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**The Third Wave Experiment: *Novel, Film and their Implementation in
German High Schools***

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njemačkim srednjim školama**

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Introduction

In 1967, a history teacher, Ron Jones began an experiment in order to illustrate how fascist regimes work and to demonstrate the attitudes of the German people during the Second World War (1939-1945), but before long his experiment turned into a dangerous game about a leader's power over their followers. The students were initially fascinated by the social mechanisms and failed to notice how much and how quickly they were turning into a fascist society. These events remained unknown to the general public until a television movie was made about them, which inspired Todd Strasser's novel. The novel *The Wave* was written in 1981 and has sold over a million copies in Europe and has been studied in German schools for the past 20 years. In 2008, a German director Dennis Gansel adapted the novel into the film *Die Welle*. Both Strasser and Gansel relocate the story of a faithful experiment in which students are shown the effectiveness of fascism and the dangers of obedience. Just as in the real story, Professor Ben Ross (in the novel) and Professor Rainer Wenger (in the movie) want to test the authority on their students who pick up their manipulative ideas and form a movement. This movement becomes very frightening and it starts leaving its marks on other classes, schools and even the world out of the school.

This paper is divided into nine sections. The first section gives a brief overview of Ron Jones, his school experiment and its historical background (Vietnam War and racial issues). The second section presents the writer Todd Strasser, his novel *The Wave* and its historical background (Cold War and school shootings in the USA). In the third section, the movie *Die Welle* and its director Dennis Gansel are introduced as well as its historical context (the period of National Socialism in Germany and facing it). Furthermore, the analysis of the novel and the film, their structures, narration and language style are outlined in the fourth and fifth section. The sixth section begins by introducing the novel's and the film's characters, compares them and analyzes their changes through the experiment. The next section looks at main ideas of the novel and the film and their interpretation. Issues regarding freedom of speech, ideology, economy in the 1980s, liberal vs. authoritative environment, etc. are discussed in this section. Main similarities and differences between the novel and the film are briefly mentioned in the eighth section. And finally, the last section examines *The Wave* in Germany, i.e. its

implementation in German high schools considering each federal state. There is a vast amount of lesson plans and ideas on this topic. However, we will choose only one and present how it can be implemented in high schools in Croatia.

Ron Jones and the Third Wave

Who is Ron Jones?

The Wave is based on true circumstances that occurred in Cubberley high school in Palo Alto, California, in 1967. It was a project created by the history teacher Ron Jones who wanted his students to experience how easy people could be manipulated the same way as Adolf Hitler did in the Second World War. To put it another way, Ron aimed to draw parallels between the rise of the National Socialist movement in Germany and ignorance of atrocities during the Second World War, and his school experiment. Before we say anything about the experiment itself in detail, it is important to provide more information about the man whose project from the 1960s made him popular worldwide.

Ron Jones is an American writer, storyteller and teacher born in San Francisco in 1941. Today he is not only known as the mover of the school experiment that made him popular in 1967 but he works and teaches poetry with people who are mentally and physically disabled as well, in order to empower them to speak for themselves. He regularly performs in local bars, theaters and studios where he speaks about unpredictable, adventurous life that is full of confusion and sometimes refuses to take control and order because it is driven by the fear and hatred of others. He is often accompanied by disabled jazz musicians and dancers. His stage performances have been recorded and made into a series of storytelling videos. He is the author of many popular works, such as “B-Ball: The Team That Never Lost a Game” (1991), “The Acorn People” (1990), “Say Ray” (1984), which was honored as the Book of the Year in the USA, and “Kids Called Crazy” (1982), which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize¹. However, one of the most popular things that he is famous for is undoubtedly his classroom experiment called *The Third Wave* that was the inspiration for the book “The Wave”, written by an American writer Todd Strasser (also known as Morton Rhue in Germany) in 1981 and a German movie “Die Welle”, directed by Dennis Gansel in 2008, what will be talked about later in this work. Furthermore, in 2011 directors David Jeffery and Philip Carr Neel made a documentary called “Lesson Plan” that features interviews with Ron Jones and original students from Cubberley High School who experienced the Third Wave experiment in 1967.

¹ The Pulitzer Prize is an award for achievements in newspaper, magazine and online journalism, literature, and musical composition in the United States. <https://www.pulitzer.org/> (last seen on the 13th of December 2018)

Movement That Changed the World

The Third Wave began as an ultimate classroom game in April 1967. After a charismatic teacher Ron Jones had graduated from the Stanford University, he was hired at Cubberley High School in Palo Alto where soon he became one of the most favorite teachers among students. “He was very charismatic and his classes were really fun. They were so good that if a particular speaker came to campus, the other kids in other classes would sneak out and watch our class,” said Mark Hancock, one of his students who experienced the Third Wave experiment, in the interview for Palo Alto Weekly Newspapers (Linda Taffee, March, 2017)². Dr. Scott Thomson, who was the principal of Cubberley High School (1964-1968), stated in the documentary “Lesson Plan” (2011): “I admired Jones. He was exactly the teacher I needed because he had good academic credentials, what was very important in Palo Alto. (7:05) ” And Palo Alto in that time was the heart of Silicon Valley, a lot of research institutions and high-tech companies were there. Moreover, most of families in Palo Alto belonged to the middle or upper middle class, with highly educated parents who prepared their children for college. Cubberly was a school that provided experimental and creative teaching and it was likely one of the best high schools in the USA. Ron Jones was one of those professors who taught his students that learning by heart was not the core of education. Namely, he was trying to look at the whole picture and he was trying to teach them to do the same with a lot of heart and effort. “We were asking Mr. Jones as we were finishing up one unit of study “What are we going to do the next day?” because we were so fascinated by his teaching and lectures and we couldn’t wait what was next” said one of his students Sherry Tousley in the documentary “Lesson Plan” (10:15).

“It all started with a question. I was teaching world history at Cubberly High School in Palo Alto. January 1967 might explain something. Do you remember 1967? Our universe was about to tilt upside down. But I am with my favorite class. The second period of world history and I am first year history teacher and life could not be better. So how many of you wanted to be against the war in Vietnam?”, said Ron Jones in one of his stage performances in 1996 while explaining what really happened in his classroom experiment and continued providing one of the most important history questions asked

² <https://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/2017/03/17/the-wave-that-changed-history> (last seen on the 16th of December 2018)

by one of the students, "How could the Germans behave as they did after the war claiming that they knew nothing about the holocaust?". Having this in mind, Ron Jones decided to create a game that would introduce them with conditions and rules of totalitarian societies. "I don't know. Let's try an experiment. I will be the dictator, and you will be the movement," cited Mark Hancock his ex-professor in the interview (Linda Taffee/Palo Alto Weekly, March 2017). Thus, on the first day, Ron Jones initiated discipline by introducing a salute, wearing armbands, standing up and addressing Professor Jones and all that under the slogan *strength through discipline*.

Ron Jones revealed later in one of his interviews that he had thought that would be enough to demonstrate what it was like to live in a totalitarian society but in reality that went too far and when he returned to class the next day, all students stood up and saluted him with "Good Morning, Mr. Jones!" instead of Ron as they had addressed him before. Having seen this, Ron Jones wrote on the blackboard *strength through community* under the previous slogan when suddenly all students began to chant loudly *strength through discipline, strength through community*. Ron Jones stated in the documentary "Nothing is possible without community. People act together in order to achieve common goals. Being in community is more important than the individual. I gave the students the feeling of being the part of the group, we were whispering together, chanting together" (Lesson Plan, 16:35). In the meantime, Jones ordered students to march out of and into the class, sit with their hands clutched behind them. He decided to use some students as spies who had to report to him if somebody did not obey the rules and they even had membership cards. Jones also admitted in the interview that one day he had found membership cards on his desk, which were obligatory if students wanted to continue their membership in the Wave, and two of them had a red x on them what meant that somebody had broken the rules. He added that 90 percent of the class took a role of totalitarian leader over their friends. "In the morning, he would come in and stand at the front of the class with us sitting up straight," Hancock recalled. "Then, he would pull a piece of paper out of his shirt pocket, and he would say a name. That person would stand up, and he would say: "My secret police have informed me that you have broken a rule. What do you have to say for yourself? ... If we are going to be a disciplined group and do great things, we can't have a rule breaker here." He would then ask the students one by one, "Is this person guilty?" until he had everyone chanting "guilty, guilty, guilty"", stated Hancock in the interview (Linda Taaffe / Palo Alto Weekly, March 2017).

The next day students became more and more impassioned and Jones got a bodyguard, one of his students Robert who started to follow him everywhere and an original number of thirty students (one class) increased to two thousand members and even students from other high schools became a part of it. “I was trapped in the same belief and I liked that – the order, the control. Being part of something is very addictive. It is pretty intoxicating”³, said Ron to the moderator Barbara Lane in the video interview for a Marsh Talk in 2017. In addition, Ron invented the salute that would symbolize their movement and it was significantly named “the Wave” (because it was an outline of an ocean wave) what can be interpreted as a catalyst for change, in both historical and situational context (symbolism will be discussed and analyzed later in this work). Thus, every time when seeing each other, the members of the movement saluted themselves by putting arm up to the side, bent it 90 degrees at the elbow, with a raised cupped hand. The group and the movement themselves were named “the Third Wave” as well. Furthermore, according to Jones’ words, nothing was impossible without action. In order to achieve something, discipline and community were important, but the most crucial things are inferable only through doing. Hence, he wrote *strength through action* on the blackboard.

However, although a lot of students were impassioned by the Third Wave and were ready to do anything for it, the movement was disapproved by some students and parents who were a minority and scared to show resistance against it by the same token. Sherry Tousley was one of Jones’ students who showed displeasure of his intentions by making a huge poster on which it was written “The Third Wave is a revolting organization. Revolt against it now!” Having seen this, Jones came to the decision that it would be appropriate to end it. “On the fourth day, my wife told me “You have to stop it, it is very dangerous!””, mentioned Ron in the documentary (Lesson Plan, 3:20). In addition, Jones told his students that the Wave was not a game but a national movement that was happening in San Francisco, in New York, in Chicago and in the whole USA. For this reason, he organized a gathering in the school hall the next day and told them they would be televised by the most popular American TV-Stations and their leader (Ron Jones) would unveil himself as the leader of a new movement in the USA. Notably, nobody asked to prove it because they trusted him. Besides, Jones said in the documentary Lesson Plan that there had not been the Internet at that time and if something really represented the truth, it would take at least two days for the news to be spread across the USA. “If we

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRBNBv3SZF4> (last seen on the 16th of December 2018)

were chosen, we didn't want to screw this up. You didn't want to fail because other people were counting on you. You don't want to be the reason why it didn't progress", mentioned Jo Ann Wood in the documentary (Lesson Plan, 47:58).

The experiment lasted for several days and finally, the students gathered in the school hall the last day as they were told by Professor Jones. Moreover, they brought posters and chanted their slogans believing they were the movement that was going to revolutionize American politics. "The students were whispering and saying *strength through discipline, strength through community, strength through action* while waiting for the leader to appear," said Jones in the documentary (Lesson Plan, 54:40). When he entered the classroom, Jones darkened the room by pulling curtains across the windows and turned on the television but nothing appeared on it. However, several minutes later the pictures of Adolf Hitler, concentration camps and the Third Reich appeared on the screen. "I can remember the sickening silence in the room. It just got hotter and hotter" (Lesson Plan, 54:23), explained Jones in the documentary while trying to depict students who felt betrayed and trapped. He compared his students to the Germans by saying they behaved just as the Germans in the Second World War. "Listen closely, I have something important to tell you. Sit down. There is no leader. There is no such thing as a national youth movement called the Third Wave. You have been used. Manipulated. Shoved by your own desires into the place you now find yourself. You are no better or worse than the German Nazis we have been studying," said Ron Jones in the interview (Marsh Talk, 2017). Consequently, this led to frustration and disappointment and students started leaving the room and they did not talk about it for the next ten years. "This shame was phenomenal. You realized you gave up your freedom for the thought of being superior", recalled Ron Jones in the interview (Marsh Talk, 2017).

Under previously mentioned circumstances, Ron Jones became a victim of his own experiment and all this caused displeasure of parents and other professors. They wanted to restrict the way he taught and the option of moving him to another school to another town was talked over. Nevertheless, there was a movement to keep him from being fired and Jones continued working at the same school till 1969 when his teaching contract expired and was denied to be renewed.

Historical Background

The late 1960s in the United States were socially marked by a strong and diverse counterculture whose beginnings lay in protests against racial discrimination and the Vietnam War. Student movements, hippies, flower power⁴, Woodstock or the slogan “Make Love not War” were just a few of buzzwords of the time. It was all about finding new life styles, democratizing education and creating a more peaceful and equitable life.

Some historical facts should be considered when talking about the Third Wave experiment and one of these is definitely above mentioned the rise and fall of the Third Reich and atrocities made in concentration camps. However, although this historical occurrence is undoubtedly the main background of this movement and its establishment, because everything started with the question about horrors committed by the Nazis and the Germans’ ignorance of it, other historical events connected to the problems in the USA in the 1960s should not be disregarded as well. Two important issues arise when dealing with American events in the 1960s and these are racial problems and the Vietnam War what will be discussed in the next two sections.

Racial Issues in the 1960s

Before we say anything about racial problems that occurred in the USA in the 1960s, it is important to mention that although the real background of the Wave was the Second World War, which mainly affected the Jewish nation, we can say that the Third Wave experiment was neither anti-Semitic⁵ nor racial movement. As can be seen in the documentary film Lesson Plan (2011), there were a few Jewish students who participated in the class and the movement itself.

Nevertheless, the 1960s were the years of new changes in American history that should not be of secondary importance when talking about the Third Wave. Martin Luther King Jr. was the most popular voice for social changes in the USA in the 1960s when he held a lot of speeches, non-violent demonstrations and protests in order to draw attention to the discrimination of African Americans in the USA and to demand better human rights

⁴Flower power was a slogan used during the late 1960s and early 1970s as a symbol of passive resistance and non-violence ideology. It is rooted in the opposition movement to the Vietnam War See more on https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flower_power (last seen on the 17th of January 2019)

⁵ Anti-Semitism, hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a religious or racial group. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/anti-Semitism> (last seen on the 17th of January 2019)

for them. One of his most notable speech was “I have a dream” in which he provided his vision about an ideal world where people were not divided by race.

In 1964 Congress enacted the Civil Rights that outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. It was considered as one of the most crucial achievements of the civil rights movements in the USA because racism existed there since the colonial era. To put it more simply, throughout American history privileges and rights were always given to white Americans and those privileges included educational, voting rights, citizenship, land acquisition, etc. A related point to consider is also slavery that was legal in the USA and it was attributed to the enslavement of African Americans in the 18th and 19th century. Notably, The Civil Rights was firstly proposed by President John F. Kennedy who was assassinated in November 1963 and later signed into law by Lyndon B. Johnson. Martin Luther King Jr. was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize the same year and killed in 1968.

Furthermore, on 11th of August 1965, it came to a large series of riots called the Watts Riots that broke out in the neighborhood of Watts in Los Angeles (California) where predominantly African Americans lived. Afro-American brothers Marquette and Ronald Frye were pulled by a white police officer and one of them failed a sobriety test. This led to Maquette’s anger and fear of going to jail. As both brothers protested the arrest, a crowd started to gather and all this erupted in a massive fight between the police and a group of people. Later that day, the two brothers’ mother Rena was arrested too because she was trying to pull the officers of her son having thought they were abusing him. As the chaos on the streets was becoming more and more intensive, patrol officers started arriving and using shotguns and batons to control the furious crowd.

On the following day, representatives from churches, local government, the NAACP⁶ and the police organized a meeting in order to calm the situation down. However, the meeting ended in lots of complaints about the police and government treatment of Afro-American citizens. This rebellion lasted for six days and it resulted in

⁶The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is formed in 1909 and the mission of it is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination. See more on <https://www.naACP.org/about-us/> (last seen on the 17th of January 2019)

34 deaths, 1032 injuries and 4000 arrests All 34 dead were black citizens and 26 of deaths were regarded as justified.

After the riot, the causes and possible improvements in it were the main topic of the local government and there were suggestions that schools, employment, healthcare and public security would be improved. The Watt Riot was not the only racial event that happened in the 1960s. That is to say that there were riots in other American cities such as in the neighborhoods of New York City, Chicago, etc. and all these had to do with an Afro-American population in the USA and problems they encountered. As an illustration, we should highlight that black people in the USA were excluded from the high-paying jobs, politics and other benefits which white, dominated mostly, people in California had.

In view of the above mentioned racial issues that occurred in the USA, we should have a better understanding of the Jones' positive attitude towards the Wave movement. "The racial thing was just beginning to happen. Black students in Palo Alto were guests to white students and they were also guests to the school administration. They denied to be in football teams, go to the theater, they would go home after school," said Ron Jones in the interview for Marsh Talk in 2007 and continued "After the Wave, outcasts weren't losers anymore and everybody wanted to be a part of it. That was a possibility and chance to change something." Provided that, it can easily be said that Ron Jones was concerned about the racial thing that coupled with the Vietnam War was the main topic in the USA then. He knew racism in schools could have very serious consequences both for students and their families. Black people were always targeted as the main suspects whenever something bad happened and they were faced with the negative racial biases on a daily basis. All this could cause an academic and psychological falling-off, which included dropping out of school and having contact with the criminal justice system, what for a charismatic person like Ron Jones was unacceptable. Ron Jones was aware of the unchangeable reality that was present at that time and he knew Palo Alto was the environment where middle and upper-middle class lived and consisted predominantly of the white race. However, on the second day of the movement, he realized that things started changing, black students became a part not only of the movement but of the football teams and other groups as well. He recognized the Wave as the symbol of a positive change and that was absolutely needed in the USA. An English teacher Sylvia Berry Williams, who spent two years in Palo Alto High School wrote about her experiences in the book "Hasslig: Two Years in a Suburban School" (1970) where she

mentioned that at the time of the Third Wave, students generally supported the African Americans and had a positive attitude when dealing with racial issues. In other words, the President of the entire overall 10th-grade class of Cubberley was an Afro-American student who was elected by 433 other students. Student organizations included an International Club and an interracial "Committee for All Students."

Vietnam War

In addition to the above mentioned racial problems and changes that affected the USA in the sixties of the last century, we should not ignore the Vietnam War that left unpleasant consequences on them. It was a long conflict between North Vietnam and the government of South Vietnam. However, in 1954 the U.S. got actively involved in it and the event that caused a heated reaction in the USA and occurred in March of 1965 was when President Lyndon B. Johnson decided to send U.S. combat forces into the battle in Vietnam. There were 82 000 combat troops in Vietnam by June 1965, by the end of July 1965 he sent another 100 000 troops and in 1966 another 100 000 troops, despite the anti-war movement. As the war was passing, the amount of physical and psychological deterioration of American soldiers was increasing. By November 1967, there were 500 000 American troops in Vietnam, ca. 15,000 soldiers were killed and 109 500 were wounded.

We should also mention that about two-thirds of Americans volunteered to participate in the Vietnam War, and the rest were selected through the drafts. The Selective Service System⁷ collected the names of all males in the USA who were between 18 and 25 years old (also called draft age). Local draft boards had huge power to decide whether someone was capable of going to the war. However, most of the American soldiers who were drafted were men from poor and lower-class families. According to the statistics, American forces in Vietnam included 25 percent of the poor, 55 percent of the working class, 25 percent of the middle class and very few came from upper-class families. Ironically, a large number of African Americans were drafted and gave their

⁷ The Selective Service System is an independent agency of the United States government that maintains information on those potentially subject to military conscription (i.e. the draft). See more on https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selective_Service_System, (last seen on the 20th of January 2019)

lives for the democracy in Vietnam and at the same time they did not have any rights in the country which sent them there.

One of the Third Wave participants Philip Neel expressed his opinion about the war situation in the documentary “Lesson Plan”: “That afternoon when I was walking down the corridor, I saw a lot of students and I heard them saying “we’re going to get the people out of Washington, we’re going to get us out of Vietnam.” We were only two years away from the draft and Vietnam was the draft war. In a couple of years, the government is going to hand us a gun and say “either kill or be killed.” So, when I heard these guys saying “we’re going to get the people out of Washington who are responsible for this war” that motivated me to go to the rally the next day. (47:15)” Hence, the Third Wave movement was very critical of the war in Vietnam. It meant a lot for the boys who were only two years from the military draft and from being pursued by the government to fight in that war. Besides the movement itself, excellent grades were their only hope that would enable them to get into college what would probably defer them from the military service.

All things considered, a better understanding of the evolution of Hitler’s regime might have been the main reason why Professor Jones started this experiment. However, if we take a broader spectrum into consideration and better analyze it, we can assume that the real reason for the experiment was the situation that dominated in the USA, the situation which, in contrast to the Second World War, was not still finished and could have probably been changed. And although historical events like the Second World War and the Vietnam War were different and they had a various background, the USA committed a lot of atrocities in the Vietnam War in the 1960s as well. The USA caused lots of deaths, recruited young people and enlisted them to give up their future. Professor Jones could not stop the Third Wave easily and it was some kind of relief to him when he saw young students together as one unit that could probably make some changes. They were young people who were in the process of shaping their attitude and opinions about the environment and the world, and Jones saw in it an ideal opportunity. Because nevertheless, one of the most basic human needs is need for social belonging what was very important according to Jones and to satisfy that need people will step across that line between good and evil, between what we know is right and usually do and what we know at some level is wrong and we should not do.

The Wave

About Todd Strasser

In 1981 the Third Wave experiment attracted much attention from the American writer Todd Strasser who decided to make a novel of it. Also known as Morton Rhue or T. S. Rhue, what are his pen names, Todd Strasser was born in New York City in 1950. He is the author of more than 140 novels, short stories and non-fiction works. Some of them are “Angel Dust Blues” (1978), which was his first novel, “Boot Camp” (2007), “Fallout” (2013), “No Place” (2014), “If I Grow Up” (2009), “Give a Boy a Gun” (2001), “Wish You Were Dead” (2009). His newest novel “Price of Duty” has received great popularity and was named *Amazon Young Adult Book of the Month* in July 2018 and as a *New York Public Library Best Book for Teens* in 2018. After he had graduated from the University of Literature and Creative Writing in Beloit, he worked for American newspapers and magazines such as the New York Times, the New Yorker and Esquire.

In his works, considerable attention has been paid to themes such as Nazism, wars, homelessness, poverty and school problems such as violence, bullying, and mobbing and all that in order to draw attention to the risk of social exclusion and the causes of destructive behavior. It has been presented to young readers of his books that social behavior and behavior when solving problems can be crucial for a positive outcome of a difficult situation. Hence, Strasser aims to support young adolescents in their development in which he deals with current and trans-national youth problems. For example, in the novel “Give a Boy a Gun” (2001), which is also one of the recommended readings at German high schools, he wrote the following in the dedication section: “For the end of the youth violence. For all young people who have ever been killed or injured by fire-arms” (p. 5).

About the Novel

However, he has achieved the greatest success with the novel “*The Wave*” and he used Ron Jones’ experiment as the base of that book. The book was published by the publishing house “Laurel Leaf” on the 15th of September 1981. The novel appeared in Germany under the pseudonym Morton Rhue on the advice of the publisher because of

marketing reasons. To put it more precisely, his pseudonym is the product of pronunciation and translation processes that emerge from the German and French languages, i.e. the first name “Todd” resembles a German expression of “death” (*der Tod*), just as “Strasser” which has similarity to the word “street” (*die Straße*). Thus, since this name combination would be awkward in Germany, it was translated into French: the terms “death” and “street” were converted to French words “Mort” and “Rue” and they were americanized to Morton Rhue. A German translation by Hans-Georg Noack⁸ was published by the publishing house “Ravensburger Buchverlag” in 1984 under the title “*Die Welle*” and it has brought him great popularity all over Germany where it is recommended reading for adolescents at high schools⁹.

The novel consists of seventeen chapters and it follows the course of an experiment performed by the history teacher Ben Ross. He wants to give his students a direct experience of the totalitarian regime with the help of the movement called the Wave. The Wave becomes very popular among students but it develops a barely controllable experiment and it comes to tensions and even attacks between some members and non-members. However, more information about the writing style, the structure of the novel, characters, themes and symbolism will be explained in the following sections.

Historical Background

Cold War

A short period before and when this book was written and published was the time of major political events both in the world and the USA. Also called as the Cold War, it was the period of international relations from the late 1940s to the early 1990s characterized by mutual hostility and competition between the United States and the Soviet Union and their allies in global geopolitical, economic and other relations. It excluded a direct armed conflict of leading forces. However, it led to numerous regional wars also called “proxy wars”. For instance, the Korean War and above mentioned the

⁸ Hans Georg Noack was a German translator, publisher and author who wrote books for children and young adults. He was born in Magdeburg on 12th of February 1926 and died in Würzburg on 15th November 2005. See more on https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans-Georg_Noack (last seen on the 27th of January 2019)

⁹ See more on https://www.schule.sachsen.de/lpdb/web/downloads/ms_deutsch_lektuereempfehlungen.pdf?v2 (last seen on the 29th of January 2019)

Vietnam War were proxy wars. And although American participation in the Vietnam War ended in 1973, tensions and threats between the United States and other countries continued to exist.

Equally important, Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States in November 1980 and he played a crucial role in the Cold War. In that time, each superpower was competing with each other trying to have a better and stronger military. Ronald Reagan managed to build a stronger military what represented a huge problem for the Soviet Union who could not follow the development of the American military and finally, this led to economic collapse in the USSR. Similarly, the controversy between the USA and the SSSR was happening in the Universe as well, known as the Space Race¹⁰, where both world superpowers competed in the superiority of their technological advancements.

School Shootings in the 1970s

In addition to the Cold War, the violence and various incidents that took place at American private and state schools, as well as universities, marked the 1970s and the 1980s of the last century. According to reports, a significant number of school shootings happened in the USA, during which the school staff and students were killed and injured¹¹.

The fact that violence and mobbing in schools have always been an issue everywhere led Todd Strasser to draw attention to it. As mentioned before, he has dealt with youth problems in his works and aimed to support them in their development and he has done that through his novels and other works. For all these reasons, the Third Wave experiment intrigued him because it contained elements of his personal interests such as school violence, mobbing and nacism. It has been indicated above that students who took a part in the Third Wave experiment perceived it seriously and they excluded those who did not want to obey the rules or stood out of it. To put it more simply, the perception of adolescents is such that it follows what is imposed and served as good and acceptable.

¹⁰ The Space Race was the race between the United States and the Soviet. It involved parallel efforts of both countries to explore the Universe, to send humans to the Universe and to the Moon. See more in the documentary about the Space Race "The Saturn V Story" directed by Elliot Weaver and Zander Weaver in 2014 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HI2BwFyZpt8> (last seen on the 7th of February 2019)

¹¹ See more on <https://www.k12academics.com/school-shootings/history-school-shootings-united-states> (last seen on the 7th of February 2019)

However, this issue is more complex in practice, because what is imposed and what youth sees every day does not necessarily have to be positive and good. Various forms of violence, in this case indirect violence, have an effect that the victims feel frustrated, angry, humiliated, isolated, hopeless, hurt, frightened and all this may lead them to the risk of worse school success and low self-esteem. Thus, it becomes clear why Todd Strasser has given the subtitle “The classroom experiment that went too far” to his novel. It refers to the young people who, due to a lack of life experience, could not yet form a firm judgment and all that was combined with a desirable learning effect and exposure to political ideologies and manipulation.

Later, we will concentrate more on a detailed analysis of the novel and the characters and we will see that the case from 1967 was excellently transformed into the novel and it highlighted the phenomenon of bullying and mobbing in schools as examples of school violence. For the purpose of making awareness that high school professors are role models to their students, Todd Strasser has put an emphasis on the main character of the novel - Professor Ben Ross. Teacher behaviors in different situations depend on the fact how students will behave in similar life situations. The professor is not just a person who gives lectures as stated in the lesson plan but he should teach them important behavior patterns. He is the model with whom adolescents identify themselves and they shape their behavior through that. If, by showing it on his own example, the professor transmits a message that choices always exist and that we are responsible for our own behavior, then the students can realize that the merits of their behavior can be attributed to themselves.

Die Welle

About Dennis Gansel and the Film

Little is known about the German director, actor and writer Dennis Gansel who was born in Hannover, Germany, in 1973. He attended Gymnasium in Hannover, after which he enrolled at the University of Television and Film (in Ger. Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film München), one of the most reputable film schools in Germany. He gained his first film-making experience in 1995 when he made a short-film “The Wrong Trip”. In 1999, he made his first narrative film “The Phantom” (Das Phantom), a political

thriller with a famous German actor Jürgen Vogel¹² in the leading role. The movie was aired on television in May 2000 and it did not only find a tremendous press response but was also awarded three Adolf Grimme Awards¹³. In 2001, his movie “Girls, girls” (Mädchen, Mädchen) was his first cinematic debut.

With his next movie project in 2010, Dennis Gansel was able to realize his long-cherished dream. He had developed the first idea for a vampire-horror movie “We Are the Night” (Wir sind die Nacht) during his education at the University of Television and Film. Furthermore, his movie “The Fourth State” (Die Vierte Macht) premiered in 2012 with a famous German actor Moritz Bleibtreu and a Croatian actor Rade Šerbedžija in leading roles.

In 2008, Dennis Gansel adapted the novel “The Wave” which was inspired by true events in the USA in 1967, into the film, with a German actor Jürgen Vogel in the leading role. The film premiere took place in Park City, Utah, in the United States at the Sundance Film Festival in the section *World Cinema-Dramatic* where it was nominated by Grand Jury Prize. It also earned a European Film Awards nomination in the category for the best film and the best European actor (Jürgen Vogel) in a leading role. The movie collected many awards at many European film festivals such as awards for the best outstanding feature film and the best performance by an actor in a supporting role (Frederick Lau) at German Film Awards in 2008, best international film, i.e. special prize of the jury at Istanbul Film Festival in 2008, best German actor (Jürgen Vogel) and best German director (Dennis Gansel) at Jupiter Award in 2009, the award for the best script (Dennis Gansel and Peter Thorwarth) at the Torino Film Festival in 2008, the award for the best young character actor (Frederick Lau) at the Undine Awards, Austria in 2008.

In the movie, Gansel relocates the story of a faithful experiment in which students are shown the effectiveness of fascism and the dangers of obedience to authority in a drastic way at high school in Berlin. Just as in the real story and in the book, the teacher Rainer Wenger wants to test authority on his students who pick up his manipulative ideas

¹² He also had a leading role in the movie *Die Welle* (2008). See more on page 19.

¹³ The Grimme Prize (until 2010 Adolf Grimme Prize) is one of the most prestigious awards for TV broadcast in Germany. See more on <https://www.grimme-preis.de/ueber-den-preis/geschichte/> (last seen on the 5th of March 2019)

and form a movement. This movement becomes very frightening and it starts leaving his marks on other classes, schools and even the world out of the school.

As mentioned above, the movie was directed by Dennis Gansel and writing credentials belong to Johnny Dawkins and Ron Birnbach (screenplay) and Dennis Gansel and Peter Thorwarth (writers), Christian Becker (production), Torsten Breuer (camera) and Heiko Maile (music). A famous German actor Jürgen Vogel embodies the role of the charismatic Professor Jones (Rainer Wenger). Furthermore, we can see in other roles Frederick Lau as Tim, Max Riemelt as Marco, Jennifer Ulrich as Karo, Christiane Paul as Anke Wenger, Elyas M'Barek as Sinan, Christina Do Rego as Lisa, Jacob Matschenz as Dennis, Maximilian Vollmar as Bomber, etc. The movie was released by the German production company *Rat Pack Filmproduktion GmbH* on the 13th of March 2008. Total running time of the movie is 108 minutes and it belongs to the movie genre thriller and drama.

Historical Background

The Period of National Socialism in Germany

The most important historical background of the novel, movie as well as Jones' experiment is the period of the Nazi rule in Germany from 1933 – 1945. For a better understanding of the Wave, this section concentrates on the power and oppression of Nazi-Germany.

After the First World War (1914-1918), Adolf Hitler joined the German Workers' Party, a relatively small party which would later become *the National Socialist German Workers' Party* (in Ger. *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeitspartei*), better known as the *Nazi Party*. He was a charismatic speaker and managed to convince the party members to appoint him a leader in 1921. After a failed coup attempt in 1923, he set out his political and ideological beliefs in "Mein Kampf" (1925), in which he portrayed nationalism as the key to revitalizing Germany. Hitler's rise to power can be at least partially explained by the economic and social context. Germany was left severely weakened by the First World War and it was forced to pay reparations to the victors.

In 1933, Hitler became Chancellor and in the period of just a few months, he established the Third Reich and named himself "Führer" (eng. leader). He eliminated all

political opposition by turning Germany into a one-party state, used armed groups (the Gestapo and the SS) to maintain order, made military service compulsory and created new jobs in the armaments industry. The picture of Germany changed in a short time and the streets were covered with flags, banners, uniforms and badges. Parades and mass-gatherings were happening on a daily basis and the official greeting of the Nazi Party was “Heil Hitler”.

On the contrary, there were a lot of massive resistances against the Nazi Party. *The Communist Party of Germany (in Ger. Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands or KPD)* and *the Social Democratic Party of Germany (in Ger. Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands or SPD)* worked against the Nazis and they tried to collect and pass on news and brochures against the Nazis abroad. According to the Statistical Yearbook of the German Reich, 20,000 people were sentenced in 1933 because of political reasons. From 1934-1938, trials against members of resistance groups took place in Germany. If the evidence was not sufficient for a drastic sentence, they disappeared in the concentration camps.

When Ron Jones, Ben Ross (The Wave) and Rainer Wegner (Die Welle) decided to end the experiment, they talked about young people in Germany who, just like their students, were entirely devoted to the movement. As part of his desire to militarize Germany, Hitler dissolved all existing youth associations and created the Hitler Youth. In 1936, he made membership compulsory. The organization aimed to provide young people with physical, moral and intellectual education in line with Nazi Ideas. Members were separated by gender and age: boys enrolled at the age of six, swore an oath of loyalty to Hitler at ten, and participated in the Hitler Youth until the age of 18, at which point they would join the labor service or the military, while girls followed the same system between the ages of ten and 21.

When the Second World War broke out, young people were sent to the front with a strong belief in the Nazis’ ideas and they were prepared to die for those ideas conceiving as it was the right thing to do.

Furthermore, the Germans developed and refined the system of Concentration Camps. The first Nazi concentration camp was Dachau that opened in 1933. The goal was to use forced labor and fear to crush prisoners’ spirits and force them to comply with the ideals of the Nazi Party. Prisoners were subjected to strict discipline in a filthy

environment, confined and surrounded by electric fences. Gas chambers were used to exterminate those who were considered unnecessary (mentally ill, Jews) to the Nazi project from 1939.

From 1942, the Germans organized the Final Solution, also known as the Holocaust. When the Jews arrived at the camps, they were divided into two groups: those who were fit to work and would be exploited until their death, and those who were unable to work (women, children, the elderly), who were sent to the gas chambers, which were disguised as showers.

It has been estimated that approximately 12 million people were killed in concentration camps.

Vergangenheitsbewältigung (Facing History)

When talking about the adaptation of this novel into the film, we can see an example of the Germans' facing their own history, in this case, the period of totalitarian National Socialism and their characteristics. This particularly refers to genocide, holocaust, the crime against humanity and racism. In the narrow sense, it denotes conclusions drawn from experience at the political and cultural level. A German historian Herman Heimpel firstly used a concept called *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (*facing history*) in his speech "Über den Tod fürs Vaterland" in 1955. Furthermore, a German political scientist Helmut König has defined it as the following: An established attitude of new democratic systems towards their non-democratic predecessors' actions. In other words, it is about how newly established democracies deal with the structural, personal and mental legacies of their predecessors and how they stand in their self-definition and their political culture to their respective incriminating history.¹⁴

Confronting National Socialism and the horrors of the Second World War has been presented in German literature and movies since the second half of the last century. *Die Gruppe 47* played an important role in the post-war literature after 1945. According to Alfred Andersch, one of the main representatives of *Die Gruppe 47*, an important aim of this group was reading about the war and fascism and conceiving it as the sign of an

¹⁴ Helmut König: Von der Diktatur zur Demokratie oder Was ist Vergangenheitbewältigung. 1998, page 375 (last seen on 14th March 2019)

apocalyptic situation of mankind. Many authors of this group wrote about the time of National Socialism, for example, Günter Grass in the novel “The Tin Drum” (Die Blechtrommel), Heinrich Böll in the novel “The Clown” (Ansichten eines Clowns), Hans Werner Richter in the novel “Die Geschlagenen” etc.

Moreover, German movies such as “The Boat”¹⁵ by Wolfgang Petersen (1981), “Downfall”¹⁶ by Oliver Hirschbiegel (2004) etc. are just a drop in the ocean of movies that deal with the atrocities committed during the Second World War.

Equally important, the director Dennis Gansel has also decided to dedicate his own directorial art to the topic that has negatively marked German history. Although the movie itself has been placed in the 21st century, to be more precise, in 2008 and not in the 1940s, Dennis Gansel has put the story of the World War II in the background of the story and he has highlighted it as something from which the moral can and must be learned. In this connection, just as the writer of the novel Todd Strasser, Dennis Gansel has emphasized issues of young generations who are ready for both positive and negative life challenges. In this case, he has put the focus on the credulity, ignorance and immaturity of high school students in Germany, who are ready to do anything in order to be in the trend because as it has been previously mentioned, it is the period of adolescence when young people are constantly looking for their role models, shaping their personalities and attitudes, and forming their own lifestyles. In other words, they are left behind by the ruling trends without a prior reconsideration whether these trends are potentially harmful or not. What is more, the location of the story has not been mentioned through the movie and it can be concluded on the basis of this that Gansel has probably wanted to generalize a whole situation, to put it more simply, he has pointed out that it is not important where these issues are common but that every mass manipulation may be possible everywhere and history can be easily repeated.

Likewise, though the story with Hitler seems to be just a part of the history that has written pages of various books, textbooks and screenplays around the world, it is the history that will be never forgotten and that will always be repeated in various contexts

¹⁵ In German “Das Boot” is a German movie directed in 1981 and is set during the Second World War. It was nominated for Oscar in six categories. See more on https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082096/awards?ref=tt_awd (last seen on the 15th of March 2019)

¹⁶ “Der Untergang” (in German) is a war drama that depicts the final days of Adolf Hitler. It was nominated for Oscar in the category *Best Foreign Language Film of the Year*. See more on https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0363163/?ref=nv_sr_1 (last seen on the 15th of March 2019)

in Germany as well as in the whole world. Nevertheless, we can say that the Germans have shown their maturity and willingness to face their own history and to be at peace with that past. And it has been manifested, among others, through art, through movies and books, as we have mentioned above.

Novel Analysis

Structure of the Novel

The novel “The Wave” has been divided into 17 short chapters that are numbered. As for the structure of the novel, Todd Strasser has chosen the form of a classical drama. To be more precise, the action is heading towards its climax and all people who are part of the action are moving along with it. Although a classical drama is divided into five acts, the most significant points of it can be applied on the novel.

Thus, chapters from 1 to 10 can be considered as an exposition of the plot. In these chapters, characters and background events have been presented and described and the reader is introduced with the action itself. In chapter 11, Laurie finds an anonymous letter in the publication office, which encourages her to reassess the purpose of the experiment. “Laurie read the note: ...”*Then he got mad. He said pretty soon people in The Wave wouldn't want to be friends with people who weren't in it. He even said I'd lose all my friends if I didn't join*”...*Laurie refolded the story and her thoughts about The Wave were beginning to come into focus.*” (The Wave, Page 87). In a classical drama, this would be an exciting moment that triggers an intensifying action or conflict. The fact that Laurie develops an even more negative feeling towards the movement while her classmates are moving away from her, can definitely be classified as a rising action.

The plot reaches its climax in chapter 15 when David brutally throws his girlfriend Laurie on the ground due to their quarrel over The Wave (The Wave, page 119). However, after David realizes he has made a mistake, he and Laurie decide to visit Professor Ben Ross so that he can put an end to the movement (The Wave, page 125). In chapter 16, it comes to the falling action. Although the reader thinks Ben Ross will intervene and end the experiment as he has promised to Laurie and David, he asks Principal Owens of the school for one more day to complete his goal. “*Right now there are two hundred students here who think The Wave is great. I can still teach them a lesson. All I need is the rest of*

the day, and I can teach them a lesson they will never forget” (The Wave, Page 12). This action delay makes the plot more thrilling. And finally, the ending scene happens in chapter 17 when Ben Ross shows his students the pictures of atrocities made by Adolf Hitler and compares them to the Nazis.

Notably, the novel ends in an antithesis to the claims of teenagers. At the beginning of the novel, students claim that the behaviour of the Germans at the time of the Second World War is impossible to happen again. Yet, Ben Ross proves they have obviously been wrong about it. *“You thought you were so special! You traded your freedom for what you said was equality. But you turned your equality into superiority over non-Wave members. You accepted the group’s will over your own convictions, no matter who you had to hurt to do it”* (The Wave, page 139). Equally important, the novel has a closed ending because an act can be considered as completed when the experiment ends. In spite of that, the consequences that the experiment will have on individuals remain unknown.

The scenes and chapters of the novel are causally connected so that the reader can easily understand the plot. The storyline focuses solely on what is happening at the moment and there are no flashbacks and information about events that occurred earlier.

Todd Strasser put the issue of Nazi movement and its connection to students’ behaviour. He used the form called “Erziehungsroman”¹⁷ (transl. from German – it is the novel that describes the development of an individual’s character) as a base. On the account of vividly described scenes, young readers are shown how negatively The Wave affects the character of adolescents because they want to abolish self-determination in order to fulfil the interests of a particular group. The end of the novel, however, contradicts the educational novel because Ben Ross’s ideology deviates from an educational norm.

Although Strasser uses the structure of a classical drama, this does not end with a catastrophe. In other words, he ensures that all conflicts in the novel are resolved, characters are “morally cleansed” and the sense of catharsis is present in the reader again.

¹⁷Erziehungsroman is the form of Bildungsroman (class of novel that deals with the maturation process, with how and why the protagonist develops as he does, both morally and psychologically. The German word Bildungsroman means “novel of education” or “novel of formation.”) The emphasis is therefore on the description of the pedagogic influences and effects on the person described. (last seen on the 5th of May 2019. See more on <https://educalingo.com/en/dic-de/erziehungsroman>)

After Ben's speech in front of the group of students, they suddenly become aware of what kind of movement they were involved in and this is by no means a good thing. Since Ben Ross identifies *The Wave* as the biggest failure in his pedagogical career, he apologizes to his students for that. *"I know this has been painful to you. I meant *The Wave* to be a great lesson for you and perhaps I succeeded too well. All I can add is, I hope this is a lesson we'll all share for the rest of our lives"* (*The Wave*, page 140).

Narrative Point of View

Todd Strasser uses three different narrative perspectives and each of them with a different function. The first one is the perspective of an omniscient narrator who intervenes and makes comments on recent developments of the plot. Furthermore, a personal narrative perspective has the role of creative and critical engagement and is reserved only for the protagonists of the novel. In addition, monological and dialogical narrative forms are present within the novel as well. While an extreme commitment to the group is expressed in monologues, opinions within the group are discussed in dialogues.

The auctorial point of view is, however, a dominant narrative style in the novel. Dialogues and monologues are connected to each other and coupled together, they grow the tensions within the novel. The narrator designs the scenes and enters situations by commenting on them. His goal is, as might be expected, that every characters' moves are easily understandable, predominantly those of Professor Ben Ross.

Additionally, in order to make the plot more comprehensible, there is a reflection interspace of the two most important protagonists – Laurie Saunders and Ben Ross and those are both expressed as inner monologues. For example, *"For a few minutes Laurie sat at her desk but did not go back to her homework. Instead, she chewed on a Bic pen and thought about her mother's concerns. She really was blowing it way out of proportion, wasn't she? It really was just a fed, wasn't it?"* (*The Wave*, page 80).

The auctorial narrative style often changes into the personal narrative style. This happens when the reader is supposed to experience a situation from the protagonist's point of view, for instance, *"Aren't you in Ross's history class, Laurie?" another staff member asked. "That's probably the biggest story in school right now." Laurie nodded.*

She was aware that The Wave was worth a story, and maybe a big story at that. A couple of days ago it had even occurred to her that something like The Wave was probably just what the sluggish, disorganized staff of the Grapevine itself needed” (The Wave, page 76). This personal narrative style builds up a kind of tension and expectation that is directed to the future. What is more, this is also an example of a critical attitude that starts waking up in Laurie’s mind.

Furthermore, Laurie and Ben Ross express their feelings in monologues and they reflect the consequences of The Wave experiment and how it affects themselves and the other students. Laurie’s criticism of The Wave is evident in a special edition of The Grapevine’s article (page 103). On the other hand, Ross’s speech (pages 138-140) depicts what made him create such an experiment and he describes his personal feelings and thoughts on that point.

A dialogical narrative style dominates in many parts of the novel and it allows discussions within the group. For instance, we have conversations between Ben Ross, his wife and Principal Owens, and both Principal Owens and his wife express their opposite and negative opinions on the movement. *“Some of them are even reading ahead. It’s as if they suddenly love being prepared for class.” “Or they’re suddenly afraid of being unprepared...these can’t be the same kids I have for music,” his wife observed*” (The Wave, page 59). Also, dialogues represent the unity between the members of The Wave – they agree that The Wave has a positive effect on the community and they express their feelings through those dialogues: *““Mr. Ross,” Robert said proudly, “I know how George feels. It’s like being born again.” No sooner had he returned to his seat than Amy stood. “George’s right, Mr. Ross. I feel the same way.” David was pleased. He knew that what George had done was corny, but then Robert and Amy had done it to, just so George wouldn’t feel foolish and alone. That’s what was good about The Wave. They supported each other.”* (The Wave, page 67).

Language Style

The writer of the novel uses a language style that is appropriate for younger generations. Sociolects¹⁸ and a contemporary youth jargon are deliberately used to make the characters more credible and to give the story an extra dynamic: “*Eric shrugged: “No, man. I think they gonna laugh.”*” (The Wave, page 51).

In order to enable younger readers to identify themselves with the characters of the novel, there is a restricted use of language in both syntax and semantics. For example, ““*My mother says it sounds like brainwashing to her*” Laurie said. “*What?*” “*She says Mr. Ross is manipulating us*”. “*She’s crazy?*”” (The Wave, page 62).

Todd Strasser uses a simple and easily understandable language throughout the novel that is aimed at a particular audience. There is no rhetorical usage of language and he is focused entirely on the novel’s protagonists and the experiment itself. Besides, he makes the characters’ feelings even more expressed by using a word choice in specific circumstances. E.g., “*The silence of the empty school was eerie. For the first time she heard sounds she’d never heard before: the hums and buzzes of electrical current running to and from alarms and smoke detectors....*” (The Wave, page 115).

Film Analysis

Structure of the Film

The narrative structure in the film “Die Welle” is presented chronologically in the so-called form of the three-act structure, i.e. setup, confrontation and resolution.

The first act, which is used as exposition, establishes the main characters Professor Wenger, Karo, Marco, Lisa and Tim, their relationship and the world they live in. Thus, the film starts with a normal day at high school on Friday, three days before the project week. Professor Rainer Wenger goes to work, drives an old Porsche and listens to his favourite punk band *Ramones*. Three students have a rehearsal of a school play. Ferdi

¹⁸ The term sociolect is the same as social dialect, and is used as a label for the alignment of a set of language structures with the social position of a group in a status hierarchy. It is used to refer to differences that are associated with groups that are unequal in status and power. (last seen on the 5th of May 2019. See more on <https://languagevenue.com/linguistics/sociolinguistics/language-variation/item/sociolect>).

makes jokes and Karo is frustrated by his frivolous behaviour. After that, there is the scene when the school team plays water polo, whose coach Professor Wenger is furious about their lack of interest and effort to be more successful and better. Everything looks so ideal and carefree. Later in the first act, an inciting incident occurs, i.e. Wenger introduces the students to the topic and an upcoming experiment. This is about to lead to a more dramatic situation in the second act and it ensures that things in the movie will never be the same again for the characters. A dramatic question, which should be answered in the climax, has been raised: "*Is fascism possible again?*" This dramatic question frames a whole story and represents the protagonist's call to action.

In the second act, also called confrontation, rising action takes place, i.e. the central conflict is introduced and the tensions between the protagonist and the antagonist begin to mount. In this case, Karo is the protagonist of the story and other students are the antagonists. She tries to solve the problem of a manipulative movement but she finds herself in a worsening situation because she does not have skills to fight against the forces of antagonism. In this part, transformation of many characters in the film happens (also known as a character arc), i.e. Tim, Lisa, Marco and the others who experience inner journey. They gradually transform into a different sort of person because of The Wave experiment. Equally important, Karo experiences inner changes as well, what helps her to achieve self-awareness and learn new skills in order to overcome obstacles and opposing forces (The Wave members). At the end of the second act, the plot point takes place (a major twist that provokes the beginning of the third act). In the climax, the main tensions of the story are brought to their most intense point, in other words, when a water polo match ends in fight, Rainer Wenger argues with his wife, Marco hits his girlfriend Karo and tells Wenger that experiment needs to be stopped.

The last act presents the final confrontation of the movie, followed by the denouement. Wenger organizes a large gathering and declares that the project is over. A lot of students are confused and disappointed and one of them, Tim, who has gone through the biggest personality transformation, takes out the gun, shoots his classmate and commits suicide. Wenger is driven away in the police car and the director leaves an open ending.

Narration and Diegetic/Non-Diegetic Elements

In contrast to the book, where characters express their doubts mostly in the form of monologues, dialogues as the way of expressing personal opinions are mostly used in the movie. Moreover, there is not an external narrator who objectively observes the situation and comments on the characters and events in the movie.

First person narration within the story-world is mostly used in the movie. This type of character tells his experiences, memories, thoughts to other characters in the story. Characters reveal their inner thoughts and feelings and none of these remain unspoken, i.e. this style is directly used to address the audience and invites them to share his/her point of view. Thus, we have a lot of movie scenes when characters express their thoughts and attitudes towards the experiment and the situation they find themselves in. Additionally, the images and sounds simulate these scenes and they shift the narration in words to the dramatization of the words. As previously mentioned, there is no narration outside the story-world. Instead, all these are translated into scenes of characters' actions and dialogues.

Equally important, diegetic elements are everything that exists in the world that the film depicts – including everything implied off-screen: settings, sounds made by objects in the story, characters and their voices, events. Non-diegetic elements are elements within the film, but not within the film's world, such as credits, music or voice-over narration. Characters are unaware of these elements. Dennis Gansel puts focus mostly on diegetic elements that are presented as originated from a source within the film's world. For example, at the beginning of the movie, we can see the opening scene when Rainer Wenger drives his car and listens to the punk band Ramones. All music that appears in the film belongs to diegetic sounds. However, in the scene when students put flyers and graffiti on buildings, we can hear the song in the background that is added for dramatic effect and awakens the audience's adrenaline and puts them out of their world into the film's world (00:52:15). Other sound effects added for dramatic effect can be heard at the end of the movie during the water polo match between two teams (01:19:17). We can notice trans-diegetic sounds here (when diegetic and non-diegetic sounds are combined). To be more precise, we can hear the noise from the fans who chant and cheer from the stands (diegetic sounds), there is also dramatic music in the background (non-diegetic sound), which is used to set the film's tone, manipulates emotions and thoughts about what is going to happen next.

Language Style

Just as Todd Strasser, Dennis Gansel uses the language style appropriate for younger generations. The main characters are students, i.e. adolescents who are 17 years old, and it is understandable that they speak a nonstandard variety of German, i.e. a sociolect, slang and jargon. Their language style is based on young people's interests and shared values. It is full of new abbreviations with its origin in the mass media/Internet communication and text messaging. For example, *Tim*: „*Nichts, schenk' ich euch. Ihr seid doch meine Homies.*” *Homie* is a common name for a friend or buddy used by German adolescents.

Analysis of Main Characters

The setting of the story takes place mostly in an American high school. Likewise, the setting of the film is also placed in a high school in Germany. The protagonists of both the novel and the film are young adolescents who attend these high schools. Thus, not only teachers Ben Ross (in the novel) and Rainer Wenger (in the film) but also other educators and students' parents play important roles in the novel and the film.

This part is therefore focused on the physical and psychological analysis of main characters, i.e. their traits, actions, roles, transformations and attitudes towards the experiment as well as various conflicts they experience. When comparing film and novel characters, it is important to mention that some of them share the same roles and go through similar transformations and inner-conflicts. Before we say anything about them in detail, we will firstly present them. The first character would be Professor Ben Ross who shares the same characteristics with Professor Rainer Wenger in the film. Furthermore, the focus will be also put on their wives Christy Ross (in the novel) and Anke Wenger (in the film). And finally, we should not forget perhaps the most crucial novel's characters Laurie Saunders, David Collins, Amy Smith and Robert Billings who Dennis Gansel has represented with different names Karo, Marco, Lisa and Tim. Other movie characters that cannot be accurately attributed to the characters of the novel are Sinan, Dennis, Bomber, Kevin, Ferdi, Jens and Mona. The following table illustrates the main supporters and non-supporters of The Third Wave experiment.

THE THIRD WAVE EXPERIMENT		
	SUPPORTERS	NONSUPPORTERS
NOVEL	Ben Ross Robert Billings David Collins Amy Smith Brian	Laurie Saunders Christy Ross Carl Blok Alex Cooper Laurie's mother Principal Owens
FILM	Rainer Wenger Tim Stoltefuss Marco Lisa Sinan Kevin Dennis Bomber Ferdie Jens Principal Kohlhage	Karo Anke Wenger Mona Bine (Karo's mother)

Ben Ross and Rainer Wenger

Ben Ross is a young, ambitious history teacher with brown hair who has been teaching at Gordon High School for two years. He has been considered as “contagious” as he always develops new and exciting teaching ideas: *“Ben’s students spoke of his intensity – the way he got so interested and involved in a topic that they couldn’t help but be interested also. He was so “contagious”, they’d say, meaning that he was charismatic. He could get through them.”* (The Wave, page 10). As can be seen, Ben Ross is an ideal committed teacher, who strives to provide his students with interesting teaching materials and methods. Although his approach might be somewhat unusual, his students find it exciting.

However, a lot of teaching staff are of the opinion that Ben Ross is too young, overzealous and even naive: *“Ross’s fellow faculty members were somewhat more divided in their feelings toward him. Some of them were impressed with his energy and dedication and creativity. It was said that he brought a new outlook to his classes, that whenever possible, he tried to teach his students the practical, relevant aspects of history. If they were studying the political system, he would divide the class into political parties.*

If they studied a famous trial, he might assign one student to be the defendant, others to be the prosecution and defense attorneys, and still others to sit as the jury. But other faculty members were more skeptical about Ben. Some said he was just young, naive, and overzealous, that after a few years he would calm down and start conducting classes the “right” way – lots of reading, weekly quizzes, classroom lectures. Others simply said they didn’t like the way he never wore a suit and tie in class.” (The Wave, pages 10-11). He is married to Christy, who always makes fun of his clumsiness in handling with machinery and crafting things. The two live together and they often talk about their job since Christy is also a teacher at Gordon High School.

We can also conclude that Ben is fond of his students and cares about their education. He wants them to succeed and is committed to helping them achieve their goals. The fact that they are not that involved into education makes him worried: *“But there were a few things that bothered him. One was his students’ lackadaisical attitude about getting to class on time. Sometimes five or ten minutes of valuable class time would be lost while students straggled in. the other was the homework. Kids just didn’t feel compelled to do it anymore. You could yell, threaten them with F’s or detention, and it didn’t matter.”* (The Wave, page 12).

As we have already mentioned, Ben strives to make each lesson well organized, pragmatic and informatory. For this reason, he decides to show them the film about the horrors committed in the Second World War in order to make the history lesson about the Second World War more clear. Although he does it to fulfill his educational beliefs and aims, he faces a counter-effect and makes his students shocked and more confused: *“But I did not show you this film today just to get an emotional reaction from you, I want you to think about what you saw and what I told you.”* (The Wave, page 17).

Precisely from his aspiration to emphasize all his pedagogical virtues, he creates an experiment The Wave that will make him even more popular among students. *“Something bothered Ben Ross...Why hadn’t he been able to give the students adequate answers to their questions? Ben suspected that he would not find the real answer written anywhere. It made him wonder? Was this something historians knew words could not explain? Was it something one could only understand by being there? Or, if possible, by creating a similar situation?”* (The Wave, pages 32-33).

Having this above in mind, Ben Ross seeks to create a fascist climate in the history course. In this way, he wants to introduce the students to what it must have been like for the Germans to live in the Third Reich. In order to make it as authentic as possible, he makes up a symbol and a special greeting for The Wave. Besides, he distributes membership cards and encourages students to recruit more members.

The experiment, however, starts becoming independent, Ben Ross becomes fully absorbed in the experiment and fully embraces the role of the leader but at the same time, he gradually loses his original project out of sight. He is fascinated by the ease with which his students have become marionettes of The Wave movement: *“Mr. Ross gazed at the students in wonderment. The Wave was no longer just an idea or a game. It was a living movement in his students. They were The Wave now, and Ben realized that they could act on their own without him if they wanted.”* (The Wave, page 68). At first, he is also pleased how everything he plans can be easily handled. Despite that, he increasingly misses his class’s ability to rethink and critically question everything around them.

We can conclude that Ben Ross is characterized as a perfectionist, an extremely ambitious and curious man, who delves so much into everything that interests him until he finds a rational answer to it. As a result, he loses his students out of sight as The Wave becomes more and more popular among them. And although his wife Christy tries to persuade him to stop the experiment immediately, he does not do so until Laurie and David tell him that the experiment has gone too far. It is also important to realize that one of the reasons why Ben sees this experiment as something positive is that that it is Robert’s chance to fit into the group and it makes him happy that Robert has finally become part of the group. In other words, to end The Wave might mean returning Robert to the role of class creep and taking away the only chance he had.

The ending of the experiment finally gives him back his clear thoughts and he realizes he has lost control. Because of this, he personally apologizes to his students for a painful lesson. All things considered, Ben Ross has achieved his goals and that is to explain to his students how easy people can be manipulated and become part of the majority, while simultaneously suppressing individuality and freedom: *“You thought you were so special. You’ve traded your freedom for what you said was equality. But you turned your equality into superiority over non-Wave members. You accepted the group’s will over your own convictions, no matter who you had to hurt or to do it. You all would*

make good Nazis. You would have put on the uniforms, turned your heads, and allowed your friends and neighbors to be persecuted and destroyed. You say it could never happen again, but look how close you came” (The Wave, page 139). Finally, he tells them that they are responsible for their own actions, and they must always question what they would rather do than blindly follow a leader, which turns out to be the main moral of this story.

Professor Rainer Wenger in the movie *Die Welle* is a young, ambitious high school teacher with a sporty stature and slightly short hair. He dresses casually and often wears t-shirts with punk band logos (The Clash, Ramones) on it. The movie also shows that Wenger graduated and lived in Kreuzberg, an area of Berlin which has historically been home to Berlin’s punk rock movement as well as other alternatives subcultures in Germany.¹⁹ Besides, he was also a left-wing political activist in his youth.

Wenger: „Autokratie? Ich dachte, das war eine ganz klare Sache, dass ich den Anarchiekurs mache?“

Dr. Kohlhage: „Der Dieter Wieland hat mir heute sein Konzept vorgestellt. Der hat seine ganze Woche schon perfekt ausgearbeitet. Also...“

Wenger: „Ich hätte mich jetzt am Wochenende drangesetzt. Wieland hat überhaupt gar keine Ahnung von der Materie. Ich hab´ in Berlin studiert. Ich habe fünf Jahre im besetzten Haus gelebt, in Kreuzberg. 1. Mai – immer dabei. Also, wer ist besser geeignet als ich?“²⁰ (Die Welle, 02:44)

In contrast to Ben Ross who teaches history, Rainer Wenger trains the water polo team in the school and he has to carry out the topic *autocracy* as part of the project week. Everything starts with the question: *“Ihr seid der Meinung, dass eine Diktatur in*

¹⁹ Kreuzberg has long been the epicenter of LGBTQ life and arts in Berlin. Kreuzberg is home to the Schwules Museum, established in the 1980s and dedicated to preserving, exhibiting, and discovering queer history, art and culture. See more on <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kreuzberg>. (Last seen on the 24th of May 2019)

²⁰ Translated from German: “Wenger: “Autocracy? I’m teaching the anarchy class.” Dr. Kohlhage: “Mr. Wieland showed me his outline. It’s well thought-out.” Wenger: “I’d have done mine this weekend. Wieland? Wieland doesn’t have a clue about it. I studied in Berlin. I squatted in Berlin for five years. May 1st demonstrations. I’m an expert.”

*Deutschland nicht mehr möglich wäre, ja?*²¹ (Die Welle, 13:32). As the project starts, he becomes very emotionally invested in the subject he teaches. However, as the experiment progresses, he becomes more and more involved in it and he even shows his aggressive behaviour. It is important to note that on the first day, he throws two students (Sinan and Kevin) out of class who do not want to participate in the experiment and behave in accordance with his rules, and in the following days, he refuses Mona and Karo to express their opinions because they do not obey the movement rules (wearing white t-shirts and blue jeans). When he finds out about dangerous acts of vandalism committed by his students, he lets his movement know that such acts will not get a green light from him. Yet, he does not rethink possible consequences and continues to convey the feeling of power and authority.

Wenger yells: „Keine Ahnung, wer das war!!!! Ich will auch gar nicht wissen, wie ihr da hoch gekommen seid. Aber eins ist klar – das war lebensgefährlich. Ich habe früher auch Scheiße gebaut, das könnt ihr mir glauben. Aber bei so was, hört der Spaß für mich auf. Ist das klar?...Ich will, dass ihr alle eure Erfahrungen, die ihr mit der Welle gemacht habt, aufschreibt und am Ende der Stunde hier auf meinen Tisch legt.“

Tim: „Herr Wenger, ich weiß, wer das Graffiti am Rathaus gemacht hat.“

Wenger: „Tim, hab’ ich dich aufgefordert, mit den Verantwortlichen zu nennen? Ich will überhaupt nicht wissen, wer das war, denn wenn ich es wüsste, müsste ich zur Schulleitung gehen und die Polizei informieren.“²²(Die Welle, 01:16:40)

The situation with the movement has shaken the relationship with his pregnant wife and it comes to an unexpected quarrel between them.

²¹ Translated from German: “Do you think another dictatorship would be impossible in Germany?”

²² Translated from German: “Wenger: “I don’t know who did it! I don’t want to know, but it was a dangerous stunt. I’ve screwed up today too, believe me. But this is going too far. Got it? ...Write down your experiences with The Wave over the past week and put them on my desk at the end of class.” Tim: “I know who’s responsible for the graffiti on the town hall.” Wenger: “Tim, did I ask you to tell me who did it? I don’t want to know. If I knew, I had to inform the principal and the police.””

Anke: „Ich glaub´s nicht. ich fass´ es nicht. und du hast die überhaupt erst auf diesen Trip gebracht. Du genießt es, wie sie dich vergöttern. In deinen Unterricht strömen, dir an den Lippen hängen.“

Wenger: „Was willst denn du mir erzählen? Dass dir das nicht gefallen würde, wenn sie dir an den Lippen hängen? Ich meine, du bist Lehrerin, was machst du dir denn da vor?“

Anke: „Darum geht es doch überhaupt nicht. Die Schüler sehen ein Vorbild in dir und du manipulierst sie für deine Zwecke. Das ist nur noch dein Ego-Ding.“

Wenger: „Weißt du, was ich glaube? Du bist verdammt noch mal eifersüchtig. ... Ja, eifersüchtig, das sie in dir kein Vorbild sehen. Trotz deines Einserdiploms. Ja, jetzt zeigt dir der Schmalspurpädagoge mal wo es lang geht....Wenigstens muss ich nicht jeden Montagmorgen Baldrian nehmen, weil ich verschissene Angst vor der Schule hab‘.“²³ (Die Welle, 01:25:10)

As can be seen above, Wenger completely loses himself and the experiment gets out of control. Consequently, his stubbornness and arrogance lead to tragic outcomes. Since one of the movement members commits suicide at the end of the movie, the police takes him into custody as he is responsible for this situation.

Given these points, both Ben Ross and Rainer Wenger share the same role within their story. They are main initiators of the movement and they are gradually confronted with changes that the movement brings. In their pedagogical world, there is a strong tendency to achieve something positive that will affect future generations. Ross and Wenger are aware that the society cannot be fully re-educated. Hence, they take over the duty to point out its ugly face so that certain behaviours would not really become normal at one point. Moreover, the role of education is to teach pupils and students how to be responsible in life. In other words, this desired personality trait means that students need

²³ Translated from German: Anke: “I just don’t believe it. You’ve got them on this trip. You relish the way they hang on your every word.” Wenger: “Are you telling me you wouldn’t? You’re a teacher too.” Anke: “That’s not the point. They look up to you, but you’re manipulating them. It’s an ego trip. Don’t you see that?” Wenger: “I think you’re jealous. Because they don’t look up to you. This minor-league teacher is showing you up...At least I don’t pop pills every Monday because I’m scared of going to school.

to be taught self-discipline, self-control as well as to be accountable for their own actions. With this in mind, Ross and Wenger use the experiment as a teaching strategy that models responsibility. By building their own responsibility within the classroom, they turn into role-models who show their students how it should be done. They have not however provided clear consequences that the experiment might have and although we can say that The Third experiment proves to be a successful experiment because it has shown its negative consequences, this leads to unwanted results especially in Wenger's case.

Christy Ross and Anke Wenger

Ben's wife is called Christy and she is a music teacher, more practical in life and more oriented to the students' problems. In contrast to Ben, who spends his free time reading books, Christy rather goes out and plays tennis with her friends. She does not have an important role in the novel. However, it is important to mention that she realizes very early that Ben is on a wrong way with the experiment: *"Do you realize that this Wave of yours is disrupting the entire school? At least three teachers stopped me in the hall today to ask what the hell you're up to...I've seen you these last few days and it's like I don't even know you. You've become so involved in playing this role at school that you're starting to slip into it at home. I've seen you go overboard like this before, Ben. Now you've got to turn it off, honey."* (The Wave, page 113). Finally, when negative consequences inevitably emerge, she requires him to end the experiment.

The pregnant wife of Rainer Wenger, Anke Wenger, is from the beginning against the experiment. Just as Rainer, she teaches at the same school and tries to dissuade her husband from his plans. When she realizes that he has lost control of his actions, an argument ensues between them. She even leaves their house and at the end of the film, when Rainer gets into the police car, it is not clear whether she forgives him or not.

Both Gansel and Strasser have given them the same role. That is to say, Anke, just as Christy, is the voice of reason who more rationally analyzes and makes judgments about the movement than Rainer. She is level-headed and wants to make statements and decisions by reasoned thinking based on facts. Both Christy and Anke think ahead about the outcomes of particular actions, in order to avoid even a minor inconvenience.

Laurie Saunders and Karo

Laurie Saunders is a model student at Gordon High School. She is a smart, always smiling, a pretty girl with light brown hair. She is also the editor-in-chief of the school magazine “The Gordon Grapevine” who always works hard with great effort. In contrast to the other editors of “The Gordon Grapevine”, she represents a rather opposite attitude towards work: *“The Grapevine was due out next week. Couldn’t they give up their Frisbees and cigarettes and suntans for just a few days in order to get an issue of the paper out on time?”* (The Wave, page 8). The relationship between Laurie and her parents is very good and she shares everything with them. Her boyfriend David is also a welcome guest in the Saunders’ house and he gets on well with them, especially with Laurie’s father.

Laurie is quite upset with the documentary scenes about the Second World War and concentration camps. There is also a lack of understanding about how the German population supposedly accepted the atrocities of the Nazis without resisting: *“How could the Germans sit back while the Nazis slaughtered people all around them and say they didn’t know about it? How could they do that? How could they even say that?”* (The Wave, page 19). According to her opinion, one should always remember these acts so that they can never happen again. At the beginning of the book, Laurie shows an indirect resistance to the manipulation system and expresses thereby her attitude that will become more and more prominent during the story: *“They could have run away. They could have fought back. They had their own eyes and their own minds. They could think for themselves. Nobody would just follow an order like that”* (The Wave, page 20). Even when Professor Ross introduces them to the experiment, she thinks it is only a game which cannot cause any harm and initially defends the movement from her worried parents and describes Ben Ross as one of the best teachers at Gordon High School: *““Mr. Ross isn’t manipulating us,” Laurie said. He’s one of my best teachers. He knows what’s he doing, and as far as I’m concerned what he’s doing is for the class’s good. I wish some of my other teachers were as interesting.”* (The Wave, page 57).

However, as time goes by, she becomes critical of The Wave and comes to the conclusion that the experiment is not a good idea. Already in the cafeteria, when everyone is very enthusiastic about the feeling of belonging to each other and equality, Laurie expresses her first doubts and questions whether it is actually a positive thing that there are no longer any individuals: *“Laurie Saunders stood with them, but she did not feel high*

energy and unity she'd felt on previous days. In fact, today there was something about the class, something about their singlemindedness and absolute obedience to Mr. Ross that she would almost describe as creepy." (The Wave, page 66).

Furthermore, when Laurie realizes that two students are beating each other because of The Wave, she becomes more and more suspicious. An anonymous letter from a younger classmate who states that he has been massively pressured to join the movement finally convinces her of the negative nature of Mr. Ross's experiment: "*The anonymous letter that morning was a symptom. It wasn't only that a senior had tried to bully a junior into joining The Wave. It was more – the fact that the junior hadn't put his name on the letter, the fact that he'd been afraid to. It was something Laurie herself had been trying to deny for days, but it just wouldn't go away. The Wave was scary. Oh, it was just great if you were an unquestioning member. But if you weren't...*" (The Wave, page 91). However, only a few of them share the same opinion with her, i.e. the editors Carl and Alex agree that The Wave is something that must not be easily allowed (The Wave, page 103).

Things get out of control when Laurie publishes a special edition of the school magazine devoted to The Wave movement. In one of the articles, she characterizes The Wave as a nonsensical movement that promotes aggressiveness and prohibits individuality: "*It condemned The Wave as a dangerous and mindless movement that suppressed freedom of speech and thought and ran against everything the country was founded on. She pointed out that The Wave had already begun to do more harm than good and warned unless it was stopped it would do much worse.*" (The Wave, page 104). After the release, many members suddenly become furious with Laurie: "*“Laurie Saunders is a threat,” Robert stated bluntly. “She must be stopped.”*" (The Wave, page 11), including her boyfriend, the football player David Collins (page 109), who has been her boyfriend since the first year of high school and who wants to convince her later not to write anything bad about The Wave or its members.

The quarrel because of their opposing views leads to the separation of Laurie and David and everything escalates that moment when he pushes her to the ground because he realizes that Laurie insists on her point of view: "*Are you afraid of what the other Wave members will do if you don't go along with them?*" (The Wave, page 102). However, she is not resentful and forgives him when he realizes how much the experiment has

changed his character and sincerely apologizes to her. Finally, she wants to resist The Wave together with David and put an end to the movement as soon as possible.

In the final analysis of Laurie, she can be described as a heroine of the novel that is far ahead in contrast to other characters with her reflective thoughts and keen judgment. Although she seems to be interested in the idea of The Wave at the beginning of the novel, she retains the ability to question it critically, and as a result, she is considered as an active resister, who strongly differentiates from the others. Notably, we should not ignore the fact that she is an individual and completely alone with her views, what does not frighten her in the pursuit of her goals.

Karo from the movie *Die Welle* is a smart and popular girl with a long reddish hair. She is excellent at school and performs in high-school plays. At the beginning of the movie, her maturity and dedication can be noticed, e.g. she becomes very furious when the other colleges do not prepare dialogues as they should (*Die Welle*, 4:20). Thus, when Wenger introduces them with the topic “autocracy”, Karo is interested in the topic and participates actively in the lesson to express her thoughts. In other words, she is the only one who gives serious answers to Wenger’s questions about autocracy: “*Karo: „Ich glaube, Autokratie ist, wenn ein Einzelner oder eine Gruppe über die Masse herrscht.“*²⁴ (*Die Welle*, 12:19).

Equally important, Karo, just as Laurie in the novel, has a good relationship with her parents who are liberal and critical of Wenger’s experiment, which does not correspond to their worldview. She often fights with them because she thinks they are too liberal towards her brother Leon who is approximately 12 years old and he smokes cigarettes together with his friends.

*Karo: „Alle haben plötzlich voll mitgemacht. Es war, wie so
'ne unheimliche Energie, die jeden mitgerissen hat.“*

*Mother: „“Unheimlich“, das ist genau der richtige Ausdruck.
Macht durch Disziplin! – Karo, Süße, ich weiß nicht...So haben wir
dich nicht erzogen.“*

²⁴ Translated from German: “Karo: “An autocracy is when an individual or group rules the masses.””

Karo: „Leon hätte ein bisschen Disziplin bestimmt nicht geschadet.“

Mother: „Dein Bruder soll seine Grenzen selbst erfahren.“²⁵
(Die Welle, 22:55)

As the experiment goes from day to day, Karo provides even greater resistance against it by not wearing white t-shirts, and later by throwing “Stop The Wave” leaflets across the school alley (Die Welle, 1:13:10). Moreover, she tries to persuade Professor Wenger to stop the movement by informing him about the fights connected to The Wave members (Die Welle, 58:40).

All things considered, both Todd Strasser and Dennis Gansel have given Laurie and Karo the roles of main story heroines. Laurie and Karo are determined in their actions and they recognize the dangers of the movement very soon. They are one of a few students who maintain a clear outlook on the movement, which keeps growing and eventually spirals out of control. They try to make the other people aware of dangers, for example by talking to their professors, publishing an article against it or throwing leaflets around. It is important to note that even in Ron Jones’s experiment from 1967, there was a student named Sherry Tousley who also showed displeasure and organized protests against the movement²⁶. Both Laurie and Karo are prepared to put their lives in danger in order to defend their ideas and to represent an active resistance. Thus, when reading all of this, one conclusion comes to light and that is: Laurie and Karo symbolize freedom of opinion and expression.

David Collins and Marco

David Collins has been Laurie’s boyfriend since the first grade of high school. He loves his girlfriend a lot, usually accompanies her to school in the morning and he visits her and her family, with whom he also gets along very well. David wants to become an engineer and tries to work hard towards that goal while still in high school. In addition,

²⁵ Translated from German: “Karo: “There was this bizarre energy. Everybody was caught up in it.” Mother: “Bizzare is a right word for it. Power through discipline! – Karo, honey, that’s not how we raised you.” Karo: “Maybe you should have use a bit of discipline when talking about Leon.” Mother: “He has to learn his own limits.””

²⁶ See the section *Movement that changed the World* on page 4.

he is very enthusiastic about sports and actively plays football for the school team. He is fond of sports topics and engineering.

David instantly becomes excited at the moment when he feels that The Wave movement begins to awaken the sense of community in the classroom: *“That was really different. It was like, when we all acted together, we were more than just a class. We were a unit.”* (The Wave, page 43). Thus, he wants to transfer this euphoric feeling to an unsuccessful football team. He hopes this will create the team that stands up for each other without members seeing each other as competitors: *“But David knew what Mr. Ross was saying. It was what he’d thought about yesterday after class. It was the kind of team spirit the football team needed...I got the team into it yesterday...I could really feel the team spirit. Even Coach Schiller was impressed. He said we were like a new team.”* (The Wave, page 48). He turns out to be a clear proponent of The Wave in the course of the novel.

When Laurie wants to convince him otherwise, he does not want to change his mind. On the contrary, a quarrel breaks between them and it leads to rage and their separation. The fact that Laurie continues to speak negatively against the movement and even publishes an article against the movement makes David more furious. Finally, Robert persuades him to talk to her in order to prevent her from doing anything that could harm the movement in the future.

When trying to persuade Laurie not to write against The Wave, David becomes aggressive and throws her down on the grass. At the same time, he realizes he has gone too far and how negatively The Wave has influenced and changed his character. He feels guilty and regrets his act: *“He could feel her tremble and he wondered how on earth he could have done something so stupid. What could have made him to hurt the girl, the one he really still loved...What had possessed him these last days that could cause him to do something so stupid? There he’d been, denying that The Wave could hurt anyone, and at the same time he’d hurt Laurie, his own girlfriend in the name of The Wave!”* (The Wave, page 120). Luckily, she forgives him and they decide to fight together against the movement.

David Collins makes a visible development in the novel. From a euphoric state of mind, he slowly becomes a fanatic. However, his violence towards Laurie awakens him and he becomes aware of a negative change that the movement has brought into his life.

As a result, he learns from his mistakes and together with Laurie visits Professor Ross to warn him about destructive consequences that The Wave has.

In the movie “Die Welle”, Marco is a tall, sporty, young man with blonde hair who loves playing water polo. The thing, which Dennis Gansel mentions in the movie, and is not present in the novel, is Marco’s difficult family situation. At one point in the movie, we can see Marco looking at his mother with another younger man, which tells us that he belongs to a dysfunctional family. Thus, he supports the movement in order to fill an inner emptiness. In other words, The Wave movement is a new family that is, in contrast to his, different, stabile, decisive and together in hard moments. Thus, he does not want to maintain the status quo within his family but tries to break free of these dysfunctional patterns and rebuilds his self-esteem in the movement. He even reveals his feelings about The Wave to Karo:

Marco: „Die Welle bedeutet mir nämlich was.“

Karo: „Und was?“

Marco: „Gemeinschaft. Du kennst das vielleicht. Du hast 'ne heile Familie, ich nicht.“²⁷ (Die Welle, 1:04:00)

Because of that situation, he is partially dependant on Karo and constantly requires her presence and attention in order to complete an emotional hole, for instance, at the beginning of the movie when talking about the project week, he tells Karo he will choose what she does just to be together with her. In addition, he feels very disappointed when Karo does not come to watch him playing water polo (Die Welle, 06:33). Furthermore, when Wenger starts with the experiment, Marco seems uninterested and confused. As the movement goes by, it awakens his feelings that he apparently lacked throughout childhood. At that point, he puts Karo in a second plan and a physical conflict emerges between them what makes him to realize that the movement itself has turned him into something he had never been before.

Marco: „Ich habe Scheiße gebaut. Ich...Ich hab' Karo geschlagen.“

²⁷ Translated from German: “Marco: “The Wave means a lot to me.” Karo: “Like what?” Marco: “Community. You know about that, you have a healthy family. I don't.””

Rainer Wenger: „Warum?“

Marco: „Ich weiß auch nicht. Wir haben uns gestritten wegen...Man, diese ganze Scheiße, die hat mich total verändert. Ich liebe Karo. Ich hab´ sie trotzdem geschlagen. Diese pseudo Disziplin, das ist alles Fascho-Scheiße. Du musst das abrechnen. Sofort!“²⁸(Die Welle, 01:26:04)

Both Strasser and Gansel present their characters like individuals who can apply the movement's principles to other areas of their life – such as sport in David's case and family issues in Marco's case. Individuals like them are won over by the team spirit and discipline that are central to the movement, as they represent a pathway to success and excellence. And although Marco's life story is somewhat more complex than David's, both of them get lost in the vertigo of *The Wave*, which changes them in a negative way as they become violent. After that episode, they are shocked at their own behaviour and persuade their professors to end the experiment.

Robert Billings and Tim Stoltefuss (Stolti)

Robert is characterized as a total outsider not only in his class but also in the whole school. He is a strong boy with shirttails hanging out and his hair always a mess who makes an unkempt appearance. Since Robert has bad table manners, he sits mostly alone in the cafeteria and is always ignored by the other students who avoid his closeness and change to another table when he sits next to them: *“There were two girls from Mr. Ross's history class sitting at the table Robert chose. As Robert set his tray down, they both stood up and took their trays to another table.”* (*The Wave*, page 23).

Ben's lessons and the school in general are hardly of any interest to him and he oversleeps a disturbing film about the Second World War. His notes are also bad and Professor Ross is concerned about him: *“Ben sighed. All semester he had been trying to get through this boy. He couldn't stand seeing him picked on by the other students and it dismayed him that Robert didn't at least try to participate in class.”* (*The Wave*, page 20).

²⁸ Translated from German: “Marco: “I screwed up. I...I Hit Karo.” Wenger: “Why?” Marco: “I don't know. We had a fight about...This whole shit has totally changed me. I love Karo. But I still hit her. All this pseudo-discipline, it's total fascist. You have to stop it. You have to call it off. Now!””

Robert confesses that he has given himself up because no matter what he does, he will be always in the shadow of his successful brother Jeff Billings, who was a model student and incredibly popular among his classmates. Even his classmates believe that Robert is stupid because he always gets bad grades. However, Laurie tells David about an intelligence test that Robert's mother allegedly made with him and which has proved he has a normal I.Q.

In spite of his bad reputation, he manages to show some self-confidence with the help of The Wave for the first time in his school career. Right from the beginning, the experiment gives him strength and courage to communicate with his classmates and to feel as a part of the community: *“Robert, the class nerd, looked up at his teacher and smiled briefly, then returned to his stiff upright position. Around the room the other students tried to copy him.”* (The Wave, page 38).

Robert, just as Amy, sees the principle of equality within The Wave as something that relieves the pressure of competition. Because of the movement, the other classmates suddenly respect Robert and they do not consider him as a nerd anymore: *“It was The Wave that had given Robert the courage to sit at the table with them and to join in the conversation.”* (The Wave, page 69). He becomes so infatuated with the movement that he asks his “leader” Ben Ross to become his bodyguard. When Ben agrees, Robert completely loses himself in the movement and stands by it with all his conviction.

Nonetheless, Robert does not notice the horrors of the Second World War and does not question the behavior of the Germans at that time. He only pays attention to the movement itself and he does not notice a wider spectrum of it, neither does he understand its background. Furthermore, when he reads Laurie's article in The Grapevine, he reacts aggressively and wants to prevent her from continuing to publish negative things about The Wave and perceives them as a serious threat. Thus, it becomes clear that he has completely accepted the totalitarian character as his own, i.e. with all his strength he fights for the movement without questioning it, and sees non-members as enemies: *“Robert, besides him, was getting really upset over Laurie's story. “These are all lies,” he said angrily. “She can't be allowed to say these things. Laurie Saunders is a threat, she must be stopped.”* (The Wave, page 109).

In the novel, Robert takes the role of a key character as he completely loses himself in the Nazi character. He reminds us of those who were influenced by the Nazi

regime in the 1930s, which was really respected. For this reason, a whole world collapses for Robert as Ben Ross puts an end to the experiment. When all the students leave the auditorium, he starts sobbing and crying. He knows that, from now on, his life will be the same as before The Wave. Even Ben recognizes him as a loser of the experiment and tries to cheer him up: *“Poor Robert, Ben thought. The only one who really stood to lose in this whole thing. He walked towards the trembling student and put his arm around his shoulder. “You know, Robert, you look good in a tie and jacket. You ought to wear them more often.”* (The Wave, page 142-143).

Dennis Gansel has not skipped the role of the main outsider as well. His name is Tim and in contrast to Robert, Tim's personality goes through a more intensive change. Tim is a teenager who longs for having friends and stays in the shadow of his older, a more successful brother. He is, however, often alone and the other students find him strange. Before the experiment, I would characterize him as a problematic, apathetic student with low self-esteem who lacks the company and does not know how to approach his school colleges.

Kevin: „Und Stolte? Hast du das Dope heute dabei?“

Tim: „Ja. Klar.“

Kevin: „Und das ist echt, ja?“

Tim: „Da hat'n Kollege von mir gestern aus Holland geholt.“

Bomber: „Was willst du dafür haben?“

Tim: „Nichts, schenk' ich euch. Ihr seid doch meine Homies.“²⁹ (Die Welle, 09:40)

It is important to mention that Tim's parents are not even interested in his feelings and thoughts about The Wave. When Tim arrives home from school, he tells his parents about the movement. And although they notice that their son, who used to be uninterested and depressed, suddenly becomes engaged and euphoric, all he receives is their indifference.

²⁹ Translated from German: *“Kevin: “Stolte, you got the dope today?” Tim: “Sure I do.” Bomber: “What do you want for it?” Tim: “Nothing. It's free for you. You're my fellas.””*

Tim: „Also, das war voll interessant. Herr Wenger hat uns gezeigt, wie man richtig sitzt. Also...Aufrecht, mit durchgedrückter Wirbelsäule und so. Ihr kennt das ja, wenn man so schnell aufsteht, und dann flackert es so vor den Augen. Das ist, weil der Puls runter gefahren ist.“

Mother: „Noch Braten, Männchen?“

Tim: „Jetzt müssen wir immer aufstehen, wenn wir was sagen wollen. Das ist gut für die Durchblutung. Und unsere Antwort muss immer kurz und knapp sein.“

Father: „Sehr schön. Und warum hältst du dich dann nicht daran?“³⁰ (Die Welle, 22:30)

When Rainer holds him up as a positive example for the other members of The Wave, Tim is transformed: he comes out of his shell, becomes more confident, finally fits in with the rest of the group and starts acting on his own initiative. For example, he raises his hand constantly in order to say something, burns his clothes after the movement decides on wearing uniforms (Die Welle, 36:45), etc. As time goes by, he takes the movement very seriously, throws himself into it and reacts aggressively to any opposition, e.g. he buys a gun in order to protect The Wave members in necessary, what he finally does when the anarchists attack them (Die Welle, 01:01:15). He also participates in committing vandalism by covering buildings, cars and street walls in The Wave graffiti and even puts his life in danger by climbing up Rathaus in reconstruction in order to put a big sign on it (Die Welle, 55:20). Furthermore, just as Robert, Tim visits Rainer at home to inform him that he is his bodyguard from now on.

At the end of the experiment, he is devastated because he loses everything he has gained. Unfortunately, this leads to tragic outcomes, he shoots his colleague and commits suicide.

³⁰ Translated from German: “Tim: “It was totally fascinating. Mr. Wenger taught us how to sit right. Upright, with your spine straight. You know when you stand up quickly and your vision goes all blurry? That’s because your pulse is low.” Mother: “More roast?” Tim: “Now we have to stand up to speak. It’s good for your circulation. And keep our answers to the point.” Father: “Good. Why don’t you, then?””

The sense of equality and community that the movement provides represent an extraordinary opportunity for someone like Robert and Tim, as it gives them a feeling of purpose and meaning. They desperately want the movement to keep thriving, or they may end up where they started. Yet, Tim as the character is more psychologically developed and elaborated than Robert. Thus, Dennis Gansel decides to end this film story with a tragic outcome what makes this movie adaptation more dramatic.

Amy and Lisa

Amy is Laurie's best friend and she has blonde curly hair. These two spend a lot of free time together. However, in the course of the novel, it becomes clear that Amy sees the friendship with Laurie as a kind of competition for grades, boys and popularity. She feels as if she is standing in the shadow of her best friend and often envies her. The sense of equality and community that the movement provides represent an extraordinary opportunity for someone like Amy as it gives her the feeling of being popular and important: *"Because ever since we became friends all I've ever done is try to compete with you and keep up with you. But now I don't feel like I have to have a boyfriend on the football team like you. And if I don't want to, I don't have to get the same grades you get, Laurie. For the first time in three years I feel like I don't have to keep up with Laurie Saunders and people will still like me."* (The Wave, page 106). Just as Robert, she wants the movement to keep thriving or she may end up back where she started. Because of this, she does not believe Laurie's word as she tries to make it clear that The Wave is not a positive experiment.

In the historical context, Amy turns out to be a conformist, who is not convinced by the dangerous and aggressive nature of The Wave. She loses herself in the experiment and enjoys sudden equality of all members. Only at the end of the novel, when Ben Ross suddenly ends the movement, does Amy understand how wrong her views were. The picture of Adolf Hitler as well as Ben's comments on the Nazis and the fact that The Wave members have behaved similarly shakes her deeply. Although she was not fair to Laurie, she is not resentful and hugs her best friend to comfort her.

The director Dennis Gansel represented Amy quite close to Lisa's character in the movie. Not only are both of characters physically identical but they also have the same role. Just like Amy, Lisa is a young, pretty girl with blonde curly hair. Moreover, Lisa is,

just as Amy, presented as the best friend of the main protagonist Karo, but she perceives that friendship as a kind of competition. Lisa stands in the shadow of her best friend Karo, who, unlike her, is more successful and popular among the other students. She feels pressured by Karo's relationship with Marco, her look and academic achievements.

However, The Wave movement significantly improves her status in the community and she gains more self-confidence and by the same token, she feels no more pressure to perform. Lisa already shows her engagement for The Wave movement at the beginning of the experiment:

Rainer Wenger: „Wodurch kann man denn Gemeinschaft erkennen?“

Lisa: „An der Kleidung, Herr Wenger. Uniformen erfüllen ja auch einen anderen Zweck. Sie eliminieren ja soziale Unterschiede. Wir alle stressen uns jeden Morgen damit, was wir anziehen sollen. Das wäre ja überhaupt nicht nötig, wenn wir alle dieselbe Uniform tragen würden.³¹“ (Die Welle, 32:55)

We may conclude that for Lisa, the experiment represents an opportunity not to feel as an outcast at school. She even secretly falls in love with Marco and has a fight with Karo over The Wave.

In contrast to the novel, Dennis Gansel presented her character much more intimately. This is particularly emphasized in her relationship with Marco after the third day of the experiment. Unlike Amy, Lisa also shows her negative personality traits. One of them is undoubtedly her vanity that comes from her insecurity. When she gets compliments from Professor Wenger, she blossoms and is in seventh heaven ever since Marco becomes closer to her. These exciting, ecstatic feelings of power, personal value and acceptance lift Lisa's ego into heaven. It is visible many times in the movie when Lisa agitates Marco against Karo because she is not part of the movement. She tells him not to answer Karo's phone calls (53:20) and even kisses him once (1:10:10). Thus, she easily becomes dependent on that feeling and is reluctant to give up.

³¹ Translated from German: *Rainer Wenger: „What are the signs of group unity?“ Lisa: “Dress-code, Mr. Wenger. Uniforms can serve another purpose. They eliminate social differences. I mean, we all stress out over what to wear every morning. If we all wore a uniform, we wouldn't care about that.”*

As in the novel, Lisa feels disappointed at the moment when Professor Wenger decides to dismiss the movement. Yet, this is emotionally more intensive as one of the characters commits suicide in the movie, what makes Lisa even more shocked and consequently, she realizes the seriousness of the situation, for which she has sold her individuality and friendship.

Main Ideas and their Interpretation

Ideology in *The Wave*

Ideology can be defined as a system of ideas and ideals that an individual or group holds for some epistemic reasons. The members of The Wave movement have their own collection of beliefs and values, which they perceive as morally right and justified. There are a lot of fascistic characteristics that can be found in this movement and some of them are salute symbols and membership cards. The most striking are, however, the beliefs introduced by professors: *strength through discipline*, *strength through community* and *strength through action*, which are intended to convey an ideology and imitate fascist consciousness. Students should repeat and act on them several times a day in order to internalize them: “*“This is our salute and our salute only,” Ben told them. “Whenever you see another Wave member, you will salute. Robert, salute and give our mottos.” Standing stiffly beside his seat, Robert performed the salute and replied, “Mr. Ross, Strength Through Discipline, Strength Through Community....Now seven students joined in the chant, then fourteen, then twenty, until the whole class was saluting and chanting loudly in unison. Ben thought, just like a regiment.”* (The Wave, pages 49 and 50). “*Und ab jetzt redet nur noch derjenige, dem ich das Wort erteile. Und noch was. Jeder, der redet, muss dabei auch noch aufstehen*”³², (Die Welle, 16:18). Moreover, Wenger proposes wearing uniforms as well: “*Was haltet ihr denn davon, wenn wir während der gesamten Projektwoche so eine Art Schuluniform einführen?*”³³, (Die Welle, 35:01). As can be seen, both Ben and Wenger approach the fascist character of the Hitler regime and

³² Translated from German: Wenger: “*From now on, no one talks without permission.*”

³³ Translated from German: Wenger: “*What do you say that we adopt a school uniform during the project week?*”

create symbols that resemble those of Nazi mass propaganda. These guiding ideas and the pursuit of power and community elevate a collective over personal freedom.

Furthermore, other components related to fascist systems are the leader principle, suppression of dissenters, the collapse within a “national community”, control over state and society as well as a lack of democratic order. All these components are found not only in a real 1967’s experiment but also in the novel and the film. With their orders and attitudes, both Ben and Wenger are leaders of The Wave movement: ““*Our salute!*” he ordered. Around the room students jumped to attention beside their desks and gave The Wave salute” (The Wave, page 67). This can be seen in the film as well, when Wenger introduces them with The Wave salute (57:50). Additionally, classmates who do not want to join the movement are being pressured by members. We have previously mentioned the case with the letter in the novel where an anonymous person is harassed by The Wave members: “*He kept asking me why I didn’t want to join. I just told him I didn’t feel like it. Then he got mad. He said pretty soon people in The Wave wouldn’t want to be friends with people who weren’t in it. He even said I’d lose all my friends if I didn’t join. I think he was trying to scare me*” (The Wave, page 87). The term “community” is raised to the absolute must and glorified accordingly: “*Community is the bond between people who work and struggle together for a common goal. It’s like building a barn with your neighbours.*” (The Wave, page 48). “*Macht durch Gemeinschaft. Ich würde gern die üblichen Cliques aufbrechen...alleine kommt man nicht durchs Leben, aber gemeinsam, da werden wir noch viel, viel stärker*”³⁴, (Die Welle, 31:00).

All things considered, Ben and Wenger pursue a clear goal with the experiment and that is to simulate a fascist climate and conditions of the Third Reich within the class. Although the movement itself does not have any political ideology nor ideas, it still has some parallels with fascist systems. Both Ben and Wenger never express clear political goals, but instead, they define three important guiding principles, membership cards, dress-code and salute that would lead them through the experiment. Yet, it remains unclear what The Wave is supposed to stand for, apart from the movement per se.

³⁴ Translated from German: “*I want to break up your usual groups. You all have your friends and groups. That’s important. But you can’t get through life all by yourself. Together we are much, much stronger.*”

Strength through Discipline, Community and Action

Ben Ross and Rainer Wenger lead their movement through three main principles: strength through discipline, strength through community and strength through action.

Firstly, Ben introduces discipline as the main key to success: “*“Now when I talk about discipline, I’m talking about power,” he said, making a fist to accentuate the point. “And I’m talking about success. Success through discipline.”*”, (The Wave, page 36). Ben wants to attract them by applying discipline into their everyday life – when playing, football, dancing ballet, painting, writing etc. In other words, discipline is the key starting point to achieve the best from yourself. For Ross and Wenger, discipline begins with a good posture of their students and they also encourage them to start questions and answers with “Mister Ross/Herr Wenger” and their answers must be short and explicit. If students are not asked or if they do not have anything to say, they should sit quietly and be attentive. By means of a few games, Ben and Rainer practice with their students how to behave properly and be disciplined in the classroom: “*“Discipline begins with posture. Place your hands flat across the small of your back and force your spine straight up.” Meanwhile their teacher walked down each aisle, checking the posture of each student. It was amazing, Ross thought. Somehow he’d hooked them. And even Robert...*”, (The Wave, page 37). This then raises the question of why they choose discipline as the first guiding principle. If considering Ben’s and Rainer’s attitude towards the experiment, it can be concluded that discipline is a main concept of the most successful people, it is essential for preventing chaos and disorder. Furthermore, it brings stability and it is the basis of human behaviour. If there was no discipline in our lives, everyone would behave as wanted and rules would be unnecessary. Thus, the ability for an individual to have self-discipline allows him/her to control and reassess his/her decisions and avoid disastrous results by the same token.

On the second day of the experiment, Ben and Rainer present the second guiding principle of the movement – strength through community. Discipline is crucial in order to become better. However, if a lot of individuals maintain a self-discipline and they apply them together, this makes them more powerful and stronger: “*Community is the bond between people who work and struggle together for a common goal. It’s like building a barn with your neighbours.*”, (The Wave, page 48). Wenger also introduces them with a similar opinion about how community is essential for gaining success: “*Rainer: “Macht durch Gemeinschaft. Ich würde gern die üblichen Cliques aufbrechen...alleine kommt*

man nicht durchs Leben, aber gemeinsam, da werden wir noch viel, viel stärker.”³⁵ (Die Welle, 31:00). Here it becomes clear that both of them put the collective above individuality. Their thesis is: if the students join together to form a community, they will gain a certain sense of power. And in order to strengthen the sense of community, dress-code, membership cards, symbols and salutes of The Wave are introduced. However, these elements are only reserved for The Wave members and they distinguish them from the other students, i.e. non-members.

The last leitmotiv that is introduced to students says: strength through action: *“Now that we understand Discipline and Community”, Ben told the class, ““Action is our next lesson. Ultimately, discipline and community are meaningless without action. Discipline gives you the right to action. A disciplined group with a goal can take action to achieve it. Class, do you believe in The Wave? ...Then you must take action! Never be afraid to act on what you believe. As The Wave you must act together like a well-oiled machine. Through hard work and allegiance to each other, you will learn faster and accomplish more. But only if you support one another, and only if you work together and obey the rules, can you ensure the success of The Wave.”*”, (The Wave, page 65). Even Wenger points out the importance of action: *“Rainer: “Damit kommen wir zur nächsten Stufe. Macht durch Handeln. Was nützen all die guten Ideen, wenn man auf dem Hintern sitzen bleibt und nicht danach handelt. Ich möchte, dass ihr eure ganze Kreativität der Welle zur Verfügung stellt, für die gesamte Gemeinschaft.”*”³⁶ (Die Welle, 40:15). In contrast to the novel, where the logo and salute are introduced as part of the slogan *strength through community*, in the film, these features are initiated as a main feature of strength through action. In spite of that, they finally give their students a final goal and that is to me more persuasive in their decisions and they should always act according to the maximal principles of The Wave. This common objective is intended to determine all actions in the community and guide them through their life.

All things considered, the main protagonists and initiators of the movement, Ben Ross and Rainer Wenger, suddenly discover how seductive it is to have power. This sense

³⁵ Translated from German: Rainer: *“Strength through community. I want to break up your usual cliques. You all have your friends and groups. That’s important. You can’t get your life all by yourself. But together, we are much, much stronger.”*

³⁶ Translated from German: Rainer: *“Strength through action. What’s the point of great ideas if we don’t actually do something? I want everyone to contribute to The Wave, for everyone’s sake.”*

of power makes them more and more dependent on The Wave and prevents them from stopping the experiment earlier.

Ultimately, students and their leaders have to admit that the feeling of power has led them too far. To put it more simply, they have let themselves to be seduced by the power and they have suppressed their individuality: “*“You thought you were so special! You traded your freedom for what you said was equality. But you turned your equality into superiority over non-Wave members. You accepted the group’s will over your own convictions, no matter who you had to hurt to do it...Yes, you all would have made good Nazis,” Ben told them. “You would have put on the uniforms, turned your heads, and allowed your friends and neighbours to be persecuted and destroyed. You say it could never happen again, but look how close you came.”*”, (The Wave, page 139). As has been mentioned before, the students in the film have gone through the sense of power more intensively as they have become more violent towards dissenters: “*Rainer: “Was machen wir jetzt mit dem Verräter? Sie haben ihn hochgebracht, weil ich es gesagt habe, ja? Und würdest du ihn auch töten, wenn ich es dir sage? Wir können ihn ja auch erhängen oder enthaupten, weil er sich zu unseren Regeln bekennt? So macht man nämlich in einer Diktatur. Habt ihr gemerkt, was hier gerade passiert ist? Könnt ihr euch noch erinnern, was für ´ne Frage letzte Woche im Raum stand? Ob so was wie eine Diktatur bei uns noch möglich ist? Das war genau das. Faschismus. Wir alle haben uns für was Besseres gehalten. Besser als alle anderen. Und was noch viel schlimmer ist, wir haben alle, die nicht unserer Meinung waren, aus unserer Gemeinschaft ausgeschlossen. Wir haben sie verletzt, und ich will nicht wissen, zu was wir noch alles fähig gewesen wären. Ich muss mich bei euch entschuldigen. Wir sind zu weit gegangen. Ich bin zu weit gegangen.”*”³⁷ (Die Welle, 01:33:13). Consequently, everyone is shocked because they have acted according to above mentioned guiding principles of power and thus, they have become little quasi-fascists.

³⁷ Translated from German: “*Rainer: “What should we do with the traitor?... You’ve brought him up here because I said so? Would you kill him if I said so? Should we hand him or cut his head off? Or we could torture him first, until he agrees with our rules? That’s what they do in dictatorships. Do you understand what happened here? Can you remember the question at the beginning of the week? Would a dictatorship be possible again in Germany? That’s was exactly what happened here. Fascism. We thought we were special. Better than the rest. And what’s worse, we excluded others who didn’t agree with us. We hurt them...I don’t want to think what we might have been capable of. I owe you all an apology. We went too far. I went too far.”*”

Wave of Changes

When Ross and Wenger introduce *The Wave*, it completely changes the social structure of the school. Until then, there was a clearly defined hierarchy that excluded some students and made the other students very popular among classmates.

As has been mentioned and described in previous sections, Laurie Saunders (novel) and Karo (film) are considered as two of the most popular girls in school until the experiment is launched. In the following lines, we will provide quotes from the novel and the film, where a quarrel comes between two best friends: “*Lisa: “Don’t you know that half of the parents in school say to their kids, ‘Why can’t you be like Laurie Saunders’? Come on Laurie, the only reason you’re against *The Wave* is because it means you’re not a princess anymore”*”, (*The Wave*, page 106). “*Karo, du bist nur sauer, weil wir heute Morgen nicht deinen Vorschlag genommen haben. Merkst du nicht, wie du allen auf die Nerven gehst, mit deiner bestimmenden Art? Hast du dir vielleicht mal Gedanken darüber gemacht, dass Marco gar keinen Bock hat, dir nach Spanien hinterher zu ziehen. Aber es geht ja sowieso immer nur um dich...*”³⁸ (*Die Welle*, 46:50).

We have already expressed thoughts about characters Robert Billings and Tim Stoltefuss who experience the biggest change through the experiment. Both of them were school outsiders who did not have any friends. Though, it changes when Ross and Wenger introduce them with the community feeling and once, they become part of the group: “Brad patted Robert on his back. “*Hey, I’m glad you joined us,*” he said” (*The Welle*, page 70). In the film, we can see the situation when Tim is being harassed by two anarchists and when his classmates Sinan and Bomber notice it, they come in order to protect Tim: “*Du darfst dich von den Assis nicht immer so rumschubsen lassen. Tim, ich geb’ dir mal meine Nummer, ja. Wenn die Stricher wieder Ärger machen, dann rufst du mich an. Okay?*” (*Die Welle*, 41:11). The similar happens to Amy and Lisa who, in contrast to Robert and Tim, are not in the same position. However, they are less popular, do not have boyfriends as their best friends and have less self-confidence by the same token.

³⁸ Translated from German: “*Lisa: I know why you are angry. Just because we voted against your suggestion when choosing the name of the movement. Can’t you see that you irritate everybody in the class. Have you ever thought about why Marco doesn’t want to go to Spain with you...it’s all about you.*”

Most importantly, the social status does not depend on popularity anymore but on the fact whether a student is a member of The Wave or not. And although all members are equal to each other, they gradually distance themselves from the students who do not want to join. Non-members become a minority excluded from events: *“You mean, I can’t go up into the stands unless I give The Wave salute? Laurie asked. Brad looked around sheepishly. “Well, that’s what they decide, Laurie.”*, (The Wave, page 101). The same happens to Karo and Mona who are not allowed to enter the hall because they do not wear white t-shirts: *Bomber: “Ich kann euch so nicht reinlassen. Holt euch ein Welle-Hemd. Draußen sind noch welche.”* (Die Welle, 1:19:27).

Although Ben Ross and Rainer Wenger are popular among students from the very beginning, they gain more respect with the help of The Wave. Suddenly, they become role models in school and they even get their own bodyguard. In other words, everything they say and propose is commonly accepted. Additionally, not only does the relationship with their students change, but also does the one with their wives. Since Christy and Anke teach at Gordon High School, they also experience the movement up close. At the beginning, they express their concerns about The Wave and they become more and more sceptical as the experiment progresses, and they require from their husbands to end it.

It is obvious that The Wave changes not only the situation within the school, but also the private lives of characters. As has been noted, a strong disagreement occurs between Ben and Wenger and their wives, Laurie and David, i.e. Karo and Marco split, Robert and Tim are not outsiders anymore, and Amy and Lisa do not stand in a shadow of their best friends and improve their status in the community. Yet, in contrast to the other characters, the personality of Laurie and Karo evolves and they become more psychically stronger. On the contrary, the other Wave supporters such as Ben/Wenger, Amy/Lisa and Robert/Tim lose themselves in the vertigo of the movement.

Freedom of Speech

The first chapter of the novel begins in the publications office of the school paper “The Grapevine” at Gordon High School, whose editor-in-chief is Laurie Saunders. This is an opportunity for students to express their opinion freely. It can be said that the central theme of the novel has already been shown at the beginning. Freedom of speech hovers over characters within the novel and often leads to conflicts between The Wave supporters

and critical voices against the movement. Thus, freedom of expression is of enormous importance for the entire novel. The incompatibility of free opinion and collective coercion is well elaborated by Todd Strasser.

This may be taken as the leitmotiv to a certain extent since the narrator always returns to the publications office whenever freedom of expression is in danger or a conflict threatens to escalate. The Wave movement definitely restricts this fundamental right and it is Ben Ross who seriously endangers freedom of expression by pointing out that being part of the community is more important than being an individual.

The Wave becomes more and more radical in time and members start behaving aggressively. This encourages the newspaper writers to raise their voice against the movement. This is the reason why Laurie constantly spends a lot of time in the publication office, where she also finds an anonymous letter containing negative experiences of a younger, non- The Wave member: “...*He said pretty soon people in The Wave wouldn't want to be friends with people who weren't in it. He even said I'd lose all my friends if I didn't join...I saw the senior from Mr Ross's class in the hall and he asked if I had joined yet. I told him I didn't intend to. He said if I didn't join, it would be too late.*” (The Wave, pages 86 and 87).

Consequently, Laurie decides to print both the anonymous letter and the report on the student who has been beaten up by The Wave members as well as critical opinions of parents and teachers (The Wave, page 107). The main part, however, is her cover story in which she bluntly expresses her thoughts and doubts about The Wave. She considers The Wave to be an incredibly dangerous movement and she even criticizes the suppression of freedom of expression and the movement's totalitarian character. While reading this, a complete disaster of the movement can be literally felt: *Copies of The Grapevine had never been scooped up faster than they were that day. The school was abuzz with the news. Very few kids had heard about the sophomore who was beaten up, and of course no one had heard the story by the anonymous junior before. But as soon as those stories appeared in the paper, other stories began to circulate.*” (The Wave, page 107).

Although freedom of speech is also presented in the film *Die Welle*, it is not put in the foreground if compared to the novel. In the movie, it comes, however, to violence against those who do not belong to the movement and they express their experiences

anonymously on The Wave internet forum: “Marco: “Was hast du eigentlich gegen die Welle?”, Karo: “Mensch, Marco. Mach doch mal die Augen auf! Die Welle entwickelt sich zu einer echt komischen Sache. Hier. ‘Gestern hat mich so ein Typ im weißen Hemd von der Seite angemacht, von wegen, wenn ich nicht der Welle beitrete, werde ich alle meine Freunde verlieren, denn bald würden alle dazugehören. Ich sagte einfach bloß, ich will es mir überlegen. Und er voll aggressiv, wenn es dann mal nicht zu spät ist.’”³⁹ (Die Welle, 01:03:20). Equally important, Karo prints papers aimed at pointing to negative sides that the movement brings and scatters them across the school alleys.

Yet, freedom of speech proves to be superior to the totalitarian movement, irrespective of the attempts of The Wave members to eliminate all critical voices. Both Karo and Laurie Saunders coupled with the other non-members advocate the interests of an individual rather than the interests of the group.

Acceptance

As mentioned, The Wave has finally given the school’s outsiders the attention and recognition they longed for. Above all, the characters Robert Billings and Tim Stoltefuss make a considerable change as the members of The Wave. From a forever-loser status and being avoided by their classmates, they blossom into the active members of the group and are suddenly accepted and even appreciated unconditionally by all members⁴⁰. “At lunch that day all The Wave members who were in the cafeteria sat at a single long table. Brian, Brad, Amy, Laurie, and David were there. At first Robert Billings seemed tentative about joining them, but when David saw him, he insisted he sit at the table, telling him they were all part of The Wave crew.”, (The Wave, page 68).

Amy and Lisa experience a similar change as well, who, unlike Robert and Tim, do not belong to a group of outsiders and they have a circle of friends. Membership and activity within the movement, however, bring them higher self-esteem and their best friends’ boyfriends attention they have always strived for. Just as Robert and Tim, they feel relieved by the ideology of equality and hence, both of them step out of their

³⁹ Translated from German: “Marco: “What do you have against The Wave?, Karo: “Ah, Marco. Open your eyes! The Wave has become something weird. Look! ‘Yesterday a guy in a white shirt hassled me. If I don’t become the member of The Wave, I will lose all my friends. I said I would think about it and he got angry saying it might be too late.’”

⁴⁰ For more information about Robert Billings and Tim Stoltefuss see the section *Characters*.

insecurity and live the way they want to. They are dazzled by their newfound feeling of freedom and turn the blind eye to any possible abuses.

But if at any price for some reason (popularity, desire to attract attention, interest, etc.) someone wants to be accepted by a group and in that reason, that individual starts changing everything about himself/herself, for example, wearing different clothes, listening to specific music genre, choosing a new way of entertainment and even different behaviour. This is a classic issue for many teenagers because the pressure of the environment can be tremendously strong.

Altogether, above-mentioned characters crave acceptance because it makes them feel like they belong. Rarely are those who do not care if they have their circle of friends and who do not care whether they will be accepted in a group. This problem bothers teenagers most and the need for belonging to a group is extremely noticed in the teenage years when adolescents seek for peers with which they are going to have parties, watch movies, etc. When somebody is not accepted, as we can see in the case of Robert and Tim prior to the experiment, that person tries to modify himself/herself in order to change it. This need for acceptance is a powerful tool for higher self-respect. Feeling as an outsider is emotionally devastating at any age and in any environment. Thus, it is essential to build your own self-confidence, because if you have built-up attitudes and opinions, it will be much easier for you to take on yourself in groups. Such people will never get into the situation where they will be imposed or subjugated by the leader. Unfortunately, Robert, Tim, Amy and Lisa do not have that personality trait and thus, they are easily manipulated.

Symbols in The Wave

In order to define The Wave as the movement, Ben Ross comes up with some symbols. Firstly, he introduces the wave sign, and the image of the wave gives its name not only to the movement but also to the novel. In his opinion, the wave unites power, movement and direction: *“He turned back to the board and drew a circle with the outline of a wave inside it. “This will be our symbol. A wave is a pattern of change. It has movement, direction, and impact. From now on, our community, our movement will be known as The Wave.””* (The Wave, page 49). In the film, Marco proposes the name “Die Welle” and it is through voting supported by the majority of the group (Die Welle, 38:40) and Bomber makes up the salute (Die Welle, 57:16). The Wave symbol stands for the

most powerful natural forces. When we look into the sea, as each wave dynamically rises and reaches its zenith, it brings new changes and opportunities. The first movement of the wave conditions all the other waves, and together they become stronger and all that ends in the explosion of power when they reach an obstacle, when the wave crashes on the rocks. Just as in nature, it can be applied to the human process, i.e. Ross and Wenger are the main waves that encourage the other minor waves – students, and together they become more powerful and influential, they are opposed to all forces and their echo becomes enormous, until they reach their obstacles. If the wave comes to someone, it is hard to resist because it is simply too powerful.

Beside logos and salutes, membership cards and the dress-code are introduced as compulsory criteria as well. Some students, who have a red cross on the back of their membership-cards, are obliged to notify Ben Ross if somebody does not follow the rules of *The Wave* (*The Wave*, page 64). The similar situation can be noticed in the film as well, when Karo and Mona are dismissed because of not wearing uniforms.

All these symbols, membership cards, uniforms, logos and salutes remind us of Nazi Germany. They have been created as a kind of mass propaganda that reinforces the fascination that *The Wave* has for some students.

Economic Issues in the 1980s

The historical background has already been elaborated at the beginning of this master thesis. The main political circumstances that have been mentioned are Nazism in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, the Vietnam War and racial issues in the 1960s. In other words, Professor Ron Jones, who was the first founder of *The Wave* movement, took the above-mentioned events as an essential starting point for the implementation of his experiment.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to mention the 1980s which were known for a major recession in the world. The USA also suffered a recession and the rate of massive inflation and unemployment were very high at that time. Federal funds rate increased and because of that, families could hardly obtain credit for home loans and cars. All of this led the American economy and therewith American auto industry falling sharply. A lot of unions

organized “Buy American” campaigns which slightly improved the situation for Chrysler and American Motors, who were near bankruptcy.

These economic issues from the 1980s are of great importance for a better understanding of the novel. Namely, when Ben Ross decides to end the experiment, he does it by informing them about a rally in an auditorium. He mentions the following reasons for the rally: *“The Wave is not just a classroom experiment. It’s much, much more than that...as you know, this country has just gone through a decade in which steady double-digit inflation has severely weakened the economy. Unemployment has run chronically high, and the crime rate has been worse than any time in memory. Never before has the morale of the United States been so low. Unless this trend is stopped, a growing number of people, including the founder of The Wave, believe that our country is doomed. We must prove that through discipline, community, and action we can turn this country around. Look what we have accomplished in this school alone in just a few days. If we can change things here, we can change things everywhere.”* (The Wave, page 129). The period they live in is realistically portrayed thereby. Through the character of Ben Ross, Todd Strasser expresses his own dissatisfaction with the situation in the USA just as Ron Jones and Dennis Gansel have done. Thus, it can be concluded that The Wave is not a question of a particular historical period or past, but something that can be incorporated into any contemporary situation.

Liberal vs. Authoritative Environment

In order to understand the novel “The Wave” as well as the movie “Die Welle”, it is important to consider the late 1960s in the USA. These times were marked by strong counter-cultures, which manifested in protests against the Vietnam War and in strong racial discrimination. The student movements, the Woodstock Festival and the “hippie” culture shaped that historical period, the slogan “make love, not war” became the guiding principle of a whole generation.

All of this had social and political aims in the background, i.e. they wanted the democratization of society and education as well as to make a more peaceful and tolerant world. Alternative life-styles and educational ideals were tested, many young people founded communities and experimented with different forms of relationships and sexuality. Not only were the monogamous relationships and the private property of an

individual questioned more and more but also obsolete methods of education and the submissive role of the woman as a housewife and mother.

Thus, a new ideal was created: the anti-authoritarian bringing up, which should allow the child to develop his/her personality freely, without violence and oppression. This led to the opinion that children should learn from their own experiences and critically question every issue they encounter. These models of education were also adopted by the American school system and suddenly, students were no longer taught to learn things by heart. In other words, teaching methods were more pedagogical and useful, and experiments were often used by teachers in public schools.

The real experiment performed by Ron Jones in 1967 can be put in this context. Jones founded the experiment to illustrate the power of the Nazis. Not only was his aim to teach students about historical facts but also to make the situation from the 1930s and 1940s more comprehensible.

These social and educational alternative ideas were not only present in the USA but also in Europe. The phenomenon of changes sprouted up in some European countries and it resulted in a fundamental restructuring of the education system.

We mention this all with the aim of highlighting the contrast between those alternative ideas and the nature of The Wave experiment. As mentioned above, the 1960s were times when people, especially younger generations, experimented with their sexual orientation and life-style and promoted freedom of choice. Ron Jones was one of the teachers who encouraged some different ways of teaching and working with students and that was the reason why he decided to make the experiment. However, the main concept of the liberal atmosphere was not present in Jones's experiment nor was it in Ross's and Wenger's.

This contrast liberal vs. authoritative is mostly visible in the movie *Die Welle*. The environment in which the students Karo, Marco, Sinan, Kevin etc. grow up has been already mentioned. It is the 21st century and students go to school with their expensive cars, go out and have licentious parties, smoke marijuana and experiment with other drugs. While watching the movie, it can be felt that parental control over children is absent. One of the examples are Karo's parents, who are anti-authoritarian and they practice liberal democracy, i.e. they are open about drinks, drugs and sex when raising their children.

According to their opinion, an authoritarian education is more prone to restrict a child's future and experience: "*Karo's mother: "Macht durch Disziplin! – Karo, Süße, ich weiß nicht...So haben wir dich nicht erzogen... Dein Bruder soll seine Grenzen selbst erfahren."*"⁴¹ (Die Welle, 22:55). And although students are growing up in the liberal milieu in the 21st century, it is interesting that the vast majority of them become part of the movement whose fundamental ideas are authority, discipline and restriction.

Suburbia as an Ideal Place for Living?

At the beginning of this master thesis, it was mentioned that The Third Wave experiment began in a small town Palo Alto, California, whose population reached only 52, 287 inhabitants in the 1960s. Much of Palo Alto's housing stock is still in the style of mid-century middle-class suburbia, with highly-rated public schools, high quality of life, numerous parks, open space reserves and a vibrant downtown area. Distinctive in every way, Palo Alto offers its business community a diverse and exciting environment in which to work and live.⁴² And in the period of the experiment, Palo Alto was the heart of Silicon Valley, a lot of research institutions and high-tech companies were there. Moreover, most families in Palo Alto belonged to the middle or upper middle class. Even if we do not put this small town in the context of the USA, which is famous for large and overcrowded cities and metropolises, but we isolate it as a small place and associate words such as family, home, peace, happiness, comfort and well-being with it.

However, while reading American novels such as "Rebecca" (1938), "Dracula" (1897), "The Haunting of Hill House" (1959), "The Stepford Wives" (1972) or watching various American films such as "Jaws" (1975), "Carrie" (1976), "Halloween" (1978), "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" (2003), "Lake Placid" (1999), series, for instance, "Stranger Things" (2016-), which is the most watched series at the moment, we can notice that the setting of these horror/thriller stories takes places in small places in the US, rather than in big cities like New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles and so on. For protagonists

⁴¹ Translated from German: "*Karo's mother: "Strengt through discipline! – Karo, honey, that's not how we raised you."* Karo: "*Maybe you should have use a bit of discipline when talking about Leon.*" Mother: "*He has to learn his own limits.*"

⁴² See more on https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/visiting/about_palo_alto.asp (last seen on the 18th of June 2019)

in such stories, the isolation of being in a small town creates a hopeless feeling and for readers and viewers, novels and movies may be more thrilling.

Neither in the novel nor in the film do the writer and the director mention the name of the town where the setting takes place. We can assume that it is an American, i.e. German town that perfectly illustrates Palo Alto, the synonym of family life, peaceful environment, freedom and a slower pace of life. Professors Rainer Wenger and Ben Ross live in small towns with their wives, have dream jobs and are favourite among their students. These are the students who are raised in a liberal environment and they spend their free time by playing various sports, writing articles for school magazines, preparing performances and playing in the school theatre, and spending their evenings in the company of their peers without any restrictions.

Finally, the story that happened in Palo Alto in 1967 as well as the story in the novel and the film cannot completely fit into the small town horror stories. Still, we can say that those small places are not always as idyllic as they look at first. It is also crucial to note that, apart from this experiment, above-mentioned books and films are based on true stories. Thus, this raises the question, which can be a challenging idea for future researches: How come that these tragic and awkward stories happen mostly in small towns that give us a completely different picture about themselves?

History Repeats Itself

It has been noted that the starting idea of *The Wave* moment begins with the question “Is it possible that fascism happens again?” In order to determine whether *The Wave* has elements of the fascist movement, it is crucial to examine real characteristics of fascism.

Fascist movements are characterized by the imposition of their own interests, a strict hierarchy, complete control over the state and society as well as a unified community feeling. Furthermore, it lacks democracy, dissenters and minorities are consistently marginalized and the members of fascist movements are known for violence and aggressiveness, the political persuasion is also done by means of combat, propaganda and, if necessary, violence. The political opponents are intentionally intimidated, eliminated and put under surveillance.

And although Ben Ross and Rainer Wenger do not have any political goals by introducing the movement, parallels can be drawn to the fascist movement. The first fascist feature that should be mentioned is the principle of hierarchy, i.e. Ben Ross and Rainer Wenger are initiators and leaders of The Wave. They give orders and students obey them without questioning them. In the course of the novel, however, this dynamic changes because a lot of things happen without Ben's and Rainer's permission.

In terms of fascist propaganda, some new characteristics emulate: The Wave symbol, slogans, uniforms, salute and membership cards. All those are meant to highlight and symbolize a fascist character. Most striking are, however, the beliefs *strength through discipline*, *strength through community* and *strength through action* and these are intended to convey an ideology and imitate fascist consciousness. Students must repeat these slogans and act on them several times a day.

The Wave movement spreads very fast mainly because all members are urged to recruit new followers. Due to the fact that all individuals subordinate themselves to the group, it gains more and more power. This feeling of power results in the belief that one can and should act against everything that opposes The Wave. In an anonymous letter that Laurie finds in the novel, and Karo on the Internet forum in the film, it becomes clear: the students who do not want to join The Wave are harassed by active members who apply violence in order to change their opinion. They have an increased potential for verbal and physical violence, and for this reason, both Laurie and Karo become victims because they write against the movement and organize protests. Just as in the Nazi state, The Wave members are brainwashed and the sense of community becomes so dominant that anyone, who does anything against it, is considered as a traitor and a potential danger. The Wave members organize meetings with flags, posters and slogans as well, where non-members are not allowed to be.

Even though Ben Ross and Rainer Wenger have positive goals with the experiment, and that is to make some historical events more understandable, it can be stated that they created a kind of fascist movement, which is, from a moral point of view, extremely questionable. Thus, they do not even recognize that their experiments are out of control and learn a painful lesson, especially Rainer Wenger, whose student commits suicide. An Irish polemicist and political activist George Bernard Shaw says: "If history repeats itself, and the unexpected always happens, how incapable must Man be of learning

from experience”. Although the phrase *history repeats itself* has become cliché and somewhat catchy, it is hard to disagree with it. History has shaped specific patterns that, if not taken seriously, are blindly followed without questioning. All above mentioned circumstances that occur during the experiment have answered Rainer’s and Ben’s question from the beginning of the story – fascism is still possible. The 20th century was considered to be as the period when two world wars happen and a lot of atrocities committed by the same token. Even after the end of the Third Reich, when people are blinded by mass propaganda, they are ready to marginalize the other people and establish themselves as rulers. Furthermore, we have witnessed the fall of democracy in the world and huge growth of conservative societies and countries in the last several years. All things considered, The Wave experiment warns us that such historical events must not be forgotten: “*All I can add is, I hope this is a lesson we’ll all share for the rest of our lives. If we’re smart, we won’t dare to forget.*” (The Wave, page 140).

Novel and Film Comparison

Throughout this master thesis, we have already mentioned and elaborated the most crucial differences between the novel and the film. Similarities and differences between the most important characters are elaborated in the section *Analysis of Characters*. Moreover, the section *Main Ideas and their Interpretation* also analyses these differences and similarities. Based on the above-mentioned analysis, it can be concluded that some differences can be found when comparing the novel by Todd Strasser and the film by Dennis Gansel. However, in the following paragraphs, we will briefly mention other differences worth noticing.

As mentioned, Ben Ross is a history teacher in an American high school and the topic of the Second World War is inevitable. Therefore, the starting point of his movement is in the subject matter he teaches and the documentary about the Holocaust, which triggers his students emotionally, inspires him to create the experiment. Ben’s history lesson becomes an autocracy project week under the guidance of Professor Rainer Wenger, who trains water-polo in a school. However, both Wenger and Ross come up with the idea for the experiment as they note how students respond to their comments on autocratic systems. Therefore, Wenger’s experiment is voluntary, which means that

students can choose the topic they are interested in and change the project course if wanted. When choosing the movement's leader as well as the name and the salute, the students in the film vote democratically in contrast to the novel, where Ben Ross proclaims himself as the leader of The Wave, and he even designates its name and salute.

Regarding characters, we have mentioned that Karo embodies Laurie Smith in the novel and both of them are popular and model students. Karo's boyfriend is called Marco and he plays water polo, while Amy's boyfriend David plays football for a high school team. In contrast to water polo, the football team plays an important role in the novel. Amy from the novel is replaced by a more insecure Lisa, they are the main protagonist's best friends and less popular than Laurie, i.e. Karo. Tim Stoltefuss, the class outsider, embodies Robert Billings and they are mocked by their classmates.

Different from the novel, Karo has a younger brother Leon, who is known for bad manners. Their liberal parents have different preferred methods of raising Karo and Leon. In other words, they do not give them too many restrictions and they are allowed to make their own choices: *““Unheimlich“, das ist genau der richtige Ausdruck. Macht durch Disziplin! – Karo, Süße, ich weiß nicht...So haben wir dich nicht erzogen.”*⁴³ (Die Welle, 22:55). This is the reason why Karo's boyfriend Marco gets along very well with her family. Laurie's parents are anti-authoritarian as well and they do not like the idea of The Wave: *“I don't think I like it Laurie. It sounds too militaristic to me...People have to do things in their own way...Babe, we've raised you to be an individual.”* (The Wave, page 56).

As The Wave progresses at the beginning, only Laurie revolts against it in the novel, while Karo and a girl named Mona protest together against de-individualization and authoritarian rules in the film. Mona supports Karo in her revolt organizations and Mona's character does not appear in the book.

Student Sinan in the film is also one of the characters who cannot be found in the book. He is extremely talented and he designs The Wave logo and even proposes wearing uniforms (blue jeans and white shirts), while Marco proposes the name for the movement. In the book, all of these elements are proposed by Professor Ben Ross. It is also important to mention Kevin, the student who is considered as a rebel at the beginning of the

⁴³ Translated from German: *“Bizzare is a right word for it. Power through discipline! – Karo, honey, that's not how we raised you.”*

experiment and he leaves Wenger's lecture. However, when he realizes that the movement is getting more and more popular, he joins it. His character cannot be found in the novel.

Furthermore, the anonymous letter, which is a real-eye-opener to Laurie, is replaced by an anonymous post on the Internet. Besides, The Wave members literally step into the movement, get into a fight with the Anarchists and spray the street walls with their own logo. Tim gradually loses control, becomes Wenger's bodyguard, buys a gun and enjoys the protection of the group, while Robert's transmission is not that drastically presented in the book.

Karo's boyfriend Marco is increasingly annoyed by her behaviour. He cheats on her at the beach party with her best friend Lisa. During their fight over The Wave, Marco hits her and bleeds her lip, while David "only" throws Laurie down on the ground. After this, Marco and Karo do not reconcile, which also represents a difference when compared to the novel. Instead, Marco goes alone to Wenger's house to tell him about the bad consequences that The Wave has on its members. However, both couples get back together and comfort each other at the end of the story.

Wenger and Ross organize a gathering of all members and they give a speech about The Wave movement. When Marco tells Wenger that he has gone crazy, everybody calls him a traitor and Wenger asks the other students to bring him on the stage. Of course, a few members do it as Wenger says. This part with Marco, i.e. David is not mentioned in the novel. However, both Wenger and Ross make it clear that they behave exactly like a totalitarian movement and that it needs to be stopped, what shocks and even disappoints students. Consequently, class losers Tim and Robert feel the anger and despair and in contrast to Robert, Tim takes the gun and shoots his classmate, and finally, he commits suicide by shooting himself in his mouth.

The last scenes of the film represent how traumatized the students are after Tim shoots himself. Professor Wenger is shocked as well and taken by the police. It is obvious that all of these scenes are not present in the novel as it does not end with a tragic outcome.

The Wave and its Implementation in German High Schools

National Socialism in High Schools

The era of National Socialism ended more than 70 years ago. However, there are a lot of arguments to deal with this topic even in the present and the future. The lessons are many and the changes are vast. The Nazi atrocities against millions of people put a burden on German post-war society. One of the ways to deal with it is to become aware of the historical responsibility, to accept it and to learn from it. It is important that we understand the causes and consequences of the Second World War. Through this knowledge, a profound confrontation with the ideology, their followers and events can be introduced and students could experience and understand it.

The school is the place where young people should be taught how to become responsible citizens. Historical responsibilities also belong to this life responsibility because it is crucial to learn from history and to prevent such events in the future. For this purpose, young generations need to understand that the ideology of National Socialism is unfortunately still possible today and it only waits for its supporters to act.

Nonhuman ideologies such as racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia or homophobia, which were part of National Socialism, are still a problem for society today. And although these ideologies have somewhat changed, they have not become less dangerous. Thus, even after the Second World War, a lot of people have been victims to this hatred.

The goal is to make these historical structures more visible even today. It is crucial that students think about their own environment and critically question in what spheres of life are people discriminated. Moreover, students should be enabled to engage with obedience, authority and peer pressure and to think about the benefits and dangers of such mechanisms. This dispute can take place at different levels with different age groups. Connections to maturity and freedom of expression can be drawn here as well so that the topic can be embedded in many different ways.

The Wave in High Schools

The topic “Nationalsozialismus” plays an important role in German high schools and pupils learn and read about it in various grades. Nevertheless, the atrocities made by the Nazis in the Second World War seem unrealistic for younger generations as the time

goes by. For many of them, the Holocaust and the horrors of this war are no more than one of numerous chapters in the history books.

Thus, the novel and the film “Die Welle” offer the opportunity to break the ice and to change these ways of thinking, in other words, the students should understand the meaning and consequences of the National Socialism.

Both the film and the novel can be implemented in the lesson and a variety of methods can be used. The novel and the film are suitable for teenagers. They allow students to learn the basics of fascism in a modern context. To put it more simply, the students apply this history in their own class and thus, they make it easier to build connections with the past. A big advantage of “The Wave” is that a hard-understandable content like obedience and ideology are implicitly demonstrated without being theoretically defined.

Furthermore, the implementation of the novel and the film in the classroom opens a lot of other methodical possibilities as well. They give a detailed view of each character and his/her change through the novel. This offers the basis for the development of reading skills, creative writing as well as the acquisition of interpreting competences.

All things considered, the novel and the film form an ideal basis for a media-oriented teaching and interdisciplinary subjects to achieve a deep and long-term understanding of the topic.

As has been mentioned before, Todd Strasser’s novel “The Wave” has found its place among recommended reading books in German high schools and it is very popular with young people. It is important to emphasize that there is not required reading in Germany and that all books are recommended depending on age and grade. Therefore, the novel “The Wave” can be found among other well-known world books and writers such as *Crime and Punishment* (Fyodor Dostoyevsky), *Hamlet* (William Shakespeare) *The Metamorphosis* (Franz Kafka), etc. In addition, the list of recommended reading books differs depending on the federal state in Germany. Therefore, this novel has been

listed in the following federal states: Sachsen⁴⁴, Baden-Württemberg⁴⁵, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Sachsen-Anhalt⁴⁶, Brandenburg and the city of Berlin⁴⁷. The novel cannot be found among recommended reading books in Bayern, Thüringen, Niedersachsen, Bremen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Schleswig-Holstein and Hessen. Furthermore, the following federal states do not provide any information about recommended reading: Saarland, Rheinland-Pfalz and the city of Hamburg. Despite missing information about recommended reading in certain German federal states, it does not mean that “The Wave” is not being read by scholars and teachers in these federal states of Germany. A German educational publishing company Cornelsen Verlag offers the lesson plan materials for the novel “The Wave”, which is, however, available only to teaching staff in Germany and it is written on the official site that it can be applied in each German federal state.⁴⁸ And although we have mentioned above that this book cannot be found among recommended reading in Thüringen, it is interesting to mention that the students of the tenth grade of Osterlandgymnasium (Thüringen) made the play “Die Welle” in 2015, which was based on the novel written by Todd Strasser.⁴⁹

Lesson Plan

It has been mentioned that Cornelsen Verlag offers a teacher’s book with working materials, which can be only purchased through an official teacher’s account. On the internet, there are, however, plenty of lesson plans and ideas how to adapt “The Wave” in the classroom. Goethe Institut Brussels has published the working materials for the

⁴⁴ See more on https://www.schule.sachsen.de/lpdb/web/downloads/ms_deutsch_lektuereempfehlungen.pdf?v2 (last seen on the 4th of September 2019)

⁴⁵ See more on <https://www.schule-bw.de/faecher-und-schularten/sprachen-und-literatur/deutsch/unterrichtseinheiten/prosa/jugendbuch-mittelstufe> (last seen on the 4th September 2019)

⁴⁶ See more on https://www.bildung-lsa.de/pool/RRL_Lehrplaene/Erprobung/Gymnasium/Deu_Lektuere_090215_LT.pdf (last seen on the 4th September 2019)

⁴⁷ See more on https://bildungsserver.berlin-brandenburg.de/fileadmin/bbb/unterricht/fachbriefe_berlin/deutsch/Fachbrief_Deutsch_23.pdf (last seen on the 4th September 2019)

⁴⁸ For more information, see <https://www.cornelsen.de/produkte/deutschbuch-ideen-zur-jugendliteratur-die-welle-empfohlen-fuer-das-9-10-schuljahr-kopiervorlagen-9783060613243> (last seen on August 25, 2019)

⁴⁹ See more on <http://olgy-gera.blogspot.com/2015/06/> (last seen on August 25, 2019)

movie “Die Welle”.⁵⁰ Österreich Institut has offered a lesson plan for those who learn German as a second language.⁵¹ Other interesting ideas and materials are issued by German War Graves Commission⁵² (Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e. V.), Hueber Verlag⁵³, online portal Kinofenster.de⁵⁴, which is the project of Federal Agency for Civic Education in Germany, etc.

In this section, I will present the lesson plan offered by the Youth Foundation (in German *Jugendstiftung*) from the federal state Baden-Württemberg. The task of the Youth Foundation is to point out pioneering ways in the area of youth education, to test them and to follow and support the ideas and plans of young people. The lesson plan suggestion has been written by Wolfgang Antes, the managing director of Jugendstiftung Baden-Württemberg.⁵⁵ He published it with the title „Die Sehnsucht nach Geborgenheit – wie totalitäre Gruppen wirken. Die Welle – vom Sozial-Experiment zum Klassiker“ and he puts focus on the implementation of a German movie “Die Welle“.

He envisions it as a one-week seminar or project and he indicates that the estimated time for this is 225 minutes, which is five school lessons (5x45).

The movie and book are suitable for the eighth and ninth grade in Germany and can serve as an implementation of the following topics in the classroom: radicalisation, seduction and voluntary disenfranchisement, but also to make aware of problems of group formation, group dynamics and one’s position.⁵⁶

Furthermore, this lesson plan may be used in Croatian high schools when teaching German as the first language in the fourth grade (the eighth and ninth year of learning).

⁵⁰ See more on https://www.goethe.de/resources/files/pdf72/Die_Welle.pdf (last seen on the 1st of September, 2019)

⁵¹ See more on https://is.muni.cz/el/1441/podzim2010/NJ2BP_3JCV/um/17707590/18458464/19123535/Die_Welle-27.05.09.pdf (last seen on the 1st of September, 2019)

⁵² See more on https://www.ibs-lommel.de/fileadmin/redaktion/JBS_Lommel/333_Angebot/Downloads/Projektmappe_Die_Welle_deutsch_final.pdf (last seen on the 1st of September, 2019)

⁵³ See more on <https://www.hueber.de/media/36/zl-C1-filmdidakt-die-welle-gansel.pdf> (last seen on the 1st of September 2019)

⁵⁴ See more on https://www.kinofenster.de/filme/archiv-film-des-monats/kf0803/unterrichtsvorschlaege_und_aufgaben_0803/ (last seen on the 1st of September 2019)

⁵⁵ Wolfgang Antes, born in 1960, studied Social Pedagogy and Journalism in Stuttgart.

⁵⁶ See more on <https://www.schule-bw.de/faecher-und-schularten/sprachen-und-literatur/deutsch/unterrichtseinheiten/prosa/jugendbuch-mittelstufe/rhue> (last seen on the 4th of September 2019)

This lesson plan is in line with some of the guidelines of the National Curriculum compiled for Croatian schools.⁵⁷ I will mention some of them which, in my opinion, might be of great significance.

- Listening skills:
 - Giving different information from auditory texts, in this case, it is the movie which students watch.
 - Understanding of speech with various impediments: natural pace of speech, language variants peculiar to individual groups (in the movie, we have the example of language among teenagers in high school).
- Speaking skills:
 - Linguistic expression of personal experiences, opinions and ideas
 - Simple argumentation using appropriate language expressions
- Writing skills:
 - Writing a short personal opinions/essays/commentary
 - With the help of guidance questions, to make a simple text analysis
- German Culture and Civilization:
 - Relations in society and the war
- Communication:
 - Developing skills that have been practiced in previous classes
 - Conducting debates with the pros and cons
 - Defending personal opinions, agreeing and disagreeing at a higher level of language skills
- Grammar:
 - Revision

Notably, another reason why I think this movie might be ideal for the fourth grade in Croatian high schools is because pupils learn about the Second World War, its causes and consequences in detail. This proposes the National Curriculum for history lessons in Croatian high schools.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ See more on page 12 on http://dokumenti.ncvvo.hr/Nastavni_plan/gimnazije/strani_jezici/1-strani.pdf (last seen on the 4th of September 2019)

⁵⁸ See more on page 12 on http://dokumenti.ncvvo.hr/Nastavni_plan/gimnazije/obvezni/povijest.pdf (last seen on the 4th of September, 2019)

In the film, very modern, youthful and authentic German is spoken. This is indeed positive in itself, but makes the understanding a little more difficult in some cases. Pictures, characters and the plot of the film are presented very clearly and even weaker learners can follow the film well. Still, the subtitles should not be omitted as they are of great help to them.

The author has not set learning objectives, i.e. a detailed description of what students will be able to do upon completing a seminar. Analysing this lesson plan, four main learning objectives can be concluded and these are:

- 1) Understanding how authoritarian system comes into existence and attracts a group of people
- 2) Development of critical thinking skills and views of both historical and current events
- 3) Encouraging students to express personal attitude towards certain aspects of dictatorship that happened in the past and are possible nowadays
- 4) Fostering teamwork as well as creativity and brainstorming ideas.

Introduction

(15 minutes) The introduction must be adapted to the group situation and the actual course of the seminar. It would be good to introduce the students with the topic, inform them about some advantages and disadvantages of being part of a particular group. It has been suggested as well to tell the students what kind of exercises they will do during the seminar and to tell those who have already watched the movie not to reveal the end of it.

Since students are already familiar with the topic of World War II, which has been already mentioned in the eighth grade according to the National Curriculum and analysed in the fourth grade in detail, it would be good to ask students several questions about the war. For instance:

- *Wie viele Jahre dauerte der Zweite Weltkrieg? (Der Zweite Weltkrieg dauerte sechs Jahre – von 1939 bis 1945).*

- *Wie begann der Zweite Weltkrieg? (Mit dem deutschen Überfall auf Polen; Deutschland hat Polen überfallen).*
- *Welche Themen verbindet ihr mit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg? (Diktatur, Nazismus, Ideologie, Macht, Angst, Extremismus)*

I suggest writing some new words which students might need when answering these questions. These are: *der Überfall, jemanden überfallen, Macht, ...*

As one of the main topics of the movie is being a part of particular groups, it would be good to ask students what they think about that, i.e. its advantages and disadvantages and write their suggestions on the blackboard.

- *Was sind die Vorteile und Nachteile der Gruppe?*
 - *Vorteile: Viele fühlen sich in einer festen Gruppe wohl; es macht Spaß, mit solchen Menschen, die die gleichen Interessen haben, den Umgang zu pflegen; man fühlt sich besser...*
 - *Nachteile: Man bekommt oft bestimmte Regeln; es werden oft andere Leute ausgeschlossen...*

The author of this lesson plan has proposed to inform students about what will be done in the following lessons.

Der Lehrer Rainer Wenger führte an einer Schule in Deutschland ein Experiment durch, das seinen Schülern und Schülerinnen helfen sollte zu verstehen, wie der Nationalsozialismus in Deutschland entstand.

Wir schauen uns den Film an und danach arbeiten wir in Gruppen. Der Film dauert eine Stunde und 50 Minuten. Wir stoppen den Film einmal und danach machen wir die erste Aufgabe. Fokussiert euch auf folgende Fragen: „Wie sollte Herr Wenger das Experiment beenden?“, „Welche Probleme könnte es geben?“, „Könnte dieses Experiment an unserer Schule funktionieren?“

With this introduction, an overview of main points is provided. In other words, it gives motivation and interest to the students, focuses their attention on the lesson and its purposes.

Warm-up: Kein Problem!

(5 minutes) This part is based on the performance of several physical activities in order to maintain physical fitness as well as obedience. There is one game master who calls the instructions and the others stand in a circle or in a row and do as they are told with the slogan “Kein Problem”. For example, a game master says: “Hoch, runter, vorwärts, rückwärts” and the others say: “Kein Problem”.

However, when implementing this lesson plan in Croatian high schools, some changes are required. This offers a chance to repeat imperative forms and rules. Thus, the teacher can write some gymnastic instructions in an imperative form on a piece of paper and one student reads them aloud while the others follow his/her orders:

- *Steht auf!*
- *Steht gerade!*
- *Streckt die Arme rechts und links aus!*
- *Bewegt den Körper von links nach rechts!*
- *Setzt euch!*
- *Atmet ein und aus!*
- *Verschränkt die Arme hinter dem Rücken!*

With this exercise, a stimulated classroom environment has been formed, i.e. mental and physical stimulation are stressed and students are challenged both physically and mentally. Since Professor Wenger introduces his students with a physical activity in the classroom as one of the examples of obedience and discipline (in the film), the students become more engaged with the content being taught. Furthermore, this activity offers the students to repeat infinitive forms of separable prefix verbs (*trennbare Verben*).

How does the film end? How can Mr Wenger end the experiment?

(85 minutes) The students watch only circa 85 minutes of the movie in the classroom. The Wave has been already established, Wenger is its leader and he enjoys his role. The students should already get the point of the movie. After 85 minutes of watching, the teacher stops the movie and starts with the following activities.

- (15 minutes) The teacher forms small groups of five to six participants. They should discuss the following questions and note where they agree/disagree.

Each group should choose their own spokesman who will present the group results.

Bitte bildet Kleingruppen mit fünf bis sechs Teilnehmenden und besprecht folgende Fragen. Bitte notiert, wo ihr euch einig seid und wo ihr unterschiedliche Meinungen habt. Nennt jemanden, der euer Gruppenergebnis kurz der Klasse präsentiert.

Question 1: *Was würdet ihr Herrn Wenger empfehlen, wie soll er das Experiment beenden?*

Da sind wir uns einig.../Da haben wir verschiedene Meinungen

Question 2: *Was muss Herr Wenger dabei beachten? Welche Probleme könnte es geben?*

Da sind wir uns einig.../Da haben wir verschiedene Meinungen

Question 3: *Würde ein ähnliches Experiment an unserer Schule funktionieren?*

Da sind wir uns einig.../Da haben wir verschiedene Meinungen

(15 minutes) After that, the students present their answers and discuss these questions in plenum.

It is generally accepted that different people have different ideas regarding something that needs to be done. Thus, teamwork is definitely a right choice for solving these questions. It helps in increasing both collaboration and brainstorming, which results in getting new ideas. Besides, the students improve their communication skills and they will be more productive. On top of that, the students build their self-confidence, foster creativity, develop smart and independent thinking when encouraged to express their own opinions.

The End of the Film

(30 minutes) The students continue to watch the last 30 minutes of the movie. It is recommended that they are formed into smaller groups so they can together discuss the end of the film. After that, the teacher and the class have a discussion about the movie.

(10 minutes) The teacher asks his/her students the following questions or it would be even easier to give them worksheets with the following questions:

- *Wie hat euch der Film gefallen?*
- *Warum? Welche Szenen im Film waren besonders gut oder schlecht?*
- *Welches Thema muss Herr Wenger mit seiner Gruppe bearbeiten?*
- *Warum haben die Schüler keine Lust auf das Projektthema?*
- *Beschreibt die Filmfigur, die euch am meisten beeindruckt hat!*
zufrieden – unzufrieden – sicher – unsicher – glücklich – unglücklich –
offen – verschlossen – nervös – ruhig – uninteressiert – neugierig –
egoistisch – hilfsbereit – ehrlich – unehrlich – kritisch – optimistisch –
verzweifelt – kontaktfreudig, usw.
- *Was erfahrt ihr über seine/ihre Familie und seine/ihre FreundInnen?*
- *Findet ihr diese Person sympathisch? Warum, warum nicht?*
- *Verändert sich diese Person im Laufe des Films?*

Since one of the movement's participants commits suicide at the end of the film, the teacher should have in mind that some students may be emotionally disturbed by this. Thus, these questions should draw their attention to think about something else in the film.

Strength through Discipline, Strength through Community, Strength through Action

(10 minutes) During the project week, Rainer Wenger writes three principles of The Wave on the blackboard. These are: Strength through discipline (*Macht durch Disziplin*), strength through community (*Macht durch Gemeinschaft*) and strength through action (*Macht durch Handeln*). The students together with Mr Wenger make significant actions changes under these principles. Each student gets three pieces of paper and a different principle has been written on each of them. After that, the teacher picks up one student who reads different statements and actions. If the student thinks that one of the statements/action belongs to the particular principle, he/she should hold up the corresponding piece of paper.

For example,

Student 1: *“Uniform tragen (ein weißes Hemd und Jeans)!”*

Other students hold up the “Macht durch Gemeinschaft” poster because in the movie, the students decide to wear uniforms as part of the “strength through community” parole, etc. The following table represents how this working sheet should look like.

As the table worksheet has been made for the native speakers of German language, I suggest that the teacher make some minor changes.

	Handlungen und Aussagen	Macht durch Disziplin	Macht durch Gemeinschaft	Macht durch Handeln
1.	Die SchülerInnen müssen den Lehrer mit „Sie“ anreden.			
2.	Die SchülerInnen müssen ein weißes Hemd und Jeans tragen.			
3.	Die SchülerInnen machen den Welle-Gruß.			
4.	Die Welle-Mitglieder rekrutieren jüngere Schüler.			
5.	Die SchülerInnen müssen die Hand heben, wenn sie etwas sagen möchten.			
6.	Kevin muss die Gruppe verlassen, weil er nicht mitmachen will.			
7.	Karo und Mona dürfen die Schwimmhalle nicht betreten.			
8.	Karo wird mehr und mehr isoliert.			
9.	Ein Logo wird entwickelt.			
10.	Die Schüler ergreifen den „Verräter“ Marco und bringen ihn auf die Bühne.			
11.	Tim erstellt die Webseite.			

12.	Die Welle-Mitglieder zeichnen Graffiti in der Stadt.			
13.	die SchülerInnen, die den Welle-Gruß verweigern, dürfen nicht ins Schulgebäude.			
14.	Die SchülerInnen müssen gerade sitzen.			
15.	Schüler ohne Welle-Uniform dürfen nicht in die Schwimmhalle.			
16.	Tim verbrennt heimlich seine teure Markenkleidung.			

This activity is used to repeat some of the important moments that happened in the movie and to check how much they focused on the details in the movie. It also provides a brief introduction to the following activity.

Class Principles

(25 minutes) The movie has been watched and discussed in detail. The students have been introduced with the rules and conditions of totalitarian society and they have seen how it is easy to manipulate and to be manipulated.

The teacher forms again the groups of five to six students who have to formulate three principles that the class should have and that, from their point of view, do not represent a possible threat but are desirable and important. They need to replace *The Wave* principles with their own phrases and discuss them in the class. After that, the students summarize the most important principles and hang it up in the classroom.

Bildet bitte Kleingruppen mit fünf bis sechs Personen und formuliert drei Grundsätze, die eure Klasse haben sollte und wünschenswert und wichtig sind! Danach werden wir eure Ergebnisse in der Klasse diskutieren und ein Plakat für eure drei wichtigsten Grundsätze entwerfen.

For example, *Gegenseitiges Verständnis, Toleranz und Respekt in unserer Klasse, ...*

In this activity, the ability to observe and participate in new experiences and to incorporate new knowledge into existing knowledge is encouraged. It enables the students to deal more effectively and independently, i.e. they should learn the lesson of the film and understand the consequences when there is a lack of confidence and mutual respect. In accordance with, they need to write three main principles, which they find quite important for the class and the school in general.

Movie Reviews and Ratings

(15 minutes) The students take on the role of a film critic. Each of them needs to write recommendation for the next issue of the school newspaper by answering the following questions given on the worksheet:

Jetzt hast du den ganzen Film gesehen. Stell dir bitte vor, du musst als Filmkritikerin oder Filmkritiker eine Empfehlung schreiben, z. B. für die nächste Ausgabe der Schülerzeitung.

- *Wie würdest du den Film auf einer Skala von 1 (sehr gut) bis 5 (sehr schlecht) bewerten?*
- *Würdest du den Film einer anderen Gruppe, einem Verein in dem du engagiert bist oder einer anderen Schulklasse empfehlen?*
Wenn ja, warum? (Schreibe drei, vier Sätze dazu)
Wenn nein, warum? (Schreibe drei, vier Sätze dazu)

Some of the students present their thoughts and feelings about the film in front of the class and they discuss the most important values, principles and preferable behaviour in their own class. The teacher can offer some useful phrases, for example:

Redemittel

Eigene Meinung ausdrücken

Ich denke/finde/glaube/ (nicht), dass...

Jemandem zustimmen

Da bin ich ganz deiner Meinung.

Das stimmt.

Da hast du Recht.

Ganz genau!

Jemandem widersprechen

Ich bin nicht deiner Meinung.

Das sehe ich nicht so (wie du).

Das ist nicht ganz richtig.

In this activity, the focus is put on development of critical thinking skills and views of both historical and current events as well as encouraging students to express personal attitude towards certain aspects of the film.

Didactic Comment

All things considered, it is obvious that the author wants to illustrate how fascist regimes work and demonstrate the attitudes of the German people during the Second World War as well as to make them aware that these things are very much possible nowadays. Various activities are done mainly in teamwork, which has my full agreement. As has been noted, working together increases the enthusiasm for every member of the team, they go through long discussions, bring more productive ideas and get different perspectives. He points out the importance of critical thinking and its development as well. However, the estimated time of 225 minutes (5x45 minutes) might be a problem for German teachers as it requires a lot of time (five school hours) and effort to implement it. It is important to note that, when students learn German as the first foreign language in high schools in Croatia, they have it four times a week (4x45 minutes). Therefore, I think that a mutual collaboration between the professors of German and history classes might be a great idea.

It would be good to offer the students some questions to think about. For instance:

- *Was ist die Rolle der Geschichte im Film „Die Welle“?*
- *Würdest du in der Bewegung “Die Welle” mitmachen? Warum (nicht)? Wie würdest du reagieren?*
- *Welche Rolle spielte die Gruppe im Leben einer Person? Warum war das Ende von „Die Welle“ besonders für Tim so schwierig?*

The students can write a short essay (150 – 180 words) on one of suggested questions for homework, which gives them not only a chance to test their critical thinking skills but to improve their writing skills.

Finally, there are plenty of resources, materials and ideas how to implement *The Wave* in the class regardless of whether it is the novel or the film. Of course, it all depends on time and capabilities the teachers have at their disposal as well as aims and learning outcomes that meet their students’ needs.

Conclusion

In this work, we have presented the experiment by a history teacher Ron Jones and its adaptation into the novel and the film. Our work has led us to conclude that it is terrifying even to think that something like the Holocaust could happen, but it is obvious from what happened with *The Wave* experiment that it could easily happen again. All these experiments, which are mentioned in the paper, demonstrate the powerful influence that peer pressure and authority figures can have. And although the writer of the novel, Todd Strasser, and a film director, Dennis Gansel, have made some changes in their works, they, however, have managed to reach the main goal of it. The analysis of both the novel and the film supports the idea that, without the movement, the students were constantly in search of recognition, popularity and success. They were trying to find a sense of identity within their high school, where there was no sense of unity and a small clique of popular students decided who was accepted and who was rejected or mocked. This resulted in invisible, but no less real, divisions between the in-crowd and the rest of the students. With *The Wave*, these divisions disappeared and were replaced by a sense of total equality and a desire to make progress together.

We have also outlined that Todd Strasser's novel "The Wave" has found its place among recommended reading books in German high schools and it is very popular with young people. For many, the Holocaust and the war horrors are nothing but one of many chapters in history books. However, the novel and the film "The Wave" give the opportunity to break through these ways of thinking and help students to understand the meaning of National Socialism. Not only does their implementation in schools illustrate how fascist regimes work but it also solves the problem of the historical background and represents a connection to the present. There is a considerable amount of lesson activities and ideas how to implement *The Wave* in schools. The one used in the federal state Baden-Württemberg has been chosen and evaluated. Likewise, we have proposed how that lesson plan can be implemented in Croatian high schools. However, minor changes have been required since this lesson plan is aimed at native speakers of German. The activities, which are introduced in the lesson plan, put focus on the development of writing, listening and critical thinking skills.

All things considered, *The Wave* shows us that the duty of memory entails more than simply remembering the Holocaust: we must also try to understand the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany so that they can never happen again.

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