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## Of the Wide-Eyed in Uncertain Times: The Education of Girls during the Third Reich

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OF THE WIDE-EYED IN UNCERTAIN TIMES:  
THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS DURING THE THIRD REICH

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Ingmar D. Clausing

December 2021

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OF THE WIDE-EYED IN UNCERTAIN TIMES:  
THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS DURING THE THIRD REICH

by

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## ABSTRACT

### OF THE WIDE-EYED IN UNCERTAIN TIMES: THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS DURING THE THIRD REICH

by Ingmar D. Clausing

The aim of this thesis is to describe how both the state school system and the Hitler Youth educated girls during the Third Reich. Conventional theories have suggested a number of ideological suppositions regarding the overall curricular emphasis, but this study contends that such simplistic determinations do not capture the full spread of the educational experience. This thesis asks if girls in Nazi Germany were truly just indoctrinated or if schooling had legitimate academic purposes. Based on actual textbooks that were studied by girls for every subject area, at different grade levels, and in different types of schools, as well as Hitler Youth handbooks and pamphlets detailing every girls' activity, this research reveals a complex situation. The state school system offered a diversified syllabus containing academic, practical, and also ideological elements. The scope of the Hitler Youth instruction was more narrow, and part of its implicit goal was to subvert the authority of the state schools. This finding suggests that the school curriculum for girls under National Socialism was more multifaceted than is commonly thought, and the Hitler Youth sabotaged the regular educational process and impinged upon the right to instruct Germany's youth.

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## Introduction

The year was 1933, and Hitler's recently installed National Socialist government decided to initiate a cultural shift, one that would impact all aspects of society. Nazi leaders claimed that the pervasive malaise of Weimar Germany could be corrected only by the complete regeneration of the German *Volk*. Posters appeared on billboards across the nation. Flags and banners adorned the streets of most major cities. Change was palpable, but people did not yet know what to expect. Some people felt excitement and optimism, while others experienced apprehension and indignation. Almost everyone felt some anxiety for one reason or another. Towards the end of summer, in a small village deep in the Bavarian Alps, or on a farm situated on the northern plains, or even at the heart of the bustling city center in Berlin, little girls prepared for their first day of school. A girl's mother might have braided her hair into two pigtails and walked her to her first day at the local *Volksschule*. Upon entering the classroom, she would have seen a large portrait of the *Führer* hung prominently on the wall. Over the course of her childhood, and into her teenage years, she would grow up immersed in the education system of the Third Reich. At the age of ten, she would join the Hitler Youth, which would contribute to her ideological development. This thesis analyzes the educational materials used in girls' schools and the membership materials provided by the girls' youth groups in Nazi Germany. To return to the little girl on her first day of school, this thesis is the story of the next twelve years of her life.

The historiography on education in Nazi Germany is typified by the works of authors who explore one particular subject or theme. Although sacrificing breadth for depth in one



area, many of these contributions imply that the entire curriculum could be described by the conclusions reasoned from a focused study. Historians who have written such a text include the following: Anne Bäumer-Schleinkofer, who researched biology education in the Third Reich; Gilmer Blackburn, whose interests pertained to history and religion; Gregory Paul Wegner, who centered on anti-Semitism across the curriculum; and Christa Kamenetsky, who looked at how children's literature and folklore impacted ideological learning.<sup>1</sup> A number of historians have examined the role of women in Nazi Germany. Most of these works focus on women and the family, or on a woman's role in society. Those who have also attended to the question of girls' education as part of their analysis include Dagmar Reese, Lisa Pine, and Jill Stephenson.<sup>2</sup> Pine's 2010 effort, *Education in Nazi Germany*, was probably the closest any full length monograph has come to covering education specifically for women and girls. Several other scholars have studied a particular historical question pertaining either to Nazi education generally, or to the female experience in particular. Being of vital importance to the conclusions put forth in this thesis, these questions will be addressed presently.

The most salient issue in the historical discourse on education in Nazi Germany has always involved National Socialist goals in pedagogy. Bäumer-Schleinkofer writes that schooling in the Third Reich could be seen as a scientifically-legitimated worldview that was

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology and Schools*, trans. Neil Beckhaus (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995); Gilmer W. Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich: Race and History in Nazi Textbooks* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985); Gregory Paul Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling under the Third Reich* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2002); Christa Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature in Hitler's Germany: The Cultural Policy of National Socialism* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2019), EBSCOhost.

<sup>2</sup> Dagmar Reese, *Growing Up Female in Nazi Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006); Lisa Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2010); Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1975).

built around character formation and racial hygiene designed to make the pupil more loyal to the state.<sup>3</sup> In accordance with her focus, she sees the biology curriculum at the forefront of these efforts. Kiran Klaus Patel agrees with the concept that students were given a new value system, but he finds the impetus for this less with the indoctrination efforts of the state and more with the self-mobilization of the people.<sup>4</sup> Patel claims that the ultimate goal of educators was to form a *Volksgemeinschaft*, a people's community, based on the shared experiences of an already-motivated student body.<sup>5</sup> Instead of examining the present, Kamenetsky looks at the past. She argues that Nazi educators used folklore and heroic sagas to build a *Völkisch* community by teaching proper values like honor and loyalty; the Germanic past was to offer cultural guidance.<sup>6</sup> Pine believes the state had no clear education policy at all beyond indoctrination.<sup>7</sup> She claims that the entire curriculum was exemplified by racial ideology and anti-Semitism in order to create a consensus for the Nazis' rule.<sup>8</sup> The idea of the totalitarian state using education to further its goals was a theme in many histories. I. L. Kandel, whose view was in line with Pine, argues that the state would seize upon education as a tool to promote stability and individual subordination to its guidance.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 42, 237.

<sup>4</sup> Kiran Klaus Patel, "Education, Schooling, and Camps," in *A Companion to Nazi Germany*, ed. Shelley Baranowski, Armin Nolzen, and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Patel, "Education, Schooling, and Camps," 182.

<sup>6</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 52, 103.

<sup>7</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 138.

<sup>8</sup> Lisa Pine, "The Dissemination of Nazi Ideology and Family Values through School Textbooks," *History of Education* 25, no. 1 (1996): 91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0046760960250106>.

<sup>9</sup> I. L. Kandel, "Education in Nazi Germany," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 182 (November 1935): 153, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1020438>.

Frieda Wunderlich believes that the Nazis used education to psychologically isolate its citizens from the outside world; she insists that the pedagogical attitude at the time was that truth need not be sought since it had already been discovered by the leader.<sup>10</sup> Kamenetsky and Patel are somewhat more temperate in their positions, but they merely make up the moderate wing of a group of historians all of whom find education in the Third Reich to have been unequivocal in its inherently nefarious character.

Who was responsible for dictating educational policy in the Third Reich? The “intentionalist” versus “functionalist” debate has often been applied to historical controversies such as the question of who was primarily responsible for the Holocaust. When applied to Nazi Germany as a whole, the intentionalist view, popularized by historians like Hugh Trevor Roper or Daniel Goldhagen, alleges that Hitler, with his autobiography *Mein Kampf*, and through his speeches, was in complete control of Germany. Functionalists, like Ian Kershaw or Martin Broszat, counter this claim by highlighting Hitler’s disinterest in day-to-day politics, and the myriad efforts of his power-seeking subordinates. The same debate pertains to education. Stephen Pagaard, who comes from the functionalist camp, argues that the situation was a chaotic competition where a number of high ranking Party officials, like Baldur von Schirach and Alfred Rosenberg, tried to carry out educational policy according to what they thought was Hitler’s will, thinking they might ingratiate

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<sup>10</sup> Frieda Wunderlich, “Education in Nazi Germany,” *Social Research* 4, no. 3 (September 1937): 358, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40981568>.

themselves with him.<sup>11</sup> Blackburn, whose text was published in 1985 when the intentionalist view was more popular, finds a “top-down” government where Hitler, due to his power, charisma, and convictions, controlled education.<sup>12</sup> Pine takes a more complex position as she contends that education itself, as far as the control of content, follows the intentionalist approach, yet educational policy can only be seen as operating according to functionalist theories.<sup>13</sup> This view declares that Hitler’s words found their way into the classroom, but only his subordinates made any operational decisions.

Given the specific focus of this thesis, the question of how gender in education has been addressed in the historiography requires mention. To a large extent, this question intersects with agency itself. Michelle Mouton views the ways that girls in the Third Reich were educated as something entirely negative. She believes the entire curriculum was designed only to promote motherhood, and that the pedagogical goal was to push women back to the pre-industrial era, where their roles were clearly defined.<sup>14</sup> Reese takes the opposing view as she argues that most women preferred to reside in the domestic sphere. Furthermore, she contends that education specifically for girls was varied; whether it be physical strengthening of their body or the practical lessons of domestic science, it gave girls something that was

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen Pagaard, “Teaching the Nazi Dictatorship: Focus on Youth,” *The History Teacher* 38, no. 2 (February 2005): 200, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1555719>.

<sup>12</sup> Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 3, 138.

<sup>14</sup> Michelle Mouton, “From Adventure and Advancement to Derailment and Demotion: Effects of Nazi Gender Policy on Women’s Careers and Lives,” *Journal of Social History* 43, no. 4 (Summer 2010): 945, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40802012>.

their own.<sup>15</sup> Reese also reminds readers that teaching girls about the domestic sphere was hardly limited to National Socialism, for such a curriculum was widespread.<sup>16</sup> Stephenson is perhaps less optimistic than Reese in what such a pedagogical goal would have implied, but she takes a similar line in any event. She recognizes that Nazi Germany drew clear distinctions between men and women; notably, men were objective, and women were subjective, or men were productive, and women were reproductive.<sup>17</sup> Stephenson writes that though the belief in such natural qualities existed, the claim that all women were taught that motherhood was their only option is wrong, and that individual experiences as a result of Nazi education—Stephenson writes a social history—were very diverse. No historian denies that the promotion of motherhood was a part of the education in Nazi Germany, but some disagreement remains as to what extent this was true in practice, and whether this should be viewed as a negative because other nations embraced this ideal as well.

The final point of contention concerns the role of the Hitler Youth. Pine notes how the combination of the Nazis' youth groups and the state school system functioned together to create the total education of youth in Germany; this assertion was what fostered a particular National Socialist identity.<sup>18</sup> Pine notes that the domineering Hitler Youth attitude did have negative effects on youth, but she finds this obstructive aspect chiefly with respect to the family because the time spent with one's youth group troop caused teenagers to identify more

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<sup>15</sup> Reese, *Growing Up Female*, 43.

<sup>16</sup> Reese, 42.

<sup>17</sup> Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society*, 8-9, 45-46.

<sup>18</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 1.

with the authority of those leaders rather than that of the father, or perhaps the mother.<sup>19</sup>

Daniel Horn insists that an organic youth rebellion, exemplified by Hitler Youth action, and not any influence from above, is what caused disruption to many facets of society.<sup>20</sup> To this point, he views youth agitation as detrimental to educational structures by undermining the prestige of teachers and precipitating a decline in academic quality.<sup>21</sup> There is no denying that an interaction existed between schools and the Hitler Youth, but the historiography differs on whether it was complementary or turbulent.

This thesis is a study of how girls were educated in the Third Reich. It operates from the theoretical perspective that the best way to gauge what girls actually learned in state schools and through the Hitler Youth is to examine the same reading material that they would have handled. Using other sources to study this topic is less useful, and potentially misleading. Official directives are often contradictory and unspecific. The ideas of educational theorists may not have actually been put into practice. Even the personal narratives of girls who attended school during the Third Reich or were part of a Hitler Youth troop are problematic. Most later accounts recall only generalities, are clouded by decades of psychological reprogramming, and are diagnostically less helpful because they apply to everything someone remembers, not just what might have been learned in school or in the Hitler Youth. First-hand sources that speak directly on education are rare, and those that do, often mention

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<sup>19</sup> Lisa Pine, "The Family in the Third Reich, 1933-1945" (PhD diss., University of London, 1996), 13, ProQuest (AAT U084457).

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Horn, "The Hitler Youth and Educational Decline in the Third Reich," *History of Education Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1976): 426, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/367724>.

<sup>21</sup> Horn, "Hitler Youth and Educational Decline," 426.

only particularly noteworthy anecdotes. While personal accounts and the opinions of bureaucrats are sometimes incorporated into this study, these sources are included only to augment the predominant research.

School textbooks and Hitler Youth handbooks form the basis of the research for this thesis. The vast majority of girls would have attended either the *Volksschule*, *Mittelschule*, or the *Oberschule* at some point during their matriculation, and all textbooks surveyed were approved for one of these three institutions. An effort was made to analyze the entirety of the sources, not just sections that might be considered the most riveting. The scope of the primary source research does not extend to the university, to uncommonly attended educational institutions, or to the Nazi elite schools; school textbooks from other countries during the same time period as the Third Reich were also not examined. The Hitler Youth handbooks that members and troop leaders were obligated to read establish a foundation for the investigation into youth group activities. This thesis will present a more holistic view of education in the Third Reich. Every subject that a girl in Nazi Germany might have studied is covered, and whenever possible, an effort is made to include a variety of textbooks that served different schools and different age groups for this particular subject. Finally, as far as education in the Hitler Youth is concerned, since it was pedagogically vital for Hitler Youth leaders to educate girls through an all-encompassing experience, primary source material explaining all the various activities girls would have participated in are considered as part of the analysis.

“Chapter I” of the thesis provides the context for the entire study. The reader will first learn about the evolution of the school curriculum in Nazi Germany. This section explains what changed and what did not change as the Third Reich strove to implement its educational system. The next section is dedicated to the role of various Nazi leaders in the shaping of educational policy. The third section includes a comprehensive description of the school structure in Nazi Germany to familiarize the reader with every potential schooling option. Lastly, “Chapter I” finishes with a description of the experience of teachers in the National Socialist Teachers’ League. “Chapter II” is the heart of the thesis. In thirteen sections, every subject that a girl would have encountered at some level of the school system is covered. Some of these sections are certainly more involved than others to reflect how important a given school subject was in the Third Reich, or how critical it might be in a historical analysis. “Chapter III” functions as a supplementary analysis to “Chapter II.” This chapter begins with the history of the Hitler Youth and moves on to four sections highlighting different ways the youth group might have inspired and coached girls in Nazi Germany. This shows how the Hitler Youth’s education interacted with that in the state school system. The shorter “Chapter IV” takes the role of the epitaph to education in Third Reich. This chapter includes a section on the effectiveness of Third Reich education, and a second section detailing how instruction would continue in both West Germany and East Germany.

How one identifies ideology in the curriculum is critical to this thesis. The role of ideology in a number of historical debates, notably in the historiography of Nazism, has suffered from the problem of theoretical incoherence. If a criteria of analysis does not have



defined parameters for what is being examined, then it has no purpose. A system of explanation must be introduced in order to understand the structures of the primary source textual material. Such a system functions to explicate what is ideological and what is normal, traditional education.

Modern popular conceptions of Nazi ideology have come to include essentially everything that occurred as a result of Third Reich policy. This has hindered understanding of the subject because the idea that everything associated with the regime must have been the result of a unique core belief does not have a basis in logic when it ignores the context of Europe during the period and the relative continuity of thought between the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany. The key to defining an ideological subject in the Third Reich is determining what was distinctive to the goals of Hitler's government. A certain idea cannot be considered Nazi ideology if officials in other European countries or those under the Weimar Constitution had the same objectives. One could certainly argue that multiple entities could expound similar ideologies and that in such a case the concept is no less ideological, yet this thesis, as part of the analysis, judges when girls' school lessons included material that was either inappropriate or ordinary, so differentiating Nazi ideology from the rest is imperative. This study assumes the point of view of the girl in the classroom, so even if a topic can be argued to be politically ideological in a general sense, if it is shared by multiple bodies of governance, it would be viewed with the sociological perspective of normalcy; this topic would also not be specifically Nazi education.

Something mundane like the set of kinematic equations in a physics class will always be a non-ideological subject. Much of any academic curriculum is inherently non-ideological; this is the nature of liberal education, which itself requires a definition. The concept implies the teaching of liberty for the masses as its focal point; this comprises a set of ideas that have been most associated with the Age of Enlightenment in Europe during the eighteenth century. While the extent of a liberal education in how it applies to government, economics, society, et cetera, is beyond the scope of this thesis, one definition for its basic educational premise can be stated as follows: Liberal education is a multi-faceted curriculum that allows for the free exchange of ideas and the fostering of a citizen who behaves rationally and fairly. To a large extent, liberal education also refers to that which is traditional and normal (for the times) because such a curriculum should be detached from ideology as much as possible. It has been observed that liberal education does not always lead to its intended ends, but it has nonetheless been credited with appropriately educating generations of students, particularly in Europe.

Ideological topics lie outside the domain of liberal education. Anti-Semitism will always be an ideological subject. Some rhetoric against Jews existed in the Weimar Republic and in other European nations, yet the acridity with which the Nazis pursued anti-Semitic invective places it far beyond what existed elsewhere. A good metric for considering the ideological in the curriculum is whether the topic crosses into racial policy. Nordicism and hereditary science fall into this category in almost all instances. Nationalism and *Völkisch* ideas sometimes do not. *Völkisch* attitudes, as long as they do not extend beyond the promotion of

the community, do not inherently serve the ideology of the state. On the other hand, if the *Volksgemeinschaft* encouraged by a Nazi reader implies a racial policy, then it can be considered ideological. Nationalism existed in every European nation. One must employ a careful consideration when looking to discern between the promotion of the home country, and the denigration of populations perceived to be “others,” at home or abroad.

Politics in the curriculum can be ideological if the topic promotes policies that were particular to the Nazi regime. The Treaty of Versailles should not be seen as ideological because hatred of this treaty extended to all political parties and was frequently debated during the Weimar Republic. Autarky as an economic policy was also not limited to Nazi Germany, and taken in and of itself, is not a nefarious idea. Girls would not have thought anything out of the ordinary when learning about the Treaty or about autarky. Items related to the question of Germany’s colonies typically manifested themselves as ideological issues because they were often presented in racially paternalistic terms. *Lebensraum* in the curriculum is tricky; the application of *Lebensraum* by the Nazis during the war conjures images of brutal pogroms in Eastern Europe, but this is not what was written in textbooks. The question of living space presented to girls in the classroom was fully intertwined with hunger, transportation, resources, and lost territory after World War One. Despite the troublesome aspects of *Lebensraum* known to historians today, living space in the textbook implied materials and the rejection of the Treaty of Versailles, both of which were taught without racial policy and thus without Nazi ideology.

The question of motherhood is a study of gender and society. Motherhood was certainly encouraged in the classroom, but this thesis concludes that most examples of the promotion of motherhood were non-ideological because girls in the Third Reich would only have perceived them as such. It is disingenuous for any historian to claim that motherhood should define the essence of Nazi education for girls if similar curricular elements existed throughout the Weimar period, and in fact, throughout Europe generally.<sup>22</sup> Girls were never required to become mothers after their schooling, and practical domestic science, along with content extolling the virtues of large families is hardly criminal. Domestic science was an ordinary, traditional subject for the curriculum.

It is important to note the limitations of this thesis. Research can only be finite, and it would not be feasible to read every page of every textbook that was ever printed in Nazi Germany. Given the multitude of grade levels, school subjects, and types of schools, the number of textbooks sampled as a percentage of all those that existed cannot be substantial. Because the Nazis centralized education and the themes in the curriculum were usually consistent from one textbook to the next, this investigative drawback would probably have only had a minimal effect on any conclusion drawn in this thesis. The other limitation is one of truth. One argument in this thesis is that the best way to understand education in the Third Reich is to look at the exact textbooks and handbooks that girls read. This fails to account for the real life experience of sitting in a classroom, hearing a teacher's lecture, and

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<sup>22</sup> For example, please see Lisa Pine, "Dissemination of Nazi Ideology." Though amply explaining how women were intended to be mothers in the household, she shows little appreciation that this philosophy was hardly unique to Nazi Germany.

understanding what everything might have meant within the context of society at large. Many narratives explicating life and awareness in Nazi Germany exist, but the dearth of those specifically relating to the school learning environment create an obstacle for a thesis such as this one. The historian can understand the politics of the era, and this thesis can interpret the exact texts that a girl would have viewed during her education, but an analysis of what any pupil actually realized during her experience can only be speculated on. To such extent, this thesis may modestly approach a whole historical truth, but any claim of exactly understanding contemporary perception would be too ambitious.

Previous works on the topic of the education of girls in Nazi Germany have argued for the dominance of one or more of a set of ideologically-driven themes.<sup>23</sup> This thesis counters that the evidence does not support this conclusion. Textbook material was far more varied than has been recognized. The partitioned nature in which it was presented created a situation where a young girl would have been taught lessons that were political or ideological side by side with other lessons that were not. Indeed, much of the curriculum was not definitively National Socialist at all. Historians have treated education in the Third Reich like children running into a multi-department discount store and immediately descending on the section with toys displaying the flashiest lights, then telling all their friends that the entire outlet was filled only with these objects.<sup>24</sup> It is entirely natural to examine a Nazi biology

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<sup>23</sup> For example, please see Erika Mann, *School for Barbarians: Education under the Nazis* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2014). She describes Third Reich education as if it were a political rally, moving from one ideological topic to the next.

<sup>24</sup> For example, please see Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*. Despite a clearly thorough examination of dozens of history texts, he reports only on content that might appear interesting to his readers, that which vividly demonstrates ideology.

textbook and be shocked at a chapter dedicated completely to racial hygiene, or for one to have to come to terms with the fact that Julius Streicher's *Stürmer Verlag* published a few viciously anti-Semitic short stories for children in German studies classes; in fact, it is human nature to want to focus on such ostentatious elements. It is, however, misleading to ignore the abundance of ideologically neutral chapters in these same textbooks when writing that education in the Third Reich was characterized only by its most extreme parts.

The efforts of Bernhard Rust, Alfred Rosenberg, and others in trying to appease Hitler by embracing *Gleichschaltung*, an ideological coordination between all the subjects within the total curriculum, was very superficial and hastily applied when it found its way into the textbooks. School materials were not completely revamped in some clever, and probably impossible, scheme to teach every single concept through a Nazi lens. These new textbooks, which had to be rushed into publication, were based on academic precedent. In some cases, one might find an example of a textbook that might include the exact same chapters, with perhaps very insignificant textual changes from an older version, but with one or two additional (ideological) chapters added to the contents; many educators took the easy way out when turning an older text into a Nazi one. It also makes logical sense that much of the curriculum must have been what most people would consider normal, then and now. Does anyone think that it would require twelve years of schooling to impart a half dozen tropes onto a girl in the Third Reich, if that was all one was learning? Even the most dedicated students or the ones most committed to National Socialism would have rebelled against a system that seemingly taught them nothing. Nazi education was a curriculum built directly

on top of a set of already-existing instructive materials, and to this extent, its foundation was not associated with National Socialist ideology.

So why was the regular curriculum considered to be so unproductive in creating educated students? The answer is the Hitler Youth. The indoctrinating lessons of the Young Girls' League and the League of German Girls, while sometimes of a practical or a character-building nature, were much more ideological. The Hitler Youth leaders had no obligation or inclination to teach anything other than the Party line, and their pedagogical materials were not based on more anodyne predecessor texts. However, this explanation is still insufficient on the question of the failure of Third Reich schools in producing educated youths. When one further considers that Hitler Youth commitments were so intense that girls would usually not have had enough time to study for any school class, or when one weighs the direct subversion of the school system by Hitler Youth leaders who literally told young girls that their teachers were unworthy and that their studies barely mattered, the picture describing why the Hitler Youth destroyed education becomes more clear.

One should always be suspicious of any theory that carries a one hundred percent correlation to the evidence. Exceptions do exist, and the consideration of one or two profoundly ideological texts could cause one to (falsely) conclude that schools were ideologically-driven propaganda factories, but a broad and even examination of the full content of many textbooks reveals a more encompassing curriculum. Nazi education for girls cannot be defined by ideological sentiments alone, for these schools maintained a diverse syllabus, with crude dogmatic lessons set adjacent to those that might have represented a

more neutral or liberal lesson plan, and it was only through the divisive influence of the Hitler Youth that the entire experience became hopeless. The young girl who started classes in 1933 probably would have left school a Nazi, but she theoretically could have obtained a reasonable, wide education, but her Hitler Youth group leader told her that her character in camp was much more important.



## **Chapter I: Overview of the School System in Nazi Germany**

Hitler placed a very high value on the youth in Germany as the vanguard of the Third Reich.<sup>25</sup> It was feared that many adults would be too unyielding to unequivocally accept National Socialism, but those Germans that made up the youngest generation could be taught to embrace Nazism in its entirety and bring about Germany's renewal. Through the cultivation of cultural bonds, a new national identity could be forged through the state's youth. Education was the key to fostering such an unwavering identity.

“Chapter I” of this thesis examines the development and order of the National Socialist school system. The first section tracks some of the curricular changes that occurred as the state evolved from the constitutional monarchy of the German empire, to the uneasy Republican government of Weimar Germany, to the authoritarian regime of the Nazis. The investigation will focus on the origins of the material that would have been encountered in a school lesson plan. The second section analyzes several key Nazi figures and how they impacted schooling in Germany. Reflecting how these individuals often competed with one another, this section incorporates the intentionalist versus functionalist debate in explaining how the school system actually came to be. Many different schools operated simultaneously and served different student populations in Nazi Germany, and the third section in “Chapter I” explains the purpose of each of them. The final section examines the role of teachers in the NSLB, the Nazi Party's teacher organization. “Chapter I” of this thesis will provide the necessary context for the primary source textbook analysis of the curriculum in “Chapter II.”

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<sup>25</sup> Konrad H. Jarausch, “Nazi Adolescents,” in *Broken Lives: How Ordinary Germans Experienced the 20th Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 66.

### **Changes in the Curriculum after the Nazis' *Machtübernahme***

As Hitler and the Nazis took power in January of 1933, educators endeavored to institute a new set of doctrinaire curricular objectives, yet many elements of their pedagogical program had firmly rooted antecedents in both the Weimar Republic and the *Kaiserreich*. The late nineteenth century had been characterized by bourgeois liberalism in most European countries. In Germany however, it was Bismarck's Realpolitik, the chauvinistic, militaristic, and obedient brand of conservative nationalism that beset German society; this reactionary ethos, nurtured by many educators, existed alongside Germany's nascent liberal humanistic culture.<sup>26</sup> Before Hitler was born in 1889, Germany had already set on its *Sonderweg*, its own special path distinct from the rest of Europe.

Surprisingly, not much changed with regards to classroom instruction as German culture underwent a massive shift in 1918/9. Germany had embraced many elements of a liberal education, and it also became a leader in scientific research in the Second Empire. This carried over into the Weimar Republic. The new lesson plans also continued to contain fervent nationalism. The obvious political differences between the Wilhelmine and the post-war eras were not well reflected in the school curriculum. Many of the exact textbooks used during the turn of the century would continue to be used unchanged once Friedrich Ebert began his term as President of Germany under the Weimar Constitution.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 8.

<sup>27</sup> Pine, 10.

Due to Germany's well-established federal tradition, the educational system that the Nazis inherited in 1933 was marked by a great deal of heterogeneity in the various norms and practices of the different states.<sup>28</sup> These differences presented an immediate challenge for a regime that sought to centralize all aspects of society according to the concept of *Gleichschaltung*, the idea of bringing order and control through the coordination of all agencies within Germany. Weimar schools were varied not just in their structure, but also in their ideological perspectives. Regardless of the textbooks used, politics and teachers' lectures in Weimar schools ran the gamut as some were anti-democratic, some were modernist, and some were radical left reformist.<sup>29</sup> All reflected the voting patterns of their locale; this was a political climate which would have been very diversified across Germany. In addition, a large number of religious schools, both Protestant and Catholic, remained so in 1933. The degree to which schools needed to be reoriented and brought into conformity presented problems beyond mere bureaucratic difficulties.

Many Weimar textbooks, like their *Kaiserreich* forerunners, already contained militaristic and nationalistic concepts; for example, the popular Prussian State Boarding Schools were housed in the former Cadet Institutions, and the curriculum was vigorously pro-German and pro-military.<sup>30</sup> Biological determinism and racism, of the likes of writers Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, had been implied in textbooks for decades, mostly due to

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<sup>28</sup> Patel, "Education, Schooling, and Camps," 183.

<sup>29</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Pine, 12.

the efforts of reactionary holdovers from the nineteenth century. Placing the woman in the domestic sphere, with several classroom subjects dedicated specifically to womanhood, was commonplace throughout Europe; furthermore, the *Frauenschulen* of the Weimar Republic were schools dedicated to teaching the “special tasks” for women.<sup>31</sup> Even the idea of the leadership cult, though not explicitly expressed, was represented in various forms of hero worship or Germanic myth. What the Nazis did was amplify, expand, and standardize the curriculum to reflect these ideas more prominently.

National Socialist education incorporated romantic nationalism, previously exalted by the *Sturm und Drang* literary movement of the early nineteenth century, and social Darwinism, which had circulated in some academic circles since the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>32</sup> Nazi textbooks heavily emphasized the ideality of German culture and the importance of the German nation, oftentimes misappropriating the ideas of great German thinkers like Johann Gottfried Herder, who spoke of German unity, and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who wrote of a devotion to one’s nation; in truth, Herder had claimed that Germany’s culture must coexist and not dominate others, and Fichte had wanted Germany to be only a model nation, not a master nation, but such distinctions were not properly explained in Nazi Germany.<sup>33</sup> Colonialism and especially anti-Semitism were common topics in schools during the Third Reich; in this regard, the works of Heinrich von Treitschke and Paul de Lagarde are

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<sup>31</sup> Pine, 11.

<sup>32</sup> Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 14.

<sup>33</sup> Susanne Charlotte Engelmann, “German Education and Re-Education,” *Educational Sciences* 6 (2020): 72, [https://academicworks.livredelyon.com/edu\\_sci/6](https://academicworks.livredelyon.com/edu_sci/6).

often cited as being influential for Nazi educators.<sup>34</sup> During the Second Empire, Treitschke had strongly supported colonial expansionism as a member of the Reichstag, while Legarde had become a prominent anti-Semitic voice. The worldview described in Oswald Spengler's popular history, *The Decline of the West*, which appeared to accurately predict the problems of the turbulent Weimar Republic, may have motivated educators in promoting their Thousand-Year *Reich* to students. The educational legacy of Wilhelm von Humboldt, one of classical liberalism and individualism, was criticized for weakening the *Völkisch* community spirit.<sup>35</sup> At its core, National Socialist education sought to link the entire curriculum to create an interdisciplinary approach that would promote unity of the *Volk*, especially by an appreciation for one's heritage.<sup>36</sup>

When considering the particularly ideological pedagogy just described, one should remember that broad themes often lack details, and more importantly, in terms of what any student might internalize, the entire Third Reich education did not consist of just five or six concepts. While one cannot discount the blatant ideological themes prevalent in Nazi education, one should also not disregard, as most historians have done, the abundance of information in Third Reich textbooks that modern observers would consider "normal," or typical of a classical or liberal education. Most of the content in Weimar texts was also incorporated into Third Reich texts. Marianne Mostowski explains the quantity of material

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<sup>34</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 22.

<sup>35</sup> Pine, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 249.

covered: “I still ask myself today how we managed to cram in all of those classes but we learned a lot and generally knew at least a little about most subjects.”<sup>37</sup> Some of this would have been taught through the lens of National Socialism, and teachers may have opined various political viewpoints, but the original content was conveyed faithfully. The ideological material, accredited to various nationalist and racist thinkers, and the non-ideological material, passed down through generations by writers and scientists, lived side by side in Nazi textbooks, sometimes literally in separate textbook chapters, one after the other.

The task of assuring that all of this material was properly corroborated and the duty of centralizing control over education in the various German states fell to Bernhard Rust, who was named Reich Minister of Science, Education, and Public Culture in May of 1934. To Rust’s dismay, it turned out to be a long, grueling process, one where many political rivals, most notably Reich Youth Leader Baldur von Schirach, would try to undermine his authority. It was actually far easier to build up the Hitler Youth than it was to revamp the school system because the former did not require retraining teachers or rewriting textbooks, but just giving ideological direction to existing local youth leaders who had been reared by the Party.<sup>38</sup> The comparison was not a fair one, to Rust’s chagrin, because the Hitler Youth did not attempt to incorporate any traditional educational elements into its curriculum.

Generally speaking, the process of change in the Third Reich could be divided into three categories: 1933-1937, a progressive process of restructuring; 1938-1942, a period of

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<sup>37</sup> Marianne Mostowski, “Personal Narratives,” trans. Chris Crawford, BDM History, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://bdmhistory.com/research-reference/personal-narratives>.

<sup>38</sup> Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling*, 27.

ideological alignment; and 1943-1945, a time of improvisation and decline as Germany's war effort failed.<sup>39</sup> The greatest concerns for Rust and for the Nazi leadership were the textbooks and teachers. As has been mentioned, the textbooks were already nationalistic, but not satisfactorily so for Nazi educators. The Nazi Party chief ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, upon noticing the large number of textbooks in circulation left over from the Weimar period, ordered Philipp Bouhler, head of the Party Censorship Office, to begin an audit of the ideological orientation of every text.<sup>40</sup> Bouhler determined that more work than just a weeding out process was required, and he recommended the creation of a new uniform text, or perhaps texts, for the whole nation; Rust put this recommendation into action. It was not until 1938 that a fully revised new group of published textbooks were available for all of Germany, though they were often not inherently dissimilar when compared to the former texts. The interceding years were characterized by the use of supplementary materials, such as primers and pamphlets, that were easier to prepare; these shorter texts were used along with older Weimar books and a few hastily-written Nazi texts that arrived before 1938.<sup>41</sup>

Hitler hated most of his former teachers, and he distrusted the ones who taught during the Weimar Republic.<sup>42</sup> As a result of his attitude, and because of the Nazis' desire to ensure political reliability, the *Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund* (NSLB), the National Socialist Teachers' League, was formed. The organization was officially recognized in 1929, but it

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<sup>39</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 187.

<sup>41</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 137.

<sup>42</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 13.

had little influence until after Hitler took power. During the Third Reich, intractable teachers were removed, and the NSLB made sure that others were put through special training courses for political re-education. The NSLB was suspended in 1943 due to the war, but at its peak it contained ninety-seven percent of all active teachers in the Third Reich.<sup>43</sup>

Once Rust finally achieved centralized control over the curriculum, and proper coordination between schools, he was undermined by Schirach and the Hitler Youth. In 1936, Schirach persuaded Hitler to enact the Hitler Youth Law, which made membership in the Hitler Youth compulsory (it was finally enforced in 1939). This law also elevated Schirach to the head of an independent *Reich* agency and ceased his ostensible subordination to the Education and the Interior Ministries; the effect of this was that Schirach, who disliked Rust and the entire state school system, could now do whatever he wanted as long as he remained in Hitler's good graces.<sup>44</sup> He did his best to have the Hitler Youth education supersede that of the schools.

In another major development that demonstrates the competing interests of top Nazis, Rust shortened the secondary school curriculum from nine years to eight years in January of 1938. On the surface, this was said to have been done to put Germany in line with other major European powers whose seniors graduated from school at age eighteen, not nineteen. The decision to discontinue the ninth secondary school grade (the thirteenth grade overall) may have been due to Rust being pressured by Göring, who proposed that those seeking

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<sup>43</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 17.

<sup>44</sup> Horn, "Hitler Youth and Educational Decline," 433.



admittance to universities should spend the extra year performing compulsory service on the land as part of his Four-Year (economic) Plan.<sup>45</sup> Göring was ordered directly by Hitler to initiate the Four Year Plan for the benefit in the German economy, so any requests made by him would have had the backing of the *Führer* and would have been considered critically important.

By 1938, the Nazi educational system had reached a point where any Weimar influence had been removed; however, an outside observer would have found the curricular changes to have been less apparent than is typically acknowledged in the historiography. These changes were the result of a gradual process where many of the ideological elements associated with Nazism had actually existed for some time in German schools, and many of the neutral school lessons consistent with classical or liberal education played more than a secondary role. The ideological ferocity with which various topics were taught by Nazi educators appears to have been unlike anything in Weimar Germany, but even this was not particularly noticeable in many subjects. The Nazi curriculum was a mixture of what was new and what was familiar, and contrary to popular perceptions, the latter was more ubiquitous.

### **Influential Figures of the Third Reich and Their Views on Education**

The bureaucracy and politics of the Third Reich is often described as the intersection of competing National Socialisms, not a single coherent system.<sup>46</sup> The same line of thought could be ascribed to education in Nazi Germany. The debate over Hitler's role in dictating

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<sup>45</sup> Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society*, 121.

<sup>46</sup> Alan Beyerchen, "What We Know about Naziism and Science," *Social Research* 59, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 641, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40970708>.

educational policy is part of the broader historical discourse weighing the force of his leadership against the workings of his subordinates in an intra-party competition. Several dozen prominent educators and Nazi political leaders had some influence over pedagogical theory, yet only a number of high ranking Party officials actually had the power to advance change at the national level. These leaders' theories on education usually referred to ideology independent of gender, and most of the time, these views were expressed in the abstract. When pertaining specifically to girls, motherhood would often be indicated as the end result. The parallel sphere for boys, as a matter of an educational goal, was not typically thought of as the workforce, but the battlefield.

Hitler, unsurprisingly, was the dominant force in the ideological direction that state schools followed during the Third Reich, yet predictably, he took little interest in actual policy. Bernhard Rust ostensibly was in charge of the entire state school system, but his work was often thwarted by other officials. Joseph Göbbels was involved because of his obligations to monitor the consumption of information. Alfred Rosenberg's duties as Party ideologue put him at odds with Rust, but only because Rosenberg saw himself as the Party representative opposite Rust's position in the state government. Rosenberg also felt that he could contribute his own publications for educational purposes. To some extent, Julius Streicher felt the same way, but while he was more successful than Rosenberg in getting materials into the classroom through his *Stürmer Verlag* publishing house, he was unable to significantly impact state pedagogical theory. Other than Hitler, perhaps the greatest authority in educational policy turned out to be Baldur von Schirach, though the youth leader

should not have had any influence at all. Schirach was a destabilizing force who actively worked to undermine Rust to further his own ambitions. His goal was to have the Hitler Youth function as the dominant, and if given the chance, the only, institution of education in Nazi Germany. None of the aforementioned individuals liked each other much, but all adored Hitler, and their confrontations spilled over into their strategy for schooling in Germany.

According to August Kubizek, Hitler's best friend while growing up, after listening to Wagner's *Rienzi*, about a leader who is betrayed by his subjects, Hitler's demeanor changed; Kubizek described it as a combination of ecstasy and rapture, and from that point forward, Hitler saw himself as a messiah.<sup>47</sup> Hitler was seventeen years old and living in Linz, Austria at the time. Determined to shape the world according to his own *Weltanschauung*, Hitler expressed his plan for the education of Germany's youth in *Mein Kampf* years before any of it could come to fruition. Speaking mostly in abstract terms, he claimed that the development of character was much more important than academic schooling.<sup>48</sup> Always contemptuous of real scholarship on the basis of its uselessness, Hitler thought that lessons in reshaping a value system, creating a national identity, and fostering racial awareness were more important.<sup>49</sup> To this extent, he felt that education should consist of separating important information from the unimportant. The actual development of official educational policy

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<sup>47</sup> Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 11.

<sup>48</sup> Patel, "Education, Schooling, and Camps," 185.

<sup>49</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 13.

very closely matched what Hitler had written in 1924, even with regards to the increased preeminence of certain subjects, like physical education or German history.<sup>50</sup> Hitler advocated for the liberal arts over the natural sciences since it more easily allowed for the teaching of nationalism and ideology. He believed that the *Volk* community should be emphasized to counter the class-emphasizing nationalism of the heavy industry barons, and to eclipse the Marxism of the Russian Bolsheviks.<sup>51</sup> As if to use *Mein Kampf* as a guidebook, the Nazi curriculum also favored *Erlebnis*, a knowledge based on experience, over the learning of facts. What is remarkable is that Hitler was able to achieve the educational policies he prescribed with almost no official decrees or directives. Blackburn describes Hitler as a leader who wanted to get things done, but found the “doctrinal hairsplitting intolerable.”<sup>52</sup> Hitler’s cult indeed reminds of Max Weber’s charismatic leader, whose followers obliged with blind obedience based on an irrational emotional bond.<sup>53</sup> In the case of Nazi Germany, Hitler’s subordinates dutifully, yet haphazardly, worked to carry out his implied orders.

Bernhard Rust was always ready to carry out Hitler’s wishes. This former teacher had a personality that combined the fanaticism of Streicher, the occultism of Rosenberg, and the work ethic of Schirach. In his role as Minister of Education, his primary goal was to implement *Gleichschaltung* in the curriculum by introducing an interdisciplinary approach to

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<sup>50</sup> Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling*, 15.

<sup>51</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children’s Literature*, 37.

<sup>52</sup> Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 32.

<sup>53</sup> Jaraus, “Nazi Adolescents,” 82.

teaching many of the primary subjects like German, history, and geography.<sup>54</sup> This was done so that many of the well-known ideological themes, like the promotion of race-based Nordicism, would be carried through multiple subjects in the curriculum. Hans Schemm, who had founded the National Socialist Teachers' League, commented that every teacher had the duty to fill all subjects with the National Socialist spirit.<sup>55</sup> Rust believed that such an approach would help restore to the German people a faith in themselves. He complained for years that public schools were unsuccessful in teaching the "living knowledge about Germania," and that too much time was wasted teaching a hatred for alien cultures instead of developing a pride in one's own heritage.<sup>56</sup>

Rust was also the driving force behind the *Napolas*, the only elite school system that enrolled girls, albeit just in select instances. These schools would eventually fall under the control of the SS, but initially, they were fully subordinate to Rust and the Ministry of Education. Rust's position was always to represent the interests of the state. When the first Adolf Hitler Schools opened in 1937, this was a direct challenge to his authority because these new institutions, founded primarily by Robert Ley, leader of the German Labor Front, and Schirach, had the same basic purpose as the *Napolas*, yet they were Nazi Party schools. The competing elite school systems mirrored the competition among top Nazi officials and Rust would find himself on the losing end.

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<sup>54</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 249.

<sup>55</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 5.

<sup>56</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 247, 194.

The problem was that Rust was not respected enough for his opinion to matter at the highest levels. As early as 1933, Rust issued a reprimand to the Hitler Youth to “respect the authority of the school and instruct its members fully to satisfy the demands of the school.”<sup>57</sup> He complained of the time constraints placed upon students which conflicted with their schoolwork, and he noted the openly inflammatory language of Hitler Youth leaders towards school teachers. Rust was even joined by Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick in voicing his concerns, but nothing changed. For years, he tried to implement Hitler’s *Völkisch* state, but he never surpassed being a minor player in the Nazi Party. In short, Rust was not part of Hitler’s inner circle, and his role actually declined over time.<sup>58</sup>

Alfred Rosenberg believed that he was the chief educator in Nazi Germany. While he did hold several official positions for the Party and Hitler had appointed him in charge of cultural and ideological education, the legal capacity by which he could issue official decrees for state schools was ambiguous. Hitler never bothered to clear up this confusion. Rosenberg had a particular fascination with Nordic Germanic folk heritage. He claimed that Nazi ideology was an “attitude rather than a dogma,” while asserting that Germans should be encouraged to feel the attitude of the fighting spirit of the German nation, which was supposed to be derived from their collective heritage.<sup>59</sup> This approach to education was taken up by many textbook authors. Dietrich Klagges, a well-known educator in the Third Reich, said that the goal of

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<sup>57</sup> Horn, “Hitler Youth and Educational Decline,” 429.

<sup>58</sup> Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling*, 183.

<sup>59</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children’s Literature*, 37.

heroic education was developing an assertive will, and that the best teachers were the ones that elicited the greatest emotional response from their students.<sup>60</sup> Another tenet of Rosenberg's plan to promote Nordicism and Germanic attitudes was the suppression of Catholicism and Protestantism.<sup>61</sup> Among the Nazi elites, only Himmler was as adamant in his hatred of Christianity and in his preoccupation with Paganism. Rust shared Rosenberg's interest in Paganism, though perhaps to a lesser degree, but Hitler and Göbbels did not endorse these ideas. Rosenberg had hoped that as many people as possible, including older school students, would read his most significant work, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*. Most of this text, which was pseudo-historical in nature, dealt with Nordic heritage and the Jewish question. English scholar John Arendzen critiqued it in 1936: "The absurdity of it all is so grotesque that the harm it can do must be very limited. But... the author of this drivel is the chief official in charge of education in Germany."<sup>62</sup> There was an ongoing joke among the upper echelons of the Third Reich that everyone claimed to have read Rosenberg's work, but no one actually had. Rosenberg's greater contribution to education may have been in his role deciding which books should be read in Germany; he had "white lists," which could be juxtaposed with Göbbels "black lists," and Rust was heavily pressured to work with these restrictions when dealing with library or censorship offices.<sup>63</sup> Rosenberg's "white lists" were instrumental in assuring that certain themes like honor and loyalty or struggle and work were

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<sup>60</sup> Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 95.

<sup>61</sup> Patel, "Education, Schooling, and Camps," 184.

<sup>62</sup> Engelmann, "German Education and Re-Education," 85.

<sup>63</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 238.

contained in textbooks.<sup>64</sup> Rosenberg was not as villainously opposed to Rust and the state school system as Schirach, but his meddling would have been divisive.

One of Rosenberg's main political rivals, Joseph Göbbels, actually had a similar effect on education, but from a different perspective. Rosenberg was primarily a Party functionary who dictated what one should read, while Göbbels, working as a representative of the state, was mostly concerned with what one should not read. As he was Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, many of his duties dealt with censorship. He was also a strong proponent of the idea that education could be used as an instrument of social control. Indeed, one of the main educational goals of any totalitarian state is to ensure that any future generation be taught to continue the ideology of the current state. Göbbels compared the educational process to a kneading machine in which individual people are converted into a coherent mass capable of being exploited for the political aims of the state.<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, and perhaps owing to his own strong educational background—he was the top student in his class at the *Gymnasium* and later earned his PhD—Göbbels felt that history and, more specifically, biographical history, did not need to be taught with a National Socialist yardstick.<sup>66</sup> This appears contradictory for someone who made a career out of the mastery of context and the simplicity of the slogan, but perhaps he thought that Germany's great men of history were satisfactorily heroic on their own. Göbbels was most influential in making sure

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<sup>64</sup> Kamenetsky, 187.

<sup>65</sup> Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, ii.

<sup>66</sup> W. H. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945* (New York: Cooper Square, 1975), 176.



people were not educated about anyone or anything deemed antithetical to National Socialism unless the mention of such people or concepts was undoubtedly negative. He was a strong proponent of removing from libraries and school reading lists any Communist texts or those written by anyone of Jewish descent. Göbbels and Rosenberg were enemies due to their sometimes overlapping job description, but their relationship to each other, and to Rust, could be considered cooperative compared to the rivalry between the Hitler Youth and the National Socialist Teachers Association.

Baldur von Schirach, a radical student organizer prior to his official role as the Nazi Youth Leader, was an outrightly disruptive force when it came to education in the Third Reich. He always claimed that schools placed too high a value on intellect at the expense of character and spirit. In this respect, he was in agreement with many educational theorists, and with Hitler himself. Ernst Krieck, a pedagogical expert in the Third Reich, claimed that it was most important to develop a pupil's personality not by abstract methods, but through strict discipline and training.<sup>67</sup> Schirach differed with his colleagues in the solution to this problem; he essentially argued that the Hitler Youth should be responsible for all youth schooling. The Hitler Youth did already educate youths through *Heimabend* sessions, but these political and historical social evenings were in no way comparable to an entire school curriculum. It is likely that Schirach had envisioned some expansion to this once weekly two-hour event, but one could speculate that if the Hitler Youth had in fact taken over

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<sup>67</sup> Pine, "Dissemination of Nazi Ideology," 96.

education for all boys and girls in Nazi Germany, that the result would have been a very limited academic instruction.

Schirach supported youth rebellion against schools with comments like: “Certainly youth has no respect for knowledge. It respects only the real man.”<sup>68</sup> He blamed the teachers—these were mostly Nazi teachers who had gone through NSLB training—for failing to understand the temperament of the youth, and he claimed that it was their “false authority, founded exclusively on examination papers and diplomas” that resulted in some students becoming unruly.<sup>69</sup> Schirach used his influence to have students’ “extra-educational performance” indicated on their report cards, and included for their graduation; Rust issued specific orders prohibiting this, but his decrees were mostly disregarded.<sup>70</sup> Schirach wanted his Hitler Youth leaders to function as students’ teachers in all subjects, and he wanted to be some sort of principal for all of it for the entire nation. Schirach finally fell out of favor with Hitler late in the war, likely because he had questioned some of the harsh treatments of Eastern Europeans and Jews (though he was an anti-Semite). At this point, the educational system was collapsing and it mattered little. During most of the Third Reich, Schirach was a Hitler favorite, and although Hitler did not allow him to take over the entire school system, he did permit him a vastly inordinate level of power over students and schools.

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<sup>68</sup> Horn, “Hitler Youth and Educational Decline,” 431.

<sup>69</sup> Horn, 430, 437.

<sup>70</sup> Horn, 435.

Patel argues that all the struggles for control of education should not be seen as a source of inefficiency, since this division of labor, as he calls it, mobilized and radicalized policies, which furthered Hitler's aims, thus productively working towards the desired result.<sup>71</sup> Rust would certainly not have agreed with this assessment. The argument could be made that disagreements between Rust, Rosenberg, and Göbbels promoted a firmer policy; however, the destructive influence of Schirach over schools, which had been fairly successful in transmitting National Socialist ideology, could not be seen as efficient in advancing the goals of the state or Party.

The question of whether Hitler's role, or the cumulative effort of his subordinates, was primarily responsible for educational policy remains. At a fundamental level, both the intentionalist and functionalist views are correct, which has given rise to the modified functionalist view which in respect to education would assert that Hitler's ideas were the driving force behind policy, but it was not his master plan, but the varied execution of the likes of Rust, Rosenberg, and hundreds of educators that put everything into motion. This middle-ground view, while seemingly more reasonable, fails to actually argue anything at all when admitting that depending on perspective, both sides have merit. If Hitler had voiced a completely different position on education, theoretically speaking, it is likely that such a plan would have eventually materialized. If his subordinates had been replaced with people unknown to history, would much have changed? Hitler decided the course of education in Nazi Germany, and the efforts of those working underneath him were not merely intended to

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<sup>71</sup> Patel, "Education, Schooling, and Camps," 187.

bring about his abstract ideology, but to execute his written and verbal statements as if they were orders.

### **The Structure of the School System**

The large number of schools operating in Nazi Germany is complicated by the fact that all of them served overlapping student populations with regards to grade level and age. A twelve year old student could have theoretically attended about ten different types of schools, and an even greater number if specialized or private schools are considered. This section provides a summary of every one of these schools. The information has been compiled from a number of sources, especially the work of Nazi educational theorist Rudolf Benze, who provided a thorough explanation of the overall framework.<sup>72</sup> It is important to note that changes did occur over the course of the twelve-year *Reich*. The outline described here pertains primarily to the years 1938 through 1942, but the structure of the school system before and after this period would have been similar. It should also be mentioned that there were exceptions to the rules described here. While most students would have gone through one of the indicated matriculation options, a few individual experiences may have varied in ways not described.

The most basic model of schooling in the Third Reich was the three-tiered *Volksschule-Mittelschule-Oberschule* paradigm. All schools would teach boys and girls separately except in a few cases where a very rural school had too small a student body to justify this. Every student in Germany, except for those attending private schools, or a few with special

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<sup>72</sup> Rudolf Benze, *Erziehung im Großdeutschen Reich* (Frankfurt am Main: Diesterweg, 1941).

circumstances, would have attended the basic *Volksschule* in grades one through four. At that point, which would usually have been at age ten, all students were placed on a designated path based mostly on their academic ability, but to some extent, on their financial status. The majority of students, and virtually all working class youth, would have remained for further instruction in the *Volksschule*. A smaller, but noteworthy, cohort would have attended the more sophisticated *Mittelschule*; this school was more popular with middle-class youths. Another small, but also significant, group continued on to the even more advanced secondary school system, of which the *Oberschule* would have been the most likely destination. Middle-class and upper-class youths who showed academic promise often went through this route. A fourth tier, the elite school system, was allegedly created to train the future leaders of the Nazi Party and state, but these schools were not more academically rigorous than the *Oberschule*. The two elite schools that existed for youths—there were others for young adults—were the Napolas and the Adolf Hitler Schools. The former did enroll girls at a few locations, but the latter was only for boys.

Those students that remained in the *Volksschule* after the first four years typically stayed on until the eighth grade. This represented the least rigorous curriculum, but it was the default path that the majority of students followed. After the eighth grade, a student graduated with a basic diploma and started training for a trade. This applied to boys and girls. Following this *Volksschule* graduation, but before their vocational training started, many students went on their *Landjahr* with the Hitler Youth. This is covered in “Chapter III” of this thesis.

In preparing for their career, a student could attend a variety of job-oriented schools after graduation. This includes the *Berufsschule*, *Berufsfachschule*, and the *Fachschule*. The first two were basically vocational schools, and the *Fachschule* would have been called a technical school, but such a description should not be understood as technical schools are conceptualized in the twenty-first century. They functioned more as schools that offered special training for a mid-level position. *Volksschule* graduates would first attend the vocational schools after which many would continue on to working-class jobs. Some would attend the technical school after vocational school, which would lead to a lower-level white collar job. Similar systems still exist in Germany and other European countries today.

Students who were more academically inclined and whose parents could afford a small tuition might attend the *Mittelschule* after age ten. This school would teach students up to the tenth grade, and it would include a more challenging syllabus with more course options. The most common outcome for *Mittelschule* graduates appeared to be a path that directly went through the *Fachschule*, followed by a middle-class career. Others sometimes started working right away. After the *Anschluß* with Austria in 1938, the Nazis wanted to incorporate the Austrian concept of the *Hauptschule* into the Third Reich.<sup>73</sup> This was a tuition-free school that offered a better education to students who demonstrated strong academic potential, but whose family did not have the financial means for them to attend any school other than a *Volksschule*. This school was not as advanced as an *Oberschule*, but was roughly equivalent to the *Mittelschule*. The school year of 1941-42 was the first year that

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<sup>73</sup> Carla Esden-Tempska, "Civic Education in Authoritarian Austria, 1934-38," *History of Education Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1990): 191, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/368656>.

any *Hauptschule* under this premise opened in Germany; there were not many of these schools.<sup>74</sup>

The most important secondary school in Germany was the *Oberschule*, which covered grades five through twelve (through grade thirteen until 1938). Secondary school students represented only a small portion of the overall student body, but the vast majority of all secondary school students attended the *Oberschule*. This school offered the most difficult curriculum and allowed students to choose a certain study track, which would have implied a specific syllabus in the higher grades, grades ten through twelve. The boys could choose between a language track or one in the sciences; the girls also had a language option, but most decided on the domestic science track. Most of the overall curriculum was the same for all students and included more intensive study in a variety of disciplines. The *Oberschule* usually led to students attending the university after passing their entrance exam, the *Abitur*, which remains the primary qualification for higher education in Germany today. Before attending university in the Third Reich, boys had to perform their two-year *Wehrdienst*, and boys and girls had to complete the six-month *Reichsarbeitsdienst*. This combination of obligatory military service and labor service was another way of encouraging a *Völkisch* feeling among the youth; for example, the labor service on the *Autobahn* or on a farm would have led to a respect for manual work, and an appreciation for those who performed it.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Patel, "Education, Schooling, and Camps," 184, 190.

<sup>75</sup> Jill Stephenson, "Girls' Higher Education in Germany in the 1930s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 10, no. 1 (January 1975): 59, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/260137>.

Another option only reserved for boys was the *Gymnasium*, a secondary school that was roughly as difficult as the *Oberschule* and was designed for the same outcome of attending university, but its curriculum purposefully catered to those seeking a classical education. This meant that these male students learned many foreign languages, including Latin and Greek, and read works by the great authors of antiquity. The *Gymnasium* was less popular in the Third Reich than it had been in the *Kaiserreich* or Weimar Germany. Even for highly educated youth, the classical humanist approach had fallen out of favor after 1933. One specialty school with a similar name, the *Musische Gymnasium*, was outside the system of classical education, and it also enrolled girls. This was an advanced school for youth with exceptional musical talents, and its overall curriculum was more closely related to an *Oberschule*.<sup>76</sup>

It should be noted that girls were allowed to attend boys' schools in exceptional cases if they received permission from a state authority.<sup>77</sup> This probably only applied to students attending the *Oberschule* or perhaps the *Gymnasium*, since non-secondary schools would not have provided a noticeable advantage to attending a boys' school. During the Weimar Republic in 1931-32, slightly under seven percent of students in boys' secondary schools were girls, and this percentage remained mostly unchanged in Nazi Germany when statistics were available in 1937.<sup>78</sup> One should remember that this still would have represented less

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<sup>76</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 30.

<sup>77</sup> Lisa Eschenauer, "Adolf Dorner's 'Mathematik im Dienste der Nationalsozialistischen Erziehung' - Politik im Mathematikunterricht" (master's thesis, University of Vienna, 2018), 8, <http://othes.univie.ac.at/52885>.

<sup>78</sup> Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society*, 125.



than one percent of all girls attending any school in the Third Reich when all students not attending a secondary school are counted. In 1938, Rust ordered that the inclusion of girls in boys schools should be allowed only under even narrower circumstances; his order also strictly prohibited any boy from attending a girls' school.<sup>79</sup> Apparently it was discovered that a fraction of one percent of students at girls' secondary schools were boys.<sup>80</sup> This was now completely forbidden.

The status of non-Aryan students during the Third Reich is another pertinent aspect of the development of the school system. The Nazis were able to quickly institute their racial aims in the classroom in April 1933 when the so-called Law against the Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities limited the number of Jewish students to one and five tenths percent of the student body of any school. This would have presented clear obstacles to Jews in some cities like Berlin and Hamburg where they made up a higher percentage of the population. The Nazis' goal was to push all Jews into separate Jewish private schools. In November 1938, the earlier law was amended to disqualify any Jewish student from attending a state school. Various, though usually less formal, attempts were also made to remove Romani children from state schools. The exclusion of Jews and others from the classroom had the effect of designating them as divorced from the national community. Students in the Third Reich would have been more receptive to condemnations of any

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<sup>79</sup> Stephenson, 125.

<sup>80</sup> Stephenson, 125.

stigmatized group. Any anti-Semitic elements in the curriculum could have been applied unopposed.

An alternative to the *Oberschule* was the *Aufbauschule*, which admitted *Volksschule* youths to a secondary school after the sixth grade, instead of after the fourth. Serving students between grades seven through twelve, the curriculum was mostly indistinguishable from the actual *Oberschule*. This was usually considered a cost-saving approach for poorer or more rural youths who could not afford to go to a secondary school right away. There were not many students who chose this route.

During the war, the Nazis decided to create an entirely separate boarding school system designed primarily for youths who lived outside of the *Reich* or those who lived in very rural settings with no local schooling options other than perhaps a small *Volksschule*. This school was called the *Heimschule*. Some children of often-traveling Party officials might also have been sent to this school. Unofficially, these schools also catered to children whose parents had been killed or to those kidnapped youths from the East who required “Germanization.” The *Heimschule* should not be confused with the wartime *Kinderlandverschickung* program which sent city youths to safer countryside schools if their home school was in danger of bombing. Such youths were placed with relatives, peasant families, or sometimes in special homes away from their parents, but they would then attend regular schools.<sup>81</sup> The *Heimschule* was considered to be a secondary school, but the curriculum was likely far less strenuous than anything a student might have encountered in the *Oberschule*, though the exact

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<sup>81</sup> Patel, “Education, Schooling, and Camps,” 185.

details of what was taught is mostly obscure because these schools were uncommon. Despite plans to substantially expand their influence across Germany, as with much else, the worsening war situation tempered any such efforts.<sup>82</sup>

In 1933, the first Napolas, the *Nationalpolitischen Erziehungsanstalten*, were opened. These were elite secondary schools which served youth between the ages of ten and eighteen, under the aegis of Bernhard Rust and the Ministry of Education. Students were chosen for their particularly favorable racial characteristics, their strength, their talents, and their loyalty to the Nazi Party. Most of these schools were for boys, but three Napolas, one each in Austria, Luxembourg and Baden, were opened for girls between 1938 and 1941.<sup>83</sup> The curriculum was similar to that in the *Oberschule*, but a greater emphasis was placed on physical training and racial ideology; for example, daily discussions of editorials in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the Nazi Party's main newspaper, was part of the lesson plan.<sup>84</sup> Boys were put through an intense boot camp where the foremost goal was to show courage; allegedly, one of the challenges for young male students was to grapple with Alsatian dogs.<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, girls received a more in-depth instruction in music, theater, singing, and dance, along with their existing extended physical education and racial ideology curriculum.<sup>86</sup> The training for Napola boys was obviously designed so they might eventually graduate into high

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<sup>82</sup> Gregory Paul Wegner, "Mothers of the Race: The Elite Schools for German Girls under the Nazi Dictatorship," *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 19, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 184, <http://www.ascd.org>.

<sup>83</sup> Wegner, "Mothers of the Race," 171.

<sup>84</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 76.

<sup>85</sup> Pine, 76.

<sup>86</sup> Wegner, "Mothers of the Race," 181.

ranking government or military positions. It is not clear what professional opportunities the girls were training for because this was never specified in contemporary sources, and the few girls who had enrolled at these schools did not graduate in time before the entire school system across Germany collapsed, so no anecdotal evidence exists.<sup>87</sup>

The Adolf Hitler Schools were boys-only Party schools first opened in 1937, designed for students between the ages of twelve and eighteen. These schools were under the authority of Baldur von Schirach, the Reich Youth Leader, and were intended to graduate future leaders for the Party, which is marginally distinct from the *Napolas*, which were to produce leaders for the state or military. The entrance requirements and the general curricular goals were similar to those of the *Napolas*, though the quality of the education was likely inferior because the AHS, due to not having any connection to the Ministry of Education, placed a lesser value and a shorter time commitment on academic learning. W. H. Koch points out that had Hitler won the war, the *Napola* and AHS graduates would have been the administrators of Europe's offices.<sup>88</sup> True as this may be, as a percentage of all students in Nazi Germany, very few boys and extremely few girls ever passed through them.

The Third Reich included a number of other schools that are beyond the scope of this thesis, mostly because their purpose was to teach young adults. The most obvious example is that of the *Hochschule*, the university. A cap of ten percent of the whole student body was set on female enrollment in 1933. There were too many college students and too few jobs in the

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<sup>87</sup> Wegner, 188.

<sup>88</sup> Koch, *Hitler Youth*, 199.

post-Depression era, and women were viewed as being less critical to the workforce. Trude Mohr, the leader of the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* from 1934 until 1937, shared her opinion that it was in accordance with the attitude of the BDM that any girl who wanted to go to the university to pursue a professional career should be able to do so.<sup>89</sup> BDM leaders never resisted Nazi officials, but many did desire some equality for women in the workforce and in education. Once the war started, the cap on enrollment for women was lifted, yet this had more to do with spots having been freed up at the university due to all the boys and young men being drafted than anything else. In general, university enrollment dropped during the Third Reich. There were several reasons for this, but perhaps more than restrictions due to government policies or unavailability due to the draft, pursuing a higher education was not as critical to success as it had been in the past; an aptitude for National Socialism was the key to an accomplished life, especially for boys.

Only one of Alfred Rosenberg's elite universities, the *Hohe Schule*, usually translated as "supreme school," was ever founded, and it was at Frankfurt am Main in 1941.<sup>90</sup> A handful of students debated the Jewish question, and the school petered out once the war progressed.<sup>91</sup> Other elite SS or Party schools for young male adults, notably the *NS-Ordensburg*, *NS-Reichsschule*, and *SS-Junkerschule* had slightly more success than

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<sup>89</sup> Stephenson, "Girls' Higher Education," 137.

<sup>90</sup> Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, trans. Jean Steinberg (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 263.

<sup>91</sup> Koch, *Hitler Youth*, 202.

Rosenberg's Nazi university, yet these schools were even further removed from any academics, focusing primarily on paramilitary training.

Various private and religious schools, particularly those serving Catholics, continued to operate in the Third Reich, this despite Hitler's insistence and the Party's best efforts to completely subsume all schools in Germany. The curriculum would have varied widely at these institutions, and schools beyond the reach of the Nazi government are outside the domain of this thesis. It is merely important to state that they continued to exist despite the optics of a complete National Socialist takeover in 1933.

One final school that deserves mention is the *Sonderschule*, the school for the mentally disabled. Those students that were considered to be only mildly disabled, those that had an ability to work in some capacity, were placed in the *Sonderschule*. Educators who worked at these schools knew that their situation was tenuous, so to protect their own job, they adapted to National Socialist ideology; these school teachers worked in conjunction with state physicians to ensure that their students were sterilized, and later in the Third Reich, once it became an acceptable practice, any students who were uneducable would be flagged for euthanasia.<sup>92</sup> The economic recovery during the years 1936 and 1937 did provide more hope for *Sonderschule* students. The worker shortage created a situation where they could be trained to work in very basic working-class jobs where they could be productive and earn a

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<sup>92</sup> Wayne L. Sengstock, Hannelore Magerhans-Hurley, and Angela Sprotte, "The Role of Special Education in the Third Reich," *Education and Training in Mental Retardation* 25, no. 3 (September 1990): 232, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23878598>.

living.<sup>93</sup> There were not very many of these schools, and only rudimentary practical lessons were part of the curriculum.

The large number of different schools operating in Nazi Germany might appear confusing and inefficient, yet from a structural standpoint, this was actually an improvement over the Weimar Republic; myriad schools operated during that period as well. Before 1933, the German states had autonomy in matters of education, and the Nazis actually simplified the situation when they tried to centralize the system. The greatly varying curriculum of the German states was clarified and synchronized. After 1945, most of those individuals who graduated from a school during the Third Reich were able to apply their credentials in the post-war era. The exception, ironically, were the elite school graduates. The education at the Napolas and the AHS, along with any Hitler Youth leadership accreditation, was considered to be mostly useless in Germany after the war, regardless of the relative quality it signified.<sup>94</sup>

### **Teachers and the NSLB**

The transmission of the state-approved curriculum was like a transaction between the Nazi government and the student, with the teacher acting as an intermediary. Some teachers may have been ardent Nazis and lectured dutifully about academic topics according to the Party line. Other teachers may have been National Socialists in name only and could have communicated Nazi ideals with a cursory effort and a sly attitude—just enough to appear loyal to the regime. It is impossible to know exactly what teachers said in the classroom.

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<sup>93</sup> Sengstock, Magerhans-Hurley, and Sprotte, “Role of Special Education,” 233.

<sup>94</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 90.

One could speculate that most roughly followed the online of the textbooks and that the degree of ideology suggested during lectures would have varied widely according to the disposition of any individual teacher. More is known about the NSLB, the National Socialist Teachers' League, and about how some teachers during the Third Reich attended special training camps, while others were fired for political or ethnic reasons. In many ways, the experiences of teachers were not dissimilar from that of their own students. It was a period of ups and downs with the only constant being the uncertainty of what lay ahead.

The origins of the *Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund* (NSLB), can be found in the Bavarian town of Bayreuth as early as 1926 in the form of a loose association of educators.<sup>95</sup> A year later it was converted into a legitimate organization by elementary school teachers Max Kolb and Hans Schemm. The latter took on the role of its leader until his accidental death in 1935. In 1929, the NSLB was officially recognized as a sub-organization of the NSDAP on the national level. Hans Schemm had been part of the old guard of the Nazi Party and embraced strong nationalistic and *Völkisch* ideas; he had been influenced by the works of Fichte, Wagner, Nietzsche, and Chamberlain, all of whom he quoted in his speeches.<sup>96</sup> As an able administrator, he was a quintessential leader in the Third Reich. Schemm did not view the NSLB as a conventional professional society representing the interests of teachers in the classroom, but more an assertive force, as if the organization was a teacher's battalion in the

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<sup>95</sup> Uwe Schmidt, *Lehrer im Gleichschritt: Der Nationalsozialistische Lehrerbund Hamburg* (Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, 2006), 11.

<sup>96</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 14.



SA.<sup>97</sup> Even before the Nazis' breakthrough victories at the ballot box in 1930, he wanted the NSLB to function as a unit that would help bring Hitler to power.

Initially, Schemm's organization remained insignificant. In 1929, it had only a few hundred members, most of whom were young radicalized teachers who had been disillusioned with the Weimar Republic. The NSLB inflamed the generational conflict, and its leaders constantly argued that the older teachers did not have the right attitude to teach the youth. The early cohort of members was probably more attracted to cultural politics and nationalism than anything related to material interests.

German Chancellor Heinrich Brüning thought that the best way to combat the economic downturn and the impact of war reparations would be a series of austerity measures. Brüning pursued new fiscal reforms that included cutbacks on spending and slashing salaries and pensions of civil servants. Since the Reichstag did not support his policies, Brüning used Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution to initiate his plan. President Paul von Hindenburg, who had always been distrustful of parliamentary politics, was convinced the emergency powers provision was appropriate in times of economic and political unrest, an unfortunate situation which defined the majority of the Weimar era. The results were predictable: Teacher salaries dropped, layoffs skyrocketed, the civil service became radicalized, and the Nazis courted anyone who had been affected.<sup>98</sup> The expansion of the NSLB membership

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<sup>97</sup> Marjorie Lamberti, "German Schoolteachers, National Socialism, and the Politics of Culture at the End of the Weimar Republic," *Central European History* 34, no. 1 (2001): 59, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4547033>.

<sup>98</sup> Lamberti, "German Schoolteachers," 56.

soon followed; by April of 1932, it was at five thousand, and immediately before Hitler took power, it grew to eleven thousand.<sup>99</sup>

After the *Machtübernahme* and Hitler's appointment to the Chancellorship, teachers and other civil servants rushed to become members of the NSDAP and all its sub-organizations like the NSLB; this new wave of membership had much more to do with opportunism and economic self-interest than ideology. Horn claims that German teachers quickly "coordinated themselves" to the emergent Nazi state after Hitler came to power in January of 1933.<sup>100</sup> The membership numbers ballooned into the hundreds of thousands by the end of the year, with estimates differing depending on the source. The increasing membership was also due to the integration of competing teachers' associations into the NSLB. Much as rival youth groups were forced to relinquish their members into the Hitler Youth, traditional teachers' organizations were absorbed into the National Socialist Teachers' League. It should be noted that although teachers were over-represented in their membership in Nazi organizations when compared to the general population, lawyers and physicians comprised a greater percentage-based membership.<sup>101</sup> Lawyers and physicians were not more zealous than educators, but Nazi membership was even more critical to their profession than that of teachers.

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<sup>99</sup> Lamberti, 58.

<sup>100</sup> Horn, "Hitler Youth and Educational Decline," 427.

<sup>101</sup> Lamberti, "German Schoolteachers," 81.

At the same time that NSLB membership was skyrocketing, the Nazis were removing undesirable teachers from the classroom. The basis for this was the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service of April 1933. The original draft of the law would have removed all Jews from the teaching profession regardless of their personal circumstances. Before going into effect, President Hindenburg sent a letter to Hitler asserting that those Jews who “bled for Germany” should be exempt from the law; Hitler sent a letter in return voicing some complaints, but clearly indicating his deference to the old Field Marshall.<sup>102</sup> The actual law was passed with an allowance to retain their civil service status for Jews who had served in the Great War, had a father who died in World War One, or who had been in the civil service since before the war had started. A few years after Hindenburg had died, these provisions were no longer acknowledged. Starting in 1933, Rust and the NSLB purged the teaching profession of all Jews who were not exempt and those individuals who had been a member in left-of-center political parties. This would have included anyone who had been part of the communist KPD, socialist SPD, or the small internationalist liberal party, the DDP. Some teachers were immediately identified for removal and others quit, knowing what was about to happen. For less obvious cases, storm troopers actually visited schools and questioned teachers in front of their pupils, expelling or arresting those found to be

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<sup>102</sup> Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, and Abraham Margalio, eds., *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 37–39.

disloyal.<sup>103</sup> The replacements for those dismissed were often better National Socialists than they were teachers.

Rust claimed that the chief purpose of teachers in schools was to train students to believe that the state is more important than the individual.<sup>104</sup> Along these lines, the NSLB sought to indoctrinate teachers in National Socialist ideology and in loyalty to Hitler. The ideal teacher was not supposed to be overly concerned with the intellectual maturing of the student, instead favoring their character development. This would allow students to graduate ready to carry out their obligations as part of the national community. The Nazis did realize that university professors must have specialized knowledge, and that they must impart this onto their students, but for all grades lower than the university, the academic qualifications of teachers were of secondary concern.

Membership in the NSLB often meant that one did not have to take the professional examinations that were compulsory during the Weimar Republic.<sup>105</sup> In fact, one of the primary duties of the Nazi teachers' association was to provide reports on the political reliability of teachers for future appointments or promotions. Membership in the NSLB was never made compulsory, but for all intents and purposes, this was the only way for a teacher to get hired and advance in the Third Reich. The organization was also responsible for all proposals regarding any question of education; the NSLB and Rust often collaborated and

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<sup>103</sup> Charles A. Beard, "Education under the Nazis," *Foreign Affairs* 14, no. 3 (April 1936): 442, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20030743>.

<sup>104</sup> Engelmann, "German Education and Re-Education," 63.

<sup>105</sup> Koch, *Hitler Youth*, 172.

exchanged drafts for future guidelines.<sup>106</sup> Teachers were actually given additional duties as members, usually in the form of organizing and participating in extracurricular activities. This became more frequent once the war began.

One of the few alleged benefits for a teacher in the NSLB were the curriculum suggestions. The NSLB published a number of journals, like the *Deutsche Erzieher*, which included classroom recommendations. In one example, teachers were given suggestions for which anti-Semitic concept to highlight when teaching about recent historical events. Teachers were instructed to mention “the Jew plants himself” when lecturing about Germany before the war.<sup>107</sup> As Germany struggled due to the blockade at the end of World War One, teachers were told to explain “the Jew becomes prosperous,” and the ways Jews exploit others.<sup>108</sup> Concerning the plight of National Socialism and the youth moving forward, the designated theme was “the final struggle against Jews.”<sup>109</sup> It is unclear what effect these journal recommendations had since they were not official educational policy. It is more ambiguous what teachers actually told students. Koch, who had been a student in the Third Reich, writes in his monograph of a particular phenomenon that emerged in the classroom. A sort of “double talk” was considered normal and all students were aware of it; a teacher

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<sup>106</sup> Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling*, 23.

<sup>107</sup> Wegner, 124.

<sup>108</sup> Wegner, 124.

<sup>109</sup> Wegner, 124.

might mention their own view and the official Party view on a pertinent issue.<sup>110</sup> This was done in order to not appear seditious, while still teaching according to personal belief.

Perhaps the most significant task of the NSLB was to indoctrinate teachers through special training camps that usually lasted about a week. Teachers were not taught any academics at all; moreover, participants in this program often studied *Mein Kampf* and worked through various ideological questions like racial studies or the issues of Germany's colonies.<sup>111</sup> Teachers who were under the age of fifty actually went through physical training, including gymnastics or a morning run. Teachers were placed in troops and they went on hikes, performed a morning flag raising, and listened to speeches from Party leaders. Teachers were supposed to become better at understanding youth, so perhaps it should come as no surprise that the teacher training camps appeared very similar to week-long excursions in the Hitler Youth. There was usually an average of one ideological theme per day.

Examples of lecture topic titles included the following: "The Women of the National Socialist State," "The German Peasantry as the Bearer of the German Population," and "Race: A Central Concept of the National Socialist Worldview."<sup>112</sup> Sometimes, teachers in specific subjects would hear special lectures; for example, biology teachers heard lectures titled "The Reproduction Battle," and "Ancestral Biology and Breeding Lore."<sup>113</sup> Most teachers claimed to have enjoyed their experiences, yet after one NSLB camp supervisor in

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<sup>110</sup> Koch, *Hitler Youth*, 167.

<sup>111</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 16.

<sup>112</sup> Pine, 19.

<sup>113</sup> Pine, 19.

Kettwig admonished attendees by referring to Christianity as blasphemy, several female Catholic teachers left crying.<sup>114</sup> By 1939, it was estimated that about two-thirds of teachers in Germany had been to an NSLB camp.<sup>115</sup> Most teachers may have gone to a camp more for the experience, and to appear to be engaged with National Socialism, than for the benefit of their teaching skills.

The influence of the NSLB actually declined throughout most of the Third Reich. This was especially true after Hans Schemm died in an airplane accident in March of 1935 and his successor, Fritz Wheeler, proved to be less capable. Since Schemm had built the organization with the intent of creating a revolutionary corps, the NSLB suffered from the same issues as the SA after Hitler actually took power. Especially after the vast majority of teachers quickly subjugated themselves to the authority of the state through their membership, the purpose of the NSLB, and its fighting spirit, was superfluous. Throughout the late 1930's and during the war, NSLB leaders exerted much effort trying to convince the top Nazi officials that the organization still served a purpose. Almost all German teachers were already members and there were no further battles to be waged. Once Germany did actually go to war, the case for the NSLB suffered tremendously because it was estimated that fifty percent of elementary school teachers and forty percent of secondary school teachers were drafted.<sup>116</sup> Nazi priorities changed and the financial administration decided to

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<sup>114</sup> Pine, 18.

<sup>115</sup> Pine, 16.

<sup>116</sup> Engelmann, "German Education and Re-Education," 94-95.

no longer finance the NSLB in 1943; the organization completely dissolved. Over three hundred thousand teachers, representing ninety-seven percent of those active, were NSLB members at its peak. After the war and the Third Reich had ceased, various traditional teacher organizations were re-formed with many of the same objectives as had existed during the Weimar Republic.



## Chapter II: The School Curriculum during the Third Reich

The curriculum for students in Nazi Germany reached its most complete organizational form during the years 1938 through 1942. These years represented a period when Nazi efforts to establish their *Weltanschauung* within the state educational system reached the height of its development before World War Two disrupted the domestic situation in Germany to the extent that schooling was curtailed or even abandoned. New textbooks, with requisite changes due to the perceived inadequacy of those used during the Weimar Republic and the *Kaiserreich*, were not consistently available until 1938. It took time to publish a fresh curriculum, and the conflicting nature of Nazi ideology must have made the task more difficult. The incorporation of Austria during the *Anschluss* and the subsequent acquisition of the Sudetenland also caused some delays for the Nazis in applying their system universally across the entire nation. The years from Hitler's ascension in January of 1933 until the new school year in 1938 represented less of a precursor system, but more of a concerted effort to bring the curriculum in every school across Germany in line with this single set of state-imposed standards. The same subjects were taught throughout the Third Reich, and each was placed into one of six categories.<sup>117</sup> The focus of this thesis concerns girls' education, yet the overall structuring of the curriculum for girls was nearly identical to that of the boys. The most important of these categories was *Deutschkunde*, which can be best understood as the study of everything German. This included German itself, which consisted of language and literature, along with the subjects of history, geography, art, and music. This category was

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<sup>117</sup> Benze, *Erziehung im Großdeutschen Reich*, 54.

considered the basis for the transmission of German culture. It would also be the one that included the most obvious National Socialist bias. There were two other fundamentally academic categories; namely, the natural science and mathematics group and the foreign language group. Sciences included chemistry, physics, and biology. A number of foreign languages were theoretically an option, but location and teacher availability dictated what an individual student may have had an opportunity to learn. Girls usually just learned English. Physical education, a very important subject in Nazi Germany, was alone in a category that focused on the development of one's body. Another single-subject category, one which received considerably less favoritism, was the study of religion. The final category for girls included the various subjects designed specifically for the female sex. The parallel category for boys included extended and more advanced studies in academic subjects particular to each student's chosen educational focus. "Chapter II" of this thesis will analyze the education girls received in every subject offered in state schools of the Third Reich.

### **German**

The most important subject within *Deutschkunde* was German. Especially for younger children, an effort was made to teach the traditional grammar, but the bulk of the instruction concerned language communication and reading literature. Naturally, students were taught to develop their language proficiency through both speaking and reading exercises. Most of the time for all students and especially with older pupils in upper grades, there was a focus on developing one's "language awareness"; this was to have been achieved through the study of literature by notable German poets and thinkers, with the goal of fostering a connection to

German culture.<sup>118</sup> In the very first grade of any *Volksschule*, all subjects in the curriculum were combined, with German featuring prominently. In grades two through four, German instruction was merged with *Heimatkunde*, a location-specific education pertaining to the culture and history of the region within Germany where the school was located. The content of German lessons sometimes continued to overlap with history in higher grades, but the two subjects were almost always taught during separate hours. For students that remained in the *Volksschule* for grades five through eight, as well as for those that attended the *Mittelschule* or *Oberschule*, weekly German instruction was often five hours or more per week.

Education in German was injected with Nazi ideology in fragments. An analysis of the material that girls would have encountered at all grade levels reveals examples of a German curriculum containing some elements that were essentially unpolitical, and others that would have been considered outrageous in any classroom outside of the Third Reich. Given that German studies were inherently intertwined with the education of culture, the line between what was National Socialism propaganda and what would have been considered a balanced education was frequently blurred. To this extent, German studies presented a mixture of the ideological with the unbiased more so than in any other subject, yet one still finds evidence that National Socialist components in the curriculum were placed adjacent to, or theoretically built on top of, the existing framework of a well-rounded education.

The Nazis maintained the same material that existed under previous governments, but added a race agenda that would provide the conceptual orientation for the entire course of

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<sup>118</sup> Eschenauer, "Politik im Mathematikunterricht," 14.

study.<sup>119</sup> Any type of reading material could be placed into one of three categories: Conventional liberal education, positively-oriented *Völkisch* instruction, or negatively-oriented racist instruction. Historians have typically focused only on the second and third categories, yet education that would have been considered to be “normal” formed a significant part of the curriculum.

One of the most consistently encountered *Völkisch* themes in German reading textbooks pertained to the romanticism of the family, particularly the rural family. Away from urban life, the rural family was portrayed as the most important unit within the national community. This ideal was extended to the concept of motherhood, which was frequently emphasized in girls’ textbooks. Through the expression of motherhood, a girl is taught to strive to become the paragon of virtue and the backbone of any household. The heroes of sagas are also regularly the focus of both poetry and prose on girls’ reading lists. Sometimes abstract heroes of Nordic tribes, or the later Germanic tribes, according to the Nazis’ articulation of ancient history, were substituted for the heroes of sagas. The women in these stories were either devoted to their family or true to their *Volk*; if not, such plot developments were adjusted for emphasis or changed outright. Publishers sometimes relied on short stories that abridged and commented on ancient or medieval primary sources. The degree to which a piece was written true to its original translation was contingent on how closely that piece agreed with the Nazi *Weltanschauung*. Stories never needed to be radically re-written since only reasonably applicable pieces were selected for inclusion. Educators also felt that

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<sup>119</sup> Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling*, 26.

characters like Bergthora (Njal's wife), or Aud (Gisli's wife) demonstrated such a deep loyalty to their husbands that it would be acceptable for girls to read these sagas and others like them without adjustment.<sup>120</sup> Finally, an appreciation of nature and a love of one's homeland are found in almost every reader. Nature in story often coincides with folktales that were popular with girls in the *Volksschule*. The intended goal of all this material was not to impart a matter of knowledge, but to instill an attitude of value.<sup>121</sup>

Short stories or sometimes entire primers that focused on negative themes were less diverse and more direct. At a fundamental level, there was a single target, and a singular goal: To disparage the Jews. Many of these stories were included not only with the goal of furthering the anti-Semitic doctrine of the state, but with the intention of having the content function as a catalyst in bringing about the conditions prescribed in the texts.<sup>122</sup> While these hate-filled short stories comprised only a small percentage of the overall German curriculum, most observers could easily conclude that this was rather flagrant political socialization.

It should be noted what was not included in the German studies curriculum. Anything that was not connected to German history, German literature, or German culture was almost completely absent in German textbooks. A few stories of exotic cultures in Africa might be included only because these were relevant to the German "colonial question." Some very neutral, though not ostensibly German, children's literature might be included since it was not

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<sup>120</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 111.

<sup>121</sup> Koch, *Hitler Youth*, 145.

<sup>122</sup> Daniel Feldman, "Reading Poison: Science and Story in Nazi Children's Propaganda," *Children's Literature in Education* (2021): 20, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-021-09454-9>.

considered a threat. Stories or poems that were technically German, but not sufficiently so due to their politically or racially unreliable connections, would have been omitted. The famous poem “Lorelei” by Heinrich Heine, a German poet of Jewish descent, was significant enough that it was given a pass, but only when it was labeled as having been written by “author unknown.”<sup>123</sup> Non-German material was viewed as a corrupting, as opposed to a potentially enriching, influence.

A German reader for the second grade in the *Volksschule* begins with a poem about praying, with a verse that is dedicated to both God, and Germany; this is followed immediately with an ode to one’s mother.<sup>124</sup> Over the course of the next few lessons, likely comprising several weeks of instruction, the reader contains both poetry and prose concerning several child-appropriate themes such as feeling ill, eating breakfast, and waking up in the morning. These stories are endearing and do not contain any elements that one would consider to be National Socialist in character. Some familiar children’s literature like “Hansel and Gretl,” “Little Red Ridding Hood,” and “Sleeping Beauty,” or the less familiar, yet similar, “The First Stork,” or “Three Rabbits” are all found on the pages of this reader. Young girls would also find gratifying tales about assisting one’s mother with the cooking, or a song literally about little girls. The most out-of-place story in the entire reader is a single two-paragraph selection about a visit from the *Führer*. Still relatively tame, the tale merely

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<sup>123</sup> Engelmann, “German Education and Re-Education,” 76.

<sup>124</sup> *Deutsches Lesebuch für Volksschulen. 2. Schuljahr* (Saale: Verlag von Hermann Schroedel, 1937), 3.

describes the excitement everyone feels at Hitler's visit.<sup>125</sup> Designed for children, benign references to National Socialism like this did set the stage for later indoctrination. For the time being, for second graders, most of the stories were ordinary and usually about animals, as in "Das dumme Kätzchen," or about life's adventures, as in "Umzug." The goal of this particular reader was to teach young girls to read, and nothing more.

Another reader, this one from a girls' *Volksschule* at the seventh grade level, does include a more ideological bent, likely due to being appropriate for older students.<sup>126</sup> The reader, containing a fair mixture of poetry and prose, includes many excerpts from the works of Martin Luther and Goethe; furthermore, many short stories contain nationalistic or *Völkisch* themes, while some are written about the virtues of women, and a few are in reference to the Jews. The reader shows evidence of the "side-by-side" phenomenon when it comes to liberal education and National Socialist education; for example, girls would read a story about the work of Homer, but also a tale about "godless" Jews constantly perpetrating lies.<sup>127</sup> Most of the nationalistic stories are not necessarily pan-Germanic, but simply slanted towards German patriotism, and thus not dissimilar from what would have been read during the Weimar Republic or the *Kaiserreich*. An excerpt written by Johann Gottfried Herder entitled "Shakespeare" is representative of the union between nationalism and liberal education found

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<sup>125</sup> *Deutsches Lesebuch für Volksschulen*, 89.

<sup>126</sup> Karl Buchholz et al., *Deutsche Sendung: Lesebuch für Mädchen. Siebente Klasse* (Bielefeld/Leipzig: Verlag von Velhagen und Klasing, 1940).

<sup>127</sup> Buchholz et al., *Siebente Klasse*, 89, 42-43.

in German texts.<sup>128</sup> This selection, only about six pages long, explains drama starting with Ancient Greece, but most of the content actually lauds expressions of romantic nationalism, which has always been a key component of Nazism. A same-age boys textbook would have contained a large number of militaristic stories which are absent here. Instead, girls could read about the queen of Prussia in the abstract to learn about a respected female figure.<sup>129</sup> The mostly female teachers in girls' schools would have been instructed to further highlight important attributes or actions related to female characters in any of the stories. A modern student might respond negatively to some of its contents, but this reader would have provided a seventh grade girl with a reasonably varied education for the times.

An eighth grade reader used by the same female student at the same school was surprisingly dissimilar to the one used for the seventh grade.<sup>130</sup> This reader is even more female-oriented, and it includes political or ideological selections that were not fully incorporated into the reader for the seventh grade; this was likely due to the thinking that many of the girls in the eighth grade *Volksschule* class are about to graduate, and some political indoctrination would be indicated. More female authors are found on these pages, which was a rarity for textbooks in Nazi Germany. Girls could read a piece by Mathilde Wesendonck, whose verses were used by her friend, Richard Wagner.<sup>131</sup> Multiple stories by

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<sup>128</sup> Buchholz et al., 111-17.

<sup>129</sup> Buchholz et al., 223.

<sup>130</sup> Karl Buchholz et al., *Deutsche Sendung: Lesebuch für Mädchen. Achte Klasse* (Bielefeld/Leipzig: Verlag von Velhagen und Klasing, 1940).

<sup>131</sup> Buchholz et al., *Achte Klasse*, 143.



Agnes Miegel, and a poem by Annete von Droste-Hülshoff give the reader a further feminine touch.<sup>132</sup> Even if written by men, stories about women or those designed to inspire, or perhaps warn, women fill the pages of this reader. There are selections about the proud and loving nature of German women, about relationships with men, about Schiller's mother, and another piece by Schiller applauding the strength of the woman.<sup>133</sup> The Nazis were fortunate that much of what would be considered liberal German education could also have been used as nationalistic or fascist propaganda; the reader also includes the work of Nietzsche and Fichte. Especially towards the end of the text, presumably at a time when the students were particularly close to graduation, the reader includes pieces consistent with National Socialist ideology. Some of these selections, such as a piece by biblical scholar Paul de Lagarde about Jewishness in Germany, maintained an academic tone, but others, like an excerpt of a speech by Hitler about work and fulfilling one's duties to the state, did not.<sup>134</sup> The reader is more predictable and less rich due to the authors' insistence on promoting ideology to the girls in the eighth grade.

To function as a comparison to the previously mentioned seventh grade textbook used in the *Volksschule*, another seventh grade text from the much more advanced girls' *Oberschule* demonstrates some interesting differences: This is *Hirt's Deutsches Lesebuch*, a textbook from a publisher that had existed since the German Empire.<sup>135</sup> The stories themselves are

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<sup>132</sup> Buchholz et al., 153.

<sup>133</sup> Buchholz et al., 157.

<sup>134</sup> Buchholz et al., 171-73, 208.

<sup>135</sup> Johannes Eilemann et al., *Hirt's Deutsches Lesebuch* (Breslau: Ferdinand Hirt, 1939).

longer, but that is to be expected. The subject matter is considerably more sophisticated in dealing with relevant matters in Germany's past and those pertinent to contemporary Germany. The stories contained in this reader follow National Socialist themes and are written with Third Reich interests in mind, yet everything is presented carefully, though not necessarily with impartiality. *Hirt's* is a good example of how National Socialist education was subsumed into an existing educational structure. Girls would read a tale about "Red Riga" that takes place during the Latvian War of Independence from the Red Army.<sup>136</sup> The text clearly implies that the German military units were the "good guys" and that the Red Army units were the "bad guys." Discussion of Bolshevism as an enemy was not present in any meaningful capacity in the lower *Volksschule* girls' textbooks. Another story addresses the "colonial question" by narrating the events of the Herero uprising in German South West Africa when the *Kaffern*, which is a derogatory term, needed to be put down to make the land safe again, especially for the German woman who was the protagonist in the story.<sup>137</sup> A higher level of maturity is assumed of the girls reading these selections. One short story is about Katharina von Bora, Martin Luther's wife, and someone who went through hardship throughout portions of her life and then died in the end.<sup>138</sup> The moral of the story is her devotion to her children and as a wife, but a story without a happy ending was unheard of in any other text. Christa Kamenetsky asserts that the Nazis cleverly emphasized Romantic

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<sup>136</sup> Eilemann et al., *Hirt's Deutsches Lesebuch*, 40.

<sup>137</sup> Eilemann et al., 216.

<sup>138</sup> Eilemann et al., 130.

folklore and pre-Nazi *Völkisch* trends to promote their ideology.<sup>139</sup> Likewise, in an effort to promote an interest in the Nazis' stated valiant heritage and to encourage a girl to identify with her ancestors, this reader also includes a story about the *Nibelungen*, adapted from the original epic poem based on the Germanic heroic legend.<sup>140</sup> Every ideological theme is cleverly covered in at least one selection in *Hirt's Deutsches Lesebuch*.

Generally speaking, this text also included a large number of ordinary stories or poems about motherhood or the landscape, staples of any Nazi Germany reader, and something that would not have been atypical in a Weimar textbook. Among the dozens of ideologically neutral mini-chapters is a poem entitled "Meiner Mutter," about a mother's love, and a story, "Die Karlsdorfer," about the heroics of certain Austrian locals after a dam break. Girls read much routine prose and poetry very similar to either of these two selections alongside stories with ideological themes. *Hirt's Deutsches Lesebuch* is nationalistic and recognizable as a Nazi reader, but it also contained enough quality content that one would be hesitant to refer to it simply as pure propaganda.

Children's literature frequently contained positively-oriented themes with National Socialist undertones. Kamenetsky argues that Nazi ideologists thought that young people were most susceptible to an idealistic appeal rather than hate propaganda, and thus they would be strongly influenced by a positive *Völkisch* approach.<sup>141</sup> Oftentimes, this was

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<sup>139</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 23.

<sup>140</sup> Eilemann et al., *Hirt's Deutsches Lesebuch*, 187.

<sup>141</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 45.

presented in schools by the use of short primers that were used in conjunction with regular textbooks. In a primer designed for young children in the state of Württemberg, a young boy and girl march alongside a military regiment waving, singing, and acting as proud Germans.<sup>142</sup> The same primer describes a Pagan solstice festival in such riveting detail, including an image of children standing around a large flame, that anyone could become excited at the prospect of taking part in such a celebration.<sup>143</sup> The ever-present message was that boys and girls were taught to do things with their community, for their community, and that this should be an enjoyable endeavor.

Educating young girls and boys using short primers was closely associated with the use of picture books, which are naturally useful for children who did not yet possess advanced reading skills. The Nazis frequently attempted to demonstrate the beauty of their nation and the nobility of their *Volk* by having picture books available to young children in schools. This was especially practical alongside folk rhymes or fairy tales, yet pictures would have also been employed anytime a storyline included references to any of the following: German achievements, including highways and architecture; the home and country, with pictures of the landscape or forests; traditions of Nordic origin, such as symbols or festivals; or the mother and child, with scenes of nursing or happy families.<sup>144</sup> Almost without fail, Nazi

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<sup>142</sup> Randall Bytwerk, trans., *Fibel für die Volksschulen Württembergs* (Stuttgart: Verlag der Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1941), "Our Army," <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/textbk03.htm>.

<sup>143</sup> Bytwerk, *Fibel für die Volksschulen*, "The Solstice."

<sup>144</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 152-53.

educational materials used every opportunity to demonstrate to children what “good Nazis” looked like.

While many contemporary educators and propagandists shared the view that positive messaging would achieve the best results, Julius Streicher, who was the *Gauleiter* of Franconia and promotor of the publishing house *Stürmer Verlag*, decided that the introduction of horrific short stories with crude stereotypes and vulgar imagery should serve the purpose of teaching children about Jews. These stories were intended to show a contrast with Aryan humanity. Three anti-Semitic books, which were to be used in schools as supplementary primers, were published for this purpose. Children between the ages of six and fourteen read *Stürmer* publications, and homework assignments were based on this reading.<sup>145</sup> These short-story books were distributed in both boys’ and girls’ schools and were designed for younger children with elements that would appeal to the sensibilities of both genders.

Perhaps the most vicious of the three, and correspondingly, the harshest publication to have appeared in any school was *Der Pudelmopsdackelpinscher* by Ernst Hiemer.<sup>146</sup> The premise of this book was to present eleven different animals, and to compare elements of their existence and behavior to that of stereotypes of Jews. In chapter order, these eleven animals were: Bees, coo-coos, hyenas, chameleons, locusts, bugs, sparrows, mongrel dogs, poisonous snakes, tapeworms, and bacteria. Ostensibly, not all of the animals were

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<sup>145</sup> Mann, *School for Barbarians*, 82.

<sup>146</sup> Ernst Hiemer, *Der Pudelmopsdackelpinscher* (Nuremberg: Der Stürmer-Buchverlag, 1940).

considered undesirable, but each possessed some significant trait that could be associated with a popular anti-Semitic stereotype circulating in Nazi Germany at that time. Each story follows roughly the same formula so a single summary will suffice. In almost all cases, ethnically German children are described as participating in normal behavior when they are introduced to the animal in question. As innocent children, they do not fear the animal at first, but some action on the part of the animal frightens them and convinces them that the animal is dangerous or at least problematic. In turn, the children typically inform an authority figure or contemplate the encounter in some way, ultimately learning of the horror of what could have happened. The primary premise is that these animals may seem harmless but are actually very dangerous—just like the Jews by implication.

The metaphor employed by any of these stories is entirely betrayed by an overt declaration such as the message in the chapter on poisonous snakes: “There are poisonous snakes not only among the animals, but also among people. They are the Jews.”<sup>147</sup> In a few of the stories, the children actually conclude that the animals must be destroyed, and in the rest, that they must be avoided. In this example, the message is that, like the snake, Jews are said to act cordially for months but might suddenly strike at those who had acted in good faith the whole time. Once every chapter declares that the Jews are thought to possess to same trait as the animal, the reader learns further lessons related to the incident. The very thinly veiled metaphor is taken further as the story advises Gentiles not to be deceived by unsuspectingly letting Jews into their countries, and that “just as the snake’s bite poisons the

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<sup>147</sup> Hiemer, *Pudelmopsdackelpinscher*, “Poisonous Snakes.”

blood of its victims, the Jews poison the blood of their host peoples.”<sup>148</sup> At the end of the book, one final lesson tells readers that Adolf Hitler has broken the power Jews held over Germany, but that they have not been entirely defeated; moreover, the reader is advised to consider that the book is designed for each of them and that “boys and girls...you are called to finish the work that the *Führer* has begun.”<sup>149</sup> The stories were so crude that children, boys or girls, were likely superficially unfazed by the details of their lessons, and that is to say, they probably did not think that Jews were like snakes. While *Der Pudelmopsdackelpinscher*, or *The Mongrel*, as it has been dubiously translated into English, may have been consciously dismissed, the simultaneous playfulness of the presentation and the directness of its wording would have desensitized children, and it would have normalized negative feelings towards Jews. Girls would not have needed to believe everything they read in the book for them to have felt terror at the sight of a Jew or indifference for what might befall the Jews in Germany.

Another text published by *Stürmer Verlag* was *Trau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heid und keinem Jud auf seinem Eid* by Elvira Bauer.<sup>150</sup> The title translates to “Trust No Fox on His Green Heath, and No Jew on His Oath.” This book was slightly less offensive than *Der Pudelmopsdackelpinscher*, but still functioned to apply various stereotypes to over-theatrical situations described by short stories and pictures. The book was similarly used as a

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<sup>148</sup> Hiemer, “Poisonous Snakes.”

<sup>149</sup> Hiemer, “A Call to the Youth of the World.”

<sup>150</sup> Elvira Bauer, *Trau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heid und keinem Jud auf seinem Eid* (Nuremberg: Stürmer Verlag, 1936).

supplementary primer in schools, but its content was seemingly more relevant for girls due to the prevalence of girls factoring prominently in many of its themes, perhaps because the story was written by a woman. The text is divided into ten sections, each of which teaches some lesson and exploits a particular stereotype about Jews. The tropes are predictable. In “The Cattle Jew,” a Jewish livestock dealer is described as abusing the desperation of a farmer and paying him less than his cattle is worth.<sup>151</sup> The idea is that Jews are supposed to be greedy and un-empathetic. In “The Jewish Lawyer,” the advocate, a crook, proceeds to take all the money obtained during a civil suit.<sup>152</sup> In the bizarre tale of “The Eternal Jew,” a Jewish person, who is cursed by being a member of his race, is portrayed as something almost monster-like, as he frightens little girls.<sup>153</sup> These narratives were the Nazis’ way of communicating racial biology where the whole nation functioned as a public laboratory for Nazi ideology.<sup>154</sup> Girls are often depicted as the intended targets of the Jews in these stories. Jews are illustrated as physically repulsive and are characterized as morally corrupt.

It is unlikely that young boys and girls would have been able to effectively recognize some of the connections being made in these stories, and even if a teacher explained it to them, the blatant anti-Semitism might not register in the mind of an adolescent. In addition, would an eight year old possess hatred towards a swindling man, or a greedy man, or frankly even a somewhat monstrous man? What German children probably internalized from these

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<sup>151</sup> Bauer, *Trau keinem Fuchs*, “The Cattle Jew.”

<sup>152</sup> Bauer, “The Jewish Lawyer.”

<sup>153</sup> Bauer, “The Eternal Jew.”

<sup>154</sup> Feldman, “Reading Poison,” 4, 20.



lessons was that Jews were not like them. Little girls might not have known why they felt this, but they would have felt that Jews, and from their point of view, probably Jewish children, were different in ways that seemed fundamental. When someone is not like you, it becomes easier to believe that they think differently, act differently, and deserve different treatment. Empathy gives way to apathy for their hardships, and in time, for their suffering.

Desensitization was surely the intention all along. In a booklet created by the National Socialist Teachers' League intended to be distributed to pupils upon their completion of the *Volksschule* at age fourteen, the historical legacy of treating Jews as "the other" is plainly spelled out. Some examples given of notable historical figures opposed to Jewish influence include: Bernard of Clairvaux, who was a preacher of the Second Crusade during which Jews were massacred; Frederick the Great, who allegedly ordered all Jews to vacate country towns; Maria Teresa, who is said to have called Jews "the worst plague a state could have because of their treachery and usury"; and of course Martin Luther, whose complaints about Jews were frequently cited by Nazi educators.<sup>155</sup> The examples are not historically accurate; for example, Bernard of Clairvaux actually opposed any violence against the Jews, and Martin Luther only spoke out against Judaism for religious reasons, but that is not what children were taught, so this context would have been obscure to any readers. Furthermore, the booklet quotes Fichte as writing that the Jews were a "state within a state," with an accompanying analysis calling the Jews "no longer a state within a state, but the state

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<sup>155</sup> Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Hauptamt für Erzieher (NSLB), *Du und dein Volk*, trans. Randall Bytwerk (Munich: Deutscher Volksverlag, 1940), "The Jewish Question," <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/du.htm>.

itself.”<sup>156</sup> Upon an adolescent girl’s graduation from the *Volksschule*, this feeling would be been so ingrained that the content of the booklet would not have been questioned except by those few who might have been exposed to strong opposing viewpoints outside of school.

The third publication originating from Streicher’s *Stürmer Verlag* was perhaps the most famous of all Nazi books intended for children: *Der Giftpilz* by Ernst Hiemer.<sup>157</sup> This publication was arguably better written than Streicher’s other two educational primers. It employs a narrative that is easier for children to understand because the lessons that needed to be learned are presented in much the same way that a parent might instruct a young girl growing up: They are relevant, friendly, and logically applicable. The most important line from the entire text is when a young boy is told: “Just as it is often difficult to tell the the difference between a poisonous mushroom and a safe mushroom, it is often just a difficult to recognize Jews as tricksters and criminals.”<sup>158</sup> The protagonist, Franz, nods that he understands, and young readers would also have understood this clever analogy. To further the point, a subsequent section quite literally explains how to tell the difference between a Jew and an Aryan, pointing out many different physical characteristics, but reminding that one must look carefully since it could be difficult to discern.<sup>159</sup> If a young girl did not heed this advice and if she visits a Jewish doctor instead of a German one, another section

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<sup>156</sup> Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Hauptamt für Erzieher (NSLB), *Du und dein Volk*, “The Jewish Question.”

<sup>157</sup> Ernst Hiemer, *Der Giftpilz* (Nuremberg: Stürmer Verlag, 1938).

<sup>158</sup> Hiemer, *Giftpilz*, “The Poisonous Mushroom.”

<sup>159</sup> Hiemer, “How to Tell a Jew.”

describes the terrible things that might happen to Inge.<sup>160</sup> This section is also noteworthy for including the insinuation that the BDM is more credible than one's parents. Before visiting the Jewish doctor, Inge complains to her mother who acts indifferently about this proposition: "Mother, you can say what you want, but you can't slander the BDM...we BDM girls understand the Jewish question better than many of our parents."<sup>161</sup> In this story, Inge ends up being right, and her mother is deeply sorry for her error; this plays upon every adolescent's dream of proving their parents wrong. *Der Giftpilz* is sophisticated enough that it could have been successful in generating anti-Semitic beliefs in girls.

Streicher was considered uncultured by many of his contemporaries in Germany, and many historians have often minimized his effect on the Third Reich. If one believes that the ends justify the means, Streicher's tasteless publications should probably be given credit for creating an atmosphere where anti-Semitism could thrive in everyday popular culture and apparently also inside the classrooms of boys' and girls' schools during the Third Reich. Whether by normalizing hatred of Jews, setting them apart in society, or skillfully explaining how to identify them, literature exploiting negative connotations would appear to have been just as fruitful as literature with positive narratives.

The German studies reading curriculum consisted of stories and poetry in an uneasy alliance between that which would have been included in any liberal education and that which was added to further Nazi ideology. Nazi social engineering efforts did not replace the

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<sup>160</sup> Hiemer, "Inge's Visit to a Jewish Doctor."

<sup>161</sup> Hiemer, "Inge's Visit to a Jewish Doctor."

existing curriculum as a policy, but the inclusion of such elements must have taken away instruction time from traditional educational literature. The evidence also shows that German textbooks exhibited a degree of integration between the two, but only at points where this was most easily accomplished; namely, aspects where nationalistic content in textbooks from previous eras facilitated an easy transition. In such cases of nationalist content, the educational material was biased in favor of German national unity, and it was not inherently fascist or anti-Semitic. The outrightly anti-Semitic material, like that contained in *Der Giftpilz*, was used in isolation. Reader selections that were National Socialist in character may have been placed adjacent to an ordinary poem written by a nineteenth century German author, and both were likely read under the same broad educational premise. A girl in Nazi Germany, with her German textbooks and primers, did not receive a liberal education, or a *Völkisch* education, or an anti-Semitic education; she would have routinely received all of the above, and always in bits and pieces.

### **Biology**

Third Reich ideology communicates its scientific truth through the subject of biology. Biology teaching functioned based on a biological and racial constructivist approach to the world, and this was the subject where education reinforced the credo of a racial hierarchy in society.<sup>162</sup> Ernst Dobers, a biologist, a university teacher in Nazi Germany, and a respected authority on biology instruction in schools, claimed that teaching biology consisted of racial

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<sup>162</sup> Beyerchen, "Naziism and Science," 638.

policy, a battle against a low birth rate, and a fight against hereditary inferiority.<sup>163</sup> Rudolf Genschel, another contemporary German biologist with a teaching background, felt that biology taught a combination of nature conservation and human eugenics.<sup>164</sup> Biology exemplified a part of the curriculum that appeared to have been thoroughly taken over by National Socialist ideology; indeed, it was considered a subject of prestige due to myriad opportunities to transmit state propaganda, and the Nazis did not miss any opportunities to integrate loaded statistics into the lesson plan.<sup>165</sup> To be sure, much of the biology curriculum of the Third Reich did not look like the curriculum of any modern school, but one must remember the era in question. The roots of a “blood and soil” approach already existed in Germany before 1933 as educators stressed ties to nature and one’s homeland, and race studies had been considered proper science (though by 1933 it also found many detractors) across Europe.<sup>166</sup> Though it may appear surprising given the makeup of the content, the biology curriculum in the Third Reich also built upon an already existing base of research from earlier periods.

Biology was not taught during the first four years of the *Volksschule*. A young girl in these early grades learned about nature in her history and geography courses, and was taught to draw a family tree; this was the closest alternative to biology.<sup>167</sup> In grades five through

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<sup>163</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 65.

<sup>164</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, 50.

<sup>165</sup> Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling*, 67.

<sup>166</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 76-78.

<sup>167</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, 65.

eight in the *Volksschule*, a course in natural history touched on the most critical aspects of racial science by drawing parallels between plants and animals and humans. Especially in the eighth grade, the last school year for those who remained in the *Volksschule* up to that point, girls were taught everything they needed to know about basic racial hygiene.

In the *Mittelschule*, for all grades five through ten, girls would have been enrolled in a course in life science comprising about two hours of instruction per week. In essence, this was strictly a biology course, just one that was not intended to move at the same pace as the more sophisticated equivalent taught in the *Oberschule*. In addition, in the ninth and tenth grade, girls in the *Mittelschule* were enrolled in a horticulture course for at least an additional hour. For this schoolwork, girls would tend to a garden with the dual purpose of growing food and learning about Mendelian genetics. The *Oberschule* curriculum included about two hours of biology instruction per week with a more advanced lesson plan than that in the *Mittelschule*. For those girls that chose the “domestic science” track, the upper grades, ten through twelve, provided extensive additional instruction in various courses that included racial science, racial hygiene, and nature conservation.

In a biology textbook for ninth grade girls in the *Mittelschule*, for which only a portion was available for review, one finds three distinct themes: A battle for survival, the importance of bearing healthy offspring, and one’s duty to the state.<sup>168</sup> In section one of the chapter “The Laws of Nature and Humanity,” the text reads that “all plants as well as animals are in a

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<sup>168</sup> Marie Harm and Hermann Wiehle, *Lebenskunde für Mittelschulen. Fünfter Teil. Klasse 5 für Mädchen*, trans. Randall Bytwerk (Halle: Hermann Schroedel Verlag, 1942), “The Laws of Nature and Humanity,” <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/textbk01.htm>.

constant battle for survival...but [this is] the only way to maintain life.”<sup>169</sup> After informing the reader that everything unfit for existence is eliminated, one learns that humans are also subject to these laws.<sup>170</sup> This idea follows from the concept of “social darwinism” that argues that man, like plants or animals, seek to obtain a dominant position during an unforgiving struggle in life. Girls reading this material are then told that what was once a struggle against large carnivores is now alternately a battle against disease or a war between one state and another.<sup>171</sup> The lesson was that the personal struggle requires that every girl maintain a healthy body in order to bear quality children, and the struggle between states is a justification for war. Furthermore, the allusion to eugenics was often presented in Nazi textbooks in such a way to convey the idea that negative selection was threatening the *Volk* and a positive selection must be actuated to achieve the desired results.<sup>172</sup>

The next section boldly states that the production of numerous offspring is a natural law, and an example of the Romans allegedly having lost the desire to have children is provided to claim that going against this law is a sin against maintaining the species and something that would lead to societal collapse.<sup>173</sup> With regards to Nazi population theory, girls needed to be

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<sup>169</sup> Harm and Wiehle, *Lebenskunde für Mittelschulen*, “sec. I.”

<sup>170</sup> Harm and Wiehle, “sec. I.”

<sup>171</sup> Harm and Wiehle, “sec. I.”

<sup>172</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 60.

<sup>173</sup> Harm and Wiehle, *Lebenskunde für Mittelschulen*, “sec. II.”

aware of their duty to maintain the national body, care for the family, and bear valuable genetic material.<sup>174</sup>

The diverse, yet specific, working duties of bees is presented to highlight how each individual contributes, and how all are essential when serving the needs of the state. The text lists five tenets that needed to be followed; the first stated that the individual had the singular purpose of serving the group.<sup>175</sup> Other ideas suggested by the bee example include working within the division of labor, risking one's life without hesitation, eliminating unfit individuals, and producing many offspring.<sup>176</sup> This material presented the Nazis' intentions in no uncertain terms. One must remember that the girls reading this would have been about fifteen years old and in a stage of natural teenage rebellion. The analogy of the bee was moderately clever, but fifteen year old girls may not have grasped the urgency that the Nazis had wanted to imprint on them. From an evaluative standpoint, this educational material does appear to be rigidly propagandistic.

A similar textbook for girls soon to graduate from the *Mittelschule* after the tenth grade provides a more complete look at the curriculum.<sup>177</sup> This is a relatively short text, at slightly over one hundred pages, but nearly all of the content is related to racial science. Before proceeding to more ideological subjects, the text includes a small section at the beginning

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<sup>174</sup> Eschenauer, "Politik im Mathematikunterricht," 17-18.

<sup>175</sup> Harm and Wiehle, *Lebenskunde für Mittelschulen*, "sec. III."

<sup>176</sup> Harm and Wiehle, *Lebenskunde für Mittelschulen*, "sec. III."

<sup>177</sup> F. Herrmann and W. Köhn, eds., *Lebenskunde für Mittelschulen* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Moritz Diesterweg, 1943).



which relays actual biological information through a preparatory summary of Mendelian genetics. This covers how heterozygotes and homozygotes contribute to dominant (or recessive) traits during genetic inheritance; girls were given an assignment with the goal of identifying rare traits their classmates might have.<sup>178</sup> The concept of considering the inheritance of traits across a family tree featured prominently in Nazi pedagogy; examples of how members of the Bach family included numerous musically-inclined individuals, or how the Hapsburgs often exhibited their characteristic lower lip were well known.<sup>179</sup> Girls were told to consider both the past and the future; they were instructed to ponder not only how their ancestors performed noble deeds, but how this same blood ran through their veins, and also how their own descendants would expand over many generations.<sup>180</sup> Theories presented like this would have made one feel important. Viewed through the lens of Nazism, such education appears politically motivated, but it was an integral part of the biology of the period. The only biology lesson without any ideological bent occurs at the very end of the text. The final chapter in the book is about the garden, with instructions on how to grow fruits and vegetables; this is an activity where adolescent girls would be able to demonstrate certain domestic skills practically.<sup>181</sup>

The more obvious politically or ideologically oriented material appears immediately after the girls were taught about basic genetics. Girls then learned about the health of the *Volk*

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<sup>178</sup> Herrmann and Köhn, *Lebenskunde für Mittelschulen*, 6-15.

<sup>179</sup> Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Hauptamt für Erzieher (NSLB), *Du und dein Volk*, “Your Kin.”

<sup>180</sup> Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Hauptamt für Erzieher (NSLB), “Your Ancestors.”

<sup>181</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 190.

with (un-cited) statistics on how intelligence, character, and other attributes might be transferred to one's young; for example, a chart indicates that two dumb parents have a sixty percent chance of having dumb children, a thirty-five percent chance of having average children, and only a five percent chance of producing an intelligent child, and when compared to similar statistics shown for smarter parents, the situation looks grim.<sup>182</sup> The eugenics policies that were derived from this type of information, and the rationality of teaching girls this information alongside lessons related to child care, had antecedents before the Nazis came to power, but in this biology textbook, the material was entirely conspicuous.<sup>183</sup> The key component of racial hygiene for girls that was being conveyed with these lessons was the need to choose the most genetically fit partner in order to promote healthy offspring.

Even more important than choosing an intelligent and healthy partner was choosing one that was of good racial stock. This tenth grade girls' biology text promptly moves into the discussion of race. After some rudimentary and scientifically accurate information about the development of humans during the Paleolithic period, the text introduces several pseudo-scientific racial classifications. A more comprehensive examination of these groupings fell under the purview of the Hitler Youth and their educational system, but biology lesson plans provided sufficiently detailed descriptions. The races of world included the Asiatic race, the African race, and the European race, with each being subdivided into further derivative

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<sup>182</sup> Hermann and Köhn, *Lebenskunde für Mittelschulen*, 29.

<sup>183</sup> Richard Weikart, "The Role of Darwinism in Nazi Racial Thought," *German Studies Review* 36, no. 3 (October 2013): 552, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43555141>.

rac<sup>184</sup> The textbook introduces the most meticulous detail for the German European race. The ethnic people of Germany were said to consist of a group of six sub-races: Nordic, Western, Phalian, Dinaric, Eastern, and East-Baltic.<sup>185</sup> Girls in this class were not told that Germans were a racially pure people, rather that they were a favorable mixture of these listed races, and that the Nordic race was the racial core of the people.<sup>186</sup> Allegedly, people of absolutely pure blood were rare.<sup>187</sup> A classroom assignment for this section instructed students to imagine how different races act in different circumstances, and then to interpret different representations of these races.<sup>188</sup> Jews, who were usually described as a Middle Eastern people within the Asiatic race, were said to have an entirely different character than the Germans. Race mixing was explicitly forbidden, and the Nuremberg Laws were explained somewhat later in the text. While the focus was to discuss the value of the Germanic race, the message to girls that foreign races were inferior was equally clear.

Upon spending most of their tenth-grade biology studies learning about race and the inheritance of favorable genes, girls moved on to a section on the birth rate. As per usual, everything was presented as scientifically as possible, with data, charts, and confident conclusions. The information imparted was only marginally scientific, and was sometimes entirely unproven, but its sagacious display would have contributed to its convincing

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<sup>184</sup> Hermann and Köhn, *Lebenskunde für Mittelschulen*, 58-61.

<sup>185</sup> Hermann and Köhn, 61-66.

<sup>186</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 190.

<sup>187</sup> Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Hauptamt für Erzieher (NSLB), *Du und dein Volk*, “Your Marriage and Your Children.”

<sup>188</sup> Hermann and Köhn, *Lebenskunde für Mittelschulen*, 66.

character. Various statistics elaborated on the ideas that live births needed to increase, immigration by Slavs into Germany needed to decrease, and movements of people from the countryside to the cities needed to stop. In the midst of all this was an intriguing chart that showed the family size of twenty famous Germans from history.<sup>189</sup> Otto von Bismarck was the fourth of six children, while Richard Wagner was the ninth out of nine, and Albrecht Dürer, amazingly, was the third out of eighteen. Having a large family was certainly encouraged. It is doubtful if many girls actually planned to have more children based on these lessons, but at least they would have felt that pregnancy and multiple births had no stigma attached to it.

In an advanced girls' biology textbook designed for the upper grades, levels ten through twelve in the *Oberschule*, a different picture emerges. In this text, which potentially would have been used by those girls who might have graduated to the university during the Third Reich, a significant proportion of the material is dedicated to real science.<sup>190</sup> The number of pages covering topics that might be considered pseudo-scientific, racial science, or National Socialist propaganda number roughly the same as in the previous biology text designed for the tenth grade in the *Mittelschule*, yet that text contained only a bit over one hundred pages, while this text for the *Oberschule* has nearly four hundred. Most of the material included in the *Oberschule* text could be considered sensible, advanced, and factual biology.

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<sup>189</sup> Hermann and Köhn, 82.

<sup>190</sup> Jakob Graf and Luise Hennig, *Biologie für höhere Schulen: Ausgabe für Mädchenschulen* (München/Berlin: J. F. Lehmanns, 1943).

Some topics that would be considered traditional biology in this text include cellular biology, animal classification, nutrition, proper genetics, child care, anatomy, and lessons on every human system in the body. The sections concerning genetics and plant and animal reproduction are among the most sophisticated in the text and would likely measure up fairly well against underclass college-level material in the United States in the twenty-first century. Various diagrams, such as one showing the process of fertilization and cell division in twenty steps, assist in conveying these ideas.<sup>191</sup> One may speculate that the reason for the high level of knowledge imparted here was due to the Nazis' obsession with heredity, an obvious application of genetics. The chapters in this textbook that dealt with genetics as biology were not pseudo-scientific, but lessons based on legitimate scientific research.

A note of interest regarding the text's presentation of the ABO blood group is that it does not reflect the then-recent discoveries concerning the Rh negative blood types, which are more prevalent in European populations; certain pseudo-scientific racist arguments have since become associated with these blood types. The Nazis surely would have convoluted this information for their own purposes had they paid attention to the research. Girls theoretically could have learned that having a Rhesus negative blood type was another desirable trait among the Germanic races.

The Nazis did believe in evolution. This biology text not only affirms this conclusion, but delves into the debate of Darwinism versus Lamarckism. Lamarckism is referred to as a philosophical theory involving the direct influence of the environment, while Darwinism is

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<sup>191</sup> Graf and Hennig, *Biologie für höhere Schulen*, 160.

called an empirical science which did not imply the mutability of the races.<sup>192</sup> The text also mentions natural selection, and given National Socialist myth that an Aryan race had evolved to a higher level due to harsher climate conditions, and that it had benefitted from the survival of the fittest, one could easily conclude that Darwinism would have been a preferred theory over Lamarckism.<sup>193</sup> Evolution in Nazi Germany occurred as a result of the selective pressures of the environment, but one's surroundings could not directly form or change a person. Girls in this biology course were taught to view primates as their evolutionary relatives, but the idea of a common ancestor was not mentioned, for that too might imply some equality with other races.<sup>194</sup> The Nazis' obsession with genetics and heritage, and their disregard for the anti-evolution stance of the Catholic church, appears to have made their teaching of evolution to girls in school a logical consequence.

The Graf and Hennig biology text does contain a section on racial studies, which was probably obligatory in the curriculum. This pseudo-scientific chapter can be juxtaposed with the scientific section on genetics mentioned earlier. One was firmly academic and the other was not. Racial studies appears to have been written into the text to create a "Nazi text," yet one should remember that all of the traditional material remains. In this chapter, the same six German sub-races as those introduced in the biology textbook for the *Mittelschule* are mentioned here, with a slightly more in-depth description of the differences between them;

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<sup>192</sup> Graf and Hennig, 250.

<sup>193</sup> Weikart, "The Role of Darwinism," 537.

<sup>194</sup> Weikart, 540, 543.

for example, the Phalian race has a strong attitude, the Dinaric race produces good soldiers, and the Nordic race predisposes one to discover or invent new things.<sup>195</sup> As in the text for the tenth grade *Mittelschule*, Jews are described negatively. This text refers to their unempathetic ways, the “fact” that throughout history they have never built or promoted states, and that Jews are “born dealers.”<sup>196</sup> Graf and Hennig also specifically warn of the Arab Bedouin, which is something that appears to be uncommon in biology textbooks. The lesson claims that these nomads are violent and intolerant, especially against those who do not believe their religion.<sup>197</sup> Pine argues that racial studies within biology textbooks never promoted extermination or the Holocaust, but that it set the stage for the validation of this policy.<sup>198</sup> Pine’s assessment is likely accurate, but the dissemination of the message would have required more force than in that of just biology lessons; this force was supplied by many other subjects in the curriculum, as well as teaching in the Hitler Youth, and a constant inundation of anti-Semitic material in public.

Towards the end of the Graf and Hennig textbook, girls would have encountered three instructive sections. The first of these would have provided a practical education for those needing to keep a household by explaining how various animal-based materials, like leather and bones, or plant-based materials, like wood or milk, are acquired and utilized.<sup>199</sup> The

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<sup>195</sup> Graf and Hennig, *Biologie für höhere Schulen*, 264-70.

<sup>196</sup> Graf and Hennig, 272.

<sup>197</sup> Graf and Hennig, 273.

<sup>198</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 44.

<sup>199</sup> Graf and Hennig, *Biologie für höhere Schulen*, 340-49.

second of these sections included a sexual education course for girls. The content describes how one becomes pregnant, the progression of the pregnancy, the act of child birth, and the need for bed rest.<sup>200</sup> For the era during which it was written, one dominated by abstinence and social purity agendas, this material was rather informative.<sup>201</sup> The third of these sections was a frank assessment of nature conservation and the negative effects humans have on the world of plants and animals. The text accuses people of changing landscapes into cultural places for themselves, harming the non-human inhabitants in the process, and it reminds the reader that it is every German's national duty to protect the environment.<sup>202</sup> Included in this section is a more direct plea to teenage girls asking if they had carved their name into a tree, or even worse, not cared about killing small creatures; the text says that "we have no right to do this."<sup>203</sup> The value of the last three sections, and the academic rigor of the majority of the textbook, refutes the argument that all biology was just racial science. This textbook offers another example of how National Socialist political and ideological education was blatantly placed alongside a legitimate syllabus, and in this case, a firmly-grounded life science curriculum.

The degree to which biology instruction might be considered National Socialist propaganda appears to have depended on the level of the student. While some implied racial

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<sup>200</sup> Graf and Hennig, 354-60.

<sup>201</sup> Carla Hustak, "Love, Sex, and Happiness in Education: The Russells, Beacon Hill School, and Teaching 'Sex-Love' in England, 1927-1943," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22, no. 3 (2013): 446, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24616544>.

<sup>202</sup> Graf and Hennig, *Biologie für höhere Schulen*, 390, 392.

<sup>203</sup> Graf and Hennig, 392.



hygiene in the curriculum was always present, the educational experiences of a young girl in the *Volksschule*, an older *Mittelschule* girl, or a higher level student in the *Oberschule* appear to have differed. It was likely felt that the youngest students were not mature enough to grasp the less conspicuous differences between the races, or for the importance of the birth rate of the nation to be of any concern to them. Likewise, the curriculum requirements of the oldest girls in the most advanced *Oberschule* necessitated a firm training in the science of life. Racial science remained a high priority for the state, and the girls who were not too young or not too academically accomplished received a biology education that was absolutely besieged with these lessons. So far as ideological training existed anywhere, it followed the trend found in the German studies curriculum, where such material was presented side by side with traditional content. A girl in a biology course might have gone through a period of time learning only about the structure of the cell, the respiratory system, or any number of other traditional subjects, and upon completion, moved to a portion of the curriculum that was literally called racial science.

### **Art and Music**

Art and Music were two separate subjects in the Third Reich curriculum, but each served the same purpose; moreover, though these were not particularly academic subjects, they both functioned as a way to transmit culture. Music in the classroom was German music, and art in the classroom was German art. The pedagogical goal was not to enlighten young girls to become more sophisticated, but to tutor them in the aspects of the only culture that mattered to the Nazi state. Direct race or ideological instruction did not pierce very deeply into the art

or music curriculum, but as with any subject that could have tended towards neutrality in the Third Reich, the overtones of National Socialism did become evident in the choice of examples used during the lesson plan.<sup>204</sup> This was especially true for the art curriculum where “good” German art was to be compared with “bad” non-German, and usually Jewish, art.

Neither music or art ever constituted a very important part of the curriculum. Music was consistently taught to girls for about two hours per week in the *Volksschule*, *Mittelschule*, or *Oberschule*, regardless of age and grade level. Art as a stand-alone subject was only part of the curriculum in the *Oberschule*, where it too was taught for about two hours per week at all grade levels. It should be noted that while art was not a separate subject in the girls’ *Volksschule* or *Mittelschule*, some mention of art or the introduction of various German artists was included in other subjects like German or history in any of the girls’ schools.

The rationale for the music instruction in schools was to teach girls how to sing and perform music. In this respect, lessons were supposed to lead to the development of the individual by increasing her connection to the community through German music.<sup>205</sup> In the *Volksschule*, girls would usually just learn various folk songs, and the goal of the lessons would be for them to experience the joy of singing. Oftentimes, the two hour per week instruction was divided into one hour for learning songs, and a second for a fun time while

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<sup>204</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 59-60.

<sup>205</sup> Eschenauer, “Politik im Mathematikunterricht,” 16.

singing.<sup>206</sup> A significant majority of first-hand accounts of school-age girls from the Third Reich report their love of singing; while the subject of their narratives concerned music in the Hitler Youth, where singing was very prominent, their feelings would surely have applied to this same activity in the school environment.<sup>207</sup>

As girls matured and some started attending higher schools, an additional focus was placed on flutes, violins, and the formation of a string orchestra. Location and the financial means of any particular girl's parents played a role in whether these options existed. Classical music played by an orchestra was a preferred medium in the Third Reich. Music theory and reading sheet music was also increasingly taught to older girls. In a music songbook used in the ninth grade, for which the specific school type is unknown, the material was fairly advanced.<sup>208</sup> The selection of sheet music contained bass and treble clefs for the different vocal parts as well as various key signatures and time signatures for different songs. It would not have been difficult for those versed in such material, but it was at a level beyond that of a basic children's chorus.

The goal of the art curriculum during the Third Reich was twofold. The first goal was to foster an artistic proficiency in students, and the second was a general plan to promote art in the public consciousness. For the artistic goal, boys and girls were educated in the following: Free design, a manual training and the use of shapes and colors; crafts, the design with

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<sup>206</sup> Eschenauer, 16.

<sup>207</sup> For example, see Ursula Sabel, "Personal Narratives," trans. Chris Crawford, BDM History, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://bdmhistory.com/research-reference/personal-narratives>.

<sup>208</sup> Gerhard Roßner, *Musik und Leibeserziehung* (Berlin: Arminius-Verlag, 1938).

different materials; German folk art, a stylistic old design; and font lettering, a clear and beautiful writing form.<sup>209</sup> For a girl, instruction on how she might beautify her dress and her household through fashionable clothing, interesting jewelry, or elegant furnishings was part of the curriculum as well.<sup>210</sup> The other side of art education, that which was designed to stimulate an appreciation of German art among students, included lessons on how to analyze and compare different examples of art.

Art and Music were two mostly-neutral subjects that included some elements of Nazi ideology. Girls would often learn nationalistic songs, but this was also true of Weimar Germany and the *Kaiserreich*. Only thoroughly German songs with content particular to German themes were favored in the Third Reich; nevertheless, the influence of direct National Socialist propaganda and politics was minimal on music instruction. The situation was marginally different when it came to the subject of art. The technical aspects of art instruction were neutral, yet when any girl was presented with classroom displays depicting German art on one side and Jewish art on the other, her teacher would have made sure she understood the distinctions. The inclusion of visual media could have made this psychologically meaningful for the pupil. In terms of how the curriculum changed due to the Nazis taking power in 1933, students were still taught how to analyze art with regards to the various features of the piece within the period of which it was created, but a new criteria, whether it was made by a Jewish artist, was added.

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<sup>209</sup> Eschenauer, "Politik im Mathematikunterricht," 16.

<sup>210</sup> Eschenauer, 16.

## Chemistry

The chemistry curriculum for boys in Nazi Germany was considerably different than that for girls. The point of divergence occurs in the application of the material, with boys being taught chemistry for industry and the armed forces, and the girls' lessons amounting to "chemistry of the kitchen."<sup>211</sup> One should not infer from this that the girls' lessons were overly simplistic or that they were considered less important; in fact, the foundational curriculum, the actual scientific concepts being taught to boys or girls, was mostly similar, yet once the material of the basic lessons was completed, teachers would seek to implement their students' knowledge in different ways. These methods were right in line with the Nazi ideology that supported the idea that boys and girls had distinct roles in society, but both were noble and important.

The needs of the state would also influence why certain academic exercises were chosen for the school curriculum. For the boys, this need was the requirement of war, or for the period prior to 1939, the expectation of war. To this extent, much of the chemistry curriculum for boys revolved around gas warfare and gas defense. For girls, the significant factors in their education were the four-year plans and the desire for autarky in sectors like agriculture and raw materials. Chemistry in the kitchen for girls was only indirectly related to cooking; the primary objective was to teach them how to use everything at their disposal properly and frugally as part of the state's need to get everyone involved in the efforts to become economically self-sufficient. To be sure, girls did learn the basics about protection

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<sup>211</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 209.

from gasses, and boys were also taught how to recycle organic compounds in the household, but as far as an educational focus, the curriculum for each gender was obvious in its intent.

The subject of chemistry was not taught in the *Volksschule*, but some lessons in the natural history curriculum probably mentioned the need to conserve materials due to environmental concerns. The *Mittelschule* included instruction in what was called natural science in the eighth, ninth, and tenth grades. This was a combination of chemistry, physics, mineralogy, geology, and perhaps a few other sciences. For the most part, this science education was fairly rudimentary and did not require higher maths. The chemistry curriculum was considered the most important component of natural science, and it was the subject that would have received the most time, relatively speaking. In the *Oberschule*, chemistry was taught as a stand-alone subject in grades nine through twelve. As with all studies in the more advanced school, the material was more sophisticated and would have incorporated a more traditional laboratory science, yet the overall goal of the curriculum was similar to the chemistry taught in the *Mittelschule*. Chemistry was never a very high priority subject for girls in any of the schools, and whether taught as a separate subject or as part of the natural science curriculum, it typically consisted of only one or two hours per week of instruction. Part of the reason for its lack of importance was the fact that there existed some intersection between this material and that taught in the domestic science courses.

A girls' chemistry textbook as part of the *Mittelschule* natural science curriculum demonstrates how chemistry as a science was presented and how this knowledge was applied

to the kitchen and to both organic and inorganic materials.<sup>212</sup> Much of the content introduced at the beginning would have been considered true chemistry, including lessons on chemical properties, such as atomic weight, and on various important molecules, like water. One of the initial applied lessons informs the reader how to use salt in cooking and in the preservation of other foods. Extensive lessons about coal explain where it comes from, how it burns, and how it could be used to heat a household. The textbook's discussion of coal also includes geopolitics by explaining the connection between the Treaty of Versailles and how raw materials in the Ruhr were taken from Germany for the benefit of France and England.<sup>213</sup> Graphs and statistics illustrate how many materials Germany had within its borders and how much it still depended on foreign powers around the time of the start of the war. One might argue that chemistry for girls was the academic field of materials.

Food is a very important commodity in any society. A detailed section within this textbook explains where various foodstuffs originated, along with a description of their micronutrient and macronutrient content. This material is presented similarly in biology or health studies textbooks. A major difference is the focus chemistry places on scrupulous buying, cooking, and preservation practices. This would not be considered chemistry in most textbooks, but it was important for the state's plans for self-sufficiency. Germany still relied on imported foodstuffs, a point of emphasis for Hitler, and chemistry textbooks often conveyed methods teaching each individual how to help combat this problem in their own

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<sup>212</sup> G. Peter and H. Schmidt, *Naturlehre für Mittelschulen: Ausgabe für Mädchen. Chemie für die Klassen 4 bis 6* (Saale: Hermann Schroedel Verlag, 1941).

<sup>213</sup> Peter and Schmidt, *Naturlehre für Mittelschulen*, 39.

household. A related chart explains how many calories one might consume with the purchase of one Reichsmark worth of certain foods; the highest cost per calorie food was lobster, while the lowest was an item with a name that one might translate as “somewhat old potatoes.”<sup>214</sup> A later section explains various ways that one might prevent spoilage of different foods, accompanied with statistics about how much food is wasted every year in Germany. Spices, alcohol, and coffee are described as luxury items; spices, because they are legitimately difficult to obtain, and the other two because each is said to actually be bad for the body.<sup>215</sup>

Other materials that are covered in this text include home remedies for health, fibers for making garments, building materials for the home, and other combustibles for making heat. A section about detergents explains all the different chemicals one might use while doing the laundry, with some alleged to be superior for certain clothes.<sup>216</sup> The text finishes with a section about chemical warfare and gas masks and a brief biographical section about various famous German chemists. The section on how to protect against a gas attack was felt to be necessary due to the knowledge that such weapons might be used by Germany’s enemies during any time of war. The section about the likes of Emil Fischer and Robert Wilhelm Bunsen was probably thought to be equally necessary for the promotion of pride by showcasing accomplished Germans.

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<sup>214</sup> Peter and Schmidt, 113.

<sup>215</sup> Peter and Schmidt, 115.

<sup>216</sup> Peter and Schmidt, 125.



In sections of this textbook that principally discuss materials that girls could use in their household, actual chemistry was included, but as more of an afterthought; for example, conceptual chemistry was provided for gas filtering in the section about chemical attacks, and formulas were provided that showed the chemistry of burning coal and other materials. A reader is left with the impression that the science (minimal as it was) and the associated applications did not demonstrably benefit each other in the lesson plan. Depending on one's point of view, one might conclude that this text was either an example of a clever way of making science relevant or a mockery of chemistry. The optimist might consider that the inclusion of non-scholastic content in a textbook for fifteen-year old girls could make learning chemical formulas more palatable, while the cynic would always take issue with the fact that this chemistry textbook only consisted of about twenty five percent true chemistry.

The textbook's content shifted towards the political only when discussing the Treaty of Versailles' effect on the availability of raw materials, which all citizens of Germany were aware of anyway. At what point does any education influenced by the needs of the state become state education, or worse yet, propaganda? Chemistry for girls was shaped by autarky politics, but the content was essentially free of National Socialist or "Hitlerist" themes. It would be unreasonable to hope that any discipline could completely disregard the contemporary status quo in any nation at a given time, and therefore, chemistry for girls in the Third Reich meets the standard of what could be considered ordinary education.

## Physics

The strategy for the Physics curriculum was much the same as that for the chemistry curriculum in terms of presenting actual science before moving on to applications. Furthermore, as with the subject of chemistry, these applications were highly gender-specific, but the problem for physics teachers was finding things for girls to do. Physics for boys became the science of the defense industry, with military engineering, ballistics, communications, aviation, and more all finding its way into the curriculum. Boys would study propeller operation and flight dynamics, perhaps with donated plane parts.<sup>217</sup> Some schools for boys had their own cannon.<sup>218</sup> Education in Nazi Germany was intended to be a means to meet the needs of the *Volk*; these needs were determined by the party in the form of Hitler, who unilaterally decided that Germany needed to go to war.<sup>219</sup> Boys were taught the physics necessary to facilitate this. It became a much greater challenge to find relevant physics applications in the traditional realm for women and girls. The result was that some material for girls was indeed a watered-down version of what was taught to the boys, and other aspects of the curriculum rather shamelessly applied physics to the kitchen.

Physics in the Third Reich also suffered from an identity crisis at the time. A political movement had emerged that proclaimed that all physics must be German physics. The theory of relativity disappeared after 1933 because of its association to the Jewish Albert

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<sup>217</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 45.

<sup>218</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 220.

<sup>219</sup> Beyerchen, "Naziism and Science," 631.

Einstein. The German physics movement promoted the science of Philipp Lenard and Johannes Stark, both Nobel Prize winners who were brilliant scientists, but who were also both wrong about quantum theory and relativity.<sup>220</sup> Modern physics, as opposed to Newtonian physics, was rarely taught at a level below that of the university, but the trickle-down effect and the insistence to remove all non-German influences in physics instruction made its way down to the boys' and girls' curriculum. The Civil Service Law of 1933, and Nazi policies removing politically unreliable teachers at all levels had a further effect on physics in the classroom; the greatest impact was felt in universities, but the lack of qualified teachers at all levels would have been felt rather severely in girls' physics classes.<sup>221</sup>

The *Volksschule* did not include any physics instruction for either boys or girls. Physics, like chemistry, was taught in the *Mittelschule* as part of the natural science course, but this was only in the eighth, ninth, or tenth grades. In the *Oberschule*, in grades eight through twelve, physics was part of the curriculum. This meant that physics was actually taught for an additional year compared to chemistry instruction, which only began in the ninth grade in the advanced school; the same was true for boys. This was probably due to that fact that physics for boys and its connection to defense was a bit more critical to the state than chemistry. Educators likely just wanted to maintain some organizational consistency in the science curriculum even though it would have been difficult to argue that physics for girls

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<sup>220</sup> Mark Walker, "National Socialism and German Physics," *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 1 (January 1989): 64, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/260700>.

<sup>221</sup> David Holloway, "Totalitarianism and Science: The Nazi and the Soviet Experience," in *Totalitarian Societies and Democratic Transition: Essays in Memory of Victor Zaslavsky*, ed. Tommaso Piffer and Vladislav Zubok (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2017), 234.

deserved greater total study time than girls' chemistry, which seemed to serve a legitimate purpose for the state.

An examination of a physics textbook for girls in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades of the *Oberschule* reveals a text that would have represented the highest level physics book any girl could have studied prior to the attending university, but still one that was lacking in rigor.<sup>222</sup> Conceptually, the physics described therein was sufficiently difficult, but the mathematics usually required to learn physics from a calculable standpoint was very weak. Since girls and boys were educated separately in all but rare circumstances, the Third Reich usually applied a “separate but equal” approach where girls were taught material that was often different, but was usually of the same, or perhaps only slightly less, caliber of difficulty. Higher mathematics was an exception to this policy. As one will discover in the next section of this thesis covering mathematics, the differences in the level taught to the boys and that assumed appropriate for girls was stark. This physics text does employ algebraic relationships, trigonometry, vectors, and very elementary calculus, but an equivalent boys' text would have included multivariate calculus and differential equations.

As in similar textbooks, the Günther text begins with the physics of mechanics by explaining relationships between velocity, acceleration, time, gravity, distance, and force. This material moves to the subsequent second-stage concepts of centrifugal force, inertia, work, power, and other quantities. Combining some of these lessons, girls are presented with

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<sup>222</sup> Erich Günther, ed., *Grundriß der Physik. Band 2b für die Klassen 6 bis 8 der höheren Schulen für Mädchen* (Hildesheim und Leipzig: August Lar Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1940).

a diagram explaining all of the forces acting upon a knitting machine while in operation.<sup>223</sup> After mechanics, girls would be taught basic thermodynamics. An assignment asks the student to calculate how much energy is required to heat a certain size room with various available materials and to different temperatures.<sup>224</sup> This question is one of the few provided in the text that would have had a clear, practical, domestic purpose. Pine concurs that physics for girls attempted to provide technical and economic applications in household management, or in some cases, even with the practical use of appliances.<sup>225</sup> Later in the text, other assignments require that girls consider the power usage of different appliances, or they are asked to compare cooking time with oven temperature increases, but these problems are only loosely connected to any physics curriculum and are very similar to what was taught in domestic science courses.<sup>226</sup>

The Günther textbook also covers other usual topics, ranging from the movement of planets to fluids and waves to electromagnetism. Towards the end of the text, presumably for the twelfth grade, the most difficult content is found. The lessons explain basic circuits for speakers and amplifiers, identification of elements from a spectral analysis, and even advanced physics in radioactivity, nuclear energy, and the splitting of the atom. Only an overview is provided, and none of this more complex material is taught with any quantitative

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<sup>223</sup> Günther, *Grundriß der Physik*, 27.

<sup>224</sup> Günther, 42.

<sup>225</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 46.

<sup>226</sup> Günther, *Grundriß der Physik*, 27, 95.

analysis at all, somewhat limiting its usefulness, but conceptually, this does impart advanced content.

Physics in girls' schools in the Third Reich could be summarized as a conceptually involved, though mathematically feeble, attempt to find practical scientific outlets for girls where few existed. Chemistry in the kitchen was defensible, but physics in the kitchen would have seemed contrived. While the same could not be said of physics in the boys' schools, girls' physics was almost entirely devoid of any political or ideological elements. It was simply a neutral subject that was taught to satisfy precedent.

### **Mathematics**

Mathematics in the girls' curriculum was a bit of a paradox. The subject was taught in all grade levels at every type of school, and through the eighth grade it was considered to have a reasonably high priority. Concurrently, educators also appeared to believe that girls had no use for higher maths, and girls' education in this subject was no longer considered a pressing matter in grades nine through twelve. In fact, the education for girls in maths involved the same material as boys until the point of divergence sometime during the ninth grade in the *Oberschule* or around the seventh in the *Volksschule*.<sup>227</sup> After this, boys continued on with progressively advanced lessons that reached higher forms of differential and integral calculus and linear algebra. Girls continued on with various forms of financial mathematics, maths for domestic applications, and other relatively simple forms that may have even represented a

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<sup>227</sup> Eschenauer, "Politik im Mathematikunterricht," 30; Richard Karselt, "Rechnen und Raumlehre in der Volksschule," *Die deutsche Schule* 81, (1940), <http://www.digizeitschriften.de/startseite>.

regression in difficulty compared to what had been studied earlier until the eighth and ninth grades.

Since the subject of mathematics, in and of itself, cannot contain any ideological elements, classroom exercises always included word problems or charts that conveyed information or viewpoints that the Nazi party wanted students to be aware of. There existed an expressed intention by educators to include these problems for the purpose of having such data act as an educational influence on the maturing student.<sup>228</sup> This should be understood to mean that mathematics lessons would be used to directly relay the ideological positions of the party and that math teachers used classroom exercises to promote propaganda.

Understandably, the math curriculum is very basic for all young children, and this was no different for girls in the Third Reich. A year-by-year synopsis of the curriculum in the *Volksschule* provides insight as to what boys and girls would have learned in the lower schools.<sup>229</sup> In grades one through four, students learned the basic arithmetic with increasingly large numbers. A simple problem might be suggested to young girls by having them calculate the resulting number of members in a BDM unit if a certain number of BDM *Mädel* were there at some point and an additional group joined.<sup>230</sup> By the end of grade four,

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<sup>228</sup> Eschenauer, "Politik im Mathematikunterricht," 26-27.

<sup>229</sup> Karselt, "Rechnen und Raumlehre," 44.

<sup>230</sup> Reinhard Siegmund-Schultze, "Nazi Rule and Teaching of Mathematics in the Third Reich, Particularly School Mathematics" (paper presented to the University of Agder, Faculty of Engineering and Science, Kristiansand, Norway, n.d.), 868, <https://publimath.univ-irem.fr/numerisation/ACF/ACF08076/ACF08076.pdf>.

students should also be familiar with all coins, lengths, weights, and time, and would be able to apply this knowledge in practice.<sup>231</sup>

Very basic algebra appeared in the fifth grade. Around this time, the curriculum was sophisticated enough to begin to introduce word problems with National Socialist themes. Certain matters that were often used in these problems included the following: Population growth, German colonies, land area, race in Germany, hereditary health, labor issues, transportation, and the military.<sup>232</sup> One math problem that would have fit the curriculum in the fifth or sixth grade explained the daily cost to the state of people in different undesirable categories, those that were mentally ill, crippled, or incarcerated; then, the student is asked to calculate how many loans of one thousand Reichsmark could be given out to families instead of supporting a certain number of the previously described undesirables per year.<sup>233</sup> It is fairly obvious that a question like this would have caused students to consider whether money might be better spent on loans for families or the hereditarily ill. If a student did not come to appreciate such logic taken out of context, they might have been won over by greed. In either case, questions like this were an easy way for the state to promote ideology.

In the higher grades of the *Volksschule*, financial mathematics was introduced in order to have students understand profit and loss, future values, income, and expenditure. Ideally they would be able to make calculations that would allow them to understand Germany's

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<sup>231</sup> Karselt, "Rechnen und Raumlehre," 77.

<sup>232</sup> Karselt, 81.

<sup>233</sup> Siegmund-Schultze, "Teaching of Mathematics," 867.



financial system and its predicaments.<sup>234</sup> The math lessons were still the same for both genders, but while boys might have been solving problems with bullet trajectories, girls were asked questions about the cost of food or paying the rent. Issues related to making a budget were common and had made up a large part of the curriculum since the *Kaiserreich*.<sup>235</sup> The introduction of geometry in the lesson plans also occurred in the *Volksschule* in the higher grades, but at first, only with regards to the rectangle and right triangle in the fifth grade. Eventually, circles, triangles, angles, lines, polygons, spheres, and other more complex shapes were included. Simple calculations, like finding the area of certain shapes, was a common geometry exercise in the seventh or eighth grades.

The mathematical education of girls in the *Oberschule*, which begins in the fifth grade, reached a higher level than that in the *Volksschule* by the end of eighth grade since the *Oberschule* is a more advanced school. The girls' knowledge is not significantly cultivated much beyond this, while the boys continue to learn increasingly difficult concepts. The same financial mathematics and geometric calculations are taught in grades five through eight, with girls and boys also learning how to solve higher order polynomials. In the ninth grade, both genders learn topography and calculating surface areas and volumes of various solid forms; the girls would eventually use this knowledge to solve problems with objects found in the kitchen.<sup>236</sup> In the tenth through twelfth grades, girls learned moderately more difficult

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<sup>234</sup> Karselt, "Rechnen und Raumlehre," 81.

<sup>235</sup> Katharine Kennedy, "Domesticity (Hauswirtschaft) in the 'Volksschule': Textbooks and Lessons for Girls, 1890—1914," *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 13, no. 1 (1991): 14, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43055822>.

<sup>236</sup> Eschenauer, "Politik im Mathematikunterricht," 30.

concepts like algebraic and geometric series, maxima and minima, and trigonometry, but more of the material involved basic statistics, discounting, star constellations, and many simple exercises in home economics.<sup>237</sup> The sphere of the woman in the household appears to have extended outwards into areas in society that must be visited in order to keep the household running. For this reason, the mathematics curriculum taught girls all the applied computational skills they needed in order to visit the post office, railroad, and bank.<sup>238</sup> It was obvious that girls in the Third Reich were not likely to end up in a professional career requiring advanced mathematics, and they were very likely to have to use financial maths and perform measurements in the kitchen, so the decision to limit their mathematical education was thought to be logical. One must consider that only a small minority of girls ever attended the *Oberschule*. Most girls who ended their education after the *Volksschule*, or those who graduated from the *Mittelschule*, did receive roughly the same mathematics curriculum as the boys, and neither group reached the point of learning advanced maths.

Unlike in the sciences, the mathematics curriculum for girls was very politically driven. Roughly from the fifth grade and up, when word problems could be used, every concept would have something to do with politics and sometimes even anti-Semitism or hereditary science, in the form of problem selection. These ideologically-motivated questions were added to a neutral mathematics curriculum by Nazi educators; the student learns mathematical concepts, and then receives National Socialist exercises. As a girl acts to solve

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<sup>237</sup> Eschenauer, 31-35.

<sup>238</sup> Eschenauer, 31-32.

such problems and obtains satisfaction in getting a correct answer, she could unconsciously be assigning her approval to the ideology. Consider again the question mentioned earlier about spending money on family loans or society's undesirables; as a girl finds that she has obtained an answer in how many loans could have been given out, it would not have been a huge psychological step for her to decide that it was also prudent to agree that those hindering the state from giving out such loans should be dealt with. As bizarre as it sounds, the subject of mathematics in the curriculum was probably one of the most effective in promoting National Socialist ideology because the student was so actively involved in conforming to the Nazi agenda.

### **History**

The study of history was one of the most important topics during the Third Reich. As a stand-alone subject, history was given medium priority in the curriculum, but the amount of history that made its way into the lesson plan of many other subjects, like German, geography, or even biology, put history instruction in an prominent position. History was taught in the *Volksschule*, *Mittelschule*, and *Oberschule*, and in all grade levels, though in the *Volksschule* in grades one through four, history was considered part of the German or *Heimatkunde* (local history) curriculum. Every girl in the Third Reich would spend at least a few hours per week studying history. Girls and boys usually used the same textbooks for their history lessons, but the teachers in the girls' schools would emphasize pertinent topics and female role models to their students.

History in the Third Reich was taught with an overarching purpose that sought to answer the complaints of those dissatisfied with the collapse of Germany's national purpose and to alleviate those worried about the consequences of a series of disastrous events in Germany's recent history.<sup>239</sup> The new state was to be a fulfillment and a redemption of this history, and for this reason, everything in Nazi Germany would act as a vital point of reference for all narratives of the past.<sup>240</sup> This past was used to convert those who doubted the Nazis' *Weltanschauung* by presenting of a sort of national drama, and not merely a linear set of events that formed a chronicle. History was to be interpreted as a struggle between nations for survival, one where Germany demonstrated its greatness.<sup>241</sup> The path of the German people was portrayed as the most difficult any had traveled in order to arrive at a state of unification.<sup>242</sup> The history discipline could be thought of as a narrative where the glorification of Germany's arduous journey to the present was superseded only by the laudatory exaltations bestowed upon this destination.

Hitler loomed large in actual classroom lessons, but this influence was also felt in the structure of the curriculum. The subject of history was Hitler's favorite in school, and he spoke highly of a teacher he remembered from his youth who was able to illuminate the past and make the material appear entirely relevant for the present.<sup>243</sup> Hitler wanted the history

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<sup>239</sup> Gilmer W. Blackburn, "The Portrayal of Christianity in the History Textbooks of Nazi Germany," *Church History* 49, no. 4 (December 1980): 444, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3164817>.

<sup>240</sup> Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, 262.

<sup>241</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 50.

<sup>242</sup> Eschenauer, "Politik im Mathematikunterricht," 14.

<sup>243</sup> Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling*, 118; Pagaard, "Teaching the Nazi Dictatorship," 193.

curriculum to cover great themes of development, all in rather broad strokes instead of with lots of detail. Hitler claimed that people do not study history to learn about the past, but to give a person the tools necessary to take a political position on issues that affected the nation.<sup>244</sup> Hitler wanted girls to learn from history what they needed so that they would want to take their place as part of the *Volk*.

History textbooks in the Weimar Republic were similar to those used in the Third Reich to the extent that both constantly emphasized heavily nationalistic themes and promoted the idea of the *Volk*.<sup>245</sup> What was added to the textbooks used in Nazi Germany was the focus on the racial community and loyalty to the *Führer*. Nazi history books also neglected most histories that did not apply to Germany. Whenever non-German history was included in a lesson plan, it was typically to put on display a nation at odds with Germany, like England; to criticize an ideological movement, like the French Revolution; or to appropriate for Nordic values another culture, like the Vikings or Greeks. Most Third Reich history was German, and when it was not, it was molded to suit the needs of the new German state.

Much Third Reich German history revolved around great leaders, like Frederick the Great, but also on the plight of peasants, whose experiences were strongly associated with the theme of the constant struggle of the German *Volk*. German thinkers, writers, or social reformers whose ideas could be connected to the National Socialist movement often received

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<sup>244</sup> Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 36.

<sup>245</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 50.

disproportionate attention.<sup>246</sup> Alfred Rosenberg felt that the weaknesses of any great men should not be obscured, but those characteristics or actions that raise them above ordinary should be explained.<sup>247</sup> German history also had the task of elucidating the fallacies of liberalism. The Weimar Republic was constantly disparaged, and a hatred of all things French permeated the pages of most textbooks. History books tried to show the decline of Western supremacy due to biological degeneration and the humanist desire to maintain the unfit.<sup>248</sup> Imperialism was also condemned whenever it concerned George Bernard Shaw's *Man of Destiny*, or Cecil Rhodes' exploits in the Boer War, but it was praised when the issue of German colonies came up.<sup>249</sup> As part of the push for a national renewal, the woman's position in the national community was highlighted whenever possible, yet the only two women to consistently qualify for Nazi history textbook biographies were Maria Theresa and Queen Louise of Prussia.<sup>250</sup>

It was typical for students to read history books that were actually polemics designed to make a single point. The most common point to be made was the glory of the Nazi movement. Philipp Bouhler's *Kampf um Deutschland* is an example of a text that was written thematically to tell the story of Hitler's rise to power.<sup>251</sup> A section at the beginning

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<sup>246</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 251.

<sup>247</sup> Koch, *Hitler Youth*, 145.

<sup>248</sup> Wunderlich, "Education in Nazi Germany," 350.

<sup>249</sup> Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 165, 167.

<sup>250</sup> Blackburn, 109.

<sup>251</sup> Philipp Bouhler, *Kampf um Deutschland. Ein Lesebuch für die deutsche Jugend*, trans. Randall Bytwerk (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., Frz. Eher Nachf., 1939), <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/bouhler.htm>.

recognizing the history of the Second Reich and Weimar Germany is presented in a manner that would provide context for Hitler's rise. In this part of the text, liberalism is connected to the lessons of the French Revolution, described as a corruption of the ideas of the Enlightenment; liberalism and Republicanism are presented as the antithesis of the Nazi movement.<sup>252</sup> Also according to the text, during World War One, Germany was surrounded by its enemies and treated unjustly. This theme appears frequently in Nazi publications and was indeed a point of agitation among many German citizens. It was said that Germany had lacked the strength of unity of all ethnic German people. For example, in a pamphlet given to graduates of the *Volksschule*, the lack of a united Greater German state was concurrently argued to have been one of the reasons for the defeat in World War One and a point of contention with the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>253</sup> After a biography about Hitler himself, the text examines these important aspects of the Nazi movement: The Beer Hall Putsch, the struggles during the 1920's, the three most important cities of the Third Reich, the ultimate Nazi victory, and the *Volk*. Bouhler's narrative functions much like a novel based on a true story in that all readers know the basics of how the story ends, but the information is nevertheless written with suspense and partnered with anecdotes. The story of the Beer Hall Putsch is described with more vigor than might have been appropriate in a straightforward history text. Bouhler's readers are reminded to proudly recall not just those who participated in 1923, but

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<sup>252</sup> Philipp Bouhler, *Kampf um Deutschland: Ein Lesebuch für die deutsche Jugend* (Berlin: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., Frz. Eher Nachf., 1938), 13-15.

<sup>253</sup> Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Hauptamt für Erzieher (NSLB), *Du und dein Volk*, "The German People on the Path to an Ethnic Reich."

also the sixteen individuals who had fallen.<sup>254</sup> Trying to incorporate elements into history texts to make them more entertaining for readers is an old tactic, but the Nazis' motives were not to make girls' education more interesting, but to make it more ideologically useful.

In Bouhler's text, the three most important cities chosen were Munich, the headquarters of the NSDAP, followed by Nuremberg, the city of the Reich party rallies, and Berlin, the capital of Germany. For every city, another Nazi leader particularly associated with that city is eulogized. In Munich, it was Max Amann, the business manager who helped the party get off its feet in the early years. In Nuremberg, it was Julius Streicher, who is credited with having an incredible work ethic and a steadfast attitude towards Jews.<sup>255</sup> In Berlin, it was Dr. Joseph Göbbels, who helped turn around "Red Berlin." Along the way one learns of other notables with connections to these cities; for example, Albrecht Dürer, who produced famous pieces of art in Nuremberg during the Renaissance, and Horst Wessel, the martyred youth in Berlin after whom the co-national anthem was named.<sup>256</sup> The association with important historical figures like Dürer also added legitimacy to the Nazis' cause. It is important to see what aspects of the development of the NSDAP girls in school were made aware of. Hitler biographies would obviously be included, yet the history of important cities of the Reich presents one of the many paradoxes of Nazi ideology. The Nazi position that urbanization was identified as a source of degeneration was at odds with the desire to promote the great

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<sup>254</sup> Bouhler, *Kampf um Deutschland* (1938), 69.

<sup>255</sup> Bouhler, *Kampf um Deutschland* (1939), "From the Sterneckerhäuschen to the Königsplatz."

<sup>256</sup> Bouhler, "From the Sterneckerhäuschen to the Königsplatz."



cities of the Reich. Girls would alternately learn that cities were a source of pride, or a source of scorn that corrupted the German spirit.

In the section titled “Germany is Ours,” much of the content is dedicated to the events surrounding Hitler becoming chancellor.<sup>257</sup> Parallels are made between Hitler and Bismarck, and the discussion of leadership becomes a focal point. Hitler and the Party had established the point that the fate of the Reich would depend on the characteristics of its ruler(s). Hitler endorsed the idea that leaders emerge as a result of inherited characteristics, but the theoretical basis of education in Third Reich was that superior training would produce superior leaders.<sup>258</sup> This was another inconsistency in Nazi Germany that was never adequately resolved, but in truth, the concept of leadership in any meaningful capacity had not been intended for the girls in the first place.

The conclusion of this text includes a rousing sequence of platitudes like this allusion to Nazi leaders: “They rescued Germany from the edge of the abyss and gave it a new face, its true face.”<sup>259</sup> It was common in all German history books for events to be presented with an urgency such that they would mobilize the emotions of their readers.<sup>260</sup> Adolf Hitler was always written to be a dynamic and heroic figure: “[Hitler] believed in Germany when everything was falling apart around him.”<sup>261</sup> Though politics were not intended to be within

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<sup>257</sup> Bouhler, “Germany is Ours.”

<sup>258</sup> Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 58.

<sup>259</sup> Bouhler, *Kampf um Deutschland (1939)*, “The Victory of Faith.”

<sup>260</sup> Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 40.

<sup>261</sup> Bouhler, *Kampf um Deutschland (1939)*, “The Victory of Faith.”

the ambit of the woman, girls reading a text like this were taught to be enthused about the eminence of the government in power. They did not read any opposing viewpoints, and given the susceptibility of the minds of youths, most would have accepted what they had read.

Johann von Leers was a prolific writer of history, and sometimes historical fiction, in the Third Reich. He was known for his particular absorption with anti-Semitic tropes, which constituted an inordinate amount of the material in his texts, even when compared to other texts in Nazi Germany. He also worked for Göbbels as a propagandist, a job that he would continue after the war, first in Juan Peron's Argentina, and then in an official capacity for Gamel Nasser's Islamic regime in Egypt. An examination of one of his history texts for students reveals a narrative that differentiates itself from others due to the consistent negativity.<sup>262</sup> Von Leers does not appear very concerned with the usual nationalistic themes of "Blood and Soil" or the *Volk*; instead, his writing moves from one enemy to the next. He even offers qualified criticism of some German leaders; for example, Bismarck is described as good in foreign policy, yet bad with domestic affairs, and Wilhelm II apparently had many talents, though military prowess was not one of them.<sup>263</sup> The correctness of these statements aside, it was uncommon for any Nazi textbook to assign negative language to a positive German figure in any situation other than times where such an individual had been betrayed

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<sup>262</sup> Johann von Leers, *Deutschland: Die geistige Wiedergeburt einer Nation* (Berlin: Erich Zander Druck- und Verlagshaus, 1941).

<sup>263</sup> von Leers, *Deutschland*, 45, 50.

or had no choice in their actions. If nothing else, for girls reading his texts in the classroom, von Leers provided a bit of variety.

World War One received much attention from von Leers; in fact, he asks readers what the World War (World War Two was not yet referred to as a world war) meant for Germany, before answering his question with “everything.”<sup>264</sup> In Nazi Germany, girls were not taught of the glories of war like the boys, but with regards to what the impact of war, especially World War One, had on society and politics, they received an in-depth education. While von Leers’s text does explain the war itself, a greater focus is placed on what occurred following the conflict. Woodrow Wilson is described as a deceiver, the Jews are said to have been the oligarchs in power who betrayed the Reich, and the *Schanddiktat von Versailles* (the Shame of Versailles) is portrayed as a terrible calamity against the German worker.<sup>265</sup> From this point forward, and as the text moved into very modern history, anti-Semitism became an even more significant part of the story.

In von Leers’s narrative, as in others, everything international began to be identified with Jews. In addition, Nazi histories frequently claimed all foreign powers were controlled by Jews, as seen in the influence of Bernard Baruch on Woodrow Wilson, Georges Mandel on Georges Clemenceau, and Edward Sassoon on David Lloyd George. Walther Rathenau, a Jewish business leader and Foreign Minister during the Weimar Republic, received an enormous amount of hate in history texts. Karl Marx was not treated kindly, but Friedrich

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<sup>264</sup> von Leers, 47.

<sup>265</sup> von Leers, 54, 62, 74.

Engels was often not mentioned at all, and he was symbolically replaced with Ferdinand Lassalle, a Jew, and the first person to organize socialist action in Germany.<sup>266</sup> Bismarck was claimed, on weak evidence, to have been an anti-Semite, and Gavrilo Princip was said, with no evidence, to have been Jewish.<sup>267</sup> The Rothschilds earned an entire family tree in some histories, and the French Revolution was described as a Jewish conspiracy.<sup>268</sup> An entire encyclopedia could have been written listing the people and events that were tied to Jewish intrigue in the history texts of the Third Reich. For any girl reading a textbook in a history class, it may have been felt that the sheer magnitude of material would have contributed to the veracity of the claims made against Jews.

Von Leers proceeds to write about the entire bureaucratic structure of the Third Reich, but it was his assessment of why the NSDAP ultimately prevailed as a party that is worthy of note. All the other major parties had money and established organizations but promoted platforms that were designed to appeal to singular demographics in order to secure a voting base, while National Socialism strove to appeal to them all.<sup>269</sup> The importance of this statement is not whether it is accurate, but that any pragmatic reason for Hitler's success is advertised at all. Students were told over and over again that the success of the NSDAP was due to an awakening of the *Volk*, a reaction against Bolshevism, the unity of the nation against Germany's enemies because of the Treaty of Versailles, or perhaps even due to the

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<sup>266</sup> Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling*, 139.

<sup>267</sup> Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 142, 145.

<sup>268</sup> Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling*, 141, 152.

<sup>269</sup> von Leers, *Deutschland*, 122.

spirit of Hitler. Though von Leers certainly offered others affirmations of Nazism as well, his comments are interesting because Nazi success was always taught in the abstract. An abstract sentiment is more difficult to oppose, and that is what educators wanted to impart on their students.

Direct discussion of race was not as common in history texts as in biology texts or German readers, but von Leers does address race in contemporary Germany in a curious way. Referring implicitly to the Nuremberg laws, von Leers shows a state-by-state breakdown of the then-current anti-miscegenation laws in the United States along with the assertion that no Black, Chinese, or Indian brought as much sorrow to the people in America as the Jew had to the German.<sup>270</sup> This statement attempts to justify Germany's actions by pointing out the hypocrisy of a rival. Though von Leers does not bring it up, the treatment of those in various nations' colonies is also often used in other texts to show hypocrisy and to provide justification for whatever Germany wants to do to ethnic minorities.

Von Leers's history, which was mostly a recent history, is a relentless attempt to inflame readers to embrace the cause of National Socialism. His words are less crude than any of those in Streicher's publications, and his prose is well written, but as part of a lesson plan, his content would not have left any teenage girl positively enthused. There is also almost nothing in the content written specifically for girls. His frankness and his ability to offer the occasional truism cannot overcome the fact that this would have been a very biased history for girls in the Third Reich.

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<sup>270</sup> von Leers, 159-61.

Another one of von Leers's texts, *Für das Reich*, was sometimes treated as history though it was actually a collection of mostly fictional short stories collected by von Leers.<sup>271</sup> In fairness, there was no attempt on the part of von Leers to deceive. He was quite candid about the fact that this text was not actual history, but he felt that the stories, which were historical in nature, would help awaken the German spirit and that they should be read in history classes. Given von Leers's admission, teachers likely would have presented these stories as fictional accounts. Essentially, the text conveys one message: Germans are heroes, and Jews are villains. While the plot lines and the characters are designed to entertain, any girl mature enough to be assigned to read this text would have clearly been able to identify the content as fiction. Anti-Semitic fiction could certainly be dangerous, and several examples of this were presented in the German studies chapter of this thesis, but in light of the force of other components in the curriculum, von Leers's anti-Semitic historical fiction essays probably had little effect.

Dietrich Klagges's *Volk und Führer*, written especially for the sixth grade in the *Mittelschule*, is a more proper history, though still one with an ideological bias.<sup>272</sup> Klagges, who was as notable an author as von Leers, focuses more on ancient history, and therefore writes a great deal about the Nordic ideal and little about the Jews. Klagges's history begins with the Ice Age, and the development of a society of very capable peasants that comprised

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<sup>271</sup> Johann von Leers, *Für das Reich: Deutsche Geschichte in Geschichtserzählungen* (Langensalza: Verlag von Julius Beltz, 1940).

<sup>272</sup> Dietrich Klagges, *Volk und Führer: Deutsch Geschichte für Schulen*, eds. Gustav Märkisch and Ernst Rickel (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Moritz Diesterweg, 1940).

the early Nordic race. Oftentimes, when writers of history discussed these early people, the characters began to take on the role of semi-mythical heroes.<sup>273</sup> The early German migrations were said to have been initiated by the people who lived in the land of what is now northern Germany and Denmark. Klagges's description of what happened next is summarized as follows: The Celts move towards Iberia and the British Isles, the Italics go to Italy, the Greeks go to Greece, the Phrygians go to Anatolia, the Baltics go to the Baltic region, the Slavs head east, and the Indo-Iranians head towards Iran and branch off into several groups around the Caspian and Black Seas.<sup>274</sup> The Slavs were disliked by Nazi ideologues because this group of Nordic people, in migrating east, had their blood contaminated and so inter-related with the Mongolian race that nothing was left of it.<sup>275</sup> Some of these peoples, like the Greeks, became very successful, but through their movements and marriages to others whom the Nordics met on their journeys, their race was becoming extinct.<sup>276</sup>

The problem for the Nazis was that compared to the Greeks and the Romans, the early Germans were not particularly successful. To resolve this, history writers often claimed that early Greek and Roman heritage was originally Nordic, and they presented of a number of daring hypotheses regarding the actual accomplishments of Stone and Bronze Age

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<sup>273</sup> Beard, "Education under the Nazis," 447-48.

<sup>274</sup> Klagges, *Volk und Führer*, 25.

<sup>275</sup> Mann, *School for Barbarians*, 58.

<sup>276</sup> Klagges, *Volk und Führer*, 31.

Germans.<sup>277</sup> By creating such a distinguished history for race, history texts validated the idea of race as the basis of a healthy population.<sup>278</sup>

A pamphlet given to *Volksschule* graduates touches on this subject and shows to what extent an ancient German heritage was important to Nazi leaders. The ancient Germans were said to be successful because they lived in strong kinship groups, belonged to the same race, and functioned in societies with bold leaders.<sup>279</sup> The pamphlet claims that “the forms of their high culture may be outdated, but the roots from which it came should find new life in us.”<sup>280</sup> The history of the early Germans was to reveal a model on which the new German state was to be constructed.

Blackburn points out that the description of the ancient Nordic people as tall, light, and strong did not appear to match some of the Nazi leadership with Göring, who was fat, Göbbels, who was short, Hitler, who was weak, and Hess, who was dark.<sup>281</sup> These inconveniences surely were not lost on contemporary Germans either, but it did not appear to matter since some members of German society did indeed match the Nordic criteria. Girls reading Klagges’s text probably still assumed that an ancient Nordic race was the heritage of every German.

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<sup>277</sup> Engelmann, “German Education and Re-Education,” 65.

<sup>278</sup> Amy Beth Carney, “‘As Blond as Hitler’: Positive Eugenics and Fatherhood in the Third Reich” (master’s thesis, Florida State University, 2005), 37, FSU Digital Library.

<sup>279</sup> Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Hauptamt für Erzieher (NSLB), *Du und dein Volk*, “People and State.”

<sup>280</sup> Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Hauptamt für Erzieher (NSLB), “People and State.”

<sup>281</sup> Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 50.



In Klagges's text, as the Bronze Age passed, the ancient Nordic people who remained in their homeland now comprised the Germanic tribes. The realm existed as West Germany (now Germany), North Germany (now Scandinavia), and East Germany (now Poland). Chronologically from this point forward, the historical details appear closer to current accepted history, though still with a favorable commentary on the part of the author. Stories of the famous battle of the Teutoburg Forest and the background of the statue of *The Dying Gaul* would be typical of any history from this historical era.<sup>282</sup> The next hundred pages of the text take the reader from Rome to the Viking Age. Klagges's text provides a rough overview of the events that transpired between antiquity and the European Dark Ages.

Three points of interest stand out. First, the fall of Rome presents an uneasy situation since the accepted state narrative is that great states like Rome fell because their blood had been corrupted by outsiders and that they lost their will to have many children. In this case, the outsiders were Germans, and the eventual fall of this great city was credited mostly to Alaric the Goth.<sup>283</sup> Klagges does not obscure what happened, but he simply disregards the controversy. Second, the coming of Christianity is all but ignored. Charles Martel is said to have saved the Christian Empire with his victory at Poitiers against the invading Islamic Umayyad forces, but Christianity is not considered to be a foundational factor in Klagges's

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<sup>282</sup> The Battle of the Teutoburg Forest marked the end of Roman expansion into Germania after an alliance of German tribes defeated the Roman legions in present-day Lower Saxony. The Statue of *The Dying Gaul* was a Roman marble statue based on an earlier Hellenistic Greek bronze, which is thought to have commemorated a Greek victory over the Celtic Galatians in Anatolia.

<sup>283</sup> Klagges, *Volk und Führer*, 96.

European history.<sup>284</sup> Nazi educators usually avoided openly criticizing Christianity, but overlooking or sometimes condemning by association was common. According to Blackburn, various Nazi histories in schools criticized monasticism for the “hundreds of thousands of Germans that wasted away behind cloister walls” and the roughly two hundred thousand good German knights that went on Crusade and did not return to their homeland.<sup>285</sup> Third, Charlemagne presents a difficult topic for the Nazis since he was a great Germanic king, but he also persecuted Pagan Germanic tribes and forced them from their cultural roots. Klagges chooses to praise the first Holy Roman Emperor, and he offers him particular accolades for his promotion of art and science.<sup>286</sup> A girl, perhaps twelve years old, reading both Klagges and von Leers would find an interesting dichotomy. She would have read about different eras, in different literary styles, and from both a positive and negative viewpoint. In Klagges's work, the Nordic race is the linchpin of all history, and enemies are essentially irrelevant. In von Leers's work, the enemy is the Jew, and the Nordic people, so far as they remained, could not thrive until he is defeated.

For comparison, Bernhard Kumsteller's history texts, in multiple volumes, cover the entire span of history from the origins of Nordic man until the formation of the Second Reich.<sup>287</sup> His history, meant for the seventh grade, is in total two hundred pages in length, so

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<sup>284</sup> Klagges, 126-28.

<sup>285</sup> Blackburn, “Portrayal of Christianity,” 437, 441.

<sup>286</sup> Klagges, *Volk und Führer*, 138.

<sup>287</sup> Bernhard Kumsteller, *Geschichtsbuch für die deutsche Jugend. Erster Teil* (Leipzig: Verlag von Quelle & Mener, 1936); Bernhard Kumsteller, *Geschichtsbuch für die deutsche Jugend. Zweiter Teil* (Leipzig: Verlag von Quelle & Mener, 1936).

one could imagine that he gives all topics only a brief outline. The content in his text is somewhat complementary to that found in Klagges's work. He provides less information overall, yet he offers additional bits of knowledge that might not have been included elsewhere. One has to remember when analyzing any one history text that it usually only served its purpose for a year or two before another text became the students' main source of information as they advanced through the grades. By the time any girl graduated, she would have read a broad sampling of history texts utilizing a variety of pedagogic, or perhaps propagandistic, methods.

Kumsteller's history provides information on the historical period after Klagges' text ends, and before the period that von Leers and Bouhler begin with. In the first volume, the main takeaway concerns those notable historical figures of the Middle Ages and early modern Europe that the Nazis would consider significant. For the most part, these individuals were German kings who had some success in war. For example, Heinrich I, who had great victories against the Magyars, received several pages of content, as did Otto I, who expanded into Italy and warred against his nobility.<sup>288</sup> Martin Luther, who was also the subject of many lessons in the German studies curriculum, is important in Kumsteller's history textbook as well; Luther's Ninety-Five Theses are explained in some detail.<sup>289</sup> Charlemagne is treated favorably by Kumsteller as he was by Klagges. He is credited for

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<sup>288</sup> Kumsteller, *Erster Teil*, 35-39.

<sup>289</sup> Kumsteller, 83-85.

building up an empire and for favoring academic development and other cultural advances.<sup>290</sup> The discovery of America about 1000AD by the son of Erik the Red is another properly-referenced historical note discussed by Kumsteller. The first volume is dominated by people and glory in conflict, but the second volume takes as its primary theme the effect of war on society.

The second volume is marked by three serious events that Kumsteller implies affected much of the history of the surrounding years. These three events were the Thirty Years War, the period of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, and the Revolutions of 1848. The Thirty Years War, which ended in 1648, was described as a period of immense unnecessary death and one that appeared to strengthen France.<sup>291</sup> Much of the period from 1789 until 1815 is written as Napoleon's era, for which the great valor of German troops in combat was more important than Napoleon's victory over them; the French Revolution is merely listed as a precursor to Napoleon's rise.<sup>292</sup> Kumsteller appears to conclude that the revolutions of 1848 were a people's revolution that contributed to the eventual formation of the Second Reich; the liberal elements of the particularly German version of these continent-wide uprisings were said to have been defeated.<sup>293</sup> Kumsteller's is a more traditional history in that it employs a chronological approach while highlighting certain key people and events. The content was probably written more with boys' education in mind, and it was also a bit

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<sup>290</sup> Kumsteller, 32-33.

<sup>291</sup> Kumsteller, *Zweiter Teil*, 7-10.

<sup>292</sup> Kumsteller, 45-71.

<sup>293</sup> Kumsteller, 79-83.

dry, but girls reading this textbook would have studied material with no serious bias. Some of Kumsteller's interpretations could be argued, but the vast majority of his content is historically sound.

The history curriculum is somewhat of an outlier in the broader Third Reich school curriculum. Most classroom subjects were taught with a combination of the traditional and the National Socialist. In these other subjects, nationalistic elements were always present, but strictly ideological conclusions were suggested only at times; politics was thrown at the reader periodically, but a straightforward, traditional education remained at the core of the syllabus. One could almost see through the eyes of Nazi educators as they took raw educational content intended for a textbook and decided where to add paragraphs or entire sections that promoted Nazi ideals. The history curriculum did not follow this pattern. Much in the way that one must look at the German studies curriculum and conclude that a student reading both a reasonably educational *Lesebuch* and an obscene *Der Giftpilz* in the same grade would have gotten both a liberal and an anti-Semitic education "side by side," one must do the same with the history curriculum, but consider what must have been read by any student, any girl, over the course of her entire school career rather than just in a single grade. Von Leers's history was strictly propaganda, and his text might have been the primary resource at a particular grade level. Kumsteller's textbook had fewer National Socialist elements than almost all textbooks examined for this entire thesis study, and Klagges's was reasonably unbiased as well. Each of those two texts, designed for the student in the seventh grade and sixth grade, respectively, paints a different picture of Nazi education than what one

would gather from von Leers, or to a lesser extent, the still very ideological Bouhler. This thesis must consider all of the above, and conclude that the history curriculum, collectively, would still teach a girl in the Third Reich traditional straightforward history and biased National Socialist history side by side by the time she had graduated.

### **Geography**

The study of geography is supposed to consist of the physical features of the land, the resources on the land, and how various people use the land. In geography courses in the Third Reich, the Nazis took this basic premise and adjusted it to suit their ideological needs. Lesson plans about physical features were minimized, and the study of people and resources became a diatribe of how the German people deserved more of them. Geography in Nazi Germany was about national pride, the love of the fatherland, and issues related to living space. To a large extent, it was geopolitics and *Lebensraum*, which in Germany's case, implied having to seize, justifiably or otherwise, territory from any of its neighbors. This subject also delved into race studies, colonialism, and military defense.

Geography was probably the most political of any subject taught during the Third Reich; it was also the subject that included the most information about different nations and cultures. Textbooks in schools during the Weimar Republic already discussed the question of Germany's colonies because the Treaty of Versailles forbade Germany from having them, but this topic did not become one of the most salient until after Hitler became chancellor.<sup>294</sup> Weimar textbooks also complained about lost territories after World War One, but they did

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<sup>294</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 230.

not contain the Nazis' "blood and soil" rhetoric with regards to re-obtaining these lands.<sup>295</sup>

Nazi textbooks openly discussed expansionist politics.

Germany laid claim to a number of territories based largely on racial undertones, and the geography curriculum in schools provided justification for these actions. Katharine Kennedy asserts that texts from the *Kaiserreich*, Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany all argued that medieval Teutonic Knights gave Germany legitimacy in lands of the East, but this language was fairly subdued until Germany's shrunken border became reality and textbook writers had time to alter their tone.<sup>296</sup> During the second half of the Weimar Republic and during the Third Reich, Germans living outside the new borders were celebrated, and calls to reclaim lost lands became intertwined with racial science; these calls were then extended to further lands in the east and to colonial territories abroad.

Girls and boys sometimes used the same textbooks for geography, and in other cases, different ones with very similar content. Teachers in boys' schools may have emphasized military expansion, while those in girls' schools probably highlighted the birth rate in German territories, but the concept of "Germandom," with respect to territory, was the basis for the curriculum in schools for both genders. In the first four grades of the *Volksschule*, geography education was still contained within the German studies curriculum, and it was not yet a stand-alone subject. It was probably felt that young girls were not yet mature enough to understand the politics of regaining lost land. In these early years, children were

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<sup>295</sup> Katharine Kennedy, "Eastern Borderlands in German Schoolbooks, 1890-1945," *Paedagogica Historica* 43, no. 1 (February 2007): 11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230601080568>.

<sup>296</sup> Kennedy, "Eastern Borderlands," 1.

just taught about the area of Germany, the people of other European countries, and the physical geography of Germany, with the theme of how beautiful it was.<sup>297</sup> In grades five through eight of the *Volksschule*, people and living space became the primary objective of the curriculum. The same was true at all grade levels in either the *Mittelschule* or the *Oberschule*. Geography was considered a very important subject in the Third Reich because educators and Nazi leaders thought it was politically crucial to teach children about *Lebensraum*, but as an actual class it usually only consisted of about two hours per week of instruction. This may have been due to the fact that there really was not that much material to teach, and students would have already experienced considerable repetition from one grade to the next.

A chapter in a text designed for the tenth grade in the *Mittelschule* provides a great example of how *Lebensraum* and the Treaty of Versailles were treated in geography textbooks.<sup>298</sup> This schoolbook by Reinhard Müller was not specifically written for girls, but as previously mentioned, most geography course lessons were not gender-specific. German leaders considered the colonial question a matter of living space just as they did the issue of the land to the east. After providing some data regarding the German birth rate and emigrant numbers, this text moves immediately to the issue of German colonies. Setting the stage for complaints against the Treaty of Versailles, the text argues that all of Germany's original colonies were obtained through legal agreements, not through theft or violence, as was the

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<sup>297</sup> Eschenauer, "Politik im Mathematikunterricht," 16.

<sup>298</sup> Reinhard Müller, *Deutschland. Sechster Teil*, trans. Randall Bytwerk (Berlin: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1943), <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/textbk02.htm>.



case with the colonies of many other nations.<sup>299</sup> Müller’s protest recalls how point five of Woodrow Wilson’s original Fourteen Points promised that all colonial claims would be resolved impartially, but this guideline, along with much of the rest of Wilson’s plan, was abandoned before the actual treaty would be “dictated” to Germany.<sup>300</sup> Germany had been accused of incompetent administration and military imperialism by various nations who were guilty of incompetent administration and military imperialism—a matter of pure hypocrisy. Müller’s text includes a 1926 quote from the *Manchester Guardian*, a British newspaper, in which it was supposedly written: “The seizure of Germany’s colonies and their division among the victorious Allies has a prime position in its foolishness, treachery, and hypocrisy of the Treaty of Versailles.”<sup>301</sup> It is unclear if this quote is being accurately relayed, but these words, and the way the entire situation was described, is precisely how girls in school, or anyone in Nazi Germany, was taught to regard the loss of German colonies. Geography as a subject had the intent to teach the destructiveness of the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>302</sup>

Müller’s text mentions the geographical danger posed by being a nation in the middle of Europe, capable of being surrounded on all sides. During World War One, access to the sea and to neutral countries had been blocked, which provided for a successful hunger blockade. What is fascinating is that Müller includes the following statement about the end of the Great War: “Though the German army fought bravely for four years against a multitude of foes, the

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<sup>299</sup> Müller, *Deutschland*, “The Development of the German Colonies.”

<sup>300</sup> Müller, “Lies about the Colonial Question.”

<sup>301</sup> Müller, “Lies about the Colonial Question.”

<sup>302</sup> Wunderlich, “Education in Nazi Germany,” 350.

lack of food and raw materials finally weakened the homeland and forced the nation to capitulate.”<sup>303</sup> Most historians would agree with this statement, yet this says nothing of the “stab in the back” myth that was the official Party line. The text would go on to state how the new Axis alliance with Mussolini in Italy and Franco in Spain (the country was officially neutral) would prevent any future encirclement; the additional allies Japan, Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia, and others, had rendered the Treaty of Versailles void.<sup>304</sup> The manner in which this text is written is similar to a drama in a fiction novel or movie. The reader is presented with an ominous plot and a seemingly uncertain ending, but Hitler and National Socialism save the day. Much of the history of the Treaty of Versailles was already known to contemporary Germans, and even to younger students; it was the most major political controversy of the Weimar Republic. It is nonetheless important to focus on the language and the style of presentation to see how this material was presented to a student.

A section in Müller’s text also describes all the resources lost due to the reparations clauses after World War One. A list is provided including such things as medicines, livestock, coal, iron, oil, and even long-distance cables and large merchant ships, which had to be surrendered to the allies.<sup>305</sup> Just as the German studies curriculum showed the state’s ambitions and biology showed its ideas, geography is where the Third Reich aired its grievances. Another section complains about class struggle and profit for the sake of profit:

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<sup>303</sup> Müller, *Deutschland*, “Political Aspects of the Central Location.”

<sup>304</sup> Müller, “The Young Nations.”

<sup>305</sup> Müller, “The Situation at the End of the World War.”

Hence, the Four Year Plans. After this, appears a section about the birth rate and the need for every couple to have an average of four children; here the author introduces the topic of marriage loans, tax credits, and various forms of child support. It is likely that any girl reading through this text would have found at least one issue that she, or her family, would have felt strongly about. Since National Socialism is presented either as having already solved a problem or as being in the process of solving a problem with the help of the *Volk*, anyone could have been induced to approve of the government. As soon as a person approves of any one aspect of an idea or a movement, it becomes far easier to convince this person to extend their consent to other aspects. The endorsement of further conditions reinforces one's initial choice—nobody wants to prove themselves wrong. While such a theory does not absolutely apply in practice, by the time a girl in the Third Reich would have completed her schooling, she would have discovered many things she could have approved of. Geography education was a large factor in obtaining a girl's approval of Nazi politics.

Early and regular compliance with National Socialism was key for Hitler in forging forward and declaring war in 1939. Müller's text describes these circumstances through a National Socialist lens, and with quite a bit of bias. According to Müller, everyone in Austria, Czechoslovakia, the Memel district of Lithuania, and elsewhere were incorporated into Germany without much trouble; dividing up Poland with the Soviet Union under the "border and friendship treaty" was beneficial for all involved.<sup>306</sup> For many Nazi authors writing during this period, the only problem, initially, had been England and France. A

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<sup>306</sup> Müller, "The General Government."

common explanatory narrative for the Soviet Union's treaty with Germany was that unlike France, the Soviets did not wish to shed their blood for England's position in the world, so they combined with Germany, ruling out England's influence.<sup>307</sup> Hitler's eventual attack on the Soviet Union was written with a baffling nonchalance, and as one would have expected, the Soviet Union was accused of violating all its treaties and threatening Germany.<sup>308</sup> Girls, as opposed to boys who had been schooled on bravery and conquest since they were young *Pimpfe*, were not so enthused for war. They did not want their fathers and brothers to be drafted. Personal experience can trump any persuasive argument. Müller's geography text tells girls that all state actions related to living space are just. Many girls would have been convinced of the theory behind this, but once any war started and people began to die, only the true ideologues would have remained convinced.

Another geography text, this one specifically for girls in the *Mittelschule* or the *Volksschule*, takes on a more historical view of Germany's geopolitical situation.<sup>309</sup> This text begins with several short chapters about geology and climate, after which students were given an assignment to draw their entire *Heimat*, indicating the location of all the fields, rivers, deciduous or coniferous forests, et cetera. After this, the authors appear to have felt that their readers were prepared for more pertinent politically-oriented lessons plans. The text reviews the racial makeup of the German *Volk*, starting with the German tribes.

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<sup>307</sup> Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Hauptamt für Erzieher (NSLB), *Du und dein Volk*, "The New Ordering of Europe and the World."

<sup>308</sup> Müller, *Deutschland*, "The Decisive Struggle."

<sup>309</sup> Konrad Olbricht and Hermann Kärger, eds., *Deutschland als Ganzes* (Berlin und Leipzig: A. W. Zickfeldt Verlag, 1938).

Kamenetsky argues that early history and folklore are often used to justify Germany's drive eastward based on the claims of the early German tribes.<sup>310</sup> As part of describing the German people, the text mentions the three different German Empires. The delineation of the Third Reich and Bismarck's Second Empire were fairly obvious. The *Kaiserreich* was given credit for the buildup of industry and trade, but the author refers to the fact that it had collapsed like a "house of cards" due to the failures of various leading circles of politicians.<sup>311</sup> This is far better than how the Weimar Republic is described. Noting that the initiation of this Republican government should not be referred to as a revolution, but a power shift, Weimar Germany was called "the path through hell."<sup>312</sup> The First Reich is well known to have been the Holy Roman Empire; however, while the text admits that this Reich officially ended in 1806, it claims the contemporary view was that it actually ended in 1648 to coincide with the conclusion of the Thirty Years' War.<sup>313</sup>

Olbricht and Kärgel prefer a very organized presentation of information, and they arrange the history of Germany into eight epochs. The Third Reich, Weimar Republic, and the *Kaiserreich* were preceded by the following: 1648-1871, the first "in between" period; 1268-1648, the time of the citizen; 962-1268, the time of the knight; 496-962, the takeover of Christianity; the period ending in 496, the Germanic time.<sup>314</sup> The rest of the text does

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<sup>310</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 252.

<sup>311</sup> Olbricht and Kärgel, *Deutschland als Ganzes*, 57.

<sup>312</sup> Olbricht and Kärgel, 56.

<sup>313</sup> Olbricht and Kärgel, 52-54.

<sup>314</sup> Olbricht and Kärgel, 60.

include sections on Jewish Bolshevism, the question of colonies, and a large chapter detailing statistics of populations and resources. Most of this text would probably be considered history. The only sections that could have been called true geography were the introductory lessons at the beginning, and the statistics at the end, which were likely used for reference. Perhaps more importantly, this text did not contain any material that one would recognize as being reserved for girls. The previously mentioned Müller geography text did not include as much history, yet the overall message, and the tendency of the presentation, was very similar to the content in the Olbricht and Kärigel text.

A third geography text by Walther Jantzen, a famous author during the Third Reich, presents content that was dissimilar to each of the other two.<sup>315</sup> It is unknown for what school and age group the text was intended for, but the impression one gets is that it may have been read by someone of about fifteen years old. Jantzen's text, written for boys and girls, is a short work that might be remembered best for the twenty-four pages of pictures included at its conclusion. These images include a rich visual history of landscapes, workers, industry, and even children. The actual textual material, only about sixty pages, chiefly covers the people in Germany, but a few interesting linked topics are included.

Jantzen relates why Jews were considered unwelcome in Germany, yet he fails to offer any original substance that any girl would not have already heard. He does provide a chart that summarizes the percentage of each nation's population thought to be Jewish, and the numbers appear reasonably accurate; for example, he claims that thirteen percent of Poles,

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<sup>315</sup> Walther Jantzen, ed., *Die Geographie im Dienste der nationalpolitischen Erziehung: Ein Ergänzungsheft zu den Lehrbüchern der Erdkunde* (Breslau: Ferdinand Hirt, 1936).

about three percent of Americans, and about one percent of Germans were Jewish in the mid-1930's.<sup>316</sup> Jantzen was one of the few authors to specifically single out blacks and the Romani. He blames France for the small influx of blacks and Moroccans into Europe, while he considers the Romani to be a wandering *Volk* without a *Heimat*.<sup>317</sup>

*Lebensraum*, the Treaty of Versailles, and the loss of resources are all mentioned within the pages of Jantzen's text. There are a number of graphs that illustrate exactly how much territory and materials had been lost. Oftentimes, geography texts try to prove the *Lebensraum* theory by reminding readers of Germany's superior achievements, and the inferiority of other peoples who are not willing or able to develop the land.<sup>318</sup> Jantzen's socio-political geography attempts to achieve this result; his scientific display tries to affirm credibility through the impression of serious scholarship.

In a confounding chapter after addressing *Lebensraum*, Jantzen describes and graphically shows the potential attack ranges of France and other European nations into Germany with regards to land, sea, and air conflict. This text was published well before the war started, but Jantzen appears to present this information to indicate his belief that the Nordic man has it in his spirit to be great on the sea and in the air, while being courageous on land.<sup>319</sup> Equally surprising is the manner in which Jantzen addresses the question of Germany's colonies. In a short section before his conclusion he claims that the colonies were a matter of honor ever

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<sup>316</sup> Jantzen, *Die Geographie*, 20.

<sup>317</sup> Jantzen, 18, 20.

<sup>318</sup> Engelmann, "German Education and Re-Education," 67.

<sup>319</sup> Jantzen, *Die Geographie*, 53.

since Adolf Hitler spoke to John Simon, Neville Chamberlain's Secretary for Foreign Affairs at the time, with Simon allegedly giving Hitler a guarantee (possibly a reassurance of some resolution).<sup>320</sup> Jantzen is vague on the details, and it is not clear if history has recorded such a conversation, but this was a unique way of asserting that Germany deserved its former colonies. Any text written once the war had started would almost certainly not have highlighted any theoretical compromise with England.

Jantzen's text does in fact include a good amount of traditional geography as well. By nature of trying to incorporate an analysis for every physical, human (and animal), economic, and political quantity typically studied within geography, he manages to inform on the non-ideological as much as the ideological. Though an examination of Jantzen's coverage of how many potatoes, pigs, or railroads Germany has within its borders is not as riveting as his discussion on the Treaty of Versailles, it is just as historically significant. All of this material relates to *Lebensraum*, and it is political, but it is not inherently ideological. Any nation that had been stripped of a sizable percentage of its natural resources and at least a problematic number of its human resources during the lives of the students' parents would teach geography in a similar fashion; materials and inhabitants is the essence of this science.

Jantzen's work contains neither the sentiment of some of the more ideological textbooks or the encouragement of those that included content that might be relatable for girls. He did not even mention the birth rate or motherhood, except in passing comments. His method was to present a series of statistics, followed by a succinct explanation on how they applied to

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<sup>320</sup> Jantzen, 54.



Germany. Jantzen's work would have been a good resource for anyone looking for National Socialist curriculum at the intersection of lost resources and living space, but since the purpose of geography was to teach girls (and boys) unequivocally that these theories were also correct and relevant, his text fails because his presentation would have been tedious for the intended audience.

Comparing the geography curriculum of the Third Reich to an unbiased assessment of geology, resources, and people would be unfair. Many of the arguments for living space with regards to people and materials had existed in textbooks for decades. Various African colonies were actively being administered during the *Kaiserreich*. Likewise, one should not underestimate how much the Treaty of Versailles was already hated during the Weimar Republic. What the Nazis did with the geography curriculum was to give it force and to make it more unrestrained. The racial element, front and center, had evolved from a paternalistic impulse to a doctrine of superiority. To this extent, the influence of Nazi education on the subject of geography can be seen as a matter of degree. Nazi educators added certain language and highlighted specific examples in order to draw their conclusions, which were, frankly, many of the same ones that could have been made before they took power. Nazi educators merely presented them with a newfound righteousness. Even the selection of anti-Semitic comments, which constituted a minority of the overall message and which were not as vicious as those seen in the lesson plans of other subjects, could have been found in pre-Nazi textbooks. The atrocities committed in the conquered eastern regions during the war were certainly not sanctioned during the Weimar Republic or the *Kaiserreich*,

but these were not examined in any textbook, and this thesis is not a study of policy, but of education. Nazi pedagogy for the subject of geography was status quo with a few elements, in the form of an additional chapter or two, added to satisfy the overall ideological goals.

What, or how much, girls would have learned in the subject of geography may have depended on individual personality. Geography lesson plans were presented with logic and statistics; they did not contain many clever analogies, and the indicated nationalism was straightforward, not triumphant. Girls' textbooks were essentially the same as those for boys, and the themes that typically pertained to girls in other subjects were absent or minimal in geography. The material, though academic in nature, was not particularly intellectual. If a girl had a disposition towards a frank, statistical justification for *Lebensraum*, she would have been right at home; more likely, geography would have been an uninspiring school subject for many girls across Germany.

### **Foreign Languages**

The Nazis instructed teachers to endeavor replacing all foreign words with an equivalent German expression.<sup>321</sup> Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf* that foreign language learning was a waste of time for ninety-eight percent of students since they would never be able to put their knowledge into practice.<sup>322</sup> The Nazis also intended to push for German to become the *lingua franca* of Europe after the war.<sup>323</sup> Despite all this seeming opposition to foreign

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<sup>321</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 250.

<sup>322</sup> Jan Hollm, "Foreign Language Teaching under National Socialism" (paper presented to the Pädagogische Hochschule Ludwigsburg, Ludwigsburg, Germany, 2004), 1, <http://www.linse.uni-due.de/linse/laud/index.html>.

<sup>323</sup> Hollm, "Foreign Language Teaching," 5.

languages in the Third Reich, this type of instruction was quite common in all schools except for the *Volksschule*. Girls in the *Mittelschule* were taught English in all grades, five through ten, and they had the option of a second foreign language in grades seven through ten. If a girl exercised this option, her choice was usually between Latin and French. In the *Oberschule*, a girl's foreign language opportunities were dependent on her chosen track. Those in the domestic science track were only taught English, and this was in all grades five through twelve. Those in the linguistic track certainly learned English in all grades, but in the upper grades, ten through twelve, a girl could also study Latin and an additional language. The boys had more options, including Spanish or Italian, but the girls typically just learned French as their third foreign language. Foreign language instruction was also taught for a high number of classroom hours. This was likely due to the fact that one requires constant exposure to a language to learn it properly, and not because some educators decided that languages should have as high a priority as German studies or physical education. The textbooks used in foreign language classes varied, and no overtly National Socialist texts were ever produced. One constant was that written translations into any foreign language were often done by using *Mein Kampf* as an origin text.<sup>324</sup>

English became the preferred language over French, which had been more dominant throughout pre-Nazi periods; this was because English was recognized as a “sister language” within the Germanic language branch.<sup>325</sup> Languages that were not spoken in Western Europe

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<sup>324</sup> Wunderlich, “Education in Nazi Germany,” 351.

<sup>325</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 251.

were never taught to girls with one exception. Some students in the elite *Napolas* who were destined to have important roles in the newly conquered territories were taught languages like Polish or Russian.<sup>326</sup> The number of girls in this role was extremely small. Wilhelm Frick at a 1933 conference suggested that students should learn the foreign languages of other Germanic peoples across Europe as part of the Nazis' historical mission in the world.<sup>327</sup> It was also dubiously suggested that learning a foreign language and comparing that language to the German language would allow students to become more aware of the character and culture of their own people.<sup>328</sup> As in all eras, learning a foreign language likely would have made any girl more worldly; it is doubtful that she would have been more or less enthusiastic about National Socialism or her German heritage as a result.

While English was the primary foreign language taught to girls in the Third Reich, Latin instruction actually increased when compared to the Weimar Republic; this was due to the Nazis' claim that the Romans were Aryans.<sup>329</sup> It was also thought, correctly, that Latin would be useful in helping German students grasp their own language and grammar. Through the study of Latin, some girls also received something resembling a classical education. This was significant since girls could not study at the boys' classical *Gymnasium* (except in very rare circumstances). Girls in Latin language classes studied Roman texts with the purpose of

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<sup>326</sup> Hollm, "Foreign Language Teaching," 5.

<sup>327</sup> Hollm, 2.

<sup>328</sup> Eschenauer, "Politik im Mathematikunterricht," 19-20.

<sup>329</sup> Hollm, "Foreign Language Teaching," 4.

grasping the attitude of the Romans and to learn about the creation of the Roman state.<sup>330</sup>

Additionally, some focus in these classes would have been on understanding the works of Classical authors and in describing the interactions these ancient people had with ancient Germans.<sup>331</sup> While it is impossible to know what any one teacher actually said during a given lesson, it does not appear as though National Socialist ideology or anti-Semitism was directly inserted into Latin, or any foreign language curriculum.

The only means by which Nazi education was reflected in the foreign language curriculum was in the previously mentioned translations from *Mein Kampf*, and in the rather benign organizational consequence that English was favored over French. This thesis previously mentioned that the physics curriculum did not include ideological or political lessons; it had only been affected by how Nazi educators chose educational applications for girls. The foreign language curriculum was alone in that it was the only subject where the actual educational material was completely devoid of any Third Reich biases. Regardless of whether a girl translated from *Mein Kampf*, nobody in the Third Reich learned “Nazi French,” or “Nazi English”; they would have just learned French or English.

### **Religion**

Unlike foreign language education which ostensibly seemed to be out of place in the Third Reich, but was not, religious classroom instruction really was a contradiction. Despite

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<sup>330</sup> Eschenauer, “Politik im Mathematikunterricht,” 20.

<sup>331</sup> Helen Roche, “Classics and Education in the Third Reich: *Die Alten Sprachen* and the Nazification of Latin- and Greek-Teaching in Secondary Schools,” in *Brill’s Companion to the Classics, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, ed. Helen Roche and Kyriakos N. Demetriou (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 244, 258.

some public grumbling in support of religion, it was commonly accepted that the highest ranking Nazi officials did not approve of traditional religious teachings. Several of the brashest Nazi officials admitted as much; for example, Julius Streicher claimed that he would rather have no God at all than the same one as the Jews.<sup>332</sup> The Nazis burned the Hebrew Bible along with Torah scrolls and prayer books on Kristallnacht.<sup>333</sup> For the Nazis, Christianity represented the Semitic world, and perhaps more importantly, it was seen as a rival for the allegiance of the German people.<sup>334</sup> A totalitarian state cannot allow a religion to compete with it for loyalty. Napoleon subordinated religion in France, and Lenin replaced the Bible with the works of Marx and Engels; the Nazis seemed to prefer the latter approach, for the Bible could be replaced by *Mein Kampf*, and the crucifix could be replaced by the swastika.<sup>335</sup> The Nazis needed to destroy part of their own culture in order to replace it with the Nazi brand, a religion in its own right.

Hitler spoke out against the “godless Bolsheviks,” but in private, claimed that Christianity was the worst thing that ever struck humanity.<sup>336</sup> A legitimate anti-clerical feeling existed in Germany, but Hitler knew better than to attack religion outright; he also felt that a political victory had the best chance of succeeding if it were concentrated against the

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<sup>332</sup> Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 160.

<sup>333</sup> Alon Confino, “Why did the Nazis Burn the Hebrew Bible? Nazi Germany, Representations of the Past, and the Holocaust,” *Journal of Modern History* 84, no. 2 (June 2012): 370, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/664662>.

<sup>334</sup> Blackburn, “Portrayal of Christianity,” 445.

<sup>335</sup> Kandel, “Education in Nazi Germany,” 154-55.

<sup>336</sup> Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 154.

fewest possible number of opponents.<sup>337</sup> The Nazis were already at war with Marxists and Jews, so the battle against the church would have to wait. In this sense, allowing religion to continue to be taught in schools was a tactical decision.

How this actually manifested itself was very location dependent. Officially, religious instruction existed in the *Volksschule*, *Mittelschule*, and *Oberschule*, in all grades, with the curious exception of the ninth and tenth grade at the *Mittelschule*. It was always treated as a low priority subject, but religious education nominally remained throughout the *Reich*. In heavily Catholic or Protestant areas, traditional religious instruction may have continued depending on the belief structure in those locales. If a particular teacher's dogma was Nazi ideology, an arbitrary version of a Nazified religion could have been taught. Sometimes, religious instruction was more of a non-denominational course similar to history or German studies. Different students may have had entirely different experiences, and there does not appear to have been a difference between the boys' or girls' schools. On average, one might only be able to conclude that traditional religious instruction in the Third Reich was minimized and in some cases replaced, when compared how religion was taught in the Weimar Republic.

Though technically beyond the scope of this thesis, a note should also be made about the continued existence of denominational schools during the Third Reich. Hitler had breached the 1933 Concordat with the Vatican that stipulated, among many other things, that Catholic schools should be allowed to continue to operate. Hitler wanted all German students

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<sup>337</sup> Koch, *Hitler Youth*, 135; Blackburn, "Portrayal of Christianity," 434.

educated together as part of one *Volk*, and he wanted all private schools of the church closed down. Despite his wishes, many remained open. Statistics from Prussia show that of the forty-five thousand Catholic (and Protestant) schools operating in 1931, thirty-four thousand still existed in 1938.<sup>338</sup> Many of these schools had very few students, but all of them presumably had extensive religious instruction. The Anschluß with Austria presented some additional problems. The pre-Nazi Austrian government under Kurt Schuschnigg was arguably a clerico-fascist state in agreement in Hitler on many topics, yet Catholicism was a strong part of the ideology. Catholic teaching was firmly entrenched in the Austrian school curriculum, and this remained the case after Austria was incorporated into Germany.

In those schools that did not continue to teach traditional religion, girls would have received a mixture of anti-Semitic and quasi-Pagan instruction. Luther was often praised for his criticism of the Jews, but he was condemned for translating the Bible into German since it allegedly drove the Jewish spirit into the German *Volk*.<sup>339</sup> The Reformation was considered to be a tragedy for Germany, but its teachings were still ranked higher than the alternative. The Catholic reaction against the German Reformation was criticized even further; the Pope (probably a reference to Paul III) was even accused of being “part Jewish.”<sup>340</sup> In some classes, Adolf Hitler was associated with Jesus, and people like Göbbels, Göring, and Röhm (before his death) were his disciples.<sup>341</sup> In certain schools, education in religion became a

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<sup>338</sup> Patel, “Education, Schooling, and Camps,” 190.

<sup>339</sup> Blackburn, “Portrayal of Christianity,” 434.

<sup>340</sup> Blackburn, 443.

<sup>341</sup> Mann, *School for Barbarians*, 89.



sort of “faith education” that consisted of folklore, the Norse creation myth, and the Pagan German Faith movement.<sup>342</sup> The subject of religion could have meant any number of lesson plans, and a girl may have even received a varying instruction at the same school, but with a new teacher.

The Nazi leaders did not want religion to continue to be a subject in schools, but they knew that attempts to discontinue it would have been met with strong resistance. Ideological themes like anti-Semitism, Nordicism, nationalism, colonialism, and any hatred of the Treaty of Versailles were either acceptable or preferable to the population, but the disdain for religion among many top Nazis was not shared by the people. The curriculum, perhaps reflecting this discontinuity, was haphazard. A girl in the Third Reich may indeed have had one or two hours per week of confessional religious instruction, or she might have been schooled on Pagan practices. The Nazi ideological intrusion into the classroom was scattered and inconsistent. The religion curriculum would have consisted of traditional elements and National Socialist elements side by side since girls’ education in this subject was a function of who her teacher was and where her school was located.

### **Drawing, Crafts, Shorthand, and Typing**

The four subjects examined in this section have been grouped together because they all involved the use of one’s hands, and because they were all very peripheral subjects in the curriculum. None were taught in the more sophisticated *Oberschule*. Drawing was the only one taught in the *Volksschule*. All four subjects were part of the curriculum in the

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<sup>342</sup> Kamenetsky, *Children’s Literature*, 252.

Mittelschule, but shorthand and typing were optional subjects only offered in some of the later grades and presumably for girls who intended on performing secretarial work after graduation.

A drawing and crafts textbook for younger children in the *Volksschule* shows examples of what the lesson plan in this class actually looked like.<sup>343</sup> The youngest children were instructed to just have fun with their drawing; oftentimes they were given general instructions to draw things that were relevant to their *Heimat*. The primary educational goal for students as they got older appeared to be narrative drawing. This included the ability to express oneself freely when drawing an active theme. Some vaguely ideological themes to draw included “marching of the SA” or “soldiers with a cannon.”<sup>344</sup> These were likely more for the boys. One theme certainly for girls was “I help with the laundry.”<sup>345</sup> Most examples given were neutral as far as gender and with respect to ideological or political influence. This includes various instructions to draw animals or happenings at school or the train station. Erika Mann alleges that these drawing sessions were typified by themes of war, though this appears to have been the exception, not the norm.<sup>346</sup>

Crafts education was also very neutral. The youngest children were told to build objects out of rocks in the schoolyard. Somewhat older children were instructed to make a Mother’s

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<sup>343</sup> Johannes Weidner, Alfred Thon, and Werner Bähr, *Zeichnen und Werken in der Volksschule: Erstes bis Viertes Schuljahr* (Osterwieck-Harz und Berlin: A. W. Zickfeldt Verlag, 1943).

<sup>344</sup> Weidner, Thon, and Bähr, *Zeichnen und Werken*, 56.

<sup>345</sup> Weidner, Thon, and Bähr, 57.

<sup>346</sup> Mann, *School for Barbarians*, 98.

Day present. Crafts would sometimes be combined with educational material being taught in mathematics courses, and students were instructed to make objects similar to various geometric shapes. There is no evidence to suggest that children were tasked with making items that might have had political connotations.

Education in shorthand and typing were optional subjects taught to a subsection of girls. One might assume that girls practicing their writing or typing could have used passages that contained National Socialist commentary, but this is speculation. If true, this would not indicate a meaningful ideological lesson plan in any event.

Crafts instruction was no different than any typical arts course for children. The drawing curriculum included a few examples of students making use of war imagery, or nationalist themes, but only ones that would have been considered patriotic in any nation. The drawing curriculum could be thought of much like the mathematics curriculum; the subject is inherently neutral, but it could be turned into a vehicle for ideology by the use of examples. In the case of drawing in the Third Reich, such pedagogic exploitation was minimal.

### **Physical Education**

“A German boy should become as strong and stainless as Krupp manufactured steel, as durable as leather, and as quick as a whippet.”<sup>347</sup> This famous Hitler quote does not communicate what his specific ideas were for girls, but it does hint at the fact that Hitler wanted a fit *Volk*. The importance of physical education in the Third Reich cannot be overstated. It is true that school-based fitness training became less important for the Nazis

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<sup>347</sup> Roland Naul, “History of Sport and Physical Education in Germany, 1800-1945,” in *Sport and Physical Education in Germany*, ed. K. Hardman and R. Naul (New York: Routledge, 2002), 22.

when compared to their efforts to train young German boys and girls in the Hitler Youth, but physical education in schools for girls was matched in priority only by German studies and the totality of the domestic science curriculum in the *Oberschule*. Girls in all schools received physical education in every grade, and usually for five hours per week. Some younger girls in grades one through four were not physically mature enough for this much intensity and would have received fewer hours; likewise, girls in the higher grades of the *Oberschule* appear to have received some reprieve from this much physical education if they were busy with their domestic science obligations. This plan did change once the war started because nearly all physical education teachers were recruited for military service, and in later years, the facilities used for training were appropriated to house necessary supplies or people who had lost their homes due to bombing.<sup>348</sup> As best as could be accomplished, fitness remained a part of the Hitler Youth during the war period, but physical education at school was curtailed.

Physical education was designed to build a “hygienic Aryan race” through the furthering of girls’ health, but the health of the individual girl was less important than the health of the state.<sup>349</sup> The Nazis knew that girls would be the birth-givers to future generations, so they wanted them to be strong. Fitness was to go hand in hand with instruction through obedience and comradeship, and this meant group gymnastics once girls were old enough.<sup>350</sup> Education

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<sup>348</sup> Naul, “History of Sport,” 23.

<sup>349</sup> Gertrud Pfister, “Conflicting Femininities: The Discourse on the Female Body and the Physical Education of Girls in National Socialism,” *Sport History Review* 28, no. 2 (1997): 97, <https://doi.org/10.1123/shr.28.2.89>.

<sup>350</sup> Barbara Keys, “The Body as a Political Space: Comparing Physical Education under Nazism and Stalinism,” *German History* 27, no. 3 (July 2009): 406, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gerhis/ghp033>.

with a display of masses of bodies moving in unison would breed conformity, and this meant that physical education could be used as a method of social control.<sup>351</sup> Nobody wanted to disappoint the group, and everyone became accustomed to do as they were told. When older girls were not participating in gymnastics, they usually took part in track and field exercises or field hockey.<sup>352</sup>

The youngest children in grades one through three often just played “physical” games that had no specific athletic goal other than to get them moving.<sup>353</sup> In grade four, more organized running and walking exercises would have been included; soon, obstacles and basic track and field events were added.<sup>354</sup> Organized gymnastics usually began around the sixth grade and progressively expanded in difficulty as rhythm and muscular development increasingly became the goal of the movements.<sup>355</sup> Girls’ Hitler Youth exercises, particularly those for the Faith and Beauty Society, often included many of the same group gymnastic movements. Older girls would have had hundreds, perhaps thousands, of hours of gymnastics over the course of their lives.

Both the Hitler Youth and the school system had their own standards for what was considered satisfactory fitness performance. Fitness in the Hitler Youth was arguably more important to the state and Party, but the fitness standards for schools carried the possibility of

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<sup>351</sup> Keys, “Body as a Political Space,” 396.

<sup>352</sup> Naul, “History of Sport,” 23.

<sup>353</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 63.

<sup>354</sup> Pine, 63.

<sup>355</sup> Pine, 63.

receiving a poor grade on one's report card. Medical excuses were acknowledged, but for those who were otherwise healthy, the inability to perform up to fitness standards was viewed as a serious deficiency. A Third Reich text explaining the importance of physical education describes some of the fitness standards in schools.<sup>356</sup> Seemingly true of every generation, the text claims that a majority of children do not achieve the best possible state of physical development.<sup>357</sup> Physical guidance was said to build character, and in this way, the physical and mental aspects of one's maturing are connected; moreover, the character traits sought in a student's development are courage, bravery, will, and determination.<sup>358</sup> This text must have been written primarily with boys in mind; however, while these four traits certainly were meant to apply to young future soldiers, any of them could have related to young mothers as well. Most of the quantitative fitness standards provided were for boys, but some for the (older) girls were as follows: Run seventy-five meters in thirteen seconds, complete a long jump of 3.25 meters, throw an eighty gram ball twenty five meters, swim two hundred meters in a "decent time," or if no pool is available, bike fifteen kilometers in sixty minutes.<sup>359</sup> This represents just a selection of the full list of standards. Other track and field exercises were also graded; in addition, girls would have received grades for their overall gymnastic performance, and sometimes, for other activities, like the popular sport field hockey.

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<sup>356</sup> Hellmut Eckhart, *Die Körperanlage des Kindes und ihre Entwicklung* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1935).

<sup>357</sup> Eckhart, *Körperanlage des Kindes*, 11.

<sup>358</sup> Eckhart, 34.

<sup>359</sup> Eckhart, 48.

From a logical standpoint, there can be no such thing as National Socialist physical education; moreover, one cannot run in a Nazi way, or perform gymnastics in an anti-Semitic way. What one can do is to teach young girls physical education with the goals of National Socialism in mind—this is what occurred in the Third Reich. Girls were trained so they could best serve the state. Most commonly, this has been conceptualized as training intended for future mothers. Additionally, fitness and strength was strongly correlated to bodily health and to beauty in Nazi Germany. The ideal woman as seen in Nazi visual propaganda usually is a loving mother, but her beauty is also displayed in fitness and strength. She is hardy and has the ability to perform manual labor. She is more than just a housewife or a woman who simply produces children. The Nazi physical education curriculum was designed to produce mothers and to produce beautiful, healthy members of society. The curriculum involved taking a completely neutral activity but endowing it with the goals of the state. The girls participating in physical education likely only noticed the physical aspects.

### **Education Specifically for Girls**

Girls and boys were educated separately in the Third Reich, but the general outline of the curriculum was comparable. Within the classroom, different themes may have been emphasized in various subjects, but the vast majority of the actual lesson plans included the same topics. Qualitatively and quantitatively speaking, the education of boys and girls in Nazi Germany had much in common for all the subjects examined in this thesis so far. On the other hand, girls were viewed as having a different disposition than boys. The following 1934 excerpt is from the Central Institute for Education and Teaching regarding the basic

principle for girls' education: "[Women] display sympathy and compassion, self-sacrifice and forbearance in accordance with their destined task of giving birth to children. Their whole conception of life is subjective, and their judgments more based in emotion."<sup>360</sup> With their emotional character in mind, the domestic science curriculum, primarily within the purview of the *Oberschule*, was a very important series of courses, training, and internships that were designed only for girls. The boys' equivalent was an additional specialized study in either the natural sciences or the languages. In either case, this represented the culmination of a student's schoolwork in the last years before graduation.

The nucleus of the domestic science curriculum was taught in the *Oberschule*, but certain related courses had existed in lower schools. Though initially limited in scope, *Handarbeit*, which can be best translated as needle-point hand work, was taught to children as soon as they entered the *Volksschule*. Every girl in every grade in all schools had a small number of weekly *Handarbeit* hours. Girls in the eighth grade of the *Volksschule* and those in the ninth or tenth grades of the *Mittelschule* were also taught *Hauswerk*. This was a course in basic domestic duties, and it would function as an alternative for all girls who never would attend the *Oberschule*. For those that did attend the *Oberschule*, there were two tracks of study: The domestic science branch and the linguistics branch. Only the aforementioned *Handarbeit* course was taught in the linguistics branch, but it is the extensive curriculum for girls in the domestic science branch that is the focus of this section. Most girls in the *Oberschule* were in the domestic science branch, but the specialized curriculum did not begin

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<sup>360</sup> Bäumer-Schleinkofer, *Nazi Biology*, 8.



until a student reached the tenth grade. In grades five through nine, these students also only took *Handarbeit*.

The domestic science curriculum taught during the last three years of the girls' *Oberschule* can be divided into three categories: Household maintenance, which included cooking, cleaning, keeping a garden, and *Handarbeit*; health and hygiene care, which included a health education course and employment education; and internships, where a girl would intern at a babies' nursery, kindergarten, or with a family with young children. While a girl was on an internship, which was typically structured as a four-week block and could have had extended hours, all other coursework was suspended. A girl could have had many internships during the last three years of her schooling, and this theoretically would have diminished her performance in her other schoolwork.

The employment education was designed only for girls who thought they might enter the workforce. The Nazis banned "double-earners," those working women who became married and had a husband who earned enough. Various professions, like those for doctors, lawyers, and judges were closed to women. The professions that girls could look forward to and thus the ones for which they might receive employment education in school were jobs like nurses, social workers, and child care specialists.<sup>361</sup> Agricultural jobs were also considered good for women by the state, but many women preferred less strenuous city jobs in factories or offices.<sup>362</sup> During the war when women had to take on jobs previously held by men, more

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<sup>361</sup> Mouton, "Effects of Nazi Gender Policy," 949.

<sup>362</sup> Mouton, 950.

opportunities opened up to them, but educators in schools did not have the time or inclination to adjust the curriculum to reflect this.

The coursework in girls' health education and household maintenance was created to reflect the life sphere for women. It was not so much a mechanical instruction in housekeeping or child care, but a series of lessons that were supposed to instill in the girls an awareness of their responsibility for the stability of society and for Germany's future.<sup>363</sup> Similar domestic science coursework had existed in some form since the *Kaiserreich*; likewise, racial hygiene and biology also preceded Hitler, but the curriculum in the Third Reich was given an enhanced meaning reflected in the state's intended purpose for girls.<sup>364</sup> To a large extent, the result was the same; girls were legitimately given the education necessary to take care of the home and to become good mothers. The difference between the Nazi state and the periods preceding it is that girls used to receive training so they might provide for their family, but now they would work towards satisfying the needs of the *Volk*.

*Handarbeit* consisted primarily of knitting and sewing, but girls would also learn crocheting, darning, and patching. This education had been the same for decades. In these classes, the girls would always try to count together as they worked; sometimes, the teacher would count for them, and everyone attempted to follow on cue.<sup>365</sup> The purpose for girls was not just to learn how to make or repair clothing, but as with many subjects in the Nazi

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<sup>363</sup> Stephenson, "Girls' Higher Education," 46.

<sup>364</sup> Engemann, "German Education and Re-Education," 85.

<sup>365</sup> Kennedy, "Domesticity (Hauswirtschaft)," 8.

educational system, the goal was also to teach them positive tendencies like patience, precision, and organization. From a practical standpoint, the lesson plans did not always achieve their purpose. In the second grade, the curricular objective had been to knit a pair of stockings, but they always turned out too small. Teachers tried having the young girls knit a single stocking, but they were not able to do this either; young students were also having trouble counting in unison.<sup>366</sup> Educators eventually concluded that only somewhat older girls would be able to make real clothing for themselves. Even for those younger girls who failed to learn how to make stockings, they did learn obedience, self-discipline, and the execution of repetitive tasks.<sup>367</sup> Older girls with far more proficiency were taught how to use available materials to make clothing for the whole family. While such skills would be considered useful, at its core, *Handarbeit* was a character building exercise.

The cooking instructions as part of the domestic science curriculum were rather extensive; for example, a diagram of a cow illustrated the twenty-two different cuts of meat, with text indicating the nutritional value of each one.<sup>368</sup> Most of the education was not connected to developing recipes, but about which foods were healthy, which should be avoided, and which ones were dangerous. There was also material on how to grow food in a family garden. Girls would learn concepts like why raw meat was dangerous, how one could tell if fish was going bad, why milk was good for children, and even how the quality of meat

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<sup>366</sup> Kennedy, 10.

<sup>367</sup> Kennedy, 11.

<sup>368</sup> Pine, "Family in the Third Reich," 107.

could be improved if the animals were fed a healthier diet.<sup>369</sup> The lesson plan also included information about the effects and dangers of alcohol, smoking, tea, cocoa, and coffee.<sup>370</sup> These substances were said to have little nutritional value, and that they should be considered unfit for a healthy *Volk*. The cooking class had as its primary teaching intent to ensure proper nourishment for a family once any girl become responsible for the domestic duties of the household.

Home care typically revolved around keeping one's living space as tidy as possible. Girls learned in intricate detail how to arrange, and clean every single room in the house; this included all the furniture and carpets.<sup>371</sup> These instructions were extended to stain removal and the storage of materials.<sup>372</sup> Girls also learned the importance of clean fresh air and appropriate comfort levels in the home. Each member of the household is said to require twelve cubic meters of breathing space in the living room, and the house should only be heated to twelve degrees centigrade.<sup>373</sup> Every aspect of home care was covered and the instructions were remarkably exact.

A text for girls in health education as part of the domestic science curriculum is different from a typical biology text.<sup>374</sup> Biology textbooks for girls, or textbooks for girls in any

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<sup>369</sup> Pine, 107.

<sup>370</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 60.

<sup>371</sup> Pine, "Family in the Third Reich," 108.

<sup>372</sup> Kennedy, "Domesticity (Hauswirtschaft)," 14.

<sup>373</sup> Pine, "Family in the Third Reich," 108.

<sup>374</sup> F. A. Schmidt, *Gesundheitslehre für Mädchen: Bildungsanstalten sowie für die häusliche Belehrung*, ed. Meta Holland (Leipzig und Berlin: B. G. Teubner Verlag, 1938).

subject for that matter, were usually boys' texts with alterations and additions, while this health education text appears to have been written solely for the female audience. The Schmidt text is divided into five parts as follows: The construction of the human body, general health, diseases and treatment (especially for children), development of children, and a short section on health organizations in the Third Reich.

The first section of the text describes all the systems of the body for both sexes, but a significant focus is placed on the reproductive system and any information relevant for pregnancy and birth. Interestingly, the length of a human pregnancy was listed as ten “mensural cycle” months, not the conventional nine calendar months.<sup>375</sup> This textbook appears to have been more expensively produced than others in the Third Reich. Multiple color pictures, like one illustrating the full musculature of the human body, or a semi-transparent image, like one showing the endocrine and digestive system, give the first chapter the impression of refinement.<sup>376</sup>

The second section, on general health, combines information from household care lesson plans with nutrition facts more similar to those in biology texts than the safety- and preservation-oriented instructions of the cooking lessons. This section mentions air quality, the nutrients in foods, and the need for Germany to remain a *Bauernreich*, a country where the farmer is valued.<sup>377</sup> This section, essentially free of ideology as in the first chapter,

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<sup>375</sup> Schmidt, *Gesundheitslehre für Mädchen*, 46.

<sup>376</sup> Schmidt, 24, 57.

<sup>377</sup> Schmidt, 93.

explains healthy living in the narrowest sense, like for a girl's body, and in increasingly broader conceptions, like clothing, the home, and ultimately, one's entire environment.

The most important material is about disease, especially when it concerns children. The content here is significantly longer than in equivalent chapters in biology texts. Many of the common diseases like mumps and tuberculosis are explained in great detail. The section also covers non-viral concerns ranging from bone breaks to gas poisoning. The text moves on to a critical section about hereditary diseases with a message that the health of the German *Volk* needs to be preserved.<sup>378</sup> The issue of sterilization for anyone deemed ill is presented repeatedly and unabashedly. The text does not propose euthanasia; this policy, initially as Action T4, did not begin until 1939, while Schmidt's text was published in 1938. Schmidt does use the word "eradication" to refer to the diseases themselves, despite the fact that he would have been aware that one cannot eradicate genetic diseases completely. It is extremely unlikely that a textbook author would have known about a euthanasia program prior to Hitler signing the order, but the tenor of Schmidt's text does leave the door open for action beyond sterilization. The conditions Schmidt lists for sterilization of the patient are as follows: Intellectual weakness, schizophrenia, bipolar or manic depression, hereditary epilepsy, Vitus' dance (probably a reference to Huntington's Chorea), hereditary blindness, hereditary deafness, major physical deformity, and severe alcoholism.<sup>379</sup> The chapter contains about three times as much material covering "regular" diseases as it does hereditary diseases, but

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<sup>378</sup> Schmidt, 147.

<sup>379</sup> Schmidt, 149.

the latter stands out more to a modern reader. It should be recognized that the hereditary science content notwithstanding, this text would appear typical to a student of health education today.

Most of the fourth section in the text is about childhood development, including instructions on how to determine if a baby might have a hereditary illness by tracking their milestones. Several pages are dedicated to choosing a proper marriage partner, and this includes a warning to not marry Jews. Most of these instructions are in regards to what one might call genetic counseling; it is advice on determining if two individuals should get married based on their risk of having a hereditarily unfit child. The fourth chapter also describes the obligations of the mother and includes directions for taking care of young children.

Schmidt's health education textbook was a complete examination of everything the Nazis felt a girl needed to know in order to become a healthy mother in Germany. Motherhood was just a part, albeit a large part, of the role women were supposed to have in the Third Reich. Appropriately, motherhood education, via textbooks like Schmidt's, was a large part of the domestic science curriculum. As this thesis has previously argued, motherhood as a pedagogical imperative should not be seen as an ideological subject because the promotion of women in this capacity was entirely uncontroversial and widespread across Europe.

Domestic science was one of the most unexceptional subjects in the entire Third Reich curriculum; it would have been considered completely normal for the times. *Handarbeit* was essentially unchanged from the Weimar Republic, household care was much of the same, and

even health studies conveyed material in the same fashion as had been taught for decades. In certain situations, historians might look back on a previous period and question how some aspects of culture may have been understood by contemporaries. In terms of Nazi education, vicious anti-Semitic material found in some subjects like German studies was recognized as such. Mathematics classes that placed a particular ideology into every word problem did appear different. History lessons were not always history; religion lessons were not always religion. Students would have noticed. The domestic science curriculum, conversely, would have felt entirely comfortable. The emphasis on motherhood was clear, but this aspect was a similarly firm focal point in pre-Nazi education. The domestic sphere was intended for women throughout Europe at the time. The fact that certain jobs had been closed to women and that enrollment in the university became more difficult in Germany ignores the reality that only a small minority of women were affected by these changes. Third Reich domestic science studies suitably taught girls the skills that the vast majority of them would have learned fifteen years earlier or in any other country. The few National Socialist additions to an otherwise typical curriculum, notably, the chapters on hereditary health, do not invalidate the conclusion that this was not a shocking and unique motherhood boot camp, but a familiar course in home economics and health.



### Chapter III: Educational Indoctrination for Girls in the Hitler Youth

The Hitler Youth for girls was divided into three sections: The *Jungmädelbund*, the “Young Girls’ League,” for girls aged ten through fourteen; the *Bund Deutscher Mädel*, the “League of German Girls,” for girls aged fourteen through eighteen, and the *BDM-Werk Glaube und Schönheit*, the voluntary Faith and Beauty Society. Most research on the ideological impact of the Hitler Youth for girls focuses on the Young Girls’ League and the League of German Girls because the Faith and Beauty Society, formed only in 1938, was more limited in its scope, included in its membership only a subset of German women of the indicated age, and met in groups for only about two or three hours per week. The focus of this thesis concerns the two girls’ Hitler Youth organizations that have more traditionally been associated with the communication of propaganda. More specifically, this is an investigation of how various activities in the Hitler Youth complemented, but also frequently sabotaged, the education in schools. The initial section describes the formation of the youth movement in Germany which ultimately led to Hitler Youth. The next four sections examine four different aspects of Hitler Youth indoctrination that girls would have experienced as a result of their membership. First, *Heimabend*, sometimes *Heimatabend*, was a weekly social event that included, among other things, ideological instruction. Second, the “Sports Afternoon” was another weekly function where girls participated in organized physical exercise. The third section is about group excursions, both shorter weekend trips, and the nearly year-long *Landjahr*. Finally, there is an analysis of various Hitler Youth supplemental activities that included both community volunteering and participation in festivals. This

thesis analyzes what young girls learned in these different facets of the Hitler Youth and how their experiences interfered with the state school system.

### **History of the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* and the Youth Movement in Germany**

The development of the Hitler Youth in Germany can be explained as a result of two international conflicts: The Napoleonic Wars and World War One. Around the turn of the eighteenth century, Germans were intrigued by the principles of the French Revolution. Germany was a fairly cosmopolitan and universalist society, and it had been a hotbed for free thinkers and poets. A few decades earlier, the *Sturm und Drang* literary movement, one of individualism and emotional expression, had been especially popular with the youth. Napoleon's aggression changed the culture in Germany forever. The German abuse at the hands of the French caused many people to re-examine their thoughts on world citizenship and brotherhood.<sup>380</sup> It was felt that a powerful state was needed to defend Germany against a threat like the one posed by the French; the work of Johann Gottfried Herder influenced many looking for answers in this respect. Herder, who also opposed egalitarianism, wrote of the individual being nothing without the *Volk*, and the *Volk* being nothing without the state; the *Volk* was a natural family that should be sacrificed for, while a powerful state was more mechanical, it was something that had to be held together by brute force.<sup>381</sup> Later, racist connotations would be attached to Herder's *Volk*, exemplified in the work of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, but in the early nineteenth century, these new ideas about a unified *Volk*

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<sup>380</sup> Koch, *Hitler Youth*, 4.

<sup>381</sup> Koch, 4-5.

coincided with a change in German attitudes, with the youth at the forefront of this societal reorientation. By the late nineteenth century, nationalism was met with a growing militarism as the army became the antithesis of a liberal free-market economy. Koch writes that “Beethoven’s Ninth was drowned by a cacophony of steel mills and forges...[and society embraced the] misinterpreted and misunderstood romanticism contained in most of Wagner’s operas.”<sup>382</sup>

Many youth groups surfaced in the years prior to the turn of the twentieth century out of the militaristic culture that had long been established by then. It was at this time that the concept of “youth leading the youth” first emerged.<sup>383</sup> Some of the most significant youth groups, like the *Wandervögel*, founded officially in 1901, actually sought to free themselves from the rigidity of society. This was a cultural and educational movement that focused on outdoor activities like camping and hiking, but also on discussion, lectures, and folk songs.<sup>384</sup> Strictly nationalistic elements and political affiliation were not yet present, but the activities and organization that would later be found in the Hitler Youth were beginning to take form. The *Wandervögel* also had female members from 1905 onwards. Many groups began to emerge; the Catholics and Protestants had religious groups, the Zentrum and the Socialists had political youth groups, the army had youth paramilitary associations, and various other

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<sup>382</sup> Koch, 20.

<sup>383</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 4.

<sup>384</sup> Cynthia A. Sandor, *Through Innocent Eyes: The Chosen Girls of the Hitler Youth* (Bloomington, IN: Balboa, 2012), xxx.

groups were aligned with all sorts of causes. Wilhelmine Germany was a mosaic of youth movements.

World War One completely changed the landscape. Many new movements formed that were unwilling to align with any of the pre-war groups. Just as with German society as a whole, organizations that had existed prior to the war took on a more serious character. The initial idea of forming a youth group within the National Socialist ambit came not from Hitler, but from Gustav Adolf Lenk in early 1921. Hitler and Anton Drexler, who was chairman of the Nazi Party until July of 1921, gave their blessing, and in May 1921, the first Nazi youth group was formed with seventeen boys in Munich. The group was officially announced in March of 1922 as the Youth League of the NSDAP. This group was not initially very popular because middle-class youth felt it was too proletarian, and proletarian youth did not want to risk joining an organization that would rival already existing working class youth groups.<sup>385</sup> The first group for girls officially connected to the Nazis surfaced when the “Red Swastika” German Woman’s Order (for adults) tried to establish youth groups in 1923.<sup>386</sup> Very little is known about these groups for young girls since they were small, local, and operated within the framework of the women’s groups. By 1923, the Queen Louise League, a pro-monarchist right-wing woman’s organization that also had members

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<sup>385</sup> Koch, *Hitler Youth*, 49.

<sup>386</sup> Reese, *Growing Up Female*, 28.

under the age of eighteen, was formed.<sup>387</sup> Unlike most groups that competed with the Hitler Youth, this women's and girls' group was always closely aligned with the NSDAP.

The boys NSDAP youth group was disbanded late in 1923 after the Beer Hall Putsch, only to be resurrected in 1925 by Kurt Gruber. The group was renamed the *Hitler Jugend*, *Bund der Deutschen Arbeiterjugend* (Hitler Youth) in 1926 at the suggestion of Julius Streicher.<sup>388</sup> Soon thereafter, Youth Leader Gruber established a department for girls; in 1927, more intense recruitment began for the so-called sisterhood sororities, the *Schwesterschaften*. In 1928, these sororities were organized into a separate youth division called the *Schwesternschaft der Hitler Jugend*, the sisterhood of the Hitler Youth, where anyone aged fourteen and older could become a member. Finally, in 1930, this same group was renamed the *Bund Deutscher Mädel*. The *Jungmädelbund* for girls aged ten through fourteen was established in 1931 when both the boys' and girls' youth groups were expanded and reorganized. Some girls in this age group had been members of various groups prior to this change.

Elisabeth Greiff-Walden was put in charge of the girls' divisions in 1931, but she was subordinate to Baldur von Schirach, who was named the Leader of all Youth Organizations that same year. In April of 1932, Chancellor Brüning banned the Hitler Youth, but his successor, Franz von Papen, reinstated all divisions in June. Of course, once Hitler ascended to the Chancellory in January of 1933, the Hitler Youth's position would never be at risk

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<sup>387</sup> Sandor, *Through Innocent Eyes*, xxxi.

<sup>388</sup> Koch, *Hitler Youth*, 64.

again. Trude Mohr was appointed the new leader of the girls' youth groups in 1934, but she too was subordinate to Schirach. The early years of the Third Reich would be marked by the dissolution of all competing youth groups except for the Catholic youth, who were temporarily protected by the 1933 Concordat. Many of the youths formally in other groups were incorporated into the Hitler Youth. The boys' divisions still had more members, but the girls' divisions actually saw a greater percentage gain during the early years in Nazi Germany.

Prospective members had to be at least ten years old, be a German citizen of no more than one-eighth Jewish heritage, and be both intellectually and physically healthy. To join, one was expected to report to a local youth leader by March 15 of the calendar year in which one turned ten years old.<sup>389</sup> The League of German Girls did not care about birth or origin, but about character; once a member, the girl became part of a community into which the individual dissolved, since it was the character as it pertained to the betterment of the *Volk* that mattered.<sup>390</sup> The League never embodied traditional family values, but most members described their relationship with each other as that of sisters; a place that was reserved for youth held a special appeal to young girls, and such a free, yet rebellious notion permitted most of them to consider the organization uncritically.<sup>391</sup> Eva Peters, who had been a member of the Hitler Youth, suggests that “anti-Semitism played hardly any role in the

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<sup>389</sup> Reese, *Growing Up Female*, 22.

<sup>390</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 99, 121.

<sup>391</sup> Reese, *Growing Up Female*, 100; Tim Heath, *Hitler's Girls: Doves Amongst Eagles* (Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword History, 2017), 76.

League of Younger Girls” but added “perhaps only because it seemed self-evident.”<sup>392</sup> Most of the girls joined because they wanted to be like the smiling girl on the posters, and because they could wear a uniform, go to camp, and be part of a new prosperous society, not because of any ideological tendencies.<sup>393</sup> They also just wanted to fit in and join because all their friends were joining.

In 1936, membership in the Hitler Youth became compulsory. At the time, the rule was more stringently enforced with the boys than the girls. In 1939, another law was passed that essentially made it mandatory to enforce the first law; membership in all of the Hitler Youth divisions became absolutely compulsory in 1939 for all girls aged at least ten years. Even then, in practice, there were some girls who did not join. Giesela Borgwaldt explains that she was given a chance to wait a year until she was eleven because she had been very small for her age.<sup>394</sup> Some girls simply never joined and were never caught, especially during the later war years when society started to break down. More girls avoided joining than the boys because membership for boys was essentially required for any eventual career, but this condition did not induce girls since many did not plan on having a career in any event.<sup>395</sup> A girl would no longer be committed to a youth group if she became pregnant or got married, but this was very uncommon except for some of the oldest members.

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<sup>392</sup> Jarausch, “Nazi Adolescents,” 83.

<sup>393</sup> Heath, *Hitler's Girls*, 11.

<sup>394</sup> Giesela Borgwaldt, “Personal Narratives,” trans. Chris Crawford, BDM History, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://bdmhistory.com/research-reference/personal-narratives>.

<sup>395</sup> Engelmann, “German Education and Re-Education,” 87.

The compulsion to join the Hitler Youth in 1936 and then certainly in 1939 made the organization less appealing for prospective members. What once represented freedom and excitement was replaced with activities then considered useless or boring; when the war started, the Hitler Youth was gutted of its meaning, and the situation in Germany also became more tenuous.<sup>396</sup> In certain cities, many homes had been bombed and local youth group leaders were not able to get everyone organized or find a safe place to meet. In such chaotic situations, the League of German Girls simply ceased to exist. Aside from the difficulties posed by the war and the lackluster enthusiasm brought on by the compulsion to join, older girls sometimes lost interest in the League for personal reasons. After several years spent in the youth group formations and after the onset of puberty, some older members simply no longer wanted to participate in the activities.<sup>397</sup> Since the entire premise of the Hitler Youth was built on camaraderie and adventure, girls who did not wish to be there but had to after 1939 (or 1936 in some cases), possibly spoiled the experience for those that still did. One might say that the “glory years” of the Young Girls’ League and the League of German Girls were 1933 through 1936.

The benefits of being a member in the Hitler Youth often came at the cost of one’s schoolwork. Instructors at universities complained that students showed up so poorly prepared that they could not become Germany’s new intellectual leaders, while government reports demonstrated that many students were failing their apprentice entrance exams; for

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<sup>396</sup> Reese, *Growing Up Female*, 40.

<sup>397</sup> Reese, 249.



example, in Liegnitz only twenty of ninety new candidates passed.<sup>398</sup> The war has sometimes been blamed for the lowering of classroom standards, but this does not explain why students from areas that were not bombed out were also unprepared. “Chapter II” of this thesis shows that the school curriculum, on average, could have provided at least an acceptable education. The problem was that the Hitler Youth crippled the school learning environment and essentially incapacitated teachers’ ability to be effective. The regular Hitler Youth functions, *Heimabend*, sports afternoon, and the occasional weekend trip, morphed into a commitment that took up multiple evenings, almost every weekend, multiple weeks during the summer, and a number of extras that could fall on any day of the week for which the school (and the home) had to cede time.<sup>399</sup> All of these conflicts meant that the youth had no time or energy for schoolwork. What is worse is that this was a purposeful sabotage. Schirach and other Nazi leaders felt that character was superior to intellect; they expressed an outright animus towards all study not within the scope of the Hitler Youth.<sup>400</sup> Hitler Youth leaders also fostered an attitude that teachers in schools were not real youth leaders, but just people who wanted students to learn useless facts.<sup>401</sup> Since the Hitler Youth had the full support of the Party, school authorities, even dedicated Nazi teachers of the National Socialist Teachers’ League could do nothing to stop student rebellion. The schools in the Third Reich likely would not have produced students any less prepared than those in the

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<sup>398</sup> Horn, “Hitler Youth and Educational Decline,” 438-40.

<sup>399</sup> Engelmann, “German Education and Re-Education,” 80.

<sup>400</sup> Horn, “Hitler Youth and Educational Decline,” 439.

<sup>401</sup> Horn, 429.

Weimar Republic, but the Hitler Youth did not give state schools the latitude to properly teach anything.

### *Heimabend*

One of the most important components of the Young Girls' League and the League of German Girls was the weekly two-hour *Heimabend*. This event, which included ideological schooling, craftwork, and singing, was usually held in the afternoon for the younger girls and in the evening for the older girls.<sup>402</sup> A location in a local community center, school, or a National Socialist Party building was chosen to house the event. The youth group leader, the *Mädelschaftsführerin*, would have undergone training on how to convey political lessons, but also on how to encourage youth, and how to lead young girls in song and other enjoyable activities. She would have been instructed to follow the directions in her *Mädelschaft* pamphlets that outlined the lesson plan. According to these Hitler Youth guidelines, a group leader must be able to conduct a worldview education at the social evenings on topics ranging from race and ethnic policies, German living space, early Nordic history, international politics, and other nationalistic themes.<sup>403</sup> The content usually reiterated and expanded upon similar lessons taught in schools, but unlike school education, it was entirely taught through a National Socialist lens. Though the rules strictly prohibited any deviation, several personal accounts from young girls in these youth groups suggest that some group

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<sup>402</sup> Reese, *Growing Up Female*, 22.

<sup>403</sup> Randall Bytwerk, trans., *Dienstvorschrift der Hitler Jugend: Die weltanschauliche Schulung im Winterhalbjahr 1938/39 (Gültig für die Zeit vom 1.10.1938 bis 31.5.1939)* (Berlin: Reichsjugendführung, Amt für weltanschauliche Schulung, 1938), "Leadership Training Schools," <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/hjworldview.htm>.

leaders strayed from protocol; for example, Ingrid Denull claims that “I think that I was very lucky that our leaders didn’t talk a lot about politics during our social evenings. I later heard from others my age that their groups spent a lot of time talking about politics, which was very boring for them.”<sup>404</sup>

Aside from politics, the structure of the *Heimabend* meetings also called for storytelling designed to invigorate the young girls’ feelings for culture and traditions.<sup>405</sup> This indirect indoctrination combined historical myth, folklore, and glamorized tales of Nazi martyrs like Horst Wessel or Herbert Norkus.<sup>406</sup> Instructors would sometimes engage the young girls in ideological discussions, yet these had an intended conclusion that the girls were supposed to have been led to.<sup>407</sup> All social evenings also included a great deal of singing, which was a very popular activity in all Hitler Youth functions. Ursula Sabel recalls her experiences in the youth groups and relays the common perception that girls liked singing: “I didn’t learn a lot about politics there, and I was fortunate enough to have a group leader who enjoyed singing. That’s how I came to know such a large number of traditional German folk songs.”<sup>408</sup> Like several other girls, Sabel appears to downplay politics in her personal narrative. Those girls who did not recall political discussion may have had a group leader

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<sup>404</sup> Ingrid Denull, “Personal Narratives,” trans. Chris Crawford, BDM History, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://bdmhistory.com/research-reference/personal-narratives>.

<sup>405</sup> Sandor, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 120.

<sup>406</sup> Horst Wessel was a low-ranking SA leader, and Herbert Norkus was a member of the Hitler Youth. Each was killed in Berlin by Communists during the turbulent late Weimar period when clashes between Nazis and Communists were common.

<sup>407</sup> Jaraus, “Nazi Adolescents,” 79.

<sup>408</sup> Sabel, “Personal Narratives.”

who did not engage in it, but others who simply claimed to have not learned much might be recollecting their experiences arbitrarily due to post-war uneasiness.

The Nazis wanted to dissociate young girls from the influence of their parents as much as possible because some in the older generation possessed attitudes incompatible with National Socialism. *Heimabend* served its purpose in trying to inculcate new ideas in Germany's youth, but the whole experience was made palatable, and thus more effective, by everything else contained within the two-hour weekly event. Girls also played games, they made shadow puppets, they put on impromptu plays, and they were taught to use their imagination and their cheerfulness.<sup>409</sup> Girls had to prove themselves as a member during these sessions by demonstrating their willingness to work with others and their ability to compromise; teachers would write down notes in an accomplishment book with the intention of identifying the most promising candidates for future leaders, and to keep track of information required for girls trying to earn merit badges.<sup>410</sup> Elisabeth Frietsch, a former member, writes: "We felt really good about our time in the Hitler Youth and I don't remember ever having had any political lessons. For me, the group mostly presented an opportunity to meet other girls my age and to participate in sports and games."<sup>411</sup> Young girls or boys do not possess the maturity to challenge what they are taught; while the Hitler Youth leaders were working towards adjusting the youngsters' moral sense, the members were just having fun. The political

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<sup>409</sup> Chris Crawford, trans., *JM Führerinnen-Dienst* (Berlin: n.p., 1940), "Jungmädels Service Structure," <https://bdmhistory.com/research-reference/becoming-a-jungmadel>.

<sup>410</sup> Crawford, *JM Führerinnen-Dienst*, "you, too, belong to the *Führer*."; Sandor, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 73.

<sup>411</sup> Elisabeth Frietsch, "Personal Narratives," trans. Chris Crawford, BDM History, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://bdmhistory.com/research-reference/personal-narratives>.

lessons of *Heimabend*, stronger than those in the state schools on equivalent topics, probably required “sweeteners” for most girls to care.

The youth group handbook, *Mädel im Dienst*, provides details on the structure of *Heimabend*.<sup>412</sup> The evening is described as making the girls feel welcome and at home and as a place where everyone together can draw strength from each other.<sup>413</sup> The youth group leader is instructed to conduct each session as follows: Start with a roll call, provide a brief weekly political report, lead the group in a few songs, direct the more serious political lecture, explain the implications, commence the various “fun” subjects, and finally, close with a song and a speech.<sup>414</sup> During the next *Heimabend* meeting, the girls had to be able to articulate a short summary during the main political lesson of whatever they had learned during the previous week. The handbook also highlights some of the most important recurring themes that would be covered during the political lectures. The topic of race is covered in excruciating detail. While the various races that made up the German race, the Nordic, East-Baltic, Western, etc, are also covered in history, biology, geography, and possibly German school classes, the Hitler Youth covers this topic with even greater specifics. The reader is provided with various statistics, craniology, pseudo-science, some in-depth descriptions, and very earnest recommendations. The obligatory discussion of Jews soon follows with the claim that they desired to destroy the value system of any host nation;

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<sup>412</sup> Reichsjugendführung, *Mädel im Dienst: Ein Handbuch* (Potsdam: Ludwig Voggenreiter Verlag, 1934).

<sup>413</sup> Reichsjugendführung, *Ein Handbuch*, 183.

<sup>414</sup> Reichsjugendführung, 220-21.

this led to the finding: “Through this spiritual opposition to the other peoples, the ‘Jewish question’ arose.”<sup>415</sup> The threat of the inevitable death of Western culture (as a result of Jewish influence) was often cited in Nazi publications, usually phrasing it as “the decline of the West,” a likely allusion to Oswald Spengler’s popular history.<sup>416</sup> Near its conclusion, the *Mädel im Dienst* handbook reminds girls that they are the carriers of the race, and with strength and resilience, they are the future.<sup>417</sup>

A published summary of various League of German Girls and Young Girls League *Mädelschaft* editions for the 1938/39 cycle shows exactly what all girls in different age groups were (supposed to be) learning on their *Heimabend* days.<sup>418</sup> The lesson plans were slightly altered from year to year to reflect changing political or military needs in the *Reich*. The youngest girls in the *Jungmädelbund*, those probably ten or eleven years old, were introduced to the biography of Adolf Hitler, but other than this, their *Heimabend* themes consisted of fairy tales and elementary German sagas, like Grimms’ Fairy Tales or the Saga of Gudrun. A year later, they were to study a theme that consisted of great figures in Germany’s past. Most, like Schiller or Heinrich the Lion, were men, but young girls were also given basic biographies of Liselotte von der Pfalz and Queen Louise of Prussia. Slightly older *Jungmädel* would first learn about great men and women who had fought for Germany. This included sub-topics like nurses during World War One, or a discussion of the first storm

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<sup>415</sup> Reichsjugendführung, 246.

<sup>416</sup> Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Hauptamt für Erzieher (NSLB), *Du und dein Volk*, “Your People.”

<sup>417</sup> Reichsjugendführung, *Ein Handbuch*, 256.

<sup>418</sup> Bytwerk, *Dienstvorschrift der Hitler Jugend*, “Education for the Hitler Youth by Age Group.”

troopers. Given that these were politically charged lessons, girls of about twelve years old might have tuned these out. Former *Jungmädel* Ilse Kleberger reflects this attitude: “I had a lot of fun during the social evenings and hikes, and enjoyed singing and music a lot. We were also given political talks, but they did not interest me and I wouldn’t listen.”<sup>419</sup> In the second and final year of the younger girls’ Hitler Youth division, more political discussion of Hitler and his comrades took place; here, girls were given extensive biographies of the likes of Hermann Göring or Rudolf Heß. Another former *Jungmädel* Ruth Reibnagel writes: “During our meetings, two or three of the older girls who were leaders taught us about the ideals and beliefs of National Socialism. They painted the most beautiful pictures of its goals for us. Youth is so easily excited and misused for political goals.”<sup>420</sup> After all of this material, the young girls would now be ready to graduate to the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* proper.

The *Heimabend* lessons for the older girls were decidedly more political. The youngest group of girls who were fourteen years old started with the theme of fighting for Germany. This topic, historical in nature, started with early German conflicts, moved to the Peasants’ War, the Thirty Years’ War, and ultimately concluded with World War One. German heroics were certainly highlighted throughout. A year later, these girls were provided with a chronological history, one sub-topic per week, of every aspect of the growth of the National Socialist movement. Sometimes this meant covering the events of a particular year, while

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<sup>419</sup> Ilse Kleberger, “Personal Narratives,” trans. Chris Crawford, BDM History, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://bdmhistory.com/research-reference/personal-narratives>.

<sup>420</sup> Ruth Reibnagel, “Personal Narratives,” trans. Chris Crawford, BDM History, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://bdmhistory.com/research-reference/personal-narratives>.

other times, an accomplishment like the elimination of unemployment would have been the weekly subtopic. The oldest girls also received a practical instruction with their political Hitler Youth education in their *Heimabend* meetings. These girls learned about topics like assistance for families with many children or *Reich* housing measures; the oldest girls also explored a few more biographies, like that of Maria Theresa. At the conclusion of her career as a member of the Hitler Youth, a girl would have been exposed to all the materials that would have made her a promising young Nazi.

One might say that *Heimabend* teaching consisted of everything past and present that was important to the Nazis. At the same time, everything that was not important to them was not taught. In and of itself, this is not altogether inappropriate; various organizations have always communicated information pertinent to their own cause. The Hitler Youth became problematic due to some of the particulars of what was included in *Heimabend* sessions, like racial pseudo-science, and because the overall objective represented a means of social control. An additional issue was that the Hitler Youth education was designed to supersede school education. *Heimabend* themes were not part of any broad curriculum, but were merely arbitrary topics conveyed in no particular order; such incomplete knowledge should not replace the more complete teachings of the state school system. *Heimabend* did not just replace the school curriculum in theory through the messaging by Hitler Youth leaders, but also in practice by imposing massive time constraints on students via a plethora of Hitler Youth commitments. Attending a camping trip was mandatory, but doing homework was not. Being on this camping trip was also very exciting, but reading a school textbook was not.



The result was inevitable. Literally attending school would remain a requirement in the Third Reich whenever possible, but when it came to learning the material, students had neither the time nor inclination to do so.

### **Sports Afternoon**

Physical training for girls did not play as important a role as it did for the boys, but regular exercise and sports was still a critical component of their Hitler Youth development process. Similar to the weekly *Heimabend* meetings, a two-hour sports afternoon was held for all girls in the Hitler Youth once per week. From a Hitler Youth leadership pamphlet: “A varied and interesting sports program will teach you about bravery and agility – you’ll get to know your body, do floor exercises, and participate in a variety of other sports...Group games will require you to be resourceful and committed [in order to perform well].”<sup>421</sup> The pamphlet also claims that young girls will achieve greater courage and dexterity as a result of their sports afternoon activities.<sup>422</sup> Perhaps most importantly, through sports, physical exercise, and youth leader encouragement, girls would have received a validation of their worth through the Hitler Youth, which they did not usually get elsewhere.<sup>423</sup>

Physical standards were also a large part of the Hitler Youth, and this came into play soon after a young girl first joined. The *Jungmädel* leadership pamphlet lists the following requirements in order to be fit enough for service: A sixty meter run in fourteen seconds, a

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<sup>421</sup> Crawford, *JM Führerinnen-Dienst*, “Jungmädel Service Structure.”

<sup>422</sup> Crawford, “you, too, belong to the *Führer*.”

<sup>423</sup> Sandor, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 50.

long jump of two meters, a ball throw of twelve meters, two forward rolls, two backward rolls, a jump through a swinging rope, and the ability to participate in a one-day trip.<sup>424</sup> While not overly difficult for most people, considering that this would have represented the minimum requirement for a girl aged ten, the high standard would have ensured a fairly fit youth group. If a girl failed, she was allowed to repeat her trial within six months, and if she were judged to be not physically prepared for the Hitler Youth by a doctor, she could defer her enrollment by one year.<sup>425</sup>

According to a Hitler Youth scoring table, standards were established for every age and ranked, one through nine, with an intricate scoring system.<sup>426</sup> In track and field (athletics) exercises, girls participated in a sprint run, long jump, and high jump, as well as three types of ball throws; this included a eighty gram distance throw, a one thousand gram medicine ball toss, and a four kilogram shot put. Not every age group competed in every event, as younger girls participated in fewer events than the older girls. In addition to track and field, girls were also graded on their swimming and gymnastics. Swimmers were usually scored on how long they were able to swim, not by speed, and if they properly completed their dive. Individual gymnastics was scored on the execution of the skill, which usually consisted of various vault jumps or swinging on bars, and on the fluidity of a girl's form. The culmination of a girl's scores ranked her into various performance classifications. Only if

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<sup>424</sup> Crawford, *JM Führerinnen-Dienst*, "Jungmädel Service."

<sup>425</sup> Crawford, "Jungmädel Service."

<sup>426</sup> E. Casselmann Bielefeld, ed., *Wertungs-Tabelle für die Leibeserziehung der Mädchen* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, n.d.).

one could not compete at the lowest scoring grade, would one's position be in jeopardy. Since all these girls participated regularly in these events, a girl failing in a Hitler Youth physical test was rare. To provide an example of a fitness standard for just a subset of the events, a fourteen year old girl would have scored a grade equivalent to an average performance if she ran seventy-five meters in twelve seconds, threw the smallest ball about twenty-seven meters, dove off a three meter high board and swam for thirty minutes, and completed a full circle swing around a bar with reasonable proficiency.<sup>427</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggests that an average girl in the Hitler Youth would have been as fit as a particularly athletic girl in the twenty-first century.

The *Mädel im Dienst* handbook, and the supplementary sports handbook, *Mädel im Dienst: BDM-Sport* provides a thorough description of all the actual sports activities that young girls participated in during their sports afternoon.<sup>428</sup> In addition to this, both handbooks also offer advice on healthy living; for example, with instructions on cutting one's nails, getting the right amount of vitamins, and avoiding alcohol or nicotine. Girls in the Hitler Youth were taken through a large number of calisthenics including various arm circles, pushups, somersaults, jumping, and yoga poses. As was typical for most Nazi publications, the instructions for these movements are very detailed. The same goes for the descriptions of all the different sports available in the Hitler Youth. Some of these were fairly ordinary, like volleyball or swimming, but if local geography permitted it, girls might have had an

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<sup>427</sup> Bielefeld, *Wertungs-Tabelle*.

<sup>428</sup> Reichsjugendführung, *Ein Handbuch*; Reichsjugendführung, *Mädel im Dienst: BDM-Sport* (Potsdam: Ludwig Voggenreiter Verlag, 1940).

opportunity to take part in skiing, sailing, or even hang-gliding.<sup>429</sup> It is not clear how many girls actually participated in some of these more exclusive activities, but one could understand why a poor peasant girl from a rural family would have been drawn to becoming a member. Of special interest is the section that described archery. The text specifically reminds readers that the participants would not be in danger of becoming amazons, but that one takes part in bow-shooting to improve one's eyes.<sup>430</sup> Some top Nazis had expressed concern that girls were becoming too masculine through all the physical training, so efforts were made to counter this perception.

A very important part of sports afternoon was group gymnastics. The infamous images and videos of scores of young ladies performing at Nuremberg were actually the result of a particular Faith and Beauty training for older girls, but scaled down versions were common for girls in the League of German Girls, and further simplified group gymnastics were considered a fun activity for the youngest members in the Young Girls' League. At all levels, these gymnastics worked to develop the spiritual and physical graces of the participants, while teaching them to work and think as a group.<sup>431</sup> The Nazis thought that such skills would encourage a greater connection to one's *Volk*. While leadership was a coveted skill more for the boys than the girls, the exercise in group obedience, learning to obey so that one might develop trust in one's own leadership in order to get others to obey, was valued for

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<sup>429</sup> Reichsjugendführung, *Ein Handbuch*, 73.

<sup>430</sup> Reichsjugendführung, 149.

<sup>431</sup> Reese, *Growing Up Female*, 23.

potential mothers as well.<sup>432</sup> With regards to rhythmic gymnastics, the desires of young girls in sports afternoon and the needs of the state would intersect; girls wanted to do things with all their friends, and the state wanted to foster collectivism and conformity.

Sports afternoon was not overly political because there was not much interaction to facilitate any discussion. The ideology was clear: The state desired cooperation and healthy bodies. Top Nazis, and certainly Hitler himself, believed that fitness and health would enable young girls to become better mothers. While some historians have criticized such government ideological interference, one must remember that the Nazis' position on things like physical endurance and abstinence from nicotine did indeed increase longevity and promote general health, and it probably made for healthier mothers. With regards to the Hitler Youth's effect on education, the main drawback to sports afternoon was the time commitment required of girls that caused a neglect of schoolwork and thus a diminished scholarly development.

### **Camps and Trips**

Along with *Heimabend* and sports afternoon, one of the most steady features of the Hitler Youth was group excursions. These trips would have been more meaningful during the Third Reich than in the twenty-first century because travel was much more difficult for ordinary people; most did not have the time or the means to visit places outside their immediate whereabouts. The Hitler Youth planned at least one full day trip per month for any group. Many of these weekend outings would take young girls on a lengthy hike through a forest, a

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<sup>432</sup> Randall Bytwerk, trans., "Die Erziehungsgrundsätze des neuen Deutschlands," *Frauen-Warte* 22, (1936/37): 693, <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/frau01.htm>.

train ride into the countryside, or even a ship down a river. At a certain point in her Hitler Youth career, a girl might also attend a country service camp as part of her *Landjahr* obligations. This would have amounted to nearly a year away from home. The longer *Landjahr* camp or any of the shorter day or weekend trips all had ideological underpinnings. Rudolf Benze, one of the Third Reich's most influential educators, claimed that the camp environment, which was similarly replicated in a lesser form on a day trip, allowed the regime to capture the whole person.<sup>433</sup> He was referring to the opportunity to have any Hitler Youth member away from their parents and even away from their school teachers for an extended period of time in order to instill the National Socialist doctrine. For the Nazis, any extended Hitler Youth group setting was the ideal pedagogical format.

Participation in the shorter weekend excursions was mandatory, but unlike some of the sports or political obligations, the opportunity to see the small wonders of the natural world around them was enough of a draw so that any girl would have wanted to take part in the event. Physical endurance and the internal consolidation of the group were necessary because whenever a Hitler Youth troop moved on foot, the girls would march in rhythmic columns, singing along the way. Each girl would carry a heavy backpack full of food, clothes, blankets, and mess kits.<sup>434</sup> During the trek, group leaders would periodically teach the girls basic survival skills like making a fire, finding food, or climbing.<sup>435</sup> The *Jungmädel*

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<sup>433</sup> Patel, "Education, Schooling, and Camps," 186.

<sup>434</sup> Jaraus, "Nazi Adolescents," 79.

<sup>435</sup> Heath, *Hitler's Girls*, 22.

leadership pamphlet describes the experience as: “You’ll see the landscape and the people at work, learn about customs and songs, and get to know more about nature. Experiencing trips as a group will teach you to stand together and become good friends with your fellow *Jungmädel*.”<sup>436</sup> The pamphlet goes on to describe the girls’ development as one of self-reliance and discipline.<sup>437</sup> In most observable ways, the short day trips for girls were analogous to similar undertakings by the Boy Scouts in the United States.

The *Mädel im Dienst* handbook provides instructions for how girls should prepare and what skills they should master while on a trip.<sup>438</sup> No detail is left unspecified; there are instructions for the exact order in which to place all items in one’s pack to ensure the interior volume is best utilized, and there are directions for the cadence of any march and the amount of time allotted to breaks. The exactness of the guidelines reminds of military training. The handbook also explains all the practical skills one needs to know such as setting up camp, cooking in camp, map reading, raft building, knot tying, and anything else necessary for outdoor survival. For example, the handbook explains that when camping near a river, the closest water should be used for drinking, and the water a bit downstream for bathing, and that further downstream for bathroom usage, with each section separated by flags.<sup>439</sup> Living with nature is a key component of camping; naturally this is also explained in detail in the *Mädel im Dienst* handbook. There are descriptions of different trees, leaves, flowers,

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<sup>436</sup> Crawford, *JM Führerinnen-Dienst*, “Jungmädel Service Structure.”

<sup>437</sup> Crawford, “Jungmädel Service Structure.”

<sup>438</sup> Reichsjugendführung, *Ein Handbuch*.

<sup>439</sup> Reichsjugendführung, 107.

mushrooms, and animals, and explanations of dangers they might present. The handbook describes recognizing animal tracks, predicting weather from barometric readings, and navigating using star constellations. None of this was political, and other than the possibility of a group leader mentioning politics on her own accord, a girl's adventure on a short trip would have been neutral on the face of it.

Such an experience would still have worked to transmit ideology by association and more accurately by positive reciprocation. Everyone would have recognized what government and what ideology sponsored the trip. A girl's enthusiasm for all the activities she enjoyed would have been mentally transferred to a future acceptance of the Nazi Party. Of course she would have concluded that it was a good thing for her to be allowed to go on a trip, especially because she likely had never been on any similar outing prior to that point. She could have thought that if the Nazis were right about her trip, they might deserve consideration for other ideas as well. Even if not, most decent people have an innate desire to reward those who had previously rewarded them; out of fairness, a girl may have thought she should support the Nazis simply because their programs had made her happy in the past.

The *Landjahr* experience, usually for those who were fourteen or fifteen years old, took young girls into the country in order to have them work in the fields and to help in the homes of farmers. The goal was to show these girls where their ancestors had originated and to try to arouse some desire among them to be resettled in the country permanently.<sup>440</sup> *Landjahr* refers to a year in the country, but these programs usually lasted for eight or nine months.

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<sup>440</sup> Engelmann, "German Education and Re-Education," 88.



The original idea began during the Weimar Republic. The trend towards urbanization had gradually brought Germans who had previously worked in agriculture to the cities. This caused Slavic workers from the East to replace them, and it was feared such an influx would cause ethnic tensions. In addition to this, the Treaty of Versailles precipitated a greater emphasis on German self-sufficiency. The *Bund der Artamanen* was formed in 1924 to address these issues; this group, similar in structure to a youth group, felt that rural work was required as one's duty to the nation. As Hitler took power, these volunteer workers were incorporated into the Hitler Youth as the *Landdienst der Hitler Jugend*. During the Third Reich, very few pupils graduating from from the *Volksschule* were choosing to work in agriculture. To combat this, in 1934 *Landjahr* was required for all youth graduating from the primary school who were not enrolled in higher schools; it was supposed to help farmers, but it was also intended to reduce youth unemployment and to promote careers in rural home economics.<sup>441</sup> To this extent, *Landjahr* had its origins in the *Landdienst* of the Weimar Republic. The country service camp allowed those particularly capable, dependable, and ideologically committed youth the opportunity to fulfill their *Landjahr* requirements while living with their Hitler Youth friends in an environment combining work, sport, and ideological education.

A pamphlet detailing life at *Landjahrlager* Schwiederstorf sheds light on the type of activities that girls at this country service camp would have encountered.<sup>442</sup> The Hitler Youth

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<sup>441</sup> Sandor, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 241.

<sup>442</sup> Dieter Pintatis, ed., *Landjahrlager Schwiederstorf* (Schwiederstorf: n.p., n.d), [https://bdmhistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Das\\_Landjahrlager\\_in\\_Schwiederstorf.pdf](https://bdmhistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Das_Landjahrlager_in_Schwiederstorf.pdf).

placed qualifying young girls in the Schwiederstorf *Lager* in the hope that the rural setting would inspire them with a love of the land. The girls would have received a practical education and an ideological education. The pamphlet unapologetically states that along with a protection from the bad influences of the cities, the camp allows young girls to be indoctrinated in the ideology of blood and soil away from the influence of their parents.<sup>443</sup> The character traits that the camp was supposed to imbue were order, obedience, diligence, cleanliness and thriftiness.<sup>444</sup> This was achieved through a packed schedule that had girls waking at six in the morning and in bed by nine, with only occasional free time in between. All meals, exercise hours, work duties, and ideological study sessions were scheduled daily and strictly adhered to; girls also performed a flag ceremony every morning and evening. Variety existed, yet girls would typically engage in agricultural labor in the morning, sports and gymnastics in the afternoons, and social learning in the evenings.<sup>445</sup> Everyone was placed on a rotation; for example, some girls might be assigned to the kitchen staff in the farm house for fourteen days and then moved to the field for the next two week block before being transferred somewhere else. For all her work, a girl would have been paid five Pfennig per day, which would have been just enough to buy basic hygiene supplies.<sup>446</sup> The pamphlet does not explain what was taught during the evening discussions at this camp, but one would surmise that the ideological content would have been similar to any *Heimabend* lesson.

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<sup>443</sup> Pintatis, *Landjahrlager Schwiederstorf*, para. 4.

<sup>444</sup> Pintatis, para. 9.

<sup>445</sup> Sandor, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 241.

<sup>446</sup> Pintatis, *Landjahrlager Schwiederstorf*, para. 19.

Both camp life and the shorter Hitler Youth trips were marked by their detachment from outside influence. The nature of the ideology being taught was equivalent to that of *Heimabend*, and the character building exercises were comparable to those of the sports afternoon, but the Hitler Youth excursions would have achieved greater success for the Party because the girls would have been completely under the influence of Nazi youth leaders while away. During other youth group events, a girl would still go home at the end of the day or go to school the next morning, but while at camp, even if just for a weekend, a girl was completely engulfed by what would have seemed like a remarkable milieu. Attendance at the lengthy country service camp took place after a girl had graduated from the *Volksschule*, but she participated in shorter day trips from age ten onwards. These activities interfered with a girl's schoolwork in the same way that other Hitler Youth commitments would have, by taking away time and by fostering ambivalence about the classroom. These trips were particularly distracting for a girl; for the Nazi Party, they represented a goldmine of persuasion.

### **Festivals and Activities**

The three preceding sections of this thesis covered the most salient aspects of a girl's Hitler Youth membership, that is *Heimabend*, sports afternoon, and the group trips. Girls in the Young Girls' League and the League of German Girls participated in a number of ancillary activities as well. Along with their troop, they also celebrated certain holidays and joined in ancient Germanic festivals. Some of these diversions were a result of the war

effort, but all of them were for the benefit of the *Volk*. The Hitler Youth partook in these events in order to strengthen a girl's bond with her community.

One of the most important activities the Hitler Youth participated in was the annual Winter Relief collection drive.<sup>447</sup> Young girls might stand on a street corner or go door to door asking for donations. The money garnered from these efforts would help support social programs in the Third Reich; many funds went specifically to winter supplies like warm clothing for poorer families, but because this freed up government expenditures, which often were then diverted to the war effort, Winter Relief indirectly also supported the war. This surprised youth group member Ilse Kleberger, who claims to have thought collecting for charity was “a lot of fun,” but she expressed dismay that the proceeds for poor families might also have supported the military.<sup>448</sup> Other girls did not especially look forward to standing on the street rattling a tin can for Winter Relief, but most understood the exercise as being “good for the people” and building character.<sup>449</sup>

Girls in the Hitler Youth did enthusiastically support Germany's soldiers. Some would make wool gloves or socks for those on the front, while others would welcome returning soldiers at the train station; some girls would perform in a choir for wounded troops at military hospitals. The *Jungmädels* leadership pamphlet writes of the Hitler Youth attitude: “Community work and social work should lead you toward unselfish and cheerful work for

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<sup>447</sup> Koch, *Hitler Youth*, 234.

<sup>448</sup> Kleberger, “Personal Narratives.”

<sup>449</sup> Jarausch, “Nazi Adolescents,” 80.

the community. It's important to learn to place your own needs behind those of others."<sup>450</sup> During the war, Hitler Youth girls also delivered mail and ration cards to households and helped women care for their children.<sup>451</sup> It is worth noting that a few girls in the *Osteinsatz* program helped prepare eastern homes for potential German settlers after the SS had removed the original inhabitants.<sup>452</sup> Surely these girls understood what had happened prior to their arrival, but once a person willfully consents to various aspects of National Socialism, and in the case of the Third Reich, a consent to the totality of life itself, it becomes natural to accept anything else. To do otherwise would have represented a rejection of one's self. By the time the war started, the girls in the Hitler Youth, and most members of society, had already allowed one precept after another. Every action taken would have built upon all those before it. The next step, whatever it might have been, would no longer have seemed unreasonable.

Far away from the war, the Hitler Youth always seemed to find time to celebrate. Some events were as insignificant as the honoring of one's own Hitler Youth troop. A group of *Jungmädel* might march through their own town as villagers stood outside waving little hand towels; it would help to increase a young girl's self worth.<sup>453</sup> Various state or Party holidays, like Labor Day, or Hitler's birthday, were always a big occasion for youth groups. Giesela

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<sup>450</sup> Crawford, *JM Führerinnen-Dienst*, "Jungmädel Service Structure."

<sup>451</sup> Koch, *Hitler Youth*, 232.

<sup>452</sup> Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*, 131.

<sup>453</sup> Sandor, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 67.

Borgwaldt, a former *Jungmädel*, explains what happened at the end of the celebration of one of these holidays:

We always sang two specific songs – first, the first verse of the national anthem just as it is sung today, and second, the Horst Wessel song. During the Horst Wessel song we had to give the German salute and hold it during the whole song, which had several verses. That was not at all easy, especially for the younger children, and I still remember that the arms kept lowering and that we eventually used our left hands to hold our right arms up. We didn't look very festive at all doing that.<sup>454</sup>

The Hitler Youth was very keen on celebrations with spiritual undertones. Some were Pagan, while others were known from the early Christian period. Christianity itself was not a factor in these festivals, and in fact, nor was Paganism; the Hitler Youth's involvement was to honor any early Germanic tradition. The *Mädel im Dienst* handbook explains: "It is said these celebrations come to us from ancient times and from our heritage, and it is our sacred duty, to do them in a dignified manner."<sup>455</sup> Some of the most popular festivals that became an important element of the Hitler Youth experience ranged from the mundane, like Easter or May Day, to the more eccentric, like Walpurgis Night or the observances of the solstices. Those in the latter category often involved large bonfires, dancing, singing, and costumes. The notion of being part of a crowd during a celebration like this can be intoxicating.

The Hitler Youth had a monopoly on job training and extracurricular activities by virtue of the Nazi Party having eliminated all competing organizations. Through the League of German Girls, job opportunities and vocational training were regularly advertised to girls. Such jobs outside the household were obviously not related to the idea of motherhood, yet

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<sup>454</sup> Borgwaldt, "Personal Narratives."

<sup>455</sup> Reichsjugendführung, *Ein Handbuch*, 200.

remained within the purview of the Hitler Youth. The relegation to the domestic sphere for women was practiced around the world during the early to mid twentieth century. In very few countries was widespread job training and placement actively practiced for the benefit of women, so the Third Reich was not comparatively repressive; in fact, it had been the reforms of the former Weimar Republic that were exceptional. That being the case, only select jobs were available for women in the Third Reich. One of the primary vocations was nursing. A text for the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* in nursing demonstrates the Hitler Youth commitment to job training.<sup>456</sup> While the text bears a strong similarity to various chapters in biology or domestic science school textbooks, it differs in that it focuses on identification and treatment of all sorts of injuries; there is even a section on bedside manners. The Nazis did prefer that a girl get married and have children, but if she did not do so upon becoming an adult, various opportunities were available in the workforce, and an employed woman was certainly preferable to idleness.

Recreation was also a large part of the Hitler Youth. Before the various leagues became mandatory, one of the most commonly cited reasons for joining was to have an opportunity to partake in new and exciting activities. The Hitler Youth offered everything from dance groups to fencing to an orchestra. Ursula Dickreuther retells how she first developed a love for music: “Girls from better families who could afford formal training to learn an instrument volunteered to play during the group meetings and passed their enthusiasm for music on to

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<sup>456</sup> Amt für Gesundheit der Reichsjugendführung, *Der Gesundheitsdienst des Bundes Deutscher Mädel in der HJ* (Berlin: J. F. Lehmann Verlag, 1941).

the rest of us.”<sup>457</sup> Even if a girl would not otherwise have wanted to join the Hitler Youth, an interest in boating or riding or another pursuit would have enticed her to do so.<sup>458</sup> It would have been absurd for any group leader to have tried to include political discussion on a sailboat or while riding a ski lift, but extracurricular activities in the Hitler Youth helped to indoctrinate young girls by acting as the lure that got them to join or by placing the hook that kept them enthused.

Participation in festivals and other supplementary activities were, by definition, extras on the regular Hitler Youth calendar. Oftentimes, these were matters that were of interest to young girls, and even when tedious volunteer work was involved, the positive experience of being part of something central to the strength of the community was manifest. The Nazis over-riding goal for Germany was the idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This essentially meant that all ethnic Germans in the community would support all other ethnic Germans in unity for the same national cause. Public rhetoric encouraging this feeling would not have persuaded everyone, yet a pre-existing national fervor was helpful in that regard. The Hitler Youth was successful because its leaders were able to create a system that solicited community action amongst its youth by urging (later requiring) their participation, and by simultaneously fostering an environment where girls justifiably found clear benefits to their involvement. The Hitler Youth could build a *Volksgemeinschaft* where the school system could not since schools had nothing to offer other than knowledge. For adolescents, this is usually not

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<sup>457</sup> Ursula Dickreuther, “Personal Narratives,” trans. Chris Crawford, BDM History, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://bdmhistory.com/research-reference/personal-narratives>.

<sup>458</sup> Jarausch, “Nazi Adolescents,” 80.



enough. To a greater extent than through its regular features, festivals and extra activities in the Hitler Youth cultivated a trust with its members. This trust could be nurtured for the state to achieve its ends.

## **Chapter IV: Students After the War**

World War Two ended in 1945 and Germany was in shambles. The educational system of the Third Reich was no longer functional, but in truth, it had been this way for at least a year. Allied bombings destroyed schools, leaving no place for students to go. If the local school still stood, some of the students themselves may have lost their homes to the same aerial attacks. If the infrastructure remained, students had to deal with enormous class sizes, refugees from all over Germany, and a lack of teachers, many of whom had been drafted (though this affected girls less than boys). Even if all the elements for a proper learning environment existed, morale was extremely low. Students were worried, they were hungry, and they did not care. For all intents and purposes, most German students received little or no education by around the middle of 1944.

The Allied forces, which basically meant the Americans in the West and the Soviets in the East, were left with the job of rebuilding society, and this included a new system of education. Such a task would entail as much a rebrand as a rebuild since the old system that had existed in Nazi Germany was considered unacceptable to both Truman and Stalin. The Americans, who had a great deal of influence in the ideological reshaping of what became West German society, wanted a school system that encouraged capitalism and democracy; meanwhile, the overwhelming Soviet influence on the East German school curriculum insisted that communism was constantly promoted. “Chapter IV” of this thesis examines the ideological mentality that students in the Third Reich embraced in 1945, and the initial changes that occurred in both the FRG and GDR to combat this.

## Survey Results from 1945

In July 1945, just a few weeks after Germany's unconditional surrender in World War Two, American officials in the Intelligence Section Informational Control Division sought to determine what residual ideological tendencies remained among German youth who had gone through the education system in the Third Reich. A study involving four distinct groups of German students was conducted, with the results reported by Donald McGranahan and Morris Janowitz.<sup>459</sup> Two of the four groups consisted of a few hundred typical boys and girls between the ages of fourteen and eighteen from the cities of Friedberg and Offenbach; another group of almost three hundred sixteen and seventeen year old POWs who had been put through a US re-education program, and a smaller group of fourteen to eighteen year old girls who had attended a private school without a Nazi curriculum, were used for comparison with the Friedberg and Offenbach samples. All responses were anonymous, but the authors acknowledge that the presence of US personnel probably had an impact on the results. These were, after all, teenagers who were under Allied occupation.

McGranahan and Janowitz suggest that the results show that most of the youth from both Friedberg and Offenbach appeared to display pro-American sentiments and reject obvious Nazi symbols, yet they gave away their true inclinations when answering various value questions.<sup>460</sup> They argue further that this partially feigned acquiescence to the views of their "new masters" is indicative of their uncritical submission to authority, ingrained by years of

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<sup>459</sup> D. V. McGranahan and Morris Janowitz, "Studies of German Youth," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 41, no. 1 (1946), <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0055736>.

<sup>460</sup> McGranahan and Janowitz, "Studies of German Youth," 4.

Nazi tradition.<sup>461</sup> Given that these youth do, to varying degrees, demonstrate views consistent with National Socialist ideology, one must conclude that those facets of the educational system and Hitler Youth that taught such ideas must have been effective. These boys and girls hardly did anything else than attend school or their youth group. It was noted that girls were somewhat more ideological in their responses than the boys. The differences were usually not stark, but given the sample size, they were statistically significant. It is possible that many of the most fervently idealistic male youth did not survive the war in numbers as high as their female counterparts. Another possibility is that young boys may have suffered greater hardships and were less enthusiastic about Nazism by 1945. The hypothesis that girls received a more effective political education is an unlikely notion.

One of the first important survey questions for the Friedberg and Offenbach youth was in relation to Jewish rights in Germany. Seventy-two percent of respondents said that Jews should be allowed to return to Germany.<sup>462</sup> Given that US officials obviously supported this conclusion, and that some Nazi-supporting Germans potentially might have said yes, sensing it to be an inevitable consequence, this percentage is not very high. For a question only given to the Offenbach teenagers, seventy percent of boys and only forty-four percent of girls thought that Germany should become a democracy; the authors claim several respondents would have said “no” just because they might have believed that democracy could not work

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<sup>461</sup> McGranahan and Janowitz, 5

<sup>462</sup> McGranahan and Janowitz, 5.

in Germany.<sup>463</sup> As reasonable a conclusion as this may be, these are not promising numbers. When asked which country would be the best, and worst, to live in, the vast majority of respondents claimed that they still wanted to live in Germany, and an even greater percentage felt that Russia was the worst country in the world to live in.<sup>464</sup> This is an interesting question, but not one that necessarily speaks to any Nationalistic leanings. Most individuals, regardless of circumstances, would wish to remain in the only country they ever knew; furthermore, one might have found similar disdain for living in Russia if the US officials themselves had been surveyed. In a set of questions that the authors claim are most indicative of differentiating Nazi or non-Nazi thoughts, students were asked if “Hitler was not bad, his advisors were bad,” and “the idea of National Socialism was good, but it was not properly carried out”; forty-two and seventy-six percent, respectively, agreed with these statements.<sup>465</sup> The level of positive response to these questions clearly shows how much many of these students still believed in National Socialist ideas. Majorities of boys and girls at Offenbach and Friedberg also answered “yes” to the question of if they felt they were superior to Italians, Russians, Polish, or French (each country was a separate question), but only minorities claimed they were superior to the Americans or the English.<sup>466</sup> Very interestingly, the boys despised the Italians the most. This may have been due to their horrible performance as allies during the war. Only a bit over half of boys felt superior to the

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<sup>463</sup> McGranahan and Janowitz, 6.

<sup>464</sup> McGranahan and Janowitz, 6.

<sup>465</sup> McGranahan and Janowitz, 7.

<sup>466</sup> McGranahan and Janowitz, 7.

Russians; this may be the boys' acknowledgment that Stalin beat them on the battlefield. The girls hated the Russians and Polish the most. One should recognize that an answer of "no" to this question probably only implied that the students felt equal to people of the indicated nationality. To summarize, almost all students felt superior to someone based on ethnicity. Finally, when asked who was the greatest man in history, the overall winner was Roosevelt, with a handful of responses listing him with the "Jewish" spelling of his name, Rosenfeld, and one referring to him as the *Führer* of the United States.<sup>467</sup> These youths either just wanted to answer with what was thought to be the most acceptable response to their occupiers, which would invalidate the question's purpose, or they retained a value system where greatness was equated with power.

The POW boys "compare group" had been subjected to a great deal of American influence and unsurprisingly displayed much stronger pro-American attitudes and less National Socialist political thought. Ninety-five percent of boys in this group thought that Jews should be allowed to return to Germany, and only twenty-five percent felt that National Socialism was good, but improperly applied.<sup>468</sup> Almost everyone, again, did not want to live in Russia. The conclusion that these boys, many of whom had been very nationalistic at one point, could be deprogrammed so quickly is a promising sign, but also an ominous notice that they probably could have easily been influenced in the first place.

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<sup>467</sup> McGranahan and Janowitz, 8.

<sup>468</sup> McGranahan and Janowitz, 12.

The results from the “control group,” the group of girls who attended a private school that did not teach Nazi values, shows the degree to which Nazi education may have shaped a youth’s mind. This may be best explained by the statistic that less than ten percent of these girls claimed they were superior to anyone based solely on nationality.<sup>469</sup> When asked who was the greatest man in history, they did not choose Roosevelt to appease their occupiers, for their private school education gave them the confidence to think independently and critically. Some girls chose Christ, while others chose Caesar or Bismarck, but most wrote that they were not in a position to judge.<sup>470</sup> Girls who did not receive a Nazi education were not Nazis; while this conclusion seems obvious, these girls still lived in Germany, and this would appear to suggest that it was the Nazi school education and youth leagues that contributed most significantly to the indoctrination of Germany’s youth, not the plethora of other instruments at the regime’s disposal.

For the sake of confirmation, all of these results should be compared to a set of studies sampling German attitudes on anti-Semitism conducted in 1996 and 2006.<sup>471</sup> While the results of these studies, with combined data, illustrate a number of things, the most relevant conclusion was that those individuals who formed the cohort that attended school during the Third Reich were much more anti-Semitic than those who grew up after the war, and

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<sup>469</sup> McGranahan and Janowitz, 13.

<sup>470</sup> McGranahan and Janowitz, 13.

<sup>471</sup> Nico Voigtländer and Hans-Joachim Voth, “Nazi Indoctrination and Anti-Semitic Beliefs in Germany,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 112, no. 26 (June 2015), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26463612>.

somewhat more anti-Semitic than those who were children before the Third Reich.<sup>472</sup> Even those individuals who barely fit into the cohort, those who would have had just a small number of years in the Third Reich educational system, appear to test at elevated statistical numbers. In attempt to isolate the cause, researchers correlated regional strength levels of media, propaganda, and Nazi party organization to the survey results, and found that none had any predictive power; they concluded that “spatial variation in the intensity of propaganda was of minor importance, relative to the huge and universal indoctrination in schools and youth organizations.”<sup>473</sup> The effects of the Nazi educational system and the Hitler Youth indoctrination protocols remained after decades.

What the McGranahan and Janowitz study shows is that young boys and girls were sufficiently influenced by the National Socialist elements placed inside the school curriculum. Taking into account that the results were probably strongly biased towards answers that US officials wanted to hear, and the fact that the Friedberg and Offenbach groups produced raw data that was already reasonably Nazi-influenced in its actual indicators, one should conclude that the ideology of the Third Reich was imparted on these youth. One should further consider that Germany had just lost the war and people were suffering. Under these circumstances, to find the results relatively approving of Nazi ideas is striking. The fact that the girls in private school, who one may speculate could have (illegally) avoided joining the Hitler Youth, demonstrated markedly fewer expressions of

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<sup>472</sup> Voigtländer and Voth, “Nazi Indoctrination, 7931-32.

<sup>473</sup> Voigtländer and Voth, 7935.



National Socialism in their answers indicates that both the school curriculum and the Hitler Youth could have contributed to producing ideological views. The twin studies from 1996 and 2006 corroborate this conclusion by showing that those who grew up during the Third Reich not only were the most anti-Semitic, but that they held on to these views. While none of these studies can conclusively differentiate between school or youth group influence, it is clear that the Nazis were successful in transmitting culture through education.

### **Educational Transition in the FRG and GDR**

Educators and political leaders in America and the Soviet Union knew that German attitudes would not be changed overnight. As seen from the survey results for young POWs, democratic norms could be instilled after several months of re-education, so the American plan was at least feasible. The Soviets had a much more difficult task since they would have had to overcome years of direct anti-Bolshevik teaching and the extremely negative publicity caused by Soviet soldiers raping and sometimes murdering German women after the war had been over. Both sides wanted to reconstruct the German students' traditional values, but while the West sought to instill popular democracy, the East wanted a new Fatherland committed to Marxism-Leninism under the oversight of the Communist Party and the Kremlin.<sup>474</sup> While both sides sought to act as agents of social change, educators in the West wished to implement an intellectual discourse with political undertones, while Stalin desired a more stringent political indoctrination. To be sure, non-ideological material was also found in the textbooks of East Germany. The West retained the system of separate classes for boys

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<sup>474</sup> John G. Rodden, "Ideology as Core Curriculum? Textbooks and German Re-Education in May 1945," *The Midwest Quarterly* 50 (2009): 272, <https://www.semanticscholar.org>.

and girls, but the East implemented a system of co-education. Despite this, the Soviets continued to teach the premise that girls were natural mothers and their sphere was the household; the calls to make sure home economics remained a part of the curriculum came primarily from women.<sup>475</sup>

From a practical standpoint, at the end of the war many schools across Germany were still set up for Nazi education, sometimes even with pictures of Hitler still on the wall. There were no textbooks available other than ones used by the Nazis or those that were left-overs from the Weimar Republic. The Soviets considered the Weimar textbooks insufficiently progressive, and the Americans thought that they were insufficiently democratic; both sides felt that the books were proto-fascist.<sup>476</sup> Neither side wanted to repeat the fiasco that occurred in Italy when the Western allies reopened schools in 1944 under occupation. There had been no new textbooks available in Italy either, so the order from London and Washington was to use the old fascist texts with certain pages torn out. Since enough families still had the old texts, the missing pages became a source of fascination for students in the classroom, and the re-education plan had the opposite effect.<sup>477</sup> The textbook issue remained a problem in Germany for some time. In the western zones, old German textbooks with alterations were eventually brought in from outside the country; these were used for two

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<sup>475</sup> Benita Blessing, "The Gendered Classroom: Girls' and Boys' Experiences in Postwar Germany," *History of Education Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 599, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20462011>.

<sup>476</sup> Rodden, "Ideology as Core Curriculum," 272.

<sup>477</sup> Rodden, 271.

years until new books were made<sup>478</sup>. Soviet policy was to use arbitrary materials until new textbooks were ready. These new texts were anti-fascist, rather than explicitly pro-communist. This distinction was rather nuanced; these were communist texts in every way that mattered, but they did not overtly signal their ideology, likely to avoid strongly negative first impressions among students. Textbooks in the FRG retained the same basic elements for several generations of school kids, but those in the GDR progressively grew more propagandistic with time, at least until communism started to waver in East Germany.

Beyond the problems with textbooks, there were not enough teachers across Germany either. In the West, those German teachers who were considered acceptable, those that did not, or no longer did, express any Nazi sentiments were allowed to teach. In the East, the Soviet Military Administration of Germany saw to it that almost everyone was fired and replaced with new politically reliable teachers; some of these individuals were as young as sixteen and possessed almost no education, but they had proven their dedication to the ideology of the new East German communist state—this is what mattered most.<sup>479</sup>

Educators in the West desired a school system that would explain parliamentary democracy to a set of youths who were emerging from a dictatorship and who required a defense of the constitutional system against its eastern Marxist counterpart.<sup>480</sup> Konrad Adenauer, the initial Chancellor of West Germany, continued along this educational path.

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<sup>478</sup> Rodden, 271.

<sup>479</sup> Rodden, 275-76.

<sup>480</sup> Dieter K. Buse, “The ‘Going’ of the Third Reich: Re-civilizing Germans through Political Education,” *German Politics and Society* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 35, <https://doi.org/10.3167/gps.2008.260102>.

The primary pedagogical method was to explain the German past through a new non-Nazi lens. Given the students' familiarity with lesson plans that often spoke of the great men in history, Friedrich Ebert, the first president of the Weimar Republic was highlighted as a dedicated politician and a good leader.<sup>481</sup> The idea of federalism, and a functioning system of checks and balances, was lauded for its stabilizing effect on the nation and for its alleged agreement with German character traits.<sup>482</sup> As far as social history, those who had opposed and resisted the Nazis were called heroes, and their stories were told with an emphasis on moral courage.<sup>483</sup> The development of regional identity was also promoted in schools in the West. While love of one's *Heimat* was certainly a part of the schooling during the Third Reich, educators in the West detached its meaning as a locality serving the greater ideological cause within the state and attempted to instill the idea of an individual community with its own history, yet with a shared appreciation for (West) Germany. This is similar to how citizens in the German states of the *Kaiserreich* understood their place within the nation; however, in Germany after World War Two and in the FRG, Prussian militarism was nowhere to be found, and the individual community functioned as a democracy.

The education in the East and subsequently in the GDR had a single theme, and all subjects of the curriculum extended outwards from it. Human history was the history of class struggle, and the concept of dialectical materialism was the basis for all events. The degree

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<sup>481</sup> Buse, "Re-civilizing Germans through Political Education," 38.

<sup>482</sup> Buse, 40.

<sup>483</sup> Buse, 42.

to which this would have been explained likely depended on the age of the student, but this new worldview, a new *Weltanschauung*, would become the springboard for how students learned about the West, the Soviet Union, history, science, and even math; nothing escaped the “red paintbrush.”<sup>484</sup> Since the Soviets did not even trust the teachers they implanted into the classroom, instructions were given to teach the textbooks to the letter, for any deviation might lead to a false interpretation of Soviet ideology.<sup>485</sup> Though East German textbooks were more tempered than those found in the Third Reich, the GDR educational system was arguably more propagandistic because Marxism-Leninism extended itself further than Nazism.

The curriculum and textbooks were determined by Ministry of Education scholarly collectives, which were made up of communist academics and headed by an elite party member, whose job was to ensure that the education reflected the communist line on all questions.<sup>486</sup> A dialogue between the department chief at a textbook publishing company and his editors explains the bizarre process which ultimately resulted in a flawed curriculum in the GDR. The department chief, Herr Frankewicz, picked out a line from the text that read: “Because the German Democratic Republic is poor in hard coal resources, soft coal is used here in great quantities.”<sup>487</sup> This statement is both correct and completely neutral, but Frankewicz became furious, accusing the writers of insinuating that the GDR was weak and

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<sup>484</sup> Rodden, “Ideology as Core Curriculum,” 270, 273.

<sup>485</sup> Rodden, 277.

<sup>486</sup> Rodden, 268.

<sup>487</sup> Rodden, 269.

that the statement implied that East Germany could not build up its industry. He argued that teaching material must instill patriotic feelings and foster political convictions; according to him, the true, normal statement was “false and useless.”<sup>488</sup> Frankewicz lamented the omissions of criticizing the Ruhr barons and the industrial monopolies in West Germany. He complained that accurate tables showing how soft coal might be worse should be exchanged for favorable tables showing that soft coal was better. Finally, he said that the textbook should say: “The German Democratic Republic has the greatest soft coal output in the world.”<sup>489</sup> When some of the editors protested, saying that they could not put such material in a chemistry book, Frankewicz fired back saying that this was not a chemistry book, but “this is a textbook whose job it is to work up student enthusiasm over the Party's output. It must show the teacher how and with what methods to instill this enthusiasm.”<sup>490</sup>

Looking at the educational system in the GDR, the most explicit comparison that comes to mind, ironically, is that used in Nazi Germany. It is important to note the differences. The Soviet-inspired texts were significantly more subtle than anything used during the Third Reich. Students in East Germany were guided to draw the conclusions intended by the state, yet students in Nazi Germany were often told very overtly what to believe. The Nazis operated on a collection of dubious conclusions, often based on non-existent evidence. They harshly criticized Jews, blaming them for all sorts of crimes. Third Reich education certainly

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<sup>488</sup> Rodden, 269.

<sup>489</sup> Rodden, 269.

<sup>490</sup> Rodden, 269.

included elements of ideology and politics, but as this thesis has argued, this material arrived in the students' textbook in bits and pieces and was shepherded there by what might be called a proper liberal education. One could say that a student in the Third Reich likely left school under the impression of much qualitative nonsense. Unfavorable facts were sometimes omitted, but actual statistics were not altered in Nazi textbooks. This thesis does not profess to apply this claim to all facets of propaganda as this goes beyond the scope of the research, but those educational materials in the Third Reich that included data began with at least one truth before moving on to statements that may have been lies. Numbers and statistics were obviously only relevant for certain applications, but when applicable, this gave a student an opportunity, however slight, to reach a conclusion dissimilar to the prevailing message.

This is not what occurred in the GDR where data itself was shamelessly altered, as in the earlier example with Frankewicz and the soft coal charts. A student exposed to only this material would have had no means by which to question the conclusion. Bizarre statements and unverified claims did exist in Nazi textbooks, but outright statistical lies did not. The primary reason for the pedagogical differences between the Third Reich and the GDR can be found by examining the collective psyche of those in power in each state. The Nazis were sure that they were right, about everything. They felt that their conclusions must have been right. If the facts said otherwise, they either explained why the facts were wrong in context, or they concluded that a given fact was unworthy; to falsify an easily verifiable statistic would have implied a self-assessment of vulnerability and doubt. That was not in the Nazi vocabulary—at least not until doubt emerged when the war situation worsened. The Soviets,

who controlled the GDR, often admitted the inferiority of their position and their argument, even in the soft coal example, but it did not matter to them. Marxism has always been taught as an axiom, not a theory, and one of the consequences of this is not the disregard of an opposing view, but the disregard that there can be an opposing view. In their eyes, the elites in the GDR were not lying when they purposefully changed facts in educational materials; they were simply correcting a far greater wrong, anything that challenged their Marxist ideology. The most historically significant repercussion of this Soviet policy was not enthusiasm for communism, but a growing divide between West Germany and East Germany in the quality of education their future leaders received.



## Conclusion

The purpose of the research for this thesis is to develop a proper understanding of what education for girls in the Third Reich was really like. It is the girls' perspective, and not an abstract pedagogical goal of the state, that this study ultimately attempts to shed light on. School textbooks and Hitler Youth handbooks, both of which were actually read during the Third Reich, provide the best opportunity for the historian to peek inside the classroom because these sources hint at what girls in the Third Reich actually would have thought about. The mindset of those who lived during an unforgettable time is the most intriguing aspect of that historical epoch, but it is also the most elusive. This thesis illuminates a girl's experience by tracing her intellectual and ideological development in Nazi Germany.

The subjects that included a considerable amount of ideology were German studies, biology, and mathematics. These were the subjects where the argument presented in this thesis is most pronounced; neutral and sometimes classical or liberal lessons existed side by side in the curriculum with those that were National Socialist in nature. In these subjects, anti-Semitism and other ideological topics were common in girls' textbooks; furthermore, the newer Nazi curricular changes were figuratively built on top of the ready textbook material.

The syllabus for German was probably the most successful in integrating National Socialist thought into the existing curriculum, which had included of a number of non-ideological poems, short stories, and other literary excerpts. The nationalist and *Völkisch* tendencies of Weimar textbooks were merely expanded. The heroic sagas were given greater emphasis. Romantic folklore was highlighted in order to promote Germanic heritage. The

virtuous woman in motherhood was presented as the pinnacle of society. These positive lessons could be juxtaposed with some of the negative ones that promoted a racial agenda. Several of the short stories read in German classes were decidedly anti-Semitic. The German curriculum incorporated a bit of everything, and thus, all these varied readings comprised a mixed education.

The biology lesson plan for very young students or academically advanced students was less ideological than that for everyone else, but the overall curriculum included a fair amount of National Socialist influence. Biology textbooks were especially distinctive in how chapters shifted back and forth abruptly between traditional science and racial science. Some sections were entirely about nature and the human body, while others only imparted information about hereditary inferiority and racial policy. Nowhere is the side-by-side phenomenon more evident than in biology textbooks.

The final subject identified in thesis as incorporating significant ideological themes into the curriculum is mathematics. This course included many of the same academic theories that had existed since Ancient Greece, but the curriculum was taught using politically charged examples. It could be argued that this makes mathematics studies chiefly ideological, but if so, it would have been unique in the broader curriculum. Viewed from a different perspective, one still finds a syllabus with neutral material that was transformed to include National Socialist elements via word problems. A mathematics course, like German studies and biology, did not fail to teach traditional material, but a student would very likely have internalized the ideological material as well, given how pervasive it was. In distinctive

ways, each of these subjects is historically compelling due to the various ideological additions, but one should not forget how much of the curriculum was unremarkable and ordinary.

A number of school subjects included a relevant amount of National Socialist content, but only under conditions that were less obvious, or less consistent. Subjects that were semi-ideological were the following: History, geography, religion, and art and music. History was often characterized by a degree of nationalism, but whether it was normal prideful content equivalent to that found in other European nations or hateful egoistic rhetoric depended on the particular text in question. Some texts followed a chronology mostly similar to accepted history in the twenty-first century, while others moved into the direction of historical fiction. Bias was also noticeable in some texts that focused on thematically dubious lessons that pertained to the Nazi state; for example, when unreliable explanations for Nordic history were presented. Other texts may have just highlighted important people and events in German history. In sum, this thesis has previously argued that the history curriculum should be viewed from the point of view of a girl's entire school career, for she would have had some years where the material was ideological and others where it was nearly devoid of it.

Geography was rather political in its overall presentation, yet this subject must be judged against what was normal for the time. Much of the content was about the Treaty of Versailles, the colonial question, or the acquisition of resources, but this treatment was completely normal in Weimar Germany as well. With regards to the colonial question, race had always been part of the discussion. This racial element was certainly more extensive in

the textbooks of the Nazi period, and ideology found its way into the geography curriculum for this reason, but the complaints about Germany's geopolitical situation cannot be considered National Socialist ideological education since it was in no way particular to the Third Reich. Discussion about resources and one's international neighbors was a crucial curricular theme in Weimar Germany, as well as in France, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. With all factors taken together, geography was a semi-ideological subject.

Religion is another subject that must be considered with caution. Religion classes were sometimes Catholic or Protestant education, and on other occasions, they were a Nazified version of secular religious history or quasi-Paganism. The findings would have depended on where the school was located and who the teacher was. One might say that across Germany, true religious education existed side by side with a National Socialist version of religious instruction.

Art and music were predominantly neutral subjects, but each contained a few examples of what might be considered ideological education. Foremost for either subject was the insistence that only German music and German art receive proper attention; for art, some additional anti-Semitism entered the curriculum through the denigration of Jewish art. On the whole, however, girls in these classes sang, painted, and appreciated music and art in much the same way students elsewhere would have. Art and music, along with religion, history, and geography were all semi-ideological subjects. These classes would have exposed girls to non-ideological elements for much of the time, thus challenging any assertions of them being dominated by National Socialist propaganda.

An additional set of subjects should be considered to have not included National Socialist influences in any meaningful capacity. These subjects include physics, chemistry, foreign languages, physical education, domestic science, and those including the use of one's hands.<sup>491</sup> The education in physics and chemistry may have had defined purposes for the state; for example, chemistry was implied for the Nazis' autarky efforts, but the actual curriculum was almost entirely free of National Socialist content. There was no racial policy or anti-Semitism in the lesson plan. The school subjects for one's hands, like drawing, could theoretically have been ideological by the use of examples as in the mathematics curriculum, but the evidence suggests that this was not done. Foreign languages were true to their typically-intended purpose. Girls in these classes struggled through their conjugations just as girls did elsewhere—and have ever since.

The vast domestic science curriculum taught girls how to keep a home and how to be good mothers. This curriculum has been alleged to be ideological in its intent, but asserting as such hints at an anachronistic understanding of contemporary European society in the 1930's and 1940's. It was very normal for any girl to take such classes. A small amount of ideology was included in textbooks in the form of hereditary science within health education. This represented such a small part of the otherwise wide domestic science curriculum that one should judge that the subject should be categorized as non-ideological.

One might be surprised to find physical education included under those subjects that were free of ideology. Recall that this thesis employs the theoretical point of view of the student.

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<sup>491</sup> The subjects considered for those of the use of one's hands include drawing, crafts, shorthand, and typing.

It is irrelevant if Nazi officials, far away from the school campus, encouraged physical education in order to promote stronger birth-giving mothers. An abstract conception of why a subject was taught did not trickle down to the girls' practical understanding of it in school. Girls were running around and competing in gymnastics, and they could have cared less about why they were outside having a good time. Ideology did not penetrate physical education, and like the other non-ideological subjects for which topics like racial science had at most a small, negligible impact, girls taking these classes received an education not dissimilar from that before or after the Third Reich.

The entire curriculum was taught with individual subjects receiving different amounts of weekly classroom time. Of course a girl would have spent more time in a German studies class than with her shorthand lessons, so these various subjects deserve an appropriate weighting. Using Rudolf Benze's estimates for how much time would have been spent on each subject in the three most commonplace schools in the Third Reich, a calculation can be made on how much ideological, semi-ideological, and non-ideological subjects contributed to the curriculum.<sup>492</sup> In the *Volksschule*, the subjects in each of these three course categories, as identified in this thesis, comprised forty-five, twenty-five, and thirty percent of the curriculum, respectively. In the *Mittelschule*, the breakdown was thirty, twenty, and fifty percent. In the *Oberschule*, ideological, semi-ideological, and non-ideological subjects represented twenty-five, thirty, and forty-five percent of the curriculum. The *Volksschule* curriculum was thus more ideological than either of the more advanced schools, but this was

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<sup>492</sup> Benze, *Erziehung im Großdeutschen Reich*, "Studentenafel für Mädchen in der Volksschule," "2. Mittelschule für Mädchen," "Oberschule für Mädchen: Hauswirtschaftliche Form."

due to the lack of neutral subjects, like the physical sciences or foreign languages, as course options. Overall, all three schools included a reasonable balance of subjects that might fit into one of these three categories. The more significant finding is that a girl would have spent a large portion of her school week in subjects that were either not ideological at all, or semi-ideological, which can qualitatively be considered a subject that included only mild or intermittent National Socialist elements. Even those subjects classified in this thesis as ideological displayed their less appropriate pedagogical elements side by side with a traditional liberal education in the textbook. It would be misleading to refer to Third Reich education for girls as strictly an ideological curriculum when so much of it demonstrably was ordinary in what was considered acceptable in early to mid twentieth century Europe. The focus on some of the most ideological parts of only the most ideological subjects might provide fodder for an engrossing historical narrative, but this is simply not representative of the full educational experience for a girl in the Third Reich; that is to say, the evidence presented in this thesis shows that a girl's school career would have been much more diverse.

Hitler Youth education is more easily classifiable. The method by which it sabotaged the school system was plainly obvious to frustrated educators during the Third Reich.

*Heimabend* for girls combined singing, fairy tales, and other "sweeteners" to make its overt political engineering acceptable. The sports afternoon fostered collectivism and conformity, and it helped create a fit, healthy *Volk*, but it also secured a girl's obedience. The series of hikes, day-trips, and Hitler Youth camps were deemed a joyous adventure for girls, but the purposeful isolation from outside influences allowed for an inundation of ideology. The

assorted set of activities that compromised the rest of the Hitler Youth experience were useful for character building and to gain practical knowledge, but they also functioned to have a girl identify with the Nazi state. Any of these events would have taken away from girls' study time to the point that most had little opportunity to complete any homework at all. The girls were also told by Hitler Youth leaders that they did not have to study. Teachers were ridiculed, and the state schools were accused of being useless for youth character development. Girls in the Hitler Youth, especially those who only attended the less academic *Volksschule*, which was the school for the majority of German youth, simply stopped caring about acquiring academic knowledge from their teachers in school. This is the primary reason why the standard of education in Germany decreased during the Third Reich, and not because it had allegedly been convoluted through ideology.

The sources examined in "Chapter IV" suggest that girls did learn Nazi ideals. The whole of the evidence collected for this thesis indicates that it is very likely that this was due primarily because of the efforts of the Hitler Youth, not the school system. That point aside, the ideological elements that provably existed in the school curriculum likely had an effect on girls' thought processes. This is not a surprising conclusion. Ideology existed in schools, so it is reasonable to assume that some of it was internalized. What this thesis argues, however, is that most girls would have perceived a great deal of their curriculum to have been non-ideological, and their actual school education, if not corrupted by the Hitler Youth, would have created sufficiently educated graduates.



The historiography would benefit from further research on this topic. A more involved study of the attack on the school system by Schirach and the Hitler Youth would be very enriching. Some additional work on the change-over period between 1933 and 1938, while most textbooks were not yet ready, would answer further questions on how education evolved into its more complete form. Likewise, a dedicated analysis of how schooling was affected during the last two years of the war when everything started to shut down would highlight a period of the Third Reich that does not factor significantly into this thesis. A gender-based study tracing the experiences of girls as they matriculated through the secondary schools, into the university, and into adulthood and a career (or motherhood) would address some of the historical issues that are related to the present thesis, but beyond the scope of its research. While the Third Reich has generally been exhaustively studied and written about, much work needs to be done in some under-appreciated areas, and many opportunities remain for those looking to unravel the mysteries of the Nazi classroom and the lives of girls and women under National Socialism.

As a point of emphasis and as a culminating thought, one should consider what effects ideology and doctrine in a school curriculum have on a student. Education is the power that adults have to gift children an ability to prosper and thrive, or to abuse children with lessons that distort and violate. Children are innocent receptacles, ready to be filled with potential or venom. The courage to think for oneself or a persistent subjugation to manipulation is equally likely to succeed in a child's mind, so the onus is on adults to ensure that a fair and proper academic curriculum prevails. As soon as an educator can provide a specific answer

to the question of what schools should teach, he or she is probably already wrong. The Nazis, and many others throughout history, often taught a theory, but not how to formulate a premise. The Third Reich and other regimes gave students the answer, but did not allow them to ask the question. History does not highlight mistakes from which people can learn; it has consistently demonstrated what is possible, and it has provided guidelines for how one might bring about similar conditions. The educational experiences of girls (or boys) in the Third Reich now function as a historical example of how adults in search of power and control can misuse children by accepting the de-prioritization of intellectual merit and by imparting pedagogical lessons in conformity and victimization.

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## Appendix A: The Structure of the School System<sup>1</sup>

School Year	Primary	Middle	Secondary			Elite	
12			A				
11			u				
10		M	f	O	G		A
9		i	b	b	y	N	H
8		t	a	e	m	a	S
7	V	t	u	r	n	p	
6	o	e	s	s	a	o	boys
5	l	l	c	c	s	l	only
4	k	s	h	h	i	a	
3	s	c	u	s	u		
2	c	h	l	c	m		
1	h	u	e	e			
	u	l			boys		
	s	e			only		
	c						
	h						
	u						
	l						
	e						

\*The *Hauptschule*, *Heimschule*, and *Musische Gymnasium* are not charted.

**Volksschule:** This primary school was mandatory for most pupils in grades 1-4; many stayed for grades 5-8.

**Mittelschule:** A second tier education for grades 5-10 between the level of *Volksschule* and *Oberschule*.

\***Hauptschule:** Based on the Austrian model, it had a structure and curriculum most like the *Mittelschule*.

**Aufbauschule:** A secondary school starting with grade 7 for students who had remained in the *Volksschule*.

\***Heimschule:** This boarding school was designed for talented rural pupils or those with absent parents.

**Oberschule:** The main secondary school during the Third Reich for grades 5-12.

**Gymnasium:** A secondary school with only male pupils which focused on classical studies.

\***Musische Gymnasium:** A special secondary school for very musically inclined pupils.

**Napola:** The *Nationalpolitische Lehranstalt* was an elite state school for boys and girls.

**AHS:** The Adolf Hitler School was an elite NSDAP Party school for boys.

\***Hochschule:** This is the university. There were also plans to form a "*Hohe Schule*," a NSDAP university, and the brainchild of Alfred Rosenberg, but this never fully materialized.

**Note:** Several private schools and religious schools continued to exist during the Third Reich. Also of note are several elite SS and Party schools for young adults such as the *NS-Ordensburg*, *NS-Reichsschule*, and the *SS-Junkerschule*.

<sup>1</sup> This chart represents the Third Reich circa 1941. For the foremost source, and for more information, please see Rudolf Benze, *Erziehung im Großdeutschen Reich* (Frankfurt am Main: Diesterweg, 1941).

## Appendix B: The *Volksschule* Curriculum<sup>1</sup>

Grades 1-4 were mandatory for the vast majority of German students.  
Grades 5-8 were typically for working-class youth not attending the *Mittelschule/Oberschule*.

**Priority level** high: 5+ hrs/wk study medium: 3-4 hrs/wk study low: 1-2 hrs/wk study

<i>Fach</i>	Subject	Grade levels	Priority
<i>Leibeserziehung</i>	physical education	all grades	high
<i>Deutsch</i>	German	all grades	high
<i>Heimatkunde</i>	local history	1-4	high
<i>Geschichte</i>	history	5-8	medium
<i>Erdkunde</i>	geography	5-8	low
<i>Naturkunde</i>	natural history	5-8	medium
<i>Musik</i>	music	all grades	low
<i>Rechnen/Raumlehre</i>	arithmetic/geometry	all grades	medium
<i>Zeichnen</i>	drawing	all grades	low
<i>Werken</i>	crafts*	3-8	low
<i>Handarbeit</i>	needlework†	all grades	medium
<i>Hauswerk</i>	basic domestic duties†	8	medium
<i>Religion</i>	religion	all grades	low

\* Crafts was usually only a subject for the boys.

† Needlework and domestic duties were only taught to the girls.

<sup>1</sup> This chart represents the Third Reich circa 1941. For the foremost source, and for more information, please see Rudolf Benze, *Erziehung im Großdeutschen Reich* (Frankfurt am Main: Diesterweg, 1941).

## Appendix C: The *Mittelschule* Curriculum<sup>1</sup>

The *Mittelschule*, covering grades 5-10, was a “medium-track” school between the level of the *Volksschule* and *Oberschule* in terms of difficulty; it was typically for middle-class youths.

**Priority level** high: 4-5 hrs/wk study medium: 2-3 hrs/wk study low: 1-2 hrs/wk study

<b>Fach</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Grade levels</b>	<b>Priority</b>
<i>Leibeserziehung</i>	physical education	all grades	high
<i>Deutsch</i>	German	all grades	high
<i>Geschichte</i>	history	all grades	medium
<i>Erdkunde</i>	geography	all grades	medium
<i>Musik</i>	music	all grades	low
<i>Lebenskunde</i>	life science*	all grades	medium
<i>Gartenbau</i>	horticulture*	9-10	low
<i>Naturlehre</i>	natural science†	7-10‡	medium
<i>Rechnen/Raumlehre</i>	arithmetic/geometry**	all grades	high
<i>Zeichnen</i>	drawing	all grades	low
<i>Werken</i>	crafts	all grades	low
<i>Kurzschrift</i>	shorthand	8-10	low
<i>Maschinenschreiben</i>	typing	9-10	low
<i>Englisch</i>	English	all grades	high
<i>Fremdsprache</i>	(+) foreign language††	7-10	medium
<i>Handarbeit</i>	needlework‡‡	all grades	low
<i>Hauswerk</i>	basic domestic duties‡‡	9-10	medium
<i>Religion</i>	religion	5-8	low

\* The combination of life science and horticulture was essentially biology education.

† Natural science included basic chemistry, physics, and mineralogy.

‡ The girls only started studying natural science in the 8th grade.

\*\* Arithmetic/geometry would have included more advanced mathematics in higher grades.

†† The choice of a foreign language beyond English was typically between Latin and French.

‡‡ Needlework and domestic duties were only taught to the girls.

<sup>1</sup> This chart represents the Third Reich circa 1941. For the foremost source, and for more information, please see Rudolf Benze, *Erziehung im Großdeutschen Reich* (Frankfurt am Main: Diesterweg, 1941).

## Appendix D: The Curriculum of the *Aufbauschule* and the *Oberschule*<sup>1</sup>

The *Oberschule*, covering grades 5-12, and typically attended by middle- and upper-class youth, was the main form of secondary education; the *Aufbauschule*, covering grades 7-12, gave students who had attended the *Volksschule* after grade four a comparable education. The *Gymnasium* (not charted) was a boys-only classical education secondary school.

**Priority level**   high: 4-5 hrs/wk study   medium: 2-3 hrs/wk study   low: 1-2 hrs/wk study

<i>Fach</i>	Subject	Grade levels	Priority for F	Priority for M
<i>Leibeserziehung</i>	physical education	all grades	medium/high*	high
<i>Deutsch</i>	German	all grades	high	high
<i>Geschichte</i>	history	all grades	medium	medium
<i>Erdkunde</i>	geography	all grades	medium	medium
<i>Kunsterziehung</i>	art education	all grades	medium	medium
<i>Musik</i>	music	all grades	medium	low/medium†
<i>Biologie</i>	biology	all grades	medium	medium
<i>Chemie</i>	chemistry	9-12	low	low/medium†
<i>Physik</i>	physics	8-12	low	low/medium†
<i>Rechnen/Raumlehre</i>	arithmetic/geometry‡	all grades	medium	medium/high†
<i>Englisch</i>	English	all grades	medium/high*	high
<i>Latein</i>	Latin	7-12**	none/medium*	medium/high†
<i>Fremdsprache</i>	(+) foreign language††	10-12	none/medium*	low/medium†
<i>Handarbeit</i>	needlework	all grades	low/medium*	not applicable
<i>Kochen/Haus/Garten</i>	cooking/home/garden	10-12	none/high*	not applicable
<i>Gesundheitslehre</i>	health education	10-12	none/low*	not applicable
<i>Beschäftigungslehre</i>	employment education	10-12	none/low*	not applicable
<i>Dienst</i>	(motherhood) service‡‡	10-12	none/high*	not applicable
<i>Arbeitsgemeinschaften</i>	special topics studies	10-12	not applicable	medium
<i>Religion</i>	religion	all grades	low	low

\* The girls' *Oberschule* included a "domestic science" track and a "linguistics" track. The girls' *Aufbauschule* included only a "domestic science" track. Several subjects were taught with varying instruction hours depending on one's track.

† The boys' *Oberschule* and *Aufbauschule* had a "science/mathematics" track and a "linguistics" track. Several subjects were taught with varying instruction hours depending on one's track.

‡ Arithmetic/geometry would have included trigonometry, calculus, and more advanced mathematics in higher grades.

\*\* Latin was taught in grades 7-12 in the boys' *Oberschule*, in grades 9-12 in the boys' *Aufbauschule*, and in grades 10-12 in the girls' "linguistics" *Oberschule*. It was not an option for girls in the *Aufbauschule*.

†† Girls typically studied French after learning English and Latin, while the boys studied French, Italian, or Spanish.

‡‡ This service consisted of an internship in either a babies' nursery, a kindergarten, or with a family. While participating in the internship, all other *Oberschule* or *Aufbauschule* coursework was suspended.

<sup>1</sup> This chart represents the Third Reich circa 1941. For the foremost source, and for more information, please see Rudolf Benze, *Erziehung im Großdeutschen Reich* (Frankfurt am Main: Diesterweg, 1941).



## Appendix E: Subjects in Girls' Schools<sup>1</sup>

V = Volksschule

M = Mittelschule

D = Domestic Science  
Aufbauschule / Oberschule

L = Linguistic Oberschule

	<i>Fach</i>	Subject	V	M	D	L
physical education	<i>Leibeserziehung</i>	physical education	X	X	X	X
German studies	<i>Deutsch</i>	German	X	X	X	X
	<i>Heimatkunde</i>	local history	X			
	<i>Geschichte</i>	history	X	X	X	X
	<i>Erdkunde</i>	geography	X	X	X	X
	<i>Kunsterziehung</i>	art education			X	X
	<i>Musik</i>	music	X	X	X	X
science and math	<i>Naturkunde</i>	natural history	X			
	<i>Lebenskunde</i>	life science		X		
	<i>Gartenbau</i>	horticulture		X		
	<i>Naturlehre</i>	natural science		X		
	<i>Biologie</i>	biology			X	X
	<i>Chemie</i>	chemistry			X	X
	<i>Physik</i>	physics			X	X
	<i>Rechnen/Raumlehre</i>	arithmetic/geometry	X	X	X	X
hand work and communication	<i>Zeichnen</i>	drawing	X	X		
	<i>Werken</i>	crafts		X		
	<i>Kurzschrift</i>	shorthand		X		
	<i>Maschinenschreiben</i>	typing		X		
languages	<i>Englisch</i>	English		X	X	X
	<i>Latein</i>	Latin				X
	<i>Fremdsprache</i>	(+) foreign language		X		X
studies specifically for girls	<i>Handarbeit</i>	needlework	X	X	X	X
	<i>Hauswerk</i>	basic domestic duties	X	X		
	<i>Kochen/Haus/Garten</i>	cooking/home/garden			X	
	<i>Gesundheitslehre</i>	health education			X	
	<i>Beshäftigungslehre</i>	employment education			X	
	<i>Dienst</i>	(motherhood) service			X	
religious education	<i>Religion</i>	religion	X	X	X	X

<sup>1</sup> This chart represents the Third Reich circa 1941. For the foremost source, and for more information, please see Rudolf Benze, *Erziehung im Großdeutschen Reich* (Frankfurt am Main: Diesterweg, 1941).