Outline***

#### ***1. Significance***

So far the careers of Ph.D. candidates have not yet been the focus of historical research (Vom Bruch 1997) whereas the situation of undergraduates in Oxford (Stone 1974 and Deslandes 2005) Berlin (Vom Bruch 2010) and America (Berelson 1960) as well as that of professors at all the previously-mentioned universities has been a focus of research in the past (Baumgarten 1997 and Engel 1974). The role of higher education in promoting national identity and nationalism has been an important part of research into German universities, for example with regard to the role of fraternities (Lönnecker 2008) or the international representation of the German higher education system (Düwell 1976). In Great Britain, both Oxford (Symonds 2000) and the University of London (Harte 1986) have been investigated with regards to training the elite for Empire. Furthermore, the introduction of the D.S. and D.Litt. at the University of London and later the establishment of the Ph.D. programme there were a direct answer to the attractiveness of German universities to American and British students (Simpson 1983). There are studies about the specialization of scientific studies and the interdisciplinary nature of science (Hulin), the role of female doctoral candidates (Mazón 2003), the professionalization of education (Engel 1983) and the differences between the German, American and British university systems (Ben-David 1968/69). Finally, while the role of doctoral thesis advisers and the doctoral rules of procedure have also been researched in some cases, for example in Jena (Rasche 2005), this is not the case in any of the three universities studied here. A modern history of the colleges of the University of London does not exist (Anderson 2006) and most publications about the general development of all three universities are anniversary publications and, therefore, mostly uncritical. Recently published studies compare the development of female education in Great Britain, Germany and Spain (Rowold 2010) and co-education in Great

Britain and the United States (Myers 2010).

In a nutshell: there is no comparative study of Ph. D. candidates of these leading universities. While being part of the increasing number of international and transnational historical studies, this project will be the first of its kind. It will keep in mind the development of social historical research in the recent decades including the rise of gender and micro-history, the new opportunities of using qualitative and quantitative methods but also the recently developed approach of *histoire croisée*.

## **2. Research Questions**

1. How does the group of Ph.D. candidates develop over time with respect not merely to their age, gender and geographic origin but also their socio-economic background and job opportunities in comparison with undergraduates at all three universities and the general population?
2. Of what kind are the contacts and knowledge transfers between the British higher education system and the German, especially in comparison with the official exchange programmes and non-official contacts between universities of the United States of America and Germany in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Do these these even have any significant influence on Ph.D. candidates?
3. What kind of correlation exists between socio-economic and political developments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the development of Ph.D. candidates, their socio-economic background and their research? What are the job opportunities for Ph.D. candidates after they have finished their theses? Do these reflect a greater influence of academics over society and economy in any way?

## **3. Sources**

The main sources are the relevant university archives, matriculation data and the theses written and handed in by the Ph.D. candidates. In the case of Berlin, nearly 80% or more than 1200 Ph.D. theses in the Humanities have already been researched. The archive of the University of Columbia has sent a copy of its list of Ph.D. theses after 1900 which includes nearly 400 theses between 1900 and 1913. However, Ph.D. have already been awarded since the 1880s at Columbia. In London, only 48 D.Litt.s appear to have been awarded by the University of London in the relevant time period. However, all candidates who failed the exam have been recorded as well. This difference in

numbers have to be taken in mind when comparing the results. To solve this obstacle, increased genealogical research and a detailed comparison of the CVs of the candidates before and after they got their Ph.D. title will be necessary.

The additional genealogical research will improve the option to present and compare result of the study. It would be possible, for example, to present some doctoral candidates and their CVs as exemplary or non-exemplary candidates of their university. It will also prevent a presentation which relies only on statistical data while it will also allow me to fill some of the gaps within the information provided by the archives of the universities concerned like Berlin. Contact with to relevant archives has already been established and information will be collected parallel to collection of data from the archives of the three universities.

#### ***4. Notes***

At the beginning, my idea was to have Oxford as part of this project. After some research, however, it became clear that of London rather than Oxford was the better university for this project. Oxford was, like Berlin, the university of the elites. However, these elites were the aristocratic elites and not, as in Berlin, London or Columbia university, the ambitious middle classes. One of the main aims of Oxbridge was to train the future upper-class for its tasks, not to train the future middle-class elites. Furthermore, students had to subscribe at matriculation to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church. Students of other religions, like the Jews, or other confessions, like the Catholics, were in general not allowed to study at Oxford until it was reformed in 1871. However, certain restrictions continued to exist even after 1871, restrictions which existed at none of the three universities studied here.

The degree system in Oxford was very different to that employed in Berlin and at Columbia University. Written exams were introduced in Oxford 1800 but only in the “classics”. This was extended over the 19<sup>th</sup> century and led to a highly competitive examination system for jobs within the government. Independent research and thinking, as in Berlin, was not an essential part of the university system until the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The University of London, on the other hand, held exams from from its establishment. Furthermore, it allowed external candidates to take degrees even if they had not attended any courses of the colleges of the university. In Berlin, on the other hand, many students studied at other universities before getting their degree.

A big difference between London and the other two universities was that the Ph.D. as a title was not introduced into England until 1917/1919. The aim was not to attract British students but American academics. The introduction of the D.S. for natural science and the D.Litt. in London for the humanities was a measure of increasing its attractiveness for American students. However, it could be argued that they were not completely comparable as the D.S. was a response to the fact that quite a lot of English students in the natural science left the country to take their “Magister” or Ph.D. in Germany as there was no MSc degree at that time. The D.S. was therefore, at least to start with, an MA degree for natural science students. On the other hand, the D.Litt. was introduced as a response to the earlier established D.S. to give students in the humanities as well the option of taking a doctoral degree after their MA. In the beginning, neither the D.S. nor the D.Litt. required a thesis to be completed, but this was changed for the D.S. in 1886, for the D.Litt. five years earlier.

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