Victory in the Cradle: Fatherhood and the Family Community in the Nazi Schutzstaffel

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VICTORY IN THE CRADLE:
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IN THE NAZI SCHUTZSTAFFEL

By

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Racial superiority was deeply embedded in the philosophy and world-view of National Socialism. It was also a key tenet within the Nazi SS (Schutzstaffel), as possessing a superior Nordic racial lineage became a crucial criterion for admission to the organization by the early 1930’s. With this racial basis, the SS was posed to serve as a new aristocracy in the fledgling Third Reich. However, this service was only to be the beginning. The leader of the SS, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, desired that his elite corps not only serve Adolf Hitler’s Reich in the present, but perpetually in the future as well. To achieve this goal, he created an ambitious plan to use his SS men as a starting point from which he could establish a larger SS family community (Sippengemeinschaft). To realize this aspiration, the wives and children of SS men also had to be vetted in order to prove their biological and hereditary worth. An entire process was created to oversee the development of the SS Sippengemeinschaft as both a biological and a cultural entity, with the vast majority of it managed by the SS Race and Settlement Main Office (Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt).

This administrative oversight of family life, and in particular the promotion and regulation of fatherhood among SS men, represented one method through which the SS leadership wanted its elite cadre to reshape societal and familial norms, thus having these men and their families serve as the racial and biological vanguard of the Nazi Reich. However, the means used to attempt to achieve this goal were not unique to the SS, the Nazi party, or even to Germany. The vast majority of the measures implemented in the SS to encourage SS men to marry racially suitable women, to father racially healthy children, and therefore to create the ideal SS family community were based on ideas which had been existed for decades as part of a then-valid science, eugenics. Eugenicists, especially those in Germany, Britain, and the United States, had wanted to find a humane means of selection to improve the quantity and quality of their respective populations. Based on their class, racial, religious, or national bias, they wanted to limit benignly the reproduction of certain people while strongly encouraging other people to have more children. However, while many scientists and physicians advocated a wide variety of measures, eugenics had been nothing more than scientific rhetoric in the late nineteenth and early
twentieth centuries, particularly when it came to using this science to promote the birth of “wellborn” children. That changed in the 1930’s as among the people who saw value in positive eugenics was Heinrich Himmler. He sought to reshape the SS and to construct a family community within the organization by selectively employing the eugenic ideals which best suited his needs. Therefore, what Himmler and the SS, particularly the Race and Settlement Main Office, attempted to do was to turn rhetoric into reality by applying eugenic ideals.

By investigating fatherhood and the family community in the SS, this work contributes to several historiographies. First, it contributes to a stronger understanding of the SS. It evaluates how the construction and implementation of a racial ideology facilitated the burgeoning bureaucracy of the SS, especially in the offices responsible for promoting and supporting families. This research analyzes the notion of the SS as an elite community, both the ideology and the reality of this ideal. In particular, it examines how the SS leadership sought to have its men willingly comply with its racial notions instead of obliging them to obey through force as well as allowed selective compliance from SS men, particularly during the Second World War. Consequently, this dissertation explores why, if the ideal of developing eugenically healthy families represented a goal of the SS, SS leaders permitted their men leeway in their personal decisions and how this tolerance defined the organization’s familial ideology. Second, as this endeavor by the SS to foster an elite community was an application of eugenics, it was the first attempt to implement this scientific rhetoric in a positive manner. Therefore, this work adds to the literature which examines the role of the biological sciences in the Third Reich. Third, it engages historical research which focuses on family life in the Third Reich as well as in the postwar era and provides a stronger understanding of the role of the father within the family. Fourth, this research addresses sexual politics in Nazi Germany, specifically how the SS attempted to reconceptualize the purpose and value of sex in order to create its family community.
“If you, my dear Annie, have this letter in your hands, I am no more.” With these words, SS-Obersturmbannführer Hermann S. began his final letter to his wife. He continued by acknowledging that the news of his death would sadden her and that their children would not know how to cope with their own feelings. Writing in the middle of the Second World War, Hermann stated that he hoped he had fallen in the field with a weapon in his hands, fighting to give their children a better life than either he or his beloved Annie had had. In his letter, he implored his wife to focus on their children as they would be “your solace for the future and also your strength.” His last wish was that he live on through his children and that they be educated to become reliable and strong Germans.

Hermann also left final words for each of his children. He recognized that “the time will come where you will very much miss your father. Both of you and your mother must resolutely hold together.” He then candidly spoke to his oldest child, the soldier in him telling his son Roland to “always learn diligently if you want to get ahead in life and whoever wants to command must first learn to obey.” Hermann urged his son to pay attention to his mother’s guidance: “believe me, if I had listened to my mother’s advice so many times, I would have been saved from some disappointment.” After this appeal, he added that Roland could do anything he wanted in the future because he and his fellow soldiers were now fighting to secure it. At the same time, Hermann noted that his son would still have to work hard for everything he wanted to achieve. He also told his son to stay an honest and decent person and to remain true to his comrades. Finally, the father informed the son that all of his experiences would serve him well later in life as he sought to find a wife. However, Hermann did specifically advise Roland that he should look for a woman with a suitable hereditary disposition (Erbanlage).

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
For his little girl Ute, he had fewer words, although they seemed no less heartfelt than the ones to his son. Hermann professed that while she could not remember him as well as either her mother or brother, he reminded his daughter that they did have some special time together when he had visited his family on his last furlough from the front. He had hoped that they would have had the opportunity for more time together; they, along with Annie and Roland, could have bonded by taking a hiking trip or sleeping in a tent in the forest. As he would not be there for Ute as she grew up, Hermann counseled her to listen to her mother, especially when it came to learning how to be a future mother herself.

Toward the end of his letter, Hermann returned to his wife. He did not want her to be a “grieving widow,” but instead “a German woman who has lost much, but [who] protects her children as my legacy.” Their children would provide her with strength as she raised them to be trustworthy and strong-minded Germans. Beyond caring for his biological heritage, he beseeched Annie to be proud of him because he had fallen not only for the Führer and Germany, but also for her future. He ended his letter by tenderly thanking his wife for her love and stating that while they only had a short time together, “it was a wonderful time….it would have become even more wonderful, but it shall not be.”

In early June 1943, Das Schwarze Korps, the newspaper of the Schutzstaffel (SS) and one of the most widely-circulated weeklies in the Third Reich, reprinted Hermann’s letter. It was neither the first nor the last personal testimonial published in the newspaper, nor was it the only letter from a fallen man to his wife and/or children. Moreover, printing this letter by Hermann S. was about more than just relaying the words of one deceased comrade to his family. The editors chose to use Hermann’s letter because of the larger messages it conveyed, messages which had been routinely present in the newspaper as well as in the rhetoric and ideology of the entire SS. They wanted their readers not only to identify with Hermann because of his heroic death for his country, but also because of the meaning he attributed to his life through his surviving children. His sacrifice for them demonstrated how the family was the center of German life, the germ cell (Keimzelle) from which all things – the SS, the Nazi party, and the German Reich – were built, and the father, whether at home or on the front, was an active participant in this small community.

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 For more on Das Schwarze Korps, see chapter 7.
Hermann’s letter confirmed the importance of this participation. His affection for his family and their importance to him in life and in death were the significant elements of the letter. A man had a vital role in his family while he was alive, but, as this letter proved, a man still lived on through his children. The victory in the cradle, as seen through his children’s survival, was meant to complement the military victory for which Hermann and his comrades had fought and died. Above all, what this letter showed was that being a father, both biologically through passing on one’s genetic lineage and physically by having an active role in raising one’s children, was important. Fatherhood and the creation of a family represented an essential ideal within the SS, one which not only held significance throughout the majority of its lifetime, but one which also helped to define its current and future purpose. The SS had begun in 1925 as a small and elite bodyguard unit staunchly dedicated to Adolf Hitler, the leader of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei, NSDAP). While it carried out this function from its creation until the end of both it and the Third Reich, the definition of what made this organization elite shifted over the course of two decades. The person primarily responsible for shaping the SS and revising what made it an elite order was its final leader, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler. He was not interested in creating an organization which could simply serve the needs of first the Nazi party and later the Nazi state in the present; he wanted to establish a community (Gemeinschaft) which would serve and lead Adolf Hitler’s vaunted Thousand Year Reich.

In particular, Himmler envisioned creating a family community (Sippengemeinschaft) in which not only his SS men, but their wives, children, and all future descendents had the potential to belong to and contribute. However, unlike communities in the past which were built on commonalities such as class, ethnicity, history, language, and/or religion, the one that Himmler sought to construct was based on something far more immutable: a person’s biological lineage. A person’s heredity defined whether he (or she) could belong to this community; although specific traits such as blond hair and blue eyes were valued (and have correspondingly come to define such efforts), the more important aspect of a person’s heredity was proving that he (or she) belonged to the esteemed Nordic race. Both popular and scientific literature had proclaimed for decades in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that the Nordic race represented the apex of civilization and culture, and Himmler, as an advocate of this perspective, used this

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9 For more information on the history of the SS, see chapter 3.
racial ideology when fostering his SS family community.

By only allowing people of Nordic descent entrance into the SS either as members or spouses, Himmler limited who had the biological right to belong. His family community was therefore directly defined by who was allowed to become a member as well as indirectly defined by the exclusion of everyone else. This use of inclusion and exclusion to define a community or a nation has a long history in Europe; as political scientist Anthony W. Marx has argued, European rulers have used exclusion as a tool for centuries to unite people. However, Himmler’s goal of creating a community was about more than excluding the majority and including a minority. The use of biology to delineate the SS family community was the cornerstone of a much larger ideal, one which sought to re-conceptualize the purpose and value of the family. With this greater end, the SS family community was as much a cultural construct as any other group. As such, although not an independent nation but an organization within the Nazi party, the SS can be conceived of as community within the Third Reich by applying the definition of community as outlined by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities.*

The SS was an “imagined community,” one with political dimensions, but social, cultural, and economic ones as well. With a population that almost reached 800,000 men at its apex, the members of this community were bound together by a common Nordic heritage, although they would never all know one another. It was also a limited community, one designed solely to accept people who were deemed to have a racially impeccable heritage. This community was almost sovereign; once the SS had proven its fealty, the organization and its leader were limited by one thing, the will of the Führer. Nonetheless, as long as the SS operated within the boundaries set by Hitler and remained loyal to him, it was fairly free to carry out whatever operations and functions it deemed necessary to sustain its existence and to increase its power. Finally, it aspired to be a community, not simply because of the many varied uses of the word Gemeinschaft, but because the SS, through its ideal of the Sippengemeinschaft, sought as of 1931 to build an eternal camaraderie among its members and their families. All other factors

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12 For the numerical growth of the SS, see Appendix A.
which might have divided them, including religion, regional identity, or socio-economic status, were to be overcome through unity based on their common possession of Nordic blood.

Having the appropriate racial lineage was only the first step in a much larger process. In the short term, it meant that each SS man and his wife were qualified to serve the SS and the Third Reich in the present. However, there were also long-term effects of their admission into the SS and its family community; every SS couple was primed to become the parents of the next generation which would already be born with the right racial credentials and would be in a position from birth to serve as the next generation of leaders. These offspring were to be the first of many such racially and hereditarily healthy generations that would perpetually ensure the longevity of the SS and the Reich. Without the presence of sufficient numbers of these high-quality children, a long-lasting German Reich could not exist. Therefore, while the SS represented one imagined community, so did the Third Reich. It aimed to become a “racial state,” specifically a national or people’s community (Volksgemeinschaft) where all racial comrades had a place. This conception of nation was not simply to be built on high through the directives of the party and the government, but through the interaction of the state and its people. And if National Socialist Germany was to become this racial state, then the SS was to be its racial elite. Its members were to be the committed vanguard that set the standards first for itself and then for the entire nation.

The Nazi state, based on its own rhetoric and laws, was as dedicated to promoting the racial well-being of the German population, the Volk, as the SS was committed to enhancing racial excellence within its own selective ranks. While the prominence of racial ideals in Nazi Germany complemented the work of the SS, the state was not the sole source of legitimacy. The idea of promoting the well-being of a nation and its people by regulating its biological heritage had existed for decades prior to the Third Reich in the form of a then-respected science, eugenics. Founded in the last decades of the nineteenth century by British scientist Francis Galton, eugenics was known as the “wellborn” science because it sought to use the scientific and

14 The role of the people in creating the Volksgemeinschaft as well as the uses of propaganda in that task are discussed in the following articles: John Connelly, “The Uses of the Volksgemeinschaft: Letters to the NSDAP Kreisleitung Eisenach, 1939-1940,” The Journal of Modern History, volume 68, number 4 (December 1996): 899-330 and David Welch, “Nazi Propaganda and the Volksgemeinschaft: Creating a People’s Community,” Journal of Contemporary History, volume 39, number 2 (April 2004): 213-38. Connelly also briefly discussed the historiography of the Volksgemeinschaft as a myth and subsequently debunked the notion that the people’s community was nothing more than a myth.
medical knowledge of the day to enrich the heredity of a population by improving the health of each generation of children. It quickly gained a sizeable international following, including in Germany where physicians and scientists advocated measures which they contended would improve the health of the Volk. The majority of their suggestions focused on preventing those people whom they deemed the least healthy from having children and encouraging those whom they considered to be the most healthy to have many children; in particular, it was desired that each healthy couple have a child-rich (*kinderreich*) family of at least four children. By the late 1920’s, the ideas of eugenicists had permeated both scientific literature and popular culture and had influenced the ways in which people viewed heredity.

Heinrich Himmler was among the people who saw value in eugenics, and his decision to establish an SS family community was based on his selective adherence to this science. The measures that he employed to evaluate a prospective member or spouse had long since been suggested by German physicians and scientists as means to improve the population. However, prior to his implementing these measures designed to regulate every aspect of family life – from getting married to having and raising children – eugenic measures specifically designed to increase the population had been nothing more than scientific rhetoric. Himmler was the first person to apply these scientific measures to a select group; as of the end of 1931, he used them to investigate the biological heritage of each person and to determine if he (or she) had the requisite credentials to join and to contribute to the SS and its family community. This investigative process was done through one of the organization’s major offices, the Race and Settlement Main Office (*Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt*, RuSHA); the procedures of this process were continuously publicized, both privately within the organization and publicly to the entire Reich. Therefore, the men who joined the SS starting in the early to mid 1930’s and the women who married them were well aware of the admission criteria and the expectations of their future families.

The majority of SS men and their wives willingly submitted to this scrutiny. However, once they gained admission to the SS elite, they failed to live up to the familial expectations of the Reichsführer by not having enough children. The victory in the cradle and with it the creation of the SS Sippengemeinschaft, much as the complete establishment of the Third Reich as a racial state, remained incomplete. For a variety of reasons, eugenic ideas proved sound in theory, but not in practice. Yet, even with this failure, an examination of the means which were
employed to create the SS family community and to convince SS men to father children who
would secure the biological longevity of the SS contributes to four distinct historiographies.

First, it adds to a stronger understanding of the SS as an organization, in particular the
Race and Settlement Main Office, which was primarily responsible for promoting and supporting
large, hereditarily healthy SS families. Over the past six decades, historians as well as social
scientists have produced a great body of literature about the SS. The earliest works sought to
ascertain the origins of the organization and to interpret its purpose and character. They
assigned the SS a particular role within the Nazi party and the Third Reich and labeled it as an
organization designed to achieve a certain objective, namely the fulfillment of the Führer’s will.
These early works provided valuable insight into the SS, but they were limited in that they each
presented the SS in the same fashion – a monolithic criminal organization under the complete
control of Himmler. This theory nonetheless gained popular credence, leading other scholars to
challenge this assessment.

Among those people was historian Robert Lewis Koehl. His analysis moved beyond
simply characterizing the SS and instead placed the SS within the context of the entire Nazi
movement. He showed that it was not a monolithic organization with a never-changing purpose,
but rather an order which constantly adapted itself to the circumstances in which it found itself.
Understanding the evolution of the SS and how it shifted to meet the needs of the party and the
Reich are the key elements in Koehl’s work. He underscored that it was important to recognize
what the SS wanted to be as well as what it actually became during its lifetime.

These concepts presented by Koehl are especially significant when assessing the purpose
and place of racial ideology within the SS, particularly in relation to how Himmler sought to use
this ideology to build the SS into an elite organization that would ensure the longevity of the

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Reich. The establishment of this ideal in the form of a racially and hereditarily healthy family community was no less significant – albeit far less deadly and destructive – than any other element of the SS. However, just as the organization itself was not static, neither was its ideology, including its racial ideology. It shifted throughout the existence of the SS, especially as greater numbers of men joined the organization during the Second World War, and examining the racial ideology and how it shaped the notion of the family community provides a stronger understanding of what the SS family community was supposed to be, particularly what Himmler ideally wanted it to be, and what it actually was based on how the men themselves interpreted and responded to the ideology.

Beyond the literature on the SS as an organization, there has also been much research which has explored the various offices and branches in Himmler’s domain and well as the people who oversaw them. These works show the various nuances of the SS and its constituent branches and prove that the SS was not a monolithic organization with a set and unvarying purpose, but rather a vast enterprise with a wide range of objectives which constantly shifted due to changing circumstances in the 1930’s and 1940’s. Among the secondary resources that focus on a limited segment of the SS, two types are of particular importance for this project. The first is the literature about the Race and Settlement Main Office. Historian James Weingartner wrote the first in-depth piece that analyzed RuSHA. He provided an overview of its history and its purpose, briefly highlighting the contributions of its first chief, Richard Walther Darré. More recently, historian Isabel Heinemann has written about the contributions of its racial experts. She predominantly focused on the activities of these experts in countries outside of the German Reich and examined the nature of their work, especially the radicalization of the RuSHA’s policies following the departure of Darré and the start of the war.

The research here builds on the work of these two authors in several ways. It too seeks to explore the history of this particular SS office. RuSHA began in 1931 with the sole function of inspecting the marriage applications of SS members. However, as the SS grew and its purpose

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18 Some of the more pertinent areas of research are the history and service of the Waffen SS (examined primarily in chapter 3); the Lebensborn program (examined in chapters 5 and 6); Das Schwarze Korps (examined in chapter 7); and biographies of and autobiographies by SS men (examined in chapter 8).


and ideology changed, RuSHA assumed greater responsibilities, which included becoming the primary authority on all racial policies within the SS, including those designed to regulate family life. Therefore, exploring the establishment of the family community – both its ideal form and its reality – provides a greater understanding of the role that RuSHA had within the SS. It demonstrates how this particular office evolved throughout the lifetime of the SS, similar to how the organization itself shifted to meet its own needs as well as those of the party and the state. Nothing illustrates this evolution better than the establishment and implementation of the first and most important of Himmler’s eugenic-based decrees: the engagement and marriage command. This order laid out the basic framework for the entire SS family community and formed the foundation for all subsequent measures relating to the family. It conveyed the ideal which RuSHA subsequently had the bureaucratic responsibility to bring to fruition.

The other type of secondary resources which this research engages is research that mentions SS racial ideology and how it was used to build SS family community. Gudrun Schwarz examined the SS Sippengemeinschaft from the perspective of the wives.\(^1\) Although she did include a brief synopsis of the engagement and marriage command, she focused less on ideology and rhetoric and more on what married life for a woman entailed. Other research focuses on the SS as a burgeoning aristocracy and examines the contours of this aristocracy. Of particular importance is the work of historian Herbert Ziegler and political scientist Manfred Wolfson.\(^2\) Ziegler did briefly delve into some aspects of Himmler’s attempt to ensure the continuation of his SS elite by managing their reproductive decisions. Beyond this aspect, both men analyzed the composition of the SS leadership. They each found that while the SS sought to redefine itself as a racial elite, it was also an elite based on the types of people who joined, namely those people born into the traditional aristocracy and/or those with a strong educational background. The former lent the credibility of their family names to the SS while the latter added to the organization’s prestige through their accomplishments as doctors, lawyers, economists, et cetera. The familial and educational background of the SS, especially its leadership core, has significance because, as will be examined, the personal backgrounds of SS leaders...


men and officers shaped their mentality toward establishing a family.

The second historiographical contribution relates to the history of eugenics. As the endeavor by the SS to foster an elite community was applied eugenics, this research adds to the literature that examines the role of the biological sciences in the Third Reich. Here too there are a great many works, most of which focus on eugenics in Britain, Germany, and the United States, although eugenics was by no means limited to them and was in fact a well-respected international science for over six decades. The articles and books that specifically explore German eugenics cover the Imperial, Weimar, and Nazi periods. Some of them only analyze one segment of German history whereas others include two or all three periods, often showing the continuities between one era and another, such as demonstrating the origins of Nazi racial thought in earlier periods of German history. These publications provide historical background for how the views of the Nazi party and the policies of the Nazi state evolved.

This connection between periods of German history and eugenics is especially strong in Weimar and Nazi Germany as many of the same scientists and physicians contributed to eugenics in both eras. Moreover, a specific institute carried over from one to the other, linking the two periods and providing the Nazi regime with scientific legitimacy for its policies: the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics (Kaiser Wilhelm Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik, KWI-A), an institute in the prestigious Kaiser Wilhelm Society (Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft, KWG). In 1997, on its fiftieth anniversary, the Max Planck Society (Max Planck Gesellschaft), the successor organization to the KWG, created a five-year presidential commission to investigate the role of all Kaiser


Wilhelm Institutes in National Socialist Germany.\textsuperscript{25} Based on previously unavailable material, a series of articles was produced from this project, many of which examined the legacy of the KWI-A. These particular pieces have imparted a great wealth of information regarding the history of the KWI-A and its connections with the Nazi state.\textsuperscript{26}

However, these previous works on German eugenics have mostly neglected the SS. Just as the racial ideology of the Nazi regime had earlier origins, so too did the racial ideology of the SS. Furthermore, the SS repeatedly interacted with the KWI-A, and this scientific body provided just as much legitimacy for SS racial policies as it did Nazi ones. The racial ideology of the SS, and subsequently its family community, could never have been founded without earlier eugenic work and later participation from and interaction with the most prominent German eugenicists. These scientists and physicians provided the SS with the scientific means to enable its officials, especially SS doctors, to become the arbiters of racial and hereditary health within the SS.\textsuperscript{27}

Demonstrating a relationship between the SS and German eugenics builds on the work of the preeminent historian of racial science in the Third Reich, Robert Proctor.\textsuperscript{28} A key theme in his research was the idea that German scientists were neither apolitical nor passive, and they willingly participated in constructing Nazi racial ideology, something which, as will be shown, was equally true for the SS. Beyond illustrating this active relationship, Proctor’s research holds significance for his examination of the work of German eugenicists in light of their connection with the Nazi regime. Following the Third Reich, eugenics was labeled a pseudo-science, and many of the scientists who participated in its promulgation were deemed crank scientists at the

\textsuperscript{25} Information on this program can be found at <http://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/KWG/engl.htm>. Early work on the KWG was done by Kristie Macrakis, although this work has since been superseded by the MPG commission. Kristie Macrakis, \textit{Surviving the Swastika: Scientific Research in Nazi Germany} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) and Kristie Macrakis, \textquotedblleft The Ideological Origins of Institutes at the Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft in National Socialist Germany,\textquotedblright in \textit{Science, Technology, and National Socialism}, edited by Monika Renneberg and Mark Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).


\textsuperscript{27} These courses will be discussed in greater detail in chapters 2 and 4.

margins of the profession. Proctor convincingly demonstrated the opposite. His analysis illustrated how the people involved with German and Nazi eugenics were top professionals within their respective scientific or medical fields. The credentials of these men were never questionable, and thus it is wrong to presume that only quacks supported Nazi racial ideology with pseudo-science. This line of reasoning is crucial because of the aforementioned connection between these highly-esteemed scientists and the eugenics work of the SS.

Another influential component from Proctor’s work is his perspective on eugenics as a valid field of science. Proctor argued that debating now whether eugenics was a science is a moot point when discussing whether or not it was deemed a science decades ago. He contended:

> I believe that it serves little purpose to continually ask, ‘But what is science?’ We should not allow our judgment of the ethical character of Nazi medical practice to hinge entirely on whether we consider it to have been based on ‘genuine science.’ One cannot (or at least should not) radically divide the practice of science from its product; science is, among other things, a social activity, and the politics of those who practice it is part of that science. Furthermore, we miss something if we assume at the outset a fundamental hostility between science and a form of political practice such as National Socialism. This was not how the scientists themselves viewed the matter.

This idea, and with it Proctor’s simple working definition of science as “science is what scientists do,” have strongly shaped the trajectory and conclusions of this research. Just because eugenics was later disregarded as a science does not make it any less valid as one in its proper historical context. As anthropologist Jonathan Marks candidly pointed out, “In retrospect, most ideas that most scientists have ever had have been wrong. That eugenics was wrong is therefore

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hardly a legitimate reason for regarding it as a pseudoscience.”\textsuperscript{32} Therefore, eugenics, while certainly having many flaws such as inescapably being shaped by the social influences of the time both inside and outside of Germany, is used as it was seen back then – as a legitimate, “normal” science as defined by historian of science Thomas Kuhn.\textsuperscript{33}

Furthermore, by attempting to build a family community based on the racial and hereditary worthiness of its members, what the SS sought to do was tantamount to biological determinism. Such efforts did not just imply but outright proclaimed that a person’s genetic lineage was the only thing to consider when determining his (or her) worth, that the environment played no role in shaping his (or her) life. While accepted by a great many scientists, this extreme emphasis on biology as the sole factor was censured at the time by others, most famously by biologist Julian Huxley and anthropologist Alfred Haddon. They derided the attempt by the Nazi regime to produce citizens of a certain racial type:

Our German neighbours have ascribed to themselves a Teutonic type that is fair, long-headed, tall and virile. Let us make a composite picture of a typical Teuton from the most prominent of the exponents of this view. Let him be as blond as Hitler, as [long-headed] as Rosenberg, as tall as Goebbels, as slender as Goering, and as manly as Streicher. How much would he resemble the German ideal?\textsuperscript{34}

This well-known derision aside, the notion of biological determinism permeated the racial ideology of the SS; the entire family community was based upon it. However, even with the subsequent discrediting of both this ideology and eugenics, biological determinism still


\textsuperscript{33} Kuhn, 5-7. “Normal science, the activity in which most scientists inevitably spend almost all their time, is predicated on the assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like,” 5. This too is the perspective taken by Proctor in “Nazi Medicine,” 346.

\textsuperscript{34} Julian S. Huxley and Alfred C. Haddon, \textit{We Europeans: A Survey of “Racial” Problems} (New York: Harper & Brother Publishers, 1936), 13. Sociologist Clifford Kirkpatrick raised the same point two years later: “National Socialism eulogizes the tall blond blue-eyed Nordic race, yet Goebbels and Hitler hardly fit the ideal racial pattern.” Clifford Kirkpatrick, \textit{Nazi Germany: Its Women and Family Life} (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1938), 41-42. One year later, journalist Amram Scheinfeld made a similar point: “As one final commentary, we believe that most leading anthropologists, geneticists and psychologists would agree to this somewhat far-fetched hypothesis: That if a child fathered by Adolf Hitler were by some whimsy of fate exchanged at birth with the child of a Jewish rabbi, and each were reared unwittingly by the wrong father, in all likelihood Hitler’s child would grow up to be ‘Jewish’ in temperament, behavior and social viewpoint, and the rabbi’s child would be goose-stepping, storm-trooping and ‘Heil-Hitlering’ with the most rabid of Aryans.” Amram Scheinfeld, \textit{You and Heredity} (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1939), 354.
exists. The misuse of biology for such purposes has been surveyed by evolutionary biologist and historian of science Stephen Jay Gould. He argued that understanding the various cases of biological determinism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and subsequently debunking their validity is significant because just as soon as one idea is discredited, another one is created. Understanding the history of eugenics and its use by the SS provides another example of biological determinism, and it is especially important to explore this application of science to society because the idea of manipulating science to produce healthier children survives in modern-day genetics.

The third way in which this research contributes to the historiography is by addressing sexual politics in Nazi Germany, specifically how the SS attempted to re-conceptualize the purpose and value of sex. Literature on sex and sexuality in the Third Reich addresses several issues. One of them is deviant sexuality, namely homosexuality. Part of how the Nazi state defined acceptable sexual behavior was through its proscription of everything it deemed objectionable. Himmler, as chief of the German police from 1936 onward, was particularly obsessive in prosecuting what he believed was abnormal behavior. Historian Geoffrey Giles has thoroughly examined the persecution of homosexuals, delving into how the regime built on pre-existing prejudices against homosexuality to marginalize homosexuals. He argued that such

36 This idea is covered again in the conclusion.
38 Homosexuality and its relation to the SS is also discussed in chapters 5 and 8.
measures turned them into social outsiders who did not have a proper place in the new Nazi Volksgemeinschaft, although by no means was there a systematic elimination of all homosexuals from the Reich. In particular, Himmler viewed homosexuality as a threat to the racial health of the German Volk and to his vaunted SS family community, and he maintained that he could not build his elite aristocracy without eliminating anything which could undermine it.

A second issue focuses on sex for the sole purpose of procreation. Both the Nazi government and the SS sought to regulate the sexual lives of the people, establishing through laws in the case of the state and decrees in the case of the SS with whom it was and was not acceptable to have sexual relations. This regulation was based on their perceptions of race. Sex was not only acceptable, but in fact encouraged when both partners had the right racial lineage; otherwise it was taboo. Historian George L. Mosse appraised the ways in which the Nazi state tried to direct the sexuality of the Volk specifically for the purpose of seeking to create a seemingly respectable society. He particularly focused on manliness and masculinity under fascist rule as well as the emphasis on home life and family as a means to shape personal sexual morality. Scholars Stefan Maiwald and Gerd Mischler presented a similar analysis of sexuality in the Third Reich, claiming that all decisions were based on the perception that sex was nothing more than a means of reproduction.

There is some truth in this perspective. Within the SS, sex was a valuable tool for creating the family community; bluntly put, it could not exist if SS men did not have sex with their wives and/or other racially acceptable women with the intention of conceiving a child. The ideal of the SS family community – what Himmler wanted it to become – was based in the regulation of the personal and sexual lives of each SS man. He expected that his men would obey any command he issued without reserve, and when it came to family life, he counted on them to persuade their wives to conform to his orders as well. Obedience was a part of his definition of the SS and its family community, and so it is important to understand the means through which he tried to influence the sexual behavior of his men. Thus, this research seeks to discern the specific ways in which there was, to use the phrasing of philosopher Michel Foucault,


41 Stefan Maiwald and Gerd Mischler, Sexualität unter dem Hakenkreuz: Manipulation und Vernichtung der Intimsphäre im NS-Staat (Hamburg: Europa Verlag, 1999).
a regulated discourse on sex, most notably the discourse on marriage serving as the anchor of
this regulated sexuality.42 Sex became the focal point around which life, in this specific case the
SS family community, could be most efficiently managed, and there was a constant discourse
within the SS about sex, marriage, and reproduction.

Finally, the project engages historical research which focuses on family life in Nazi
Germany as well as in the postwar era. Interest in Nazi family policies existed concurrently with
the Third Reich.43 Of particular interest was the 1933 marriage loan, which generated jobs for
men by providing married women monetary incentives to leave the workplace.44 Regulations
designed to increase the birth rate, such as curtailing access to birth control and criminalizing
abortion, were also examined. Beyond assessing the creation, implementation, and results of
Nazi family policies, other research delved into the actuality of family life. Sociologist Clifford
Kirkpatrick based his analysis on his personal experiences living in Nazi Germany for a year.45
He primarily highlighted the role of the woman in the family and analyzed the various reasons
why women supported the rise of Nazism, including the promises made by the party and the
government to restore domestic order. Kirkpatrick assessed how the state encouraged young
women to choose a marriage partner wisely by selecting a genetically healthy and racially
suitable partner. He emphasized the familial responsibilities of women, and he cited that the
Nazi state regarded them as the guardians of tradition as well as viewed the terms woman and
mother as synonymous. Finally, Kirkpatrick called attention to women’s tasks of creating a
stable home, bearing healthy Nordic children, and serving as the guardians of morality.

Much like this earlier work, research later conducted by historians focused on family life
by emphasizing women’s roles as wives and mothers. One of the first books to address the
contributions of women and to assess their place in Nazi society was written by historian Jill

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39, 108-09, and 147.
166-86; Alfred Meusel, “National Socialism and the Family, Part II,” *Sociological Review*, volume 28, number 4
(October 1936): 389-411; Frank H. Hanks, “German Policies for Increasing Births,” *The American Journal of
Sociology*, volume 42, number 5 (March 1937): 630-652; P.K. Whelpton, “Why the Large Rise in the German Birth
Rate?” *The American Journal of Sociology*, volume 41, number 3 (November 1935): 299-313; and Conrad Taeuber
2 (September 1940): 150-167.
44 This law and its impact are discussed in greater detail in chapter 5.
45 Kirkpatrick, *Nazi Germany* and Clifford Kirkpatrick, “Recent Changes in the Status of Women and the Family in
Stephenson.\textsuperscript{46} She analyzed the status of women and the opportunities made available to them by the government in the 1930’s. Stephenson also showed the continuity in policy and attitude toward women during the transition from the Weimar to the Nazi government, particularly demonstrating how both elevated a woman’s position as a wife and a mother. Other historians and political scientists have since contributed to the examination of women and their lives in Nazi Germany.\textsuperscript{47} These works have collectively contributed to a greater understanding of family life and the roles of women during the Third Reich. They illustrated how and why the Nazi state valued large and hereditarily healthy families, and in exploring the responsibilities of women, especially as wives and mothers, their significance to the historiography cannot be understated.

Nonetheless, the vast majority of this literature ignored men as participants in family life as husbands and fathers. Part of this exclusion does relate back to the ideals and policies of the Nazi regime, which admittedly did underscore women as the primary agents responsible for the establishment of a home and a family. However, women could have never achieved these goals without men as husbands and fathers. If nothing else, men had a biological procreative role. Within the SS, Himmler tasked each SS man with the responsibility of fathering a racially healthy family; that duty was repeatedly emphasized in official commands and rhetoric. Yet, as other documentation and publications illustrated, this biological duty was only one facet of fatherhood. SS men were also expected to and did assume greater parental responsibilities; they had a place within their families, as already shown in the letter from Hermann S. Therefore, determining a man’s place in the family as a husband and a father – in this particular case the place of the SS man within his individual family and the SS family community – augments research on the family and family life in the Third Reich. It provides a stronger understanding of both the biological and racial ideology of the SS and the realities of fatherhood.

Having this knowledge relates to one final aspect of literature on the family, that which


was produced immediately in and/or about the postwar era. Psychiatrist Bertram Schaffner and anthropologist David Rodnick independently conducted interviews in the American zone of occupation and wrote studies about the cultural patterns and attitudes in the German family. Among the themes which the two men described was the function of the father. Both presented him as an authority figure, but that is where the similarities in their assessments ended. Schaffner depicted the father as a strict disciplinarian who had to maintain his authority at all costs and who preferred respect and gratitude from his children rather than love. This father-figure concerned himself with little else than to provide his family with food, shelter, clothing, and education. Rodnick presented a much softer image. He demonstrated that while fathers provided financially for their families, they also lavished their children with affection; there was nothing unmanly about fatherly attention. According to Rodnick, a man found no shame in holding his baby or playing with his older children, and he served as a mentor and a guide to them, especially to his sons. Having a greater insight into family life prior to collapse of the Third Reich provides a stronger context for these immediate post-war studies, especially as this work reveals a father figure much more akin to the one presented by Rodnick.

It furthermore adds depth to the historical literature which directly examines the German family in the early postwar era. The division of Germany first into four occupation zones and then into two independent countries drastically altered the lives of the people. With a sizeable portion of the adult male population dead or imprisoned, there was a crisis in masculinity that prompted the divided nation to redefine the concept of masculinity and patriarchy. Patriarchal power shifted as two Germanys sought to create new national identities, resulting in adjustments within family dynamics. One aspect of family life was the role of widows. Historian


50 Almost half a century later, those new identities and new dynamics once again played a role in German reidentification following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the unification of East and West Germany. Katharina
Katharina Tumpek-Kjellmark examined the social meaning of widowhood in West Germany and even delved into the specific place of the widows of SS men.\textsuperscript{51} Besides women as widows, the family as a unit and the father’s place in it was also redefined, as scholar Till van Rahden has analyzed.\textsuperscript{52} He argued that the formation of democracy in West Germany during the 1950’s and 1960’s occurred simultaneously with alterations to family life and paternal authority. Rahden contended that new methods of child rearing and a more egalitarian perspective toward gender were necessary for democratic polity to succeed. Yet, while these changes were being made, he likewise noted that one particular idea held over from the earlier era and remained prominent among intellectuals from a wide range of political and cultural milieus – that of viewing the family as the biological germ cell of the nation.

Thus, despite all of the changes in Germany due to Nazism, the idea of the family as the central unit around which all else could be built remained the same. During the National Socialist era, SS men and their families had been the mainstay of this idea. As the newly-anointed, blood and racially-based Nazi aristocracy, they were ideally posed to set the standard for family life and children which other members of the Volk could eventually emulate. Exploring the ideal of fatherhood in the SS, examining the means used to encourage it, and assessing the outcome of this attempt elucidates how the SS family community was the core of that standard. The starting point in this investigation of the family community, however, is not with the SS, but with the science on which all measures designed to build that community were based: eugenics. Chapter two briefly delves into the history of eugenics, primarily focusing on the most pertinent German scientists and physicians whose ideas on marriage, family, and children provided the basis for the measures which Himmler implemented in the SS. The use of eugenics in the SS subsequently shaped not only the organization and its family community, but

\textsuperscript{51} Katharina C. Tumpek-Kjellmark, “From Hitler’s widows to Adenauer’s brides: towards a construction of gender and memory in postwar Germany, 1938-1963” (dissertation, Cornell University, 1994).
ultimately had an effect on the relationship of this science to society, both in Germany and internationally, namely the discrediting of eugenics following the Second World War.

Chapter three evaluates the history of the SS, assessing how the structure and purpose of the organization shifted throughout its two decade lifetime to meet its own needs as well as those of the party and the state. One of the most significant amendments in the organization was its self-perception as an elite order. Its elite status was originally based on its small size, but following the appointment of Himmler as Reichsführer-SS that definition changed. Possessing the right racial characteristics and hereditary lineage became the defining qualities of SS men. However, recruiting men based on their possession of Nordic blood was only the starting point in founding a long-lasting and elite aristocracy. The next step involved transmitting that blood to future generations, and chapter four examines the first step in that process: the engagement and marriage command. This order established a lengthy and complicated procedure to regulate the entire process of getting married. Yet, as Himmler’s first and most significant eugenic decree, it was the foundation of the Sippengemeinschaft and it set the basis for all future measures that regulated family life, which included not only biological prerequisites, but also the creation of new cultural ceremonies to initiate each wife into the SS family community.

Chapter five evaluates the measures from the 1930’s designed to help each SS man establish a child-rich family. Among the measures were rhetoric designed to convince every SS man that having children represented an integral duty to the party and the Reich. There was also a series of financial incentives beyond what the state already provided to the general population created to encourage SS men to have children. In addition to these policies designed to foster the growth of the population, there were new rituals established to celebrate children, especially their baptism and acceptance into the family community. Chapter six appraises the alterations made to the engagement and marriage process and the measures designed to promote and abet families because of the Second World War. Although the war necessitated many changes, the rhetoric from those years indicated that the goal of establishing the family community was as important as ever, and the modifications made to family-related policies revealed that the war was not to impede the process of building families.

While chapters four through six primarily examine the private means through which each SS man was encouraged to marry and have a family, chapter seven assesses the public discourse on family and fatherhood. In particular, the primary resource used to publicize the values and
goals of the SS not only to its own members but to the German Volk as a whole was *Das Schwarze Korps*. The family was a frequent theme in the newspaper’s articles, and there were even a couple of recurring sections dedicated exclusively to marriage and children, all of which served to publicize the naissance and augmentation of the SS family community in a positive manner. Finally, because all of this persuasion failed, chapter eight appraises why Himmler ultimately failed to achieve his population policies. A series of explanations which could have affected the decision or the ability of each SS man and his wife to have a child-rich family, such as the influence of socio-economic factors or the impact of the Great Depression, is examined.

Taken together, this research demonstrates the significance of the SS family community to the organization and to the Third Reich as both a biological and a cultural construct. It illustrates that building this community was a significant goal for Himmler, one which he dedicated much time to and one which warranted the creation of an entire office whose primary purpose was to safeguard the racial health and well-being of SS men and their families. Furthermore, by investigating the relationship between this attempt to construct a racial aristocracy and the science of eugenics, this research shows that the SS family community was not solely based on the romanticized whims of one man, but was in fact the culmination of decades of legitimate scientific and medical research which had called for the systematic regulation of a population for its own well-being as well as the future good of the nation. The endeavor to produce the SS family community therefore underscores the potential uses and misuses of applying scientific ideals to society, an aspect which, like the history and legacy of the SS, has historical and contemporary relevance.
CHAPTER 2
THE “WELLBORN” SCIENCE: EUGENICS IN A GERMAN CONTEXT

The Nazi party, including the SS, embraced racial and biological explanations of society, and its racial ideology was an amalgamation of many influences. One which had drastic implications was the science of eugenics. As one such influence, eugenics was expected to provide a scientific solution to the perceived social and demographic problems allegedly plaguing dozens of countries, especially in western Europe and North America, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among the most severe problems were fears of an overall population decline and a rise in degeneracy among the “less” desirable elements within a particular people. Eugenicists globally aspired to utilize their science to resolve these problems, and those scientists in Germany were no exception. They had proposed numerous suggestions to the Imperial and Weimar governments, and by the time the Nazi party began to achieve political power in the late 1920’s, their solutions had permeated both scientific and popular culture and shaped how many people, including those who belonged to the NSDAP and the SS, perceived the relationship among the concepts of race, health, and heredity. Assessing the development and dissemination of these ideas provides an historical and scientific context to the decisions later made by Heinrich Himmler and members of the SS; it also shows an already-existing relationship between this particular science and German society, one which the SS joined and subsequently shaped.

The methods and ideas which eugenicists inside and outside of Germany espoused originated with the work of British scientist Francis Galton. Although he did not coin the word eugenics until his 1883 book *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development*, Galton published many articles and books both prior to and following the advent of the term to convey the concepts behind his investigations of heredity.¹ His prime inspiration came from the work of his cousin, Charles Darwin. After Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, many people adopted his idea of natural selection and sought to apply it to mankind and human society.²

² Charles Darwin, *On the origin of species by means of natural selection, or the preservation of favoured races in
Galton was among the people inspired by *Origin* and dedicated much of his own research, including the work on eugenics, to exploring the implications of Darwin’s book. Overall, Galton wanted his new field to provide the foundation for producing better children. Through his studies, he alleged that children could inherit certain personal characteristics, such as judgment, imagination, and will. Galton also thought that intelligence passed from parent to child; believing that a genius would beget another genius, he wished to encourage breeding among the intelligent members of the population.

These ideas are clearly evident from Galton’s first publication on the subject, an article entitled “Hereditary Talent and Character,” which appeared in *Macmillan’s Magazine* in 1865. “I find,” Galton wrote, “that talent is transmitted by inheritance in a very remarkable degree…” He justified his conclusions in the same manner that he did with his other scientific pursuits—through statistical analysis. The numbers indicated to him that children inherited the combined attributes of their parents. He suggested that society would greatly benefit if, generation after generation, those people who possessed the finest physical and intellectual endowments united in marriage and produced children. Galton argued that his conception to improve mankind through selective marriage and breeding could be achieved if everyone agreed on its necessity.

In his article, Galton laid out a basic plan for a utopia where such improvement could take place. Galton suggested creating a competitive examination that took into account every important mental and physical quality that a person could possess. Once young men and women passed the examination, they would be encouraged to select a marriage partner from their peers. As a reward, these young couples would receive a monetary wedding present from their government, which would also bear the burden of paying for the maintenance and education of

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4 Francis Galton was hardly the first or last person to create a utopia (or a dystopia for that matter). Although not all of them explore the concepts of marriage and children, many of them examine the possible future of mankind based on use of and reliance on science, in some cases eugenics specifically. Plato created one of the earliest utopias based on science and technology in his *Republic*. Other philosophers, writers, and intellectual thinkers have since contributed to this genre; a brief sample of such people include Francis Bacon (*New Atlantis*), Thomas More (*Utopia*), Johann Valentin Andreae (*Christianopolis*), Tommaso Campanella (*City of the Sun*), Edward Bulwer-Lytton (*The Coming Race*), Edward Bellamy (*Looking Backward*), William Morris (*News from Nowhere*), H.G. Wells (*The Shape of Things to Come*), George Orwell (*Nineteen Eighty Four*), Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*), and Ursula K. Le Guin (*The Dispossessed*).
these couples’ children. In return, these children would grow up to serve the state. Galton believed that such an arrangement would improve the hereditary endowment of the population.5

Publishing additional articles and books over the next four and a half decades, Galton continued to outline the purpose and value of eugenics. Among the topics he investigated, he wrote on the continuing significance of statistics as well as the need to examine the quantity and quality of offspring on a national level and to determine how the state influenced the fecundity of its population.6 Galton additionally delivered many lectures throughout his career which highlighted themes important to the continuing growth of eugenics. In 1901, he gave the second annual Huxley Memorial Lecture at the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. The focus of his speech was the improvement of mankind and the value of such an endeavor for anthropology. Galton also articulated his contention that “the brains of the nation lie in the higher of our classes.”7 He reaffirmed this sentiment when he expressed the opinion that each class of people tended only to marry others from the same class, and this form of marriage produced “a marked effect in the richness of brain power of the more cultured families.”8 On the other end of the socio-economic spectrum were the people who offered no useful services to society, who destroyed rather than improved that society, and who, as individuals, were perhaps incapable of any form of improvement. The nation as a whole would benefit the most, argued Galton, by increasing the reproductive productivity of the higher classes while benignly limiting the reproduction of other classes. While he did not outline a plan to achieve the latter, he contended that the former could be attained by encouraging early marriages and providing suitable women with dowries for the establishment of a home. Moreover, Galton stated that people should be encouraged to feel enthusiastic about this aim to improve the race,

5 Ibid., 165, 319-21. This article was not the only place where Galton laid out a plan for a eugenic utopia. He created a utopia called “Kantsaywhere.” However, only fragments of this text remain, primarily reproduced in Karl Pearson’s multi-volume biography of Galton: The Life, Letters, and Labours of Francis Galton (London: Cambridge University Press, 1914, 1924, and 1930). According to historian Peter Weingart, without a complete text, only an incomplete picture can be drawn for what Galton had in mind. Peter Weingart, “Eugenic Utopias – Blueprints for the Rationalization of Human Evolution,” in Nineteen Eighty-Four: Science between Utopia and Dystopia, edited by Everett Mendelsohn and Helga Nowotny (Boston: Lancaster, 1984): 175.


8 Ibid., 663.
so enthusiastic, in fact, that it could give rise to a sense of obligation where the people viewed an early marriage as a natural and advantageous measure to produce healthy children. He concluded by noting that unbiased scientific inquiry would demonstrate that such measures would make the improvement of mankind an attainable goal.\(^9\)

These few examples provide a brief overview of how Galton saw eugenics and its application to society. In his own lifetime and following his death in 1911, scientists not only in Britain but around the world adopted eugenics as a legitimate science. Through both public and private funding, more than thirty countries across five continents developed eugenics movements between 1890 and 1930.\(^{10}\) Each country had its own demographic concerns, and those concerns dictated the solutions that eugenicists created. For example, proponents of eugenics in Britain continued to pursue an agenda which focused on the hereditary endowment of people based on class while eugenicists in Brazil were more concerned with the racial composition of the population. This simple comparison demonstrates the subjectivity of eugenics; in the quest to rectify supposed biological inequalities, eugenicists had varying opinions regarding who among the people within a given society represented its “superior” and “inferior” elements. At the time, however, eugenicists deemed their work objective, and they generally supported the research of one another on a national and international basis.\(^{11}\)

Although eugenics research was conducted in many different countries, the most important eugenicists with regards to the development of Nazi racial thought were fellow countrymen. Those who advocated eugenics in Germany during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries primarily had a middle class upbringing, and despite later associations of eugenics with conservative parties in general and National Socialism in particular, their political

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\(^9\) Ibid., 663-64.


\(^{11}\) There were some minor divisions among the scientists who supported eugenics. Eugenicists in Britain, the United States and Germany tended to favor scientific explanations solely based on the genetic work of Gregor Mendel, whereas those in France, Italy, and the countries of Latin America espoused explanations supported by the work of Jean Baptiste de Lamarck, who had argued for the significance of environmental influences. Despite these differences, there were no major disputes between those who adopted a Mendelian perspective versus those who adopted a Lamarckian one. The major exception was among the scientists in Germany and the Soviet Union in the 1930’s, with the Germans supporting a Mendelian perspective and the Soviets a Lamarckian one. In this case, each side argued that the other was not basing its research in science, but was instead allowing its political system to influence scientific research. For more information on this debate, see Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 34-38.
affiliations varied. Comparable to their colleagues across the English Channel, as well those in the United States, German eugenicists readily accepted the then-common belief which posited that Caucasians were racially and culturally superior to other people. Some of them did promote the notion of Aryan supremacy, though many did not. It should be noted that by the twentieth century, Aryan was one of the two terms used in Germany (though also within Europe as well) to refer to people who possessed the desired characteristics. However, Aryan was primarily considered a linguistic term, referring to the language family which had common ancestry in India. A second term, Nordic, referred specifically to people from northern Europe. Although the two terms had originally been used interchangeably, by the first decades of the twentieth century, Nordic had emerged as the conventional term to refer to the people who possessed the appropriate characteristics and was more accepted by the scientific community. Even the Nazi government preferred the term Nordic.

On the whole, early German eugenicists tended to focus more on the effects of class rather than on racial divisions. They defined the fitness of “superior” and “inferior” individuals based on their productivity and achievements, which reflected their collective upper and middle class bias. Eugenicists were additionally concerned with the social and demographic problems due to the late and rapid industrialization and urbanization of Germany. As many of them were trained as physicians and saw themselves as the custodians of the health of the nation, they saw a means of redemption in eugenics. This is not to suggest that all German doctors advocated eugenics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but a great many of them did. Eugenics represented a solution in which they could rationally manage the reproductive capabilities of the German people. It would allow them a means to shape the biological heritage of their nation by

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13 Ibid., 80, 90, and 93-94. As will be seen later in this chapter, Hitler used the term Aryan extensively throughout *Mein Kampf*. However, as Christopher Hutton has shown, by the mid 1930’s, Nazi racial scientists had deemed the term Aryan unscientific, and the Nazi government preferred to use the term Nordic or German-blooded in official documentation. However, the term Aryan was still used in two contexts: one, in popular speech (thus, leading to the misconception that the term was widely used and scientifically acceptable) and two, in the context of non-Aryan descent (i.e. as a synonym for being Jewish). This latter use of the term was utilized by the SS, as noted in chapters 3 and 4. The prime use of the term Aryan in the SS was with regards to completing a genealogical tree and proving oneself free of Jewish ancestry. Otherwise, the term Nordic was more commonly used in SS documentation as well.

One of the earliest advocates of eugenics in Germany was physician Wilhelm Schallmayer, whose work in a psychiatric clinic led him to doubt the ability of medicine to improve the health of the race. Overall, Schallmayer staunchly rejected the idea of Aryan supremacy, and he criticized those who found inspiration in such visions as posited by nineteenth century racial aggrandizers Joseph Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Schallmayer did, however, support the ideas of the Monist League, founded by German embryologist and zoologist Ernst Haeckel. The Monist League promoted a strong state led by a biological elite, but feared that the biological decay of Germany would lead to its downfall. Monists wanted to enlighten their fellow Germans about this decline and convince them of the necessity of eugenic reform.\footnote{Weiss, “The Race Hygiene Movement in Germany,” 18; Proctor, \textit{Racial Hygiene}, 21; and Gasman, 90-93.} Much of Schallmayer’s writing showed the influence of Monism. In addition, he wrote the earliest eugenic tract in Germany in 1891: “Concerning the threatening physical degeneration of civilized humanity.” In this essay, Schallmayer stressed using education and propaganda to achieve eugenic goals and introduced the idea of marriage restrictions via state intervention. He furthermore suggested that the state should issue each person a health passport on which physicians could record the health of the patient; these passports would allow the state to gather medical information about its citizens and would hopefully, argued Schallmayer, assist in the regulation of marriages.

In 1900, Schallmayer entered and won an essay contest co-sponsored by Ernst Haeckel and Friedrich Krupp, the son of the Essen munitions baron. In response to the question, “What can we learn from the theory of evolution about internal political development and state legislation?,” Schallmayer wrote the essay “Heredity and selection in the life-process of nations.” In it, he discussed how the twentieth century would be called upon to apply Darwin’s theories, which taught society the political lesson that biological vitality formed the basis of a state’s long-
term power. Neglecting the biological fitness of a nation could lead to its downfall, and a good politician would wisely manage his human resources. Schallmayer argued that Germany should actively regulate biological efficiency by encouraging the best elements to reproduce. He did not openly approve of state legislation to achieve this goal, but he still emphasized the necessity for taking positive measures to improve German society. These measures included promoting early marriages, introducing monetary allowances for children, and allowing polygamy for men. Schallmayer further noted that the only people eligible for such measures should be those who had passed a medical examination administered by a physician. Those people who failed this physical were to be prevented from marrying and reproducing. This essay, published as a book in 1903, became the standard work on eugenics in Germany for the next two decades.17

Another physician who facilitated the advancement of eugenics in turn of the century Germany was Alfred Ploetz. Ploetz’s medical studies and service in a Swiss hospital led him to believe that he must work not only to preserve the German race, but to improve it as well. The major thrust of his argument resembled the dilemma posed by Darwin in *The Descent of Man*; Ploetz questioned how man could reconcile humanistic ideals and the desire to help others with the interests of race. He wondered if Germany should continue to expand its social welfare at the expense of the overall health of the nation, and he inquired if this policy would increase the number of unhealthy individuals while depriving the nation of healthy ones.18

Ploetz concluded that the state should balance the concept of compassion with the need for biological advancement. He felt that the state should not abandon its health policies, but should work toward improving the hereditary fitness of its population. He named this improvement race hygiene (Rassenhygiene), a term which first appeared in print in his 1895 book *The Fitness of Our Race and the Protection of the Weak*. To Ploetz, race dealt with how interbreeding within a group of humans over generations had created similar physical and mental traits among the people, and race hygiene denoted the health of these various groups. The term had a larger scope than eugenics because it focused on both the quantity and quality of a

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population, thus not only considering the good of an individual, but the good of an entire race. Ploetz contended that race hygiene would lead to a more humane form of selection which would eliminate the negative qualities within a population. He used his new science primarily to study white people, and while he periodically utilized the term Aryan, he kept his more racist views regarding the struggle for existence of the Nordic race against other races private.\(^\text{19}\) He additionally founded the first journal in the world dedicated to eugenics in 1904, *Archive for Race and Societal Biology*, and dedicated the first issue to Haeckel as well as German biologist and genetic pioneer August Weismann. From the outset, Ploetz sought contributions that discussed the preservation and improvement of the race.\(^\text{20}\)

Alfred Ploetz and Wilhelm Schallmayer represented two of the many physicians who expressed concerns with the condition of the population in Wilhelmine Germany. This apprehension among medical and scientific professionals intensified during the First World War. Eugenicists worried about the dysgenic effects of the war, namely the consequences resulting from millions of deaths, which not only stripped Germany of its youngest, strongest, and most fit men, but of their potential future offspring as well. Eugenicists attempted to persuade the Imperial government to enact reforms to prevent further degeneration. They suggested that the government should provide economic privileges to large families, abolish impediments preventing men in the military from marrying early, persuade a bride and a groom to exchange health certificates before marriage, and awaken the youth to their future obligations. Despite this encouragement from the scientific community, the Wilhelmine government did not pass one eugenics related law.\(^\text{21}\)

Germany’s defeat in the First World War brought many changes, including the fall of the monarchy and the rise of a republic. This political shift, however, did little to alter the goals of the eugenics movement. In the early 1920’s, German eugenicists eschewed international


gatherings, most notably the 1921 Second International Congress of Eugenics, because of their 
aversion for the Treaty of Versailles and as a means to protest the occupation of lands in western 
Germany by former Allied powers. Beyond this resentment—which they shared with nearly 
the entire German population—German eugenicists continued to participate in scientific 
developments personally through correspondence with colleagues abroad and professionally 
through publications. Among the publications, none was as influential domestically or 
internationally as the two-volume work *Human Heredity and Racial Hygiene*.23

Written by botanist and physician Erwin Baur, anthropologist Eugen Fischer, and 
physician Fritz Lenz, this book became the standard text on heredity and eugenics. Simply 
known then and even today as Baur-Fischer-Lenz, the two volumes were originally published in 
1921 by Munich publisher Julius Lehmann. Although now primarily associated with the vast 
number of periodicals and books produced by the Nazi party and its members, Lehmann’s firm 
published more works on racial hygiene and associated fields than all other German publishers 
combined, including acquiring Ploetz’s *Archive for Race and Societal Biology* following the 
First World War.24 The production of this substantial body of work by a conservative firm 
certainly facilitated the association of eugenics with more conservative political parties as well as 
with the Nazi party.

The Baur-Fischer-Lenz book covered a wide range of topics, most of which eugenicists 
had advocated for decades. After commenting in the introduction how German society was “in a 
degenerative phase,” the authors set out to explain how society had reached this state and the 
methods through which it was and was not possible to ameliorate the situation.25 As others 
before them had suggested, the decline in the quality and quantity of the population directly 
resulted from the best members of population reproducing less than the average members; Lenz 
even specifically defined the best as the more propertied and educated classes, thus highlighting

22 Weiss, “German Eugenics,” 23 and Bentley Glass, “A Hidden Chapter of German Eugenics between the Two 
Band I: Menschliche Erblichkeitslehre* (Munich: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1921) [hereafter Baur-Fischer-Lenz Band I] 
and Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, and Fritz Lenz, *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene. 
Band II: Menschliche Auslese und Rassenhygiene* (Munich: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1921) [hereafter Baur-Fischer- 
Lenz Band II]. The first volume of the book was also published in English: *Human Heredity*, translated by Eden 
and Cedar Paul (London: Allen and Unwin, 1931) [hereafter *Human Heredity*].
188.
the class bias he shared with many other eugenicists. The authors argued that education about racial and biological matters would improve the current generation, but such knowledge could not influence any subsequent generations because environmental influences had no bearing on a person’s genetic disposition. Instead, one of the best means to discover a person’s hereditary traits was through an investigation of his genealogical tree. Such an inquiry would allow scientists to acquire a stronger understanding of the racial composition of the people as individuals and as a collective, which in turn would enable them to examine how social and political influences affected the people and to aid the state in creating legislation concerning racial hygiene and population politics (Bevölkerungspolitik).26

The authors additionally summarized the physical characteristics and geographic locations of the four main races found in Europe: Nordic, Mediterranean, Alpine, and Dinaric. The distinguishing traits of the Nordic race found in northern, northwestern, and central Europe included an average height for a male of 1.73 meters (just under 5 feet, 7 inches), a long and narrow skull, light blond or reddish hair, and light blue or gray eyes.27 Beyond these physical traits, the authors commented on the contributions of the Nordic race to European and world history, specifically that modern western culture primarily derived from places where a strong Nordic influence existed. Great political, military, and cultural figures predominantly descended from the Nordic race. As an example, the authors cited leaders from both alliances in the First World War: German generals Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff; French officers Joseph Joffre and Ferdinand Foch; British prime minister David Lloyd George; and American president Woodrow Wilson.28 Mentioning leaders on both sides of the war was a rather notable concession for the time, given the pervasive outrage in Germany against the Allies for blaming the entire nation for the war. Then again, suggesting that both sides possessed the same biological and racial heritage may have been a subconscious method by the authors of lessening the shame and humiliation caused by losing the war.

Finally, the authors made some suggestions regarding how the people and the state could strengthen Germany. Among the proposals designed to fortify the health of the population were maintaining marriages, providing couples with monetary allowances for their children, providing state officials bonuses for having children, and convincing people that more than two children

26 Baur-Fischer-Lenz, Band I, 2; Baur-Fischer-Lenz, Band II, 71; and Human Heredity, 41, 67, 101, 107, and 565.
per marriage were needed to sustain the population. The point of these measures was to foster a population that would best support the state, and many of them were clearly designed to aid the well-educated middle and upper classes – again, the very classes represented by the authors and their fellow eugenicists. However, this emphasis on social and economic traits also reflected their view that, despite having laid out the physical characteristics of the Nordic race and having suggested that the best leaders of the world descended from that race, the authors did not necessarily correlate looks with talent. In fact, Lenz specifically wrote in the second volume: “We cannot save the Nordic race by breeding blond hair and blue eyes…the state is best served by supporting families based on the criterion of their general efficiency for the Volk as a whole, irrespective of their external status.”

Over the next two decades, a total of five editions and hundreds of mostly positive reviews domestically and internationally allowed for the permeation of the ideas presented in the Baur-Fischer-Lenz book. All three authors along with other luminaries of the eugenics movement, including Alfred Ploetz, continued to publish articles and books to support these and other arguments. Additionally, the University of Munich established an institute dedicated to race hygiene in 1923; headed by Lenz, it was the first of what would become more than forty

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30 Sheila Faith Weiss strongly underscores this point in her article “Race and Class in Fritz Lenz’s Eugenics,” Medizinhistorisches Journal, volume 27 (1992): 12. “…the almost laughable manner in which he [Lenz] projected idealized German educated middle class and Prussian values on to ‘Nordic man’ were of course not recognized by him as prejudices…” Above all, Lenz believed himself to be an objective scientist who arrived at his conclusions after careful consideration of the facts.” Furthermore, as noted by Robert Proctor in Racial Hygiene, Lenz firmly believed that science was value-free, and while science could inform politics, the reverse was not desirable, thus explaining Lenz’s firm adherence to Mendelian inheritance and his mockery of scientists in the Soviet Union for allowing the politics in their country to dictate that they had to follow neo-Lamarckism. Proctor, 37 and 49.
33 A few examples of such works produced in the 1920’s and early 1930’s include Eugen Fischer, Rasse und Rassentstehung beim Menschen (Berlin: Verlag Ullstein, 1927); Eugen Fischer, Der völkische Staat, biologisch gesehen (Berlin: Junker und Dümnnaupt Verlag, 1933); Eugen Fischer, “Forschungsinstitute zur wissenschaftlichen Unterbauung deutschvölkischer, rassenhygienischer Bevölkerungspolitik,” MPG, I Abteilung / Repositur 1A / Nummer 2404, pages 22-26; Fritz Lenz, “Rassenhygiene (Eugenik),” in Handbuch der Vererbungsgewissenshaft, volume 3, edited by Erwin Baur and Max Hartmann (Berlin: Borntrager, 1932); and Alfred Ploetz, “Rassenhygiene als Grundlage der Friedenspolitik,” Ahnen un Enkel: Beiträge zur Sippenforschung, Heimatkunde und Erblehre, volume 3 (March 1936): 25-29.
academic institutes throughout the country by 1945. Combined with the popular co-authored book, this institute position solidified Fritz Lenz’s position as the foremost expert in eugenics in Germany during the Weimar era, and both the Nazi party and the SS most certainly found this professional clout useful when Lenz spoke positively of their racial ideals in the early 1930’s. Beyond the aforementioned authors, other scientists throughout the 1920’s and early 1930’s also conducted their own research into eugenics and its benefits for German society. Among them was anthropologist Hans F.K. Günther, who by the end of the 1920’s had become the most popular racial theorist in the country. His works, such as The Racial Elements of the German Volk and The Racial Elements of European History, explained the racial divisions throughout Europe’s past and present. He too highlighted the significance of the Nordic race for western culture, noting that the leading figures in ancient Greece, Rome, and Persia all possessed Nordic blood. Günther found the same to be true of his time; the leading ranks in modern Germany – the upper and middle classes – carried the most Nordic blood. The dominance of this blood, however, was threatened by three aspects of modern life: the effects of the Industrial Revolution, which paved the way for inferior people to thrive because of the corresponding rise in philanthropic social measures; the legacy of the French Revolution, which fostered the ideal of equality of man, a theory that he found biologically untenable; and the lower birth rates among the middle and upper classes, which jeopardized the vitality of the race.

Günther additionally chastised the governments of Europe for not having the courage to implement the theories of Charles Darwin as well as the early genetic pioneer Gregor Mendel. Conversely, he praised the United States, especially for the sterilization laws passed by some

34 Paul Weindling, Health, Race, and German politics between national unification and Nazism, 1870-1945 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 515-16.
35 A few other examples of physicians and scientists who wrote works designed to explain and popularize eugenics include Konrad Dürre, Erbbiologischer und rassenhygienischer Wegweiser für Jedermann (Berlin: Alfred Metzner Verlag, 1933); Hermann Muckermann, Vererbung biologische Grundlage der Eugenik (Potsdam: Müller & I. Kipenheuer GmbH, 1932); Hermann Muckermann, Kind und Volk: der biologische Wert der Treue zu den eugenischen Gesetzen beim Aufbau der Familie (Freiburg: Herder, 1933); Hermann Muckermann, Eugenik (Berlin: F. Dümmler, 1934); Hermann Paull, Deutsche Rassenhygiene. II Teil: Erbgesundheitspflege (Eugenik), Rassenpflege (Görlitz: Verlag für Sippenforschung und Wappenkunde, 1934); Hermann Werner Siemens, Grundzüge der Vererbungslehre, der Rassenhygiene und der Bevölkerungspolitik (Munich: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1917); Hermann Werner Siemens, Vererbungslehre: Rassenhygiene und Bevölkerungspolitik für Gebildete aller Berufe (Munich: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1934); and Martin Staemmler, Rassenpflege im völkischen Staat (Munich: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1934).
36 Among his many publications, additional books by Günther include Adel und Rasse (Munich: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1926); Der nordische Gedanke unter den Deutschen (Munich: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1927); Herkunft und Rassengeschichte der Germanen (Munich: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1935); Führeradels durch Sippenpflege (Munich: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1936); and Formen und Urgeschichte der Ehe (Munich: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1940).
states; he called those laws “a model for the future,” arguing that saving the best racial elements within a people “is a question of finding means whereby the hereditary part of any ill-endowed individual can be separated out of the inheritance of the people without his being in any way harmed in his own individual life. The distinction must be drawn between the ‘right to live’ and the ‘right to give life.’”

This comment about “the right to live” versus “the right to give life” echoed the sentiment present in many works on eugenics. This science was not about who had the right to live or not, but about which people had the best biological (or racial, financial, or educational) lineage and how the plentiful reproduction of that lineage would benefit the people and the state. Such sentiments did categorize people as “more” and “less” valuable, and this type of delineation did have fatal consequences during the Third Reich. However, no eugenicist ever emphatically argued for the destruction of life, only for the prevention of creating lives that would have little to no value for the state and the race.

One final person who examined the vitality of the people and its impact on the population was statistician Friedrich Burgdörfer. In 1929, as Director of the Population Division of the Reich Statistical Office (Statistisches Reichsamt), he quantified the losses that Germany had experienced as a result of the First World War. Due to the war itself, the Allied blockade of Germany afterwards, and the 1918 influenza epidemic, Burgdörfer calculated that Germany had lost between twelve and thirteen million people. He further quantified the effects of those

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37 Hans F.K. Günther, *The Racial Elements of European History*, translated by G.C. Wheeler (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1970), 245 and Hans F.K. Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* (Munich: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1924). In expressing this concept of “right to live” versus “right to give life,” Günther was expressing ideas discussed in an uncited work by Norwegian biologist and eugenicist Jon Alfred Mjøen. This idea had also been expressed by British statistician Karl Pearson, who was the first Galton Professor of Eugenics at the University College London, in his 1912 speech *Darwinism, Medical Progress, and Eugenics*: “The right to live does not connote the right of each man to reproduce his kind…As we lessen the stringency of natural selection, and more and more of the weaklings and the unfit survive, we must increase the standard, mental and physical, of parentage.”

38 Eric Weitz is the only historian I have found so far who argues that one eugenicist in particular, Alfred Ploetz, advanced the suggestion that those people who had unwanted traits should be exterminated. The basis of Weitz’s argument is his translation of selected passages of works by Ploetz; with this argument, Weitz in particular says that he is countering the argument made by Paul Weindling, who suggests in his interpretation of Ploetz’s writing that Ploetz did not have such genocidal intents in mind. Eric D. Weitz, *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 42 and 265, footnote 109 and Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, 131.

39 Additional works by Friedrich Burgdörfer include *Sterben die weissen Völker: die Zukunft der weissen und farbigen Völker im Lichte der biologischen Statistik* (Munich: G.D.W. Callaway, 1934); *Bevölkerungsentwicklung im Dritten Reich: Tatsachen und Kritik* (Heidelberg: K. Vowinckel, 1935); and *Volkdeutsche Zukunft: eine biologisch-statistische Betrachtung der gesamtdeutschen Bevölkerungsfrage* (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1938).

losses in his published works, especially in his book, *Volk without Youth*, where he calculated how this smaller German population would fare in the coming generations. Burgdörfer labeled the family as the biological cell of the people, but he demonstrated with a series of statistical calculations that the population of Germany could not survive when each healthy marriage only produced an average of two children; if such a two-child-system continued, he estimated that the German population would die out in approximately three centuries. A Volk without a healthy, burgeoning youth, argued Burgdörfer, was a Volk without a future. Only a state which supported the creation of prolific families could counter such a debilitating and bleak future.  

Burgdörfer’s calculations on reproduction and its effect on the future population permeated other literature on population politics and eugenics written by eugenicists, but more specifically those works later produced by the Nazi government, whom he continued to work for as Director of the Reich Office for Statistics, and the SS.

Through individual and collective publications, these men all contributed to the definition and diffusion of eugenics throughout Germany. By the late 1920’s, decades of research and publications had drawn attention to the potential demographic and racial crises as well as legitimized eugenics as a science worthy of study, discussion, and implementation. Though the early Weimar government paid little attention to this information, things began to change by the mid to late 1920’s when the government started to respond to the appeals of eugenicists to take action. This change in perspective of the Weimar government resulted from a larger change in its attitude toward science. At this time, the emphasis on science shifted away from an earlier perspective which valued pure science for its own sake toward one which underscored the importance of the application of science. By claiming that their ideas could be directly utilized to improve the health and well-being of the German population, eugenicists could strongly argue for the utility of their science.

The vacillation by the government allowed for the founding of a new institute for

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42 The Nazi government and the SS were liberally using Burgdörfer’s statistics and charts by the mid 1930’s, often times without citing the original source, which was more often than not *Volk ohne Jugend*. However, by this time, Burgdörfer had served as the Director of the Reich Office for Statistics for several years both under the Weimar and Nazi governments.

eugenics, one not tied to a university, as the one in Munich, but instead one associated with a prestigious scientific body, the Kaiser Wilhelm Society, which had existed since 1911 and had a network of institutes each dedicated to a branch of science. On September 15, 1927, with financial and political support from the Prussian and Reich governments as well as funds from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics opened in Berlin. This twenty-ninth KWI was the “brain-child” of biologist Hermann Muckermann, although the name for the institute came from its first director, the distinguished anthropologist Eugen Fischer.\(^{44}\) Fischer recognized that the Weimar government, then dominated by socialist and center political parties, might not have supported the institute so generously if the words “race” or “race hygiene” appeared in its title.\(^{45}\)

As director, Fischer set the agenda for the new institute, claiming that its research would investigate human races and their differences; the results of this research would culminate in measures that, when implemented, would improve the hereditary health of the people. He filled positions in the KWI-A with colleagues whose work complemented this agenda. Among those associates were Muckermann, who headed the department of eugenics, and Fischer’s former student, pathologist and geneticist Otmar von Verschuer, who led the department of human heredity and in 1942 succeeded Fischer as director. Fritz Lenz joined the institute in the early 1930’s and replaced Muckermann in 1934. Other prominent scientists associated with the KWI-A included Fischer and Lenz’s co-author Erwin Baur, Ernst Rüdin, a psychiatrist and director of the KWI for Genealogy, and Carl Correns, a botanist, geneticist, and director of the KWI for Biology.\(^{46}\)

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Besides offering the state scientific research, the KWI-A lived up to the expectation that the science it produced would have practical applications for society. One of the ways in which the institute followed through on this expectation was that it—unlike most other KWIs—offered courses. The primarily recipients of these educational seminars in eugenics and genetics were medical and welfare officials who worked for the government. These classes allowed the scientists of the KWI-A to spread their ideas on eugenics while establishing a strong relationship with government officials, a relationship that continued after 1933 under the National Socialist government and extended to party organizations, notably the SS. Eugenicists associated with the institute, and even those independent of it, became willing to support the NSDAP because, as many of them acknowledged, it was the first political party that advocated racial measures and it was the first government that put such measures into practice.

Many of them also publicly praised Adolf Hitler, who had very clearly laid out his views on racial matters in his book *Mein Kampf*. To Hitler, prominent cultures of the past and the present flourished only because of the contributions of the members of society who descended from the Aryan race; they alone had produced great achievements in art, science, and technology. The superior qualities of the Aryans came from their blood, not their nationality, and according to Hitler, if this superior culture builder died, humanity as a whole would suffer from this loss. He also discussed the necessity of maintaining racial purity, specifically suggesting that a racial crossing between a higher and a lower race would only lead to the desecration of the intellectual and physical abilities of the former and an overall decline in civilization. To prevent this demise, Hitler argued that the youth should be educated about the value of race and learn how they represented an important link in the longevity of the race. He believed their education remained incomplete unless they clearly understood the necessity of keeping their race and blood pure. Thus, Hitler contended that the state had a role in educating these young citizens about their heritage. By placing race in the center of all of its activities, the government could encourage the reproduction and development of its best racial elements. Through this conscious regard for the racial welfare of the people, Hitler claimed that the state

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would secure the future of Germany by halting its present racial decay. He likewise made it a tenant of the Nazi party to secure the existence and reproduction of the Aryan race.  

It is not entirely certain which works on eugenics and other related fields Hitler may or may not have read prior to writing *Mein Kampf* in the mid 1920’s. Historians Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann have suggested that Hitler’s book shows traces of ideas from literature written by philosopher Immanuel Kant in addition to Galton, Gobineau, Haeckel, Schallmayer, and Ploetz. The two historians admit that there is no clear way to determine whether Hitler actually read any of the works written by these men or if he was only familiar with their ideas because he was acquainted with the non-scientific literature which popularized them. However, according to an interview between chemist Benno Müller-Hill and Widukind Lenz, the son of Fritz Lenz, Hitler may have read the Baur-Fischer-Lenz book around the time he wrote his political testament. Widukind Lenz informed Müller-Hill that his father had never personally met Hitler, but someone at the Lehmann publishing company had informed him that Hitler had received and read a copy of his co-authored book.

Despite the lack of transparency regarding what sources might have influenced Hitler’s racial thinking, many scientists and physicians in Germany still praised his willingness to address Germany’s racial and demographic problems. While most of this acclaim for Hitler came after President Paul von Hindenburg appointed him Chancellor on January 30, 1933, and while many scientists – especially those funded by the state – may have had an ulterior motive for their plaudits, the strongest approbation for Hitler and his views was actually written prior to the beginning of the Third Reich. In 1931, Fritz Lenz wrote an article for *Archive for Race and Societal Biology*, whose editorial board he had served on since 1912. Entitled “The Position of National Socialism toward Racial Hygiene,” he opened by stating that “the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP) is the first political party not only in Germany but at all which


49 Burleigh and Wippermann, 37-39. 


advances race hygiene as a central demand of its program.”  

Lenz then described Hitler and highlighted passages in *Mein Kampf* that demonstrated Hitler’s commitment to race hygiene. He commented that Hitler did not cite any scholarly works, but noted that he understood the basic concepts of race hygiene well and that several of Hitler’s points reflected arguments made in his own co-authored book. Lenz claimed that Hitler perhaps exaggerated the damage caused by racial mixing, but the NSDAP leader appreciated the value of an early marriage to a healthy Volk and recognized the necessity of sterilizing inferior individuals. Lenz concluded by returning to his opening point, that the National Socialist movement and its millions of members supported race hygiene, and he praised its leader as “the first politician with a large influence who recognized race hygiene as a central task of all politics and who wants to fight energetically for it.”

As the Nazi party and its leader were so dedicated to this perspective, Lenz suggested that other political parties across the spectrum could no longer ignore the issue.

Beyond Lenz, other professionals – physicians, scientists, lawyers, statisticians – also praised the work of Hitler and his government throughout the duration of the Third Reich. In general, they identified the value of a healthy population to the state and the necessity of implementing policies inspired by race hygiene to prevent the German Volk from deteriorating. They also commended Hitler and his government for taking action to save the population from this decay. Eugen Fischer represented one of the professionals who publicly acknowledged the efforts of Hitler’s government, although he had good reason, for the sake of his institute, to

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53 Ibid., 308.

remain on good terms with Nazi officials. Otmar von Verschuer likewise recognized in his works over the course of a decade how the National Socialist state had turned rhetoric into reality. He concurred with the sentiments of Fritz Lenz when he stated: “The Führer of the German Reich is the first statesman who has made the findings of hereditary biology and race hygiene a leading principle in state leadership.”

All policies concerning population politics served the advancement of the German Volk; because of the proliferation of such measures, von Verschuer claimed that physicians now had a greater role in caring for the welfare of the nation’s population, including ensuring the reproduction of hereditarily healthy families. Finally, Alfred Ploetz complimented Hitler and his party toward the end of the 1930’s for making education about blood and race central to their movement. Such an endeavor, he suggested, would revolutionize mankind’s knowledge of its past and its future. In a second article co-authored with Ernst Rüdin, Ploetz noted that because of Adolf Hitler’s dedication to the German Volk, no past German leader was as loved by his Volk as Hitler.

While individual support for Hitler and National Socialism manifested itself in the form of published praise, on an institutional level, the KWI-A showed its support by continuing to demonstrate its utility to the state. Fischer deliberately made the services of the KWI-A appealing to the new government by selling its work as a vital resource. He noted in early July 1933, “As the hygienist stood at the disposal of the old state and successfully carried out the fight against epidemics, so the new state requires the race hygienist. He is the guardian of the heritage and racial worth of our Volk.”

Nazi officials, such as Arthur Gütt, a physician and health minister in the Reich Ministry of the Interior (Reichsministerium des Innern), did recognize that Fischer’s institute represented an irreplaceable asset for the Third Reich. He attended the first board of directors meeting following the Nazi assumption of power and specifically asked the

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58 “Forschungsinstitute zur wissenschaftlichen Unterbauung,” MPG, I Abteilung / Repositur 1A / Nummer 2404, pages 22.
KWI-A to continue to serve the Reich, especially with establishing racial policies. Eventually Gütt along with Walter Groß, a physician and leader of the Nazi Office for Racial Policy (Rassenpolitische Amt), Leonardo Conti, a physician and Reich Health Leader (Reichsgesundheitsführer), and Bernard Rust, the head of the Reich Ministry for Science, Art, and Education (Reichserziehungsministerium), served on the KWI-A board of directors.

Throughout the rest of the 1930's, the institute increased the number of educational courses it offered on eugenics, heredity, and racial care for medical, legal, and state personnel. It even designed ones specifically for SS doctors, a measure that will be discussed in detail later. Thousands of state officials – the very people who created and executed racial policies in the Third Reich – routinely attended these courses taught by Fischer, Lenz, and von Verschuer among others and formed another connection between government and scientific authorities. This coordination between the state and German scientific community did not come without difficulties. Not all Nazi officials were pleased with Fischer and his management of the KWI-A. However, the prestige that he wielded domestically and internationally for his anthropological work combined with the continual support of Arthur Gütt ensured that Fischer remained in place until he chose to retire, allowing the relationship between the KWI-A and the Nazi government to remain intact. In general, the relationship literally paid off for the institute, as monetary support from the Nazi government increased almost every year until the outbreak of the Second World War. These increased funds allowed Fischer to hire more experts who in turn offered more courses for Nazi bureaucrats, thus enabling the state to implement its racial agenda promptly and efficiently.

Beyond the KWI-A, several eugenicists further solidified this scientific-state relationship by serving on government commissions related to eugenics and public health, most notably the Expert Council for Population and Racial Policy (Sachverständigenbeirat für Bevölkerungs- und Rassenpolitik), established in June 1933 by Wilhelm Frick, the Reich Minister of the Interior. In his address at the first meeting, the minister showed how attuned the Nazi government was to population problems and the solutions suggested by eugenicists. He claimed that Germany had

59 Berez and Weiss, 174.
61 For more information, see chapter 4.
the difficult task of stopping the national and cultural ruin which had led to a disastrous decrease in the number of births per year. Frick noted that a “healthy” German family had two or less children while an “unhealthy” family had two or three times this number. He did not define healthy or unhealthy in this address, but as he subsequently spoke about birth control, morality, and family size, it is reasonable to presume that he had the socio-economic values of the eugenicists in the audience in mind as opposed to racial demarcations. Frick recognized the value of eugenics research and a sound population policy, and he ended his speech with a hopeful note for future possibilities: “I see the greatest aim and duty of the Government of our national revolution in warranting the improvement and preservation of our German people in the heart of Europe.” This last statement showed how the Nazi leadership identified the need for biological fitness among its population, recognition that satisfied the views which German eugenicists had publicly advocated for decades.

Lenz, Ploetz, and Günther attended this speech, and these three scientists, along with Rüdin, served on council committees with the following party and state officials: Gütt, Burgdörfer, Reich medical leader (Reichärztführer) Gerhard Wagner, director of the Reich Office for Volk Health (Volkgesundheitsdienst) Falk Ruttke, leader of the SS (Reichsführer-SS) Heinrich Himmler, and Reich Agricultural Leader and head of the SS Race and Settlement Main Office (Reichsbauernführer and Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt-SS) Richard Walther Darré. The Expert Council never became a central agency responsible for designing Nazi racial policies, but it did nonetheless bring scientists together with party members who had likeminded ideas, most notably Himmler, Darré, Gütt, and Ruttke – all of whom belonged the SS. These committees aimed to harmonize the work of the government with the demographic and racial needs of the Volk. They focused on reorganizing tax statutes so that they benefitted racially healthy, large families; compiling statistics on the causes of the birth decline in the country; proposing monetary measures designed to allow mothers to remain at home full time; and forming race offices and educational courses to coordinate the instruction of racial policies for

64 Ibid., 37-38, quote 38.
state, military, and party officials. In reality, very few practical suggestions ever emanated from these committees. The one major exception was the July 14, 1933 Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring (Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses vom 14. Juli 1933); primarily written by Frick, the committee did provide him with scientific, and in the case of Ruttke legal, advice for this sterilization law. Sterilization had been illegal under the previous two governments; it fell under the part of the penal code that dealt with bodily injury. Two months prior to passing the sterilization law, in May 1933, the Nazi government had amended the penal code definition of bodily injury to make voluntary eugenic sterilization legal while keeping voluntary sterilization for contraceptive purposes illegal. The subsequent July law reflected a proposal that the Weimar government had contemplated a year earlier except for two crucial differences. Whereas the Weimar bill allowed for voluntary sterilization due to any hereditary illness, the Nazi law required compulsory sterilization for individuals suffering from one of nine hereditary defects and diseases: congenital feeblemindedness, schizophrenia, periodic insanity (manic depression), inherited epilepsy, inherited St. Vitus’ dance (Huntington’s chorea, a degenerative neurological disease that affects the brain and muscles), inherited blindness, inherited deafness, severe inherited physical deformation, and severe alcoholism.

Coming into effect on January 1, 1934, the sterilization law laid out a very specific legal and medical process. A consenting adult requested sterilization either in writing or verbally at the office of the Eugenic Court, but if physically or mentally incapable of making this decision or under the age of eighteen, a legal guardian submitted the request. A doctor’s certification accompanied this request; this medical certification avowed that the doctor had fully explained the procedure and effects to the patient and/or guardian. The Court consisted of three members: a magistrate, an official doctor, and a second doctor qualified in eugenics. These three men interviewed the patient, witnesses, and experts in a private court session. After hearing the testimony, the members of the Eugenic Court consulted with one another, reached a verdict, and explained in writing the reasons for their judgment. The court passed this judgment down to the

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66 Lösch, 309-11.  
67 Burleigh and Wippermann, 57 and Tucker, 119.  
patient and/or legal guardian and the doctor. The patient and/or guardian had the right to appeal the judgment within one month of the court’s decision. This appeal was forwarded on to the Eugenic High Court. After a decision came down from the High Court, however, it stood as the final ruling.69

The 1700 Eugenic Courts and 27 High Courts received over 84,500 petitions in 1934 alone. Of that number, the courts decided in favor of sterilization two-thirds of the time. They ordered over 56,000 sterilizations, and both sexes were equally represented in this number. Between 1934 and 1939, the courts ordered almost 375,000 operations, thirty-seven percent of which were voluntary, thirty-nine percent involuntary (against the patient’s will), and twenty-four percent nonvoluntary (consent granted by a guardian). The commencement of the Second World War in September 1939 slowed down the progress of the courts. Nonetheless, by the end of 1944, almost 400,000 people in the Greater German Reich had been sterilized.70

If the court decided in favor of sterilization, an approved doctor who had no previous connection with the petitioner or the court performed the operation in a hospital. The operation itself, known as the Hitler cut (Hitlerschnitt), was via vasectomies for men and tubal ligations and x-rays for women. The doctor had permission to use whatever force necessary to carry out the operation – even against the patient’s will. The people involved in the procedure were bound to secrecy, and anyone who broke this silence would be punished accordingly. Finally, according to the law, the government bore the majority of the costs for the legal and medical procedures.71

Beyond their assistance in Expert Council for Population and Racial Policy with the


71 “Eugenics in Germany,” paragraphs 11-13, 15, and 18.
wording of the law, several committee members promoted its implementation. In 1934, Arthur Gütt, Ernst Rüdin, and Falk Ruttke published a booklet which provided a detailed explanation of the purpose and value of the law.\(^{72}\) A new medical journal, *The Hereditary Doctor*, was founded that same year; edited by Otmar von Verschuer, its purpose was to discuss issues surrounding sterilization. Additionally, Fritz Lenz and Eugen Fischer served on hereditary health courts that determined which people would be sterilized.\(^{73}\)

Altogether this coordination between scientific and government officials signified several factors concerning eugenics and its relationship to the state. Eugenics had become an internationally respected science, in no small part because of the work done by German scientists, who by the late 1920’s had begun to restore their own international reputation by once again participating in conferences and meetings abroad.\(^{74}\) By the time the Nazi party came to national political prominence in the late 1920’s and to power in the early 1930’s, eugenics had long since permeated scientific and popular culture, and the claims made by Nazi theorists about the greatness of the Nordic race simply reflected already existing ideas. Among the staunchest political advocates of this science was the man who became Chancellor in 1933, and eugenicists welcomed this advocacy and the willingness of a politician to consider their work seriously. A relationship had already existed between the state and the scientific community, primarily in the guise of the KWI-A, and this relationship continued under the Nazi government, solidifying a tacit bargain between the scientific and political communities. This was not a direct relationship where one side explicitly did as the other wanted, nor did it mean that all German eugenicists partially or completely backed the Nazi government or that the ideas of the Nazi party were founded solely on the work of these eugenicists. However, the two sides clearly interacted with one another and shared ideas. In doing so, the scientific community, through its domestic and

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\(^{74}\) Overcoming their earlier antipathy for participating in the international scientific arena following the First World War, German scientists began to travel outside of Germany to deliver speeches and to participate in conferences by the late 1920’s. The KWI-A recorded which of its members traveled abroad: KWI-A “Jahresbericht 1932,” MPG I Abteilung / 3 Repostor / Bestell Nummer 8, pages 105-06; KWI-A “International Federation of Eugenics Organizations,” MPG I Abteilung / 3 Repostor / Bestell Nummer 23, pages 482, 485-86, 502, and 618; *Jahrbuch 1939 der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften*, MPG Z2 – 1939 +2, page 47; and *Jahrbuch 1942 der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften*, MPG Z2+ 2, page 83.
international reputation, conferred legitimacy on the Nazi state and its policies, such as the sterilization law, while the latter politically and financially supported the work of the former.75

A similar relationship also formed throughout the 1930’s between the SS and the scientific community, as will be examined in subsequent chapters. It was in the SS where Heinrich Himmler attempted to realize the scientific utopias and ideals that eugenicists had advocated since the mid to late nineteenth century. Himmler based his racial order on the ideas of eugenicists which best suited his needs. In incorporating these ideals, Himmler sought to turn scientific theory into practical reality, specifically to ensure the continuation of the Nordic race and its leading role in history; as will be noted in later chapters, several eugenicists endorsed some SS policies designed to improve the racial quality and health of this segment of the German Volk. However, the notion of the SS as a selective racial community and the process by which Himmler tried to mold it into a racial elite evolved over the two decades that the organization existed. A brief examination of the development of the SS will allow further illumination into this conception of an elite ideal, which will be vital for a complete understanding of the organization and its functions within the Nazi party and state.

“The SS was to be the living embodiment of the Nazi doctrine of the superiority of the Nordic blood – the carrying into effect of the Nazi conception of a master race.” ¹ Warren F. Farr, the Assistant Trial Counsel for the United States, made this statement one month into the Nuremberg Trial in late 1945. With these words, he succinctly acknowledged that the once formidable Schutzstaffel – now a criminal entity – had been from its very inception an elite organization.² This privileged status, however, changed during its two decade existence. The shifting definition of what made the SS elite was highly dependent on its leader, and among the three men who held the position of Reichsführer-SS, none was more adamant in molding the SS into a community (Gemeinschaft) than its final and longest-serving leader, Heinrich Himmler.³

During his sixteen years as Reichsführer, Himmler sought to establish the SS as a new German aristocracy, one that was not based on inherited titles or even educational achievements, but one that was instead rooted in something far more immutable: a person’s blood. Himmler founded his goal of molding the SS into an elite, blood-based community on ideas which had existed in Germany for decades. Among those pre-existing ideas, none was more potent than eugenics. Within the Third Reich, Himmler’s endeavor to shape the future population of Germany through attempting to control the SS amounted to applied eugenics; he selectively implemented only those ideals that he felt would best achieve his goal of constructing an elite Nordic community. Himmler’s preoccupation with establishing this community indicated his aspiration not only to purify the blood of the nation, which many other individuals and organizations in the Reich were also interested in doing, but to assemble a select cadre that, because of their superior racial heritage as well as their dedication to the National Socialism and

¹ Trial of the major war criminals before the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, 14 November 1945-1 October 1946 [hereafter IMT], volume V, (Nuremberg: N.p., 1947-1949),176.
² The SS had been declared a criminal organization in the indictment filed by the tribunal on October 18, 1945. IMT, volume I, 268.
³ The term Gemeinschaft was intentionally chosen because it was used in many variations throughout SS documents; for example: Blutsgemeinschaft, Lebensgemeinschaft, Sippengemeinschaft, and Volksgemeinschaft. The concept was also examined and explained in chapter 1.
its leader, would ensure first the success of the party and then the longevity of the Third Reich.

Prior to Himmler’s expansion of the organization, the SS had a modest beginning and limited purpose. Its history began in early spring 1923 with the formation of the Stabswache, a small unit assigned to guard Adolf Hitler. The Stabswache only consisted of a few men, all of whom were trustworthy party members pulled from the ranks of the Sturmabteilung (storm troopers, SA), the party’s political soldiers, which had formally existed since November 1921.4 The men of the Stabswache wore the brown uniforms of the SA, though they did have one additional element; on their caps, these men attached a small badge consisting of a skull and crossbones known as the Totenkopf (death’s head), an insignia that would later become synonymous with the SS. The Stabswache only lasted for two months until May 1923 when its leader resigned.

At this time, Hitler chose to disband the Stabswache and order the creation of a new unit. He placed his chauffeur and one-time bodyguard Julius Schreck along with Josef Berchtold, both of whom had belonged to the Stabswache, in charge of this task, and in mid 1923, they formed the Stosstrupp (shock troop) Adolf Hitler. The term Stosstrupp had originated in World War I, and it referred to a specially trained, elite assault unit that each division of the German army was supposed to create following the 1916 Battle of the Somme. In theory, the World War I Stosstrupp units had greater discipline and more intensive training, but also had more privileges. The Nazi version, under the command of Schreck and Berchtold, was likewise elite; approximately 50 men devoted themselves to protecting Hitler as well as other high-ranking party members. This small group stood in contrast to the SA, which, as the paramilitary unit of the party, had a more active and violent role in campaigning for the party, as best symbolized by its frequent and oftentimes public brawls with its communist counterpart. That is not to say that the Stosstrupp or its successor organization did not ever participate in violence or that the SA was solely defined by violence. In fact, the Stosstrupp along with the SA took part in the November 8-9, 1923 failed Nazi putsch, in which party leaders attempted to ignite a coup in Munich that would allow them to march to Berlin and overthrow the government. Among the consequences of this debacle were the imprisonment of Hitler and the temporary banning of the party and the SA by the government. The government also forced the Stosstrupp to dissolve, and

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many of its surviving members served short sentences in prison.\(^5\)

After his release from Landsberg prison in December 1924, Hitler began to reconstruct the Nazi party. He promised the state government of Bavaria, in which Munich was located, that he would not attempt to seize power again, but would remain within the legal bounds of the political system. In return, the Bavarian state government dropped the prohibition against the party, and Hitler reestablished the NSDAP in February 1925.\(^6\) Part of this reconstruction included creating a new unit exclusively dedicated not to the party, as the still prohibited SA was, but personally to the Führer. Once again, Hitler entrusted this assignment to Julius Schreck. By May 1925, Schreck had formed the nucleus of what would soon evolve into the Schutzstaffel. To Schreck, the concept of elite meant that the men of this new bodyguard unit asked no questions and obeyed their orders. To achieve this purpose, Schreck limited the number of men who could join. According to his September 21, 1925 order, Schreck urged each branch of the Nazi party to set up a local SS unit consisting of one leader and ten men. These potential SS members were to be chosen from the most reliable members of the Nazi party. Each man had to be in good health and be between the ages of twenty-three and thirty-five as well as not be a habitual drunkard, gossip-monger, or delinquent in any other way. He also had to be a resident of the region in which the SS unit was located for at least the previous five years. Although protecting the party’s leaders continued to form the core responsibility of the SS, this job took on greater precedence. The ban on the numerically superior SA lasted until 1926, leaving the smaller SS as the only group to safeguard party meetings and assemblies from their foes, especially the communists.\(^7\)

In the summer of 1926, Hitler relieved Schreck because of the prevalent opinion among party leaders that he was not well suited to lead the organization. Members of the SS apparently shared this view, as one SS man wrote to Hitler in May 1926 that “Schreck is not equipped with

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\(^6\) Peter Longerich, Heinrich Himmler: Biographie (Munich: Siedler Verlag, 2008), 89.

the necessary leadership and organizational talent and also does not have a name that offers assurance that the SS is the elite troop of the movement.”

Hitler subsequently turned the SS over to Josef Berchtold, who had recently returned from Austria where he had fled following the 1923 putsch. By this time, the ban on the SA had been lifted, and the protection echelon was placed under the aegis of the storm troopers and their leader Franz Pfeffer von Saloman. In compensation for this arrangement, Berchtold was given the title of Reichsführer-SS. He received an additional compensatory honor during the second party rally in Weimar on July 4, 1926 when Hitler presented him with the party blood banner (Blutfahne), the flag stained with a party member’s blood from the abortive Munich putsch. The honor of safekeeping this sacred flag combined with the unit’s size reinforced an already existing elitist feeling among SS members, a sentiment that many other party members did not share, especially those who belonged to the nominally superior SA. In particular, the SA leadership was displeased that the SS continually poached its best recruits, a practice which continued for almost a decade.

The notion of the SS as a small, but elite organization on which the Führer could rely was further bolstered by a series of written guidelines issued by Berchtold. In these guidelines, Berchtold indicated that the SS was “a band of upright German men who protect with their lives the movement and the Führer.” Through meetings held twice per month where they sang and practiced drills, the men of the SS solidified their comradeship, a comradeship built on the motto “One for all. All for one!” They deepened their commitment to National Socialism through service to the party. These services consisted of protecting local party meetings; reinforcing the unit tasked with guarding Hitler at party events; distributing fliers and informational pamphlets about the party; promoting party membership; and soliciting subscriptions and advertisements for the party newspaper, the Völkischer Beobachter, for which Berchtold also happened to work. Men who dedicated their time to these services would have done so part-time and without pay as

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8 Quoted in Longerich, 121. Despite being relieved of command of the SS, Schreck did remain associated with the SS and held the honorary rank of Brigadeführer. When he died in May 1936, he was honored by Das Schwarze Korps and an SS Standarte took his name: “SS Brigadeführer Schreck,” 21 May 1936, page 3; “Abschied von Kamerad Schreck,” 28 May 1936, pages 3-4; “Kameradschaft,” 25 June 1936, page 3; and “Besichtigung der SS-Standarte ‘Julius Schreck,’” 16 July 1936, page 3.
11 Ibid. No less than three variations of these guidelines are found in NS19/1934, and while two of the three list the sentiment above, the third one states the motto as “One for all, all for one, and all for the German fatherland!”
full-time employment with the SS did not become feasible until almost a decade later. One additional element that Berchtold discussed in these guidelines was the clothing worn by the SS. This early uniform had many of the basic elements which would later become identified with the organization, including a cap with the Totenkopf insignia.12

These duties assigned to the SS by Bechtold differed only slightly from those given to the SA in the mid 1920’s. The SA, according to its own guidelines, was tasked with defending mass party meetings. It was also responsible for protecting individual party leaders and members as well as carrying out propaganda work. This work included distributing leaflets and enlightening other Germans about the party in areas heavily dominated by the communists, and therefore, SA men continually subjected themselves to personal danger in the name of serving the National Socialist movement.13 These guidelines for the SA, when compared with those of the SS, indicated that at this point, size and self-proclamations of elite status were the two primary factors which distinguished the SS from the SA. Further differentiation would only come with new SS leadership, expansion of the organization, and the political success of the party and its leader on the national level.

Berchtold continued to command the SS until March 1927. At this time, he resigned because he was dismayed with the continuing edict that the SS had to remain small while the growth of the SA remained uninhibited following the lifting of the ban against it the year prior. Hitler replaced Berchtold with Erhard Heiden, who had served as deputy to both Schreck and Berchtold. Heiden served as Reichsführer-SS until the beginning of 1929; the most notable achievement during his tenure was a decline in active membership from 1000 to 280 members.14 On January 20, 1929, Hitler issued a decree, thanking Heiden for his services and indicating that he had relieved Heiden from office on the latter’s request because of “familial and economic reasons.” In this same decree, Hitler appointed the third and final Reichsführer-SS: Heinrich Himmler.15 Himmler had been working as Heiden’s deputy since September 1927, and when Hitler promoted him in January 1929, there was nothing to suggest that Himmler would radically reshape the elite ideal of the SS and expand the purpose of the organization.16 Yet, with this

12 Ibid., and Reitlinger, 25.
13 Bessel, Political Violence, 45.
14 Graber, 39; Williamson, 18; Koehl, The SS, 37; and d’Alquen, 7-8.
16 Koehl, The SS, 39 and Padfield, 89.
appointment, Hitler had found someone who had the necessary organizational talents to ensure that the notion of the SS as an elite troop transformed from wishful rhetoric into practical reality.

Over the next decade and a half, Himmler’s personality, views, and goals restructured the organization. The bureaucratic abilities of this man, described by many contemporaries as “the archetype of the German schoolmaster,” enhanced the position of the SS first within the party and later within the state. While always attuned to practical functions of the SS, which until the end of the Third Reich consisted of protecting the party and the Führer from internal and external threats, Himmler aspired to establish the SS as an independent entity within the party, one with its own rules and principles. These rules and principles would form the foundation upon which Himmler could mold the SS into an elite force. However, elite was no longer simply defined by numbers alone; instead, it was based on Himmler’s perception of how race had influenced history.

Himmler had an interest in history stemming from his upbringing. Raised in a conventional, middle class Bavarian family, his father, Gerhard, strongly emphasized the family’s personal history. There was even a room in the Himmler household dedicated to the family’s ancestors and archaeological artifacts. As a youth, Himmler became acquainted with a romanticized, and often racial, view of German history through the authors whose books he read and kept notes on, such as Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Arthur de Gobineau, Hans F.K. Günther, and Werner Jansen – all of whom wrote on the virtues of the Nordic race. Due to this upbringing, Himmler had already formed the basic features of his racial view toward the past, present, and future prior to his association with the Nazi party. After he joined in 1923, he found confirmation of his racial and historical worldview from other party members, including the Führer.

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These ideas substantiated Himmler’s perception of the world and validated his choices regarding the expansion of the SS.¹⁹ This augmentation began in late 1930 when Hitler authorized Himmler to enlarge the SS; it could now reach ten percent the size of the SA.²⁰ By the end of 1931, the SS had recruited almost 15,000 members; a year and a half later, over 100,000 men had joined. Even with this rapid growth, the SS remained within the size parameters set vis-à-vis the SA and continued to uphold the ten percent ratio until it gained independence from the SA in 1934, as examined below.²¹ From that time, the organization continued to grow for more than a decade longer, reaching its height of almost 800,000 members in the summer of 1944 – an impressive development especially considering that the wartime numbers did not include the organization’s approximately one million war deaths.²²

The SS did not just expand in size; as the membership base grew, so did the organization. It did not become a gigantic monolith, but instead formed a network of offices and branches. The SS eventually consisted of twelve main offices (Hauptämter), all led by an officer who held the rank of Obergruppenführer, the second highest rank in the SS.²³ Each main office had its own purpose and duties, and oftentimes the tasks of one section had little to do with the work of the others. One of the largest, the Race and Settlement Main Office, supervised all racial matters, including overseeing the hereditary health of SS men and their families as well as the relocation of German families to land in conquered eastern Europe. Another, the Economic and Administration Main Office (Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt), managed not only financial policies, but also administered the concentration camp system, while the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt) handled intelligence and espionage.

Originally, everyone in the SS belonged to one branch known as the Allgemeine (general) SS. Excluding some of the people who worked for a main office, in the early years of the organization, most men served in the SS only part-time and received little or no payment for their services. Thus, they typically combined their night and weekend work for the SS with a

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¹⁹ For a complete list of the numerical development of the entire SS, see Appendix A.
²⁰ Anthony Read, The Devil’s Disciples: Hitler’s inner circle (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 204.
²¹ The SA had approximately 500,000 members when Hitler came to power; one year later, their numbers had soared to 2,950,000, and the SA peaked in size in the summer of 1934 with 4,500,000 members. Campbell, The SA Generals, 120.
²² Koehl, The SS, 237.
²³ The twelve offices were Persönlicher Stab Reichsführer-SS, SS-Hauptamt, SS-Führungshauptamt, Rasse-und Siedlungshauptamt, Hauptamt SS-Gericht, SS-Personalhauptamt, Reichssicherheitshauptamt, Hauptamt Ordnungspolizei, Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt, Dienststelle Heßmeyer, Hauptamt Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, and Hauptamt Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums.
full-time job. Additionally, these men did not all belong to one unwieldy mass unit. The Allgemeine-SS was broken up into geographic regions called Oberabschnitte, which at first only covered Germany, but later included Austria and Czechoslovakia after their incorporation into the Reich and the occupied territories in western and eastern Europe during the war. By the early 1940’s, twenty-two Oberabschnitte existed, each commanded by an Obergruppenführer or Gruppenführer, the third highest rank. Every Oberabschnitte was further divided into a series of sections called Abschnitte. The next smallest division was the Standarten, followed by the Sturmbanne, and finally the smallest unit of the Allgemeine-SS, the Sturm.

This growth led to an expansion of the responsibilities of the SS, but no matter how many other tasks the SS managed, the organization still fulfilled its original purpose: to protect the Nazi party and the Führer. However, the duty of defending Hitler eventually brought the SS into conflict with its own superior organization, the SA. Problems arose in 1930 when friction developed between Hitler and von Salomon. The head of the SA wanted some of his men to be awarded a portion of the seats that the Nazi party had won during the recent election for the Reichstag, the German parliament, and he wanted the party leadership to address the financial poverty of the SA rank and file. Hitler and von Salomon never resolved these issues, leading to the latter’s resignation in late August 1930. Hitler then placed himself in charge of the SA, although in January 1931 he asked Ernst Röhm to become the SA Chief of Staff, a position which Röhm had held prior to the Munich putsch. This change in leadership did little to alleviate the unrest in the SA, especially when one of the remaining SA leaders, Walter Stennes, tried to turn Röhm against Hitler by claiming that the Führer was faithless and incompetent. Stennes wrote to Röhm in February 1931 and specifically complained that Hitler’s preoccupation with winning power legally had led him to neglect the well-being of the men in the SA, most of whom

24 A statistical report from 1942 lists nineteen Oberabschnitte by name, but does not indicate their location. A document from the IMT indicates that there were eighteen Oberabschnitte in the greater German Reich and four in conquered territories. Based on these reports, the Oberabschnitte would have been as follows: in greater Germany – Donau, Alpenland, Süd, Südwest, Westmark, Rhein, West, Nordsee, Ostsee, Weichsel, Nordost, Warthe, Südost, Main, Fulda-Werra, Mitte, Spree, and Elba; in conquered Europe – Nordwest (the Netherlands), Nord (Norway), Ukraine, and Ostland (the Baltic states). “Stärkmeldung der Allgemeine-SS vom 30 Juni 1942,” BA NS19/2097, page 22 and IMT, volume XXXI, document 2640-PS, 49.

25 d’Alquen, 18; “Abschrift von Abschrift,” BA NS19/1934, page 142; IMT, volume IV, 167; IMT, volume XX, 282-83, 417, and 421; IMT, volume XXII, 513; and IMT, volume XXIX, document 1992(a)-PS.

were suffering economically because of the Great Depression. In response, Röhm sought to curb Stennes’ power. Fellow SA members did not approve of Röhm’s decision, and with the support of Stennes and other SA leaders in Berlin, these men revolted in April 1931 against Röhm, Hitler, and the entire Munich-based party leadership.\(^\text{27}\) To quell this insurgency, Hitler relied on the SS. The members of the SS in Berlin proved their fealty by defending party headquarters and leaders in the city. They did not always succeed in this task as the revolting SA members had vastly superior numbers.\(^\text{28}\) Nonetheless, their willingness to protect the party did facilitate in ending the threat of Stennes, who found himself expelled from the party in 1931 and the country in early 1933.\(^\text{29}\)

Following the suppression of Stennes and his supporters, Hitler wrote a letter to Kurt Daleuge, one of the Berlin SS leaders who had played a role in crushing the revolt. In this letter, Hitler showed his appreciation for the actions of SS with the comment “SS-Man, your honor is called loyalty” (SS-Mann, Deine Ehre heisst Treue). This phrase became the most important guiding principle of the SS and a variation of this quote – “My honor is called loyalty” – was even inscribed on the belt buckle of an SS man’s uniform. The key word in this sentiment is the German term heisst, which typically translates as “is called” or “means.” According to political scientist Manfred Wolfson, however, this word also has several older translations: enjoins, decrees, and exacts. These other interpretations signify that loyalty in the SS, based on this phrase, took on a stronger meaning. Loyalty was not something that an SS man could take lightly; it was, in essence, a command from the Führer.\(^\text{30}\) Once given, this command of loyalty

\(^{27}\) As he was one of the leaders in Berlin whom the SA under Stennes was revolting against, Joseph Goebbels described the revolt in his diary: Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher*, March 25, 1931 (Teil I/Bd. 2/I, pages 370-371), April 2, 1931 (Teil I/Bd. 2/I, pages 376-78), April 4, 1931 (Teil I/Bd. 2/I, pages 378-79), April 6, 1931 (Teil I/Bd. 2/I, pages 379), April 9, 1931 (Teil I/Bd. 2/I, pages 380-81), and April 10, 1931 (Teil I/Bd. 2/I, pages 381-82).


\(^{29}\) Three other factors contributed to the end of the Stennes’ revolt: one, most of the party, including the majority of the SA, remained loyalty to Hitler; two, the SA leaders who revolted quickly ran out of money, as funds were distributed centrally to each Gau and SA unit; and three, the party asked for and received assistance from the Berlin police. Two years later, the only reason why Stennes was expelled from the party and not executed after the SS took him into protective custody was because of the intervention of several highly-placed officials, including Hermann Göring. Read, 211; Campbell, *The SA Generals*, 88; Hoffmann, 18; and Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998), 350.

became the very core of what defined the SS as a community and became a virtue specific to the
SS. It harkened back to the earlier motto of the SS as outlined by its first Reichsführer,
Berchtold: “One for all. All for one!” All other ideals, including that of molding the SS into a
blood-based elite, could be built upon the quintessential term ‘heisst.’

The fortunes of the SS, along with those of the entire party, continued to rise over the
next two years, culminating with the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor of Germany on January
30, 1933, a date which the party subsequently celebrated yearly. This political victory had vast
repercussions for the party, primarily leading to an influx of millions of new members who were
derisively called March violets. The party was not the only one to benefit; all associated
organizations found themselves overwhelmed with applications, and the SS was no exception.
Yet, Himmler thought that opening the ranks to the masses could result in “a dangerous
situation” if the newcomers “were not entirely loyal” to the party and the SS. Therefore, in
April, he prohibited further admission into the SS, and starting at the end of 1933 and lasting
until the end of 1935, Himmler expelled almost 60,000 men who proved unsuitable, leaving the
organization with around 200,000 members. The Reichsführer justified this expulsion by
claiming that it benefited the SS by improving the quality of its members.

The quality of these men as well as their dedication to the SS and their loyalty to the
Führer proved vital in the summer of 1934, as the SS once again found itself opposing the SA.
By this time, Röhm no longer agreed with all of Hitler’s policy decisions for the party and for the
state, as Hitler had been Chancellor for more than a year. Specifically, Röhm believed that the
SA needed to serve as the vanguard of a new, revolutionary army, and as the SA numbered four
million strong, Hitler humored Röhm as long as it was politically feasible. By 1934, he could no
longer afford to tolerate Röhm’s views because the leadership of the German military did not
want the SA to serve as the training ground for the expanding German army. Forced to choose
between the SA and the military, Hitler acceded to the wishes of the latter. He turned to his loyal
SS, who conceived of a plot to destroy the very organization to which it was still technically

15 and 17-18; Charles Messenger, Hitler’s Gladiator: The Life and Times of Oberstgruppenführer and
Panzergeneral-Oberst der Waffen-SS Sepp Dietrich (London: Brassey’s Defence Publishers, 1988), 44; Graber, 44-
45; Padfield, 100; Wolfson, “The SS Leadership,” 171; and “Die Pflichten des SS-Mannes und SS-Führers,” BA
NS19/3973, page 8.
31 Although there was an increase in the number of people who wanted to join the Nazi party following Hitler’s
appointment as chancellor, the term “March violets” actually refers to the people who flocked to the party after its
success during the March 5, 1933 parliamentary elections. Katrin Himmler, The Himmler Brothers: A German
Family History (London: Macmillan, 2007), 158.
subordinate. Leaders in the SS began to collect evidence against the SA to present to Hitler suggesting that Röhm was planning a putsch. To circumvent this alleged coup, the SS conducted its own operation, known as the Night of the Long Knives, on June 30, 1934. Having the tacit support of Hitler as well as that of the Wehrmacht, SS men rounded up and summarily executed almost 200 members of the SA, including Röhm, as well as many non-Nazi political leaders who could have potentially caused future trouble for their Führer.  

For a second time, the SS had proven its loyalty to Hitler, and the SA never challenged the Führer again. The SA continued to exist until the end of the Third Reich as a large and well-financed party organization. Its new post-purge leadership under Victor Lutze reorganized the SA and stressed their loyalty to the very people who had ordered the murder of their former superiors. The SA still remained numerically larger than the SS, but the balance of power had clearly and irrevocably shifted in favor of the smaller, elite organization. As proof of this shift, Hitler established the SS as an independent branch of the party.

This freedom aided the meteoric growth of the SS. Himmler seemingly had free reign to set whatever standards he desired for admission to this highest caste of the Nazi party. The earlier criteria of good health, a robust physique, and party membership no longer sufficed as of the early to mid 1930’s. Age remained a factor, as a man could not join before age eighteen, and someone between thirty and forty-five years old could join only if he had served as a soldier in the First World War. Himmler personally approved any exceptions to these age guidelines. More important than a candidate’s age was his height, as Himmler presumed that men of a certain height must possess Nordic blood. According to regulations from 1932, the minimum height for enlistment in the SS was 1.7 meters (just under 5 feet 7 inches), although exemptions to this rule existed depending on the age of the candidate and in what branch of the SS he


35 IMT, volume IV, document 1857 PS. This document can be found in German in the printed volumes of the Nuremberg Trials as well as online in English via the the Avalon Project maintained by the Yale University Law School: <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/1857-ps.asp>. It can additionally be found in the Nazi party newspaper: *Völkischer Beobachter* (26 July 1934), 1.

36 Heinrich Himmler, *Once in 2000 Years: Secret speech delivered by Heinrich Himmler, chief of the German Secret State police (Gestapo) to the German Army General Staff* (New York: American Committee for Anti-Nazi Literature, 1938), 7-8 and “Einstellung in die SS,” BA R187/666, page 5.
ultimately served. A person who wanted to enter and advance in the SS still had to be physically fit; doctors belonging to or associated with the SS confirmed the fitness of a potential member by examining each man and providing a healthy applicant with a medical certificate to submit as part of his application. Beyond submitting this completed medical form, an applicant had to hand in a headshot so that SS officials could study his facial features for any defects.

More significant than a man’s physical health and appearance was his racial health. The emphasis on racial health stemmed from Himmler’s contention that race, and with it blood, formed the core of a healthy, burgeoning Volk. Only a person who descended from a superior racial lineage would have the necessary hereditary credentials to join the SS. To Himmler, the men in the SS represented the prime carriers of Nordic blood – the best of the best – and through their dedication to National Socialism and its ideals, especially its racial ideals, they would establish an elite community that would lay the foundation of the Thousand Year Reich.

Numerous statements by Himmler from the mid 1930’s illustrate how he emphasized race and blood as the basis of the elite ideal within the SS. During two speeches made in January 1935 and January 1937, Himmler paraphrased sentiments expressed over a decade earlier by Hitler in Mein Kampf, not to mention also previously established by eugenicists. The Reichsführer commented that he was “a convinced supporter of the idea that what matters in the world ultimately is only good blood.” Good blood – above all Nordic blood – was “the leading creative element in every state,” and it “enables us to invent more than others, to lead our people better than others because it enables us to have better soldiers, better statesmen, higher culture, better characters.” Therefore, Himmler remarked that he approached all of his activities from the perspective of valuing this good Nordic blood.

He substantiated these views in a February 1938 speech when he noted that members of other races outnumbered the carriers of Nordic blood, but the strength of Nordic blood compensated for this disparity because it allowed the German people to be more inventive, which enabled them to be better statesmen and soldiers and subsequently develop a higher

37 “Einstellung in die SS,” 5; “Ergänzung der Schutzstaffel,” BA NS19/3903, page 21; and “Vorläufige Dienstordnung für die Arbeit der SS,” BA NS19/1934, page 120.
39 “Rede vor Offizieren der Wehrmacht, Januar 1937,” in Joachim Fest, Bradley Smith, and Agnes Peterson, editors, Heinrich Himmler Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945 und andere Ansprache (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen Verlag, 1974), 53; Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force Evaluation and Dissemination Section G-2 (Counter Intelligence Subdivision) [hereafter SHAEF], Basic Handbook: The Allgemeine SS (The General SS) (Wiltshire: Antony Rowe Ltd., 1993), 32; and IMT, volume XXIX, document 1192(a)-PS.
culture. These distinguished attributes would allow Germany and its people, who lived in the heart of Europe, to serve as the vanguard for the entire white race.\textsuperscript{40} One final example of how Himmler stressed the significance of race was the pamphlet \textit{The SS as an anti-Bolshevik fighting organization}, published in 1936 by the Nazi party press in Munich. It presented a compilation of Himmler’s speeches and covered many themes, including the importance of good blood: “The realization of the value of blood and selection is the first guideline and true for us…. [It] will be valid so long as there is a Schutzstaffel.”\textsuperscript{41} According to the pamphlet, this principle of selecting the best blood must never slacken, but instead must continually become more rigorous for each successive generation.

Together, these speeches provide a basic overview of how Himmler incorporated race and blood into the elite ideal of the SS. His emphasis on how the carriers of Nordic blood provided the state with the best political and military leadership echoed the earlier statements of eugenicists, especially those in the Baur-Fischer-Lenz book. Himmler truly took his mission of molding the SS into a racial elite seriously, leading to the requirement where every candidate had his racial health evaluated. Requiring this evaluation was the first of many eugenic-inspired standards that Himmler imposed as by this time, the mid 1930’s, he would have not only been familiar with eugenic ideals from the literature he had previously read, but he would have personally interacted with some of the people who had created these ideals, such as Fritz Lenz, Alfred Ploetz, and Hans F.K. Günther, from their joint work on the Expert Council for Population and Racial Policy. A man’s racial health was determined by examining his entire family, and one of the most crucial forms in ascertaining the hereditary history of a candidate was a genealogical tree (\textit{Ahnentafel}). In researching and completing this genealogical tree, each candidate had to verify two things: that no one in his family showed signs of hereditary illness and that his lineage contained no Jews. Someone seeking to join the SS as an enlisted man or noncommissioned officer had to prove this healthy and Jewish-free ancestry back to 1800; a commissioned officer had to confirm this ancestry back to 1750.

Setting the boundary at 1800 and prior was not a random choice. As a result of the ideals spawned by the French Revolution and the subsequent conquest of Europe during the Napoleonic Era, new laws had been proclaimed throughout the greater French Empire as well as

\textsuperscript{40} Himmler, \textit{Once in 2000 Years}, 11, 19, and 22.
\textsuperscript{41} Heinrich Himmler, \textit{Die Schutzstaffel als antibolschewistische Kampforganisation} (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1936), BA NSD70/439, page 20.
in nearby independent but militarily defeated kingdoms, including Prussia and Austria. These laws emancipated the Jews and allowed them to integrate with the Christian population.

Following the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, each German state independently determined the future legal status of its Jews; some revoked emancipation while others slowly and bureaucratically expanded religious freedoms. Full emancipation in the German states (minus independent Austria) remained incomplete until the unification of the Second Reich in 1871.42

This shifting legal status of the Jews throughout the nineteenth century prompted Himmler to set the appropriate chronological boundary to ensure that Jewish blood did not taint the men in his organization. To complete a genealogical tree and prove himself hereditarily healthy and free of Jewish blood, a potential SS member had to verify – most often through church records – the births, baptisms, and marriages of his ancestors. Himmler eventually wanted to require that such personal background checks confirmed a candidate’s ancestry as far back as the end of the Thirty Years’ War in 1648; he suggested that this year represented the farthest back he could mandate as many church records from earlier times no longer existed completely intact.43

To persuade his men to fulfill this obligation, Himmler decided in late 1937 to hold a contest revolving around the completion of genealogical trees. He called this contest an “intellectual match” designed to abet “the creation of a history of the families of our SS-men.”44 The Reichsführer wanted individual men to trace their family ancestry as far back as possible, and he encouraged each level of the SS, from the Sturm up through the Oberabschnitte, to produce as many genealogical trees back to 1750 as possible.45 He did not indicate in this order that any individual or unit would receive a prize or accolade for creating the most detailed family histories; he simply implied that awareness of such familial knowledge benefitted the organization and its members.

There was one additional facet to this genealogical tree requirement. Unlike most of Himmler’s proclamations – for instance, his constant assertion that the SS represented a

43 Himmler, _Once in 2000 Years_, 8; SHAEF, 32; “Rede vor Hitler-Jugend am 25.5.1936,” in Fest, 61-62; IMT, volume IV,177; and Ziegler, _Nazi Germany’s New Aristocracy_, 53-54.
44 “SS Befehl für den Wintersonnenwend-Wettkampf 1937,” BA NS2/2, page 7 and BA NS19/3901, page 47.
45 Ibid.
community of the carriers of Nordic blood – documentation referring to genealogical trees used the term Aryan rather than Nordic. Specifically, for someone who wanted to belong or did belong to the SS, the genealogical tree provided “proof of Aryan descent” (Nachweis der arischen Abstammung). Despite the more prominent use of Nordic in the scientific community and within SS records as well, the genealogical tree requirement represented a slight inconsistency with regards to terminology. However, the term Aryan was more commonly used in German society, as legally codified in the 1935 Nuremberg laws; in addition, the term gained social credence due to the popularization of genealogical research as a hobby.

Altogether these requirements meant that not everyone who wanted to join the SS could actually do so. In fact, according to Himmler, the SS only accepted ten to fifteen percent of its applicants. These rules could be bent, usually by the Reichsführer, to admit people who did not assiduously meet the aforementioned prerequisites, but these regulations set a standard for admission. On at least one occasion, in 1938, Himmler even noted several reasons that could not be used against a person seeking admission. Among the reasons listed, an applicant could not automatically be rejected because he had tooth decay or was missing up to five teeth. Posture, height, and tissue problems caused by rickets or malnutrition could not be held against an applicant, and to a certain extent, neither could poor vision or astigmatism. These factors illustrate that the quest to create a racial elite did not likewise suggest a search for perfection among the people who aspired to belong to the SS.

Interestingly enough, two key physical characteristics stereotypically associated with this pursuit were missing: eye and hair color. Almost no document, order, or any other source insinuated or outright stated that these two features were relevant when it came to selecting candidates; they also do not reference why such factors were intentionally not considered.

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48 Longerich, 313; IMT, volume IV, 177; and IMT, volume XXIX, document 1992(a)-PS. Himmler made this comment in a January 1937 speech to Wehrmacht officers, and so the acceptance rates may have later changed due to the war.

49 There was also a standard procedure for processing each application, as outlined by Weingartner, “The Race and Settlement Main Office,” 67-68.

Additionally, most personnel forms did not list such information for an individual SS man and statistical reports did not organize the SS by such factors.\textsuperscript{51} The sole major reference that briefly mentioned such criteria was a reprint of a selection of a speech delivered by Himmler from January 1937. In this speech, Himmler acknowledged that while he could draw conclusions about applicants based on their physical appearance, he recognized that he could not judge these men alone by their “height, blond hair, and blue eyes and the dimensions of the skull.”\textsuperscript{52} In essence, with this statement, Himmler recognized a point that Fritz Lenz had already articulated almost two decades prior: “We cannot save the Nordic race by breeding blond hair and blue eyes.”\textsuperscript{53}

In spite of this admission, Himmler otherwise remained steadfast in his conviction about the connection between physical criteria and possession of Nordic blood.\textsuperscript{54} This resolute obsession with racial purity and physical health was not without irony. Unlike many of his subordinates – who met the genealogical requirements, fell into the appropriate age range, met the minimum height, had a fit build, and in many instances even had blond hair and blue eyes – the Reichsführer himself was a stark contradiction to his most precious ideals. His flabby physique and poor eyesight were two of his more obvious shortcomings. Contemporaries most certainly noticed these deficiencies. Felix Kersten, Himmler’s massage therapist, noted in his diary that Himmler “championed the Germanic racial type, yet his own round skull was very far from being nordic. He was all for sport and athletic accomplishments, but in person he was stiff and inflexible. It was really funny to see him try to adapt himself to the rules he had himself invented.”\textsuperscript{55} A second, more caustic critique came from Albert Forster, a party Gauleiter, or regional boss, who frequently clashed with Himmler: “If I looked like Himmler I would not talk

\textsuperscript{51} For example, the main file kept on each officer in the Berlin Document Center does not list such information, and with the exception of the medical examination form, discussed in detail in chapter 4, nor do the majority of the records in the Race and Settlement Main Office files contain these details. However, both Hans-Peter Bleuel and Isabel Heinemann have respectively noted that eye and hair color were two factors listed on the application card (\textit{Rassenkarte}) for admission to the SS. Even with this collection of this data for admission, it was not – at least as far as I have found so far – used for statistical purposes. Furthermore, because the Race and Settlement files which do have such information are rather inconsistent from person to person, it would be rather difficult, not to mention somewhat impractical, to attempt to create statistics regarding hair and eye color based on such randomly available information. Hans Peter Bleuel, \textit{Sex and Society in Nazi Germany}, translated by J. Maxwell Brownjohn (Philadelphia:J.B. Lippincott Company, 1973), 198 and Heinemann, “‘Another Type of Perpetrator,’” 389.

\textsuperscript{52} IMT, volume XXIX, document 1192(a)-PS.


\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{55} Kersten, 297.
about race!” Werner Best, an SS officer who held the rank of SS-Obergruppenführer, related another example after the war. He and his wife had attended a dinner party held by Himmler, and at one point during the evening, Himmler had discussed the superiority of the Nordic race. Best’s wife, who was a brunette, then asked Himmler if such a topic fostered a dangerous precedent because if it were brought to fruition no one in the upper echelon of the Nazi party leadership, including the Führer, could meet the appropriate criteria. Himmler replied, according to Best, that a long brain – one of the traits of someone with Nordic blood – could be planted in a round skull such as his own.57

Many people questioned the Nordic, elitist ideals exemplified by the SS, but there were just as many people – hundreds of thousands in fact – who willingly accepted these notions and sought to enter its ranks. The very exclusivity of the SS made it more appealing than other party organizations. Among the people who found such selectivity alluring were aristocrats. Many of them enlisted prior to Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor in 1933, although his victory bolstered their support for the party and their decision to join the SS. Aristocrats were especially well represented in the officer ranks. An examination of the 492 men who held one of the four highest ranks in the SS (Oberstgruppenführer, Obergruppenführer, Gruppenführer, and Brigadeführer) provides evidence demonstrating a relationship between social status and membership in the SS. Just under ten percent, or forty eight officers, of the upper leadership had a noble heritage. Ten served as an Obergruppenführer, fourteen as a Gruppenführer, and twenty-four as a Brigadeführer.58 These results correlate with the general conclusions drawn by

57 Padfield, 377.
58 The name, rank, date of birth, position in the SS, SS membership number, and party number for each of the 492 men was found in editions of the Dienstalterliste der Schutzstaffel der NSDAP from 1942-1944, as cited below. All of the volumes can be found in the library at the Bundesarchiv in Berlin-Lichterfelde and copies of many of them can be found at the National Archives in College Park. Once the abovementioned vital statistics were found, they were verified, when possible, by examining the personnel files in the Berlin Document Center SSO files, again found in Berlin and College Park. All but seven of the officers had files. In a few cases, these files revealed that there were promotions granted in 1945, which, because they were granted after the last edition of the Dienstalterliste came out, are not taken into consideration. For example, Hans Baur is listed as a Brigadeführer in the final November 1944 edition of the Dienstalterliste, but he was promoted to Gruppenführer in late February 1945; therefore, for the purpose of these calculations, he is considered a Brigadeführer. Regarding the specific numbers given above, the statistics for the nobility are based off of the total number of 492, as such information would be found in the name of a person (i.e. von). Dienstalterliste der Schutzstaffel der NSDAP (SS-Obergruppenführer – SS-Standartenführer) Stand vom 30. Januar 1942 (Berlin: Herausgegeben vom SS-Personalhauptamt, 1942);
historian Michael Kater in his social profile of the Nazi party; Kater found that the elites within German society were overrepresented among the rank and file of the party, and “the higher the cadre, the greater the degree of elite representation.” There was certainly no higher cadre in the Nazi party than the SS.

During the Nuremberg Trial from 1945-1946, when the SS along with five other organizations and twenty-four individuals were tried, the defense attorney for the SS, Horst Pelckmann, questioned former SS-Obergruppenführer Friedrich Karl von Eberstein about the relationship between the aristocracy and the SS. Von Eberstein confirmed the nobility’s endorsement of the SS. He provided several reasons why princes, barons, and counts would have wanted to belong; for some people, they wanted to show their loyalty to the new government whereas others enjoyed the pleasures of sport and comradeship offered to SS members. Personally, von Eberstein had “very willingly” entered the SS in the late 1920’s because service to Germany was a tradition in his family, and he thought that membership would allow him to fulfill his patriotic duty. Pelckmann subsequently asked him if he believed “that the membership of such prominent personages made an impression” on the German people. In response, von Eberstein acknowledged that the admission of such people did strengthen the notion that the SS had a valuable and good purpose.

Beyond the nobility, a second notable group swelled the ranks of the SS and its officer corps – those who had obtained some university education. According to research conducted by Manfred Wolfson, more than half of the SS officers in his statistical survey had a graduate education, one fourth held a doctorate, and one fifth had obtained but not completed some form of secondary education. A second random sample of officers carried out by historian Gunnar


Boehnert revealed similar trends. After 1933, more people from high social and educational strata joined the SS. Thirty percent of the men from his sample had a university education, compared with two to three percent of the German population as a whole. Historian Herbert Ziegler drew similar conclusions in his book on the SS leadership corps. He suggested that so many well-educated people belonged not because the organization intrinsically valued them more, but because the nature of the work in the SS oftentimes required the skills of doctors or lawyers.61

After the collapse of the Third Reich, former SS-Brigadeführer Walter Schellenberg wrote a memoir and indicated why students like himself found the SS attractive. He claimed that because many people already considered the SS an elite by the early 1930’s, it appealed to the best recruits; in turn, once these people joined, they enhanced the prestige of the organization. “I cannot deny,” Schellenberg wrote, “that at the age of twenty-three such things as social prestige and, shall we say, the glamour of a smart uniform, played quite a large part in my choice.”62 However, he found that while there were many advantages to belonging to the SS, the dashing elegance which had attracted him and so many other students in the first place quickly faded away. Another former SS officer, SS-Oberführer Helmut Poppendick, reported a similar first impression: “I joined the SS…because a number of my friends whom I knew to be idealists were members of the SS. Their membership caused me to join.”63 As with von Eberstein and Schellenberg, Poppendick saw value in the SS; he viewed it as an organization in which he, as a physician, could make a positive contribution. Former SS-Obergruppenführer Werner Best, one of the many lawyers like Schllenberg who joined the SS, expressed comparable sentiments as well; the elite status of the SS, especially as compared to the mass SA, was appealing.64

By joining the SS, aristocrats and university-educated men lent credibility to the organization and validated its racially-based ideals. Although these men were admitted as a result of their ability to prove their possession of Nordic blood, there is some irony in the fact that fulfilling such racial requirements, many SS recruits still fit the elite standards as had been

62 Schellenberg, 21.
set by eugenicists for decades – based on class, education, and social productivity. Moreover, this membership base of the SS stood in stark contrast to that of the SA, further demarcating the difference between the two organizations. The SA rank and file, according to the studies of historian Conan Fischer, were not nearly as well educated. Approximately seventy-five percent of them had finished their mandatory education at age fourteen, and they belonged to the lower-middle class as unskilled and skilled workers. The SA leadership tended to come from a slightly higher socio-economic background and many had served in the military, an assessment confirmed by historians Richard Bessel and Bruce Campbell in their respective works. Overall, criteria for admission to the SS based on racial standards, socio-economic background, and levels of education reinforced one another and set the SS even further apart from the SA.

Nevertheless, regardless of the high numbers of members from the social and educational elite, each successful SS applicant completed – at least in theory – the same basic process for admission and service. “The Way of the SS Man,” drafted in the summer of 1935, provided an outline describing the path a person would follow over the course of his lifetime. No one could enroll in the SS before he turned 18 years old; ideally, he would have already served for ten years in the Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend), the party’s youth organization for boys. According to the outline, a man born in 1917 would take his first step toward membership in the SS on the anniversary of the Munich putsch, November 9, 1935. At this time, he would be accepted as an applicant (Staffel-Bewerber) and take a personal oath of allegiance to the Führer: “We pledge to you, Adolf Hitler, loyalty and bravery. We swear obedience to you and the superiors appointed by you, even unto death, as God is our witness.” On January 30, 1936, concurrent with the celebration of Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor, the applicant would commit himself to the Führer. With this commitment, he would cease to be an applicant and would become a young man (Staffel-Jungmann). Less than three months later, a young man would become a candidate

67 That oath is not found in “The Way of the SS Man,” but can be found in the same document collection: IfZ MA356, pages 2685453-2685462. It can also be found in Koehl, The Black Corps, 89. The newspaper of the SS, Das Schwarze Korps, printed an article on the actual ceremony in 1938: “Ich schwöre dir, Adolf Hitler…” 17 November 1938, page 4.
(Staffel-Anwärter) on Hitler’s birthday, April 20.

Over the next half year, the candidate would learn about the organization to which he now belonged and would be required to demonstrate his physical prowess by earning a bronze Reich Sports Badge (Reichssportabzeichen). For the next year, from October 1, 1936 through October 1, 1937, a candidate would split his time between two activities. For the first six months, he would complete his mandatory work service (Arbeitsdienstzeit), an honorary duty required of all young men and women in the Third Reich; for the second six months, he would serve as an SS-candidate full time and continue his ideological education. During this year, he also would have to acquire the SA Sports Badge (SA-Wehrsportabzeichen). After he had completed this year of service, he would have to join the military for one year, as the government had introduced compulsory military service in early 1935. As long as he completed this duty with distinction and without any major infractions, he would return to the SS and became a full candidate (Staffelvollanwärter). This candidacy would last less than two months, as on November 9, 1938, he would become an SS man (SS-Mann). On that same night, he would receive a special dagger inscribed with the SS runes and swear that he and his future family would obey all laws laid down by the SS.

For the next four years, until November 9, 1942, he would dedicate himself fully to serving the party and the Führer, and he would have to obtain the SS Sports Badge (SS-Sportabzeichen). During the following decade, an SS man would maintain his status by continuing to learn about the history of the German Volk. He would also have to get married, preferably between the ages of 25 and 30, and establish a family. By the time he reached 32 years old in 1949, he would have to earn the silver Reich Sports Badge. As of November 9, 1952, an SS man would leave active service and join the SS reserve, where he would remain for

68 The SS advertised the physical fitness achievements of its men throughout the mid 1930’s in Das Schwarze Korps. This publicizing of earning sports badges, such as the Reich sports badge and the SA sport badge, was a precursor to its reporting military achievements, especially the awarding of Iron Crosses, Knights Crosses, and Oak Leaves, during the war. “…alles für das Sportabzeichen,” 29 May 1935, page 3; “700 SS Männer marschieren,” 17 July 1935, page 3; “Stab RFSS-München erwirbt das SA-Sportabzeichen,” 24 July 1935, page 3; “Stab RFSS Berlin bei der Prüfung für das SA-Sportabzeichen,” 14 August 1935, page 3; “Reichsführer Himmler verleiht SA-Sportabzeichen,” 19 December 1935, page 2; “In Kürze,” 30 January 1936, page 4; and “In Kürze,” 2 April 1936, page 4.

69 It is interesting to note that these regulations, again released in 1935, required an SS candidate to earn an SA sports badge, as by that time, the SS had been independent from the SA for almost a year. However, according to David Littlejohn and C.M. Dodkins, while the SA Sports Badge began in 1934 as the semi-official badge of the SA, in February 1935, Hitler gave it official status, meaning that any German who met the racial ideals of the Nazi party could attempt to earn it. David Littlejohn and C.M. Dodkins, Orders, Decorations, Medals, and Badges of the Third Reich (including the Free City of Danzig) (Mountain View, California: R. James Bender Publishing, 1973), 82.
ten years. In this decade, his prime goal would be to acquire the gold Reich Sports Badge before he turned 40 in 1957. After November 9, 1962, he would join a post-reserve unit (SS-Stammabteilung) which he would remain associated with until his death.

The theoretical path laid out in “The Way of the SS Man” never completely came to fruition, although some elements, such as yearly ceremonies on November 9, swearing unconditional obedience to Hitler, and requiring sports badges for promotion, were implemented. It nonetheless provides an idea of how the SS wished to organize itself in light of its growth. However, this document does not clarify the type of duties required of each member during his lifetime of service. In all reality, it could not provide such information because of the structural changes to the SS between publication of “The Way of the SS Man” and the end of the organization less than a decade later.

The Allgemeine-SS remained the sole branch of the SS until the mid 1930’s when two other branches formed. The first branch was the Totenkopfverbände, (Death’s Head Unit, SS-TV). Its members primarily worked as guards in the concentration camps, which had opened in early 1933. As of the summer of 1934, members who served in this unit were employed full-time and paid. The second branch was the Verfügungstruppe (disposal troops, SS-VT), an active infantry unit formed between 1933 and 1936. The basis of the SS-VT was yet another personal bodyguard unit for Adolf Hitler. Following his appointment as Chancellor, Hitler ordered the creation of a new guard unit to serve him in the Reich Chancellery. He specifically entrusted this task not to Himmler, but to SS-Gruppenführer Josef “Sepp” Dietrich. In March 1933, Dietrich handpicked 120 SS men in Berlin, and by November of that year, this unit received the name Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. Much as the SS had been founded in 1925 with the purpose of personally safeguarding the Führer in lieu of the mass SA, the same could now be said of the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler vis-à-vis the SS. It became a showpiece unit whose volunteers had to meet even stricter physical and racial guidelines than those set for entry into the Allgemeine-SS. One other crucial difference existed between the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler and the Allgemeine SS. Whereas the latter remained a party-funded organization, the Reich government directly

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70 For all of the emphasis on sports badges, there appears to be very little information available indicating what specific physical tasks a man actually had to complete to earn each respective bade. Two sources provide some information regarding the SA Sports Badge: document 1992(a)-PS from the IMT and Orders, Decorations, Medals, and Badges. According to these sources, some of the exercises which a man had to complete on an annual basis to earn and maintain this badge included sprinting 100 meters, running 3000 meters, marching 25 kilometers carrying a 12.5 kilogram pack, firing a small caliber weapon, demonstrating knowledge of basic first aid skills, reading a map, and conducting reconnaissance work.
financed the Leibstandarte. Dietrich used this funding situation along with his personal ties to Hitler to ensure relative independence for his unit, making him one of the few SS leaders who could—to Himmler’s chagrin—ignore any order from the Reichsführer as he saw fit.\textsuperscript{71}

As with the Totenkopfverbände, men in the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler and all successive units of the Verfügungstruppe served full-time and received a salary; conversely, unlike employment in either the Totenkopfverbände or Allgemeine-SS, service in the Verfügungstruppe replaced the mandatory one year military conscription.\textsuperscript{72} By September 1939, there were four divisions of the Verfügungstruppe, including the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, and they served as the foundation of what would become in early 1940 the Waffen (armed) SS.\textsuperscript{73} Due to the need for troops to serve on all military fronts during the Second World War, most members of the Allgemeine-SS transferred into the Waffen-SS, and by the end of the war, the vast majority of SS members belonged to this military unit.\textsuperscript{74} Although the Waffen SS did conscript men throughout the war, it primarily remained a voluntary organization.\textsuperscript{75}


\textsuperscript{72} Statistisches Jahrbuch 1937, BA NSD41/37, pages 10, 12, and 14; Koehl, The SS, 121; and Burleigh and Wippermann, 62.

\textsuperscript{73} Although most historical accounts note that the term Waffen SS was not the official term to refer to the armed units of the SS until the spring of 1940, Das Schwarze Korps used the term as early as November 23, 1939: “SS im grünen Rock,” page 4. There were other references throughout later editions of 1939, and as of December 7, 1939 there was a section of the paper called “Für die Waffen SS.” According to a postwar interview with Gunter d’Alquen, the editor of Das Schwarze Korps, this name for this section was created purely by chance, as the newspaper need a short title for the weekly column. “Befragung von Herrn Gunter d’Alquen am 13/14 Januar 1968 im Mönchengladbach,” IfZ ZS2, page 46. However, according to SS-Obergruppenführer Paul Haesser, the title Waffen-SS was first used in an Wehrmacht order on November 22, 1939. Paul Haesser, Soldaten wie andere auch: Der Weg der Waffen-SS (Osnabrück: Munin Verlag, 1966), 11.

\textsuperscript{74} “Germany Basic Handbook, Part II,” NA RG331/54, pages 143-145; IMT, volume X, 294-95, 417, and 421; IMT, volume XXII, 224-25, 247-48, and 513; Hans Buchheim, “The Position of the SS,” 269 and 271; Williamson, 47-48 and 54; and Read, 381 and 665.

\textsuperscript{75} The notion that the SS was a voluntary organization from its inception until its end was promoted by SS leaders. It was also advanced throughout the Nuremberg Trial, although the court’s declaration of criminality did differentiate between those men who had a choice to join and those men who were drafted into the SS. For example, see IMT, volume XXII, 247-248 and Trials of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10, volume 1, case 1: U.S. v. Brandt (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946-1949), 36. Subsequent historical research, however, has provided a more nuanced interpretation. The SS had militaristic ambitions as early as late summer 1934, leading military leaders to request clarification from Hitler on the status of militarized SS units. The most important decree demarcating the role of the armed SS units, then known as the Verfügungstruppe, vis-à-vis the Wehrmacht was issued on August 17, 1938. In that top secret order, Hitler established that the Verfügungstruppe was neither part of the Wehrmacht nor the police, but in the event of mobilization, it would be under the operational control of the army. This caveat was significant because it meant
Due to this massive expansion, only three factors united all of the disparate offices and branches within the SS. The first was the Reichsführer himself who technically, and sometimes quite literally, oversaw every aspect of the SS. This oversight did not mean that Himmler personally controlled every facet of the SS, although he tried to, nor did it mean that the officers under him, such as Sepp Dietrich, could not or did not act of their own accord. It simply meant that he attempted to control as many decisions as possible. Historian Peter Longerich—Himmler’s most recent biographer—commented on this particular character trait: the Reichsführer’s “type of leadership corresponded with his mistrust of others and his need for control. Himmler tried to steer the extensive apparatus over which he ruled…he reserved for himself the last decision in numerous cases…. No detail was too insignificant.” This task became increasingly difficult as Himmler amassed numerous positions outside of the SS: Chief of the German Police (Chef der deutschen Polizei) in June 1936, Reich Commissar for the Consolidation of Germanism (Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums) in

that while the Wehrmacht could not prevent the Verfügungstruppe (and later the Waffen-SS) from recruiting within Germany, the military could set limitations on that recruitment. These limitations all but prevented the SS from recruiting Germans, although it could accept anyone who volunteered.

At the outset of the war, Himmler wanted to increase the size of the armed SS units. To do so, he relied on men from the Allgemeine-SS and the Totenkopfverbände to transfer into the Waffen-SS. Police personnel were also channeled into the Waffen-SS, and while not directly conscripted, it was less than voluntary compared with the movement of other personnel. These transfers, especially from the Totenkopfverbände and the police, thinned their ranks, but did not cause any manpower shortages because the August 1938 order did not give the Wehrmacht any prerogative over recruitment within Germany for those two units.

Beyond these transfers, Himmler wanted to find other sources of recruits for the Waffen-SS. The SS turned to foreigners because the Wehrmacht could not control such recruitment. The foreigners fell into one of three categories: Volksdeutsche (ethnic Germans who lived abroad), Germanic volunteers (foreign men of Nordic blood), and volunteers and conscripts from western and eastern European countries. While some of these men joined because they supported National Socialism or agreed with SS ideology, the vast majority who volunteered did so for other reasons; for example, many men from eastern Europe joined because of the opportunity to fight the Soviet Union. For the first half of the war, most of this recruitment remained voluntary; unofficial conscription began in the middle of 1942, and by 1943, it had spread to most countries allied with or occupied by Germany. This foreign recruitment changed the composition of the SS; in 1940, the bulk of SS membership came from Germany, but by 1944, the reverse was true, with Volksdeutsche representing the largest population in the SS. This shift meant that while Himmler wanted to maintain the racial purity of the SS, the exigencies of war somewhat tempered this ideal.


76 Longerich, 310.
October 1939, Reich Minister of the Interior (Reichsminister des Innern) in August 1943, and head of the Replacement Army (Ersatzheer) in July 1944.\textsuperscript{77}

The second factor was the basic uniform common to all branches. It consisted of a black peaked cap with a silver death’s head’s head insignia, black tie, black tunic, black belt inscribed with the loyalty motto, black leather pistol holder, black boots, black pants, and black leather buttons on a brown shirt (which became white in 1937).\textsuperscript{78} In black from head to toe, the uniform made the SS the Black Order. It became the physical manifestation of the SS. It identified the SS man, who in turn exemplified the best racial heritage Germany had to offer.

The third factor was ideology. Himmler desired to have his men not just adhere to the racial standards, but to view those standards as the foundation for a larger community to which they – as well as their wives and children, as will subsequently be examined – belonged. This ideology-based community emphasized their common possession of Nordic blood and their ability to achieve more than anyone else because of this blood. Comparable to the great leaders of the past who shared this Nordic lineage, the member of the SS, as bearers of this blood, were theoretically primed to become the leaders and ideological arbiters of the Nazi party and state.\textsuperscript{79} The SS and its men would ideally serve as the forerunners for the changes that Hitler and his potentates wished to enact throughout the entire country, changes that would ultimately shape Nazi Germany.

These black-clad men served their Führer well, but an individual’s service to the Third Reich could only last throughout his lifetime. When Himmler constructed this elite cadre, simply gathering the best German men and using them to help establish the Nazi state was only the first step in a much larger process. Using his racial elite as a starting point, he intended to build an organization of good Nordic blood which would eternally ensure the longevity of the Thousand Year Reich. But to accomplish this long-term goal, an SS man’s responsibilities had to extend beyond the traditional duties of a soldier. As stated in “The Way of the SS,” men were essentially required to devote their entire life to the organization, and to Himmler, this commitment governed all aspects of a man’s life. His efforts to achieve this goal, to make the SS

\textsuperscript{77} SHAEF, 6. The German titles were respectively Chef der Deutschen Polizei, Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volksstums, Reichsinnenminister, and Befehlshaber des Ersatzheers.

\textsuperscript{78} “Vorläufige Dienstordnung für die Arbeit der SS,” 117-18; Koehl, The Black Corps, 48; Graber, 64; and Padfield 180.

as Warren Farr later claimed “the living embodiment of the Nazi doctrine,” led him to appropriate selective theories which suited his needs, including those posited by German eugenicists, many of whom he was personally acquainted with. Among the specific ideas he implemented were requiring a family tree and a physical examination to determine each man’s racial suitability. However, Himmler was hardly content to form an order of Nordic men; he desired to cultivate a much broader community. To do so, he once again utilized the already-existing ideas of eugenics, starting with intervening in a personal choice for each SS-man, his choice of a “proper” wife.
CHAPTER 4

“THE FUTURE BELONGS TO US”: THE ENGAGEMENT AND MARRIAGE COMMAND AND THE INSTIGATION OF EUGENIC SELECTION IN THE SS

All of the good Nordic blood in the world was irrelevant if it did not exist in sufficient quantity. Similarly, gathering the carriers of this valuable blood into one organization was pointless unless the continued existence of both the blood and the organization could be ensured. Heinrich Himmler very clearly recognized these points. The fate of the society upon which the SS was partly modeled – the Jesuits – illustrated this problem; according to an interpretation prevalent in the SS, the chaste men of this Catholic order had died out because they had not first left behind a biological legacy.\(^1\) Himmler did not want the same disastrous fate to doom his order, and it was with the racial longevity of the SS in mind that he created his most significant eugenic order: the engagement and marriage command, which required every man to obtain permission to marry. With the promulgation of this decree, Himmler appropriated the eugenic ideals which best suited his needs and applied them to an already select group, thus utilizing research that had previously been nothing more than scientific rhetoric.

His command served as the basis for securing the continuation of the SS as an elite order because, while illegitimate children were accepted and tacitly encouraged, most children were born in wedlock. It also contributed to the physical growth and the increasingly systemic bureaucratization of the SS. An entire office – the Race and Settlement Main Office (RuSHA) – was founded to process applications, and each man and his prospective bride had to complete a protracted series of forms and examinations to ensure their racial suitability to become parents. The creation and implementation of this bureaucratic procedure during the years until the Second World War emphasized that no detail in the process of getting engaged and married was too inconsequential. Whether a man had joined the SS as a full-time, salaried member or as a part-

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1 One document which connects the history and nature of the Jesuit Order to the SS is “Bevölkerungspolitik im SS-Führerkorps,” Stand 1, Dezember 1938, Bearbeitet der SS-Personalkanzlei found in BA NS34/30 and NA T-175/123. Although he did not mention the Jesuits by name, Himmler indicated in The SS as an anti-Bolshevik fighting organization that a past mistake made by soldier’s and men’s organizations was the lack of breeding and continuation of the traditions of the clan. Himmler, Die Schutzstaffel, 25. Walter Schellenberg also noted in his memoirs that Himmler modeled the SS after the hierarchy of the Jesuits. Schellenberg, 32.
time, unpaid member, it was expected that he willingly submit to this eugenic command and to comply with each requirement as stipulated by Himmler and RuSHA.

The notion of receiving formal approval for marriage was – as with many ideas in the Nazi party and the SS – not unprecedented. Prior to 1918, all officers in the army and navy needed the Kaiser’s permission to marry. He based his judgment on financial and social criteria to guarantee that each marriage would not bring disrepute to the officer’s corps and that the couple could live in a manner befitting an Imperial officer. Apart from the Kaiser and his concern for sustaining a reputable officer corps, eugenicists had called for marital measures. Traditional social and financial factors did influence their work, yet these men argued for their ideas because of their supposed scientific merit. For example, Francis Galton predicated an entire utopia on matching the best men and women, while Wilhelm Schallmayer wanted the state to issue health passports to assist in regulating marriages, and Fritz Lenz stated that maintaining the marriage served as a prerequisite for all population politics. These suggestions, however, remained nothing more than wishful thinking until 1931.

On December 31, 1931, Himmler implemented SS order “A – Nr. 65,” which, in ten short points, established that every SS man who wanted to marry had to obtain the personal authorization of the Reichsführer. Himmler would approve or deny a request solely based on racial and hereditary health criteria because the primarily goals of these unions were the selection and conservation of good blood and the formation of healthy and valuable Nordic clans (Sippe), which in turn had the potential to strengthen the German Volk. If Himmler rejected an application and the SS member still wanted to wed the unsuitable woman, he would be dismissed from the SS, although he would have the opportunity to resign. While Himmler had the final say, he created a Race Office (Rassenamt) to process each application as well as to maintain the “Clan Book of the SS” (Sippenbuch der SS), which contained the names of each SS couple who had received permission to marry. Furthermore, the Reichsführer and the people who worked in the Race Office would be bound to secrecy when processing this material. In his final point, Himmler commented that the SS had taken an important step with this order and that mockery or

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2 Padfield, 103.
3 Prominent eugenicists outside of Germany also suggested ways in which to regulate marriages. Of those, none was more prominent than American eugenicist and zoologist Charles Benedict Davenport who in a 1913 book on regulating marriage suggested a plan of action remarkably similar to the one implemented by the SS, as described below. Charles Benedict Davenport, *State laws limiting marriage selection examined in the light of eugenics* (New York: Cold Spring Harbor, 1913), 37-40.
scorn by others should not affect the SS because “the future belongs to us!”

When combined with the increasingly stringent requirements imposed for entry into the SS in the early and mid 1930’s, the engagement and marriage command brought to fruition decades of eugenics research and proposals. Himmler was the first person to apply eugenic standards to a select, self-proclaimed elite group of people. At the time of the order, the SS only had 15,000 men, but within two years, that number had expanded to over 200,000 and continued to grow for more than a decade. With these rising numbers, the future might not have completely “belonged” to the SS, as Himmler declared, but undoubtedly the SS had a significant role in shaping the course of the Third Reich. Additionally, although the engagement and marriage command was an order, membership in the SS during the 1930’s and even throughout the war predominantly remained voluntary. Anyone who did not support this policy could have chosen to leave the SS, but as will be shown later in the chapter, very few men opted out for this reason; the vast majority willingly submitted to the racial and eugenic demands of the order.

The command did not go unnoticed by the scientific community; in particular, it did not go unnoticed by the very person who had earlier in 1931 praised Adolf Hitler as the first statesman who fought to place eugenics at the center of all politics: Fritz Lenz. In 1932, Lenz published “An attempt at racial hygienic guidance of marriage selection” in *Archive for Race and Societal Biology*. In this article, Lenz informed the scientific community about the organization’s decision to use the principles of race hygiene to guide its members when it came to choosing a spouse. He reprinted Himmler’s entire order and briefly commented on its content. In short, Lenz called the command “a very meritorious (dankenswerten) attempt.” He noted that while various misgivings still existed toward the regulation of marriage by the state, such objections could not be raised with regards to a voluntary organization, such as the SS. Ultimately, Lenz claimed that the permanent success of this command depended not only on the standards to which members of the SS were held, but to the fate of the National Socialist movement overall, a fate dependent on the ability to prohibit unhealthy and incapable people from obtaining leadership positions in the party.

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*4 “SS-Befehl – A – Nr. 65,” BA NS19/1934, page 147; BA NS19/752, page 2; IMT, volume XXIX, document 2284-PS; and d’Alquen, 10. See Appendix C for the complete order.*

*5 For a detailed explanation of the voluntary and forced nature of SS recruitment, see chapter 3.*


*7 Ibid., 461. The word *dankenswerten* literally translates as worthy of thanks, though it also does mean meritorious, good, respectable, praiseworthy, and deserving of recognition.*
There could have been no greater asset than to have unsolicited praise from the premier eugenicist of the Weimar era almost a year before the political success of Hitler and the subsequent coordination between state and scientific officials. Lenz’s article gave scientific credibility to Himmler’s command, much as later cooperation between the Nazi government and the KWI-A did for Nazi racial policy. His endorsement may have directly meant very little to the average SS man who complied with the command, but it – like the order itself – represented a crucial shift in the identity of the SS from an organization committed to serving and protecting the Führer to the elite organization that in many ways influenced the development of Nazi Germany. The engagement and marriage command and this public praise also helped differentiate the SS from the brawling street fighters of the still superior SA. That differentiation fostered an ever-widening gap between the SS and the SA and lent credence to the SS claim that it was an elite organization, and thus, the more elitist the SS became, the more the members of the traditional elite in Germany wanted to join it, which in turn created a cycle where perceptions of elitism bred further elitism. The application of eugenic standards as a basis of the Black Order did not mean that the SS relinquished crude violence; on the contrary, both the Night of the Long Knives and the bestial behavior of SS guards toward concentration camp inmates belied that notion.  

It did mean, however, that simple, brutal, and oftentimes calculated sadism did not alone define the SS; instead, there was a greater ideal in the form of a Nordic, blood-based, family community which shaped the trajectory of the organization.

Himmler set this greater ideal into motion with the December 1931 command, and he had an active role in its implementation. Yet, he did not personally oversee the daily affairs of the newly-created Race Office. On the same day he issued the edict, Himmler released a second order appointing SS-Standartenführer Richard Walther Darré to head the Race Office. Darré was hardly a random choice. The two men had most likely met in the mid 1920’s when both had belonged to the Artamanen League. Begun in 1924, the approximately 2000 members of the league were agrarian romantics who wanted to see the German people, especially its youth, return to the rural regions from the urban cities. The association believed that the German government needed to aid this migration to the countryside and to encourage the development of

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8 For more information on the selective use of terror in the Third Reich see Nathan Stoltzfus, “Tactical Terror to Nazi Reliance on Terror for Repressing Dissidents and its Social Causes,” in Terror: From Tyrannicide to Terrorism, edited by Brett Bowden and Michael T. Davis (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2009).

9 “SS-Befehl – A – Nr. 67,” BA NS19/1934 and IfZ Fa 201, page 44.
a strong peasantry. Some of its members also belonged to the Nazi party, and when the league dissolved in 1930 due to economic strains brought on by the Depression, many of them joined the SS. Himmler and Darré further crossed paths due to their agricultural work. Prior to his appointment as Reichsführer, Himmler had campaigned for the party in the mid 1920’s trying to encourage rural residents to vote for the NSDAP; at the same time, Darré worked for the German government in the department of agriculture. In 1930, the Nazi party recruited him specifically to serve as the leader of its agrarian movement (*Agrarbewegung*) and to win over the peasantry to its cause.\(^{10}\)

In addition to this work, first for the government and then for the Nazi party, Darré wrote many articles and books throughout the 1920’s and early 1930’s. Most of these tracts focused on animal and plant breeding, reflecting Darré’s university education in farming. His most well-known works, however, combined this knowledge of farming with his reflections on the Nordic race: *The Peasantry as the Life Source of the Nordic Race* and *A New Aristocracy from Blood and Soil*.\(^{11}\) In these two books, respectively published in 1929 and 1930, Darré glorified both the peasant way of life and the Nordic race. In fact, he connected the two concepts, claiming that the basis of the superiority of the Nordic race was its close ties to the soil and that, as it had in the past, the future German elite would emerge from the people of this Nordic, agrarian stock. Darré was not the first person to argue for the connection between Nordic blood (\textit{Blut}) and German soil (\textit{Boden}), but he did popularize these concepts and use them as a means to educate the German people and awaken their racial consciousness.\(^{12}\)

Himmler undoubtedly found Darré’s interpretation of the blood and soil ideology appealing, partially because of his own university education in agriculture and his background as


\(^{11}\) The editions procured for this dissertation are later editions of these two works: Richard Walther Darré, *Das Bauernatum als Lebensquell der nordischen Rasse* (Munich: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1937) and Richard Walther Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden* (Munich: J.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1934).

a chicken farmer, but especially because it buttressed his own perspective regarding the
superiority of the Nordic race. Darre’s potential influence over Himmler’s thinking towards
racial matters and the connection between the German peasantry and a blood-based aristocracy
most likely increased following his entrance into the SS in 1931. He may have also had some
input into the development of the engagement and marriage command, and as the leader of the
newly established Race Office, he most certainly had control over the implementation of it.

However, as was typical of every SS office during the 1930’s, the Race Office very
quickly grew beyond the bounds of its original purpose. Reviewing engagement and marriage
applications soon became only one of the tasks assigned to Darré and the officers working under
him. To reflect these additional responsibilities, Himmler changed the name of the office in June
1932 to the Race and Settlement Office (Rasse- und Siedlungsamt, RAS); it was one of the first
three independent offices in the SS. RAS had four primary tasks: ideological training of SS
men, selecting new members, overseeing family welfare, and maintaining close relations
between the SS and the peasantry. To accomplish these tasks, the chief oversaw seven
departments: the central department, the personnel department, the department for racial matters,
the department for farm and settlement matters, the training department, the selection
department, and the department for family development and child care. RAS also had the
responsibility of supplying educational leaders, race advisors, and farm consultants to serve not
in its central headquarters, first located in Munich and after 1933 in Berlin, but at the regional
level from the Oberabschnitte all the way down to the Sturm.

This departmental division and these tasks did not remain static throughout the lifetime of
the office. On January 14, 1935, Himmler issued an order which elevated the three SS offices to

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13 As Ben Kiernan has noted, this particular type of glorification of the people and the land was not unique to
Germany. In many cases, Nazi Germany included, this idealization of the peasant cultivator has been a key element
in genocide. The ideal itself was not enough to lead to genocide, Kiernan argued, but combined with other factors,
such as racism and religious prejudice, could instigate genocide. Ben Kiernan, “Twentieth century genocides:
Underlying ideological themes from Armenia to East Timor,” in The Spector of Genocide: Mass Murder in
Historical Persepctive, edited by Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003),
33, 39, 41, and 51.

14 This reorganization came after Chancellor Franz von Papen lifted the ban on the SS and the SA, which his
predecessor, Heinrich Brüning, had implemented in April 1932. The other two offices were the SS Office (SS-Amt)
and Security Office (Sicherheitsamt). Dagmar Barnouw, The War in the Empty Air: Victims, Perpetrators, and
Postwar Germans (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 292, footnote 31 and Eberhard Kolb, The Weimar
Republic, translated by P.S. Falla (London: Routledge, 2001), 117 and 120.

15 “Aufgaben und Gliederung des Rasse- und Siedlungsamtes-SS,” BA NS2/99, page 1 and BA NS31/337, page
157. The respective RAS departments were Abteilung I: Zentralabteilung, Abteilung II: Personalabteilung,
Abteilung III: Rassenfragen, Abteilung IV: Baurern und Siedlung, Abteilung V: Schulung, Abteilung VI: SS-
Auslese, and Abteilung VII: Familienbau, Sippenbuch, Nachwuchs.
a main office (Hauptamt), a designation they would eventually share with nine other SS branches. The tasks assigned to the renamed Race and Settlement Main Office remained the same, although its departments were reorganized several more times over the next decade in order to manage the duties assigned to it more efficiently.\(^\text{16}\) The constant expansion and restructuring of RuSHA was not an anomaly among the SS main offices. The longer the Third Reich existed and the longer the SS as a whole facilitated its expansion, the larger and more complicated the bureaucracy of each main office became in order to handle its respective responsibilities. This growing complexity was moreover reflected in many of the orders issued by Himmler, especially as he habitually released supplementary statements to clarify, validate, and expand his directives. The engagement and marriage command represented one such order that became more complicated with each passing year.

The SS Main Office (SS-Hauptamt) released the first addendum to the order less than two months after its original release. This February 1932 command indicated that SS men who had already proposed to their fiancées prior to January 8 – the day that SS order “A – Nr. 65” was officially announced – did not need to apply for authorization. The reason for this exemption, according to the decree, was because an engagement was seen as a legal act, and the SS order should not disrupt an already existing legal act. However, for any SS man who intended to become engaged after January 8, he had to report this intention and his fiancée’s information to the Reichsführer at least three months in advance.\(^\text{17}\) Again, because Himmler and his staff regarded an engagement as a legal act, they wanted to have an appropriate amount of time to evaluate the prospective bride and to determine if she were suitable to become a member of the burgeoning SS community.

This emphasis on legality in both the December command and the February addendum has significance for two reasons. First, it demonstrates that while Himmler sought to alter the mentality of his men with regards to their perceptions of marriage and family, he did not want to alienate them. Requiring an already-engaged SS man to meet new standards after the fact could have very well forced him to choose between the SS and his fiancée. If he chose the latter,


\(^{17}\) “SS-Befehl – A – Nr. 5,” BA NS2/179, pages 75-76 and BA R187/669, pages 226-27.
Himmler would have lost a valuable man of Nordic blood as well as that man’s potential offspring. With only 15,000 men at that time, even a small decline in membership could have affected the position of the SS as the loyal guardians of the Nazi movement and its Führer. Exempting a minority of men in this particular case represented a relatively small price with regards to the greater ambitions and future possibilities for the SS in the party and later the state.

Second, choosing the path of legality was in line with the party leadership. Following the abortive 1923 putsch and his subsequent prison sentence, Hitler had only wanted to gain power legally through the electoral process; he wanted to work within the democratic system to undermine it. Himmler had been present at the Beer Hall putsch, had seen firsthand how it had failed, and knew that the Führer had renounced violence as the sole means to power. Therefore, stressing the legality of an engagement and thus matching Hitler’s position on legality could have most certainly been a means for Himmler to curry favor with Hitler.

Moreover, such a decision accentuated the growing divide between the SS and the SA, with the former more and more representing a seemingly respectable side of National Socialism compared with the dominant and rabble-rousing storm troopers. The Stennes putsch, which had taken place less than a year prior, was but one indication of the proclivity of the SA to use violence to achieve its goals. While the youthful men of the SA did provide the party with an air of vigor and dynamism often found lacking in other Weimar political parties, this exuberance also obstructed the party as violence could have scared away potential voters. In fact, SA violence did routinely cause problems for the party. Despite the fact that the NSDAP made remarkable gains at the polls throughout the parliamentary elections in the early 1930’s, no election had given it complete power. To many SA men, this lack of absolute control via elections meant that the legal path was not the means to power; only revolution – one brought about by the SA – could win total power for the movement.

Yet, violence could not convince Germans to vote for the NSDAP, nor did it induce the men holding the key positions in power in the Weimar government to ask the Nazis to join a ruling coalition. On the contrary, SA violence after Hitler’s loss in the 1932 presidential election

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led to another government ban of the SA between April and June of 1932.\textsuperscript{20} In complete contrast, the SS never turned against the party or its leader. It proved its loyalty by serving the party within the bounds set by its leadership – legality.\textsuperscript{21} The engagement and marriage command represented one extension of the decision within the SS to remain within those bounds.

Beyond the legality issue, Himmler also released orders which reemphasized other elements of the engagement and marriage process. In March 1936, he issued a decree which again reminded his men that they needed to submit “complete records,” though not directly to him anymore, but to the Race and Settlement Main Office “at least three months before the intended engagement.” As if that wording did not emphasize his point clearly enough, Himmler commented three times verbatim that all paperwork must be submitted “in a timely manner” \textit{(rechtzeitig)}. RuSHA needed this time before the public announcement of an engagement to process the application and ensure that each intended marriage would fulfill the goal of fostering “hereditarily-healthy…Nordic” families.\textsuperscript{22} Just over a year later, another command connected the physical health of the applicants with the engagement and marriage order. In this 1937 decree, Himmler indicated that he wanted each SS man under the age of 50 had to have earned the appropriate sports badge for his age; without it, this man could not obtain the engagement and marriage authorization. The Reichsführer applied similar criteria to women. A future SS bride born in 1920 or later had to prove she had earned a Reich sports badge if she wanted to receive approval for her marriage.\textsuperscript{23}

One final example of a supplementary decree was issued in March 1939. Similar to the one issued in February 1932, this order indicated who did not need to receive permission to


\textsuperscript{21} It should also be noted that at the same time Himmler seemed concerned about legality in the SS, he was forming an intelligence network, a far more subtle way to gain power – both within the party and the state – over a revolution. Hitler had already given the SS the task of policing the movement in a November 1930 decree, and in the spring of 1931, Himmler expanded upon this duty. He created intelligence staff positions in each SS unit and required the person who held that position to forward reports to him. While garnering information, there was no centralized control over either the information or the people who collected it, leading Himmler to have to endure the wrath periodically directed at the SS and its amateur intelligence officers by other party leaders, including Joseph Goebbels, Hermann Göring, and even Hitler. Therefore, Himmler chose to reorganize the intelligence network and gave that task to Reinhard Heydrich. By the late spring of 1932, Heydrich had accomplished that task, and the Security Service (\textit{Sicherheitsdienst} – later to become part of the Reich Security Main Office) was formed. For more information on the security apparatus of the SS see George Browder, \textit{Hitler’s Enforcers: The Gestapo and the SS Security Service in the Nazi Revolution} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 105-109 and Höhne, 58-59.

\textsuperscript{22} “Befehl zum Einholen der Verlobungs- und Heiratsgenehmigung,” BA NS19/3902, page 69.

\textsuperscript{23} “SS-Befehl,” BA NS19/435, pages 2-3; BA R187/669, page 241; NA T611/24; and NA T-175/roll 23/frames 2528827-2528829.
marry. Any SS applicant, man, or officer who had married prior to December 31, 1935, but who “did not yet belong to the SS before this time can be waived from obtaining [this] additional marriage authorization.” These men and their wives nonetheless had to submit the required records to RuSHA. This submission had no bearing on the legitimacy of their already-existing marriage, but their hereditary health was still examined for any faults that could potentially affect their future children, especially if those children later sought to join the SS family community as a member or a spouse.

If these orders had represented the only additions, the procedure would have most likely been relatively straightforward, and the approval (or denial) of an application would have taken very little time. However, reality was far more complicated than these aforementioned supplementary commands suggest. Besides clarifying who did and did not need to apply for permission, indicating where they needed to submit an application, and requiring proof of physical fitness, Himmler also circulated decrees that laid out the exact process each couple needed to follow when applying for permission to marry. It was this process, which included a litany of forms and examinations, that underscored the increasing bureaucratization specifically within RuSHA. This complexity furthermore demonstrated how the formation of a family for an SS man hardly represented a personal decision. Instead, it was the first of many times where he was expected to comply willingly with the Reichsführer’s edicts and interference in his familial choices.

The process toward marriage began when an SS man requested the appropriate forms from RuSHA. In making this request, he had to submit his mailing address, date of birth, SS number, SS rank, and SS unit. He likewise had to include the address and date of birth of his future bride; the address, rank, and unit of his immediate superior in the SS; the address of the SS doctor(s) who would examine him and his bride; and the addresses of two guarantors who belonged to the party and could vouch for his fiancée and her family. The SS man also had to indicate in this original petition to RuSHA that he had notified his immediate superior of the request. After receiving this submission from any part-time SS member, RuSHA mailed the appropriate paperwork to the respective people.

However, for someone professionally employed full-time by the SS as well as anyone

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serving in the Verfügungstruppe, additional regulations existed. Someone in the former group could not ask for the appropriate engagement forms unless he was at least twenty-five years old and included a written statement outlining his financial assets and debts. For someone in the latter group, these special regulations were slightly more complicated. A commissioned officer had to have obtained at least the rank of first lieutenant (SS-Obersturmführer) before he could marry; for a non-commissioned officer, it was technical sergeant (SS-Oberscharführer).26 Finally, for a man enlisted in the Verfügungstruppe, he could not request authorization until he reached age twenty-five, although unlike every other full-time member, once he reached that age, there were no further impediments.27

After an SS man had requested and received the necessary paperwork, both he and his future wife were then responsible for completing and resubmitting four forms. By the time the war began, these forms were: a Race and Settlement questionnaire (RuS Fragebogen), a genealogical tree (Ahnentafel), a hereditary health form (Erbgesundheitsbogen), and a medical examination form (Ärztlicher Untersuchungsbogen). He also had to answer a general questionnaire (Fragebogen) which provided some basic information about his future bride. These details indicated if she were related to him by birth or marriage, how long he had known her, if she were fond of children, her spending habits, and her commitment (and by extension her family’s commitment) to National Socialism. He furthermore had to specify whether he believed

26 For an overview of the commissioned, non-commissioned, and enlisted ranks in the SS as well as a comparison to equivalent ranks in the German and American armies, see Appendix B.
27 Ibid., 70-71. This age/rank issue changed over the course of the 1930’s and 1940’s. In 1935, Himmler had indicated that permission could be given for a man in an active unit even if he had not yet turned twenty-five years old. Then, almost a year later, he released the requirements noted above, which set specific age and rank guidelines. In August 1937, he also issued guidelines for those men attending an SS-Junkerschule; in this case, the officer still had to be 25 years old, but only needed the rank of second lieutenant (SS-Untersturmführer). Overall, there seemed to be some flexibility when it came to all of these guidelines, at least when it came to the Leibstandarte SS, although such differentiation could have been due to Sepp Dietrich and not Himmler. However, even Himmler changed his mind when it came to age and rank, and indicated in late 1937 that as of January 1, 1938, an SS man did not need to be at least 25 and have reached the appropriate rank if the SS unit which he belonged to advocated his marriage. Finally, during the war, in response to a letter from a fiancée, a RuSHA official explained that an SS man did not have to wait until age 25, but could marry at age 21, which was the legal age of emancipation in Germany. This RuSHA official did not directly state that such a change in policy was a result of the war. However, Himmler most certainly wanted to ensure that each man left behind a biological legacy before perishing in the battlefield, and such flexibility with regards to the age when a man could marry would have been in line with the decisions and comments he made throughout the war when it came to familial matters. Letter from Heinrich Himmler to RuSHA from April 10, 1935, NA T580/333/Ordner 122; letter from the Führer of the Leibstandarte SS to RuSHA from August 13, 1936, NA T175/148/frame 2675356; “Heiratsgenehmigung für die aus den SS-Junkerschulen hervorgegangenen SS-Führer,” NA T175/39/frame 2548761; letter from Heinrich Himmler to RuSHA from December 7, 1937, NA T580/330/Ordner 52, Teil 2; and letter from the Chief of the Marriage Office in RuSHA to Margarete Kempe from February 3, 1943, NA T580/326/Ordner 18.
his fiancée would make a suitable wife of an SS member.\textsuperscript{28} Altogether, with these answers, an SS man had the opportunity to give RuSHA a positive first impression of the woman he wanted to marry. He also had to turn in a statement summarizing his personal finances. Finally, he had to obtain a written report from his immediate superior; Himmler preferred to have each superior officer meet with both the SS man and his prospective bride in an informal or social setting in order to form a personal impression of the couple.\textsuperscript{29} RuSHA officials used the information collected from these sources to decide whether a prospective couple met the racial conditions to belong to the developing family community of the SS. Thus, their lengthy forms, especially the ones that both the man and woman had to complete, oftentimes necessitated detailed answers.

The couple’s first required form, the Race and Settlement questionnaire, requested basic background information. Although the form indicated that both the man and woman needed to fill out a copy, most of the questions were more applicable to the SS man than to his future bride. Presuming that the man did not complete this form around the same time as he joined the SS, the information it asked for hardly differed from that which would have been already present in his SS personnel file maintained by the SS Main Office.\textsuperscript{30} Among the particulars requested were details of his service in the SS and, if applicable, in the party and the SA. He had to indicate any prior employment in a military or police unit and honors he may have received from that service.

The SS man additionally had to list his profession, specify where he lived, and denote his marital status as single, widowed, or divorced; if it were the last of the three, he had to include the legal ruling which confirmed the dissolution of his previous marriage.\textsuperscript{31} Since the Nazi state offered financial assistance to all married couples as of mid 1933, this questionnaire required the man to acknowledge if he had applied for the state marriage loan. On an even more personal level, a man had to submit a picture of himself and a one-page personal and professional vita (\textit{Lebenslauf}). He likewise had to provide some basic facts about his parents and grandparents, including their names, ages, any illnesses they survived, and, if dead, the cause of death. Lastly,
an SS man signed and dated the bottom of the fourth page of the questionnaire. With this signature, he accepted the final two clauses, avowing that his statements were truthful to his “best knowledge and conscious” and that he recognized that falsehoods would “result in exclusion from the SS.”

The next form which an SS man and his potential bride were each respectively responsible for, a genealogical tree, was slightly longer and more complicated. If a man had entered the SS prior to the engagement and marriage command, he most likely would not have had one on file already, as providing this family background was not necessary to join the organization until the mid 1930’s. Nonetheless, in submitting this form when enlisting in the SS or applying for permission to marry, the overall point remained the same: proving one’s Aryan descent. The only difference lay in the fact that with the latter process, the woman also had to furnish a genealogical tree to establish her racial worthiness. Enlisted men and noncommissioned officers had to confirm their ancestry back to 1800, commissioned officers back to 1750. For the women, the boundaries were the same; if a woman wanted to marry a commissioned officer, she too had to trace her ancestors back to 1750.

Besides supplying the appropriate charts to fill out, RuSHA provided detailed instructions. The first page of the seven page document described what type of information every applicant had to include. For example, for each ancestor, a man had to write in his (or her) full name, date and place of birth, date and place of death, religion, occupation, and date and place of marriage. If an SS man found these instructions inadequate, he could have referred to a guidebook written in 1937 by Erhard Lange, a RuSHA official in the Office for Family Affairs (Sippenamt). This booklet presented a series of questions and answers designed to assist SS men with the engagement and marriage paperwork, such as explaining the purpose of the 1800 boundary for the genealogical tree.

The chart itself comprised the remaining six pages of the form. In meeting the requisite

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32 Completed copies of this questionnaire and the other forms mentioned throughout this chapter can be found in some, though not all, of the BDC RuSHA files. However, a blank copy of the RuS Fragebogen can be found in NA T611/11/Ordner 446 (Teil 2)/no frame numbers.
33 A blank copy of the Ahnentafel can be found in the file of SS-Brigadeführer Otto Abetz: BDC RuSHA files NA A004/frames 1374-1380.
35 Lange, Ahnentafel-Fibel, BA NSD 41/59. This book was mentioned in an article in Das Schwarze Korps which discussed the purpose of the Ahnentafel in the context of the RuSHA examination process. “Die arische Großmutter,” 3 December 1936, p. 4.
date requirements, the chart allowed for an SS man to write in the necessary facts for both his mother and his father’s respective families for six generations. In total, if he supplied this information for his parents all the way back to his great-great-great-great grandparents, he would have included the basic life details for one hundred and twenty-six ancestors. Once he submitted this form, RuSHA officials scrutinized the data to ascertain that the SS man descended from a worthy Aryan lineage; the same obviously held true for his future fiancée.

The SS man and his potential wife did not directly complete the final two forms: the hereditary health form and the medical examination form. Instead, they had to undergo a physical examination, and the doctors who gave them their evaluations had to fill out these two forms. The couple was allowed to choose which doctor he or she wanted to visit. When the SS man sent in his original request to RuSHA to receive the paperwork, he provided the names and addresses of the selected doctors so that RuSHA could send the relevant forms directly to them. If the physicians belonged to the SS, then the examination was at no cost to either the potential bride or groom. However, according to a May 1937 order, the standard for choosing a doctor became stricter. At this time, Himmler required the doctors which they selected belong to the SS, and he refused to acknowledge any examination conducted by a non-SS doctor unless RuSHA had given the applicant permission to use one prior to the physical. He justified his strictness because of the significance of hereditary health to the SS community. Himmler wanted “every SS member to establish a racially valuable, healthy, German family,” and the physician’s examination produced “a clear picture of the appearance, the health, and the hereditary value of the SS member and his future bride.”

In this May 1937 order, the Reichsführer did not restrict himself to commenting on who could and could not conduct the examination; despite his personal lack of medical training or expertise, he nonetheless advised the doctors how to do their jobs and decreed that RuSHA

36 “Abzug aus den Ergänzungsbestimmungen zum Verlobungsbefehl, soweit sie für die Erläuterung seiner Durchführung wichtig sind, [part] B, P.P.,” BA R187/669, page 227. While indicating that the exam was at no cost to either the SS man or his fiancée, this regulation did not clarify whether SS-affiliated doctors provided this examination for free or if the SS reimbursed them for any costs incurred.

37 It would not have been difficult for an SS man and his future bride to find a doctor associated with the SS as by this time, according to historian Robert Proctor, approximately half the doctors in the country belonged to the Nazi party, and doctors were represented in the SS seven times more often than the average employed male. Robert Proctor, “Nazi Doctors, Racial Medicine, and Human Experimentation,” The Nazi Doctors and the Nuremberg Code: Human Rights in Human Experimentation, edited by George Annas and Michael A. Grodin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995): 19.

enclose a copy of this order every time it mailed the appropriate forms to the doctors. Among
the instructions he listed, Himmler noted that an examination for the engagement and marriage
application absolved the physicians of doctor-patient confidentiality; in other words, while
Himmler and RuSHA officials were, as stated in the original December 1931 order, bound to
secrecy with all information, the doctors in this case had to reveal every detail to them. Himmler
then reminded the physicians to proceed carefully, to double-check all statements, and to remain
tactful when examining women, especially when reviewing gynecological issues and
determining, through vaginal examinations, their childbearing ability.\(^{39}\)

Based on this intensive examination, a physician could then complete the necessary
paperwork.\(^{40}\) The information required for the hereditary health form relied less on a physical
examination and more on a conversation between the doctor and his patient. This form required
some general personal information about the patient, but it primarily listed the medical history of
the patient’s family. From their discussion, a doctor had to discern the health of not only his
patient’s mother and father, but of his/her grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and siblings. If
the patient had any children, legitimate or illegitimate, the doctor had to compile information on
them too. In the course of the discussion, the doctor had to learn if his patient or any of his
relatives suffered from a wide range of medical and social problems including alcoholism,
mental illness, diabetes, congenital deformities such as a club foot or deafness, or incarceration.
Once their conversation was over, the doctor signed the completed hereditary health form,
acknowledging his detailed discussion with his patient and affirming that the patient understood
the significance of truthfully speaking with him about these personal matters.

The medical examination form, in contrast, recorded the results of the physical. While
the doctor specifically wrote down his assessment of the childbearing abilities of the woman, he
otherwise completed the same examination for an SS man and his future bride. The physician
had to mark off the physical characteristics of his patient, such as age; height; weight; physique;
and skin, eye, and hair color. He had to comment on the health of his patient’s teeth, eyesight,
lungs, heart, and reflexes. Finally, he had to record his overall impression and pronounce

\(^{39}\) Ibid., pages 2-3 and frames 319-320, respectively.

\(^{40}\) A copy of the Erbgesundheitsbogen can be found in NA T611/11/Ordner 446 (Teil 2)/no frame numbers and BDC
RuSHA files NA A417/frames 2294-2300. There were three variations of the Ärztlicher Untersuchungsbogen. A
copy of the one discussed throughout this chapter can be found in NA T611/11/Ordner 446 (Teil 2)/no frame
numbers. The other two versions appear to be earlier variations from 1934 and 1935; copies of these forms can be
respectively found at BDC RuSHA files NA B0335/frames 178-182 and BDC RuSHA files NA B282/frames 1680-
1682.
whether he had any misgivings regarding the future genetic and reproductive capabilities of his patient. Once he had completed both forms, the doctor sealed them and then had the choice of either returning them to his patient or mailing them directly to RuSHA; in either case he also had to include his own medical credentials (ärztliche Zeugnisse). 41

Although RuSHA utilized the information from all of the forms when making a decision, these latter two documents were highly significant because the medical officials who filled them out were not just doctors offering a casual opinion about the general health of their patients. They represented the experts who could best judge the racial worth of each individual, thus judging their potential contribution to the SS and the German Volk. Part of this expertise was gained in medical school, as both genetics and eugenics had become standard fields in medical coursework by the 1930’s. However, SS doctors received supplementary education on race hygiene, and it was most likely for this reason that Himmler insisted that his men and their future brides go to them over their non-SS-affiliated colleagues.

SS doctors obtained guidance from their medical peers within the SS. Dr. Ernst Robert Grawitz, chief medical officer of the SS (Reichsarzt-SS), issued a document directly outlining the tasks of SS doctors. He proclaimed that they were health leaders responsible for judging the hereditary well-being and genetic suitability of SS men and their fiancées as well as influencing these couples to contribute to a positive population policy. 42 Dr. Leonardo Conti, the Reich Health Leader and the Health Commissioner (Staatskommissar für das Gesundheitswesen), published a short guidebook for SS doctors. In it, he explained the value of hereditary health and a strong population for Germany. Conti urged them to use their medical knowledge to foster the growth of the German Volk because the end result of all medical policies was the creation and preservation of racially healthy, child-rich families. 43

Other supplemental education for doctors came from an institutional level. The SS did

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41 Neither the instructions for returning the forms nor including the doctor’s credentials were given with the Erbgesundheitsbogen or Ärztlicher Untersuchungsbogen. The former was provided in “Allgemeine, SS-ärztliche Untersuchung für Verlobungs- und Heirats-Genhmigung,” BA NS2/179, page 3 and BDC RuSHA files NA A041/frame 320, and the latter was noted in a general list of material that each applicant had to submit as part of the engagement and marriage process: BDC RuSHA files NA A5489/frame 2915.


43 Leonardo Conti, “Grundzüge nationalsozialistischer Bevölkerungspolitik,” Ärztlicher Lehrhefte der SS, BA BDC 31.30. The copy of this article found in the Bundesarchiv library does not list a publication date, but online catalogues list possible publication years as either 1935 or 1939.
have an officer’s school for doctors in Alt Rehse.\textsuperscript{44} It also had a medical academy, first located in Berlin, and then in Graz, Austria where it was associated with the University.\textsuperscript{45} More important than the medical academy and its university connection was the relationship between the SS and the KWI-A. Starting in the fall of 1934 and running through at least the spring of 1937, KWI-A officials offered medical courses on genetics and race hygiene specifically for SS doctors.\textsuperscript{46} Turning to the premier eugenics institute and its experts for further medical education was an obvious choice, but it was one that did not come without a slight bit of controversy.

Among the party and SS officials who did not fondly regard KWI-A director Eugen Fischer was the head of RuSHA. Apparently he had written reviews which panned Darré’s books, and Darré had not forgotten this slight.\textsuperscript{47} Somehow the two men had come to terms with one another over this issue by late 1934, although it would not have been above the Reichsführer to remind to Darré that Fischer and his institute were a valuable resource for the SS and to compel his RuSHA chief to accept this association.

Regardless of how Fischer and Darré overcame their differences, the KWI-A began its first course, which lasted nearly a year, on October 1, 1934. RuSHA along with the NSDAP Office of Racial Policy chose twenty-one SS doctors to participate, although Fischer did have some say in who could attend. While ostensibly designed solely for the benefit of the SS, it was the Reich Ministry of the Interior that paid for these courses.\textsuperscript{48} The seminars that followed the original 1934-1935 program did not last for an extended period, but instead took place for

\textsuperscript{44}“Ärzte unter sich,” \textit{Das Schwarze Korps}, 26 September 1935, 6 and Thomas Maibaum, “Die Führerschule der deutschen Ärzteschaft Alt-Rehse” (dissertation, University of Hamburg, 2007).


\textsuperscript{46}As cited below, there are a few documents in the Bundesarchiv and the Max Planck Gesellschaft Archiv which briefly discuss these courses. However, from 1999-2004, the Max Planck Society, the successor organization of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society, established a Presidential Commission: “History of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society in the National Socialist Era.” Selected scholars were given unprecedented access to the archive to investigate the contributions of the KWG to the National Socialist regime, including an investigation of how the society legitimized the aims of the government. Of the work published from this research, that produced by Rüdiger Hachtmann, Benoît Massin, and Sheila Faith Weiss are the most significant with regards to the courses offered by the KWI-A for the SS, though other historians not associated with that commission have also briefly mentioned these courses in their respective works. For more information on the MPG Presidential Commission: <http://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/KWG/engl.htm>.

\textsuperscript{47}Schmuhl, 137.

\textsuperscript{48}Proctor, \textit{Racial Hygiene}, 348; Schmuhl, 205; Müller-Hill, 37; Berez and Weiss, 175; and Weiss, “Human Genetics,” 70.
approximately one week each month. These latter courses were not, according to Fisher’s activity report for the KWI-A from April 1935 to March 1936, held at the institute any longer, but directly at the Reich Ministry of the Interior. Beyond the ministry, the institute, and RuSHA, the SS medical office (SS-Sanitätsamt) and the Reich Security Main Office also had a vested interest in these courses.

Dr. Arthur Gütt, a ministry official and the chief of the SS Office for Population Politics and Hereditary Heath Care (Der Amtes für Bevölkerungspolitik und Erbgesundheitspflege im Stabe des Reichsführers-SS), provided guidelines for course participants in 1935 and 1936. Unlike the original twenty-one person course, these one week seminars each accommodated up to 100 doctors. Again, lodging and meals were paid for; in addition, each participant was reimbursed twenty Reichmarks per day to compensate for time away from his medical practice or other duties, and he could receive further monetary compensation for travel expenses if he made a request in advance and provided receipts for the tickets he had purchased.

Most of the people who served as an instructor for these courses either came from the SS or the KWI-A. Among the people who belonged to the former group were Gütt, Conti, Grawitz, Falk Ruttke, Lothar Loeffler, and Bruno K. Schultz, and the latter group included Fischer, Lenz, and Otmar von Verschuer. Other notable state officials who lectured SS doctors were Friedrich Bürgdorfer and Walter Groß. In his guidelines, Gütt had indicated that because of the brevity of each course, participants were expected to have a basic knowledge of the most important hereditary rules, such as the genetic work of Gregor Mendel. He required them to review the book Genetics, Race Hygiene, and Population Politics by Dr. Hermann Siemens before attending the seminar; as with everything else, if the participants presented a receipt for purchasing this book, they were reimbursed. During the week-long course, the participants learned about a wide range of medical, racial, and political topics, including hereditary health care, racial history, population politics, hereditary diseases, racial politics and ideology, the medical services of the SS, the meaning of genetic selection, the relationship between race and the law, and the role of the SS doctor in the National Socialist state.

The ongoing connection between the SS and the foremost eugenics experts in Germany

49 “Tätigkeitsbericht von Professor Dr. Fischer vom 1.4.1934-31.3.1936,” MPG Abteilung 1/Repositur 1A/Nummer 2404, page 52b.
benefitted both sides. For the KWI-A, the relationship with the SS not only bolstered the position of the institute in the state, but also led to an almost yearly increase in funding.\textsuperscript{51} Institute officials responded positively to the participation of SS doctors, as noted in a personal letter from von Verschuer to Fischer in April 1937.\textsuperscript{52} Many of the SS physicians went on to work for the KWI-A in some capacity after completing one of the courses, with several of them serving as research assistants to Fischer, Lenz, and von Verschuer.\textsuperscript{53} For the SS, the involvement of noteworthy KWI-A personnel further validated its racial ideals and policies. There was no greater legitimacy possible for Himmler’s racial ideology, and if his doctors were informed of the most current eugenics research, then it served to reason that they represented the best arbiters in the SS when it came to evaluating the health and racial qualities of each SS man and his future bride.

These various resources aided SS doctors in preparing for their responsibilities, including the engagement and marriage paperwork. However, just as the SS as an organization provided support for its medical officials, it likewise sought to help individual SS men navigate through the engagement and marriage process. The SS published the \textit{SS Order Bulletin}, which printed various commands and reminders, including keeping the men informed of what paperwork they needed to submit for the engagement and marriage process.\textsuperscript{54} Additionally, in each Oberabschnitt, RuSHA appointed race experts and training leaders to supervise the racial education and indoctrination of the SS members, although they could assist SS men with their engagement and marriage examinations and paperwork.\textsuperscript{55}

On a smaller level, in August 1937, Himmler ordered the creation of an SS support agency (\textit{SS-Pflegestelle}) in each Standarte of the Allgemeine-SS, Totenkopfverbände, and Verfügungstruppe. Each agency had four employees responsible all matters concerning family care as outlined by RuSHA: a leader, typically the officer in charge of the Standarte; a full-time...

\textsuperscript{54} “SS-Befehls-Blatt,” BA NSD 41/2.
advisor who processed paperwork related to admission to the SS and the engagement and marriage command; a doctor who assisted with the relevant engagement and marriage forms and counseled married couples about the importance of having numerous children; and a full-time clerk. Of these four people, RuSHA particularly underscored the duties of the full-time advisor, requiring that he was no less than 30 years old, married, and had children. This emphasis on his familial status related back to the tasks handled by each agency, which included proofreading the engagement and marriage paperwork and subsequently promoting the formation of hereditarily-healthy, child-rich families after an SS man and his fiancée had married.

Once an SS man and his future bride had filled out and submitted their completed application, the Office for Family Affairs in RuSHA received it. The officials processed the applications for enlisted men and non-commissioned officers. However, for all commissioned officers as well as any application in which a refusal was highly possible, Himmler reserved the right to make the decision personally. This division demonstrated how he did not give complete autonomy to the people he had placed in charge of a main office, but instead routinely became involved in the decision making at all levels. He explained this personal involvement in a 1937 speech, proclaiming that he examined “20 such requests daily because I want to remain familiar with the practice.” This constant familiarization allowed Himmler to set the standards personally when it came to spousal selection, create precedence for future decisions, and signify that establishing a family did not represent a private decision. In the relevant cases, RuSHA forwarded the paperwork to him along with a letter, oftentimes marked secret (Geheim) to maintain the privacy required by the original command. When Himmler consented to a marriage, he wrote in the margins of the letter from RuSHA his initials and the date next to the word “yes” or “approved.”

57 “Verlobungs- und Heiratsgenehmigung,” NA T175/135/frame 2663483.
58 The Chiefs of RuSHA were well aware of Himmler’s involvement and interest in the process. Otto Hofmann, the third person to serve in that position, commented in his testimony during the RuSHA Trial that Himmler was extremely interested in the process: “I can tell you from my own person experience…that during a flight from Berlin to Lodz I observed how he was looking through the engagement and marriage applications and later he said to me that this was almost a rest from his whole duties, this examination of the applications.” US v. Greifelt, 3173.
60 Examples of Himmler approving applications can be found in the following BDC RuSHA files: A417/frame 2926; B0088/frame 476; C5116/frame 2770; G73/frame 1648; and G588/frame 1592.
Whether Himmler reviewed an application or RuSHA did, in both cases a RuSHA official filled in another form, the clan dossier (*Sippenakte*). In this short, two-page record, the official recorded the most relevant information gleaned from the documents submitted by each couple: if the applicants were of sound racial descent back to the appropriate date, if they were racially healthy, if they had applied for the state marriage loan, and if the bride had the appropriate sports badge. There was also a space to indicate if the Reichsführer had given his approval, if necessary, as well as a section to note information about children from a previous marriage or illegitimate children. Once the RuSHA official, or Himmler, had approved the application, a simple comment along the lines of “No essential misgivings” or “No objections” was entered on to the clan dossier.\(^6^1\) The official then wrote a letter to the SS man and indicated that RuSHA had authorized his marriage.\(^6^2\)

If there were problems with the submitted paperwork, a temporary approval could not be given; no such thing existed. Instead, the RuSHA official sent a letter to the SS man and indicated where the specific deficiencies in his application lie. One of the most common problems was with the genealogical tree, as applicants did not always fill it in completely. Typically, they had not provided enough ancestors to meet the 1800 or 1750 deadline, had made a chronological error like listing the date of birth of an ancestor as 1753 and the date of death as 1883, or had not written in all of the information about each ancestor, such as date of birth or date and place of marriage. The SS man (or his future bride, if the mistake were with her submission) was asked to correct the problem and resubmit the relevant forms.\(^6^3\)

Completing the necessary paperwork as requested, however, did not necessarily mean approval for one’s engagement and marriage. In scrutinizing each application, both RuSHA officials in the Office for Family Affairs and Himmler himself found plenty of reasons to deny an engagement and marriage request. Any association with Jews or Jewish organizations automatically eliminated the possibility for approval as did the conviction and incarceration of either the bride or one of her family members. Himmler reflected that such flawed individuals would not make suitable wives or in-laws for an SS man. He was also loathe to approve a

\(^{61}\) A blank copy of the *Sippenakte* can be found in BDC RuSHA files NA C0200/frame 692 and NA A004/frame 1382.

\(^{62}\) Examples of approval letters can be found in BDC RuSHA files NA A041/frame 272; NA B0335/frame 166; and NA C5116/frame 2768.

\(^{63}\) “Heiratsgenehmigung des SS-Rottf. H. Kloose,” NA T354/407/frame4123035; BDC RuSHA files NA B5195/frame 2800; BDC RuSHA files NA A5458/frame 2436; and Untitled document, BA NS2/8, page 49.
marriage where the bride descended from a non-Germanic heritage.\textsuperscript{64}

Other obstacles with an application were based on the hereditary health of the SS man or his future bride. If either petitioner could not provide the required information about his or her family, RuSHA officials could not properly judge his or her hereditary health. That was grounds for rejection, as was any inherited medical condition suffered by a family member of either petitioner. If that medical condition was among those listed in the 1933 Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring, not only did RuSHA reject the application, but the SS man – if it were his family member with the hereditary condition – also risked expulsion from the SS. Any man who had joined the SS after 1933 was automatically released not because he himself was hereditarily ill, but because his family lineage indicated that his future offspring could suffer from such conditions; if the man had joined prior to 1933, Himmler decided his fate.\textsuperscript{65} Another reason which justified rejection of a marriage and expulsion from the SS was impotency. If the SS man were found to be impotent, he could not enter into a marriage because he would deprive an otherwise healthy woman of the ability to have children. Furthermore, he himself would be released from the SS if he had joined after 1933 because he could not fulfill his obligation to have a child-rich family.\textsuperscript{66}

RuSHA officials and the Reichsführer also rejected applications if they deemed that a woman would not make an appropriate wife for an SS man and would therefore not be a suitable addition to the SS family community. The most common reason that a woman would be declared unsuitable was because of her age. Despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that he had done so himself, Himmler did not want his men to marry older women on the grounds that few, if any, children could emerge from such a marriage. He and his seven-years-older wife Marga

\textsuperscript{64}A “Germanic” bride would have been a German woman, a Volksdeutsche (an ethnic German living in another country), or a foreign national of Nordic blood (such as a Norwegian). A “non-Germanic” bride would have been someone denied less for her nationality and more for her racial unsuitability, such as a Czech or a Pole.


\textsuperscript{66}“Entlassung aus der SS,” BA NS2/168, page 252. This decision was made prior the advent of the Lebensborn homes and the push for SS families to adopt racially suitable children from these homes, so it most likely would have been overturned later in the decade.
only had one biological child, a daughter named Gudrun, born in 1929.

However, just as Himmler did not want his men to marry women who could not provide them – and by extension the SS community – with a large and hereditarily healthy family, he was none too pleased when an SS man and his bride put in the engagement and marriage paperwork after the woman was pregnant. In October 1935, he directed RuSHA to submit all applications to him when the prospective bride was already pregnant. He commented that he was likely to consent to such marriages if, and only if, the parents of the bride cared for their daughter until the wedding and the couple otherwise met every other requirement. Himmler had apparently approved more than a few engagement and marriage requests on such grounds because not even half a year later, he released an order covering the pregnancy issue. In this command, he lambasted the irresponsibility of SS men who had served in the organization for several years and still did not submit their paperwork prior to their prospective bride’s eighth or ninth month of pregnancy. Himmler furthermore reprimanded the officers above these men for not properly informing their troops about the significance of the engagement and marriage command. In the future, so Himmler proclaimed at the end of his order, he would hold both the individual SS man and the superior officer responsible for this oversight.

Focusing on these intricate details suggests that RuSHA officials, not to mention Himmler himself, dedicated an extensive amount of time to examining each couple and that the approval or rejection of their application would have taken weeks, if not months, to finish. Inevitably, such intensive scrutiny led to a backlog of applications by 1937. Himmler was none too pleased to learn of this delay and expressed his displeasure to Darré in a May 1937 letter. The Reichsführer indicated that he had recently met with Hitler, and they had spoken about the authorization process. Hitler had commented that he had the impression this process took an extremely long time; the Führer further noted in a half joking, half serious tone, according to

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67 Letter from Heinrich Himmler to RuSHA from October 4, 1935, NA T580/333/Ordner 122. One example is when Himmler approved of the marriage of Bruno Streckenbach, then an Oberführer, to his fiancée who was three months pregnant. It was, according to Streckenbach’s BDC SSO file, his third marriage, from which two children were produced in total. Letter from the Chief of the Office of Family Affairs to Himmler, 18 June 1937, NA BDC RuSHA file G73, page 1648 and Streckenbach, Bruno, Berlin Document Center SS Officer files [hereafter BDC SSO file], SSO 165B, page 1136. Jens Banach provides a brief overview of the content of the BDC SSO files maintained by the SS Personnel Main Office (as well as the RuSHA files maintained by the Race and Settlement Main Office). Jens Banach, Heydrichs Elite: Das Führerkorps der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1936-1945 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1998), 27-28.

68 “Befehl zum rechtzeitigen Einholen der Verlobungs- und Heiratsgenehmigung,” BA NS19/577, page 10; BA NS19/3902, page 72; and NA T580/329/Ordner 50.

69 Letter from Heinrich Himmler to Richard Walther Darré from May 18, 1937, BA NS2/41, pages 142-43.
Himmler, that perhaps this function of RuSHA presented an obstacle to marriage. Hitler’s statements prompted Himmler to inquire with the Office for Family Affairs, and he learned to his “horror and astonishment” that there were over 20,000 outstanding requests.

Himmler clearly wanted a solution to the excessive amount of time that an SS man had to wait for a response from RuSHA, but indicated to Darré that his office would not receive any more funding in order to solve this problem. Otherwise, any other solution to the backlog was perfectly acceptable to Himmler as he did not want his SS men faced with the decision of either marrying without permission and risking punishment or waiting for approval and not being able to marry in a timely manner. He ended his letter by telling Darré not to allow this issue to anger him because they would find an appropriate solution.

For the most part, the extensive application process and the backlog resulting from it did not serve as a deterrent for most SS men, as by the mid 1930’s approximately 1700-2000 requests were filed each month.70 A personal letter from SS-Standartenführer Georg Lörner to SS-Gruppenführer Karl Wolff, the Chief of the Personal Staff of the Reichsführer (Chef des Persönlichen Stabes Reichsführer-SS), illustrates how one officer personally accepted the requirements. Lörner wrote that he understood the desire of the Reichsführer to have his full-time officers marry, but he did not believe that Himmler intended for his men to marry as quickly as possible because that would lead, in Lörner’s opinion, to an unhappy and bitter marriage. Nonetheless, Lörner was happy to report to Wolff that he had found a woman whom he desired to marry, one who met his personal requirements of being sweet and nice and one who wanted to have many children. He now wished to proceed forward and promptly obtain his authorization so that he could marry.71 This approval was granted and Lörner married the day prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.72

Although Lörner’s letter represents just one example, it does demonstrate the willingness of most SS men to accede to Himmler’s orders and to wait, even a prolonged period of time, for approval from RuSHA. A minority of them, however, did not wish to comply, prompting

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70 “Rede des Reichsführer-SS anlässlich der Gruppenführer-Besprechung in Tölz am 18.II.1937,” IfZ MA 311/frames 2611839-2611840. Although I have not found a document that directly shows the ratio of engagement and marriage requests filed per month versus requests approved each month, based on approval ratings from December 1938 and January 1939, it appears unlikely that RuSHA was able to speed up the review process significantly enough to eradicate the 20,000 application backlog. For December 1938 and January 1939 combined, a total of 2198 applications were approved. “Heiratsgenehmigungen und Freigaben,” BA NS19/577, page 40.
71 Letter from Georg Lörner to Karl Wolff from October 1, 1937, NA RG238/1/folders SS-282, SS-284, and SS-285.
Himmler to address the issue. In March 1935, he released an order indicating that he had
strongly censured an SS officer because “contrary to the command known to all SS members,”
this officer had gotten engaged and had announced it in a newspaper prior to receiving the
Reichsführer’s approval. Himmler declared that in the future, such a transgression would lead to
expulsion from the organization.73

Less than three months later, he issued a supplementary command which outlined a
judicial procedure for SS members who got engaged or married without prior permission. Any
contravention of the engagement and marriage command would be reported to the SS Court
(Hauptamt SS Gericht) in Munich. The court would hold a hearing, and for all transgressions
committed before August 1, 1935, it would reprimand any SS member who acted in ignorance of
the command. The court furthermore would admonish the superior officer of that reprimanded
SS man for neglecting his own responsibility to inform the men under him about the proper
engagement and marriage procedures. After August 1, the court could dismiss anyone who
knowingly disregarded the command, although for officers found guilty, it could propose
demotion and expulsion from the SS. To ensure that every single SS member understood the
severity of this judicial procedure, Himmler not only required every single unit to announce this
command once a month, but he also insisted that each unit had to record monthly recitation in its
service book.74

The results of these disciplinary measures were quite mixed. On the one hand, over four
hundred people were dismissed from the organization for violating the engagement and marriage
command. Based on numbers produced in its annual statistical report for 1937, 7,515 men were
discharged from the SS, mostly honorably and of their own volition.75 Of that number, only 320
– less than 5% of the dismissals – related to the engagement and marriage command. In
comparison, far more people resigned or were expelled for occupational reasons (42.6%), health
reasons (16.4%), an assignment with the military (11.8%), or a transfer to another branch of the
party (7.9%).76 The situation vis-à-vis the engagement and marriage command and dismissal

73 Letter from Heinrich Himmler to the SS Main Office from March 21, 1935, NA T611/11/Ordnung 446 (Teil 2)
and NA T175/30/frame 2537793.
75 Actually, 7,960 people were dismissed in 1937 for one of five reasons: per their own request, their unsuitability
for service, their unfitness due to health, their unsuitability on ideological grounds, or their unsuitable character. Of
these five reasons, 7,515 were dismissed for the first two, and the 1937 Statistical Yearbook only provided
additional clarification for the dismissals based on these two reasons.
76 Statistisches Jahrbuch, 1937, pages 16 and 55-56.
from the SS improved in 1938 when a total of 5,461 men were dismissed; again, the vast majority of the dismissals were dishonorable discharges instigated by the individual. Of these discharges, 83 (1.5%) of the men who received an honorable discharge and 24 (0.44%) of the men who had received a dishonorable discharge had left because of the engagement and marriage command.  

Clearly, while these numbers show that Himmler and the SS Court allocated punishments for disobeying the engagement and marriage command, they likewise indicate that men were allowed to petition and did actually receive honorable discharges based on their decision not to comply with that command. However, these honorable discharges were not the only flexibility shown.  

In the very same time frame, 1936-1938, Himmler demonstrated leniency toward his men as well as even relaxed the regulations regarding violations of the engagement and marriage commands. One example of clemency toward an SS officer was that of SS-Sturmbannführer Wilhelm Huth. According to his personnel and RuSHA files, he had requested the required paperwork, but he and his fiancée did not complete and submit the documents prior to getting married in January 1935. The very act of requesting the RuSHA forms proved that Huth knew of the engagement and marriage command, yet he chose to disregard it and only send in the forms after the fact, although he did not specify why he made this decision. When the issue came to Himmler’s attention over a year later in March 1936, he dismissed Huth from the SS on the grounds that he expected his officers to set “a good example,” and this inappropriate decision had proven that Huth “did not possess the inner aptitude for a higher SS officer.”

The matter would have been concluded and Huth would have been dismissed from the SS had the Oberabschnitt to which he belonged not questioned Himmler’s decision a month later. At that time, the head of Oberabschnitt Northeast wrote to Darré for clarification about the status of Huth because, according to the Oberabschnitt records, which had been forwarded from RuSHA, Huth had received belated permission for his marriage from Himmler in February 1936. The officer in charge of the Oberabschnitt wanted Darré to clarify which of the contradictory orders, both endorsed by Himmler, he needed to relay to Huth: the February 1936 one approving

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77 Again, a total of 5,638 people were dismissed for the same five reasons as noted above, but again, clarification was only provided for the first two reasons, which represented 5,104 of the cases. *Statistisches Jahrbuch, 1938*, pages 16, 18, and 67-69.
78 For more on Himmler’s leniency, see chapter 8.
his already existing marriage or the March 1936 one dismissing him from the SS. In the end, Himmler approved Huth’s marriage for a second time in April 1936. Furthermore, despite the Reichsführer’s earlier admonition about Huth’s character and suitability to serve as an officer, Huth eventually reached the rank of Brigadeführer, a rank four grades higher than when he had gotten married and one of the highest ranks obtainable in the SS.80

Beyond this specific case, Himmler also mitigated the possibility for punishments. In late June 1937, the Chief of the SS Court, SS-Gruppenführer Paul Scharfe, forwarded an order to the Race and Settlement, Main, and Reich Security Main Offices as well as to all of the Oberabschnitte. Taking effect immediately and lasting until October, Himmler had decreed that no further penalties would be imposed on SS men because of violations against the engagement and marriage command. However, Himmler still wanted each man who did not comply with the order to be investigated and to have a file created so that if he desired penalties could be imposed later.81 In November, Scharfe passed on an updated order. The Reichsführer still wanted all cases investigated, and he especially needed to know whether noncompliance was due to a man’s carelessness or his difficulties procuring the necessary records. Regarding punishments, Himmler had no intention of creating new penal regulations until an SS support agency was established in each Oberabschnitt, which did not occur until 1938.82

Neither order forwarded by Scharfe indicated why the Reichsführer had changed his mind, but there are several possible reasons. First, Germany was undoubtedly preparing for war by this time, and he could have wanted to increase the size of the SS before that future conflict broke out. While the majority of SS men did not belong to the Verfügungstruppe, this branch did serve as the core of a potential elite fighting force dedicated first and foremost to Hitler. Himmler most likely understood that such a unit, if successfully employed, would improve his standing with Hitler, which in turn would strengthen his power within the party and the state. Second, as noted in the statistics from 1937 and 1938, those men who were dismissed from the SS either because they did not want to comply with the engagement and marriage command or because they had violated it represented a minority of those who left the organization. With so

few transgressions, it might not have been worth the time and effort of the SS Court to prosecute these cases. Third, eliminating the punishments might have encouraged others to stay in the SS and complete the RuSHA paperwork when the time came to get married, thus positively reinforcing the original 1931 command. Retaining these men meant keeping as much good Nordic blood as possible in the SS, and as Nordic blood was believed to produce the best leaders – especially military and political leaders – this retention could have influenced the future growth and wartime uses of the SS.

Beyond these possibilities, there is perhaps one other reason to explain why Himmler relaxed the penalties. The statistics do show that most of the SS men who got married readily complied with his command and very few men violated it, but they highlight another problem: not all of his men got married and the majority of those who did marry did not do so in a timely manner. Young SS men and officers were not allowed to apply for the engagement and marriage authorization until they turned twenty-five years old; after this point, the organization’s leadership wanted them to pursue the task of finding a wife aggressively and to get married by twenty-seven – an age corresponding with the average marriage age throughout the Reich in the mid to late 1930’s. This desired correlation between age and marital status most certainly did not come to fruition during the pre-war years. According to statistics from 1936 and 1937, less than half of twenty-seven year old SS officers were married, and the average marriage age in the SS was five years above the Reich median.

In general, in the years leading up to the war, the marriage rates in the entire SS remained well below 50%. As of August 1936, 69.3% of all SS men (enlisted, non commissioned officers, and commissioned officers) were single, 30.3% were married, and 0.4% were widowed or divorced. A year later, in September 1937, 54.4% of all SS men were single, 44.6% were married, and 0.9% were widowed or divorced. Finally, as of the end of 1938, 60.3% of all SS men were single, 39.1% were married, and 0.6% were widowed or divorced. However, SS statisticians did note in 1937 and 1938 that approximately half of the unmarried SS men were

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83 An article from the *Preußische Zeitung* examined the average marriage age in the Reich by profession. Among the professions listed, academics, doctors, lawyers, and higher civil servants had the highest average age for marriage; all of them were above 30 years old. “Heiratsalter und Beruf,” *Preußische Zeitung*, number 244, 4 September 1937; this information can also be found in BA NS5/VI/4889, page 40.

84 “Nachtrag für die bevölkerungspolitische Schrift an die SS-Führer,” BA NS19/3964, pages 18-19 and “Nachtrag für die bevölkerungspolitische Schrift an die SS-Führer,” BA NS19/3965, pages 7 and 9.
twenty-five years old or younger, and they were not expected to be married yet. 85

Among the officers, the statistics were slightly more encouraging, although by no means did the officer class, in part or in whole, reach 100% compliance. In 1936, 74.1% of all officers – both those serving the SS full-time in paid positions and those serving unpaid during nights and weekends – were married; in 1937, 76.7% were married; and by the end of 1938, 77.3% were married. This high point of 77.3% was almost 4% above the total percentage of married men in the Reich. Nonetheless, Himmler commented in late 1938 that this higher SS number should not serve as an excuse for those officers who were still single to remain so because “the SS should be a germ cell (Keimzelle) of the German Volk…” 86 This desire to see the SS become a model for the German Volk, at least with regards to marriage, remained unfilled. When the marriage statistics were broken down by age, not even the oldest age group containing all officers forty-one years and older were married; over 5% of these officers remained single. 87

Various offices and departments produced marriage statistics during the mid and late 1930’s, all of which, as shown above, demonstrated the problem of convincing SS men to get married. However, those created by the SS Personnel Chancellery (SS-Personalkanzlei) also addressed the issue of why the numbers were so low for SS officers by conveying the justifications that the officers themselves had reported when surveyed. Four primary explanations emerged: they were impeded by economic conditions; they had not finished their education and therefore had no job; they lacked the time and opportunity to find a wife; and finally, they had not met a suitable woman yet.

For the most part, the person who wrote the two statistical reports in which these reasons appeared briefly scrutinized and rejected each one. Economic conditions could not be an impediment to marriage for two reasons: one, because the economic situation in the country had improved since the Weimar Republic, and two, because anyone employed by the SS full-time received a salary. The second explanation was refuted for similar reasons, although the author of the reports did acknowledge that people who pursued an academic education usually married

86 “Bevölkerungspolitik im SS-Führerkorps, Stand 1 Dezember 1938,” BA NS34/30, page 8.
87 “Nachtrag für die bevölkerungspolitische Schrift an die SS-Führer,” BA NS19/3965, pages 2 and 9; “Bevölkerungspolitik im SS-Führerkorps, Stand 1 Dezember 1938,” BA NS34/30, page 7; “Zahl der Verheirateten und Gesamtkinderzahl in der SS am 1.1.1939 und 31.12.1939,” BA NS19/752, page 29; and “Nachtrag für die bevölkerungspolitische Schrift an die SS-Führer,” BA NS19/3964, pages 14, 16, and 18.
later in life. The SS employed tens of thousands of men who had obtained a university education in a wide range of fields including legal, medical, and scientific professions. Furthermore, they verified that certain occupations were overrepresented in the SS compared with the German population at large; for example, professionals working in the field of health care and hygiene only represented two percent of the population of the Reich, but three percent of the total membership of the SS. Again, as recognized by the author of the SS Personnel Chancellery reports, this overrepresentation of certain learned professions might have influenced the lower marriage rates among SS officers.

Pertaining to the third and fourth explanations given by SS officers for not marrying, they too were rejected. The basis for this refutation was additional statistics regarding SS officers. The author of the two reports from the SS Personnel Chancellery provided figures not just for officers altogether, but also broke them down into two categories – full-time, salaried ones versus part-time, unsalaried ones. In a year-by-year analysis, a higher percentage of officers in the latter category were married. Based on these numbers, the author’s combined rejection of the third and fourth reasons followed these lines: if a part-time SS officer could hold down a full-time job, commit himself to the SS with unpaid service during nights and weekends, and still find time to get married, then a full-time SS officer who received his salary from the SS could not lack the time to find the opportunity to meet a suitable woman and get married.

As these statistics and related details illustrate, in the realm of marriage, the SS – particularly through the work of RuSHA, although accompanied by the efforts of other offices and the personal intervention of the Reichsführer – sought to micromanage every decision relating to the process of getting married and to scrutinize its statistical outcome. No detail was too inconsequential for their attention, including, once permission had been granted, the actual ceremony. That the SS built its own particular marriage celebration is hardly surprising; this attempt was very much in line with the decisions of the Nazi government, which sought to reinvent many rituals and holidays as a means to celebrate the national community and encourage the German Volk to support the regime. Religious weddings were not outright

89 “Nachtrag für die bevölkerungspolitische Schrift an die SS-Führer,” BA NS19/3964, pages 16-18 and “Nachtrag für die bevölkerungspolitische Schrift an die SS-Führer,” BA NS19/3965, pages 14, 15, and 17.
90 For example, William John Wilson explored how the Nazi regime sought to redefine the context of festivities, especially using technology as part of the process of transformation, and Joe Perry has examined how the Nazis sought to shape and control the celebration of Christmas. William John Wilson, “Festivals and the Third Reich,”
forbidden in the SS, but RuSHA did create an SS ritual designed to replace the traditional wedding service in light of the fact that many SS men had, as Himmler had wanted, left their religious denomination and professed themselves to be believers in God (Gottgläubig). 91

This SS ceremony was not, per se, an officially recognized ritual. 92 As with a church wedding, an SS man and his fiancée still had to register their marriage with the appropriate government office. This registration could be done prior to the SS ceremony or during it. Either way, the couple could use the SS service as a means to initiate the wife into the SS family community. The ritual itself was to be simple, yet festive, and it took place during a banquet; this meal did not have to be lavish, but could be served at the SS man’s own home or a nearby inn. The room in which the ceremony took place was to be modestly decorated. An SS flag would stand in the background surrounded by a flower arrangement containing fir sprigs, holly, and ivy. Chairs would be set out for the guests as several SS officers would have been present to perform the ceremony. However, the directions provided by RuSHA did not indicate whether friends and family of the bride and groom could attend the ceremony.

The service would begin with a musical prelude. The RuSHA outline did not list any specific songs, but suggested that ideologically appropriate composers should be used. After the music, a speaker would commence the ceremony with a short prologue, such as a poem or a quotation from Mein Kampf or a speech by the Reichsführer. This prologue would be followed by an address by an SS officer, preferably the immediate superior of the groom because he most likely would have personally known the couple and could speak about the development of their relationship. Otherwise, in his address, the officer would emphasize the significance of the marriage as a means to sustain the vitality of both the Volk and the SS family community. He

91 See chapter 8 for more information.
92 The description of the SS wedding ceremony comes from four sources. Himmler briefly commented on the content of an SS wedding ceremony, first in a statement issued in April 1936 and then in a Gruppenführer speech in November 1936. More detailed descriptions and plans for the ceremony were produced by RuSHA in an undated document as well as in a booklet published by SS Oberabschnitte West; this latter document does not indicate the original source for the ceremony it describes, but as both the RuSHA and SS Oberabschnitte West documents outline similar services, it is reasonable to presume that the Oberabschnitt document was likely influenced by the RuSHA one, which in turn had probably taken elements of its ceremony outline from Himmler. “Worte des Reichsführer-SS Himmler bei der Eheweih der SS-Sturmbannführers Deutch am 2. IV.1936,” NA T175/89/frames 2611595-2611596; “Rede des Reichsführer-SS anlässlich der Gruppenführer-Besprechung am 8. November 1936, in Dachau,” NA T175/89/frames 2611727-2611728; “Feier der Eheschließung von Angehörigen der Partei und ihrer Gliederungen,” BA NS19/1148, pages 4-6; “Plan für die Durchführung einer Hochzeitsfeier!” BA NS19/1148, page 6; and SS Oberabschnitt West, Die Gestaltung der Feste im Jahres- und Lebenslauf in der SS Familie (Wuppertal: Völkischer Verlag G.m.B.H., 1930’s).
would suggest that the phrase “My honor is called loyalty” become a guiding principle for the wife as she was now subordinate to the laws of the SS. Following this speech, there would be a musical interlude, after which the bride and the groom would register their marriage with civil authorities, if they had not already done so.

The newlyweds would then receive a copy of Mein Kampf as well as light a candle, symbolizing their union. Theoretically, the couple would have received a candle-holder from Himmler, and it was expected that they christen this gift with the lighting.93 The wife would also be given a present relating to her marriage or her future role as a mother. She, along with her new husband, would receive a wooden platter with salt and bread on it; this offering served to remind the couple of a simple standard of living. Finally, the ceremony would conclude when the senior most SS official in attendance welcomed the wife into the SS family community and handed her and her husband a certificate notifying them that their names had been registered in the SS Clan Book. The festivities could continue afterwards with the meal and dancing.

The very creation of this ritual reiterates the notion that getting engaged and married was an all-encompassing affair. The ceremony represented an attempt to modify an otherwise well-known ritual and to found a new “invented” tradition solely for the SS.94 Each union signified the beginning of a hereditarily and racially healthy family, at least according to how Himmler and RuSHA officials interpreted and applied the long-existing tenets of eugenics; though as noted before, the SS certainly found many people within the scientific community willing to authenticate its interpretation of racial hygiene. Theoretically, these new families were ideally poised to establish an elite community that had the potential to serve as the vanguard of the Third Reich.

However, toward the end of the 1930’s, not everyone shared this perspective regarding the ultimate purpose of SS marriage policies. By late 1937, Richard Walther Darré, whose very

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93 According to Himmler’s November 1936 Gruppenführer speech, a pair of silver cups was given as a gift from the SS to the bridal pair. He also noted that the bride and groom would exchange rings, a point which the SS Oberabschnitt West booklet also mentioned; however, neither document clearly indicates when in the ceremony the rings would be exchanged.

94 In essence, with this new wedding ceremony, the SS created an invented tradition, as defined by Eric Hobsbawn in his co-edited book The Invention of Tradition. In particular, this new ritual fulfilled Hobsbawn’s definition of the three overlapping types of tradition invented since the Industrial Revolution: “a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems, and conventions of behaviour.” Eric Hobsbawn, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in The Invention of Tradition, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 9.
work on the peasantry and his interpretation of the blood and soil ideology Himmler had used to create the original command, had begun to mistrust the Reichsführer and his aims. He saw the SS developing into “a feudal praetorian guard,” and this imagery caused him to worry about the future of the Black Order. By the beginning of 1938, Darré began to wonder if he should not give up his position as the Chief of RuSHA “because the SS develops into a capitalistic praetorian guard under Jesuit supreme command.” Personally more concerned with the welfare of the German peasantry and less with crafting the SS into a master elite, Darré offered Himmler his resignation in February.

Himmler refused it, but as relations between the men began to deteriorate due to their opposing views on the value and purpose of the SS, he relented and discharged Darré from his responsibilities as RuSHA chief in September 1938. The lack of genial relations between the two men by this point was anything but evident when Himmler publicly announced Darré’s resignation. After claiming that Darré had asked to resign because of his increasing responsibilities as Reich Farm Leader and Reich Nutritional Leader and acknowledging that his work had served as the foundation for RuSHA, Himmler cordially thanked Darré for his service. He then appointed Darré’s successor: SS-Gruppenführer Günther Pancke. Although ostensibly only selected as a temporary chief, Pancke led RuSHA for almost two years.

This change in leader did not alter the by-now well-established purposes of RuSHA, of which the engagement and marriage process was no more than one complicated and time-consuming part. Yet, while only one facet of this main office, it represented the first vital step in creating a self-sustaining elite order. Vetting SS men and their fiancées on the grounds of racial and hereditary health fostered eugenically sound marriages. The creation and implementation of the entire process had turned scientific rhetoric into actual practice. With those unions in place, Himmler could in the pre-war years construct other policies and programs designed to build on this marital foundation and foster the formation of families of sound racial stock, thus ensuring the continuation of their Nordic blood and the SS.

95 Quoted in Longerich, 389.
96 Ibid., 391.
97 “SS-Befehl,” BA NS19/3901, page 65. Pancke’s promotion was also announced in Das Schwarze Korps: “Der Führer hat befördert,” 8 September 1938, page 4. However, according to the prosecution in the RuSHA Trial, Pancke was appointed RuSHA chief on July 1, 1938. US v. Greifelt, 704.
“[M]arriage cannot be an end in itself, but must serve the one higher goal, the increase and preservation of the species and the race. This alone is its meaning and its task.”\(^1\) Adolf Hitler dictated these words during his sentence in Landsberg prison. Less than a decade later, Heinrich Himmler sought to fulfill this objective laid down by his Führer. Regulating the marriages of his SS men had only been the beginning. The next step in preserving the Nordic race was to encourage these men to start a family, with the goal of every SS family producing a minimum of four racially healthy children. Throughout the mid and late 1930’s, various measures were initiated to advance this ideal. These tactics were designed to emphasize the value of healthy blood within each family and within the SS community as well as to establish the notion that having children represented a vital duty of every SS man. In addition, several of the stratagems provided for the financial well-being of SS families while others led to the creation of ceremonies relating to children. Altogether these pre-war measures were devised with the intention of solidifying the SS as a racially-based family community.

The strategy to build a sustainable SS community included continuing to adhere selectively to the ideals which eugenicists outlined in the 1930’s. Among their suggestions was the notion that a two-child system – that is an average of two children per marriage – could in no way sustain the German population quantitatively, let alone qualitatively. Such a system would lead, according to prominent government statistician Friedrich Burgdörfer, to the extinction of the German people in approximately three centuries. He calculated that merely conserving the current population would require a birth rate of 3.4 children per marriage, or 3.1 if illegitimate births were also taken into account.\(^2\) This fight against a birth decline was a dire one, with Burgdörfer even suggesting that “a Volk without youth would be a Volk without hope, [and] a Volk without a future.”\(^3\) Many eugenicists concurred with these results and called for

\(^1\) Hitler, \textit{Mein Kampf}, 252.  
\(^3\) Kühn, Staemmler, and Burgdörfer, 230.
hereditarily healthy families to have a large number of children, typically at least four. \(^4\)

Interestingly, while insisting that the best elements of society produce high numbers of quality children, eugenicists did not specify how these members of society would each personally achieve this goal. Instead, they simply emphasized having the right elements in society reproduce for the sake of enlarging the population and saving the German nation from decline.

However, to make Germany a child-rich land, these scientists wanted to have the government to construct policies which fostered the establishment of families. In particular, they desired economic benefits extended to large and healthy families; concurrently, all such measures which were to the advantage of childless and child poor couples should be curtailed. A state which did not care for its healthy families did not, in the words of pathologist Martin Staemmler, “have any moral right to continue to exist. It is no Volk state.” \(^5\)

Eugenicists likewise wanted the government to participate in this process not just by creating financial regulations, but also by ensuring the security of the state from domestic and foreign threats, such as the impact of foreign races. \(^6\) They contended that the government had to fight to preserve and to support the hereditary heritage of its people, and in return the people had the responsibility to increase their biological heritage. This leitmotif became highly prominent in the Nazi state and gave credibility to the already-existing racial and eugenic goals within the SS.

By the mid 1930’s, most SS men should have been aware of this connection between the ideas of eugenicists and the racial goals of their order. One of the ways in which they would have gained this familiarity was through their participation in the “Week of the German Book” in 1935, 1936, and 1937. This yearly program, which was designed to promote the works of German authors, was orchestrated by the Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda). \(^7\)

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4 For example, Dürre, 92; Siemens, Vererbungslehre, 136; and Staemmler, 64.
5 Staemmler, 67.
6 Burgdörfer, Volk ohne Jugend, 87 and 491; Staemmler, 64; Siemens, Vererbungslehre, 157; Lenz, “Rassenhygiene (Eugenik),” 20; Kühn, Staemmler, and Burgdörfer, 265 and 293; Dürre, 87; Schultze, 24; von Verschuer, Erbpathologie, 2; von Verschuer, “Rassenhygiene als Wissenschaft und Staatsaufgabe,” 17; and “Wege zur Erbgesundheit des deutschen Volkes. Vortrag, gehalten von Prof. Dr. O. Frhr. v. Verschuer am 16.2.1934 in der Kaiser Wilhelm-Gesellschaft zur förderung der Wissenschaften,” MPG Abteilung I/Repositor 1A/Nummer 779, page 123.
SS unit to collect money from its members and to purchase titles from a list of approved books. For each book that a unit bought, it had to acquire two copies – one to remain in the library of that SS unit and the other to be donated to a group such as the Hitler Youth or its female equivalent, the League of German Maidens (Bund Deutscher Mädel).

Books by prominent Nazi figures (Hitler, Darré, Rosenberg) were on the list, but more importantly so were books by scientists and physicians, many of whom promoted the racial ideals adopted by the SS. Among those authors were Hans F.K. Günther, Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss, Werner Jansen, and Martin Staemmler. Staemmler’s 1934 book, Racial Care in the Volkish State, might have struck a responsive chord with SS readers. He commended the Nazi state for taking racial care seriously. He specifically praised the SS Engagement and Marriage Command, lauding the entire examination process. He suggested that its stringent requirements would create awareness about racial and hereditary health among SS men, knowledge which could be implemented when founding their families.

Beyond seeking to fulfill the ideals posited by eugenicists, the family-related tasks of the SS were designed to work in conjunction with government organizations, including the Office for Racial Policy. Founded in May 1934 and headed by Walter Groß, this office designed most of the important racial policies of the Third Reich, including the 1935 Nuremberg laws; it subsequently enlightened the German people about their necessity. The Office for Racial Policy also educated medical personnel and it participated in the KWI-A courses for SS doctors. One of the departments within this office was the Reich Association of the Child-Rich (Reichsbund der Kinderreichen), which had the task of overcoming the declining birthrate. In essence, the Office for Racial Policy, and with it the Reich Association of the Child-Rich, performed a similar function within the Nazi state as the Race and Settlement Main Office did in the SS. This

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9 Staemmler, 132.


parallel government office reinforced the previously-established functions of the SS office by normalizing racial population politics on a national level.

This reinforcement, however, did not come without the potential for conflict. In April 1934 – only a couple of weeks prior to the founding of the Office for Racial Policy – Himmler recognized that friction might occur between the SS and party or state offices when it came to training officials and issuing propaganda about racial matters. He therefore issued an order indicating that RuSHA was in charge of all SS racial affairs and he directed RuSHA officials to report any problems with other organizations up the appropriate SS chain of command so that they could be remedied.\textsuperscript{12} This possible discord was compounded by the fact that Darré and Groß had differing opinions on racial matters, with Darré focusing on building up the Nordic race through the peasantry and Groß emphasizing more negative elements, such eliminating foreign races from Germany.\textsuperscript{13} These opposing perspectives would have complicated working relations between the two men and their respective organizations. Furthermore, beyond this possible problem, there was also the potential for further conflict regarding control of racial affairs and racial policy as many other organizations and their leaders attempted to wrest control of racial and health matters from the Office for Racial Policy, including the National Socialist Doctor’s League (\textit{Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Ärztebund}) under Gerhard Wagner and the Expert Committee for Population and Racial Policy under Arthur Gütt.\textsuperscript{14} Even with the prospect of conflicting or overlapping areas of control, the constant interest in creating state and party bodies designed to regulate racial and health matters again normalized what the SS sought to do within its own ranks. Regulating the racial health of the nation provided a larger context for the work of the SS.

Beyond regulating from these offices, the government directly passed a series of regulations to aid the growth of its population, such as reinstating paragraphs 219 and 220 of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} The office that Himmler specifically referred to as the one where conflict could occur between it and the SS was the party Propaganda Office for Population Policy and Racial Welfare (\textit{Aufklärungsamtes für Bevölkerungspolitik und Rassenpflege}), which had been founded in April 1933 and in May 1934 became the Office for Racial Policy. “Schulungs und Propaganda auf dem Gebeite der Bevölkerungspolitik und Rassenpflege,” BA NS19/3902, page 20.
\item \textsuperscript{13} US v. Greifelt, 435.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Weindling, Health, 520-22; Burleigh and Wippermann, 57-59; and Michael Kater, “Dr. Leonardo Conti and His Nemesis: The Failure of Centralized Medicine in the Third Reich,” \textit{Central European History}, volume 18, numbers 3-4 (September-December 1985): 299-302. During the late 1930’s and 1940’s, Leonardo Conti and Karl Brandt entered this fracas for control, as Conti replaced Wagner as Reich Health Leader (\textit{Reichsgesundheitsführer}) when he died and Brandt used his position as Reich Commissioner for Health and Sanitation (\textit{Generall- und Reichskommissar für das Sanitäts- und Gesundheitswesen}) to undermine Conti’s authority.
\end{itemize}
penal code, which criminalized abortion.\(^\text{15}\) However, the most prominent legislation was a financial act: the Law for the Promotion of Marriages, which was contained in the 1933 Law for the Reduction of Unemployment.\(^\text{16}\) This marriage law essentially created jobs for men by encouraging women to return to their domestic and maternal duties. According to the law, which went into effect in August 1933, if a woman left her job and subsequently married, her husband could apply for an interest-free state loan of up to 1000 Reichmarks (RM), quite a substantial amount as the average yearly salary at that time was between 500-1000 RM.\(^\text{17}\) This loan was not a direct cash payment, but a series of vouchers that the couple could redeem at retail stores for household goods and furniture. The law indicated that a couple had to repay the loan at a rate of one percent per month; these payments would begin two months after they had received the vouchers. Within less than three years from their introduction, the state had granted half a million loans worth a total of three hundred million RM. By the end of 1938, approximately 1,121,000 marriage loans had been allocated.\(^\text{18}\)

There were two additional caveats to this loan program. First, applying for and receiving a loan was not an automatic process. To qualify, each couple had to undergo a medical

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\(^{15}\) The Weimar government had removed those paragraphs in 1926.


\(^{17}\) This assessment was made by Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene*, 120. For a clear and concise breakdown of weekly and monthly incomes in Germany by 1938, see Otto Nathan, “Consumption in Germany during the Period of Rearmament,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, volume 56, number 3 (May 1942): 361.

examination to establish their mental and physical health. Any signs of a defect, such as a genetic illness as classified by the 1933 sterilization law, disqualified a couple.\textsuperscript{19} As of late 1935, these health standards also included racial suitability as defined by the appropriate Nuremberg laws.\textsuperscript{20} The second related to children. For each child that a couple had, the state canceled one-quarter of the loan. The population implications of this decision were obvious. The state did not want the loan repaid; it wanted each couple to have four children. There was some success; of the 1,121,000 loans made by 1938, 980,000 of them had been cancelled due to the birth of a minimum of four children per family.\textsuperscript{21}

Thus, this marriage loan represented the most important law that the Nazi government passed with regards to regulating its population in a positive manner.\textsuperscript{22} As with the establishment of the Office for Racial Policy, the loan scheme normalized racial and population politics. In addition, it demonstrated the high regard the Nazi party and state accorded hereditary health. Nonetheless, while designed to aid the growth of a healthy population, these governmental measures were never as rigorous as those of the SS. Although members of the SS could take advantage of government policies, such as the marriage loan, their leader held them to a much higher standard when it came to their family lives and subsequently created a series of measures solely intended to aid SS men and their families. The overall point of these measures was to ensure that SS men propagated their all-too-valuable blood, fulfilling the ideals of the eugenicists.

Among the new measures was rhetoric, primarily in the form of speeches and letters by the Reichsführer. Throughout the 1930’s, Himmler sought to convince each SS man that he had the responsibility to preserve his racial heritage, especially because he viewed Nordic blood as a vital tool for the Führer to wield as he constructed his greater German Reich. “I am ideologically convinced,” Himmler said in one speech, “that in the last analysis and in the long run, only good blood will bring about the highest achievements.”\textsuperscript{23} Yet, while he considered it to be self-evident that good Nordic blood was the prime criteria for the SS to become Germany’s new aristocracy, Himmler also understood that it would take time to inculcate his men to accept this

\textsuperscript{19} Hankins, “German Policies for Increasing Births,” 642-543.
\textsuperscript{20} “Eine Verfügung des Reichsfinanzministers bezüglich der kinderreichen Familien,” BA NS2/155, page 30.
\textsuperscript{21} Grunberger, 235.
\textsuperscript{22} The sterilization law, which affected approximately 400,000 people, was certainly the most influential measure with regards to a negative influence.
\textsuperscript{23} Himmler, \textit{Once in 2000 Years}, 6.
perspective. Knowing that “permanent success” would only be achieved “if an inner reorientation takes place,” he advocated a reorientation which would convince the men of the SS that the imminent decline of Germany would be prevented if they, the bearers of valuable Nordic blood, had enough children.24

In espousing this perspective, Himmler adopted the standpoint taken by Baur, Fischer, and Lenz that the Nordic race was the leading creative element in Western culture. He took the task of finding and managing this blood seriously and at one point commented in a speech to his Gruppenführer:

All good blood in the world is German blood, [and] what is not on the German side can only be our undoing. Therefore, it is each German with the best blood whom we take for Germany…. I really have the intent to get, to rob, and to steal the Germanic blood in the whole world where I can.25

These personal views on the value of German blood reflected Himmler’s staunch adherence to the magnitude of qualities inherent within a person. He placed a greater emphasis on nature as opposed to nurture, just as German eugenicists did.

Himmler’s acceptance of this view was in agreement with Hitler’s view as expressed in Mein Kampf.26 The Führer had contended that an individual could not cater to his selfish whims when it came to the good of the Volk. If that individual were unhealthy, it was his responsibility to abstain from having children; conversely, if he were healthy, it would be “reprehensible” for him to deny the nation his progeny.27 The fertility of the healthiest members of society had to be “consciously and systematically promoted,” Hitler proclaimed, because the entire Volk would benefit from their well-born offspring.28

Himmler promoted these notions over a decade later as he attempted reorient the views of his men toward their paternal obligations. In a June 1935 letter to all SS officers, he wrote that “SS families must be child-rich families for all the future.”29 In a second letter from September of the following year, he reinforced the value of the prolific SS family by stating “…that we have

24 “Rede vor unbekanntem Publikum im Jahre 1938,” in Fest, 85.
25 Gruppenführerbesprechung from November 1938, NA T175/90/frame 261259.
27 Hitler, Mein Kampf, 404.
28 Ibid., 405.
all fought for nothing if we do not add the victory of the birth of good blood to the political victory” of the Nazi party.30 This sentiment – that a political victory was in vain without a subsequent victory in the cradle – was one which Himmler repeated several times throughout the 1930’s, and a variation of this theme became important during the war.31 Besides stressing the relationship between the two victories, Himmler also noted in his September 1936 letter that “the question of many children is not the private concern of the individual, but is the duty towards his ancestors and our Volk.”32 By emphasizing these sentiments, the Reichsführer indicated to his men that having children represented a greater ideal than merely establishing a family. These children represented the future of the Volk and the country because they represented the people who would grow up to continue the legacy which their fathers had built with the Führer. There could be no Thousand Year Reich without them and their descendants.

Himmler wanted his men, especially his officers, to understand that they were responsible for initiating this pattern. He desired to have them embrace the ideal of expanding the SS from an order of Nordic men to a renewable community of Nordic families. However, for it to become, as Himmler stated in a November 1937 speech, “a new aristocracy that supplements itself again and again from the best sons and daughters of our Volk,” SS men had to regard familial affairs as no less a significant responsibility than any other obligation to the SS.33 Thoroughly revealing his desire for SS men to produce high-quality children was only the beginning for Himmler. He was not content simply to tell his men to be fruitful and multiply; that alone would not have fulfilled their paternal and biological duties to the SS and the Volk. Quality – as defined by passing down their supposedly superior genetic material – was not the endgame. Quality itself had limited value unless it was combined with quantity.

In the case of quantity, Himmler was very much in agreement with eugenicists. He contended that if at least three children emerged from every marriage, then Germany as a whole could speak of a positive birth rate. However, this number was not accurate when one took childless marriages and bachelors into consideration. With this problem taken into account,
Himmler asserted that SS marriages had to carry the burden of compensating for those people who had not contributed to the German Volk. This compensation equaled four children to Himmler, or the “minimum child number of a good and healthy marriage,” as he wrote in a letter to his SS officers.\textsuperscript{34} The reason for four children was clarified in a December 1938 memorandum produced by the SS Personnel Chancellery. The first two replaced their own parents, the third substituted for a loss within the family, and the fourth made up for those Germans whom the Nazi government had deemed incompetent and unable to reproduce.\textsuperscript{35}

The idea of SS men counteracting the reproductive inactivity of other Germans reinforced their fidelity, a point which the December 1938 memorandum emphasized: “The order of the SS is no community of sanctimonious loafers, no death chamber of good genetic makeup, but it should become the life cell of the German Volk.”\textsuperscript{36} To carry out this task, the memorandum set down a timeline in which it would be possible for a man and his wife to have the requisite number of children. The couple would have the first two years after they wed to themselves before they would be required to have their first child. After the birth of this child, they would be expected to have another child every three years thereafter. According to the memorandum, this plan would allow for an SS family to produce five children, more than fulfilling all biological and familial obligations.\textsuperscript{37} Successfully discharging this duty would in turn mean that the sight of an SS uniform would henceforth be associated with “a healthy flock of children” who represented the future of the Reich.\textsuperscript{38}

It would take more than rhetoric to encourage the members of the SS to fulfill their paternal responsibility, especially when their leader did not practice what he preached. In his capacity as Reichsführer as well as in his position as Chief of the German Police, Himmler initiated measures designed to influence the actions and behavior of his SS men. Some of these measures aided the creation of large families, while others prohibited certain types of behavior. Of the latter measures, none were as significant as the ones to combat abortion and homosexuality.\textsuperscript{39} Himmler summarized his views regarding abortion during a June 1937 speech

\textsuperscript{34} Letter from Himmler to all SS-Führer, 13 September 1936, BA NS19/3902, page 84 and NS19/3973, page 2.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{39} Homosexuality and abortion were the two major “vices” which Himmler sought to reform, but they were not the only ones. He also sought to control the social behavior of SS men and police officers by prohibiting them from
before the Expert Council for Population and Racial Policy. In it, he indicated that there were around 500,000 abortions in Germany every year, despite its proscription. Preventing them would help the nation in two ways. First, Himmler declared that if at least twenty percent aborted children were saved (even if all of them were illegitimate children), their numbers alone could decisively influence the future of Germany, especially when it came to men available for military service over the next two to three decades. He argued that no commander would care if his soldiers were legitimate or not if they could possibly make a difference in the fate of Germany, or perhaps even the world. The second reason related more to the mothers than to their unborn children. Himmler was convinced that in many cases abortion caused sterility, leading not simply to the death of one child, but to “the killing of motherhood for a lifetime.”

He was far more obsessive in his abhorrence of homosexuality and pursued its elimination with far greater fervor than any other Nazi leader. He suggested that homosexuality destroyed the state because “the homosexual is through and through a mentally sick human being.” Through his work as Chief of Police, which included spending hours personally interviewing men who had been arrested for homosexuality, Himmler claimed that there were between one and two million homosexual men in Germany. In 1937, he estimated that the country had a total population of sixty-seven to sixty-eight million people, of whom approximately twenty million were sexually-capable men over the age of sixteen. Therefore, the presence of one to two million homosexuals within the population represented an “epidemic” because these men did not contribute anything to the growth and health of the German Volk.

Furthermore, when these homosexuals were combined with the two million men who had

swing dancing while in uniform, abusing alcohol and subsequently misbehaving while under the influence, and using cigarettes and nicotine. The last prohibition is slightly ironic given that some of the most frequent advertisements in Das Schwarze Korps were for cigarettes. “Befehl an die gesamte SS und Polizei,” 12 April 1938, NA T611/26/Ordner165; “Übermässiger Alkoholgenuss,” 21 December 1937, NA T611/26/Ordner165; Heiber, letters 17, 154, and 311b; “Rede vor SS-Führern des Oberabschitts Süd-Ost in Breslau am 19.1.1935” and “Rede vor der SS-Standarte 99 in Znaim (Sudetenland) am 11.12.1938,” in Fest, 89-90; and Robert N. Proctor, The Nazi War on Cancer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 138.


41 Ibid., 58.

42 Geoffrey Giles has examined Himmler’s loathing of homosexuality in-depth: “The Institutionalization of Homosexual Panic in the Third Reich,” “The Denial of Homosexuality: Same-Sex Incidents in Himmler’s SS and Police,” and “The Denial of Homosexuality: Same-Sex Incidents in Himmler’s SS and Police.” Stefan Micheler also has an article that focuses less on Himmler and more on propaganda in the entire country: “Homophobic Propaganda and Denunciation of Same-Sex-Desiring Men under National Socialism,” in Sexuality and German Fascism, edited by Dagmar Herzog (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).

43 “Rede des Reichsführer-SS anlässlich der Gruppenführer-Besprechung in Tölz am 18.2.1937,” IfZ MA 311/frame 2611877 and “Rede vor den Gruppenführern am 18.2.1937,” in Fest, 95.
fallen during the First World War, Germany faced, according to Himmler, the possibility of a catastrophe when it came to sustaining its population. For any homosexual who proclaimed that what he did in his personal life was no concern of anyone else, Himmler offered a contrary view. The lack of reproduction by homosexual men was as grave a concern for him as any other reproductive matter because the presence or absence of children meant the life or death of the Volk. Altogether, portraying homosexuals as a catastrophic epidemic had many ramifications. The term “epidemic” implied a disease; homosexuality represented a malady from which an otherwise healthy Volk was suffering. As such, Himmler was suggesting that it was something which could be eliminated, much like a disease, in order to save the Volk. Thus, to combat what he considered to be a blight on the German population, Himmler ordered an investigation into the mental constitution of homosexuals. He even requested research about a possible connection between homosexuality and left-handedness, some of which was carried out by Eugen Fischer’s institute. In October 1936 Himmler established a Reich Central Office for Combating Homosexuality and Abortion (Reichszentrale zur Bekämpfung der Homosexualität und der Abtreibung). A special department in the police, it was responsible for recording all reported cases of homosexuality and abortion.

Within the SS, upon learning that there were approximately eight to ten cases of homosexuality per year, not to mention charges of SS men molesting Hitler Youth boys, Himmler devised a rather draconian solution in early 1937. After being publicly humiliated and discharged from the SS, the man would be tried and sentenced by the German courts. Homosexuality had been illegal since 1871, although in 1935 the Nazi government had broadened the definition of what constituted homosexuality, which allowed authorities to

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46 Letter from Ullmann to Ernst Robert Grawitz, 10 June 1938, NA T175/84/frame 2609744 and letter from Werner Jansen to Ullmann, 8 December 1936, NA T175/84/frame 2609746.
increase their prosecution to the point where evidence of physical contact between two men was not even necessary.\(^{49}\) However, punishment by the state was not enough for Himmler. Following the court-assigned penalty, the Reichsführer declared that a former SS man would be sent to a concentration camp and then would be “shot while trying to escape.”\(^{50}\) The final element to Himmler’s attempt to rid the SS of homosexuality was to announce the crime and punishment to the unit in which the now-dead homosexual had served. Through this process, Himmler wanted the remaining SS men to understand the severity of practicing homosexuality. He was not above using a humiliated, convicted, and executed corpse to make his point, again emphasizing that a man’s decisions regarding his personal life were anything but private when it came to Himmler’s infatuation for preserving the health and well-being of the SS and the German Volk.\(^{51}\)

Prohibitions alone would not raise the birthrate in the SS. Positive initiatives also needed to be taken to encourage reproduction. One such measure was the introduction of monetary allowances. Not only could SS men apply for the aforementioned state marriage loan, but those men whom the SS employed full-time during the 1930’s received additional money from the SS for being married. Salary charts from 1934 and 1936 indicate that all SS men – from the newest recruit to the highest-ranking officer – received more money per month if married. For example, according to the 1936 figures, a married SS man received 140 RM per month, whereas his unmarried counterpart only received 125 RM. For an Obergruppenführer, this disparity was even greater; a married Obergruppenführer earned 1350 RM per month while an unmarried one earned 100 RM less.\(^{52}\) To receive this increased income, the married SS man had to submit his


\(^{50}\) “Rede vor den Gruppenführern am 18.2.1937,” in Fest, 97.

\(^{51}\) For more information on homosexuality and how Himmler sought to regulate it, see chapter 8.

\(^{52}\) “Berechnung der Grundgehälter der Besoldungsordnung der SS unter Berücksichtigung der Gehaltskürzungen und der Zehrzulage (in Berlin einschliesslich Sonderzuschlag),” BA NS31/262, pages 10-13 and “Bestimmungen über die Gewährung der Besoldung in der allgemeinen SS,” BA NS3/1565, pages 13-14; BA NS3/465, pages 5-6; BA NS3/466, pages 29-30; and BA NS3/468, pages 30-31. There is also a differential in pay rate based on the location of the SS man, but this difference is not significant for this particular analysis because the trend of married men and officers earning more than unmarried ones remained the same regardless of where they were located. The numbers listed throughout this chapter were taken from the lines of the salary chart for those SS men and officers who lived in Berlin, which equaled the highest pay for each respective enlisted man, non-commissioned officer, and commissioned officer.
original marriage certificate to the Administration Main Department (*Verwaltungs-Hauptabteilung*), the precursor of the Economic and Administrative Main Office. Once that department had copied the document, it returned the certificate and modified the SS man’s salary.\(^{53}\)

A similar pattern existed with money for children. Throughout the 1930’s, the Reich government offered monetary allowances for families who had three or more children and whose yearly income was less than 8000 RM.\(^{54}\) Most full-time, salaried SS men would have been eligible for this assistance; only those officers who had obtained the ranks of Oberführer, Brigadeführer, Gruppenführer, and Obergruppenführer would have earned too much money to have qualified.\(^{55}\) Beyond the government money, the SS granted additional funds based on the number of children. Salary regulations from 1935, 1936, and 1938 indicate that an SS man received an additional 20 RM per month for his first and second child, 30 RM per month for his third and fourth child, and 40 RM per month for his fifth and every subsequent child.\(^{56}\) This money was granted for all legitimate biological children as well as any adopted children or step children for whom an SS man had taken responsibility. In addition, he could receive money for any illegitimate children born out of wedlock if his paternity had been verified and he had taken responsibility for the offspring.

These additional funds were allocated until a child reached the age of sixteen; however, they could be extended to age twenty-one if the child were still in school or engaged in occupational training and did not have an independent income. Every time a new child was born or one became financially independent, the monetary allowance had to be adjusted.\(^{57}\) For instance, if an SS man with two children welcomed a third into his family, his monthly allowance would increase from 20 to 30 RM. In this case, formal documentation had to be

\(^{53}\) “Tagesbefehl Nr. 2/36,” BA NS2/10, page 3.

\(^{54}\) For examples of such regulations, see “Gewährung von Kinderbeihilfen an kinderreiche Familien,” BA NSD 41/2, page 19 and “Kinderbeihilfen an kinderreichen Familien,” NA NSD 41/2, page 18 and BA NS2/2, page 85.

\(^{55}\) According to the salary charts provided by Nathan, which were based on number from *Wirtschaft und Statistik*, only 3.3 percent of the working population in 1938 earned 600 RM or more per month, which meant that the vast majority of the German population would have been eligible for these funds. Nathan, 361.

\(^{56}\) “Bestimmungen über die Gewährung der Besoldung in der allgemeinen SS, Teil I: Haushalt und Besoldung,” BA NS3/1565, page 11; “Durchführungsbestimmung zur Haushaltplanung 1935,” BA NS3/465, pages 51-53; “Haushaltplanung der Schutzstaffel der NSDAP für das Rechnungstab 1936,” BA NS3/466, page 7; and “Haushaltplanung der Schutzstaffel der NSDAP für des Rechnungsjahr 1938,” BA NS3/468, page 7. There was also a special, one-time monetary allowance paid out during the 1938 holiday season. An extra 25 RM was paid to families for their fourth, fifth, or sixth child, and an extra 100 RM was paid to families for their seventh and additional children. “Besondere Zuwendung anlässlich des Julfestes 1938,” BA NS2/65, page 47.

submitted – namely the child’s original birth certificate – to the Administration Main Department. Conversely, if an SS man had three children and one of them came of age, the Administration Main Department would update his financial records and his benefits would decrease to 20 RM per month.

There are a couple of ways to put these SS salaries and stipends into a larger perspective and to examine their potential impact on family size. Regarding salaries, one method is to compare the salaries for full-time SS men and officers with the wages earned by contemporary Germans. Based on information analyzing the patterns of wages for unskilled and skilled male labor, it does not appear that these figures take into account employment which required higher education, such as the legal, medical, and scientific professions – all of which were highly represented, if not over represented, in the SS. Therefore, judging the wages of unskilled and skilled male labor against the salaries of the SS can only provide a general comparison regarding the value of money.

The average weekly gross earnings for German workers in 1936 was 34.39 RM, or 1788.28 RM per year. There are also average weekly gross earnings based on specific profession. Among the highest paid professions were jobs involving book printing, which earned 50.49 RM per week, or 2625.48 RM per year. At the bottom of the scale was the average wage for those people employed in the baking industry, who only earned 23.20 RM per week, or

58 “Tagesbefehl Nr. 2/36,” BA NS2/10, page 3. As with the change in financial status due to marriage, the birth certificate was copied and then returned.
59 Some of the financial ledgers which indicate a man’s salary as well any additional monetary benefits still exist in the BDC SSO files. For example, see Karl Taus, BDC SSO 174B, page 039 and Wilhelm Werner, BDC SSO 237B, page 1301.
60 Outside of the wages for the SS, which have been cited in the various documents above, the information for the wages of skilled and unskilled labor used here come from the work of Gerhard Bry whose book is the foundation for twentieth-century German economic histories. Gerhard Bry, Wages in Germany, 1871-1945 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960). René Livchen also compiled some useful studies a decade and a half before Bry: “Wage Trends in Germany from 1929 to 1942,” International Labour Review, volume 48 (December 1943): 714-32 and “Net Wages and Real Wages in Germany,” International Labour Review, volume 50 (July 1944): 65-72. Adam Tooze recently wrote a more comprehensive study of the German economy, and his figures largely matched those used here from Bry. Tooze stated that in 1936, 62% of German taxpayers earned annual incomes of less than 1,500RM, 21% earned between 1500-2400RM, and 17% earned more than 2,400RM. Adam Tooze, The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 141-42. Bry, 58. Although Bry did account for net wages as well by examining deductions because of taxes, social insurance, dues owed to the Labor Front, and mandatory yearly contributions to the Winter Help Work, gross wages are used here because it appears, based on the previously cited SS documents along with examinations of SS personnel files, that SS salaries listed were by gross and not net amounts. Furthermore, the per year wage calculations are my own, not his, and are based on a 52 week work year. The decision to use 52 weeks was because while Bry intensively examined the average working hours per week, neither his nor Livchen’s studies indicate if the average worker worked every week or was given time off. Thus, 52 weeks is used here to give the highest possible earnings for comparison.
1206.40 RM per year. Based on these numbers, it is reasonable to presume that, accounting for both skilled and unskilled labor, the average, full-time German worker earned between 1200 and 2600 RM per year in 1936. In comparison, the lowest paid full-time SS member, an unmarried recruit, earned 125 RM per month, or 1500 RM per year, in 1936. Based on the ideal conditions of joining the SS and advancing within the organization’s ranks, a man would only hold this position and with it this pay rate for approximately a year and a half. Once he became an SS man, he would have the opportunity to ascend into the enlisted, non-commissioned, and commissioned officer ranks and earn considerably more money. To make more than the average German worker per year (1788.28 RM), this unmarried SS man would have had to become a Rottenführer, which was the highest grade among enlisted men and would have come with a pay rate in 1936 of 160 RM per month, or 1920 RM per year. For the unmarried SS man to earn more than the highest non-SS wage earner, at 2600 RM per year, he would have had to achieve three promotions to the noncommissioned officer rank of Oberscharführer, where he would have earned 235 RM per month, or 2820 RM per year.

Again, these salary figures for 1936 can only provide a general comparison of what a man might have earned working for an industry versus working full-time for the SS. Even with this basic comparison, however, it is evident that someone within the higher enlisted or lower non-commissioned officer ranks of the SS could have earned just as good of, if not better, living than his non-SS affiliated counterpart working in the highest paying industries. Also, as noted above, for each and every pay rate in the SS, a man who was married earned more money.

Overall, although this overview is by no means a complete and thorough analysis of salaries and wages in the SS or Germany in the mid 1930’s, these numbers suggest that someone who joined the SS full-time would have made more money on average than someone who did not. Furthermore, this increase in pay would have also been combined with the aforementioned monetary benefits from the state as well as the additional financial compensation from the SS.

For the monthly stipends of 20-40 RM provided by the SS for children, one method to

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62 Bry, 251. Again, the per year calculations are my own for a 52 week work year.
63 As cited above, these SS pay ranks are coming from “Bestimmungen über die Gewährung der Besoldung in der allgemeinen SS.” Also, for a concise view of the SS ranks listed, see Appendix B.
64 As noted in chapter 3, a man wishing to join the SS would become an Anwärter, or recruit, on April 20. Provided that he met all of the requirements, he would become eligible to become a full member on November 9 of the following year.
65 As married men did make more money at each rank, it should be noted that for a married SS man, he could have earned more than this average pay of 1788.28 RM at the rank of Sturmmann, which was one rank below Rottenführer, where he would have earned 150 RM per week, or 1800 RM per year.
gage the utility of this money was through what goods could have been purchased with it. Daily and weekly newspapers routinely listed advertisements which promoted goods that one could have found in a household. The newspaper of the SS, *Das Schwarze Korps*, was no exception to this trend. As will be discussed in-depth in a later chapter, this newspaper was not just solely for or read by SS men, but they were a key audience, and advertisers certainly would have taken them and their families into consideration when advertising in their newspaper. In each weekly edition, *Das Schwarze Korps* ran dozens of advertisements for clothing, accessories, books, cosmetics, medicine, and uniforms among other household goods. These advertisements frequently listed the prices of the items, thus providing a simple way to determine the basic buying power of the Reichmark.  

For example, an eight piece bedroom set was advertised for 140 RM, a six piece kitchen set was only 45 RM, a small wardrobe was 27 RM, and a child’s bed was 14 RM. A book shelf cost 18 RM; to have an edition of *Mein Kampf* to place on it would have cost an additional 6-24 RM, depending on whether a person wished to purchase a paper or leather bound edition. A doll stroller ran between 8-10 RM while a children’s bicycle cost approximately 15 RM. A yearly pass for the zoo and aquarium in Berlin cost 22 RM for an adult and 12 RM for a child under 16. More mundane items such as toothpaste cost 25-45 pfenning per tube (100 pfenning equaled 1 RM) while headache tablets ran between 60 pfenning and 3 RM. Finally, a 1000 RM life insurance policy in the prewar period could be purchased for 1 RM per month, or a 10,000 RM policy could be bought for 10 RM per month.

These prices give a basic indication that the extra funds of 20-40 RM per month would have by no means completely paid for the total cost of raising a child, especially as the prices of necessary items such as clothing and food have not been included. Still, this child stipend would have provided an additional financial cushion for an SS family.  

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66 In several cases, the prices listed here were rounded up or down to simplify the explanation. Examples of prices for goods, included the ones cited here, come from the following editions of *Das Schwarze Korps*: 29 May 1935, pages 7 and 16; 5 June 1935, page 16; 24 July 1935, page 15; 5 December 1935, pages 14 and 20; 12 December 1935, page 17; 23 January 1936, page 16; 30 January 1936, page 5; 5 March 1936, page 20; 12 March 1936, page 18; 7 May 1936, page 7; 21 May 1936, page 9; 11 June 1936, page 19; 6 August 1936, page 6; 3 September 1936, page 19; 29 October 1936, page 20; 12 December 1936, page 19; 17 December 1936, page 20; 18 March 1937, page 20; 14 April 1938, page 5; 12 May 1938, page 12; 1 September 1938, page 12; and 22 December 1938, page 4.

67 As the Reichmark has not existed as a currency for well over half a century, one way to provide a stronger understanding of what 20-40 RM might have meant for an SS family is by taking into account what that amount equals in American dollars, both contemporary and current. Historian Harold Marcuse has created a website which provides some basic information for converting German marks into American dollars. According to the charts on his website, 2.48 RM were equivalent to $1 in 1936. That conversion rate meant that 20 RM = $8.06, 30 RM =
convincing an SS man and his wife to have children – much like the additional funds for being married would not have been the deciding factor to persuade an SS man to marry – but would have been of value to the SS couple who already wished to have one or more children. This subsidy was also, as noted above, highly flexible and included more than the traditional nuclear family of a husband, a wife, and their children. Family was not solely determined by biological relations, but by the ability and willingness of an SS man to care for children which included but were not limited to his legitimate, biological offspring.

This flexibility when defining a family and making financial provisions for children correlates with a related issue: illegitimacy. Despite the fact that most children were born in wedlock, a substantial, if not lopsided, amount of attention was paid to illegitimate children. This was a somewhat precarious issue in the Third Reich. In general, German society disapproved of single mothers and their children, an attitude which the Catholic and Protestant churches encouraged. Even within the party itself, there was no standard position, and many leaders opposed anything beyond the traditional norms of matrimony and family. For example, in the Office for Racial Policy, Walter Groß was mainly against illegitimate children. When his office received numerous inquiries on the issue, it released a statement indicating that the unmarried mother and her child were a historic problem. Only a sound population policy would solve this issue, and with it the general demographic troubles of the nation. Nonetheless, despite his opposition, Groß thought that defaming unmarried mothers and their children was of no benefit either. These women deserved protection from economic or social disadvantages which

Marcuse also provides a link to a second website created by economists Lawrence Officer and Samuel Williamson. From this second website, it is possible to compare the relative value of American dollars from 1774 to 2008. There are a series of indexes and calculators which one may choose when making this comparison. For the purposes of this comparison with the SS financial stipend, the best index would be the unskilled wage rate, which Officer and Williamson define as “payment (wage rate) per time period for unskilled labor.” Using this index, it is possible to determine the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RM</th>
<th>1936 Value</th>
<th>2008 Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>$8.06</td>
<td>$309.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>$12.20</td>
<td>$469.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>$16.13</td>
<td>$620.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


69 This assessment was made by Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy 1933-1945* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 38-39, 53, and 180. She also pointed out that several other Nazi leaders, such as Hitler and Rosenberg, were certainly not against less than traditional views of marriage and children.
would be detrimental to the upbringing of their children.\(^{70}\)

The Reichsführer had a rather different opinion; he espoused some of the most liberal views on illegitimacy, views which he also encouraged his SS men to accept. Himmler laid out his position in the mid 1930’s. In one article, he noted that marriage and family represented “the best and most fertile solution” because they provided the most suitable environment in which children could be raised and incorporated into the Volk community.\(^{71}\) He further proclaimed that “the family is the small Reich from which the larger Reich is made up of.”\(^{72}\) Nonetheless, Himmler thought it imperative that society “break through the small and holier-than-thou civil judgment against the unmarried mother and the illegitimate children.”\(^{73}\) While he recognized that some illegitimate children were begotten through careless behavior and had no value for the Volk, such an assessment could not be made of all of them. Many unmarried mothers were racially worthy and of good character, and Himmler contended that so long as these women were themselves valuable, and if the fathers of their children were also worthy, then their children should be embraced as a beneficial addition to the Volk.\(^{74}\)

Beyond accepting those illegitimate children already born, Himmler wanted the SS to become the avant-garde when it came to changing the sexual and social mores of the German people. He certainly did not want illegitimacy to replace marriage and legitimate children. Yet, Himmler acknowledged that men and women did not abstain from sex before marriage, and he wanted the SS to break from the mendacious attitudes postulated by Christianity vis-à-vis marriage and children.\(^{75}\) It was not that Himmler ever directly encouraged or even demanded that all of his SS men have illegitimate children, but he did desire that those men who wanted to have additional children outside of the bounds of marriage felt free to do so. From those men who did not wish to have extramarital offspring – which would have been the majority of them – he still wanted acceptance of illegitimate children as just as valuable to the SS racial community and the German Volk as legitimate ones.

Although such conditions never came close to fruition, especially with regards to SS men


\(^{71}\) “Die Schutzstaffel und das deutschen Frauengeschlecht,” BA NS2/51a, page 11.

\(^{72}\) Ibid.

\(^{73}\) Ibid., 13.

\(^{74}\) Ibid., 13-14.

\(^{75}\) Longerich, 383.
liberally taking advantage of their leader’s tacit acceptance of illegitimacy, Himmler did not tolerate anyone within the officer corps who spoke poorly of an unmarried mother. Anytime he heard of an officer making a snide comment, he requested to see that officer’s genealogical tree. Himmler would then personally examine the officer’s ancestry back to 1750 to see if he had descended from a purely legitimate line. Oftentimes, Himmler claimed that he found at least one or two illegitimate ancestors, thus proving to his own satisfaction that the officer in question might very well have never been born were it not for his own less than perfect ancestry. By criticizing unmarried mothers, that officer had also berated his own ancestors. Therefore, Himmler strenuously argued that illegitimacy did not destroy the moral fabric of the German Volk. History – including some of the personal histories of his own men – was replete with examples where unmarried women had given birth to children of good blood. The Reichsführer had no objections with this practice continuing, particularly when the father, although not in a committed relationship with the mother, took care of his offspring.

The Reichsführer supported his rhetoric with action when it came to illegitimacy. Upon facing the dilemma of “brave and decent women of the most valuable blood” refusing to name the fathers of their children, Himmler remarked that he had allowed for a private solution whereby the mother and the father came to him and secretly acknowledged their child. Such acknowledgements were written down and locked up in a safe. Himmler also knew of cases where couples had made similar declarations before Hitler. In these declarations, the parents claimed that even though there were reasons which prevented them from recognizing their child publicly, they wanted the child to know his (or her) ancestry.

An even larger project designed to assist mothers and their children was the Lebensborn association. Meaning “fount of life,” the Lebensborn program was not solely created to aid unmarried mothers and their illegitimate children, but it was as much a benefit to them as to married mothers and their legitimate children. In essence, the Lebensborn homes were maternity hospitals where women – primarily those who were engaged or married to SS men or those whose sexual relations with an SS man had resulted in a pregnancy – could receive care before,

78 Ibid., 69. Himmler made these comments before the Expert Council for Population and Racial Policy in June 1937, thus before a non-SS audience. There is nothing in his speech to indicate if he was addressing the body as Reichsführer-SS, Chief of the German Police, or both. Therefore, such a solution of acknowledging paternity could have been theoretically applied to the entire German population and not just the SS.
during, and after the birth of their children. The association was also designed to support racially worthy, child-rich SS families.\(^79\) With these two goals, the Lebensborn program aimed to achieve one primary purpose: to assist with the reproduction and care of valuable Nordic blood. The association was founded in December 1935 by the Office for Family Affairs in RuSHA. However, after January 1938, it was dissociated from RuSHA, subordinated to the SS Personal Staff, and reorganized under a board of directors which Himmler personally led.\(^80\) The three men primarily responsible for the program, Dr. Georg Ebner, Dr. Guntram Pflaum, and Max Sollmann, were commissioned officers in the SS.\(^81\) Ebner served as the association’s chief medical officer while Pflaum and later Sollmann were responsible for administrative matters.

For a pregnant woman to enter a home, both she and the father of her unborn child had to be racially acceptable according to SS standards. Women who were engaged or married to an SS man already met such standards, but single women had to prove their racial worth to be received into a home. They also had to divulge the name of the father, for he too had to be vetted for his worthiness.\(^82\) While the name of the father was revealed to the Lebensborn program and was subsequently on file with the SS, an unmarried mother was supported by the organization if she desired to keep the details confidential. Only she and the biological father received birth certificates, although the father’s name might not appear on it to preserve his identity, particularly if he were married. No government official, private person, or party organization could obtain access to this information.\(^83\)

While using the privacy offered by the Lebensborn to shield themselves from outside scrutiny, especially for their extramarital affairs, fathers were expected to take responsibility for their children and their mothers. Some did so by acknowledging their paternity in writing and accepting responsibility for their offspring.\(^84\) Furthermore, although the Lebensborn did have several sources of income and did accept all racially worthy woman and children regardless of their personal economic situation, the association obligated these men to make financial

\(^80\) Koehl, The SS, 132; Lilienthal, Der Lebensborn, 44; Longerich, 384; Clay, 61 and 65; and US v. Greifelt, 41.
\(^81\) According to the SS Dienstalterliste, the highest rank that each of these three men reached was as follows: Ebner was an Oberführer, Pflaum was a Standartenführer, and Sollmann was a Hauptsturmführer.
\(^82\) An example of a Lebensborn questionnaire can be found in BA NS19/3031, pages 2-3.
\(^84\) Clay, 7.
provisions for their children. There was no set amount that each father was asked to pay; Lebensborn authorities determined the amount individually for each man based on his income and economic circumstances.\textsuperscript{85}

Regardless of whether married or unmarried women took advantage of the Lebensborn homes, all SS men, according to Himmler, had a “self-evident honorary duty” toward the program.\textsuperscript{86} By this statement, he meant that he wanted every SS man to become a member of the Lebensborn – not that their wives, fiancées, or mistresses needed to use the maternity homes, but that they, the SS men, needed to help finance the work of the Lebensborn. The program already received funds from private contributions, the SS, the party, and the Reich Finance Ministry (\textit{Reichsfinanzerministerium}).\textsuperscript{87} Still, Himmler was fairly insistent that all full-time SS officers join, as he knew that they had the financial means to contribute to the organization. As for non full-time officers and all SS men, he desired that they should join and contribute according to their means, but he did not mandate participation.\textsuperscript{88}

For those officers required to join, there was a scale set for contributions, although of course the Reichsführer could bend these rules if and when he saw fit.\textsuperscript{89} Men holding the two lowest commissioned officers ranks, Untersturmführer and Obersturmführer, were each required to pay a minimum of 1 RM per month. From the next rank up, Hauptsturmführer, through the very top of the officer ranks, then an Obergruppenführer, the rates were determined by a sliding scale.\textsuperscript{90} There was a general pattern to these rates. The higher a man’s rank, the more he paid. The older a man was, the more he paid. If he were not married, he paid more. However, for each child that a man had, he paid less money. All biological children for whom he cared – legitimate and illegitimate – as well as any other children for whom he had taken educational and financial responsibility for were counted in his favor.

The figure that a man paid each month was not a set amount, but was a percentage of his gross salary. For instance, a 36 year-old unmarried Gruppenführer paid 6.25\% of his salary per month. To put this percentage into perspective, an unmarried Gruppenführer earned 1130 RM

\textsuperscript{85}“Aufgaben und Ziele des Lebensborn,” BA NSD41/103, page 17.
\textsuperscript{86}“Entwurf. An sämtliche SS-Führer im RuS-Wesen beim SS-Oberabschnitt,” BA NS2/65, page 162.
\textsuperscript{88}“An alle SS-Führer,” BA NS19/3902, pages 84-85 and “Zwei Jahre Lebensborn-Arbeit,” BA NS48/31, page 17 and NA T175/17/frame 2520715.
\textsuperscript{89}“Befehl” from 2 March 1939, BA NS34/21, no page number.
\textsuperscript{90}“An alle SS-Führer,” BA NS19/3902, pages 84-85.
per month in 1936; the Lebensborn fee would have equaled approximately 70 RM per month, or 840 RM per year. This contribution roughly equaled two-thirds of the salary of the lowest-paid average German workers, as examined above. As the Lebensborn’s fees were on a sliding scale, this Gruppenführer’s married counterpart only paid 5.25%, and the rates decreased to 4.25%, 3.5%, and 2.75% with each child. If that 36 year-old married Gruppenführer had four or more children, then he actually made no financial contribution. The point of these contributions was to ensure that every SS officer was paying for the upkeep of their familial community. Financial responsibilities were to become yet another duty inherent within the SS regardless of whether a man personally procreated or not, thus once again attempting to remove personal choice from a private decision. However, as in many cases, what Himmler wanted and what actually occurred were two different things. Within the first year of requesting members of the SS officer corps to join, only 4600 of the approximately 8000 officers had enrolled. By the beginning of 1939, the program had 13,300 members, 12,500 of whom were SS men (officers and enlisted men); at this time, the SS had more than 238,000 members.

Part of the problem in soliciting contributions from the men was the fact that many of them remained unaware of the existence and purpose of the Lebensborn program. The privacy afforded by the homes appealed to many women, especially unwed mothers, yet efforts were made to ensure that all SS men knew about them. As the program was originally a part of RuSHA, its employees working in each Oberabschnitt along with those men employed in the SS support agencies within each Standarte were tasked with informing the men in their respective units about the Lebensborn homes. RuSHA even commissioned an educational primer to enlighten SS men about the program. In addition, articles were placed in both the SS-Leithefte and Das Schwarze Korps to clarify the purpose of the association. SS-Leithefte was a monthly magazine produced by RuSHA which served as a general training guide. It covered a wide range of topics, from the history and customs of the German Volk, to discussions about selections from

91 “Beitragstabelle zum ‘Lebensborn e.V.,’” BA NS19/3358, pages 3-7 and BA R187/667, pages 318-25.
92 A copy of Walter Schellenberg’s membership card and receipts are in NA T175/572/frame 9449646.
93 “Nachtrag für die bevölkerungspolitische Schrift an die SS-Führer,” BA NS19/3964, page 20.
95 “SS-Pflegestellen,” NA T580/332/Ordner 95/no frame numbers and Änderung der vorl. Dienstvorschrift,” BA NS2/21, page 70.
Mein Kampf, to information relating to the engagement and marriage process. Due to its association with RuSHA, the Leithefte articles on the Lebensborn would have most likely been useful for any unit training sessions or meetings with individual SS men.

As for the articles in Das Schwarze Korps, one appeared in January 1937 and another later that year in December. The first showcased the original Lebensborn home located east of Munich in Steinhöring. The pictures in the article revealed a home situated in an idyllic setting with clean medical facilities and comfortable accommodations. The article itself described the home as a place for a mother and her hereditarily worthy offspring. It indicated that these women and children were accepted regardless of legitimacy, thus publicly disclosing the official approval of illegitimacy within the SS. The second reported on an educational meeting held for applicants of an SS Standarte in Berlin. Georg Ebner spoke at this gathering, informing the new recruits about the purpose and meaning of racial selection in the SS and membership in the Lebensborn program. To a casual reader of the newspaper, these articles would have just been two among the dozens that appeared in those respective editions. But to a member of the SS, they served as a reminder about the program and his obligations toward it.

Again, the work of the Lebensborn was two-fold: to assist child-rich SS families and to care for racially worthy mothers and their children. Regarding the former task, the Lebensborn provided some money to the Oberabschnitte, which then distributed the funds to the qualifying families within its section. These funds were exceedingly limited, as indicated in records from Oberabschnitt Fulda-Werra, which was located in Bad Arolsen in central Germany. The amount of funding did not appear to increase in later years. At the beginning of 1939, a report was filed with Himmler which reviewed the work of the Lebensborn program over the previous two years. This report indicated that the association paid monthly support to 110 child-rich SS families, a number which represented less than six percent of child-rich SS families. A total of 3000 RM per month was allocated for this purpose; stipends ran between 20-50 RM per family,

98 A list containing the various unit names and locations from the Oberabschnitte down can be found in BA R187/648, page 8 and Dienstalterlister der Schutzstaffel der NSDAP (SS Obersturmbannführer und Sturmbannführer) Stand vom 1. Oktober 1944 (Berlin: SS-Personalhauptamt, 1944).
101 This percentage assessment was made by Georg Lilienthal, whose publications on the Lebensborn program are considered by historians to be the most authoritative works. He noted that there were 1906 SS families with five or more children at the end of 1938, and the 110 families who received money from the Lebensborn represented 5.8% of this total. Lilienthal, Der Lebensborn, 40.
each determined according to the size of a family and its financial situation. In order to receive
this money, a family had to submit an application, and a committee comprised of child-rich SS
officers decided which families would obtain the funding. This stipend, although meager with
just 3000 RM per month for the entire SS, indicated that promoting the family in the SS was
more than just rhetoric. The SS in general and the Lebensborn in particular were willing to back
up their ideals when possible with concrete measures, namely money. As with the SS stipends,
these Lebensborn funds were highly unlikely to encourage an SS man and his wife to have
children, but would have been a boon to an SS couple that already had or wanted to have a large
family.

While this assistance to child-rich SS families was regarded as important in documents
about and publicity for the Lebensborn program, far more attention was given to aiding the
mothers and children residing in the homes. Just over half of these children were illegitimate
while the remainder were the legitimate offspring of SS men, SA men, and police officers.\(^\text{102}\)
After caring for the mother during the end of her pregnancy through the birth of her child,
Lebensborn officials encouraged the mother to leave the home with her child. For married
women, this request presented no problems, but the same could not always be said for unmarried
mothers. If it were not possible for an unmarried mother to take responsibility for her child,
there were two possible solutions.\(^\text{103}\) The first was to place the child in the home of an SS
family on a temporary basis. Preference would be given to childless SS couples, although
already having biological offspring by no means ruled out the possibility of providing foster care
to a Lebensborn child. However, membership in the SS, or even the Nazi party, was not a
prerequisite for a couple to serve as foster parents; Lebensborn officials were most concerned
about finding foster parents who would care for the children.\(^\text{104}\)

In either case, the foster family would raise and educate the child until the mother was
able to resume her maternal responsibilities, either because her economic situation had changed
or because she had married the father of her child. Lebensborn authorities recognized that asking
a family to care for a child only to take it away would create a hardship on the foster parents.
Yet, with regards to SS families especially, this burden was seen as another sacrifice that an SS

\(^{102}\) Lilienthal, *Der Lebensborn*, 58 and 66-67 and Schmitz-Köster, *Deutsche Mutter*, 35. Statistics for the month of
April 1939, which indicate the marital status of the men and women whose children were born in the Lebensborn
homes, can be found NS3/431, pages 45-48.
\(^{103}\) Letter from George Ebrecht to Heinrich Himmler from 26 January 1938, BA NS2/65, pages 188-90.
\(^{104}\) *US v. Greifelt*, 1379.
man and his wife should have been willing to make for the greater good of the Volk. Furthermore, it was suggested that the foster parents could still have a relationship with the child as an honorary godparent.\textsuperscript{105} Himmler never directly commented on this issue, but there is little reason to believe that he would have been against it. He served as the godfather for scores of children, primarily the offspring of SS officers and men. He was also the godfather of any Lebensborn child born on his birthday, October 7, routinely providing them with birthday gifts, mainly money deposited into a savings account.\textsuperscript{106}

However, if the mother were unable to take her child back, there was a second solution. The foster parents would have the option of caring for the child indefinitely by adopting him (or her).\textsuperscript{107} The child they would raise would not be theirs biologically, but as only racially worthy children came out of the Lebensborn homes, any adoptive children would have been just as valuable to the SS familial community. Therefore, such adoptions would have been an ideal solution, but very few were ever carried out. The biological mothers were generally unwilling to give up their children permanently, and most SS families showed little interest in adopting. Despite persuasions by Himmler to have his SS men eschew middle-class, Christian morality and to accept illegitimate children, SS couples were disinclined to adopt the children of unwed mothers whom they perceived to have loose morals.\textsuperscript{108} Beyond this problem, the Lebensborn developed a less than wholesome reputation for other reasons. Although historians have painstakingly pointed out that the Lebensborn homes were maternity homes and not brothels or stud farms, such an insalubrious reputation has persisted.\textsuperscript{109} Part of the reason this reputation has

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 190.
\textsuperscript{106} Lists of Himmler’s godchildren can be found in the following documents: BA NS19/482; BA NS19/629; and BA NS19/3672. Among the more notable SS officers for whom he served as a godfather for at least one of their children were Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, Sepp Deitrich, Reinhard Heydrich, Karl Wolff, and Udo von Woysch.\textsuperscript{107} Letter from George Ebrecht to Heinrich Himmler from 26 January 1938, BA NS2/65, page 190.
\textsuperscript{109} Koehl, \textit{The SS}, 210: The Lebensborn homes “may have winked at illegitimate pregnancies…but they were not brothels.” Lumsden, 73: “Despite the contemporary salacious rumours about brothels and ‘SS stud farms’, only a small percentage of children appearing from the Society’s homes in peacetime were illegitimate. The establishment of the Lebensborn homes was a genuine attempt by Himmler to provide free but high-quality maternity care for the poorer SS families.” Thompson, 71: “That Lebensborn did nothing to encourage illegitimacy is certainly true, but the prosecution [in \textit{The United States of America v. Ulrich Greifelt et al.}] subsequently failed to produce any evidence in support of the assertion about sponsored sexual liaisons. And, while Himmler wanted to reduce the artificial restrictions which society placed upon sexual activities, much evidence indicates that he never pushed this desire to such bizarre lengths.” Schmitz-Köster, “A Topic for Life,” 214: “The image of Lebensborn as a ‘stud farm’ does not conform to reality. There are no documents which prove this…”
remained prominent is because most of the records for the Lebensborn homes are not available and the men and women who either worked at or took advantage of a home chose not to speak about their experiences after the fact. Furthermore, those few stories which are known have created a rather distorted and seedy account of the Lebensborn program.

For example, most of the girls who gave birth to an illegitimate child were teenagers who came from the League of German Maidens or the Reich Labor Service. One such girl, Hildegard Trutz, spoke of her experience in a Lebensborn home to journalist Louis Hagen in the late 1940’s. As reported by Hagen, even after the collapse of the Third Reich, Trutz had absorbed Nazi ideology and believed in her position as a “Nordic Beauty with the ‘child-bearing pelvis.’” Having finished her education during the mid 1930’s, she had spoken to her League leader about what she could do with her time. This leader suggested that Trutz could give a child to the Führer. It was also from this League leader that Trutz learned about the Lebensborn homes, which she thought “sounded wonderful.”

Trutz went to a “luxurious” home in Bavaria; there she learned about the Führer’s desire to have the Reichsführer pair a small group of woman of good Nordic stock with equally superior SS men in order to found a racial elite. This task was an honorable duty, one which Trutz proudly completed. She and the other girls with her were introduced to SS men and were given a week to choose a specific man, not that she ever knew any of their names. Once Trutz had chosen, she was subsequently given permission to receive him at night, although she noted that he was having sexual relations with more than one woman. Trutz told Hagen that she and the SS man “had no shame or inhibition of any kind” because they “believed completely in the importance of what we were doing.” She was quite proud of the fact that it did not take long for her to get pregnant; from that point, she lived in the home until the birth of her son, whom she kept for only two weeks. Lebensborn officials thanked Trutz for her work and told her that she could come back in a year if she were interested.

She never did, eventually meeting and marrying another SS man a few months prior to the war. Interestingly, while Trutz was proud of her pre-marital maternal duty, her husband did not approve of her choice. “I was rather surprised,” Trutz told Hagen, “to find that he was not as

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110 Hillel, 81.
111 Hagen, 254.
112 Ibid., 263.
113 Ibid., 265.
pleased about it as he might have been. Of course, he couldn’t very well say anything against it, seeing that I had been doing my duty to the Führer, but he didn’t like it mentioned.”

Clearly, as the entire account was from Trutz’s perspective, her comments on her husband’s position must be carefully regarded. By the time she gave this interview, she passionately hated her husband, who was imprisoned at a British camp at Neuengamme near Hamburg, blamed him for all of her problems, and had been trying to divorce him since the end of the war. Her portrait of him was anything but flattering, yet given her own positive impression of her experiences at the Lebensborn home and her husband’s negative reaction to it, Trutz’s story strongly suggests that most SS men – despite Himmler’s desire and despite, in this case, the woman’s acceptance – did not abandon conventional morality when it came to marriage and children.

However, while most SS men did not have children before marriage or commit adultery, there were several notable men who did, thus adding to the sordid reputation of the Lebensborn program. Among them was one of the highest-ranking and positioned SS officers: Karl Wolff. In 1937, Wolff, then a married SS-Gruppenführer and chief of Himmler’s personal staff, had an affair with Ingeborg Bernstorff which resulted in a pregnancy. To avoid any gossip that might have resulted from such a predicament, Wolff turned to fellow SS-Gruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the SS Reich Security Main Office. Given his experiences handling delicate and secretive matters, Heydrich arranged for Bernstorff to travel under a false name and passport to the clinic of a well-respected gynecologist in Budapest. After she gave birth, Bernstorff returned home while her son was placed in the home in Steinhöring. Several months later it was coordinated so that she could take in her own son as a foster child.

Cases such as Wolff’s were not common, yet they happened enough that Lebensborn officials accommodated the needs of married men, be it allowing the biological mother to take the child or to arrange for the biological father and his unsuspecting wife to adopt his child. The Lebensborn was more than willing to aid an unfaithful man in such a situation in order to keep his marriage intact, thereby allowing him to produce as many children as possible. This decision to place biological duty above marital vows reinforced the purpose of the Lebensborn

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114 Ibid., 268.
116 Lilienthall, *Der Lebensborn*, 151 and Hillel, 53.
society to aid in the creation of valuable children, regardless of the circumstances. Although few people benefited from this program, it represented a concrete measure implemented by Himmler in his desire to create a master race for the good of the Reich which his Führer was creating. He saw no problem with bending traditional morality, as long as it meant producing children that would be of good blood and of good use in the future, be it as future soldiers or future mothers. Such flexibility perfectly fit into his conceptions of blood, race, and Volk.

It was those same conceptions that brought Heinrich Himmler into conflict with eugenicists. While he wholeheartedly supported illegitimate children of good blood, German eugenicists did not. They advocated strengthening marriage and family, and they questioned the value of the illegitimate mother, as her decision to have a child out of wedlock proved her inferiority, at least when it came to preserving and promoting the racial well-being of the German Volk. “The family is irreplaceable,” Fritz Lenz wrote in 1932, “not only as the life and educational community, but also for the conservation of the race.”117 This perspective – in line with what he and his co-authors Baur and Fischer had advocated more than a decade earlier – was also promoted by other eugenicists and medical professionals.118 Geneticist Otmar von Verschuer commented that “the human being is no breeding animal” and argued for the protection of the traditional marriage.119 Physician Hermann Paull wrote a guidebook in 1934 designed to convince Germans of the value of eugenics and of the necessity of selecting a healthy marriage partner. He strongly urged that “the sentiment must be hammered into the heads of the people: the moral, hereditarily healthy child-rich family is the basic cell of the state.”120 Only this family could care for the welfare and future of the German state.

Martin Staemmler concurred with Paull’s a sentiment in the same book where he praised the SS for its engagement and marriage command, hence doubly proving his staunch adherence to the value of marriage. However, Staemmler did indicate – much like Walter Groß – that the question of illegitimate children could never be avoided completely and that the state should help the unmarried mother and her illegitimate child if the father was known and if both parents were hereditarily worthy.121 Yet, Hermann Siemens warned in his 1934 book that supporting

118 Baur-Fischer-Lenz, Band II, 133.
121 Staemmler, 70.
illegitimate children too extensively would have an unfavorable effect. Illegitimate children tended to suffer from mental weaknesses more commonly than legitimate ones, he contended. Siemens also argued that illegitimate children should not be counted when it came to birth policies designed to aid the population. Overall, he asserted that “an increase in illegitimate births is not in the interest of our race and our Volk…”\textsuperscript{122} His views on this issue were important not only for what he said, but where he said it. Siemens expressed these opinions in Genetics, Race Hygiene, and Population Politics, the very book which the SS and KWI-A used in its medical courses for SS doctors. At the same time the SS was establishing a program which could aid unmarried mothers and illegitimate children, it was also training its doctors to become the arbiters of the racial well-being of the Black Order, particularly when it came to arranging SS marriages and maintaining the health of their families.

For all of these reactions against illegitimacy, none was as problematic as the comments made by Fritz Lenz in 1937. In June of that year, the Reich Ministry of the Interior held a conference about illegitimate children. Lenz spoke at this meeting and once again expressed his opposition to illegitimacy, claiming that these children were undesirable from a racial hygienic perspective because they were of lesser genetic and intellectual value.\textsuperscript{123} In addition, he published an article in Volk und Rasse attacking illegitimacy and declaring that from a racial perspective, illegitimate children were unwanted: “Therefore, it seems to be subject to no doubt to me that illegitimate births are undesirable from the point of view racial hygiene population policy.”\textsuperscript{124} Measures should be taken, Lenz argued, to reduce the number of illegitimate children born each year.\textsuperscript{125} Himmler was not pleased by Lenz’s speech or article, and he sought to suppress the latter, a surprising failure given that by 1937, the SS controlled Volk und Rasse.\textsuperscript{126}

This conflict between Himmler and eugenicists once more illustrates how Himmler selectively chose which eugenic ideals best suited his purposes and how he conveniently ignored any ideas that did not buttress his model of the SS as a racial order composed of all offspring of good blood. Nonetheless, this one conflict cannot be blown out of proportion. Himmler might not have liked the perspective taken by Lenz, let alone any of the other scientists and physicians,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{122} Siemens, 152.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Müller-Hill, 76; Paul Weindling, Health, race, and German politics between national unification and Nazism, 1870-1945 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 535; and Henry Friedlander, The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 19.
\item \textsuperscript{124} Fritz Lenz, “Zur Frage der unehelichen Kinder,” Volk und Rasse, volume 12 (1937): 93.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 92.
\item \textsuperscript{126} For more information on Volk und Rasse, see chapter 7.
\end{itemize}
but he did not completely rebuff them because of this opposition. A claim of unconditional rejection, particularly of Lenz, was posited by geneticist Peter Emil Becker in his history of racial hygiene in the Third Reich. Becker claimed that because of the position that Lenz took, “it was unadvisable to state the name Lenz in RuSHA-SS, that Himmler rejected him completely.”127 This statement must be read with caution, as Becker, himself a former member of the SA and party, had served as Lenz’s student and assistant at the KWI-A starting in 1936.128 With those words, he could have been seeking to exonerate the memory and reputation of his former mentor.129

Becker’s position can also be repudiated by pointing out that Himmler favored granting party membership to Fritz Lenz, among other eugenicists, in the year following Lenz’s less than supportive commentary. In a letter to Hitler’s deputy Rudolf Heß, Himmler acknowledged the contributions of Lenz as well as those of Eugen Fischer “to the substantiation and scientific recognition of the racial part of the National Socialist world view (Weltanschauung).”130 He proclaimed that “despite some surely existing misgivings,” both men should be accepted into the party.131 Himmler even suggested that membership was “a certain political necessity” because it would otherwise be impossible to use the ideas of these two men as a “scientific underpinning for the Party.”132 Lenz, along with Alfred Ploetz and Ernst Rüdin, joined the party in 1938; Fischer and von Verschuer accepted membership a few years later.133

In all of these matters – rhetoric emphasizing the value of good blood, exhorting SS men

127 Becker, 199. As this book was published in the late 1980’s, it was highly unlikely that anyone else involved would have been able to contradict Becker’s personal memories.
128 Schmuhl, 165.
129 This is also the perspective taken by Sheila Faith Weiss in her article “Race and Class in Fritz Lenz’s Eugenics,” 19: “Both Lenz and his recent biographer Paul Emil Becker, for example, have made much out of the former’s conflict with Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler over the ‘racial worth’ of children born to unwed mothers. As if to demonstrate that his former teacher was an upright individual, Becker also points out that the name ‘Lenz’ was a dirty word in the Race and Settlement Office of the SS and that important Party officials such as Alfred Rosenberg and Walter Darré attacked Lenz in print. According to Becker, Lenz was so honorable that the Gestapo allegedly kept him under surveillance.”
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
133 Schmuhl, 153; Weindling, 511-12; and Hans-Peter Kröner, Von der Rassenhygiene zu Humangenetik: das Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik nach dem Kriege (Stuttgart: G. Fischer, 1998), 28 and 33. There actually are some discrepancies about the dates as Schmuhl said that Lenz joined in 1938 while Weindling cited 1937; also, Weindling listed 1941 as the year Fischer joined, but Kröner listed 1940. Even with these differences, the general point made above about it being politically incorrect to use these men’s ideas without granting them party membership still holds as valid.
to have children as a duty, prohibiting homosexuality and abortions, providing financial allowances for offspring, and abetting illegitimacy – Himmler had the same goal: fostering the birth of as many Nordic blood-carrying children as possible. This goal, however, was not limited to the birth of the children. The Reichsführer wanted them to be integrated into the SS family community. The first step was having each father report the birth of his newborn child. A father could send notification to RuSHA, as it was responsible for maintaining the SS Clan Book and the files on each SS man’s family. He could have also communicated the birth of his child to the SS Personnel Main Office, which was where he reported any changes in his personal, familial, or party status. Furthermore, in several instances, higher ranking officers directly wrote Himmler and the SS Personnel Chancellery, indicating the gender and names of their newborns.⁵³⁴

Once the SS knew of the addition of a member to an SS family, the next step was to baptize the child. As with the wedding ceremony, the SS sought to replace the traditional Christian baptism with a new SS ceremony designed to welcome the newborn into its family community. The first part of this process was not the ceremony itself, but a medical examination. Himmler required that a doctor associated with each Sturm evaluate the child, and if the baby were racially acceptable and healthy, then his (or her) name could be added into the SS Clan Book and Birth Book (Geburtenbuch).⁵³⁵ Just because the father and mother had already been vetted and approved by RuSHA did not mean that their child was automatically accepted. The baby too needed to have a medical official proclaim his (or her) worthiness to enter into the SS family community. This examination would have been especially important for those couples who had married prior to the engagement and marriage command because in those cases only the father’s lineage would have been previously examined when he had joined the SS.

Regarding the ceremony, it was to be an intimate occasion where the parents, their closest relatives, and the father’s comrades in the SS received the child into the SS family community.⁵³⁶

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⁵³⁶ There did not appear to be one standard service for the entire SS, although reports from two Oberabschnitte describe strikingly similar ceremonies. One ceremony is detailed in a report from October 1936 to the race instructor with Oberabschnitt Rhein in Wiesbaden (NA T354/407/frames 4122210-4122212) and the other is from Die Gestaltung der Feste im Jahres- und Lebenslauf in der SS Familie, which was released by SS Oberabschnitt West in the late 1930’s. Because the former document was simply a report filed with an Oberabschnitt detailing one particular baptism and the latter was published a pamphlet which described the purpose and content of various family ceremonies, the latter pamphlet is the source for the description of the baptism above. However, there is one additional note to this ceremony. There is a letter from Darré to RuSHA from 4 November 1937 (BA NS2/41, page
The service should have ideally taken place in the parents’ home; the room in which the baptism was conducted had to be suitably decorated with flowers and fir sprigs. In the first part of the ceremony, the father conferred the name of the child, which was to be carefully chosen, with preference given to German names. After the naming, an SS comrade accepted the child into the SS family community by making a short speech in which he addressed five key points: the great Reich into which the child had been born, the Führer and his love of children, the worship of mothers, the actions of the wife for increasing the size and quality of the Volk, and the obligation that each member of the SS had toward the family community. This speech concluded the baptism, after which the same SS comrade gave the mother a gift, such as a piece of jewelry, to commemorate the birth.

The new parents may have also received a Sturm cradle; every unit was to have in its possession one or more cradles that it could provide to SS parents in need of such assistance. Several newspaper articles from 1938 discussed the existence of such cradles, including one from the Münchener Neueste Nachrichten. This piece was about a cradle in SS Standarte 58 in Cologne. The article stated that the communal cradle was designed to spare parents expenses associated with newborns as well promote the SS family community. This particular cradle was decorated with swastikas and runes. It came with its own clan book which contained the names of the SS men who had contributed to the purchase of the cradle as well as the names of the newborns that had used it. With the bequeathing of the gift and possibly the cradle, the baptism concluded, and a small celebratory meal was held. Every year thereafter, the parents were advised not only to celebrate the birthday of their child, but also his (or her) baptism.

As with the previously discussed wedding ceremony, there are no statistics to indicate how many families chose an SS ceremony. One of the few examples of an SS officer doing so, indicating that at the baptism ceremony, he wanted each father to repeat an old saying: “God blesses your entrance into this world and is with you for all days and takes you to himself when life has finished.” There is no indication that any SS baptism included this phrase, and in spite of the religious-like aspects described by both ceremonies, there is no mention of God in either.

In the ceremony described in Oberabschnitt Rhein, there was also a swastika flag present and fires burning on each side of a table on which laid a picture of Hitler, a basin of dirt, a basin of water, Mein Kampf, and a dagger.

The dagger was the gift presented to the mother in the Oberabschnitt Rhein ceremony.


“Eine Wanderwiege der SS,” Münchener Neueste Nachrichten, 4 February 1938. This article can also be found in BA NS22/521.

Die Gestaltung, 66-68.
however, was Karl Wolff. In early January 1937, he had his eldest legitimate son baptized with a newly created SS ceremony. The particular ceremony for his son was far more eccentric than the one described above. It had been designed by SS Brigadeführer Karl Maria Weisthor, an officer on Himmler’s personal staff and a self-proclaimed expert on ancient German religion, customs, and ancestral runes. Wolff gave his son the name Thorisman, after the Teutonic deity. The baby also received three middle names, one for each of his “Goden,” an ancient Germanic term for godfather: Heinrich [Himmler], Karl [SS-Sturmbannführer Karl Diebitsch, Himmler’s personal art referent], and Reinhard [Heydrich]. Throughout the service, the child, in the arms of his mother, Frieda, received a blue ribbon, a cup, a spoon, and a ring. The ribbon was to symbolize “birth and marriage, life and death,” the cup to remind the child that “his purpose in life” came from God, the spoon to give him nourishment, and the ring to signify “the house of Wolff.”

There is one other note about this ceremony. Unlike the one described before it, which seemingly had no mention of God, Weisthor liberally used the word God throughout the service. At the end of baptism, Weisthor proclaimed, “…you [the baby] may receive the proud name of Thorisman as your Christian name for your entire life.” So, in spite of the Reichsführer’s desire to have his order pull away from Christianity, even the most outlandish and pagan-like ceremony did not completely break away from church traditions. Nonetheless, there is little reason to believe that this particular ceremony ever gained wide acceptance. While Weisthor might have originally had powerful patronage in Himmler, he made enemies, including by the end of 1938 Karl Wolff. Wolff had learned that Weisthor had been institutionalized and certified as mentally incompetent earlier in his life. In his capacity as the chief of Himmler’s personal staff, Wolff brought Weisthor’s work to an end and allowed him to retire in August 1939.

Altogether, these baby naming ceremonies were designed as the initial phase in welcoming every newborn into the SS family community. They were not, however, the only family ceremonies. Other services were invented to initiate children into the various Nazi youth

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143 Weisthor was actually a pseudonym, which he assumed when he joined the SS in late 1933. His real last name was Wiligut. Hans-Jürgen Lange, Weisthor: Karl Maria Wiligut: Himmlers Rasputin und seine Erben (Engerda: Arun, 1998), 47, 53, and 62; Stephen E. Flowers, The Secret King: Karl Maria Wiligut, Himmler’s Lord of the Runes (Waterbury Center, Vermont: Dominion Press, 2001), 21; and Lang, 37.
144 Lang, 38-39. Although Lang is cited here, Lange did reprint the entire ceremony on pages 192-93 and Flowers listed it on pages 122-24 of their respective books.
145 Lang, 39.
146 Flowers, 32.
organizations, such as the Hitler Youth or the League of German Maidens. There was also advice on how each family could establish a Family Book (*Familienbücher*) which would contain the life stories of the living family members. This book would be used to inform each generation about its ancestors – who they were, where they came from, et cetera. These additional services were not necessarily designed to replace traditional familial and religious ceremonies such as birthdays, anniversaries, or even Christmas and Easter. They were created to accompany already existing practices and aimed to shape the mentality of future generations and reorient young boys and girls toward the worldview promoted by the SS.

Once these children had become full-fledged members of the SS family community, their parents had the responsibility to raise them to be proper National Socialists, but to some extent the fathers and mothers were not alone in this task. While the SS as an organization did not intervene in the daily affairs of raising children, it still oversaw the entire family community. It also sought to ensure the vitality and longevity of this community. The prime method of organizational oversight was the Gruppenführer oath. During the celebration of the Munich putsch in 1936, Himmler released not a command but a basic law (*Grundgesetz*) which dealt with maintaining high racial standards in the SS. He asserted that one “greatest dangers for the future of the SS” was if the sons and daughters of SS men were automatically admitted into the SS as members and wives without further examination. Future generations could not be admitted solely based on the merits of their ancestors. Simply because their fathers had belonged to the SS was not reason enough to allow the admission of the children as stricter conditions for entry had to be imposed on each generation. As with the examination of each newborn by an SS physician, this notion indicated that assessing the value of the parents when the fathers joined the SS and the mothers married into the SS family community was only the first step of a much larger process. Each generation was subsequently going to be vetted to make sure that every single person who was in the SS family community truly belonged there.

Thus, Himmler required every Obergruppenführer and Gruppenführer to swear an oath to him personally. This oath bound these highest ranking officers to serve as “the guardians of the blood and life laws of the Schutzstaffel.” They were responsible for inspecting every possible

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147 *Die Gestaltung*, 42 and 68-70.
149 Ibid., 126. The full oath can be found in the above cited document as well as “*Nicht vereidigte Gruppenführer,*”
candidate or spouse, recognizing that such scrutiny might lead to the rejection of their colleagues’ children – or even their own. In addition, these officers obligated themselves to ensure that with each new generation who joined the SS, at least one quarter of the men and women came from families not already associated with the SS. To satisfy Himmler, each officer had to swear on his loyalty to the Führer and to his ancestors to uphold the Gruppenführer oath. Finally, the oath was sealed not just by an officer shaking Himmler’s hand, but also by having a document inserted into his personnel file that indicated the date he had taken the oath.  

Beyond the Gruppenführer oath, another way through which the SS cared for its own was by providing for the widows and orphans of its fallen men. Although such measures would take on a greater significance during the war, the notion of the SS taking responsibility for the well-being of the members of its family community pre-dated the war. In particular, on November 9, 1937, Himmler announced another basic law which addressed the issue of caring for the families of deceased SS men. This particular duty was a “sacred task” for the SS as a family community and for each individual SS man, especially the commanding officers of the deceased. The basis of this care revolved around financial provisions, yet allocating money to these families was only one factor. SS men were to honor their fallen comrades by serving as protectors to their widows and orphans; in essence, they were to guide these families as a father would, taking special care to oversee the education of the children. They could rely on the SS support agencies in each Standarte for assistance with the relevant administrative chores, but otherwise, the responsibility was a personal obligation from which there was no reprieve.

This second basic law only accounted for wives and legitimate children; illegitimate children, of whom they were few anyway, would have most likely come under the purview of the Lebensborn program. A widow could remain associated with the SS and receive support for her children from it so long as she continued to live an honorable life worthy of her late husband. However, if her conduct was unbecoming or immoral, she risked being placed on trial by the SS.

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in NA T175/17/frame 2520783 and in the personnel file of Ernst Robert Grawitz in NA BDC SSO 030 page 123. The oath was: “I commit myself as a Gruppenführer of the SS with all of my strength to carry with it, that regardless of the person of the individual, to accept only such applicants for the SS on the merits of his parents and ancestors, that fully and completely correspond to the sharpest respective requests of the SS. I will fight for it even if it is about the rejection of my own children or my clan’s children. Furthermore, I obligate myself to watch over it that in every year the quarter part of the SS-applicants consists of men who are not sons of existing SS-men. I swear to these obligations with my loyalty to our Führer Adolf Hitler and with the honor of my ancestors – so help me god.”

150 An example of such a document is in Ernst Robert Grawitz’s file, cited above.

151 “Grundgesetz,” BA NS19/3902, page 180. Portions of this basic law can also be found in BA NS19/3901, page 46 and BA NS19/3973, page 11.
Arbitration and Honor Court, which had been founded in 1935. This court reviewed the woman’s behavior, and if it ruled against her, then she was excluded from the SS community, lost all financial assistance, and risked having her children removed from her custody.  

To anyone in the SS tasked with caring for the family of an individual comrade or whose official duties within the order included familial measures, such responsibilities would have reinforced the notion of the SS as a selective familial community. They would have likewise taken a considerable amount of time on the part of the individual SS men and money on the part of the SS as an organization. However, the burden of this obligation was not nearly as onerous as it could have been, at least in the pre-war years. Despite all of the appeals and incentives designed to foster the creation of child-rich families, the men of the SS came nowhere near to achieving the population goals that its leader set for them. The ideal of each SS man fathering at least four racially healthy children was nothing more than a romantic fantasy.

Statistics compiled by the SS in 1936, 1937, and 1938 reveal just how far below the ideal of four children the actual numbers were. The SS Statistical Yearbooks for those three years assessed the numbers of children per family for the entire SS. In 1936, there were over 50,500 marriages in this SS; from those couples, almost 14% were childless. Of the couples with children, 52% had one child, 30% had two children, and 12% had three children. Only 6% of SS families in 1936 were child-rich with four or more children. Altogether, all SS marriages produced a total of 1.5 children per marriage. In 1937, the average number of children decreased, with 1.2 children per marriage. The numbers in 1938 were even lower, with an average of 1.1 children per marriage for the entire SS. In addition, fewer than 5% of SS marriages had four or more children. The 1938 statistics are notable for one other reason. Beyond accounting for the numbers of children produced by each marriage, this year also included the number of children born to single SS men. These children born out of wedlock only accounted for just over three-quarters of one percent of all children born of SS men. Still, the very action of including them in the statistics signified the lack of official stigma toward illegitimacy and the desire to have all children of good blood join the SS family community.

Beyond these numbers for the entire SS, statistics were compiled during those same three

153 Statistisches Jahrbuch, 1936, 25. The percentages listed here were rounded up or down to the nearest whole number to simplify the explanation.
155 Statistisches Jahrbuch, 1938, 96.
years on the officer corps by the SS Personnel Chancellery. These reports were far more detailed than the ones recorded in the *Statistical Yearbooks*, as the author(s) responsible for them broke down the numbers by marital status, age, and full or part-time service in the SS. They also listed comprehensive numbers. For 1936, just over 25% of all married officers had no children, 31% had only one child, 25% had two children, and 12% had three children; only 7% were child-rich. In 1937, despite having more officers, the statistics remained comparable. The average number of children per SS officer marriage at that time was 1.52 children, a number which declined slightly to 1.48 children in 1938.

These averages, while slightly higher than those produced for the entire SS, were certainly well below the four children per marriage needed to aid the growth of the German Volk and slightly lower than the number of children per non-SS German family in approximately the same time frame. The Reichsführer directly told his Gruppenführers that while he understood that the SS had a large contingent of young officers whom he could not expect to be married and have children yet, he otherwise found such low numbers “fatal.” Himmler characterized this birth deficit among the higher ranks as particularly problematic in a second speech before the police: “The higher the rank, the fewer the children,” he stated. “That is ingratitude against the Volk and Führer.” This speech given by Himmler before the police force was just as significant as the lectures routinely given to his Gruppenführer because many officers in the former organization belonged to the latter as well and were responsible for adhering to all edicts regarding their marital and familial choices.

Unlike the marriage statistics examined in the previous chapter where an SS statistician in the SS Personnel Chancellery attempted to explain the possible reasons for the high marriage ages of SS men, no such comparable explanations were given for the numbers relating to children. More time was spent projecting how many children SS men could have if they married

156 “Nachtrag für die bevölkerungspolitische Schrift an die SS-Führer,” BA NS19/3965, page 2.
157 Ibid., 8 and “Bevölkerungspolitik im SS-Führerkorps,” BA NS34/30, page 16. This latter document also contains a series of charts which analyzed the numbers of children per marriage by various factors.
159 “ Rede des Reichsführer-SS anlässlich der Gruppenführer-Besprechung in Tölz am 18.II.1937,” IfZ MA 311/frame 2611918 and Fest, 83.
160 “Zur Statistik der Kinderzahlen bei der Polizei,” in Fest, 85.
at an appropriate age (defined as age 27, which was the average age in the Reich and five years below the average in the SS) and had a child at least every three years through age 41.\textsuperscript{161} Space was also dedicated to lamenting the fact that such physically and racially healthy men were not procreating.\textsuperscript{162} However, among the scant explanations given in these various statistical documents, was the acknowledgement that the number of children per marriage was related to the actual age when an SS man married. The higher marriage age could to some extent account for the lower birth numbers.\textsuperscript{163} For this reason, one of the reports subsequently noted that a high marriage age and a low birth number would have devastating consequences for the SS beyond one generation. If the basic attitude among the members of the SS toward the value of marriage and family did not alter toward producing child-rich families, then the SS as an organization would have to take special care to recruit from outside its current families. Otherwise, a perpetual cycle of small families would doom the bearers of the best blood from contributing to the racial renewal of the German Volk.\textsuperscript{164}

Over the course of the 1930’s, Himmler sought to mold the SS into an organization which could meet the present and future needs of the Third Reich. Part of this plan included assuring the continuation of the genetic lineage of his men. Measures were designed to encourage the creation of biologically valuable, child-rich Nordic families which would augment the SS and its position as the vanguard of the growing German Reich. Among the pre-war measures were rhetoric emphasizing the value of Nordic blood, letters and speeches exhorting SS men to have children, prohibitions against homosexuality and abortions, financial stipends for offspring, support for illegitimacy, the establishment of familial ceremonies, and welfare provisions for SS families. Taken together, these components emphasized that the formation of a family was a crucial duty for each SS man, one just as vital as any other responsibility to the organization. The magnitude of this responsibility of every SS man needing to establish and to preserve his family line would only grow in significance following the outbreak of the Second World War.

\textsuperscript{161} This particular detailed analysis was given in “Nachtrag für die bevölkerungs-politische Schrift an die SS-Führer,” BA NS19/3965, pages 11-13 and “Nachtrag für die bevölkerungs-politische Schrift an die SS-Führer,” BA NS19/3964, pages 25-29.

\textsuperscript{162} “Bevölkerungspolitik im SS-Führerkorps,” BA NS34/30, page 12.

\textsuperscript{163} Statistisches Jahrbuch, 1936, 25.

\textsuperscript{164} “Nachtrag für die bevölkerungspolitische Schrift an die SS-Führer,” BA NS19/3964, page 29.
Throughout the 1930’s, Heinrich Himmler had devoted himself to molding the SS into his vision of a racial elite, and he did not want the Second World War to prevent him from achieving this aim. Thus, Himmler needed his SS men to understand the gravity of the situation; the Thousand Year Reich for which they now fought could not prevail without a strong biological legacy. The vast majority of the measures previously introduced remained in place, although the SS did modify existing measures and implement new initiatives because of the war. These changes included modifying the engagement and marriage process, adopting new rhetoric to emphasize the value of children, creating opportunities for SS men to have children, and establishing financial and educational provisions to assist their families. While many of these alterations came in the form of official commands, when it came to their actual implementation, men were given some leeway in complying due to the exigencies of war. Supplementary regulations and corresponding rhetoric were designed to provide positive incentives to persuade rather than compel men from all branches of the SS to conform to the racial standards designed to regulate their families. By allowing these changes and seeking voluntary compliance, Himmler sought to balance his goal of building an elite family community which could ensure a victory in the cradle with his desire of establishing a strong SS military branch which would contribute to a military victory. This balance required him to amend his priorities when it came to what he required from his men personally and professionally, and while standards remained high, Himmler proved more willing during the war to bend his own rules periodically for regulating marriages and families in order to facilitate the growth of the SS, especially the Waffen-SS, and to achieve all of his aspirations.

With the outbreak of the war, the necessity of ensuring the longevity of the SS through the marriage and welfare of its members grew even stronger because of the massive bloodletting of the best Nordic blood. The Race and Settlement Main Office remained responsible for overseeing these tasks. Günther Pancke continued to supervise the office until early July 1940.
Of the four men who led RuSHA, he was the only one who needed Himmler’s permission to marry, as he wed his second wife in 1935; in addition, Pancke was the only one of them to have four children.¹ He was then replaced by Otto Hofmann, who administered RuSHA until mid April 1943 and was followed by Richard Hildebrandt, who served as the last leader.² Unlike Darré – whose time as chief of RuSHA lasted about as long as the other three men combined – neither Pancke, Hofmann, nor Hildebrandt had any formal education or publications relating to the Nordic race, blood and soil ideology, or farming, and only Hofmann had any previous experience with RuSHA, first as a Race and Settlement Leader in Düsseldorf and then as the head of the Race and Settlement Office for Family Affairs (Sippenamt) and its Office for Racial Affairs (Rassenamt).³

The Office for Family Affairs remained responsible for the engagement and marriage process for the first half of the war. As of 1942, however, its responsibilities were divided with two newly created departments: the Genealogical Office (Ahnentafelamt) and the Marriage Office (Heiratsamt); the latter of these sections took over the majority of the tasks related to engagements and marriages.⁴ Regarding that process, the looming threat of war in late summer 1939 led to some relaxation of regulations. The first deviation was issued on the very day that Germany invaded Poland.⁵ Any SS member who wished to expedite the marriage process because of imminent mobilization only had to submit the Race and Settlement questionnaire and the genealogical tree; the two medical examination forms were desired, but not necessary, a move which placed the facilitation of mobilization for war ahead of the racial demands of the organization for the time being. RuSHA officials made a decision within a few hours, most of the time approving the proposal as long as the questionnaire and the genealogical tree revealed no serious hereditary misgivings with the SS man or his fiancée. If further verification

¹ Darré was married in March 1931 and had one daughter born prior to this marriage. Pancke married for the second time in August 1935 (well after the engagement and marriage command) and had four daughters, all by his second wife. Hofmann married twice, well before 1931 in both cases, and had three children – a biological daughter and two sons who were most likely foster children. Hildebrandt married in March 1928 and had two sons and a daughter. This information can be found in the BDC SSO files of each man: Richard Walther Darré SSO 136, page 1280; Günther Pancke SSO 364A, page 003; Otto Hofmann, SSO 111A, page 765; and Richard Hildebrandt SSO 097A, page 810.
³ This assessment is primarily based on the information found in these three men’s BDC SSO files and on the testimony that each of them gave during the Race and Settlement Trial. US v. Greifelt, 655, 706, 1301, 3171-76, and 4002.
⁴ RFSS order, 31 December 1941, BA NS19/3903, page 105.
uncovered medical or racial problems with either applicant, the SS man had to accept the consequences, namely the possibility of dismissal from the SS.

When Himmler had issued this command, he did not immediately clarify why he had chosen to make these changes. However, in a March 1943 letter to SS-Obergruppenführer Udo von Woyrsch, Himmler wrote that he had personally wrestled with the question at the beginning of the war as to whether he should promote marriages among his SS men without first educating them about the proper life laws and racial regulations.\(^6\) He subsequently told von Woyrsch that he wanted to promote marriage among his men and was willing to allow for mistakes that might subsequently result from this decision. The important thing to Himmler, so he wrote in this letter, was that each SS man had at least one child before he fell. In order to facilitate the birth of these children, he was willing to risk the possibility that a minority of them would not meet the racial standards of the SS. Even if a few of the children were not racially impeccable, Himmler argued that poor blood was better than no blood, especially when it came to having as many boys as possible who could later serve in the armed forces.

Five months later in January 1940, Himmler issued a supplementary command returning the necessary paperwork back to pre-war levels.\(^7\) As with the order from the start of the war, he did not indicate why he had again chosen to change the requirements, although it would not be unreasonable to presume that the military situation, which was quite favorable to Germany at the time, might have influenced his decision. With Poland divided between Germany and the Soviet Union and no active fighting on the western front for several more months, the war would have not confined the men serving in the militarized units of the SS from gathering and submitting the full paperwork. Once these requisite forms were received by RuSHA, its officials evaluated the application and made a decision. As with the previous order, if further investigation revealed hereditary problems with his application, the SS man might have to retire from the organization.

By this time, the engagement and marriage regulations applied to anyone who belonged to the SS. The original 1931 command had solely applied to all members of the SS and their brides, although in July 1938, it had extended to Himmler’s other domain, the police, as well. As of January 1940, he expanded his orders to include the Waffen-SS, and in 1941 and 1942 explicitly ruled that even SS members who did not have German citizenship still needed to

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\(^7\) “Verlobungs- und Heiratsgenehmigung,” 26 January 1940, BA NS2/21, page 127 and BA NS34/8, no page number.

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request permission to marry.\(^8\) As with the previous orders examined above, neither Himmler nor
the higher-ranking Waffen-SS officers who passed on these decrees clarified why it was
necessary to reiterate that the engagement and marriage command applied to everyone in the SS.
However, by 1941-1942, the expansion of the SS was primarily due to the inclusion of non-
Germans, such as Volksdeutsche, who were ethnically German but did not live in Germany, and
foreign nationals, such as Norwegians, who were acceptable because of their Nordic heritage.
The publication of later commands which repeated what was otherwise obvious to anyone
already serving in the SS was most likely aimed at informing the newer, non-German members
of their familial obligations to the organization. Beyond this extension, there was one additional
augmentation to the command. In 1943, Himmler required female employees of the SS and the
police to seek his approval before getting married. These women needed to submit genealogical
records and the medical examination forms, but their future husbands, if they did not belong to
the SS or the police, merely had to submit a genealogical tree.\(^9\) The order did not indicate how
far back the women and their future husbands had to prove their Aryan descent, but it would be
reasonable to presume to 1800 as that was the requirement for most SS men.

Despite the increasing inclusiveness of the engagement and marriage command, some
people were exempt from this edict throughout the war. In October 1940, the RuSHA Office for
Family Affairs issued a letter which clarified its position on who did not need to request
permission. According to the office, anyone who had joined the Waffen-SS, including the
Death’s Head units, during the war but who did not intend to remain in the SS following it were
not obligated to obtain authorization. The Office for Family Affairs recommended that the
Waffen-SS command record the names of these men. Over a month later the Waffen-SS
published the exception list in its ordinance gazette.\(^10\) Neither the RuSHA letter nor the
ordinance was directly signed by the Reichsführer, but the very publishing of the information in
the ordinance gazette suggested that he tacitly approved it.

Two years later, however, the Waffen-SS rescinded the exemption policy and ordered

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\(^8\) “Verlobungs- und Heiratsgenehmigung,” 26 January 1940, BA NS2/21, page 127; “Verlobungs- und
Heiratsgesuche von Volksdeutsche, die der SS angehören,” NA T611/11/Ordnung 446 (Teil 2)/no frame number;
“Heiratsgenehmigung für alle Angehörigen der SS,” 1 October 1942, BA NSD41/40, page 1/1h;
“Heiratsgenehmigung für Angehörige der Waffen-SS,” 14 December 1942, NA T175/152/frames 2681626-
2581627; and Knoebel, 42-43.


\(^10\) “Heiratsgenehmigung,” 4 November 1940, NA T580/326/Ordner 18/no frame number and IMT, volume XLII,
document SS-42.
that all members of the organization needed to have their marriages approved.11 This command was repeated in a February 1944 ordinance gazette; it specifically noted that even those men who had joined the Waffen-SS simply for the duration of the war were still required to obtain permission. This February 1944 command also stated that the men now in training needed to be informed about the basic laws of the SS, especially its marriage regulations.12 There was only one minor exemption to these rules by the end of the war. In May 1944, Himmler himself issued an exception, exempting those men who had joined the SS guard units (Wachverbände) from the Wehrmacht.13

Most of the men who needed permission to marry during the war seemingly had little difficulty obtaining it, even when their circumstances were less than ideal. As in the pre-war period, Himmler personally approved the marriages of officers; he likewise reviewed all applications where a rejection was highly possible and in cases with exceptional circumstances, such as when the fiancée was already pregnant.14 Otto Hofmann later recounted personally spending time with Himmler as he reviewed the applications, noting that the Reichsführer declared to him that he found reviewing applications a welcome respite from his other duties.15 However, unlike that earlier time, when he lambasted his men and their superiors for submitting the paperwork because of the pregnancy, he complained of this condition less frequently during the war, in spite of the fact that some wartime statistics showed 13-15% of officers and 20-25% of enlisted men requesting permission on grounds of pregnancy.16 On one occasion, Himmler

11 “Heiratsgenehmigung,” Verordnungsblatt der Waffen SS, 1 October 1942, paragraph 359, NA T611/5/Ordner 431/no frame number.
12 “Heiratsgenehmigung,” Verordnungsblatt der Waffen SS, 1 February 1944, paragraph 57, NA T611/6/Ordner 431/no frame number.
13 Letter from Himmler to the Chief of RuSHA, 11 May 1944, BA NS2/231, page 11.
did write to an officer and told him that requesting permission to marry an already-pregnant fiancée was “cavalier and unchivalrous…. [and] unworthy of an SS man,” and requested that the officer redress the issue by committing himself to his marriage. These sentiments reinforced a now well-known discrepancy in Himmler’s opinions on marriage and fatherhood. He accepted illegitimate children of good blood, such as those born in the Lebensborn homes, many of whom were fathered by his SS men; yet at the same time, Himmler took offense when these same SS men sought to get married only after their girlfriends were pregnant. He could bend traditional morality in the name of producing children of “good blood” in one instance, but not in the other. In Himmler’s view, violating the engagement and marriage order represented a far worse transgression than having an illegitimate child.

Whereas Himmler’s response to the pregnancy issue demonstrated a certain amount of flexibility because of his desire to have his men produce as many children of good blood as possible, there were other issues that he did not overlook as easily. As in the pre-war period, approval for an engagement and marriage was often denied if a bride were deemed unacceptable due to the presence of foreign or Jewish blood or if her family history revealed hereditary defects or diseases. Yet, as illustrated with the cases of SS-Obersturmführer Mayr, SS-Brigadeführer Walter Schellenberg, and SS-Gruppenführer Walter Krüger, the boundary between the Nazi ideal and what Himmler allowed was somewhat blurry. In the situation with Mayr, Himmler learned that his wife was one-quarter Jewish. While such information would had led to a refusal of a new engagement and marriage application, Mayr and his wife had been married well prior to this discovery and already had three children together. Himmler allowed Mayr to remain in the SS provided that he and his wife had no additional children and that he was informed that his children would never be allowed into the organization.

Schellenberg wanted to marry for a second time in 1940. When he gathered the relevant paperwork to submit to RuSHA, he discovered that his future mother-in-law was Polish. Knowing the strong likelihood that his application would be rejected, he elicited help from his

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17 Heiber, letter 207.
19 Heiber, letter 50.
superior in the Reich Security Main Office, SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich. Heydrich intervened on Schellenberg’s behalf and within less than a week had secured Himmler’s approval, although Schellenberg noted in his memoirs that his intercession had a high price. Six months after he had married, Schellenberg received a file which contained a copy of a secret dossier compiled on his wife’s family by the Gestapo. The Reich Security chief maintained this file on Schellenberg’s wife and her family until Heydrich’s assassination in 1942. Schellenberg commented in his memoirs that by asking for and receiving this aid from Heydrich, he had given Heydrich the means to entrap him, which he had already suspected his superior had been trying to do.²⁰ Yet, beyond this consequence from his underhanded means of gaining approval, Schellenberg’s second marriage was apparently successful and led to three children.²¹

The case of Krüger was slightly more complicated. He had married almost a decade prior to the engagement and marriage command, and the issue was not with him, but his children. When his daughter sought to marry an SS-Sturmbannführer, permission was denied. Although Krüger’s lineage was impeccable, his wife’s was not; her family tree, which was already on file with the SS, revealed that she had a Jewish ancestor in 1711. Even though lineages for officers and their wives only needed to be traced back to 1750, knowledge of this Jewish ancestor prevented Krüger’s daughter from receiving approval. Himmler wrote Krüger and explained the reason for the rejection. Moreover, the Reichsführer indicated that he had not directly issued a rejection to the Sturmbannführer who sought to marry Krüger’s daughter, but was leaving the matter for Krüger to handle. He suggested that his Gruppenführer find some other way to reject the marriage, such as indicating that his daughter was too young to marry and he could not give his fatherly permission. However, there was one other twist to the story. Just over a year later, Himmler allowed Krüger’s son to enter the SS despite the presence of Jewish ancestry in the maternal family line.²² With this decision, Himmler again demonstrated his willingness to bend the rules which he himself had created in order to facilitate the growth of the Waffen-SS.

Beyond these examples, Himmler still tended to object to marriages where the bride was older than the groom or the couple had no desire of having children, and he made his opposition

²⁰ Schellenberg, 37-38.
²¹ Personnel file of Walter Schellenberg, BA SSO file 074B, page 201.
quite clear when issuing a rejection. In many of these cases, after Himmler denied a request, he either directly wrote to or ordered that RuSHA contact the superior officer of the man whose application he had rejected. The Reichsführer requested that this officer explain to his subordinate why his application was refused, clarify the racial laws of the SS, and remind him of the necessity of each SS man having children. There were a limited number of exceptions when it came to these rules, such as the approval of the marriage of SS-Brigadeführer Peter Hansen. Hansen directly petitioned Himmler and requested approval even though he and his fiancée had no intention of having children. His argument was that both he and his future bride already had children from previous marriages and wished to raise them together with a good National Socialist upbringing. Himmler approved Hansen’s union, but rarely showed such leeway when it came to issues of age or children, and when he did, he typically noted that he had consented to these marriages against his better judgment.

There was one other area where Himmler reevaluated the engagement and marriage command because of the exigencies of the war. In 1935, he had issued a command which dismissed any man from the SS who had married without requesting approval. Over the next three years, several hundred men received honorable and dishonorable discharges, but shortly after the war began, Himmler decided to pardon these men. He wanted every racially suitable, able-bodied man serving in the armed units of the SS. After communicating with officers in his Personal Staff, Legal Main Office, and RuSHA, he issued an order in November 1940 which granted amnesty to men who had left the SS in 1935, 1936, and 1937. Each man could seek readmission if he met several conditions: one, he had been dismissed solely for violating the engagement and marriage command; two, an assessment of the dismissed man demonstrated that his character and attitude still met the standards required by the SS for admission; and three,


RuSHA gave belated approval for the man’s marriage.\textsuperscript{26}

Although the original intention of this clemency and readmission was designed to benefit men who had left the SS prior to the war, during the war its scope was expanded. One example of an officer who benefitted from this change in policy was SS-Obersturmführer Louis Evers. Evers had been released from the SS in early 1940 because he had married without authorization; he would have most likely never have received approval because several members of his wife’s family had been incarcerated, and that alone had long since been grounds for rejecting an application.\textsuperscript{27} Evers appealed and requested re-entry into the SS; in late 1941, Himmler agreed to allow him to re-join if he divorced his wife, which Evers did by the end of the year. Once the SS Personnel Main Office received official documentation concerning this divorce, Evers was allowed to reenter the SS in late 1944 at his previously-held rank. Himmler requested that Evers report to him every six months about his marital status, as he wanted his newly reinstated officer to find a suitable wife.\textsuperscript{28}

The Evers case was only one example of how Himmler displayed selected latitude when it came to what he expected from his SS men. He sought to balance his overarching desire to establish a racial, Nordic, blood-based elite with his immediate need to have a strong SS military branch. The former required strict rules guiding the admission of wives, and thus children, into the SS family community while the latter necessitated the inclusion of as many healthy men as possible into the units of the Waffen-SS. The war forced him to readjust his priorities, especially when it came to the demands he made of his men. Although Himmler claimed that he fully intended to reevaluate the situation following the war, he was willing to show a limited amount of leniency in order to achieve a more immediate goal, namely having the Waffen-SS play a decisive role in a Nazi military victory.

Himmler indicated that he would reevaluate the situation in the aforementioned November 1940 amnesty order. However, in late March 1944, SS-Gruppenführer Harald Turner, a jurist who served in both the Race and Settlement and Reich Security Main Offices, sent

\textsuperscript{26} “Verstöße gegen den Verlobungs- und Heiratsbefehl,” 27 October 1939, BA NS19/752, page 24 and NA T611/10/Ordner 446 (Teil 1)/no frame number; “Amnestie wegen Vergehen gegen den Verlobungs- und Heiratsbefehl,” 16 August 1940, NA T580/333/Ornder 122/no frame number; and “Wiederaufnahme in die SS bei Vergehen gegen den Verlobungs- und Heiratsbefehl,” 1 November 1940, BA NS7/216, pages 2-3.

\textsuperscript{27} The issue of incarceration and the rejection of an application is discussed in chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{28} Letter from the Personnel Main Office to the Personal Office of the RFSS, 3 February 1944, BA NS2/1028, page 2; letter from the chief of the Personnel Main Office to the Personal Office of the RFSS, 31 October 1944, BA NS2/1028, page 4; and letter from Brandt to the Personnel Main Office, 13 November 1944, BA NS2/1028, page 6.
Himmler a letter requesting that he reconsider his position regarding punishing SS men who violated the engagement and marriage command. He made his suggestions based on his work for RuSHA, which at the time of the letter included actually running the office in his capacity as Richard Hildebrant’s deputy.  

In particular, Turner suggested that establishing new penal regulations would be imperative if Himmler was to maintain his command over the SS. He also argued that the new rules would prevent a further decline of discipline within the ranks, but Turner did not back up this assessment with any specific numbers. He wanted members of the Waffen-SS who violated the command to be punished for military disobedience and sent Himmler an outline for an order to turn his suggestion into a command.  

Two months later, Turner received a response, not directly from Himmler, but from the Reichsführer’s senior jurist, SS-Standartenführer Horst Bender. According to Bender, Himmler currently saw no need to punish violators. Nonetheless, the Reichsführer wished to be kept informed by Turner of those SS men who married without first seeking permission and furthermore asked that the civil registry offices report to RuSHA in a timely manner all marriages in which the groom belonged to the SS.  

Turner complied with Himmler’s request and starting in late 1944 submitted a monthly report containing the names of the SS men who had married without authorization; well under one hundred and fifty men were listed between then and early 1945. Most likely, these men would have been forced to comply with the

30 Letter from Harald Turner to Himmler, 28 May 1944, BA NS2/239, page 68 and BA NS7/216, page 4; and “Entwurf!” BA NS2/239, page 69. This letter indicates that Turner served in the Race and Settlement Main Office, an assessment also maintained by the US Office of Strategic Services Research and Analysis Branch in a confidential report from August 1945, although the SS Dienstalterliste indicates that he served in the Reich Security Main Office and his SSO file (193B, page 667) recorded his formal education in law, a profession which was well represented in RSHA. “Principle Nazi Organizations Involved in the Commission of War Crimes: Nazi Racial and Health Policy, 15 August 1945,” *The Donovan Nuremberg Trial Collection* at Cornell University Law Library, accessed 25 October 2009 <http://library2.lawschool.cornell.edu/donovan/show.asp?query=Schutzstaffel>. Beyond Turner’s letter, it should be noted that at least one other person, SS-Brigadeführer Otto Heider, had suggested to Himmler twice in letters from 1943 that not all members of the SS were complying with the engagement and marriage regulations. As Heider worked in the RuSHA Marriage Office, he would have had firsthand knowledge about the compliance, or lack thereof, by SS men; however, he provided no specific details in his letters regarding the nature of this disobedience. Letter from Heider to Himmler, 3 June 1943, NA T175/29/frame 2536756 and letter from Heider to Himmler, 20 December 1943, NA T175/29/frame 2536745.
31 Letter from Horst Bender to Harald Turner, 17 July 1944, BA NS7/216, page 6. The reason Himmler most likely wanted the civil registry office to report the marriages of SS men to RuSHA was because of a previous experience of an SS man not only forgoing permission from RuSHA, but also denying his affiliation when registering to marry. This transgression took place in early 1943, leading Himmler to expel the SS man and demand that any other SS man who did such a thing would be expelled as well. Letter from Udo von Woyrsch to SS Abschnitt II, XVIII, and XXXVII, 17 February 1943, NA T580/326/Ordner 18/no frame number.
regulations or expelled from the organization had the Third Reich and the SS lasted longer. However, there was another issue which may have influenced the lack of action on Himmler’s part. The date of Bender’s reply to Turner was July 17, 1944. Shortly thereafter, Himmler had more pressing concerns to handle, in particular an almost successful assassination attempt against Hitler.

While Turner did not provide any specific data to Himmler in his request, it was certainly not because RuSHA was not keeping track of engagement and marriage petitions throughout the war. As in the pre-war period, the SS continued to compile statistics regarding who among the men was single, married, divorced, or widowed. However, unlike the statistics from in the late 1930’s, completely comprehensive numbers do not exist for the war years. The most complete data exists for 1939-1942; this information provides a general idea of the marital status of the members of the SS. For example, according to one report from the end of 1939, 44% of the entire SS and 78.6% of officers were married.33

RuSHA also provided Himmler with monthly reports outlining the number of SS men and officers applying for and receiving approval for their engagements and marriages. The numbers varied, but based on the available reports, most of which come from the second half of 1941 and the early months of 1942, an average of over 2500 requests were filed with RuSHA per month.34 This average represented an increase from the pre-war period where approximately 1700-2000 requests had been submitted each month.35 The vast majority of these wartime

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34 Monthly reports from December 1939, January 1940, September 1941, October 1941, November 1941, and January 1942 which contain the number of requests from commissioned officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted men were averaged to create the number 2550. The actual range of requests from month to month, based on these six months alone, was quite large. For the commissioned officers, it ranged from the lowest of 57 requests (September 1941) to the highest of 358 requests (January 1942); for the non-commissioned officers and enlisted men, it ranged from a low of 1009 requests (January 1940) to a high of 4326 requests (January 1942). “Heiratsgenehmigungen und Freigaben,” BA NS19/577, page 40; “Statistischer Monatsbericht des Sippenamtes im RuS-Hauptamt von Monat November 1941,” BA NS19/3479, pages 2-7; “Statistischer Monatsbericht des Sippenamtes im RuS-Hauptamt von Monat September 1941,” BA NS19/3479, pages 13-18; “Statistischer Monatsbericht des Sippenamtes im RuS-Hauptamt von Monat Oktober 1941,” BA NS19/3479, pages 19-25; and “Statistischer Monatsbericht über das Sippenamtes im Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt-SS von Monat Januar 1942,” BA NS19/3482, pages 324-331. Additional reports mention engagement and marriage numbers; for example, the statistical reports for July and August 1941 and a report for the entirety of 1942; however, as the August and July reports do not clearly differentiate among the ranks of the SS and because the 1942 report only accounted for commissioned and non-commissioned officers, they were not included in the average noted in the text. “Statistischer Monatsbericht des Sippenamtes im RuS-Hauptamt von Monat August 1941,” BA NS19/3479, pages 27-32; “Statistischer Monatsbericht des Sippenamtes im RuS-Hauptamt von Monat Juli 1941,” BA NS19/3479, pages 35-39; and “Verlobungs- u. Heiratsgesuche 1942,” BA NS48/6, no page number.
35 See chapter 4 for information on approval rates prior to the war.
applications were submitted by officers and men who were twenty-five years and older, keeping
with the pre-war position that SS men below age twenty-five should not actively attempt to get
married.\footnote{For specific information on the age breakdown on the marriage requests, see the documents listed in footnote 32. Furthermore, although it was preferred that SS men not marry before age twenty-five, they could do so as of age twenty-one, the legal age for emancipation. For more information, see letter from Himmler to RuSHA, 4 October 1935, NA T580/333/Ordner 122/no frame numbers; letter from Brandt to Das Schwarze Korps, 28 February 1940, BA NS19/3480, page 216; letter from Karl Wolff to Radke, February 1940, BA NS19/3480, page 220; letter from Margarete Kempe to Das Schwarze Korps, 27 January 1943, NA T580/326/Ordner 18/no frame numbers; and letter from the Chief of the Marriage Office of RuSHA to Kempe, 3 February 1943, NA T580/326/Ordner 18/no frame numbers.}

The slight wartime increase meant that the numbers of marriages per month did not
greatly increase even though the number of men actively serving in the SS more than tripled
between 1939 and 1945. Consequently, because of the minimal rise in applications during the
time span when the most men joined, it stands to reason that the percentages of married men
within the enlisted, non-commissioned officer, and officer ranks would have at best remained the
same as compared with the pre-war and early war period, but more likely would have decreased.
In fact, throughout the entire SS, only one group almost reached 100% compliance: the SS
officers who had obtained one of the four highest ranks.\footnote{Brigadeführer, Gruppenführer, Obergruppenführer, and Oberstgruppenführer.} The SS promotion records indicated
that 492 officers held these four ranks as of late 1944.\footnote{Dienstalterliste der Schutzstaffel der NSDAP (SS-Oberst-Gruppenführer – SS Standartenführer) Stand vom 9 November 1944 (Berlin: Herausgegeben vom SS-Personalhauptamt, 1944), BA NSD41/65 – 1944.} Of those 492, the Berlin Document
Center contains dossiers for 485 of them; based on the information in those files, 471 officers –
or 97.1% – were married. Although more than half of these married officers had wed prior to the
1931 command, they still set an example for their subordinates with their marriages.

There is one final issue regarding to the wartime uses of the engagement and marriage
command. On December 31, 1941, the decree itself had been in existence for a decade. Its very
creation had been the first and most significant instance of Himmler seeking to implement the
measures posited by German eugenicists. Praised at the time it was issued, others also publicly
commended it a decade later. A short article appeared in the \textit{Völkischer Beobachter}, the Nazi
party newspaper. It is hardly surprising that this newspaper would have run an article informing
its readers of the SS command and praising married SS families for having at least one child.\footnote{“Zehn Jahre Heiratsbefehl der SS,” \textit{Völkischer Beobachter}, 3 January 1942. A copy of this article can also be found in BA NS22/520.}
In the same vein, it is unsurprising that *Das Schwarze Korps* ran an article lauding the order.\(^{40}\) The SS newspaper reminded its readers that the command had been issued because the Reichsführer had recognized that the future of the German Volk depended on the existence of a large number of racially and hereditarily healthy clans. Over the past decade, the men of the SS had been selected to carry out this service to the Volk; their descendents would be the bearers of the best blood and have the most valuable racial qualities. With this piece, the newspaper not only reminded its readers about the command, but also stated that the decree was one of the many ways in which the SS and its members were preparing for the future of the nation.

*Das Schwarze Korps* was not the only SS periodical to issue an article celebrating the anniversary. In early 1942, SS-Standartenführer Bruno K. Schultz wrote one for *Volk und Rasse*, a publication which the SS had controlled since 1933. By the war, Schultz, an anthropologist, was the sole editor of *Volk und Rasse*.\(^{41}\) He had been one of the instructors for the KWIA courses for SS medical personnel and had led the RuSHA Race Office between 1932-1935 and 1942-1944, and at the time of the article, he served as the director of the Biological Institute of the Reich Academy for Physical Education (*Biologischen Institut der Reichsakademie für Leibesübungen*) in Berlin.\(^{42}\) These positions gave him plenty of experience on which he could draw for his piece.

In it, he called the command “the most exemplary racial measure in an organization of the NSDAP.”\(^{43}\) Schultz argued that it contained “the essential and crucial guidelines for the entire attitude of the SS to the question of race, hereditary health, [and] family…”\(^{44}\) The order enlightened SS men about their responsibility for producing future generations. Thus, the children born from these marriages, he argued, validated the order and the marriages. These children represented the “well-born” (*wohlgeboren*) and the beginning of an increase in the number of children for the German Volk. He also praised the command for having set a very important trend for the entire Reich; in the decade since its creation, the government had followed a similar path and had taken steps toward regulating the marriages and racial health of the entire Volk.

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\(^{40}\) “10 Jahre ‘Heiratsbefehl,’” *Das Schwarze Korps*, 8 January 1942, page 4.

\(^{41}\) Weindling, *Health, race and German politics*, 500.

\(^{42}\) Kohl, *The Black Corps*, 82-83; Heinemann, *Rasse*, 684-685; and Banach, 88.

\(^{43}\) Bruno K. Schultz, “10 Jahres Verlobungs- und Heiratsbefehl in der Schutzstaffel,” *Volk und Rasse* (January 1942). A copy of this article can also be found in BA NS19/577, page 56.

\(^{44}\) Ibid.
Outside of publications owned by the Nazi party and the SS, two articles appeared in *Archive for Race and Societal Biology*. The first was written by a medical doctor named Derkmann who praised the command for its practical realization of questions relevant to race hygiene. He commented that the SS men’s commitment to this order demonstrated their willingness to take the first step in obliterating negative hereditary traits in Germany.\(^{45}\) Ernst Rüdin, a psychiatrist, director of the KWI for Genealogy, and co-editor of *Archive*, wrote the second article in 1943.\(^{46}\) The purpose of his piece was to praise the state and its notable, achievements, such as the willingness of Hitler and his government to take decisive steps toward implementing racial hygienic measures which put into practice what had previously only been scientific theory. Rüdin listed the various laws implemented by the government and specifically discussed the SS engagement and marriage command. He noted that this order was the primary means through which the SS sought to conserve and increase the hereditary endowment and health of the German Volk.

As these articles demonstrated, the engagement and marriage command remained significant within the SS throughout the war. The regulations derived from it sought to maintain a high standard when evaluating the racial and reproductive value of each SS couple. However, as in the prewar period, the command and the marriages themselves were only the first step in a much larger process. For Himmler’s ideal of creating a sustainable racial elite to come to fruition, these couples needed to have children. Therefore, measures were created to persuade SS men to have children, to provide them with the opportunity to do so in the middle of a war, and to assure them that the SS would care for their wives and children while they served and possibly died.

One of the first means designed to influence SS men to have wartime children was a change in rhetoric. This new rhetoric continued to emphasize a point made in prewar period: having racially healthy children was a duty of every SS man. However, orders, speeches, and booklets issued during the war indicate that this responsibility had become even more significant. The first command which stressed this necessity was released on October 28, 1939. Issued to the entire Schutzstaffel and police, Himmler began this command by proclaiming that “[e]very war


is a bloodletting of the best blood.’’\textsuperscript{47} By this, he did not just mean the loss of the men who had perished in the battlefield, but also the absence of their unborn children. Thus, the Reichsführer urged his SS men to accept “the old wisdom” that a man can die knowing he has left behind children and that a current military victory had little meaning if there were not enough children to sustain the legacy of their fathers in the future.\textsuperscript{48}

Beyond the appeal to have children, this was the order where Himmler noted that unmarried women of good blood had the moral responsibility to carry the child of a soldier, which led to immediate resistance not from the SS, but from the military. The military objected to Himmler’s call for women to fulfill their “sacred obligation” to have children while their men – fathers, brothers, and even husbands – serving in the armed forces were already fighting for Germany.\textsuperscript{49} In response to the military’s objection, \textit{Das Schwarze Korps} published an article in early January 1940; this newspaper supported the decree by publicly discussing its merits and defending racially worthy illegitimate children.\textsuperscript{50} Later that same month, Himmler personally addressed the misunderstanding when he released a letter addressed to all SS men and police officers. Whereas he bluntly stated that illegitimate children existed and would continue to exist in the future, he did clarify that no decent SS soldier would attempt to establish a sexual relationship with a woman whose husband was at the front. However, should one of his SS men (most of whom were also at the front) do so, Himmler pointed out that there were two people involved in a seduction – the seducer and the woman who allowed herself to be seduced. Therefore, while “one does not approach the wife of a comrade,” a woman was the best guardian of her honor, and any man who rejected such a perspective insulted German women.\textsuperscript{51}

These differences of opinion were further worked out when Himmler met with army commander-in-chief General Walther von Brauchitsch. The general subsequently released a statement acknowledging that he agreed with the Reichsführer that “the vitality of the Volk rests

\textsuperscript{47} “SS Befehl für die gesamte SS und Polizei,” 28 October 1939, BA NS19/3901, page 80. Although among the most prominent of Himmler’s orders and appeals to his men, the notion that losing the best elements of a population during war would have a deleterious effect on the population, especially from a eugenic or racial perspective, was also strongly evident during the First World War. For example, see Leonard Darwin, “On the Statistical Enquires needed After the War in Connection with Eugenics,” \textit{Journal of the Royal Statistical Society}, volume 79, number 2 (March 1916): 159-188.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} The objections raised here were mentioned in Himmler’s January 30, 1940 letter, which is discussed below.
\textsuperscript{50} “Der Sieg der Frauen,” \textit{Das Schwarze Korps}, 4 January 1940, p. 6.
in the assured growth of its children.”\textsuperscript{52} He asserted that “marriage is the basis of the family” and encouraged all racially valuable people to marry and have many children because they were the “highest good” and represented the best means to preserve the Volk.\textsuperscript{53} Extramarital relations and the children which resulted from them could not replace the family, but Brauchitsch did acknowledge that the state should protect illegitimate children from any disadvantages.

With the misunderstanding resolved, Himmler continued to press his SS men to procreate both inside and outside of their marriages. He expressed these aspirations in both private letters and speeches, stressing that he could be content to let his men wait to father children if he were certain that they would survive the war. As this certainty did not exist, Himmler wanted each man to have at least one child who could not only sustain the Nordic blood and his personal family lineage, but also, if he were a boy, take his rightful place in twenty years fighting for Germany.\textsuperscript{54} To emphasize the significance of establishing a family, Himmler created new guidelines in November 1942 which specifically connected an SS officer’s familial decisions with the prerequisites for promotion.\textsuperscript{55} To be promoted, an officer must have married by age twenty-six and have a suitable number of children, a number determined by the age of the couple and the length of their marriage; pre-war requirements had stipulated four children by age 40, and there is nothing to suggest that these numbers had changed.

If the officer were not married or did not have children, he had to justify his single and/or childless status. According to a February 1944 amendment to the directive, the officer had to explain why he had failed to have multiple children when his wife was under forty years old and/or the birth of their last child had been more than two years prior.\textsuperscript{56} Despite these two orders, it is reasonable to presume that not having a wife or enough children did not prevent most

\textsuperscript{52} “Abschrift Nr. 327/40,” 6 February 1940, BA NS18/712, page 1.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} “Richlinien zur Einreichung von Beförderungsvorschlägen für Führer der Allgemeine-SS und der Waffen-SS für die Dauer des Krieges,” 15 November 1942, BA NS34/21, no page number. One month prior to this order, Himmler wrote a letter to the Personnel Main Office and noted that several promotions were rejected because the officer in question was not married; letter from Himmler to the SS Personnel Main Office, 20 October 1942, NA T175/54/frame 2568954-2568956. There is also a letter from October 1943 in which Rudolf Brandt expressed Himmler’s position regarding a specific SS officer, SS-Hauptsturmführer Franz Schwarz. Schwarz was to be informed that he would be released from the SS at the end of the war if he were not married; Heiber, letter 277. Himmler had made a similar demand of Hermann Fegelein; Padfield, 294.
\textsuperscript{56} “Einreichung von Beförderungsvorschlägen,” 15 February 1944, BA NS34/21, no page number. This issue was also partially addressed in a letter from Brant to Bernhard Frank from December 1944; Heiber, letter 366.
officers from achieving a promotion. Based on SS engagement and marriage statistics produced in the early 1940’s, more than fifty percent of the officers who requested permission to marry were over thirty years old, and the personnel files of the officers who held one of the four highest SS ranks show that by early 1945, less than thirty percent had four or more children. Other requisite factors, such as exemplarily job performance, the ability to continue to serve the SS and the party well, affiliation with any Nazi organization before 1933, and seniority in the SS, were just as significant when weighing whether or not an officer should earn a promotion. Combined with the fact that the SS was already losing good blood due to the war, these factors might very well have convinced Himmler to overlook low marriage and child numbers when issuing promotions, thus encouraging as many officers as possible to remain in the organization instead of alienating them during the war because of their familial choices.

Nonetheless, Himmler’s quest to produce children was encouraged by other prominent officials. He had the support of Hitler who, on numerous occasions throughout the war, privately spoke about the need for many children. The Führer wanted his people to comprehend the necessity of large families: “everyone should be persuaded that a family’s life is assured only when it has upwards of four children – I should even say, four sons.” He expressed his opinion that many great men in the past had come from big families and that a two-child system would deprive Germany of future geniuses. Hitler also proclaimed that in the future, the German elite would descend from the SS because “only the SS practices racial selection.” He wanted this practice to continue, especially because he recognized that part of the job of the SS was to set an example. Furthermore, the Führer rejoiced in the knowledge that during the war, when blood was being lost in vast quantities, healthy SS men were fulfilling their duty by convincing young women to have children. These children represented the future of the nation, and Hitler acknowledged that Germany would automatically know where to turn to for its leaders.

Himmler likewise had the backing of SS-Oberstgruppenführer Kurt Daluege, the chief of the uniformed police (Ordnungspolizei). In late 1942, Daluege submitted a draft of a command outlining how the police should serve as a model within the SS and the German Volk when it came to generating large families; in essence, the police would be an elite within the already elite

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57 For a few exceptions see Zielger, 30 and Vieregge, 68.
58 Trevor-Roper, Hitler’s Table Talk, 58-59. Himmler was aware of Hitler’s comment about four sons, at least according to an April 1943 letter written by Brandt; see Heiber, letter 217.
59 Trevor-Roper, Hitler’s Table Talk, 83.
60 Ibid., 327.
SS. Unlike Himmler, Daluege spoke from personal experience, as he and his wife had four children, the last of whom had been born only a few months before he wrote this command. In it, he proclaimed the by-then standard line that child-poverty, which he defined as two children per marriage, would lead to the annihilation of the German Volk. The excuses used by police officers in the Weimar period to have small families could no longer apply. In fact, the opposite must become true, because as a leading social class within Germany, the police had a duty to create families which could serve as role models. Only medical reasons or advanced age should prevent a man from creating a child-rich family. However, because previous admonitions had gone unheeded, Daluege wanted superior officers to commit themselves to promoting children in the families of their subordinates. He sought to have officers and their wives pursue all medical avenues to ensure their ability to procreate. Himmler did not directly dismiss this order, but he only gave Daluege permission to classify it as a “secret Reich matter” (Geheime Reichssache) and to forward it to his commanders as an educational guideline for personal conversations and instruction.

Despite Himmler’s refusal in this particular instance, he did promote the publication and dissemination of works throughout the war designed to elicit support for large families. Among those publications was Victory of the Arms – Victory of the Child, a pamphlet created by the Educational Office (Schulungsamt) of the SS Main Office in late 1940. The title of the document summed up its general purpose: to convince SS men through words and images that Germany’s military achievement must be followed by an equivalent success in the cradle. Only an early and child-rich marriage could sustain the German Volk and ensure the continuation of National Socialism; otherwise, the political struggles of the past two decades and the sacrifices made in both World Wars would have been for naught. In order to maintain a growing and healthy Volk, each SS man had to embrace the obligation to preserve and increase Nordic blood, which meant accepting the notion that his family needed to have four to six children. By becoming “the happy parents of a large and healthy flock of children,” SS men and their wives would prove their commitment to the Volk and the nation.

61 Personnel file of Kurt Daluege, BA BDC SSO 134, page 1213.
62 Letter from Himmler to Daluege, 5 October 1942, NA T175/18/frame 2522065 and “Familiennachwuches des Führerkorps der Ordnungspolizei,” NA T175/18/frames 2522066-2522069.
63 Sieg der Waffen – Sieg des Kindes, BA NSD41/130, page 31.
64 Ibid. The SS continued to promote this work in the next year through its publishing house, Nordland Verlag. “Werbung für das Bildwerk ‘Sieg der Waffen – Sieg des Kindes,’” BA NS2/67, page 95.
The SS Main Office continued to publish educational material underscoring these themes. In 1941, it released *SS Man and the Question of Blood*, which emphasized the needs of the Volk over those of the individual.\(^{65}\) Fertility alone guaranteed the survival of the genetic material of the Nordic race, but a decline in the willingness of the German people to have children in the first decades of the twentieth century combined with the demographic decline caused by war had threatened this survival. The vitality of the Volk therefore depended on the conservation of its best members, particularly through the readiness of these people to marry early and have many children. Only when “the number of cradles [was] larger than the number of coffins” would an individual clan and the entire Volk be saved and the military victory in the Second World War be solidified in the future by the sacrifices of those offspring.\(^{66}\)

A third publication from 1943, *Race Politics*, stressed the idea of community – namely that a Volk represented a living community – and within it, the SS embodied a community of the best bearers of Nordic blood.\(^{67}\) As a selective elite within the Volk, the SS had the obligation to eschew the traditional two-child system and to have a plentiful families with at least four children. By assuming this responsibility, each SS man had to acknowledge that his private decisions regarding offspring required him to place the needs of the SS and the Volk above his personal desires. As guardians of the Nordic race, he and his wife had to accept that passing on their blood to their offspring was their highest duty and honor.

These three SS publications represent a sample of the literature designed to elicit SS men to embrace the principle that only a “victory of arms” followed by a “victory of children” would safeguard the future of the Third Reich. To complement these written works, the SS Main Office developed guidelines in 1942-1943 organizing political community hours for SS men and their families.\(^{68}\) Among the most significant themes for the speakers to address at these meetings were ones that emphasized the connection between the aforementioned dual victories and the objective of the SS and its families to guarantee the racial vitality of the German Volk. As with the literature, detailed guidelines were to be used to convince each SS couple that they lived on through their children, thus validating every sacrifice.

Using this written and verbal rhetoric to persuade an SS man and his wife to have

\(^{65}\) *SS Mann und Blutsfrage: Die biologischen Grundlagen und ihre singemäße Anwendung für die Erhaltung und Mehrung des nordischen Blutes*, BA NSD41/128.

\(^{66}\) Ibid., 6

\(^{67}\) *Rassenpolitik*, BA NSD41/122.

\(^{68}\) “Richtlinien für die politischen Gemeinschaftsstunden der SS 1942-43,” BA NS2/70, pages 36-46.
children, however, meant very little if the husband and wife were not in the same location and could not conceive. To overcome this problem, Himmler issued new policies to facilitate conjugal relations. In early August 1941, when the military situation was still highly favorable to Germany, Himmler ordered the withdrawal from the front of any SS man who was the last surviving adult male in his family without at least two male descendents. He required these men to report to him to receive an assignment away from the front, such as training new troops.  

Less than a year later, Himmler drafted another decree designed to pull all childless SS men from the front. After consulting with and receiving the approval of Hitler, the Reichsführer released the “SS Order to the Last Sons,” in mid-August 1942. In three simple points it announced the removal of every last surviving son on the “Führer’s orders.” The purpose of the extraction was to provide each SS man with one year to secure his family’s lineage, as the Reich had a vested interest in ensuring that the families of its best men did not expire. Producing “children of good blood” and guaranteeing that each man was “no longer the last son” in his family represented an obligatory duty because “it has never been the way of SS men to accept fate and not contribute anything to change.” The future of the Third Reich depended as much on the reproductive contributions of the SS men as it did their prowess as soldiers, once again intertwining military and familial responsibilities. After an SS man had fulfilled his paternal obligation, he had to return to his military post.

One month later, RuSHA released a supplementary decree, reminding SS men about the existence and purpose of the “SS Order to the Last Sons.” The office subsequently coordinated efforts with the Waffen-SS to determine which men were last sons, as the former kept records on the familial status of SS members and the latter transferred soldiers to and from the fronts. This process of managing the last sons required filing reports with Himmler, who – as with just about every matter in the SS – wanted to remain apprised of any changes. The ability to implement this order and to allow the men time to father children became increasingly difficult as the war turned against the Nazi regime and every soldier was needed to try to stave off defeat. The

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69 “Zurückziehung aus der fechtenden Truppe,” 4 August 1941, BA NS7/381, page 1.
70 Knoebel, 75.
72 Ibid.
closer the war physically came to Germany, the more difficult it became to transfer last sons to less dangerous assignments, and by August 1944, only those last sons with “special cases of hardship” could possibly be withdrawn from the fighting front.\(^75\)

By removing SS men from the war for a year, the last sons order contained rather drastic measures in an attempt to assure the continuation of the SS family community. It was not ostensibly designed for married SS men, although they benefitted from it more than their unmarried counterparts who had to use the same timeframe to get married and have a child.\(^76\)

However, the SS did implement policies solely designed to aid married SS men and their wives. In particular, when allotting time for a yearly vacation, married men, especially those with children, were favored over single men.\(^77\) In October 1943, Himmler took this correlation a step further. He wanted married SS men to have an additional opportunity to meet with their wives. The point of this extra time had nothing to do with rewarding the men for their services; it had everything to do with Himmler’s goal of increasing the birthrate.\(^78\)

The Reichsführer’s original idea was to have these men take a short leave of absence and rendezvous with their wives for five to six days because, as he noted in a letter to SS-Gruppenführer Benno Martin, “we cannot otherwise expect that the so wished for and necessary children sprout from these marriages.”\(^79\) To facilitate these trysts, the responsible SS Oberabschnitt had to arrange for quarters where the men could meet with their wives. These SS units also had to pay for the railway costs, as depending on where a husband was stationed and where his wife was living, both might have to travel in order to take advantage of this additional leave. The Oberabschnitt could settle these expenses with the Personnel Staff (\textit{Persönlicher Stab}), and with these expenditures covered, each couple was merely responsible for the cost of meals.\(^80\) According to the paperwork filed by various Oberabschnitt, these trips ranged in cost from 30-170 Reichmarks per couple, meaning that the Personnel Staff routinely reimbursed each


\(^{76}\) Heiber, letter 240.


\(^{78}\) “Planmäßiger Urlaub,” 2 October 1943, NA T175/71/frame 2588327 and Lilienthal, \textit{Der Lebensborn}, 137.

\(^{79}\) Heiber, letter 247a.

\(^{80}\) “Planmäßiger Urlaub,” 5 August 1944, NA T175/71/frame 2588347.
Oberabschnitt thousands of Reichmarks. For example, between November 1943 and June 1944, over 111,000 Reichmarks were spent on this program.81

As the primary goal of this extra vacation was to produce the desired children, each furlough had to be planned accordingly. For instance, upon requesting a vacation for her husband, Paula Wagner was informed by SS-Obersturmbannführer Rudolf Brandt, Himmler’s private administrative officer, that he had forwarded her appeal to the appropriate SS officials. While they waited for a response, Brandt recommended that she make an appointment with her gynecologist. A gynecological examination would allow the doctor to determine the most favorable time for conception. With this knowledge, a vacation could be obtained for her husband when there was the highest possibility of their conceiving.82

The husbands also needed to understand the magnitude of the extra vacation, a point which Himmler doubted most men had grasped. Therefore, he wanted all SS men to receive a copy of “Reminder and Obligation,” a 1943 article by Hans Sievers, a naval doctor working at the women’s clinic at the university in Greifswald.83 Sievers proclaimed that the loss of life throughout the war had already begun to overturn the rising birthrates that Germany had experienced between 1934 and 1939. According to him, every lost soldier meant a lost child, and “each unborn [child], therefore, means a military relinquishment from our political ascent.”84 The physician further noted that a high-quality marriage remained unfulfilled without children. He defined a sterile marriage as one in which, given regular possibilities for conception, a child had not been produced after two years and suggested that young women in infertile marriages should consult with their doctors about this problem. Sievers moreover asserted that married soldiers needed the opportunity for scheduled vacations to meet with their wives at a time favorable for conception, which he, based on his medical experience, defined as the tenth day following the beginning of a woman’s menstrual cycle through the start of the following cycle. Although not directly associated with the SS, Sievers reinforced the message already introduced by SS propaganda, namely that the victory of arms had to be followed by one in the cradle.

Taken together, the last sons order and the additional scheduled vacation demonstrate that

81 “Planmäßiger Urlaub,” 19 September 1944, NA T175/71/frame 2588320 and “Zusammenstellung der vom November 1943 bis Juni 1944 gezahlten Beträge für planmässigen Urlaub,” 30 June 1944, NA T175/71/frame 2588414. See chapter 5 for a discussion of the pay rates within the SS. 170RM would have been just above what an SS man would have earned in a month in the pre-war period.
82 Heiber, letter 233.
83 Letter from Himmler to Hans Jüttner, 9 September 1943, NA T175/71/frame 2588518.
84 “Mahnung und Verpflichtung,” NA T175/71/frames 2588536.
Himmler did not want the war to impede his reproductive goals for the SS. Neither program significantly aided in the growth of the population, but the vast majority of married SS men did have at least one child. As in the pre-war period, a man had to report to the birth of his children to RuSHA, although he also had to notify the SS Personnel Main Office (Personalhauptamt) because this office was responsible for maintaining a complete file on each SS man. Many officers chose to inform Himmler personally about the addition to their families, and oftentimes Himmler, or Rudolf Brandt on his behalf, replied with a short congratulatory letter.

There were also celebrations held to mark the birth of a baby. Hildegard Trutz related in her interview with Louis Hagen how her husband had been given a few days leave after the birth of their first child and how they had invited their friends and family to commemorate their son. Mothers were still given gifts for having successfully brought a child into the Volk, such as receiving a book from RuSHA. As of 1942-1943, the children themselves also received a gift, a Lebensleuchter. Himmler wanted every child born in those years to receive this candle holder as a visible expression of thanks to the parents for having brought him or her into the world. He made RuSHA responsible for this task. As soon as the parents had reported the birth of their child, RuSHA officials arranged to have a Lebensleuchter personally inscribed with the name and date of birth of the newborn before shipping it to the family. Besides these gifts, there were financial benefits for children. Pay tables for the Waffen-SS indicate that, as in the 1930’s, an SS man who was married and had children received more money than one who was not, and the amount of money he received increased with each child. If the father worked for

85 Letter from Otto Hoffman to all full-time and honorary members of RuSHA, 12 August 1941, BA NS2/21, page 146; letter from Brandt to Otto Hoffman, 15 December 1942, BA NS2/147, page 1; and letter from Himmler to all main office chiefs, higher SS and police leaders, and leaders of SS Oberabschnitte, 20 March 1943, BA NS19/3904, page 65.
86 For example, letter from Franz Hayler to Himmler, BA NS19/3034, page 5 and letter from Himmler to Hayler, BA NS19/3034, page 6.
87 Hagen, 271.
88 Letter from Himmler to all main office chiefs, higher SS and police leaders, and leaders of SS Oberabschnitte, 20 March 1943, BA NS19/3904, page 65.
89 A picture of the Lebensleuchter can be found in BA NS2/82, page 39. There is also a picture of one on the first page of volume 7, number 8a of SS-Leithefte (1941); the cover of that edition has an illustration of a Lebensleuchter as well.
90 Letter from Himmler to unlisted recipient, no date given, BA NS2/147, page 5; letter from the chief of RuSHA to unlisted recipient, no date given, BA NS2/147, pages 6-7; “Entwurf für eine Veröffentlichung im Schwarzen Korps,” BA NS2/167, pages 8-9; and letter from Rudolf Brant to Richard Korherr, 3 April 1942, BA NS48/6, no page number. This last source also noted that in addition to the Lebensleucher, Himmler wanted a personal congratulatory note sent to each mother along with some coffee.
91 Salary tables for the Verfügungstruppe and the Waffen-SS can be found in NA T611/7/Ordner 432 (Teil 2)/no frame numbers.
the party or the state, he received additional allowances for any legitimate children.92

While these last guidelines indicate that the state and even the party remained steadfast in only recognizing and supporting legitimate offspring, the SS continued to abet illegitimacy. In particular, Himmler strongly espoused it, and in this case, for once he practiced what he preached. With his wife Marga, he had a biological daughter, Gudrun. By all accounts, Püppi, as she was called, was doted on by her parents, and as noted in her mother’s diary, she adored her father.93 Despite a desire to have more children, especially on the part of Marga, they were unable to.94 However, they did adopt a son, Gerhard, who was approximately one year older than Gudrun. According to Himmler’s older brother, Gebhard, the boy was the son of an SS officer who had been killed prior to the war.95 While Himmler and Marga took him in, Gebhard claimed that they never officially adopted Gerhard, a point confirmed by Marga who referenced in her diary periodic contact with Gerhard’s biological mother, yet contradicted by Himmler’s SS personnel file, which listed the boy as an adopted child.96 Regardless of his actual status, he was a member of the family – both Himmler’s personal family and the larger SS family as Gerhard, the son of SS men two times over, joined the organization late in the war.97

As for Himmler’s marriage, any affection which Himmler may have felt for his wife had apparently dissipated before the war. Whereas he remained devoted to his daughter, the same could not be said of his wife. He was not with her on their tenth wedding anniversary, and early in the war when she was living in Berlin, he rarely came home.98 Contemporary accounts confirmed that their marriage had become a rather unhappy one, but Himmler chose to remain married out of respect for his wife.99 He may have also chosen to stay with Marga to avoid any

94 This desire is most clearly manifested in a diary entry from 26 January 1938: “Püppi is still doing badly in diction. We often call her ‘schwinekin’ (little pig) and then one day she answered, ‘Schwinekin Mommy.’ Too bad we don’t have 6 like this, so loveable.”
95 Gebhard Himmler spoke with historian Heinrich Fraenkel about his younger brother and among the information disclosed was that about Gerhard. Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, Heinrich Himmler (New York: Putnam, 1965), 40 and 258, footnote 1.
96 Marga Himmler diary, 2 April 1938 and 8 April 1938 and personnel file of Heinrich Himmler, BA BDC SSO file 099A, page 003.
97 Marga Himmler diary, 21 February 1945.
98 Marga Himmler diary, 3 July 1938, 28 November 1940, and 7 December 1940.
99 Schellenberg, 313 and Kersten, 304.
scandal or, more importantly, disfavor with Hitler. His marriage and his daughter certainly gave Himmler the appearance of being a respectable, middle-class, bourgeois family man. This image was slightly ironic given how he sought to undermine it within the SS, but it would have been a positive benefit for him as a public figure, more particularly for his role as Chief of the Police than as Reichsführer-SS.

Moreover, Himmler may not have wanted to be subjected to the public humiliation associated with the scandal that could have arisen from a bad marriage, not to mention risk incurring Hitler’s anger with a divorce. This concern would have not been based on fear of what could happen to him, but instead on his knowledge of the incident involving Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Propaganda Minister. Between 1936 and 1938, Goebbels had carried on a very public affair with Czech movie actress Lida Baarova. This situation grew perilous for him in the summer of 1938 when he and his wife, Magda, sought to divorce. This decision was not to Hitler’s liking, who did not want this scandal interfering with his regime or the work of his minister. He personally spoke with Goebbels and then his wife and required them to reconcile.  

Himmler knew of this debacle and that many fellow Nazi leaders, including himself, had privately vented against Goebbels for what had happened. With this knowledge, Himmler may well have not wanted to suffer Hitler’s wrath for ending his own marriage. The Führer would have undoubtedly not removed Himmler from power, but he probably would have expressed his displeasure with Himmler in the same manner he had with Goebbels, by disfavoring him following the debacle. An awareness of how Hitler viewed divorce, or more importantly public scandal leading to divorce, might have also influenced Himmler’s decisions regarding divorce within the ranks of the SS. For example, when Karl Wolff sought permission to divorce his wife in 1942, Himmler refused. Wolff subsequently petitioned Hitler directly, who, upon learning that Frieda Wolff consented to it, agreed to the divorce, which in turn freed

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101 According to Reimann, part of Himmler’s intimate knowledge of Goebbels’ affair may have come from his personal involvement in the situation. Karl Hanke, who eventually became an SS-Obergruppenführer, then served as Goebbels’ state secretary. Hanke sought to aid Magda in the divorce as well as bring down and replace Goebbels, and so he compiled a list of Goebbels’ former mistresses who were willing to testify against the minister in a divorce proceeding. Hanke made sure that Himmler had a copy of the list, and Reimann commented that some of these former mistresses could have very well been persuaded by either Hanke or Himmler to cooperate with them in this matter. Reimann, 229-30.
Wolff to marry Ingeborg Bernstorff, the mother of his illegitimate child.  

Himmler did not blame his wife Marga for their unhappy marriage nor for their lack of children, part of which may have been the result of her being older than him. Yet, he did not wish to be impeded from having more children, which led him to take Hedwig Potthast as his mistress in 1941. Nicknamed “Häschen,” or bunny, Potthast was twelve years Himmler’s junior. She had served as his personal secretary from 1936 to 1941. After she left her job, she bore him two children, a son named Helge in February 1942 and a daughter named Nanette Dorothea in June 1944. Both were born in Hohenlychen, a well-known medical clinic near Berlin under the management of SS-Gruppenführer Dr. Karl Gebhardt, a man whom the Reichsführer publicly praised for his medical work. The same month his daughter was born, Himmler appeared before an SS judge to claim paternity for both offspring, and in mid-September 1944, he acknowledged himself as their father and guardian in a legal document. With these two additional children, Himmler technically met the four children quota he had repeatedly set for his SS men, even though he did not have four children by each woman.

As with everything else relating to his views on population policy, Himmler justified the decision to take a mistress based on the biological need for more children. As he commented to Felix Kersten, his masseuse and unofficial confidant:

The fact that a man has to spend his entire existence with one wife drives him first of all to deceive her and then makes him a hypocrite as he tries to cover it up. The result is indifference between the partners. They avoid each other’s embraces and the final consequence is that they don’t produce children. This is the reason why millions of children are never born, children whom the state urgently requires. On the other hand the husband never dares to have children by the woman with whom he is carrying on an affair, much though he would like to, because middle-class morality forbids it. Again it’s the state which loses, for it gets no children from the second woman either. The law is in direct contradiction to our crying need – children and still more children. We must show courage and act decisively in this matter…

102 Lang, 205-07.
103 Padfield, 233-34.
105 Manvell and Fraenkel, 263-64, footnote 14 and Padfield, 539.
106 Kersten, 177.
Neither marriage nor infidelity was about pleasure or happiness. Everything in the belief system proclaimed by Himmler related to reproduction. He did not approve of an affair for the sake of escaping one’s marriage, but for its ability to create more children. At least according to his official statements and his comment to Kersten, sex was about the children conceived from the act and not about intimacy or bond between two people.

In the quote above as well as in the aforementioned orders, the promotion of children for the benefit of the state exceeded all personal desires. Himmler wanted SS men to have children with their wives and children with their mistresses. He aspired to have them forsake middle-class bourgeois morality to achieve this end, which would perpetuate the German nation under the guidance of the Nazi government and the leadership of the SS. He personally lamented to Kersten about the scorn placed on illegitimate children by German society which in essence robbed a father from having an open and personal relationship with them.

Although Himmler made these comments a year after the birth of his illegitimate son and may have been indirectly airing his own personal grievances, his statement was in line with his views on illegitimacy before the war and prior to his affair. His commands continuously indicated that he believed Germany had no future without more offspring, and his stance on infidelity and illegitimacy again proved his intention to amass good blood through any means necessary.

The Reichsführer was not the only prominent SS leader to support illegitimacy or to have illegitimate children. Besides the previously-mentioned son that Karl Wolff had with Ingeborg Bernstorff, SS-Obergruppenführer Oswald Pohl, the chief of the Economic and Administration Main Office, had a son by his secretary Rosemarie Fauler in 1942.

This child was in addition to the son and two daughters he had with his first wife and the daughter he had with his second wife. SS-Obergruppenführer Ernst Kaltenbrunner, who succeeded Reinhard Heydrich as the head of the Reich Security Main Office, had twins named Ursula and Wolfgang in March 1945 with his mistress Gisela von Westarp, who had been employed in Himmler’s Berlin headquarters. Kaltenbrunner already had three children with his wife Elisabeth. There is

107 Kersten, 177-78.
108 Schwarz, 93 and Katrin Himmler, 249.
nothing to suggest that in either of these cases Pohl or Kaltenbrunner had these affairs and children because their superior promoted illegitimacy, but such support from above worked in their favor. Furthermore, Himmler would have been pleased if he knew about these dalliances, just as he was delighted to learn from Sepp Deitrich that many men in the Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler had fathered illegitimate offspring.\footnote{112}

Himmler also found limited support among the party leadership, most notably from Rudolf Heß, the deputy to the Führer, who publicly commented on the issue in a letter addressed to an unmarried mother published early in the war in the \textit{Völkischer Beobachter}. Heß repeatedly argued that a strong family formed the nucleus of the German state, and as such, the Nazi government had worked and would continue to work to maintain its integrity. Times of crisis, however, inevitably forced people to depart from traditional mores. Eligible young women must push aside moral scruples and guarantee that a healthy soldier did not enter the battlefield without first leaving behind his valuable blood through his children. Even though the war prevented the marriage between the mothers and the soldiers, Heß indicated that these women could still receive widows’ benefits if the men died.\footnote{113}

Despite this proclamation, Heß and Himmler stood in the minority when it came to illegitimate children. Officially, the Nazi government had to reject Heß’ letter because of its promotion of illegitimacy. State and party propaganda touted the opposite perspective, and oftentimes unmarried women who worked as either civil servants or for party offices were dismissed when they became pregnant.\footnote{114} In essence, as noted by Goebbels in a 1941 diary entry, “the legitimate child must remain at least the norm.”\footnote{115} Most people rejected illegitimacy, putting Himmler in a somewhat awkward position during the war. While he wanted his men to have children, both with their wives and other women, he knew that he had to approach the issue carefully, especially when it came to young women who were left vulnerable and without the

\footnote{111} His personnel file (BA BDC SSO150A, page 004) only lists two children, but the CIA article cited above noted that they had three.

\footnote{112} Letter from Himmler to Sepp Dietrich, 23 July 1943, IfZ MA 287/frame 2529087.


\footnote{115} Joseph Goebbels, \textit{The Goebbels Diaries, 1939-1941}, translated and edited by Fred Taylor (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982), 321. This is not to suggest that Goebbels did not support the idea of illegitimacy. Other diary entries indicated that he agreed with some of Himmler’s policies, and he reported that Hitler even looked on some aspects of illegitimacy favorably. Goebbels, \textit{Die Tagebücher}, November 19, 1939 (Teil I/ Bd. 7, page 201), March 13, 1940 (Teil I/ Bd. 7, page 346), and October 29, 1943 (Teil II/Bd. 10, page 199).
protection of their male relatives who were off fighting. Himmler even issued an order to his men in April 1942 – not even two months after his illegitimate son was born – reminding them to be mindful of their duties, one of which was to protect underage women from any harm. “Never forget,” he cautioned them, “how enraged you would be if your own daughter or sister were ruined. You would justifiably demand the harsh prosecution of the accused.”¹¹⁶ In essence, the Reichsführer was telling his men that impregnating an unmarried woman was acceptable, so long as she was a consenting adult.

Beyond this matter, Himmler still found himself at odds with eugenicists over the issue of illegitimacy; many denounced it and advocated marriage as the sole place for reproduction. Among the medical professionals who espoused this position was Ernst Koch, a physician and senior medical officer in Leipzig. He claimed in his 1940 book, Does the present-day marriage still secure the continuance of our Volk?, that one-third of all cases of idiocy (schwachsinnig) and inferiority among children could be traced back to unmarried mothers. Koch also argued that having such children ruined the marriage prospects of these women. He even asked his readers if they would want their daughters or their sisters this position. Finally, Koch contended that the best place to assure the continuance of the German Volk was through marriage.¹¹⁷

Fritz Lenz also remained steadfast in his opposition to illegitimacy. To him, such children represented undesirable elements of the population. In May 1940, he wrote a letter to the editorial board of Das Schwarze Korps in response to an article the newspaper had printed the month prior about unmarried mothers.¹¹⁸ Lenz argued that no one wanted unmarried motherhood to be preferred over matrimony and that the state should not – as one woman had requested – entitle them to higher incomes and benefits from their employers.¹¹⁹ In addition, while he found the current ratio between men and women unbalanced because of the loss of lives in the World Wars, he stated that affairs between married men and unmarried woman had many moral implications. Furthermore, he argued that the excess of women would not damage the German Volk in the long term because there were enough married couples who could produce plenty of children to sustain the population. As per previous arguments, he noted that each

¹¹⁶ Letter from Himmler to all men of the SS and the police, 6 April 1942, BA NS2/187, page 41; BA NS6/337, page 117; and NA T175/152/frame 2681662.
¹¹⁷ Ernst Walther Koch, Sichert die heutige Ehe noch den Bestand unseres Volkes? (Leipzig: Offizin Haag-Drugulin, 1940), 11, 19, and 21.
¹¹⁸ The article in question was “Eine Frau hat das Wort,” Das Schwarze Korps, 11 April 1940.
¹¹⁹ Letter from Fritz Lenz to the editorial board of Das Schwarze Korps, 10 May 1940, MPG Abt 3/Rep 86B/Nrs 1-13/Nr 10, pages 8-10.
person had the responsibility to rear four children, and anyone who failed in this regard should be required to pay the state the costs equivalent to raising that number of children.  

With this letter, Lenz enclosed an article entitled “Ways of further advancing population politics.” He contended in this article that the current generation of young adults expected to produce children during this second war were part of the very generation who were lacking in numbers because they were from the small generation of offspring born during the first war. He argued against providing money to families for having children because not enough funds were available for such programs and because too many of the families who had taken advantage of this money did not use it to have more than one child. Lenz suggested that the taxation system should be revised after the war; among his recommendations, he proposed taxing people inversely to the number of children they had so that a family with four or more children would pay no taxes. He specifically addressed illegitimate children and claimed that each one should only count as half a child; both the biological father, if he were paying child support, and the full-time caregiver, either the child’s mother or stepfather, would get credit for half a child. Therefore, Lenz wanted to see families have more children.

Lenz ended his letter with the comment that he did not expect the SS newspaper to print it, but he did request that the editorial staff at least recognize the issues which he had raised in it and in his article. Over a month later, he had not heard back from Das Schwarze Korps or anyone else in the SS, as he reported in a letter to Otmar von Verschuer, who, in his own correspondence with Lenz from the same month, had shown his support for Lenz’s letter and article and had offered to publish them in the Hereditary Doctor, a medical journal which he edited. Lenz expressed his appreciation for the publication offer, but declined it, citing that his suggestions for overhauling the tax system were quite critical of current government ministers and that he was going to speak with a member of RuSHA soon. That meeting must have gone favorably for Lenz, as in the following spring Himmler was reported to have said that he was impressed with many of the scientist’s suggestions.

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120 Ibid., 12-13.
122 Ibid., 16, 18, and 21.
123 Letter from Lenz to the editorial board of Das Schwarze Korps, 14.
125 Kröner, 36.
Besides the general issue of support for or disapproval of illegitimacy, there were other concerns. Illegitimacy was not just about the children; in many cases, the situation was not that simple because the relationships between the men and their wives and/or mistresses were complicated. One problematic situation involved a young man named Sepp Fink. In February 1940, he wrote a letter to the editorial board of *Das Schwarze Korps* seeking its advice. In December of the previous year, he had gotten involved with a woman only to find out after the fact that she was half-Jewish and pregnant by him. Fink was distraught by the news: “If this woman was at least a German woman! Then I could…marry her or at least take over material responsibility for the child. But to marry a half-Jew….no, I prefer the pistol. And to draw near a Jewish offspring….the thought is simply dreadful.”

The newspaper did not respond, but forwarded the matter to Himmler’s personal staff.

Less than two weeks later, Fink received a reply from Rudolf Brandt who relayed his conversation with the Reichsführer about the situation. Through Brandt’s letter, Himmler wanted Fink to know that there was no “reason for you to reach for the pistol.” Himmler not only recognized that Fink had made a mistake with his relationship with the Jewish woman, but also that Fink understood the gravity of his error. Shooting himself would not solve the problem. Brandt confirmed that marrying the child’s mother was not possible, but still reminded Fink that he did have a child for whom he must take responsibility. He suggested the Fink submit further information about himself as Himmler had consented to the possibility of him joining the newly-formed Waffen-SS. This reply greatly relived Fink, who seized upon the opportunity to serve the Führer and the Reich. By the end of February, the matter had been turned over to Gottlob Berger, then an SS-Brigadeführer, who was responsible for organizing recruitment for the Waffen-SS.

The case of Sepp Fink had a relatively straightforward solution, even with the caveat of informing him that he had to take responsibility for his one-quarter Jewish child. However, not all situations involving illegitimate children were as effortless to resolve. In November 1943, Ruth Heinrich, the wife of SS-Untersturmführer Dr. Alfred Heinrich, wrote a letter to Himmler

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126 Letter from Sepp Fink to the editorial board of *Das Schwarze Korps*, 3 February 1940, NA T175/115/frame 2639677.
127 Letter from Brandt to Fink, 14 February 1940, NA T175/115/frame 2639679 and BA NS19/3480, page 85.
128 Letter from Fink to the personal staff of the RFSS, 18 February 1940, NA T175/115/frames 2639681-2639682.
129 Letter from Brandt to Fink and Berger, 22 February 1940, NA T175/115/frame 2639674 and letter from Brandt to SS Oberabschnitt Donau, 23 February 1940, NA T175/115/frame 2639673.
requesting his help. After almost a decade of marriage and three children, Ruth had learned that her husband had had an affair with his secretary, Ella Barth, which had already resulted in one child, and, at the time of her letter, a second child was on the way. According to Ruth, her husband was now demanding a divorce, and therefore she sought Himmler’s advice. She asked him, “Can I, as a German wife and mother of three children, be forced into a divorce? I am innocent in this situation and now must fight for my rights and the rights of my children.”

Ruth ended her letter by imploring Himmler to protect her and her children.

This situation would have put Himmler in a precarious position, as he was in the same position as Alfred Heinrich. It was further complicated by German law and his own regulations for the SS and police. In 1938, the Nazi government had amended the laws relating to marriage by expanding the grounds for divorce. One of the new provisions allowed for a divorce to proceed if the marriage had all but dissolved because the spouses had lived apart for three years or more. Ruth Heinrich’s letter indicated that she and her husband had not lived together for some time, first because of his assignments for the SS and then because of his choice to live with his mistress and their children. For this reason alone, Heinrich could have requested a divorce, and the Nazi courts would have looked favorably on his petition because he had already begun to have children with another woman, thus fulfilling the population ideals of the state and SS. But, while this one provision of the law might have aided him, he would have simultaneously found himself in trouble with the SS courts. In April 1941, SS-Gruppenführer Paul Scharfe, chief of the SS Court, had released a memorandum indicating that SS men could be disciplined for committing adultery.

In response, Himmler requested that the Personnel Main Office forward a copy of Alfred Heinrich’s file to him. He did not directly reply to Ruth, but had an officer in his personal staff send her a letter in mid-December 1943. This letter did not indicate that Himmler was looking into the matter, but suggested that because her husband had served in the Security Service (Sicherheitsdienst, SD), Ruth should take up the matter with the chief of the Reich Security Main

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130 Letter from Ruth Heinrich to Himmler, 18 November 1943, BA NS19/3031, page 4.
131 Pine, 18; Grunberger, 244-45; Gabriele Czarnowski ““The value of marriage for the Volksgemeinschaft”: policies towards women and marriage under National Socialism,” in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: Comparisons and Contrasts, edited by Richard Bessel and translated by Pamela Selwyn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 104-10.
132 “Disziplinarmassnahmen wegen Ehebruchs,” NA T175/135/frame 2663203 and NA T611/7/Ordner 431 (Teil 2)/no frame number.
Office, of which the SD was a branch. This situation remain unresolved for more than a year; officials in Himmler’s personal staff and the Reich Security Main Office corresponded about the matter until at least late March 1945, debating whether or not to proceed with disciplinary actions against Alfred Heinrich and determining the suitability of his mistress Ella Barth. The matter was not resolved by the end of the war, an assessment confirmed by Heinrich’s personnel file, which never listed a divorce.

All of these cases of illegitimacy were personal matters involving only a few individuals. However, the vast majority of illegitimate offspring were produced through the Lebensborn program. During the war, the number of maternity homes expanded; most of them were located in Germany and Norway. Contemporary accounts of the program leave the impression that, contrary to later historical analysis, the homes were nothing more than a breeding ground for the master race. Himmler even contributed to this perception, at least as recorded by Felix Kersten. The Reichsführer claimed that the Lebensborn program had given women who would have otherwise remained childless the opportunity to have “the happy experience of being a mother” while simultaneously playing “her full part in the life of the community.” Himmler admitted that only the most valuable and racially pure men were allowed to conceive children with these women, and he anticipated that more women would take advantage of this possibility after the war.

One SS man who participated in this attempt to make Himmler’s wish a reality was Peter Neumann. According to his postwar autobiographical account, he was sent to a Lebensborn home in early 1940. One his first day there, he met a young woman named Lotte who, at least as he recalled it, was just as willing as he to fulfill their biological duty after having known each other for only a few hours. Neumann later described their brief sexual encounter as “an astonishing experience in a man’s life.” He and Lotte succeeded in conceiving a child, a boy whom she named after him. While still at the home a year later caring for their newborn, Lotte wrote to Peter and updated him on their son. On receiving this information, the unmarried

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133 Letter from Meine to Heinrich, 14 December 1943, BA NS19/3031, page 6. This letter did not directly list Ernst Kaltenbrunner as the head of RSHA, but Himmler had already appointed him to the position by this time.
134 Personnel file of Alfred Heinrich, BA BDC SSO file 078A, page 525. The correspondence mentioned above can be found in the personnel file, pages 578, 613-19, 622, 624, 626, 630-31 and BA NS19/3031, pages 7-13.
135 See chapter 5 for the historians’ perspectives.
136 Kersten, 181.
Neumann reflected that “it’s funny, but I don’t feel at all like a father.” His story, like that of Hildegard Trutz, appears to deviate from the norm. A more typical account was that of SS-Obergruppenführer Fritz Schleßmann who, after already having four children with his wife, impregnated his secretary Isolde. He turned to Himmler for assistance in placing Isolde into a Lebensborn home, a task which Himmler was more than pleased to do.

Altogether, of the approximately 7,000-8,000 children born in the Lebensborn homes throughout the entire existence of the program, between 50-60% were illegitimate. Yet, despite attempts to encourage SS families to adopt them, there was limited success; most families were not interested in adopting in general and from the Lebensborn association in particular, and most unwed mothers wanted to keep their children. Of the unmarried mothers, some of them wished to have a relationship with the fathers of their children. Regardless of whether this wish came to fruition, fathers were held financially responsible for their offspring. All SS officers were still required to support the Lebensborn program financially during the war, contributions again determined by marital status and rank. Individual men who placed their wives/girlfriends/mistresses in a home paid additional support.

Even with the birth of children, legitimate or otherwise, the war obstructed a man’s ability to influence their upbringing directly, especially if he were killed as a result of his service. Himmler certainly recognized that many of his SS men might be reluctant to increase the size of their families if they believed that they might not be able to care for them in the future. Therefore, he established plans designed to aid widows and orphans. The notion of the SS having an obligation to care for the wives and children of its members predated the war.

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138 Ibid., 162.
139 Heiber, letters 380a and 380b and personnel file of Fritz Schleßmann, BA BDC SSO file 081B, page 014.
140 These are the numbers calculated more than two decades ago by Georg Lilienthal and subsequent research by historians has upheld his work as the definitive account of the Lebensborn program. Lilienthal, Der Lebensborn, 244 and Georg Lilienthal, “Ärzte und Rassenpolitik: Der ‘Lebensborn e.V.,’” in Ärzte im Nationalsozialismus, edited by Fridhof Kudliken (Cologne: Kiepenheuer and Witsch, 1985), 156. Lilienthal also provided a breakdown of the average number of children born in the homes per month for the war years. Lilienthal, Der Lebensborn, 112.
141 For specific cases of adoption of Lebensborn children, both by SS and non-SS families, see the following documents: “Die Annahme an Kindes Statt,” Münchener Neueste Nachrichten, 16 August 1941 and BA NS22/520, no page number and selected correspondence with the Lebensborn in NA T175/40/frames 2550775-2550792, NA T175/76/frames 2594383-2594391, NA T175/77/frames 2595490-2595499, and NA T175/210/frames 2750074-2750104. For general information on adoption see Lilienthal, Der Lebensborn, 73 and Schmitz-Köster, Deutsche Mutter, 36. The lack of adoption, however, may have also been influenced by the fact that the legal system made it a cumbersome process, as Michelle Mouton has shown in her article “Rescuing Children and Policing Families: Adoption Policy in Weimar and Nazi Germany,” Central European History, volume 38, number 4 (2005): 545-571.
142 One mother who originally wanted a relationship was Charlotte Roth. NA T175/55/frames 2595490-2595499, and NA T175/210/frames 2750074-2750104. For general information on adoption see Lilienthal, Der Lebensborn, 73 and Schmitz-Köster, Deutsche Mutter, 36. The lack of adoption, however, may have also been influenced by the fact that the legal system made it a cumbersome process, as Michelle Mouton has shown in her article “Rescuing Children and Policing Families: Adoption Policy in Weimar and Nazi Germany,” Central European History, volume 38, number 4 (2005): 545-571.
143 “Dienstanordnung Nr. 100,” 18 February 1942, IfZ Fa 202/frame 85 and BDC SSO201A, page 233.
November 9, 1936, Himmler created an oath which all SS-Obergruppenführer and SS-Gruppenführer had to affirm personally with him; sealed with a handshake, this pledge committed these highest-ranking SS officers to serve as “the guardians of the blood and life laws of the SS.”\textsuperscript{144} The responsibilities stipulated by this oath included having to maintain the quality of the bloodlines of the members of the SS and their families. On a more practical level, in late 1937, the Reichsführer committed the SS with the “sacred task” of assisting the wives and children of deceased comrades.\textsuperscript{145} The commanders at all levels of the SS had the responsibility to help these families not just with financial and welfare measures, but they also needed to provide personal support, especially with regards to the education of fatherless children.

The obligation of SS men to care for the well-being of the families of fellow SS men took on greater significance immediately following the start of the war. In mid-September 1939, Himmler required that the Personnel Main Office compile a report which listed the names of all fallen SS soldiers. He specifically wanted this office to convey to him the names of married SS members as this information would provide a starting point from which SS commanders could accept responsibility for the welfare of their widows and orphans.\textsuperscript{146} Just over a month later, the Reichsführer again briefly commented on such responsibilities in the same October order in which he implored SS and police men to have children before going off to war.\textsuperscript{147} Near the end of this decree, Himmler addressed the issue of the families that each soldier left behind. He noted that unlike previous eras, when soldiers did not want to burden their wives with wartime children, SS men should not have such reservations. If an SS man died fighting for Germany, Himmler himself would appoint a guardian to oversee the financial and educational needs of his family. The SS would also care for any mother who gave birth during the war. In both cases, this assistance applied to legitimate and illegitimate children as the ultimate goal of the order was to facilitate the transmission of the best hereditary material by removing any pretexts that an SS man could use to abscond from his biological duty.

Beyond suggesting that the care for the families of the fallen represented a duty of surviving SS men, these two orders did not outline any specific measures. They did nonetheless

\textsuperscript{145} SS Befehl für den Wintersonnenwend-Wettkampf 1937,” BA NS2/2, page 24.
\textsuperscript{146} RFSS order, 16 September 1939, BA NS34/21, no page number.
\textsuperscript{147} “SS Befehl für die gesamte SS und Polizei,” 28 October 1939, BA NS19/3901, page 80.
set the tone for future decrees, and they likewise revealed Himmler’s underlying concern for the women and children of his SS men, a concern which Felix Kersten noted in his diary. According to Kersten, the Reichsführer was quite respectful toward women and “very fond of children.” He paid particular attention to war widows and orphans, going so far as to forbid his adjutants from turning them away with the excuse that he was too busy and did not have time for them.

“‘Compared with their sacrifice,’” Kersten reported him saying, “‘the half hour which I sacrifice to them is such a small matter that I would be ashamed if I failed to listen to them or [failed] to give them the feeling that there was somebody to whom they could turn.’”

As the war progressed and the number of casualties rose, Himmler had to confront the duty of assigning tasks related to the families of the deceased to various SS branches. Each Oberabschnitt, along with the Personnel Main Office, was responsible for overseeing the development of these children until they reached the age of majority. The latter office additionally had to maintain records regarding the economic circumstances of the surviving dependents and determine when a family needed financial help from the SS beyond what it had already received from the state. The SS Main Office advised mothers and legal guardians about schooling and occupational training of children, particularly for those boys who showed an interest in pursuing a career as an officer in the Waffen-SS. The Race and Settlement Main Office had to manage the non-economic needs of each family, including “all questions in life.”

On special occasions, this general care consisted of distributing goods such as coats, mittens, stockings, and candles to SS families. RuSHA furthermore had to intervene in any affair when the officers of another division of the SS could not satisfactorily resolve an issue.

However, the branch of the SS given the greatest responsibility for the care of women and children was the Lebensborn. In conjunction with Oberabschnitte officers, Lebensborn officials worked to place mothers and children in their homes. Himmler assigned the Lebensborn the right to assume the guardianship of fatherless children when it corresponded with the mother’s wishes or was in the best interest of the child. Such assistance by the

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148 Kersten, 304.
149 Economic and Administrative Main Office Chief Order Number 19, 30 June 1943, BA NS3/1080, page 167.
152 “Bestellung des ‘Lebensborn’ e.V. als Beistand für die ehelichen Kinder und Übernahme der Vormundschaft für die unehelichen Kinder gefallener SS-Kameraden,” 27 October 1939, BA NS19/3903, page 34; letter from Pflaum
Lebensborn also extended to children whose fathers had served in the SS and whose mothers had perished during the war, although in this particular case, the initiative came from neither the Lebensborn nor Himmler, but directly from Hitler who wanted the Lebensborn to provide for these children rather than an orphanage. The Lebensborn took full responsibility for parentless children, primarily assigning the few children who fell under its care for this reason to foster families, most of whom would have been SS families.\(^{153}\)

Outside of the official responsibilities of the SS, individual members of the German Volk took the initiative to help the widows and orphans of fallen SS men. On numerous occasions during the war, men and women submitted letters to Das Schwarze Korps and included money or information regarding money that had been deposited in a bank account. In these letters, the writer asked that the money, ranging in amounts from 30-2,000 Reichmarks, be given to an SS family with the express wish that the funds would be put toward raising the child of a deceased SS soldier.\(^{154}\) The basic tenor of each of these letters was the same; each writer hoped that the gift would express his or her gratitude to an SS man who had fallen while serving Germany. Several contributions even came from other soldiers on the front. One pointed out that he gave the money for the future of happy and healthy children for which he and his fellow soldiers fought while another donated the money due to his personal gratitude after returning home on his last vacation and being able to meet his second war child.\(^{155}\) With their money and sentiments, these soldiers doubly demonstrated their dedication to Germany while publicly acknowledging that their commitment to the SS family community was one of the reasons why they fought.

**Convincing SS men to have children** – whether legitimate or otherwise – and providing them with the means to have and care for their offspring throughout the war were major concerns. But they were not the only matters in which the SS was interested. In particular, all of

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the aforementioned issues were contingent upon one crucial factor: that an SS man and the woman he was in a relationship with were capable of having children. For the majority of couples, the birth of their children proved this a non-issue, but for a minority of them, infertility was a matter with which they had to contend. Therefore, it was a matter that the SS and its medical community had to address.

Himmler wanted to avoid infertility, especially within a marriage. Early in the war, he and Heydrich had begun to make plans for new marriage laws which would have allowed for the end of a marriage if five years had gone by and no children were produced. These plans must have been based on the possibility of strengthening existing regulations, as the amended marriage law from 1938 allowed for a divorce based on premature infertility and the refusal of one spouse to procreate. Upon telling Felix Kersten of these proposed changes, Kersten immediately objecting, suggesting that many childless couples were quite happy and would be upset were the state to intervene in their personal relations. In response, Himmler overruled his objections and claimed that the good of the Reich was of far greater significance than the desires of an individual. New laws had to be created which would address the population needs of the German state.

Later in the war, Himmler moderated his views slightly. He still desired to prevent the marriage of a fertile partner with an infertile one, but if an already-married couple were to learn of their infertility, he thought it would be detrimental to force them to divorce.

Many SS medical officials also wanted to combat infertility. In his capacity as chief medical doctor of the SS, SS-Obergruppenführer Dr. Ernst Robert Grawitz worked in conjunction with SS-Gruppenführer Dr. Karl Genzken, the chief of the Waffen-SS medical department, to eradicate childlessness in SS marriages. Special departments for women’s health and obstetrics were founded in SS military hospitals in Berlin, Prague, Dachau, and Marienbad. However, a great deal of this work was not handled by SS medical personnel, but by specialists, typically university personnel specially recruited by these departments. As these professors did not directly work for the SS, they had set fees which they charged for their services, leading Grawitz to contact Oswald Pohl and request funding to pay for the treatments. Grawitz supported his argument on the basis that it was the desire of the

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156 Pine, 18 and Czarnowski, 105.
157 Kersten, 72.
159 Letter from Karl Genzken to Ernst Robert Grawitz, 30 October 1944, BA NS2/148, page 38.
Reichsführer to have his SS men “sire as numerous offspring as possible.” Pohl agreed to fund treatment in exceptional cases and requested that Grawitz submit all petitions to him. The medical offices of the Waffen-SS were henceforth notified of the new funding available for the treatment of infertility by specialists. SS medical officials communicated with both specialists and SS men in order to resolve the infertility plaguing the marriages of the latter. In some cases, an investigation revealed a problem with the husband, in others with the wife. Some investigations revealed that nothing appeared to be wrong with the reproductive organs of either spouse. When a problem was diagnosed, various treatments were suggested, among them hormone therapy and visiting additional specialists. One of the more unique remedies proposed for female sterility was bathing in a natural bog bath (Moorbad).

Probably the most prominent Nazi and SS medical official researching a possible solution to infertility was Reich Health Leader and SS-Obergruppenführer Dr. Leonardo Conti. He conducted his research throughout the war, and among the proposals he suggested were matchmaking and providing marriage advice. Conti also proposed a more invasive solution: artificial insemination. According to an article which he submitted to Himmler in June 1942,

160 Letter from Grawitz to Oswald Pohl, 8 November 1944, NA RG238/190/13/4/06/entry 211/box 2/folder SS-987-C-6-Dupl-No-3352, no page number and BA NS2/148, page 37.
161 Letter from Pohl to Grawitz, 16 November 1944, NA RG238/190/13/4/06/entry 211/box 2/folder SS-987-C-6-Dupl-No-3352, no page number.
162 Letter from Klug to all medical service offices (Santitásdienststellen) of the Waffen-SS, 1 December 1944, BA NS2/148, page 34.
164 Letter from Brandt to Max Sollmann, 17 May 1944, NA T175/20/frame 2524516; letter from Brant to the medical inspection (Sanitätsinspektion) of the Waffen-SS and the chief medical officer of the SS [Ernst Robert Grawitz], 26 October 1944, NA T175/20/frame 2524517; letter from Brant to the medical inspection of the Waffen-SS, 17 May 1944, NA T175/20/frame 2524519; letter to Sollmann, 6 March 1944, NA T175/20/frame 2524521-2524522. This solution was one of the few cases where infertility treatments were being coordinated by the Lebensborn program.
165 Conti’s proposal was not the first time artificial insemination had been brought up in the SS. Over two years earlier, Das Schwarze Korps had run an article which discussed the statistics and causes of infertility and suggested
Conti recognized that with this proposition “the fertilization process would become somewhat mechanically soulless,” but argued that it was unnatural for a healthy woman to remain childless and otherwise be deprived her natural function as a mother.\textsuperscript{166} He then suggested that it would still be possible to determine the descent of the child, especially if the sperm came from a man known to the woman, such as a friend’s husband, thus tacitly acknowledging that racial criteria could still be upheld in these cases.

Despite his desire to have his SS men increase the size and quality of the German Volk by just about every means possible, in this particular case, Himmler rejected Conti’s proposal. To him, fertility by all possible means meant by all possible natural means, which artificial insemination was not. He communicated his concerns to Conti, stating that the medical profession was already overburdened with many problems and that tasking it with solving this particular issue would be of no benefit particularly when it could be handled by other organizations.\textsuperscript{167} Himmler was even leery about the overuse of such measures when it came to breeding animals. In a letter which he wrote in March 1943 to Dr. Heinz Henseler, director of the institute for animal husbandry and breeding biology in Munich, he directly commented that “for our total breeding and passing of genetic material, I consider it [artifical insemination] dangerous.”\textsuperscript{168} He wrote that he also held such an opinion “valid in the area of human reproduction.”\textsuperscript{169} This position was additionally one held by Grawitz; he too rejected such methods as unnatural. Nonetheless, Conti continued his research developing potential methods of artificial insemination in the later years of the war.\textsuperscript{170}

While Himmler did not approve of Conti’s research, there were other projects which he supported, including research on sex ratios. He paid particular attention to analyses that proposed methods for increasing the number of males born. This type of research was not uncommon within the larger scientific and sociological communities of which Germany was a

\textsuperscript{166} Leonardo Conti, “Erhöhung der Kinderzahl durch Eheanbahnung, Eheberatung, und Wahlkinder,” NA T175/69/frame 2585953.
\textsuperscript{167} Letter from Himmler to Leonardo Conti, 13 July 1942, NA T175/69/frame 2585949.
\textsuperscript{168} Heiber, letter 226.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
part; studies conducted prior to and during the Second World War, especially in the United States, addressed which social factors, including war, influenced the gender of children. Among the research which garnered Himmler’s attention was that done by Dr. Richard Korherr, a prominent demographer and statistician whom the Reichsführer had recruited in September 1940 to work for him personally as his Inspector for Statistics (Inspekteur für Statistik). As such, Korherr was responsible for overseeing the statistical work of nearly every SS department and office, a point which the statistician emphasized in a postwar interview when he commented that Himmler did not want to see any statistical report which had first not met his approval. Korherr also used the information made available to him to conduct his own studies, among which were two reports from 1942 concerning the sex ratios of legitimate SS children.

The first study examined the relationship between the difference in age of the parents and the gender of their children based on married SS couples who had a child in 1941. His report showed three significant facts; one, in 84% of SS marriages, the father was older than the mother; two, within the SS, 109 boys were born for every 100 girls, a ratio which was more favorable than the one for the Reich of 106:100; and three, the younger the mother, the larger the number of boys born. The second study delved into the gender of children and their birth order. For the SS, Korherr determined that for every 100 girls born as the first child, 123 boys were born. His work also revealed that this ratio increased to 134 boys to 100 girls when it came

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172 Personnel file of Richard Korherr, BA BDC SSO file 201A, page 389 and letter from Himmler, 9 December 1940, NA T580/331/Ordnung 78/no frame numbers. While Korherr has an SSO file, he was not in the SS, although the Himmler’s order appointing Korherr his Inspector for Statistics notes that the statistician was a party member. Gerald Reitlinger and William Seltzer each provide a brief overview of Korherr’s work for Himmler and the difficulties he had with SS leaders in carrying out this work. Reitlinger, 221-22 and William Seltzer, “Population Statistics, the Holocaust, and the Nuremberg Trials,” *Population and Development Review*, volume 24, number 3 (September 1998): 530-31.


175 Letter from Korherr to Himmler, 18 September 1942, BA NS19/472, pages 2-6
to children conceived prior to the marriage of the parents, a factor which may have given Himmler pause before he censured another SS man for only asking for permission to marry after his girlfriend was already pregnant. In both studies, Korherr made it very clear that because he was only working with numbers for the SS for 1941, he was working with a small sample and could draw no general conclusions from the limited numbers. These were temporary results which could only be further validated or refuted with similar studies in future years. Himmler was nonetheless pleased with the results, as a letter from Brandt to Korherr indicated that the Reichsführer wanted his Inspector for Statistics to pursue the issue.\footnote{Letter from Brandt to Korherr, 18 December 1942, IfZ MA287/frame 2529146.}

Besides Korherr’s statistical reports, Himmler received information on gender ratios from other sources, including Artur Dombek, who worked for the party, but not the SS. Dombek wrote a letter to Himmler in January 1944 in which he explained when, based on his years of observation, it was most likely for a couple to conceive a boy. Among his conclusions were that a boy was more likely for the first, second, and even third child when the man was about ten years older than the woman. More male offspring were produced during wartime, which Dombek concluded was due to the physical and mental fatigue experienced by the men.\footnote{Letter from Artur Dombek to Himmler, 30 January 1944, BA NS19/444, page 3.} This research intrigued Himmler, as Brandt wrote in his reply to Dombek.\footnote{Letter from Brandt to Dombek, 14 February 1944, BA NS19/444, page 6.} However, Himmler would have highly regarded any work which bolstered his already-existing opinions. In this case, he had opposed marriages between older women and younger men. Furthermore, learning once again that more boys were born in wartime would have most likely convinced him that he was correct in attempting to persuade his SS men to have children during the war.

Around the same time as he received Dombek’s letter, the Reichsführer had a conversation with Gottlob Berger where the Obergruppenführer informed Himmler about a tradition from his home in the Swabian Alps in southwestern Germany. If a boy was desired, the couple had to follow a certain ritual. For one week, neither the man nor the woman consumed alcohol; during this same timeframe, the wife refrained from work and got plenty of sleep. After this week, the man marched a forty-kilometer roundtrip to the city of Ulm. He could not stop during this trek, and once he had returned, he and his wife had sex, which resulted in the birth of a boy.\footnote{Letter from Brandt to Max Sollmann, 12 February 1944, BA NS19/444, page 5 and Heiber, letter 297, which lists...}
This information from Dombek and Berger was forwarded to Grawitz, who probably dampened Himmler’s enthusiasm for the research with his own take on it. Grawitz found both methods problematic. He proclaimed that if such formulas actually worked and were consciously used to generate offspring of one sex or the other, “it would probably mean the end of the human race.”¹⁸⁰ Then, after providing a brief overview of the fertilization process where he confirmed that the father determined the sex of a child, Grawitz commented that the ratio of boys to girls was approximately 1006:1000, a number in line with the ratio reported by Korherr. As the formulas which claimed to produce boys over girls had not been tested on this large a scale, it was difficult to determine their validity. At the end of his letter, Grawitz contended that “it is impossible to generate intentionally a child of a certain sex,” something which he believed would remain impossible in the future.¹⁸¹ Despite his nay-saying and even Korherr’s cautionary remarks regarding drawing broad conclusions from limited statistics, the information provided by Dombek and Berger intrigued Himmler to the point where he requested that the Lebensborn program investigate the question of producing boys or girls.¹⁸² This research would have represented one more factor in Himmler’s quest to create a sustainable SS family community.

Taken together, all of these measures demonstrate that the survival of the genetic legacy of each SS man remained a crucial goal for Heinrich Himmler during the Second World War. He redoubled his efforts to create a family community with his desired Nordic blood and sought to have each SS man willingly embrace the notions that only a racially healthy marriage and child-rich family would secure the military victory for which they fought. Fathering children represented just as significant a duty to the SS and to the Reich as any other. However, while new guidelines and commands were designed to compensate for the loss of valuable blood during the war, Himmler did allow some selective leniency in their application, such as when it came to the requirements for marriage or promotion, in order to balance the efforts to build the family community with the equally important task of founding an effective militarized unit. Overall, as will be examined later, these measures failed to persuade SS men to fulfill their paternal obligations, yet they still provide a greater insight into the ideal community that Himmler sought to construct and the private means he utilized in his attempt.

¹⁸⁰ Letter from Ernst Robert Grawitz to Brant, 19 February 1944, BA NS19/444, page 8.
¹⁸¹ Ibid., 9.
¹⁸² Heiber, letter 297.
During his sixteen years as Reichsführer-SS, Himmler continually conveyed to his SS men his desire for each of them to find a racially suitable woman and establish a child-rich family with her. Through his orders, speeches, and letters, he routinely indicated that their biological contribution would ensure the longevity of Hitler’s Reich, a task to which they, as loyal SS men, were already devoted. These means used by Himmler to express his aspirations to have the SS form a Nordic family community were relatively private. The majority of commands, lectures, and correspondence were solely for the eyes and ears of his SS men. Beyond these measures, however, there was another forum in which the idea of the SS as an elite order was disseminated: SS publications. Using its own publishing press, Nordland Verlag, as well as the official Nazi party press, Eher Verlag, the SS produced books, pamphlets, and journals which publicized its ideals and objectives.\(^1\) The organization also articulated its views through its personal newspaper, *Das Schwarze Korps*. These publications, especially the newspaper, were a conduit through which the aforementioned internal measures were reinforced. They revealed the ambitions of the SS to the German people, demonstrating how these men were dedicated to their Führer and Reich and how they were setting an example for the entire Volk by adhering to the principles of eugenics. By publicly displaying the domestic goals of the organization, SS publications divulged how the most loyal members of the party and the regime were posed to lead the rest of the German Volk when it came to family life and reproduction in the name of creating a racial state and a greater Volksgemeinschaft.

Among the periodicals produced by the SS, three in particular emphasized the relevant racial and familial matters: *Volk und Rasse*, *SS-Leithefte*, and *Das Schwarze Korps*. Of those three, the last one had the greatest influence because of its broad range of articles and high circulation. Nonetheless, the other two are worth mentioning as they too contributed to the

\(^1\) For example, *Sieg der Waffen – Sieg des Kindes*, *SS Mann und Blutsfrage*, and *Rassenpolitik*, all of which were discussed in chapter 6.
promotion of racial and family ideas. The first, *Volk und Rasse*, was not originally associated with the SS. Launched by publisher Julius Lehmann in 1926, it was one of many periodicals dedicated to race hygiene produced by his firm. Originally edited by anthropologist Walter Scheidt, a year after the journal’s founding, serologist Otto Reche and bacteriologist Heinz Zeiss assumed editorial responsibilities. Anthropologist Bruno K. Schultz replaced Zeiss in 1931, and two years later, when the SS took over *Volk und Rasse*, Schultz – who joined the SS that same year – became its sole editor. Beyond these men, many renowned scientists were on its editorial board and contributed articles, including Eugen Fischer, Fritz Lenz, and Alfred Ploetz. Richard Walther Darré also served on the board and eventually so did Himmler, Arthur Gütt, and SS-Standartenführer Dr. Karl Astel, one of Himmler’s racial experts.\(^2\) The publication’s most important work with regards to popularizing the racial and familial work of the SS came under the management of Schultz, who published articles which emphasized the Nordic ideals so valued by Himmler.\(^3\) Despite these contributions, this journal had a limited impact. Its circulation only rose to 12,000 copies with Schultz as editor, a number which was well below that produced by *Das Schwarze Korps*.\(^4\)

The second periodical, *SS-Leithefte*, had a more germane focus with regards to printing topics that would have been relevant to the racial and familial ideals within the SS. To support its goals, the RuSHA Training Office (*Schulungsamt*) began publishing it in 1935 to supplement its lectures and films.\(^5\) Each monthly volume ran approximately 30-45 pages and contained articles replete with information on a wide variety of subjects, including articles about the family. By referencing themes that SS men would have already been familiar with, they reminded the SS reader that National Socialism was a biological world view and that the SS stood as a clan order (*Sippenorden*) within the National Socialist movement. Additional articles delved into topics about family and racial ideology and were designed to bolster these two fundamental ideas. They provided a man with advice on how to choose a wife wisely, primarily by advising him to examine the family history of a woman carefully because her heritage would

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\(^3\) For example, the article praising the 10 year anniversary of the engagement and marriage command examined in chapter 6.

\(^4\) The circulation numbers for *Volk und Rasse* are in Weindling, *Health, race, and German politics*, 500.

\(^5\) “Rede des Reichsführer-SS auf der Ordsenburg Sonthofen am 5 Mai 1944,” NA T175/92/frame2613495; Heinemann, *Rasse*, 91; and Shalka, 296.
become the heritage of his children. A healthy wife would lead to a healthy marriage, leading to the creation of a racially and biologically worthy family which was the smallest, yet most valuable unit in the entire Reich. The formation of these families and the SS family community represented a grave responsibility, but it was a responsibility that, as one article noted, had been vested in the SS by the Führer when he had given them the motto “My honor is called loyalty.”

While their Führer entrusted them with loyalty, their Reichsführer entrusted them to give life to Germany by having child-rich families. To emphasize the importance of children, the editors of SS-Leithefte included several articles which stressed the value of offspring. One chronicled the genealogy of a prolific family for two centuries; the unknown author pointed out that the reader should learn from the history of this family, that it was possible for a family to contribute to the Volk in times of peace and war. A second highlighted many great luminaries in German history who had come from large families; among the figures listed were ruler Friedrich the Great, composers Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Johann Sebastian Bach, and Richard Wagner, chancellor Otto von Bismarck, industrialist Werner Siemens, and philosopher Immanuel Kant. Every new child born in the Reich represented the possibility of a future luminary, and the responsibility for ensuring the birth of these potential great men lie with the present generation.

Due to the war, SS-Leithefte also published the last testaments of SS men who had died on the front. In one of these testaments, the author, Leo R., recorded that he wanted his children to respect their mother, as she had given them life. He furthermore advised them that “they should always be simple, loyal, and true.” In a second testament, the fallen SS man, Heinz H., had written to his entire family, including his parents, brother, and wife. He beseeched his brother to carry on the family name, as Heinz had died not knowing if his wife were pregnant.

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9 G.d., “Wir geben das Erbe weiter,” SS-Leithefte, volume 8, number 3 (1942): 17-18. The same article was printed in Das Schwarze Korps, 9 July 1942, p. 4.
10 “Der Wurf des Schicksals,” SS-Leithefte, volume 7, number 5a (1941): 9-13. This tactic of citing great men from larger families was used prior to the SS; for example, Burgdörfer, Volk ohne Jugend, 67-68 and Alfred Ploetz, “Rassenhygiene als Grundlage der Friedenspolitik,” Ahnen und Enkel: Beiträge zur Sippenforschung, Heimatkunde und Erblehre, volume 3 (March 1936): 29.
However, if she were with child, then he had certain requests; if the child were a boy, he wanted his son to have his name and to be raised as a healthy and honest lad, and if the child were a girl, Heinz H. desired that she, as a healthy German woman, be made aware of her duties to the nation.\textsuperscript{12}

These testaments reminded each SS man of his duties as a husband and a father. This message was reinforced by a letter written to the journal by an SS widow. In it, the woman spoke of her late husband, their life together, and his service at the front. She wrote about their children, whom she indicated completed her life. The widow even commented that she felt sorry for other German women who intentionally did not have children because they were missing out on the joy of being a mother, and she lamented that she and her late husband had only been able to have three children before his death. Yet, in those very children, the woman recognized that her husband had never died; he lived on through them, through his son who had his eyes and his daughter who had his laugh.\textsuperscript{13} She wanted every woman to know of her continuing love for her husband because of their children, a message that would have been just as applicable to any SS man. He too would have been reminded from this letter that his children represented his future, a point which echoed Himmler’s October 1939 order where he implored his men to have children before they risked dying at war.

There was one other way in which \textit{SS-Leithefte} showcased the importance of children to SS men. Each edition contained pictures, and a few of the shots featured children. In these photos, the children looked relatively innocent and sweet, not to mention physically in accord with the appropriate racial stereotypes.\textsuperscript{14} Other pictures showed children with their fathers and/or SS men.\textsuperscript{15} These images all presented the same basic illustration: a man interacting with a child or children in a positive manner; for example, one picture revealed an SS soldier holding a young girl while another showed a father teaching his son how to play the piano.\textsuperscript{16} There were two photos where Himmler was snapped interacting with children, proving in images what Felix

\textsuperscript{13} “Mein Mann ist nicht tot. Er lebt in meinen Kinder weiter,” \textit{SS-Leithefte}, volume 9, numbers 1-2 (February 1943): 24.
\textsuperscript{14} Examples of such pictures can be found in volume 7 (1941), volume 8 (1942), volume 9, and volume 10 (1944).
\textsuperscript{15} Examples of such pictures can be found in volume 7 (1941), between pages 20-21 and volume 9, number 12 (December 1943), before page 27.
\textsuperscript{16} The image of the soldier holding the girl can be found in a series of pictures prior to page 13 of volume 6, number 12b (1940) and the father and son at the piano can be found before page 1 of volume 7, number 6a (1941).
Kersten had noted with words – that he appeared to like children.\textsuperscript{17} However, as useful as the pictures would have been in educating SS men to accept children as an integral part of their community, there were altogether very few images of these types throughout SS-Leithefte, limiting their overall educational impact. They only reinforced the general idea that healthy children were of value, but did not really clarify how each man should actively and routinely interact with children as either a role model and/or as a father.

One other issue limited the influence of SS-Leithefte. Publication of the journal continued during the war, although by that time RuSHA had lost control of the Training Office to the SS Main Office. According to a postwar interview with SS-Obergruppenführer Gottlob Berger, who led that office during the war, the Training Office had some difficulties with the publication. While the Main Office forwarded copies of SS-Leithefte to all SS companies and even provided foreign language editions for non-Germanic units, oftentimes the troops rejected the ideas presented in it. Berger did not specify what ideas the soldiers did and did not accept, although he did comment that Himmler generally edited drafts of the journal and that SS-Leithefte “remained a permanent object of concern.”\textsuperscript{18} Therefore, while SS-Leithefte was officially a resource for ideological indoctrination, it was of limited use for informing SS men about what the ideals of the SS were, how the organization sought to implement those ideals, and the amount of success that it did or did not have.

The same cannot be said for Das Schwarze Korps. In short, this newspaper was not just the most prominent SS publication; it was one of the leading weekly newspapers in the entire Third Reich, second in circulation only to Das Reich.\textsuperscript{19} The impetus for the paper primarily came from the man who served as its chief editor, Günter d’Alquen. He had been a long-time party member, having joined it and the SA in 1927 and then switching to the SS in 1931 after the failed Stennes putsch. That same year, the twenty-year-old d’Alquen gained employment as an

\textsuperscript{17}“Blumen für den Reichsführer-SS aus ukrainischen Kinderhänden,” SS-Leithefte, volume 7, number 6b (1941), following page 12 and “Unser Reichsführer-SS im Gespräch mit jüngstem Nachwuchs,” SS-Leithefte, volume 7, number 10b (1941), following page 12.


\textsuperscript{19}Das Reich was launched by Joseph Goebbels in 1940; by 1943, each weekly edition was running approximately 1.5 million copies. The next closest weekly newspaper was Der Stürmer, Julius Streicher’s anti-Semitic screed, which ran almost 400,000 copies as of March 1944. Richard Grunberger, 12 Year Reich: A Social History of the Third Reich (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), 400; Norbert Frei and Johannes Schmitz, Journalismus im Dritten Reich (Munich: Beck, 1989), 102; William L. Combs, The Voice of the SS: A History of the SS Journal ’Das Schwarze Korps’ (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 20; and Fritz Schmidt, Presse in Fesseln, eine Schilderung des NS-Pressetrusts (Berlin: Verlag Archiv und Karlei, 1947), 218.
assistant editor with the Bremer Nationale Zeitung, the Nazi party newspaper in the city of Bremen. He remained with this weekly paper for less than a year before transferring to the Munich-based Völkischer Beobachter where he learned a great deal about writing for and editing a large newspaper, especially from its chief editor, party ideologue Alfred Rosenberg. Following Hitler’s appointment as chancellor, the Völkischer Beobachter set up an operations center in Berlin, which d’Alquen moved to by the end of the year. This work in Berlin and his experience writing for and leading the domestic politics department of the paper allowed him to establish a reputation as well as form an opinion about the purpose of a newspaper.  

His reputation brought him to the attention of Max Amann, the head of Eher Verlag, which produced the Völkischer Beobachter. At the end of 1934, Eher Verlag took over the publication of Der Angriff, a Berlin-based party newspaper founded by Joseph Goebbels in 1927. Amann offered d’Alquen the position of main editor, which he was inclined to accept because he appreciated the paper’s polemical style. D’Alquen drew up an editorial program for Amann. He wanted Der Angriff to continue to have a provocative design; d’Alquen felt that opposition within the media was needed, and if no outside opposition existed, then a loyal variety must be created within the party. Amann forwarded this design to Goebbels, who rejected the proposal. With this rejection, d’Alquen did not takeover Der Angriff, and this decision upset him to the point where he almost quit the Völkischer Beobachter. Instead, he vented his grievances in early 1935 to SS-Gruppenführer Kurt Wittje, then-chief of the SS Main Office. Wittje’s response was to ask d’Alquen why he did not create his own newspaper. Wittje pointed out that nearly every other Nazi organization had one except the SS. He subsequently brought the matter to Himmler’s attention, and the Reichsführer responded positively to the idea.  

Eher Verlag agreed to print a weekly paper for the SS, and Himmler promised the publisher 40,000 subscribers. This number would have hardly been difficult for Himmler to achieve within the SS alone as it had almost 200,000 members by 1935. Himmler and d’Alquen debated on a title; the chief editor wanted one that would encompass a perspective and audience beyond the SS, while the Reichsführer wanted one which would predominantly reflect

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22 Ibid., 33.  
23 See Appendix A for the specific numbers.
his organization. Neither one came up with a satisfactory title, and they settled on Das Schwarze Korps. In early 1935, test versions of the newspaper were presented to the SS, and the first publicly available edition was sold on March 6, 1935 for fifteen pfennig. Over the next ten years, each new edition came out in Berlin on Wednesday, although it was dated for Thursday, the day it came out in the rest of the Reich. The cost for an individual copy remained the same, as did the 60 pfennig a month price for a subscription. Das Schwarze Korps was immediately successful; within the first month of publication, each weekly edition ran an average of almost 80,000 copies. By the third quarter of 1935, the numbers had risen to over 150,000 copies per week; by the second quarter of 1937 – just over two years since the start of the paper – over 500,000 copies per week were being sold. D’Alquen later claimed that the high point of sales was in 1939, with an average of 1,080,000 copies in circulation. The vast majority were bought from street vendors.

Part of the newspaper’s success undoubtedly came from aggressive advertising campaigns waged by the SS. These campaigns were internal and external. For the internal, both Himmler and Wittje appealed to the rank and file to become aware of the new SS newspaper even before the first edition had been published. In particular, the press personnel attached to each SS unit were informed that they must remain well-apprised of the paper so that they could provide material from their respective divisions. Several months later, SS-Gruppenführer

24 “Befragung von Herrn Günter d’Alquen,” 33-34. Robert Lewis Koehl commented on the choice of title in the footnotes to the introduction of his book The Black Corps: “The ‘Black Corps’ (Das schwarze Korps) was adopted as the name of the SS magazine in 1935 because the romantically inclined wished to make a parallel between the Schutzstaffel as a paramilitary unit in black uniforms and the similarly attired free corps volunteers of the 1813 War of Liberation. If had been chosen as the title because it conveys the theatrical, cheap romanticism of the SS.” Koehl, The Black Corps, xxiii.

25 The front page of the February 1935 test edition can be found in Helmut Heiber and Hildegard von Kotze, editors, Facsimile Querschnitt durch das Schwarze Korps (Munich: Scherz Verlag, 1968), 49.


27 The monthly and quarterly averages for the paper were printed along with the editorial staff information on the bottom right corner of the second page of each edition. These numbers were reported through the second quarter of 1939. There were also two articles published in the newspaper which mentioned the growth in circulation: “Ein Jahr ‘Das Schwarze Korps,’” 5 March 1936, page 3 and “Über 500,000 Auflage in 3 Jahren,” 24 March 1938, page 7. Historian William L. Combs, who has written extensively on the SS newspaper and who courteously corresponded with me briefly on the newspaper, noted that as of March 1944, 750,000 copies were distributed each week, a number in accordance with that provided by Norbert Frei and Johannes Schmitz in their book on journalism in the Third Reich, which is considered to be the definitive account, and corroborated by Fritz Schmidt’s book on the Nazi press. Combs, The Voice of the SS, 20; Frei, 102; and Schmidt, 218.

28 “Befragung von Herrn Günter d’Alquen,” 34.

August Heißmeyer, who had replaced Wittje as the head of the Main Office, insisted that while a subscription should not be forced on any SS man who did not have the financial means, all SS men should have access to the newspaper. He recommended that each unit should remind its members about the paper at every possible occasion and that each department should purchase at least one subscription to make the newspaper readily available to its men.30

For the external campaign, there were articles in the newspaper calling on SS members to support it, and a subscription application was present in many early editions.31 Leaders of the SS main offices and other high-ranking SS officers submitted congratulatory notes during the first few months of publication; these blurbs not only praised Das Schwarze Korps, but established the purpose of the newspaper as the public mouthpiece of the organization.32 Himmler also mandated that SS men advocate sales for Das Schwarze Korps just as they had once won subscribers for the Völkischer Beobachter.33 He wanted them to have a vested interest in the newspaper, and to help achieve high circulation numbers, SS men participated in a publicity campaign held for approximately one month each year between 1935 and 1939.34 The point of these advertising operations was, according to Heißmeyer, to inspire every SS man to read Das Schwarze Korps.

Through reading the paper, each man would remain well-informed of the political activities and ideological matters of the organization. Once the newspaper had taken hold within the SS, Heißmeyer indicated that Himmler wanted his SS men to encourage readership among the general population.35 The yearly advertising campaigns were set up as a competition where each SS unit and office vied with one another to obtain the most subscribers.36 Given the

31 Unless otherwise noted, all of the articles from this point of the chapter onward are from Das Schwarze Korps, and therefore, the title of the newspaper will be omitted from the citations. “Kameraden!” 6 March 1935, page 13. Subscription applications can be found in the following editions from 1935: 6 March, page 16; 19 June, page 4; 5 December, page 4; and 26 December, page 12. Appeals for subscriptions were also made in 1939: 21 September, page 10; 30 November, page 1; and 14 December, page 11.
32 Those announcements all appeared on page 3 of the following editions from 1935, the first under the title “Die Chefs der SS Hauptämter an das ‘Schwarze Korps,’” and the rest under the title “SS-Führer an das ‘Schwarze Korps’”: 6 March, 13 March, 20 March, 27 March, 3 April, 10 April, 17 April, 24 April, 1 May, 8 May, 15 May, 22 May, and 19 June.
33 Letter from Himmler to all SS men, November 1935, BA NS19/3902, page 68.
34 Based on the archival documents and articles found in Das Schwarze Korps, there were advertising campaigns in 1935, 1936, 1937, and 1939; nothing is mentioned one way or the other for 1938.
36 For an example of how one SS unit was encouraged to participate in the 1939 advertising campaign, see
growing circulation numbers cited above, this marketing tactic was highly successful. There was one additional benefit to this profitable advertisement operation. *Das Schwarze Korps* generated a considerable amount of revenue, most of which the Eher Verlag transferred to the SS. In the middle of 1937, Himmler decreed that these extra funds were to be used to provide godfather gifts (*Patengeschenken*) for child-rich SS families.

Another reason for the success of the newspaper was its style and content. D’Alquen never created the opposition newspaper he wanted, but the articles produced for *Das Schwarze Korps* were often sharply written and frequently attacked corrupt party and state functionaries. As was noted in 1940 by contemporary sociologist Hans Gerth, *Das Schwarze Korps* “is perhaps the only Nazi paper which can occasionally allow itself to expose ruthless employers, even if they are party members.” This censure was possible because d’Alquen was given a relatively free hand to run the paper as he saw fit and because most articles were not individually signed.

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39 There were clearly some people and topics which were off limits to criticism, for example, Hitler or any problems with the military during the war. Others, however, such as the civil service, were not. “Befragung von Herrn Günter d’Alquen,” 40; letter from Wilhelm Frick to Himmler, 14 July 1942, NA T175/69/frames 2585337-2585340; and letter from Frick to Himmler, 26 September 1941, NA T175/69/frame 2585341.


41 According to Combs, Himmler gave d’Alquen considerable latitude in the daily running of the newspaper, but because of its association with the SS, *Das Schwarze Korps* was also able to avoid interferences by other people who controlled the press, including Goebbels and Amann. However, based on entries from Goebbels’ diary, the Propaganda Minister did have a strong opinion about the newspaper and its editor, one which vasilated from disapproval to working in conjunction with d’Alquen when the latter served on the front as a war reporter. Combs,
D’Alquen employed this method to attract authors who would provide an honest opinion, although the majority of articles were written by him and the other members of the editorial board, Rudolf aus den Ruthen and d’Alquen’s brother, Rolf. He believed that such criticism would ultimately improve the party and the state and encourage participation among the youth. Many articles did generate a strong public response, based on the letters that the newspaper received in response to particular topics.

The overall success of *Das Schwarze Korps* meant that it was the public “voice” of the SS. As August Heißmeyer asserted in May 1935, “in no other press product is the spirit of the SS presented in so clear a manner as in [*Das Schwarze Korps*]...” Although the newspaper did venture into other topics concerning the party, the state, and the German people, the SS remained at the forefront of its content and was always presented in a positive light, thus helping to create a public perception of the SS. In this regard, d’Alquen succeeded in creating a paper geared toward the SS, although it aimed for and achieved a wider audience. Throughout its ten-year run, *Das Schwarze Korps* addressed a number of issues. These included recounting the rise and current activities of the SS, paying homage to the sacrifices made during the First World War, and discussing history topics ranging from the French Revolution and Napoleonic era to Japanese samurai to Scotland Yard’s latest investigative techniques on fingerprinting and handwriting analysis. It also developed a series of recurrent themes and sections, and it was in these articles where the ideals of the SS were most clearly expressed.

The family was a frequent theme; there were two sections on familial matters, one or both of which appeared in nearly every edition of the newspaper. The first was called “On Relations and Family” (*Aus Sippe und Familie*). The initiative for this segment came from Himmler, who wanted all family news published under this heading. He requested that the men be made aware that they needed to report their family news to RuSHA, which then forwarded the material to

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42 This assessment regarding the potential authorship of most articles was determined by Combs, *The Voice of the SS*, 31.
45 Among the most common recurrent sections were two from the pre-war, “Der Nordische Mensch” and “Der politische Soldat.”
Das Schwarze Korps. This section ran periodically from May 8, 1935 through the last edition of the paper on March 29, 1945; however, the newspaper halted its publication between August 17, 1939 and May 15, 1941 without citing a reason for the stoppage. As these dates roughly correlated with the weeks prior to the opening of the Second World War through a month before the commencement of Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union, perhaps the paper felt it necessary to concentrate on the then successful war efforts of the German armed forces.

Yet, as one of the semi-regular segments of the paper where SS men could list their nuptials and the birth of their children, “On Relations and Family” communicated the everyday reality of families and fatherhood in the SS. Throughout the tenure of the newspaper, the style of this section and its position in the paper varied, but the information it presented remained relatively consistent. Early editions listed engagements and marriages first and then births in a column primarily located on page four of a more than twenty-page newspaper. The section took up about a quarter of one page and divided the engagements, marriages, and births by the Oberabschnitte in which the fiancé, husband, or father served; the date of birth and gender for the child was often listed as well.

In August 1936, Himmler decided that engagements should no longer be included. Other than this omission, the section remained the same for most of the pre-war period. The only variation was in the first five issues in 1939. The title changed to the lengthier “We have the will for the victory of the children and we are gaining this victory” and only recorded the birth of children. This time the newspaper did not list the men by unit or the children by date of birth, but rather these five sections were randomly organized. After this alteration, the title returned to “On Relations and Family.” For the remaining months of 1939 when the newspaper included this section, it now appeared on page five of a paper which still ran over twenty pages per issue and took up the entire page instead of just a column. The most dramatic change, however, was that this section now contained pictures of newborns, infants, and toddlers. Starting with the May 18 edition, one final addition emerged; the articles arrayed the birth announcements by the number of children per SS family. Although the numbers reached as high

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47 For example, the Waffen-SS had its own recurring section “Für die Waffen SS.”
48 See Appendix D for examples of how “Aus Sippe und Familie” appeared as described in the text.
49 Letter from Rolf d’Alquen to Himmler and RuSHA, 1 August 1936, NA T580/329/Ordung 50/no frame number.
50 “Wir haben den Willen zum Sieg des Kindes und wir werden diesen Sieg erfechten.”
as ten children, the majority of babies were listed under SS families celebrating the birth of their first, second, or third child.

After a twenty-one month hiatus, “On Relations and Family” resumed, but returned to a text-only format, similar in size and style to earlier editions. Marriage notices, in addition to intermittently included engagement notices, were still placed above birth listings. However, the latter proclamations had a new form of organization. All of the sons born to SS men were stated first and then all of the daughters, and within this gendered division, the children were put in order by date of birth. These announcements also gave the first name of the baby. Later editions from 1942-1945 continued this format, although when it came to reporting children, they often declared how many children an SS man had altogether. Most of the articles were located on page six, although they occasionally turned up on pages seven, eight, or nine, which situated them closer to the end of the paper; the total length of Das Schwarze Korps shortened during the war to eight to ten pages per issue. “On Relations and Family” was consistently placed at the end of a much shorter newspaper. In fact, in the final edition of Das Schwarze Korps on March 29, 1945, “On Relations and Family” was the last article on the last page.

Appearing almost 300 times throughout the course of the newspaper, “On Relations and Family” held significance for the themes of fatherhood and family in the SS. First and foremost, this section demonstrated the public pride in the birth of Germany’s new elite. Furthermore, as “On Relations and Family” literally catalogued the naissance of the Nazi nobility, it gave tangible credence to Himmler’s modus operandi. Publicizing the birth of newborns especially demonstrated the success of eugenics on a superficial level because it illustrated a definitive increase in the number of children. From the outside looking in, the selective use of eugenics had increased the population of the most racially fit members of the German Volk.

Additionally, this section used the birth announcements to promote the ideal of prolific parenthood. It highlighted the merits of having a large family, especially during 1939 when the articles organized the children by how many existed in a family. This type of familial advertisement openly created peer pressure to encourage greater success because publishing the birth of one’s child publicly revealed that an SS man and his wife had fulfilled their biological duty for the Reichsführer, Führer, and Reich. It likewise flaunted the victory of the child on the home front as a counterpart to the military triumph on the battlefield during the early years of the war. These children represented the Germans who would safeguard in the future those gains
won by their fathers.

Finally, “On Relations and Family” kept the ideal of parenthood alive for a decade. Its continuing presence in the newspaper connected children with the sustenance of Germany. The section clearly held greater importance at the start of its run when it occupied a position close to the front of the newspaper. It was never headline news, but it warranted considerable attention due to its location within the first few pages of the paper. Its significance grew during 1939 when the articles bolstered the idea of family through the imagery of children in each piece in the prewar months. During the middle and later years of the war, the value of this section fell as it was pushed toward the end of an increasingly shorter newspaper. Nonetheless, once Das Schwarze Korps resumed its publication in 1941, “On Relations and Family” remained until the end, and its presence upheld the idea that the children of the SS represented a key element to the future of the Third Reich.

The second section in Das Schwarze Korps which consistently related familial matters was called “Family Announcements” (Familien Anzeigen). First appearing on June 19, 1935 and running fairly consistently through the last edition on March 29, 1945, the section served a similar function as “On Relations and Family.”51 Featured in the newspaper well over 450 times, it too reported engagements, marriages, and the birth of children. However, “Family Announcements” differed from “On Relations and Family” in several ways. To begin with, the initiative for this section did not come from Himmler and the newspaper did not receive information for it from RuSHA. On the contrary, “Family Announcements” was a form of paid advertisement.52 The newspaper routinely ran a small blurb on the same page as the section that indicated when and where the information had to be sent as well as how much it would cost. The editors requested that the material be submitted by the end of the week to the advertising department located in the paper’s main office on Zimmerstraße, conveniently down the street from the central SS headquarters on Prinz Albrecht Straße.53 The price for one announcement ranged from 6-14 RM depending on the size of the ad, but the most often quoted price was 10.50

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51 See Appendix E for examples of how “Familien Anzeigen” appeared as described in the text. Also, there were only two sizeable gaps without this section, in April and May 1937 and from mid-May to late July 1941.
52 This concept is much clearer in German as the word Anzeigen also means advertisement.
53 At first, ads had to be submitted by Saturday morning. Then as of July 1936, the newspaper requested submission by Friday morning. From then until the end of the paper’s run, the day changed periodically, primarily back and forth between Thursday and Friday.
RM – a price around 3 RM higher than the yearly cost for the paper.\textsuperscript{54} “Family Announcements” was located toward the end of the paper, as most advertisements were, throughout the entire run of \textit{Das Schwarze Korps}. Depending on how many advertisements were purchased, the section took up anywhere from one-fifth of a page to two full pages.

Most of the advertisements were purchased by SS families. While the parents of a couple periodically placed ads, most couples announced their own engagements and marriages. In each case, a couple listed their names and the date of their engagement or marriage, and the man also included his SS rank and unit. For example, SS-Standartenführer Kuno von Eltz-Rübenach, later a Brigadeführer in RuSHA, announced both his engagement and marriage, as did SS-Standartenführer Günter d’Alquen and SS-Untersturmführer Rolf d’Alquen.\textsuperscript{55} As for the birth of children, again ads were primarily purchased by an SS man and his wife, although on a few occasions, it was just the SS man who made the announcement or an entire SS unit placed a collective announcement on behalf of its men.\textsuperscript{56} The parents typically listed the name, gender, and date of birth of their newborn. Occasionally, they noted if the child was their first, second, third, et cetera child. Sometimes they even phrased the announcement in a cutesy manner, such as stating that their son was going to be a big brother or that their three boys had a baby sister to welcome into the family.

Some of the SS officers who announced the birth of their children in “Family Announcements” included SS-Obergruppenführers Richard Walther Darré, Friedrich Krüger, and Udo von Woysrch, SS-Gruppenführers Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, August Heißmeyer, Reinhard Heydrich, Günther Pancke, and Karl Wolff, and SS-Brigadeführers Werner Best and Richard Hildebrandt.\textsuperscript{57} The three men of the \textit{Das Schwarze Korps} editorial staff were also

\begin{itemize}
  \item At 15 pfennig a paper, a fifty-two week supply would have cost 7.8 RM and a 60 pfennig monthly subscription would have cost 7.2 RM a year. Outside of the published prices, the SS central chancellory justified the cost of the ads within the SS in mid 1937: “Familien-Anzeigen im ‘Schwarzen Korps,’” 25 June 1937, BA NSD41/2, page 10.
  \item The announcements were placed on the following dates: Kuno von Eltz-Rübenach (7 October 1937, p. 22 and 19 May 1938, p. 18), Günter d’Alquen (21 October 1937, p. 18 and 11 November 1937, p. 18), and Rolf d’Alquen (30 December 1937, p. 18 and 14 April 1938, p. 17).
  \item For an example of the latter, see 20 March 1941, p. 12.
  \item The ranks listed were not necessarily the highest obtained by each man, but instead the rank listed at the time of the advertisement: Richard Walther Darré (8 September 1938, p. 18), Friedrich Krüger (19 March 1936, p. 14), Udo von Woysrch (16 July 1936, p. 18), Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski (27 August 1936, p. 19), August Heißmeyer (19 March 1936, p. 14, 7 October 1937, p. 22, 12 December 1940, p. 14), Reinhard Heydrich (20 April 1939, p. 32), Günther Pancke (19 November 1936, p. 18, 24 August 1939, p. 18), Karl Wolff (23 January 1936, p. 12 and 30 March 1938, p. 18), Werner Best (3 August 1939, p. 17), and Richard Hildebrandt (16 July 1936, p. 18).
\end{itemize}
among the thousands of SS members who bought an advertisement. These purchased announcements served two purposes, similar to “On Relations and Family.” Within the SS, the routine inclusion of this information in “Family Announcements” promoted the celebration of new life and the expansion of the family community. It also set a good example for other SS men to follow, especially when higher-ranking SS officers purchased an announcement; the inclusion of their information sent a stronger message than the listings in “On Relations and Family” because SS men willingly chose to share their family news as opposed to RuSHA supplying the relevant details.

There was one other notable element to “Family Announcements.” Engagements, marriages, and births formed only part of the section; many spaces were purchased to publicize deaths. The vast majority of death announcements were of SS men, although on occasion SS men and their families purchased an ad to commemorate the loss of a parent. Most of these advertisements were placed by SS men seeking to honor a fallen comrade from their unit, but occasionally a widow paid for one. Standing out from the other three types of ads with a big black border, a death announcement gave the name of the deceased person, his rank, age, unit, and date of death; it oftentimes included kind words about the departed man and commended him for his bravery and loyalty.

Prior to the war, the death advertisements took up no more than half of the area allocated for “Family Announcements.” They frequently occupied less space or may not have even been present. This frequency, however, greatly altered with the war, and death began to occupy more space than life to the point where an entire page or more was often devoted to mourning those who had lost their lives fighting for Germany. Within a few editions after the start of the war, most of the death announcements also contained a cross with a small swastika in the center of it, the same basic design as the various medals a soldier could have earned. Thus, while the other ads announced the enlargement of the SS family community, these latter ads drew attention to its potential decline as soldiers lost their lives fighting for the fatherland. Furthermore, as of late July 1941, there was a correlation between “Family Announcements” and “On Relations and

59 “Aus Sippe und Familie” did list deaths, but these listing were rare and only at the beginning of its run.
60 The families of Darré, Himmler, Heydrich, and Kaltenbrunner all purchased ads following the loss of a parent: Darré’s mother (30 July 1936, p. 17), Himmler’s father (5 November 1936, p. 18), Heydrich’s father (1 September 1938, p. 18), and Kaltenbrunner’s father (15 September 1938, p. 18).
Family.” The former only reported deaths and the latter only marriages and births. There were a few editions where one appeared and the other did not (normally “Family Announcements” did and “On Relations and Family” did not), but on the many occasions when both were issued, they appeared on the same page, one right on top of the other. By the later years of the war, these sections served in tandem to bear witness to the state of the SS family community.

“On Relations and Family” and “Family Announcements” were clearly the most important sections of *Das Schwarze Korps* dedicated to the SS family. Beyond these two segments, however, there were a variety of individual articles that delved into topics related to the family, indicating where the SS stood on a myriad of issues. Some articles were tailored toward SS readers, but many of them aimed to reach a broader readership. One of the themes important both within the SS and Nazi Germany was hereditary hygiene and racial care. *Das Schwarze Korps* ran articles emphasizing the significance of population politics and the value of preserving and passing on healthy Nordic blood.\(^61\) Several of them even reported on related affairs within the scientific community, such as highlighting the International Population Congress held in Berlin in 1935.\(^62\)

Articles about blood and race also mentioned their importance for the goals of the SS, emphasizing that it was an organization of racially worthy soldiers which respected racial selection.\(^63\) A couple of pieces explained the process through which an SS applicant had to go through to join the order.\(^64\) One article in particular from late 1935, “The Inner Security of the Reich,” summarized the overall purpose of the SS, connecting its vetting process with its core ideals of honor and loyalty.\(^65\) The article twice declared that the SS had imposed these selection laws on itself and took them so seriously that not all children born to SS men would have the privilege of automatically being accepted; they too had to be evaluated so that only the very best German blood would belong to the SS. The inclusion of this point appears axiomatic in hindsight given the Gruppenführer oath which Himmler required of all SS Gruppenführer.

\(^61\) For example, “Erbgesund – Erbkrank,” 3 April 1935, p. 11; “Ewiges Blut,” 26 June 1935, p. 14; “Der neue Weg,” 10 March 1938, p. 3-4; and “Erst hinterher weiß man es,” 1 June 1944, p. 4
\(^64\) “Was bin ich für ein Rassentyp?” 12 December 1935, p. 14 and “Wer will unter die Soldaten,” 17 December 1936, p. 3.
Obergruppenführer. But Himmler created that oath in November 1936 – one year after the newspaper had printed the article. Thus, in this instance, a segment within the SS – the young staff of Das Schwarze Korps – anticipated an element within the Reichsführer’s population policies and goals.

Beyond this possible prescience, “The Inner Security of the Reich” brought up another issue: the engagement and marriage command. It noted that this decree represented the first selection law in the SS, although it was neither the first nor the last article to discuss the order. Others explained the purpose of the command, delving into various aspects of it, such as elucidating why RuSHA required a family tree to trace lineage back to 1800 and why the wife of an SS man had to be racially and hereditarily worthy. They also defended it, proclaiming that the Reichsführer had intervened in the private affairs of his men as a means to protect the German race. Promoting healthy marriages meant promoting healthy children, which in turn promoted a healthy Volk.

These articles revealed the marital ideals and ambitions of the SS. Additional articles conveyed the overall importance of a healthy marriage to the entire Volk and presented a larger context for readers beyond the immediate SS audience. Part of that larger context was provided by a Reich ministry health official, Arthur Gütt. Contributing an article in late October 1935, he briefly outlined the various hereditary health laws passed by the Nazi government. Among them, he discussed the Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German Volk (Gesetz zum Schutz der Erbgesundheit des deutschen Volkes), which the state had issued one week prior. Gütt defined the law as one designed to promote the birth of valuable children by ensuring healthy unions and preventing undesirable ones based on racial and hereditary grounds. This law showed how race and hereditary health could not be separated, a point which, Gütt acknowledged in his article, the SS had already recognized. The organization had taken a leading role in protecting the blood and hereditary health of the German Volk. Gütt proclaimed that the government could pass laws, but individuals were ultimately responsible for achieving...
the goals laid down in them, something which SS men and their wives recognized and accepted with their marriages and families.

Additional articles promoted the merits of healthy marital bonds, classifying the marriage as the germ cell (Keimzelle) of the Volk. They reinforced the idea that a marriage represented the beginning of a family whose task was to preserve its heritage for the future. Its importance lay in producing children; therefore, a childless marriage could not contribute to the Volk.71 One piece directly noted that “the marriage is the child and its upbringing in healthy, harmonic surroundings” while another proved the same point by quoting the definition of marriage as designated by the Family Judiciary Committee of the Academy for German Law.72 The newspaper continually promoted the connection between marriages and families by publishing articles emphasizing the efficacy of an early marriage. The basic message remained the same in each article: the younger the age at which two people married, the higher the possibility of the couple raising a child-rich family.73

Das Schwarze Korps remained relatively supportive of state measures designed to augment the family. For example, the article “Child = Child” from March 1937 commended the state marriage loan program, but at the same time, it objected to one element of the law – the fact that a portion of the loan could only be deferred for a child born in wedlock.74 The unlisted author argued that the deferral should also apply to a couple who had a child and then later married one another because the purpose – although not the wording – of the law was to encourage the birth of healthy children. When the child was born was irrelevant; the point of the law, the author contended, was not to reprimand the parents on moral grounds or subject them to bourgeois (bürgerlicher) morals. This critique represented one of the many times when the

72 “Im Mittelpunkt: das Kind,” 21 October 1937, p. 6 and “Ein Wort zur Ehescheidung,” 12 November 1936, p. 6. The committee defined marriage as the following: “Marriage is acknowledged by the Volk community (Volksgemeinschaft), as a permanent life community (Lebensgemeinschaft) of two racially similar, hereditarily healthy people of the opposite sex, based on mutual loyalty, love, and respect, for the purpose protecting and supporting the common welfare through peaceful cooperation and for the purpose of producing racially similar, hereditarily healthy children and educating them to be stalwart Volk comrades (Volksgenossen).” There was a follow-up to this article: “Die Ehe – ein Geschäft,” 10 December 1936, p. 7.
74 “Kind = Kind,” 18 March 1937, p. 9. For more information on this loan, see chapter 5.
newspaper chided the pervasive sway of bourgeois morality within German society.\textsuperscript{75}

Promoting racially and hereditarily sound marriages within the SS and the German Volk was one of the many themes in the articles found in \textit{Das Schwarze Korps}. Another related subject often appearing in its pages was the importance of children. This was of course an essential message for SS men to receive; the aforementioned article “The Inner Security of the Reich” specifically noted that SS men were taught in the present and would be taught in the future that \textit{“the most precious property (Gut) is the German child.”}\textsuperscript{76} Many other articles articulated a similar point.\textsuperscript{77} The future of the German Volk depended on children; therefore, they were to be valued and families were to be supported. Both SS and non-SS readers were told that everything that Germany had achieved would be wasted if there were not an unending supply of children. However, the declining birth rate over the past few decades had turned Germany into a child-poor state, a problem that the National Socialist government had recognized, yet one which could only be rectified when the German people accepted that having children was their duty.\textsuperscript{78}

By emphasizing the idea that the fate of Germany lay in the hands of its citizens, in particular by assigning them the task of securing that future with their children, these articles fulfilled two purposes. The first was to remind its SS readers of their familial responsibilities to the organization and the Reich, publicly reinforcing objectives which they would have already been familiar with due to their education and training within the SS. The second was to inform them that while they, as a leading element in Nazi Germany, were responsible for achieving reproductive goals, they were not alone in this task. As bearers of the best Nordic blood, their involvement was vital, but many Germans also possessed good blood and they too would contribute with their children. The articles called upon these other Germans as much as the members of the SS to become accountable for their collective future. 

\textit{Das Schwarze Korps} therefore implored its readers to take action and to secure the primacy of National Socialist Germany through their service to the Reich and commitment to its

\textsuperscript{75} One major issue with regards to the newspaper attacking bourgeois morality was its acceptance of illegitimacy, which is discussed below.
\textsuperscript{76} “Die innere Sicherung des Reichs,” p. 2, emphasis in original.
future, which included having a racially valuable family. In doing so, it explicitly connected the theme of children with the theme of blood and race. Not all Germans were worthy enough to contribute to the Volk; those individuals classified by the state as asocial, degenerate, criminal, and/or hereditarily ill were not the target audience of the newspaper. Children were only desired from healthy members of the Volk. Quality was crucial, yet the newspaper also recognized that quantity was essential as well, leading to articles calling for not only racially healthy children, but for such offspring in high numbers. In accordance with the propositions of racial hygienists and the intentions of the Reichsführer, these articles mentioned that every fertile marriage needed to have four children in order to ensure the continuance of the Volk. One article conveyed the content of a series of speeches given by Himmler to various Oberabschnitte. Among the issues addressed these speeches, Himmler spoke of the Volk as an eternal entity kept alive by the reproductive contributions of its members; he proclaimed that every young German who did not give his Volk four to five healthy children between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five was committing a crime. Himmler informed his SS listeners, and by extension Das Schwarze Korps informed its entire readership, that having children was a duty to one’s ancestors.

To emphasize further the value of a large and healthy family, another article showcased eminent Germans who had come from prodigious families. This article served a similar purpose as the one in SS-Leithefte, although it was published about a year earlier. Names mentioned in the Das Schwarze Korps article include musician Franz Schubert (twelfth of fourteen children), Prussian King Friedrich the Great (fourth of fourteen), composers Johan Sebastian Bach (sixth of twelve), Richard Wagner (last of nine), and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (last of seven), German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck (fourth of six), and First World War General Erich Ludendorff (third of six). The underlying assumption behind the article was that these well-respected and influential Germans would have never had to opportunity to contribute to Germany or to the world if their parents had limited their families to one or two children. It implied that present-day Germans should follow the lead of their eminent ancestors by producing a child-rich family or else risk losing some of the greatest future contributors.

81 “Deutschlands wichtige Frage,” 16 March 1939, p. 3-4.
82 “Der Deutsche Mutter,” January 25, 1940, p. 3.
The newspaper moreover included articles that highlighted the stories of individual Germans, using its own readers to reinforce its message on family and children. One case involved a recently-married twenty-seven-year-old man.\footnote{“Die Tanten sollten lieber helfen,” 13 July 1939, p. 6. Another individual case is in the article “Frage und Antwort,” 30 July 1942, p. 4.} He informed the paper that he and his wife wished to have at least four children. After speaking with his friends, he learned that they too wished to have large families. However, he and his friends realized that not only had all of them come from small families, but their parents and older relatives were against them wanting to have large families. This older generation was trying to convince their offspring that they were still young and that children would only disrupt their lives now. The young man disagreed with this perspective. He conversely proclaimed that it was the elders who needed to change their attitude; they needed to support their children and help their children with their offspring.

In these examples, the newspaper demonstrated its dedication to children as a topic which merited coverage. Its articles promoted the family and encourage acceptance of the population policies of the government and the SS. As shown above, many of these pieces supported children outright, although others took a more critical and less friendly tone by lambasting measures detrimental to the family. For instance, two articles from the summer of 1939 took umbrage at the treatment of families; in the first, two child-rich fathers in Berlin were fined by the police when their children made too much noise, and in the second, a restaurant in Hanover was criticized for not being friendly to children, especially young ones still in strollers.\footnote{“‘O diese Kinder…!,” 25 May 1939, p. 16 and “Für Kinderreiche verboten!” 3 August 1939, p. 7.}

In a more positive manner, the newspaper championed families and children through the literary works and pictures it published. At least a dozen poems were printed which focused on various aspects of the family, including ancestors, blood, and children.\footnote{“Ewigkeit,” 20 March 1935, p. 14; “Unser Junge,” 20 March 1935, p. 14; “An meinen Sohn,” 29 May 1935, p. 9; “Des Ahnen Ruf,” 7 August 1935, p. 14; “Ewiges Blut,” 28 August 1935, p. 9; “Der Väter Blut,” 31 October 1935, p. 9; “Kind und Sonne,” 21 January 1937, p. 6; “Sieg Heil…Ihrem Kindchen,” 19 May 1938, p. 7; “Für meine Kinder,” 7 July 1938, p. 15; “Bange Frange,” 30 March 1939, p. 17; and “Sein Kind,” 14 March 1940, p. 9.} These poems sought to capture the essence of the family and its role in the Volk; as one of them began, “A Volk has no greater good / than its clans…”\footnote{“Ein Volk hat großer Güter nicht,” 23 June 1938, p. 16.} What made these poems notable beyond their lyrical adoration of the family was that fact that the newspaper supplied the names of the people who had sent in submissions. Therefore, if most or all of the poets were readers and not employees of Das Schwarze Korps, including their works bolstered the position of the newspaper with regards to
the family. The submissions indicated that readers found enough resonance in the newspaper’s content that they took the time to write and mail in a reply. 87

Regarding pictures, every edition was replete with photographs and sometimes even illustrations. Some were directly connected to the articles on the same page, although many of them were unassociated photos. Most of the family-related pictures were simply those with children in them, and as with the photos in SS-Leithefte, the children looked happy, innocent, and racially impeccable. 88 Puppies or bunnies appeared in photos with children, frequently more often than a parental figure. 89 In the cases when a father did turn up, the photos always displayed a happy reunion or bonding between the proud father and his healthy and vibrant offspring. Examples of such images included an SS soldier kneeling next to a baby carriage, a father holding his two children while they played with a small toy car, a father sitting at the dinner table with his wife and child, and a little girl smiling while in the arms of her uniformed father. 90 Altogether, these images served to reinforce pictorially every family-related theme in Das Schwarze Korps. 91

One final way in which Das Schwarze Korps endorsed family affairs, especially to the SS, was by publicizing family-related events in the SS. The most notable of those events was the family night (Sippenabend). These evenings were promoted by RuSHA, which wanted the get-togethers to be occasions where the family and friends of SS men could gain greater insight into the purpose of the SS. 92 In particular, it was important for the wives and fiancées of SS men to attend because they should understand the community to which they and their men belonged and be willing to participate actively in that community. On a dozen occasions, Das Schwarze Korps ran small blurbs reporting on family nights which had been held in various SS units throughout

87 There was also poetry which served a similar purpose in SS-Leithefte.
88 Examples of children appearing alone can be found on the following dates and pages: 24 April 1935, p. 4; 26 June 1935, p. 14; 14 May 1936, p. 15; 1 July 1937, p. 14; 27 October 1938, p. 17; and 9 March 1939, p. 15.
90 Examples of children with father figures can be found on the following dates and pages: 3 July 1935, p. 3; 19 March 1936, p. 11; 26 March 1936, p. 10; 31 August 1939, p. 11; 30 May 1940, p. 11; 16 January 1941, p. 11; and 20 March 1941, p. 3.
91 The vast majority of the photographs appeared to have been run based on the discretion of the newspaper. However, early in the war, a mother did write the newspaper and ask it to include a photo of her child so her husband on the front would see it, and in another article, a photographer offered his services to take pictures of children whose fathers were at the front and send the pictures to the fathers free of charge. The fact that the newspaper ran these two articles suggests that it might have followed up on both requests, but it remains a bit unclear. “Lieber SK,” 28 March 1940, p. 9 and “Lieber SK,” 19 April 1940, p. 9.
92 RuSHA’s expectations for the Sippenabend can be found in “Wie gestalten wir einen Sippenabend?” BA NS2/82, page 185 and “Der Sippengedanke der SS im Kriege,” BA NS2/42, pages 1-2.
the Reich. Most of these articles commented that the evenings were designed to solidify the SS family community. Invited speakers, generally high-ranking SS officers, talked about a relevant topic, such as the development and tasks of the SS, the responsibility to have a healthy family, and the fight against the declining birthrate. One lecture in Berlin even took place at the well-known Märkisches Museum where the speaker enlightened his listeners about the latest findings on the lives of German farmers based on recent nearby digs. Beyond the speeches, there was music, singing, dancing, artistic performances, and eating.

The inclusion of SS family nights demonstrated how the newspaper kept its SS readers updated on activities within the organization and its non-SS audience informed about how the SS was contributing to the Volk. It was one more way in which Das Schwarze Korps specified how the family was an integral element of the Volk. However, the newspaper was not content with simply speaking of the family in generalities. Having a racially healthy family was only the first part of the larger family ideology in the SS and the Third Reich. Actively parenting was another component, and many articles promoted the involvement of parents in raising their children. The mother had long since been seen as the primary caregiver in the German family, and the newspaper sustained that perspective. However, it also published articles emphasizing the essential role that a father had in the life of his children. Fatherhood was not limited to a biological contribution; fathers were expected, as shown in many articles, to participate in rearing and educating their offspring.

According to one article, “the most precious and happy goods in life are as follows: health, love, and children; man cannot buy these with money, they are gifts of heaven that we should gratefully and humbly accept.” Thus, one facet of fatherhood exemplified in the

93 “Sippenabend der Sanitäter,” 25 March 1937, p. 3; “Sippenabend der Sanitäter,” 1 July 1937, p. 4; “Erster Sippenabend in Linz,” 7 July 1938, p. 4; “Sommerfest mit unserem FM,” 18 August 1938, p. 3; “Sippenabend,” 16 March 1939, p. 4; “Sanitätsabteilung,” 13 April 1939, p. 4; “Sippenabend,” 4 May 1939, p. 4; “Sippenabend,” 8 May 1939, p. 4; “Sippenabend,” 25 May 1939, p. 4; “Sippenabend,” 8 June 1939, p. 4; “Sippenabend,” 24 August 1939, p. 4. Although all of these citations are from before the war, the documents from RuSHA cited above indicate that family nights were still held during the war.
94 “Sippenabend,” 27 April 1939, p. 4.
96 “Gesundheit, Liebe, Kinder,” October 1, 1942, p. 4.
newspaper was the reaction of men to the birth of their children. Publicizing this aspect of fatherhood was a simple means of indicating how fathers should take pride in their ability to fulfill their racial responsibilities by having children. For example, the newspaper reported the immeasurable satisfaction of a father, Helmut Lewenhardt, as he attempted to compose the birth announcement of his sixth child for his local paper in Essen. He wrestled to find the right words to express his ecstasy over his third son, and after realizing the benefits that his son would give to the nation, he finally reached the appropriate words: “Germany shall live even if we must die!” By including the words of this one father, the author implied that every father should respond to his newborn child with similar candor and excitement.

Once the fathers had welcomed the babies into their families, they had other paternal responsibilities. Two different articles discussed the duties relevant for fathers. The first, “Is this unmanly?,” illustrated the day-to-day tasks relevant for fathers. It emphasized the acceptable actions undertaken by a father for his children. It plainly averred that a father should not take over the responsibilities of a mother, but it was permissible for a man to help his wife with her domestic duties. With this assistance, a man would lose nothing of his manliness or dignity, but he would in fact prove his position as “a genuine man and a proper husband.”

This same article contained five photographs demonstrating the acceptable care that a father, or any SS man for that matter, should provide for children. The first image depicted a father pushing the baby carriage while taking a stroll with his wife and son; the caption exclaimed, “This father fears nothing unmanly to his appearance. He decreases the troubles of his wife.” The second photograph showed a family outing. The uniformed father carried his daughter, an action which the words underneath the illustration strongly supported: “The smallest of the family has become tired from a walk in the forest. Now should the mother… [sic] no, our SS-comrade shows that he has no fear.” The third snapshot revealed an SS man in uniform aiding a mother with her baby carriage, and beneath it the footer noted: “Uniform and baby carriage, both rescue the soldier.” The last two pictures portrayed a man feeding a bottle to and changing the diaper of a baby. Once again, the caption affirmed the encouragement of the newspaper for these deeds: “Why shouldn’t the father also provide for his child…? He thereby

99 Ibid., 13.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
loses nothing of his masculinity, but he shows himself in such a case that his love for his wife and his child is not only lip service.”

The second article, “Best Friends,” focused on the time that a father should spend with his older children, especially his sons. The authors (the article was written anonymously in the third person plural) emphasized the fond memories they had with their fathers. These interactions included playing boyhood games and listening to their fathers speak about when they were young. The authors proclaimed that in this time together, the father ceased to be an authority figure, but became a comrade who taught his sons the value of love, respect, and trust. “...we believe today,” the authors contended, “that something like a camaraderie developed between us and our fathers in these hours.” They argued that all fathers had time for their children; no father could make a contrary claim, because if nothing else, he could spend time with them when on vacation. The authors also derided fathers who would not be seen outside cavorting with their children as cowardly, suggesting, “Daddy, you are foolish!”

Nothing could replace the time that a father spent with his children, and while acknowledging that the activities could be tiring, the article proclaimed that the rewards were worthwhile.

As with the previous article analyzed above, “Best Friends” reinforced the text with images. Each picture showed a father interacting with his son or sons – giving swimming lessons, constructing a fort, climbing a tree, and building a camp fire. In both cases, the depictions furnished a persuasive argument with respect to the vital participation of a father in the daily life and upbringing of his children. They imparted the vision of an active father who cared for his family; fatherhood encompassed far more than biological responsibility. Moreover, in the illustrations with uniformed SS men, they demonstrated the very image that Himmler wanted associated with his SS soldiers: strapping young men with healthy wives and cherubic children. Finally, they publicly stated that fatherly admiration and care were acceptable and admirable traits for SS men. There was nothing unmanly in fatherly affection. This was a fact of which the staff of the newspaper, Günter d’Alquen, Rudolf aus den Ruthen, and Rolf d’Alquen, all fathers of at least one child when these two articles were published, would have been personally well-aware.

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102 Ibid.
104 Ibid., p. 8.
105 Ibid., p. 9.
Fathers also assisted with educating their children. An article from May 1936 affirmed that fathers participated in the educational upbringing of their children through their early teenage years. At this time, daughters pulled away from their father’s oversight as they matured, only to grow closer as they grew into young women. Sons tended to rebel from their fathers before realizing that they stood behind their fathers as the men who would carry the family lineage into the future. Once the fathers and sons had reconciled with one another, a later article contended that they could mutually teach one another as the younger generation joined the older one in the workforce.\textsuperscript{106}

The obligations of fathers also extended into the realm of finances, especially as men were the primary financial caregivers. Loans and grants provided by the government were always given to the father as the head of the family, who also received tax deductions for having children. This fiscal courtesy, however, did not extend to divorced fathers when the mother had custody of the children. One article described this plight of divorced fathers.\textsuperscript{107} The tax laws stated that in cases where the children lived with the mother and the father only provided monetary support, the father was regarded as childless. These laws compounded this slight by awarding financial benefits to the mother and the stepfather, a man who had no commitments to the children. As it had in the case of deferring payments from the marriage loan, \textit{Das Schwarze Korps} objected to the law. The article insisted that “this discrimination has a lasting effect damaging to the children, for [the father’s] natural interest is to save them.”\textsuperscript{108} The idea of a father working for the advantage of his children correlated with the belief that fathers needed to have an active role in their rearing, but this article on divorced fathers demonstrated that even the Nazi system, which so emphatically stressed the value of healthy families and children, had its flaws.

The information in the articles examined so far presented ideas that were well within the parameters of racial and familial policies both in the Third Reich and the SS. However, Günter d’Alquen had not founded \textit{Das Schwarze Korps} simply to reiterate what the people most likely already knew and supported. Consequently, while the majority of family-related subjects found resonance among the readers, there were particular themes which were less steadfastly embraced, none more so than illegitimacy. The newspaper’s support for illegitimacy was conditional, but

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{106}] “Ein Generationsproblem,” May 21, 1936, p. 6 and “Wenn der Vater mit dem Sohne…” August 5, 1937, p. 17.
\item[\textsuperscript{107}] “Gleiches Recht für alle Väter!” January 12, 1939, p. 6.
\item[\textsuperscript{108}] Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
within the bounds sanctioned by Himmler. Several articles indicated that single motherhood was not the ideal; the best situation for the children, financially and socially, was to have the parents together, and when this was not possible, it was still the moral obligation of the father to care for his children.

In addition, the newspaper took a notable stance on bourgeois morality and illegitimacy, attacking the fact that women were scorned for such pregnancies whereas men were not. One piece specifically argued that men were just as responsible as women for illegitimacy while another indicated that men and women needed to be held to the same standards. With illegitimacy came the related issue of adultery, which the newspaper was generally not in favor of: “Once again, it is repeated: we still neither defend nor excuse the ‘infidelity’ of a man.” Although when it came to the issue of reproduction, the newspaper did allow some leeway for men, suggesting the each man needed to decide if betraying his wife or not having children was a worse violation of nature.

These caveats aside, the newspaper was quite liberal in its support for illegitimate children. One article even pointed out that, biologically speaking, more than half of first-born children were illegitimate because they were conceived prior to marriage, a fact which the newspaper would have known to be relatively true in the SS if the editors had any knowledge of the engagement and marriage applications that Himmler had approved due to pregnancy. Beyond this particular statistic, the general purpose of the articles on illegitimacy was to disprove the commonly held view in German society that an illegitimate child was an aberration. The newspaper argued that it could not subscribe to such a view, that not all unwed mothers and illegitimate children should be looked down upon, and that every racially-suitable illegitimate child deserved a place in the Volksgemeinschaft. It consistently contended throughout its ten-year run that the National Socialist state had the responsibility to find this place without devaluing the marriage and mentioned on several occasions that the Lebensborn program was

110 “Im Mittelpunkt: das Kind.”
111 The following articles discussed adultery: “Keine konstruierten Ehebrüche mehr,” 21 October 1937, p. 6; “Sinn und Unsinn der Ehe,” 28 October 1937, p. 6; “Die sittliche Bewertung,” 28 October 1937, p. 6; and “Der Sippenanwalt,” 1 April 1943, p. 4.
112 “Kinder – ausserhalb der Gemeinschaft.” A second article proclaimed that in Austria there was a regional average where one out of every four children was illegitimate. “An ihren Früchten,” 9 July 1936, p. 11.
one such measure designed for this purpose.\textsuperscript{113}

With illegitimacy came the related issue of adoption, namely that it was a perfectly viable option for a childless couple to adopt healthy illegitimate children. “Children are the most precious property of our Volk,” one article proclaimed. “They should all have a home and a family in our Reich.”\textsuperscript{114} The newspaper admitted in other articles that an adopted child might not take the place of a biological one, but this option would provide a couple otherwise denied children with the opportunity to contribute to the Volk.\textsuperscript{115} With this supportive attitude, Das Schwarze Korps simply promoted adoption as an alternate opportunity, as it had already suggested that marriages without children were of no use to the Volk. Yet, the articles printed in the newspaper did not address the issue that unwed mothers did not want to give up their children or the problem that families did not want to adopt them, hindrances which did exist in the SS and for the Lebensborn program.

After the war started, Das Schwarze Korps had many new topics to report on, especially the successes of the Waffen-SS. Even with this new content, it still published articles emphasizing racial and familial themes. If anything, these subjects gained greater importance because of the threat of death hanging over each and every German soldier. Article after article appealed to these men to have children: “…the victory of arms must also be the victory of the commitment to the child.”\textsuperscript{116} Reproduction was defined as an integral duty. Children had the potential to even out the loss of blood, and they preserved the heredity and lineage of those men who sacrificed themselves protecting Germany. This preservation was vital, especially because many soldiers came from one and two-child families and might have been the last surviving male.\textsuperscript{117} Thus, men could not wait until after the war was over to ensure the lineage of their family. As one article, “Life Enemies,” fervently implored: “We say to the soldiers, they should, if possible, not delay in giving life to a child; we advise them to marry early; we charge them and

\textsuperscript{113} “Kind = Kind;” “Darauf können wird stolz sein,” 16 November 1939, p. 1; “Ich fand wieder zu mir selbsts zurück,” 9 May 1940, p. 6; and “Gute Gelegenheit,” 4 July 1940, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{114} “Kinder auf Wideruf?,” 21 July 1938, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{115} “Adoption,” 22 December 1938, p. 18; “Aufgabe der Krankenkassen,” 27 April 1939, p. 14; “Geschäfte mit Adoptivkindern,” 27 July 1939, p. 16; and “Adoption und Patenschaft,” 22 February 1940, p. 6. In a related vein, the newspaper also printed the story of an SS-Scharführer who spoke of the unhappiness in a marriage due to childlessness, hoping for a child year after year, but never having one, and suggested that adopting healthy illegitimate children as an alternative. “Das uneheliche Kind,” 30 April 1936, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{116} “Neues Leben für vergossenes Blut,” 15 May 1941, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{117} “Das Wunder nach einmal erleben,” 22 February 1940, p. 4; “Die Aufgaben der Zukunft,” 18 December 1941, p. 2; and “Unser lieber einziger Sohn,” 15 July 1943, p. 5.

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their wives not to postpone the child-luck until the peace. The German future, the security of the hard-won victories will depend on whether our Volk will also prove to be a victor in the cradle of its children.”118 With this quote, and many others like it, the newspaper sought to inculcate its readers that while the war was being fought for the survival of the nation, its future depended on more than a military victory; the continued existence depended on life as much as death.

The family, as the germ cell of the Volk, was still the center of that life.119 Yet convincing men that they needed to ensure the continuation of their families proved easier said than done. From the correspondence submitted to and reprinted by the newspaper, many men agreed with the concept of marrying and having children. It was the execution that proved to be more problematic. One major quandary raised by soldiers was in a letter submitted by an unnamed twenty-five-year-old soldier. Both a party and SA member, this man indicated that he would gladly marry his twenty-two-year-old fiancé and have a child, clearly pointing out his belief that “Germany’s future is in our offspring.”120 However, he had one major dilemma. Due to the war, he had never finished his education. So, this soldier wanted to know how he would be expected to take care of his wife and child once the war was over. He specifically asked the newspaper for advice on how to handle such a responsibility. To answer the query, the newspaper did not directly reply, but instead reproduced a letter from a father to his son from the previous month, suggesting that it would give everyone something to think about.

The son was in a similar position; he was twenty-six years old, serving in the field, with a twenty-one-year-old fiancée. During his last conversation with his father, he had indicated that he considered it wrong to marry during wartime. The father primarily used his own experiences from the First World War in an attempt to convince his child that he was wrong. Among the advice provided by the father in his letter, he noted that a widow from the first war would have been happy had she been left with a child to raise and that those widows who did have children had been able to live securely in the postwar era. There were also many women who had married returning soldiers, even those who had been injured (another concern raised by his son), and these couples had created prosperous lives together. The father commented that the future of Germany was probably already secured through triumph on the battlefield – a self-evident view

118 “Lebensfeinde,” 30 April 1942, p. 5.
at the time of his letter in November 1939 – yet the future would only be completely ensured through a young and strong Volk, one especially founded through the fertility of its mothers. This letter from a father to a son clearly gave many readers, especially soldiers, plenty to think about and respond to because the newspaper received several more notes over the course of the war raising the same issue. Men on the front who had not finished their education or vocational training before the war were clearly worried about providing for their families after it. The newspaper was not unsympathetic to their plight; through the articles it ran, it clearly showed that it understood the dilemma faced by young soldiers. Nonetheless, *Das Schwarze Korps* held to its original position. Children must be born. “That one does not have any occupation,” one article directly proclaimed, “does not alter it [that a man should marry]. Life does not put itself on hold.” Even with the belief of an inevitable German victory early in the war, the fate of each individual was uncertain, and he must therefore, argued the newspaper, secure his family lineage.

For all of the emphasis placed on the dual victory of the war and in the cradle, the newspaper did comprehend that the reality was more complicated, and its advice of “marry, comrade, and give your Volk children,” was difficult to achieve. The article “Marry – but whom?” directly acknowledged that finding a wife and having a family in the middle of a war was not as easy as films and novels made it seem. Yet, the difficulty of the task did not make it any less necessary. Marriage and children were a necessity, and the newspaper tried to personalize the issue for its male readers by suggesting that they should not only fight for the survival of their country, but of their very own blood. As the article “And what is after that” proclaimed, “If, however, a war for the future is a war for the children, then the thoughts of a soldier also revolve around the child: around his child, that is his future blood. He fights for his child in the war; he is willing to bleed for his child; he is willing to die, if necessary, for his child.” It should be noted that these words were written less than half a year into the war, well before anyone associated with the newspaper routinely reported from the battlefront. Whoever wrote these words – be it d’Alquen or one of his writers – was doing so from the safety of the

123 “Wohler worbene Rechte,” 28 May 1942, p. 1
125 “Und wird was nachher,” 25 January 1940, p. 1.
editorial office in Berlin.\textsuperscript{126}

Therefore, to reinforce the argument and to attach a stronger significance to the idea of a man directly fighting for his own children, the newspaper featured the words of individual fathers. Such sentiment was included in the article “And what is after that” cited above. A young soldier named Werner N. had just seen his wife and learned of her pregnancy. After he returned to the field, he wrote the paper and stated that “now I know what I have to protect because under the heart of my wife grows a child, my child, and I believe that I do my duty all the more today and perform my duty because I know this…”\textsuperscript{127} Das Schwarze Korps subsequently printed additional letters from fathers, showing them taking pride in their children from far away. For example, the newspaper reported the immense joy felt by SS-Obersturmführer Jurgen V. when he became the father to both a son and a daughter within two years of his February 1940 marriage. “Through my splendid children,” he wrote, “whom I could only hold in my arms a few days, I became infinitely rich.”\textsuperscript{128} These two men found in their children a reason to fight, as did other soldiers who professed that, despite the hardship of being separated from their offspring and missing seeing them grow up, they fought now so that their sons would not have to in the future.\textsuperscript{129}

Beyond finding in their children a reason to fight, these articles demonstrated how fathers remained a part of their children’s lives during the war. Das Schwarze Korps featured several letters from fathers at the front to their children to demonstrate how men could still influence the

\textsuperscript{126} The editorial information on the bottom of the second page of each edition did not list Günter d’Alquen as associated with the Waffen-SS until the November 20, 1941 edition. By the fall of 1943, the Waffen-SS Standarte Kurt Eggers had been created and responsibility for the unit, which was a propaganda and media unit, was given to d’Alquen. By the following year, he primarily spent his time on the front, meaning that the editorial tasks in Berlin were mainly left to aus den Ruthen. Based on the bylines periodically printed with articles, toward the end of the war, it appeared that war reporters from the SS Standarte Kurt Eggers were located on all of the European fronts. Combs, The Voice of the SS, 159; William L. Combs, “Fatal attraction: dueling and the SS,” History Today, volume 47, number 6 (June 1997): 16; and Werner Augustinovic and Martin Moll, “Günter d’Alquen: Propagandist des SS-Staates,” in Die SS: Elite unter dem Totenkopf: 30 Lebensläufe, edited by Ronald M. Smelser and Enrico Syring (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schönningh, 2000), 108. Additional information can be found in the postwar records on d’Alquen created by the United States Counter Intelligence Corps in NA RG263/230/C/64/2/Box 1.

\textsuperscript{127} “Und wird was nachher,” p. 1. This letter was also included in a compilation of letters edited by d’Alquen called Das ist der Sieg! This book contained letters from men at the front. The letters were divided thematically, and one theme was “War and Family,” in which several other soldiers speak of their pride as fathers. It is not clear whether all of the works included were written by SS men, although Himmler did endorse the publication. Günter d’Alquen, Das ist der Sieg! Briefe des Glaubens in Aufbruch und Krieg (Berlin: Franz Eher, 1941), 59, 61-63, and 72. Another SS publication which reprinted letters not only from soldiers on the front, but even from family on the front to soldiers was Aufbruch: Briefe germanischer Kriegsfreiwilliger (Berlin: Der Reichsführer-SS, SS-Hauptamt, 1942).

\textsuperscript{128} “Ein glücklicher Vater,” October 1, 1942, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{129} Für meine drei Jungen,” 25 January 1940, p. 7 and Übertrieveme Lebenssicherung,” 7 September 1944, p. 2.
upbringing of their offspring. In one letter from February 1941, a father used his own frontline experiences to teach his son about the value of vigilance. As a soldier in the Waffen-SS, he firmly related everything in terms of military preparation. He advised his growing boy to perform his duties thoroughly, and he warned his son never to hesitate, but to act decisively, especially when facing an opponent.\textsuperscript{130}

The newspaper reprinted a May 1941 letter written by Alfons Putz to his son on his birthday. The pride he felt for his child emerged in his opening words: “With much love, I think of you on your birthday. Nine years ago, your mom gave you life and made us all quite happy with you. Because a child is the sunshine in the family. You are a healthy, faithful, and a really good German boy, [who] brings us much joy.”\textsuperscript{131} Putz sent his best wishes to his son, and he implored the boy to live righteously. As in the letter above, Putz offered practical advice, such as reminding his son to “always be a good and helpful comrade.”\textsuperscript{132} As he spoke to his child through this letter, Putz used a gentle tone to counsel his boy as if he understood that this letter possibly represented the last opportunity he had to communicate with his child. A third letter, written by SS-Hauptsturmführer Karl S. in December 1941, showed how a father and his children could still commune with one another during the holidays.\textsuperscript{133} Karl S. told his children to go to the park one night and decorate a tree. Then they needed to show their festive tree to the moon and stars. If they did so, the moon and stars would be able to reach him and tell him all about them because he also saw the same skyline no matter where he was. Through this celestial communication, Karl S. told his children, he would know how much his children loved him and they would know the same.

For the most part, communication between a father and his children was through letters, although occasionally he had the opportunity to see them when on leave. This time at home, according to the newspaper, allowed the father to influence his children, as shown in the article “Father on Leave.”\textsuperscript{134} It shared the daily interactions of a father with his family while on a reprieve from military service. Neither the father nor his children could conceal their elation at seeing one another. The boys vied for the attention of their father and bombarded him with questions about the front, which the father patiently answered. The article related how the

\textsuperscript{130}“Frontsoldat schreibt seinem Sohn,” February 27, 1941, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{131}“Der Soldat an seinen Sohn,” May 15, 1941, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{132}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133}“Brücke der Gedanken,” 18 December 1941, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{134}“Vater auf Urlaub,” January 4, 1940, pp. 11-12.
family found mutual comfort in the presence of one another. Even after the father had returned to the front, the sons did not let his memory slip away. They relived the encounter over and over again and recalled what their father had said and done while at home. As in the earlier articles which highlighted the interaction between fathers and children, this one had pictures of the father playing games with his children, tucking them into bed, and demonstrating what he did on the front. These photos proved that even during a war, a man had the ability to serve actively as soldier and a father to his young and impressionable children.

All of these articles and reprinted letters demonstrated how many soldier-fathers found solace through their children. However, a few soldiers apparently remained unconvinced of the need to marry and have children. One of them, Werner W., expressed his position in a letter to the newspaper. He insisted that his duty as a soldier did not have to correlate automatically with fatherhood. He respectfully argued that “you [the newspaper] think that we fight for our children. No, we fight for our eternal Germany. You think one struggles more easily if one has a child at home… I have no children… [but] I know what I struggle for – for Germany. However, Germany is more than our children.” Werner W. asserted that Germany had to win the war first and then concern itself with raising families in peacetime.

The newspaper refuted Werner W.’s perspective. It rhetorically asking what would become of a victorious Germany that had no children to succeed the present generation. Germany was losing its best blood in the war, and if these men did not procreate now, then the German nation would forfeit its most valuable racial heritage. The article editorialized: “And therefore every soldier shall, who would like to transmit his blood to the German future, have the right to be a soldier and a father…” The newspaper further reasoned that “the German man of the present is responsible not only for victory on the battlefield. Soldiers and Germans can no longer be separate concepts. The responsibility for the future of the Reich with all of its demands weighs on all of us.” This editorial portion emphatically stressed that one obligation could not supersede the other.

With these articles and letters, Das Schwarze Korps accentuated its-point-of-view that the victory of the arms and in the cradle had to mutually coexist and reinforce one another. Yet, as Germany was fighting a war, the newspaper could not and did not ignore the interrelated issues

136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
of death and how death influenced the family. One of the means through which the newspaper addressed these matters was by reprinting the last wills of soldiers, some of whom were fathers. One of the most somber and poignant examples was written in August 1943 by a war reporter named Walter Serocka to his unborn child. In his letter, he attempted to encapsulate the entirety of a father’s influence in his child’s life in one brief passage. Serocka wrote as a man cognizant that he might never have the chance to see his child, which was true; in the introduction to the letter, the newspaper indicated that Serocka had in fact died. Thus, he presciently acknowledged that his “fate is uncertain because it lies in the darkness of the war. Whether I will see you, whether you will ride on my knees, whether I admire your first step, and whether I can ever be a playmate and comrade for you, I do not know this because death marches at the side of the soldier.” The man explained to his future child that he too had to stand at the grave of his father at a very tender age. As a child, Serocka had provided solace to his widowed mother in the days after the First World War, and he recognized that his own unborn child might very well have to give his wife similar comfort.

Serocka described how close birth and death lay together for him; mortality stood as his daily companion not unlike the baby growing in his wife’s womb. He knew that if he died, his child still lived, and through his offspring, a small part of him remained alive. Until his death, he fought to protect his wife and child during the day and at night looked at the stars while kindly thinking of them. This letter attested how soldierly duties did not prevent Serocka from attending to his fatherly responsibilities, even from afar. His letter encompassed the paternal affection that the earlier articles “Is this unmanly?” and “Best Friends” had advocated as appropriate. It reminded fellow fathers of their obligations to their children as well as informed other soldiers that their deaths on the front did not end their lineage.

Overall, all of the articles produced by SS publications such as Volk und Rasse and SS-Leithefte reinforced racial and familial themes, although none had as great of an impact as Das Schwarze Korps. The material published in the newspaper was completely relevant to the SS, as the men of this organization remained its target audience. The racial and family themes within its articles publicly reinforced the internal measures of the order. Yet, the newspaper also aimed to reach a larger audience, and as the second largest weekly in the Third Reich, it succeeded in

139 Ibid.
becoming a lucrative business venture for the SS. There is no doubt that anyone in the Third Reich who read *Das Schwarze Korps* could not have had a clear idea of what the SS stood for and how its familial ideology was an important part of its identity as a family community. However, despite all of this publicity and persuasion, the ideal of the racially healthy, child-rich SS family remained just that – an unfulfilled ideal. In the end, the SS, and with it the Third Reich, lost both the war on the front and in the cradle.
 CHAPTER 8

WITHOUT “A HEALTHY FLOCK OF CHILDREN”: ASSESSING SS POPULATION POLITICS AND THE FAMILY COMMUNITY

Despite all of the private and public entreaties, the efforts of Heinrich Himmler to build the SS into a self-sustaining elite failed; his desire to construct a Nordic family community was nothing more than, in the words of his most-recent biographer, “a figment of Himmler’s imagination.”¹ This failure was evident within the SS before and during the Second World War, and it has been evident to historians ever since. Many of the latter who study the SS or a related topic have briefly mentioned family and children, particularly the significance of racial selection and especially the engagement and marriage command.² However, while placing the issues of family and children within the context of their respective works, most historians have glossed over why Himmler failed to achieve his population policies. At best, they state that the birthrate remained low primarily because Himmler could not convince enough SS men to eschew traditional “bourgeois morality.”³ This explanation is valid solely in terms of the relationship between bourgeois standards and personal family choices. Yet, it must be explored in greater detail and given a larger context which incorporates other explanations that could have affected the decision or the ability of each SS man and his wife to have a child-rich family. This larger context includes social, economic, and educational factors. It furthermore takes into account the balance between ideology and personal desires, the possibility of evading ideological orders, selectivity among SS men regarding how they as well as their wives chose to abide by official

¹ Longerich, 391.
² For example, Knoebel, 36-48; Longerich, 137-38 and 364-380; Manvell, 22-24; Padfield, 103-04; and Schwarz, 26-27 and 36-37.
³ Larry V. Thompson used this particular term twice when judging Himmler’s eugenics policies to be a failure: “The continued unwillingness of Himmler to carry through radical eugenics proposals that would possibly alter the concept of motherhood or the structure of the family reveals that he proved unable to free himself from the strictures of ‘bourgeois morality’” and “SS ‘bourgeois morality’ proved surprisingly strong when limited to the creation of life; unfortunately, this same ‘bourgeois morality’ proved astonishingly weak when applied to the destruction of life.” Thompson, 76-77. In a more general and related use of the notion, Ian Kershaw discussed the relevance of the bourgeois political cultural in Germany, specifically how the Führer myth was able to tap into its long-standing and pervasive ideals as a means to secure a bond between the people and Hitler and to legitimize Nazi rule. Ian Kershaw, The ‘Hitler Myth’: Image and Reality in the Third Reich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 4, 10, 254-57, and 262.
ideology, and Himmler’s willingness to compromise on his ideology, at least temporarily due to the exigencies of the war.

Before delving into the myriad of possible reasons why the SS fell very short of realizing the biological and population goals of its leader, it is first necessary to examine just how far below expectations these men were. As noted in earlier chapters, the marriages rates for the SS remained below 100%. In relation to the general German population, each age cohort of the SS was relatively on par with or even slightly above the equivalent age cohort for the entire Reich when it came to marriage rates. Of course such numbers did not please Himmler; as he constantly reiterated, he wanted the SS to serve as a model for the Volk.

However, the deficit in marriages within the SS was far less problematic for his population policies than the reproductive rates among married couples. Himmler wanted – in accordance with his selective reading and application of eugenics – at least four children per SS marriage. The first two replaced their parents, the third substituted for a loss within the family, and the fourth made up for those people unable to reproduce. With these numbers, he sought to have an SS uniform equated with, to use the words of the pamphlet Victory of the Arms, a “healthy flock of children.” The actual numbers came nowhere near his desires. By the late 1930’s, each married SS officer only had an average of 1.48 children; the average among all SS men as a whole was even lower – between 1.1-1.2 children.

Even taking into consideration the fact that the SS was a relatively youthful organization, one which became even younger during the war, and the fact that the longer a man was married, the more likely he was to have additional children does not greatly alter the statistics. Those SS officers and men who belonged to the oldest age cohorts – thus those who on average would have presumably been married the longest – only showed slightly higher numbers: between 1.6-1.8 children per marriage. Unmarried SS officers and men also had children, but those numbers were minimal and would have not changed the figures had they been included in official

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4 For specific numbers and related information, see chapters 4 and 6.
5 “Bevölkerungspolitik im SS-Führerkorps,” BA NS34/30, table 2 (“Ehe der SS-Führer im Vergleich zum Reichsdurchschnitt” between pages 6 and 7).
7 Statistisches Jahrbuch, 1937, 62-63; Statistisches Jahrbuch, 1938, 96; “Bevölkerungspolitik im SS-Führerkorps,” BA NS34/30, page 16, table 1 (“Familienstand und Kinderdurchschnitt im SS-Führerkorps” between pages 5 and 6), table 3 (“Die Jahrgänge in ihrer Entwicklung” between pages 7 and 8), and table 4 (“Familienstand und Kinderdurchschnitt” between pages 13 and 14).
8 Such numbers were extrapolated from men born 1900 or earlier from tables 1 and 4 of “Bevölkerungspolitik im SS-Führerkorps.”
statistics. As with the marriage rates previously discussed, there was only one small group who stood above the general statistics – those men who held one of the four highest ranks. These officers had an average of 2.6 children per marriage, and only ten percent of them did not have at least one child. Almost half of these offspring were born during the Third Reich, and the vast majority of them experienced some part of their childhood and/or early adulthood in Nazi Germany.

Over two children per marriage was certainly better than under two, at least with regards to Himmler’s population policies, although it was still nowhere near the requisite four. Such low figures would have not been enough to sustain the SS – assuming that every child was worthy enough to be granted admission as a member or a spouse – let alone increase the quantity and racial quality of the German population overall. Without these offspring, the organization could not secure its position as the vanguard of the Reich and set the racial and family standards which the rest of the Volk could emulate. In fact, when it came to simple quantity, the populace as a whole performed slightly better than the SS. Based on contemporary statistics analyzed by Friedrich Burgdörfer, by the end of 1939, each marriage in the Reich generated 1.81 children. Broken down by length of marriage, the numbers were slightly higher; after ten years of marriage, the average was 2 children, after fifteen years, 2.36 children, and after twenty years, 2.7 children. The average goal of four children per marriage, Burgdörfer reported, was reached by no marriage year.

That the German population altogether had higher numbers undermined the ideal that the SS was supposed to be an elite family community whose many descendents would perpetually lead the Reich. This general comparison of the population at large to the SS also reinforced the point that statistically, the SS failed to live up the population policies and expectations of its leader. The larger question that failure raises is why. In particular, for an organization conceptually bound by an ideology which stressed loyalty above all else, why did SS men not fulfill their biological and reproductive duties? Which factors, including but not limited to

10 These calculations were compiled based on the information provided in the 485 BDC SSO files for those officers who held one of the four highest ranks.
bourgeois morality, influenced how these men perceived the relationship between their personal lives and their allegiance to the SS?

One way to ascertain what SS men thought about their personal lives, especially their marriages and families, is through works by and about them. In truth, there are a limited number of sources by these men in which they mentioned their families, let alone indicated their feelings toward their wives and children. Yet, in the resources that do exist, it is possible to gain some insight into these men’s views. From the time of the Third Reich, the most widespread documentation about the life of each SS man, at least each officer, was the Lebenslauf, or personal life history. Each officer was required to write one, and it was maintained in his personnel file. There was no standard format for the Lebenslauf; some were typed and others were handwritten, but in general, each one was up to several pages long. In this short document, an officer succinctly recounted his personal history, starting with when and where he was born and continuing on to his education, employment, and service in the military, party, and SS. If he were married at the time he wrote the Lebenslauf, he typically indicated when and who he had married. The same was true for children. Common information provided about offspring included their names or gender, dates of birth or current ages, and possibly familial status if they themselves were adults. Periodically, a picture of the couple or of the family was submitted with the Lebenslauf. Taken with the rest of the information provided, the details on the family were simply additional facts which completed the brief life story of each officer. They were typically presented formally and dispassionately, although on occasion, an officer included the more personal information that his family was hereditarily healthy, a rather evident fact given the man’s acceptance into the SS. Nonetheless, the inclusion of the vitals on an officer’s family demonstrates that such material was as important as any other detail of his life.

Beyond the Lebenslauf, personal correspondence also revealed personal information, such as the letters written by SS-Brigadeführer Otto Heider to Himmler. Heider did not

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12 When available for an officer, the Lebenslauf is now part of his respective BDC SSO file. This Lebenslauf was also different than the shorter one which was part of the Race and Settlement questionnaire.
13 For example, SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, BDC SSO 95A, pages 1179-80.
14 Those officers who had married more than once also indicated so; for example, SS-Brigadeführer Hermann Haertel, BDC SSO 50A, pages 136-37 and SS-Brigadeführer Karl Pflomm, BDC SSO 377A, pages 978-79.
16 For example, SS-Brigadeführer Walter Granzow, BDC SSO 028A, pages 930-31.
17 For example, SS-Brigadeführer Oskar Hock, BDC SSO 102A, pages 14-15; SS-Brigadeführer August Schwedler, BDC SSO 124B, page 872; and SS-Sturmbannführer Otto Trinkaus, BDC SSO 190B, pages 128-29.
correspond with his superior simply to inform Himmler about his family, but in several letters, he did mention the status of his children. Of his five children, he spoke of his two eldest sons, both of whom served in the Waffen-SS during the war.\(^{18}\) Having sons old enough to fight indicates that he began to make his familial choices prior to his admission to the SS, although his three younger children were born during the Third Reich.\(^{19}\)

Moreover, the other content of his letters reveal that Heider was in agreement with Himmler’s marriage and child policies as he served as chief of the RuSHA Marriage Office throughout its entire existence from 1942-1945.\(^{20}\) A couple of his letters delved into RuSHA business, such as pointing out that not all SS men were conforming to Himmler’s standards when applying for permission to marry. Heider mentioned that this matter was of crucial importance and wanted Himmler’s permission to tackle the problem.\(^{21}\) His desire to ameliorate the situation, as briefly expressed in his letters, could easily be construed as not just performing his official duties thoroughly, but also as showing support for his Reichsführer’s policies.

Since the collapse of the Third Reich, other resources have been published which reveal personal information about members of the SS. Historians have written biographies about many leading and/or infamous figures.\(^{22}\) The earlier works published in the first couple of decades

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\(^{18}\) Letter from Otto Heider to Himmler, 31 May 1944, NA T175/29/frame 2536744 and letter from Heider to Himmler, 3 November 1943, NA T175/29/frame 2536746.

\(^{19}\) Personnel file of Otto Heider, BDC SSO file 075A, page 063.

\(^{20}\) Heinemann, Rasse, 684-85.

\(^{21}\) Letter from Heider to Himmler, 20 December 1943, NA T175/29/frame 2536745 and letter from Heider to Himmler, 3 June 1943, NA T175/29/frame 2536756.

after the Second World War tended to focus mainly on providing as many details about the personal life and career of their respective subjects whereas the books written more recently have placed the life and career of a given individual into the framework of the time and place in which he lived. Regardless of the shifting nature of the biography, most of these articles and books included information about the families of their subjects. Sometimes the information they relayed was nothing more than a factual account of who a man married, when he married, and when his children were born. Other times the sources included salacious details about the affairs and illegitimate children of their subjects, although in the case of SS-Gruppenführer Karl Brandt, one of Hitler’s personal physicians, the biography vindicated its subject from such rumors. According to his biographer, when he was asked while in prison about his mistress, “…Brandt did not give the impression of someone who had committed adultery: ‘My wife will be very surprised. Only too bad that you cannot tell me the name…[my wife and I] actually have led a very happy life.’”

In addition, a few of the biographies provided an inkling of a man’s relationship with his offspring. The most notable of the biographies to do so were the ones on Brandt and SS-Obergruppenführer Ernst Kaltenbrunner. Notably, both men were on trial following the war, the former during the Doctor’s Trial from 1946-1948 and the latter during the Nuremberg Trial from 1945-1946. Both of them were found guilty and executed, but prior to sentencing, each father attempted to leave behind a personal record for his children. Brandt kept a daily notebook in which he recorded his life in prison, trying to show his son how he stayed strong during the rigors of the trial. He wanted to prove to his son and his wife that he had remained a caring father and a loving husband as well as a dedicated doctor. Kaltenbrunner wrote a memoir for his children in which he proclaimed that the “truth” of what had happened would eventually come out; at that time, his children would know that they could be “proud of your Daddy as a man who sacrificed all for the greater good.” He beseeched his children to look after their

24 Schmidt, 92.
25 Ibid., 354 and 357.
mother “since I can no longer come home to you.” The only thing he felt guilty for was of a personal matter, having betrayed his wife with an affair.26

These two accounts, as relayed in the respective biographies, attempted to show each man, in his own words, as a good and moral person until the end. They also, if the words are taken at face value, demonstrated affection toward the children and wives these men left behind. Yet, even these words – thoughtful as they may be – do not reveal what either man thought of the racial standards to which he and his family had formerly adhered. Among the selected biographies, only one demonstrated acceptance of the hereditarily-based population policies of the SS, the one on Karl Wolff. With his first wife, he had had four children, and as shown in the book, he had allowed his third child and eldest son, Thorisman, to be christened in 1937 with the new SS child naming ceremony.27 If Wolff had not had faith in the order to which he belonged and the rules which governed it, he would have undoubtedly not consented to baptizing his child in a neo-pagan, pseudo-religious service.

Beyond the biographies, several individuals published autobiographical accounts.28 The primary purpose of these works was to detail the lives of these men and their service to the Third Reich and the SS. One such personal story was written by SS man Peter Neumann, who, as mentioned earlier, accepted Nazi and SS racial rhetoric, went to a Lebensborn home, and impregnated a woman he met there.29 But Neumann’s account aside, here too the men focused more on their service than on their families. Probably the most noteworthy of these accounts was SS-Brigadeführer Walter Schellenberg’s memoirs. Outside of his difficulties marrying his second wife due to her Polish heritage and mentioning the birth of his son, he focused more on his duties for the Reich Security Main Office, prompting historian Alan Bullock to describe the

26 Quoted in Black, 272 and 276.
27 Lang, 37-39. For more details, see chapter 5. Information on Wolff’s marital status and children can be found in his BDC file SSO/010C, page 569.
29 For more information, see chapter 6.
book aptly as “…a first-rate collection of spy stories.”

In a related manner, interviews with former SS officers sometimes provide a brief glimpse into the private lives of their subjects. The conversations with SS-Gruppenführer Jürgen Stroop were among the most striking of these accounts. Former Polish Home Army officer Kazimierz Moczarski spent over eight months in jail with Stroop in 1949; he subsequently wrote a book based on the conversations that he had with Stroop and a third inmate, a former enlisted SS soldier. Throughout the course of their discussions, Stroop proved himself still unswervingly committed to Nazi and SS ideology; this commitment extended to his views on his family and children. During the First World War, he had been billeted with a Polish family and had fallen for a local girl. Despite his emotional re-telling of his relationship with her decades later, Stroop insisted that it had been in his best interest in the end that he had never married that young woman. “With a wife who was Polish…” he stated, “I could have never joined the SS, and my children would have been mongrels.” He later married a more suitable woman, and they had three children. Stroop also had a child via the Lebensborn program, and although he appeared to know nothing about this child, he was proud of this dalliance. Finally, he remained dedicated to the racial knowledge which he had learned, not only admiring Himmler several years after the demise of the Third Reich as “one of the great experts concerning race,” but also using his own racial knowledge to type Moczarski and to analyze why he himself was not a perfect Nordic specimen. In all of these facets, he remained totally loyal to the racial and familial ideals of the SS, and as a faithful officer, he would have once represented an exemplar model for other officers and enlisted men.

A second officer who provided some personal insight was SS-Obergruppenführer Richard Hildebrandt; most of his information came from his direct examination in the Race and Settlement Trial from 1947-1948. As the last chief of RuSHA, Hildebrandt had been nominally associated with the Lebensborn program as a member of its board of directors. He did not have an illegitimate child, but he did assert that all claims suggesting that the Lebensborn had immoral

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30 Schellenberg, 7.
32 Moczarski, 22.
33 Ibid., 31, 55, 60, 73-74.
34 Ibid., 74. In particular, Stroop thought that his brow was too broad and his eyes were not perfectly blue, but flecked with green.
aims were wrong. Those officers who paid mandatory fees to the program were generally interested in its purpose, and based on his experiences with it, Hildebrandt testified about the value of the program, stating that its objective was “to improve the fate of the unmarried mother or illegitimate child in a tactful manner.” He asserted that the program not only sought to do away with all prejudice associated with illegitimacy, but actually succeeded in this endeavor. Therefore, Hildebrandt proclaimed that he had been in favor of the program’s work.

Moreover, he contended that in no way were the Lebensborn homes seen as “an attack against matrimony.” In fact, in defending the Lebensborn program, Hildebrandt also defended the integrity of the marriage ideals promoted in the SS: “Matrimony is and remains the foundation of every people and of every state. This very consideration and this very conception was [sic] strongly advocated and promoted in our ranks. It was an important part of the ideals which were those of the SS, because we do know that from matrimony only can originate those things that render a people in the last analysis valuable and noble.” Further testimony by Hildebrandt supported this contention that establishing and caring for families was a prime goal of the SS. That he spoke these words when he was on trial due to his work for RuSHA and his association with the Lebensborn program reveals that seeking to foster strong families in the SS first through the bonds of matrimony was an ideal which most SS men could accept. His defense of the Lebensborn program also indicates a measure of flexibility, especially with regards to the interaction between bourgeois morality and personal decisions; an SS man did not have to take advantage of the services of the homes, whether for an illegitimate or legitimate child, in order to defend their integrity.

The information provided about these men in their biographies, autobiographies, and interviews, while limited, does strongly suggest that there were men in the SS who accepted its racial and family ideology. One final way to approach the question of how much an SS man might have believed in the tenets of the order to which he belonged is through his children. There is a rich body of literature containing interviews with and autobiographical accounts by the children of Nazis – some prominent, some not; some in the SS and others not – from the

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36 Ibid., 4017.  
37 Ibid.  
38 Ibid., 4063.
immediate post-war era through the present. Several of the children had known or knew their fathers, although a great many of them did not. However, in all cases, these children, now adults, sought to come to terms with who their fathers were and what they had done. This task was somewhat problematic for children born in Lebensborn homes, as they had scant records upon which they could rely for answers to the most basic questions, including in some instances the identity of their fathers. Not all such situations were hopeless, such as the case of Gisela Heidenreich, who not only met her father, but established a relationship with him and her half sister.

Of the legitimate offspring who learned something of their father’s past, the reactions varied, from outright rejection of the father to outright rejection of any accusations that the father was anything but a good person. Dagmar Herzog, the daughter of SS-Hauptsturmführer Max Herzog, fell into the former category. She discovered that her father had been willing to forgo marrying her mother when he learned during the verification of his engagement and marriage application that his future father-in-law was an alcoholic. Her father forced the man to enter a rehabilitation program and told RuSHA authorities that if they believed his future offspring could have a genetic disposition toward alcoholism, he would cancel his submission. Nothing came from the RuSHA check; he married Dagmar’s mother, and they had two children. Many years later, when she found out about his crimes, Dagmar disassociated herself and her own children from her father. Although she personally had trouble reconciling the image of the father who raised her with the man indicted as a criminal, she still remained fearful of both the genetic

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and environmental influence he might have on her children were they to have a relationship with their grandfather.

On the opposite side of the spectrum from Dagmar Herzog was the Reichsführer’s own little girl, Gudrun. She only spoke about her father on one occasion, to a journalist in 1959. At the time, she did not believe he had committed suicide and saw it as her goal to rehabilitate him.43 “I look on it as my life’s work to show him to the world in a different light,” Gudrun declared. “Today my father is branded as the greatest mass murderer of all time. I want to try to revise this image. At least to get the facts straight about what he thought and why he acted as he did.”44 To achieve this goal, she proclaimed that she was going to write a book about him, but Gudrun never did, nor did she ever publicly speak about her position again. Even when given the opportunity decades later by Katrin Himmler, the granddaughter of Himmler’s younger brother Ernst, to contribute to her book on the Himmler brothers, she declined.

While Dagmar Herzog and Gudrun Himmler represented opposites when it came to the relationships with and memories of their fathers, not all reactions from children were as stark. Such was the case of Leonardo Conti’s daughter Irmgard.45 As with the other two women, she too adored her father as a child and had many fond memories of the time they spent together, such as when her father taught her how to play chess or how to dance. As Irmgard wrote in her memoirs, she cherished all of her memories of her father and in particular noted that “my joy was complete when my father, my beloved Vati, took the time to join me in my play and examined her [baby doll] and bandaged a hurt leg and showed me how to do it. He had so little time to be just with me, but when he did, he gave me his undivided attention, and we were doctor and nurse making a doll patient better.”46 For all of these positive memories which still meant so much to her decades later, Irmgard was also able to come to terms with who her father was and what he did. His suicide devastated her, and she did not want to believe for a long time that he had been complicit in anything malevolent: “Other officials maybe, but not him.”47 However, she eventually came to terms with his actions, unlike Gudrun, but, unlike Dagmar, she did not reject

43 Gudrun Himmler’s interview is found in Stephan Lebert and Norbert Lebert, My Father's Keeper: Children of Nazi Leaders – An Intimate History of Damage and Denial, translated by Julian Evans (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 2000), 154 and 193.
44 Ibid., 106.
45 Irmgard Powell, Don’t let them see you cry: Overcoming a Nazi childhood (Wilmington, Ohio: Orange Frazer Press, 2008).
46 Ibid., 22.
47 Ibid., 172.
her father. She recognized that her father was two men: the gentle and loving Vati of her childhood whom she will always love and the other man, the one she did not know, but the one whom she acknowledged was responsible for his actions and his participation in the Nazi regime.

All of these sources on the men and their children provide a partial view about what SS men may have thought about the racial and familial goals of the SS. But again, the numbers – especially when it came to the lack of children produced – indicate that not all SS officers and men were committed to official ideology or that they may have chosen to be selective in how they interpreted it, perhaps not believing in the necessity of producing both quality and quantity. However, the decisions that human beings make, including those revolving around having or not having children, are dependent on a constellation of factors, including demographic, economic, political, and social ones.\(^\text{48}\) It is therefore necessary to look beyond the ideology of the SS and to examine other factors affecting Germany, and the larger western world, which most likely influenced SS men not to have child-rich families or even impeded them from doing so, thereby critiquing the supposition that adherence to bourgeois morality was the only hindrance to creating a child-rich SS family community.

To start with, there was a general decline in fertility among western countries, one that had been evident since the turn of the twentieth century and one that affected Germany as much as any other nation.\(^\text{49}\) Therefore, despite claims by some historians that Germany deviated developmentally in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from other western nations, there was no “special path” in Germany when it came to the demographic downturn as compared to other politically and industrially modernized countries.\(^\text{50}\) The extent of the decline and the

\(^{48}\) The idea that procreation was dependent on the interaction of a variety of factors was already well-established in Europe and North America by the 1930’s and 1940’s; for example, Frank W. Notestein and Clyde V. Kiser, “Factors Affecting Variations in Human Fertility,” Social Forces, volume 14, number 1 (October 1935): 34; Rudolf Heberle, “Social Factors in Birth Control,” American Sociological Review, volume 6, number 6 (December 1941): 794; and P.K. Whelpton and Clyde V. Kiser, “Trends, Determinants, and Control in Human Fertility,” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, volume 237 (January 1945): 118 and 121.

\(^{49}\) John E. Knodel created an in-depth study of German demography from the Kaisereich through the Third Reich: The Decline of Fertility in Germany, 1871-1939 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

\(^{50}\) The Sonderweg thesis is based on the idea that because Germany had a late political and industrial revolution, it developed on a special path toward modernization as compared to Britain or France. According to the theory, this divergent path directly led to the rise of Nazism. Primarily put forward by historian Hans Ulrich Wehler, this thesis has since been critiqued, mainly by historians Geoff Ely and David Blackbourn, that Germany did have bourgeois revolutions similar in nature to Britain or France, and while there were dissimilarities among the three countries, Germany’s path toward modernization was not radically different and did not automatically lead toward Nazism and the Holocaust. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, The German Empire 1871-1918, translated by Kim Traynor (New York: Berg Publishers, 1985); David Blackbourn and Geoff Ely, The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth Century Germany (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); V.R. Berghahn, Imperial
pace at which it occurred varied from country to country, but the decline was nonetheless evident, as many publications from the time attested. Within Germany, the birthrate had declined from an average of 41.8 births per 1000 inhabitants in 1874, to 35.2 births in 1904, to 14.7 births in 1933. The Nazi government was aware of this problem; official statistics covering the last decades of the nineteenth century through the then-present day starkly pointed out the declining number people in each family because of fewer children being born. Many leaders within the SS also understood the gravity of the situation and subsequently sought to combat it. For example, the SS Main Office developed guidelines in 1942-1943 for community hours to be attended by SS men and their families. Among the topics which were to be brought up during these meetings were statistics emphasizing the demographic deterioration of the nation. This decline resulting from small families was directly attacked as wrong, although no specific suggestions were provided in these guidelines as to how the SS could solve this problem beyond the general platitudes of it being the responsibility of SS couples to have child-rich families. It would have been highly difficult for the SS to arrest this long-standing and widespread decline within its own membership, let alone Germany, without a more concrete plan of attack beyond reiterating rhetoric calling for child-rich families.

A second factor which must be considered when weighing why the members of the SS

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chose not to or could not have more children is sexuality, specifically the regulation of sex.\textsuperscript{55} Heinrich Himmler, as Reichsführer-SS and Chief of the German Police, spent a great deal of time and effort attempting to control the sexual lives of other people. If he was not condemning homosexuality, then he was trying to convince his SS men that sex with any racially suitable woman for the purpose of procreation was acceptable.\textsuperscript{56} Sex had actually been a topic which had preoccupied him prior to his days with the party and SS. As noted by two of his early biographers, Werner T. Angress and Bradley F. Smith, “no other [subject] elicited so many commonplaces from his pen.”\textsuperscript{57} This fixation even shaped his perception of women as a young man. In a diary entry from late 1921, Himmler defined his views of women:

> A woman is loved by a man on three levels: as a dear child who has to be chided, perhaps even punished on account of her unreasonableness, and who is protected and taken care of just because she is tender and weak and because one loves her. Then as a wife and a loyal, understanding comrade who fights life’s battles alongside [the man], and stands everywhere by his side without hemming in and fettering the man and his mind. And as a goddess whose feet he must kiss, who gives him strength through her feminine wisdom and childlike, pure sanctity [which] does not weaken during the hardest struggles and bestows upon him in ideal hours the soul’s most divine gift.\textsuperscript{58}

As exemplified by this one entry, Himmler viewed women as nothing more than objects around which men dedicated their lives. At the time he wrote these sentiments, he espoused a perspective very much in line with his traditional, Bavarian, and Catholic upbringing. He placed women in an almost saintly role, one defined by Klaus Theweleit as the “white nurse,” an emblem and not a real figure who is both strong, but at the same time needs to be protected.\textsuperscript{59}

Yet, in less than a decade, Himmler’s views had shifted. His formal education in agriculture, his informal exposure to Nordic racial ideals from the Artamanen League, and his


\textsuperscript{56} As noted in the introduction, several historians have recently pointed out that because so much effort was expended not just by Himmler but by the entire Nazi regime to regulate sex, it has led to an erroneous perception that sex was simply reduced to prohibitions when in fact sexuality was not suppressed but reinvented.

\textsuperscript{57} Angress, 218.

\textsuperscript{58} Quoted in Angress, 219.

\textsuperscript{59} Klaus Theweleit, Male Fantasies, volume 1, translated by Steven Conway (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 95, 99, 108, 125-26, and 134.
personal introduction to the blood and soil ideology, especially through his then close relationship with Richard Walther Darré, had added a key dimension to his views of women. They were not only symbolically children, wives, and goddesses, but also mothers who had the racial responsibility to bear hereditarily healthy children for their husbands. By the time Himmler had become Reichsführer, this fourth role for women had shaped how he perceived them in relation to their husbands – his SS men – and the submissive role which they were to assume in their individual families and within family community.

When subsequently formulating commands to regulate SS families, he discounted what his men may have thought or wanted when it came to their families and he certainly did not take into account the opinions of their wives. Himmler expected that he could issue decrees that his men would follow and persuade their wives to obey as well. He reconfirmed his position vis-à-vis husbands and wives and the relationship that he believed they were supposed to have in a wartime-speech: “Gentlemen, there is only one possibility here. Either the man leads in the marriage, or if he cannot do this, if he is not capable of leading, then he either retires from us…or he parts from his lifetime companion…[who] is not internally willing to go along.”

The issue was very clear-cut for Himmler; he never understood the complexities of his own men, let alone their wives, when he sought to manage their familial decisions. Even if he could have convinced every married SS officer and man to agree with the necessity of having at least four children, all of their wives would have also had to have been persuaded in order for his population plans to have succeeded. Furthermore, he objectified women as passive agents, a view well within the parameters of Nazi society where females had a select number of acceptable roles, best encapsulated by the catchphrase children, kitchen, and church (Kinder, Küche, Kirche). Women were simply viewed as daughters and wives and glorified as mothers.

Himmler’s disregard for women as active players in family life was further confirmed during a conversation with Felix Kersten. When his massage therapist learned of his desire to legitimize bigamy, Kersten asked his patient if he really thought women would accept such a proposal. Himmler clearly did, suggesting that the first wife would have special rights. To this statement, Kersten replied, “I pity from the bottom of my heart the wretched husband who has to

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61 Among the literature which describes the roles of women in Nazi society are the following: Stephenson, Women in Nazi Society; Koonz, Mothers in the Fatherland; and Pine, Nazi Family Policy.
daily listen to and smooth down the quarrels of his two wives and their various children…” He later pointed out another drawback to Himmler’s idea: “…just think, two mothers-in-law. In my opinion, it would be easier to win the Knight’s Cross than to endure that for long. You must create a special award for bravery under the domestic fire.” Kersten also tried to call attention to the fact that ideology and the needs of the state would not convince women to go along with this plan. He suggested that Himmler ought to listen to the opinions of the women before implementing a law to allow bigamy. Once again, Himmler brushed off Kersten’s objections, leading the latter to report that his patient seemed amused by them. Himmler then continued by stating that education and propaganda would solve any resultant problems. He expected ideology to have a stronger hold over men and women than personal desires, a position which he held on to tenaciously and which undoubtedly influenced the failure of his population goals.

Beyond the general decline in population and the obstacles to regulating sexuality, another factor which hindered the success of Himmler’s familial ideals was the relationship between class and education on one side and fertility on the other. As of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a strong correlation among these factors. Simply put, in the west among Europeans and people of European descent, the higher a person’s socio-economic class and/or the greater the education he (or she) obtained, the fewer children he (or she) had. The connection between the two is the basis of the “bourgeois morality” explanation, that the middle and upper classes had established a lifestyle where education was used to foster economic comfort, a position which was partially maintained by abstaining from having a large family. Eugenicists were well aware of (and displeased with) this inverse relationship as were sociologists, psychologists, and statisticians, and even officials within the SS acknowledged this.

62 Kersten, 178.
63 Ibid., 179-80.
65 Wolfgang Knorr, “Der Kinderreichtum um Handarbeiterstand,” Volk und Rasse, number 5 (May 1937): 193; this article is can also be found in BA NS5/VI/4910. Erhard Hense, “Nicht korn allein, Menschen sollen wachsen,” N.S. Landpost, number 4 (27 January 1939); this article is can also be found in BA NS5/VI/4546, page 32.
66 For more information, see footnote 3 in this chapter.
connection. Furthermore, as the populations of western countries declined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the birth rate dropped the most severely in this group.

As already examined, the exclusivity of the SS enticed Germans from these very social and educational strata to join the organization. Both the nobility and the university-educated were over represented in the SS not because the SS sought out these men in particular – although their admission did increase its prestige – but because the nature of the work in the SS required people with certain educational training, such as in economics, jurisprudence, and medicine. Not all members of the SS were from such prominent backgrounds or were well educated, but the organization did, as shown in its own yearly statistical surveys, contain fewer people percentage wise from uneducated or rural backgrounds compared with the general German population. Neither these surveys nor other statistics produced by the SS categorized birthrates according to level of education, which means that definitive conclusions between education, or noble status, and the birthrate within the ranks of the SS cannot be made.

Nonetheless, the general point still holds that the very types of people who already produced the lowest number of children joined the SS in droves and had an impact on the overall child statistics of the organization. When the relationship between social class/education and fertility was combined with the widespread decline in fertility in the west, it created a highly difficult predicament for the SS to overcome. Ideological commands, most notably the engagement and marriage command, rhetorical persuasion including pamphlets and other

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67 For the eugenicists’ views, see chapter 2 and for the recognition by the SS, see chapter 4.
69 For more information, see chapter 3.
70 Specific details on the distribution of SS men based on their occupation can be found in Statistisches Jahrbuch, 1937, 68-74 and Statistisches Jahrbuch, 1938, 109-13.

With social class and education came a related factor: age. People in this higher-class, well-educated group tended to marry later in life than their fellow countrymen with less education and in lower socio-economic classes.\footnote{For more details on this statistic, see chapter 4.} A later marriage meant that a couple started having children when they were older, and because they had a shorter timeframe of fertility, they had fewer children overall. This was a problem which the SS faced, having a median marriage age of 32 years old.\footnote{“Wer ist denn eigentlich ‘ledig?’” \textit{Das Schwarze Korps}, 23 June 1938, page 12 and “Ein Problem,” \textit{Das Schwarze Korps}, 31 December 1936, page 2.} It was also one which \textit{Das Schwarze Korps} sharply attacked. Articles in the newspaper pointed out the disparity among average marriage ages based on educational status and considered it to be unfortunate that members of the upper social strata had imposed a limitation on the number of children.\footnote{“Unser Kinder sollen es besser haben,” \textit{Das Schwarze Korps}, 14 December 1939, page 6 and “Dem Leben verschworen,” \textit{Das Schwarze Korps}, 20 May 1943, page 4.} The newspaper also condemned the justification used by these parents – the idea that they needed to provide for their children in a manner befitting their current status and that their children should have it better than they did.

\textit{Das Schwarze Korps} conversely argued that intentionally limiting the number of children had a disastrous effect on the country, conveniently not acknowledging that part of the reason why some of these people may have been better off financially was because they had fewer children. Instead, the newspaper insisted that people who were better off financially had a duty to the Volk to have more than one or two children.\footnote{“Heiratsalter und Beruf,” \textit{Preußische Zeitung}, number 244 (4 September 1937); this article is can also be found in BA NS5/VI/4889, page 40.} Yet, despite their censure, these articles are noteworthy for another reason. None of them singled out the SS as one of the prime culprits in this quandary. Then again, the editors never turned their sharp wit against the SS at any point during its ten-year run; doing so in this one instance would have been a drastic shift in practice.
Furthermore, had they done so, the editors would have had to contend with an irate Reichsführer who would have undoubtedly not appreciated his newspaper maligning his organization and the failure of its members to meet his population goals. Finally, several of these articles appeared prior to the war, but some of them were printed in the middle of it. While the newspaper’s editors chose remain consistent in their promotion of families in these as well as other articles, they may have also elected to adopt a less critical stance toward non-compliance within the SS as SS men and their families were the core readers. This stance would have also been in line with Himmler’s own position during the war, when, as previously noted, he sought to balance constructing the family community with building a strong fighting force.

While marrying later in life provided the couple with a shorter time span to have a family, trying to have children presented additional difficulties, such as increased infertility. Although the reproductive capacity of a man does diminish gradually over his lifetime, the decline is far more rapid for a woman. A woman in her thirties has fewer children than a woman in her twenties because age-related fertility decline begins in her early thirties and accelerates over the next decade of her life. Contemporary and recent medical literature confirm this relationship between age, especially that of a woman, and the ability to procreate. This biological factor added one more impediment to the ideal of having a plentiful number of children per SS family. The available marriage statistics indicate that while between 40-45% of the women who married SS men and officers were between the ages of twenty and twenty-five and between 20-25% were between the ages of twenty-five and thirty, over 10% were thirty years and older. The age of the wives would have thus contributed to the low birth numbers.


77 “Statistischer Monatsbericht des Sippenamtes im RuS-Hauptamt von Monat November 1941,” BA NS19/3479,
Another aspect which diminishes fertility is the influence of lifestyle, in particular the effect of alcohol and tobacco use. Medical studies from both then and now suggest that drinking and smoking have an inverse effect on fertility. These two factors alone do not greatly impede pregnancy, but when combined with other lifestyle choices, they tend to have a negative influence. As with age, drinking and smoking would not have been key detriments, but when taken into consideration with the aforementioned factors, they would have contributed to fertility problems. In fact, this correlation was one of many reasons why the Nazi government sought to curb the use of alcohol and tobacco. Anything that could have impeded achieving a high birthrate was anathema to the regime, especially in the pre-war period when there were not more immediate concerns.

As historian Robert Proctor has shown, the Nazi government promoted some of the most progressive and aggressive campaigns against drinking and smoking, including banning the second in party offices in April 1939. Within the SS, Himmler did not advocate a complete repudiation of alcohol and nicotine – he himself liked to indulge in a glass of wine or a cigar occasionally – but he did use the SS to promote the advancement of mineral water and herbal medicines, which were bottled in springs owned by the SS and grown in SS barracks and SS-controlled concentration camps. These operations encouraged healthy habits and coincidentally benefitted the SS monetarily. As of 1940, Himmler also banned police and SS officers from smoking while on duty. SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann stated after the war that Himmler’s aversion to nicotine was well enough known that any officer who visited him in the field was advised to use a lemon pumice stone to remove nicotine stains from his fingers before reporting to the Reichsführer. Anyone who did not take this precaution risked the possibility of

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Himmler ordering him to refrain from smoking for a certain time period on punishment of dismissal from the SS if he were caught.  

Himmler likewise took a personal interest when one of his men drank excessively, although he tended to be more concerned with behavioral issues than reproductive ones in relation to abuse of this substance. He even threatened to punish his men more severely if their delinquent behavior were influenced by drunkenness. However, even with all of this remonstration, there was a slight bit of irony, at least when it came to tobacco. The most prominent advertisements featured in Das Schwarze Korps were for tobacco; toward the final years of the newspaper, one cigarette advertisement often took up an entire page. The constant presence of these advertisements suggests that Himmler restrained his objections to tobacco, whether for reproductive reasons or personal dislike, in order to sustain the financial wellbeing of the newspaper.

Although it would have unmistakably differed for each person, all of the aforementioned reasons would have contributed in varying effect to the limiting reproduction in the SS. Yet, there are two other major factors that influenced the environment in which SS men and their wives lived. The first was the Great Depression, and the second was World War II. These two events would have influenced whether they would have chosen to or would have had the opportunity to have children. The 1920’s had been difficult for Germany economically. Following the First World War, the country’s economy had transitioned from one geared toward war to one that could meet the needs of the civilian population. This transition was less than smooth, partially due to the rampant and astronomical inflation in the first part of the decade. It was also impeded by the decisions made by the Weimar government, which typically favored implementing policies that were politically expedient, but not economically sound in the long-term. Nonetheless, the situation in Germany – economically as well as politically – appeared to have stabilized in the mid to late 1920’s. Then the Great Depression struck, and while it did not solely cause the collapse of the Weimar Republic, the economic downturn certainly

80 Manvell, 250.
accelerated its demise.\textsuperscript{84}

One of the largest crises in Germany because of the Depression was unemployment. It reached over 4.3 million in December 1930, and twelve months later, over 5.6 million people, or about one-tenth of the entire population, were unemployed.\textsuperscript{85} These economic woes in turn affected social conditions. In particular, people waited to get married and those who were already wed delayed having children.\textsuperscript{86} A pre-existing and detrimental population situation was made worse by these postponements. When the Nazi government came to power, one of the first problems it had to tackle was the economic predicament of the country. Through a series of measures that created jobs, regulated taxation and social welfare, fixed commodity prices and wages, and controlled domestic investment and international trade, the regime appeared to create a system which stabilized the country.\textsuperscript{87} Part of this stabilization was due to the 1933 Law for the Reduction of Unemployment, which provided married couples, including SS couples, the financial incentive to have the wife leave the workplace, thus freeing up jobs.\textsuperscript{88} Unemployment virtually disappeared within a few years, primarily because of public works projects, such as the autobahn, and the emphasis on remilitarizing the country, although wages in the mid to late 1930’s were still below the rates from the late 1920’s.\textsuperscript{89}

This apparent recovery affected familial choices. Once the financial crisis had ended, people who had postponed getting married now did so. With a rise in marriages, there followed an increase in births.\textsuperscript{90} However, having waited to get married increased the average age of marriage, thereby limiting the time period that a couple had to have a family. Nonetheless, by 1936 – when full employment was reached – the birth rate had risen 31\% from 1933, which amounted to over 300,000 more children being born each year in the Reich.\textsuperscript{91} In other words,

\textsuperscript{85} Craig, 553.
\textsuperscript{88} For more information, see chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{89} Norman Crump, “The Economics of the Third Reich,” \textit{Journal of the Royal Statistical Society}, volume 102, number 2 (1939): 174 and 177; Bry, 166, 188, 235, and 239; and Craig, 621.
\textsuperscript{90} Kirk, 128, 135, and 138 and Ogburn, 324, 334, and 338-39.
\textsuperscript{91} Friedrich Burgdörfer, “Familienstatistik und Fruchtsbarkeitmessung. Neue Aufgaben und neue Wege der deutschen Bevölkerungssstatistik,” \textit{Review of the International Statistical Institute}, volume 5, number 3 (October
from a low of 14.7 births per 1000 inhabitants in 1933, there were 19 births in 1936, and this number continued to climb, peaking at just over 20 births per 1000 inhabitants in the first years of the war. This increase made Germany stand out from nearby countries where birthrates remained the same or decreased during the 1930’s, leading contemporary sociologists to suggest that Nazi policies geared toward increasing the birthrate were successful.

With regards to the SS, its members who were already adults during the Great Depression would have been influenced by these problems. Even those men who were then teenagers and who joined the SS later would have had a clear memory of this time and the impact on their family lives while growing up. The influence of these political and economic trends would have most likely affected how they viewed money and their ability to have a financially secure life.

In fact, part of the appeal of the SS in the early to mid 1930’s for many of the well-educated was the opportunity to have a steady-paying job. The SS grew exponentially in these years, and each expansion created more positions which needed to be filled by men with the appropriate education and expertise.

However, even while providing employment, the class and educational backgrounds of these men combined with the personal experiences of the Depression was a formidable confluence of factors that the SS had to attempt (and of course failed) to overcome. For example, all of the money that the organization provided to its men, such as allowances granted for each child, were designed to encourage each SS couple to have a child-rich family. But if these men were already well-ensconced in the prevalent middle-class, educated, bourgeois values; if they had vivid memories of unemployment and material deprivation from less than a decade previously; and if they believed in the notion that they should be able to provide a better life for their children despite what their own newspaper argued, then there is little reason to think that they would have used this supplemental income to increase the size of their families. It is far more likely that such funds would have been seen as a means to establish a small, but

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93 Taeuber, 150, 156, and 160-61. One of those government policies was the re-criminalization of abortion; for more information on that topic, see chapter 5.
94 Economics was in fact one of the reasons reported by SS men to the SS Personnel Chancellery to justify why they were not getting married. For more information, see chapter 4.
95 For example, Jürgen Stroop gave this reason for having joined. Moczarski, 41.
96 For more on the growth of the SS, see chapter 3.
Furthermore, this stability seemingly engendered by the Nazi government was short-lived. No one had the opportunity to become accustomed to the economic and political recovery before the Second World War started, particularly as a large part of that recovery was due to years of preparing for the war by the military and industries. Once hostilities had begun, new obstacles arose, many of which unsurprisingly had a direct impact on procreation. The First World War had earlier demonstrated the tremendous influence that war had on the demographics of the countries involved in that war. The belligerent powers of the Second World War understood the debilitating effects of modern warfare. They knew that, unlike wars in the nineteenth century, no country had been able to recover demographically from the losses inflicted in the first great conflict of the twentieth century.

Germany in particular sought to avoid repeating the mistakes made by the Imperial government, and in some regards, the Nazi regime was successful. One of the major successes was food rationing. Deprivation of food had been a severe problem for Germany during and immediately following the First World War. To prevent a repeat of malnutrition, and also possible discontent among the population at home, the government began to reserve millions of tons of grain years before the war began. A few days before Germany invaded Poland, the Reich Ministry for Food and Agriculture (Reichsministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft) under Richard Walther Darré began a rationing system. It was relatively effective in providing the

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97 There is also the related issue of peer influence; a couple might have chosen to limit the number of children they had based on working and socializing with other couples from similar educational and social backgrounds who limited the size of their families. This suggested correlation was made in 1955 in a study from Indianapolis; it was one of many factors examined as the researchers sought to determine why people chose to have large or small families. Robert G. Potter and John F. Kanter, “Social and Psychological Factors Affecting Fertility. XXVIII. The Influence of Siblings and Friends on Fertility,” The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly, volume 33, number 3 (July 1955): 246-267.


German population with enough calories and nutrients to prevent malnutrition. The availability of food staved off a potential source of disgruntlement, but it also affected fertility. A healthy diet is crucial when it comes to fertility and pregnancy. Extreme weight levels – in this case a loss of weight – increase infertility. Had there been severe food problems in the country, the ability for any woman, the wife of an SS man or not, to conceive and carry a healthy child to term would have been impaired.

While nutrition was not an issue, there were other factors that shaped the ability of every German, SS men and their wives included, to have children. One of those factors was stress, namely men on the front fighting for their lives and their country and women at home concerned about those men. Related to stress and the war were the continually worsening conditions on the home front. As the Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels never tired of reiterating, World War II was a total war. Since late 1940, German cities had been subject to bombing, first by the Royal Air Force out of Britain and then later to a combination of nearly continuous bombing by the British and the Americans from Britain and Italy. The primary targets of these attacks were German industries, but strategic bombing was notoriously inaccurate, and civilians suffered as a result. Living under the fear and reality of constant bombardment would have caused stress for the women living through it as well as the men on the front knowing they could do


102 This is not to suggest that there were absolutely no food shortages, but as Götz Aly pointed out, most of the problems were shunted on to the people of occupied countries and Soviet POWs. Aly, 170.

103 “Infertility in Men” and “Infertility in Women.”


nothing to prevent their loved ones from this danger. The bombings also deprived people of
their homes, making day-to-day survival more important than seeking to expand one’s family.
Such a predicament would have been a problem for every German couple, and there is simply no
reason to believe that most SS families would have been able to or would have chosen to
surmount such difficulties to have children.

Outside of the general issues which affected the entire country, there were problems
specific to the SS. Himmler was among the people who recognized the impact of war, and as
discussed previously, he actively sought to encourage reproduction and to prevent a repeat of the
devastating demographic loss seen in the previous war. For example, the SS provided married
men with extra vacation time to meet with their wives in the hopes of each couple conceiving a
child during the rendezvous. However, the very fact that special efforts had to be made to
promote reproduction, which often included having the wives determine with their doctors the
best opportunity for conception, indicates the difficulties in conceiving during the war.

Beyond the physical separation issue, there were two particular factors which impeded
Himmler’s goals during the war. The first was age of new recruits. After the Waffen-SS was
formed in the first months of the war, it quickly expanded. It acquired new recruits every year,
and these recruits successively got younger. In the first years of the war, the call up age for
volunteers and conscripts for both the Wehrmacht and the Waffen-SS was 19. By 1943, this age
had dropped to 17. The average age of a Waffen-SS division throughout the war was 18; in
recognition of this youth, these soldiers received a ration of sweets instead of cigarettes. Even
the vaunted Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler division was not that old. The average age among
enlisted soldiers was 19.35 years, and for non-commissioned officers, it was 25.76 years, leading
to a unit average of 22.5 years.

Moreover, following the devastating loss at Stalingrad in early 1943, new Waffen-SS
divisions were formed including the unit Hitler Jugend. The name was not a random choice;
Himmler worked in conjunction with the head of the Hitler Youth, Artur Axmann, to form a unit
recruited from the latter’s organization. After receiving approval from Hitler in early February,
the new division was formed, allowing the boys to hold joint membership in the Hitler Youth

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107 For more on these measures, see chapter 5.
and the Waffen-SS. About 10,000 boys joined, the vast majority of whom willingly and enthusiastically volunteered for service. After months of training from the summer of 1943 through the winter of 1944, the boys, who were only 17 or 18 years old, were sent to the front under the leadership of commissioned and non-commissioned officers drawn from the Leibstandarte. Their presence on the front was known not only in the Germans ranks, but also to the enemy, who subsequently dubbed this group in its propaganda the “Baby Division.”

Recruiting heavily among the youth inhibited Himmler’s population goals for several interrelated reasons. First, a boy in his late teens was unlikely to be married. By going off to war, he would have greatly reduced his chances of getting married simply by being away from the home front and losing the opportunity to meet and marry sometime. He also risked being killed while fighting. Second, prior to the war, Himmler had not expected a young SS man without sufficient means of caring for a family to have gotten married. He wavered over the course of the 1930’s when it came to the specific age a man should be when he married, but the age was always in the early to mid 20’s, an age which was supported by the statistics of when SS men married in the war years. Nonetheless, young men recruited to fight prior to completing their education and/or securing employment would have hardly had the financial means to support a family. Third, once the war had started, although Himmler encouraged each man to have a child before going off to fight, SS policies favored men who were already married and had children. Again, vacation time was more often allotted to men with wives and children, making it more difficult for the unmarried soldier to change his marital status. Overall, with the age of the SS declining throughout the war, Himmler could have had no reasonable expectation that the number of marriages of his SS men let alone the number of children born to them could have risen greatly. By recruiting young boys, which was seen as a military necessity to stave off defeat, Himmler was in essence repeating a mistake from the First World War. He allowed a young generation to risk dying before they had the opportunity to get married and father children. Therefore, while the victory of the arms was supposed to work in tandem with the

111 Dearn, 12; Williamson, 8-9; Meyer, 211-12 and 248; Michael Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2004), 209-10; John Keegan, *Waffen SS: The Asphalt Soldiers* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), 91; and Hubert Meyer, *The 12th SS: The History of the Hitler Youth Panzer Division*, volume 1 (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2005), 2-4. Interestingly, Michael Kater pointed out that while the hardcore Hitler Youth willingly joined the Waffen-SS, for most young boys, they chose the Wehrmacht over the SS because they were too daunted by the elite standards of the latter organization. They did not believe that they could meet its rigorous physical and ideological standards.

victory in the cradle, in reality, trying to achieve the former greatly impaired the success of the latter.

Outside of the age factor, there was one final issue which specifically impeded Himmler’s plans during the war: personal hatred of him. After the war, the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg branded the entire SS a criminal organization. Seeking to rehabilitate themselves, veterans from the Waffen-SS argued that they had nothing to do with the criminal activities, such as the atrocities of the concentration camps. They felt that the Waffen-SS should be viewed as a fourth branch of the military and not as a part of the SS. These former soldiers routinely inveighed against Himmler personally. This hatred was seen all throughout the ranks of the Waffen-SS, even as high as SS-Oberstgruppenführer Paul Hausser, who had specifically been recruited in the mid 1930’s to found the precursor of the Waffen-SS, the SS-Verfügungstruppe. After the war, he wrote several books, declaring that “Himmler was no soldier.” Hausser proclaimed that Himmler along with Oswald Pohl had deceived the troops by grouping them with the concentration camp personnel. This combination “chained the actual Waffen SS to the fate of those men who are responsible for the incidents in the concentration camps.” Because he strongly held to these views, Hausser spent most of his post-war career seeking to rehabilitate the Waffen-SS.

Below this high-ranking officer, there was also discontent among the enlisted men and non-commissioned officers, among them SS-Unterscharführer Richard Fuchs and SS-Oberscharführer Hans-Gerhard Starck. Fuchs asserted, “The Waffen-SS had no love for Himmler. To us he was more or less a stranger,” while Starck more vehemently stated that, “To me a Heine is a man who is not trustworthy, a juggler, an illusionist, a weak little man who is nothing without his uniform.” Men such as these two agreed with their former military leader, Hausser, and sought to establish that Himmler was not a soldier. At best, his connection with the Waffen-SS was nominal; they claimed that he and the SS militarized unit had actually become estranged from one another throughout the war.

116 Ibid., 19-20.
The testimony of SS-Obergruppenführers Richard Hildebrandt and Karl von Eberstein during the RuSHA trial in 1947-1948 corroborated this claim regarding the relationship between Himmler and the Waffen-SS. Both of them reported that because Himmler had no experience as a soldier, his opinions were not taken seriously by the Waffen-SS. These two former officers also pointed out that by the war, Himmler had likewise become estranged from older SS leaders. Hildebrandt was one of those leaders, his testimony confirmed during the direct examinations of SS-Gruppenführer George Ebrecht, a co-defendant, and Franz Viertz, who had worked under Hildebrandt when he was RuSHA chief. Hildebrandt alleged that his displeasure with Himmler originated when the Reichsführer became Chief of Police. He claimed that many older SS leaders agreed with him that the amalgamation of the SS with the police harmed the integrity of the SS. Himmler’s quest for power, as seen in his takeover of the police, strained the relationship between him and his SS officers because it conflicted with the ideals of the SS as Hildebrandt saw them, namely to educate the German people in the values of chivalry, obedience, and loyalty. The former RuSHA chief claimed that the only reason he stayed in the SS was in spite of Himmler; he contended that he remained true to the ideals of the SS even when Himmler’s lust for power had betrayed them.

Based on these examples, if this personal hatred of Himmler was real, and undoubtedly for some men it was, then these men would have had little reason to pay attention to let alone follow the commands designed to regulate their family lives above and beyond the general platitudes on racial care and healthy families already prevalent in Nazi Germany. If they wanted to evade these ideological decrees, then there really was nothing that Himmler could have done to them in the middle of the war. He needed the Waffen-SS too much; their military successes bolstered his position, and as examined earlier, he was willing to make some compromises and changes when it came to balancing family ideals with military necessity. Nonetheless, all of this remonstration against Himmler must be regarded with suspicion. After all, these complaints were made after the war. Given Himmler’s postwar reputation, distancing themselves from him would have been a strategically viable option, especially as the veterans fought in the 1950’s and 1960’s to receive pensions from the West German government as members of the Wehrmacht.

118 US v. Greifelt, 4064 and 4116.
119 Ibid., 3771 and 3817.
120 Ibid., 3771, 4051-52, and 4063.
121 For more information, see chapter 6.
did and as some former high-ranking officers defended themselves in court on charges based on
their work for the SS.\textsuperscript{122}

Combined with the other factors mentioned, both the Great Depression and the Second
World War did anything but facilitate Himmler’s population goals. However, to some extent, he
must carry part of the blame for the failure as well. Whereas Himmler clearly sought to control
the personal behavior of his men, particularly through the commands he issued, he also allowed
quite a bit of leniency when it came to many personal decisions. For example, in the mid 1930’s,
anyone found disregarding the engagement and marriage command was subject to a judicial
hearing in the SS Court and risked being expelled from the organization.\textsuperscript{123} Several hundred
men were evicted for that reason, but several hundred more were allowed to leave with an
honorable discharge because they disagreed with the engagement and marriage policy. In both
cases, the punishment was nothing more than leaving the organization, although later there was
clemency and many of these men were re-admitted to the SS.\textsuperscript{124}

Homosexuality was another case where Himmler’s rhetoric was far stronger than his
actions. There were severe penalties for homosexuality, as regulated by the law and prohibited
in the SS and the police by Himmler.\textsuperscript{125} He actually wanted to make homosexuality a capital
offense as early as September 1938. This desire did not come to fruition until November 15,
1941 when Hitler issued a decree which allowed for special SS courts to try members of the SS
and the police for homosexuality and to sentence them to death. However, the potential impact
of this ordinance was hampered because Hitler prevented Hans Heinrich Lammers, the head of
the Reich Chancellery and an SS-Obergruppenführer, from publishing it because Hitler did not
want the public to have the impression that homosexuality was rampant in the SS and the police.
When Lammers pointed out that such a prohibition would limit the effectiveness of the
ordinance, Hitler declared that that was Himmler’s problem. Therefore, Himmler issued a
confidential memorandum on March 7, 1942 and ordered that Hitler’s decree be disseminated

\textsuperscript{122} On the fight for some of these men to receive pensions see David Clay Large, “Reckoning without the Past: The
Modern History}, volume 59, number 1 (March 1987): 79-113. On a related note, the West German government also
provided pensions to widows whose husbands had been members of the Allgemeine-SS, Waffen-SS, or Gestapo and
had been excuted by Allied forces. Katharina C. Tumpek-Kjellmark, “From Hitler’s widows to Adenauer’s brides:
towards a construction of gender and memory in postwar Germany, 1938-1963” (dissertation, Cornell University,
1994), 116-17, 120, and 149.
\textsuperscript{123} For more information, see chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{124} For more information, see chapter 6.
\textsuperscript{125} For more information, see chapter 5.
orally to all members of the SS and the police. Once they had heard the command, each member of the SS was required to sign a declaration acknowledging that the order had been explained to him and that he would not engage in such acts; this declaration was subsequently placed in his personnel file. Under this new regulation, death sentences were carried out, although rarely and inconsistently. As intolerant as Himmler was toward homosexuality, he never eradicated homosexuals from the SS, the police, or German society.  

One other area where Himmler was inconsistent with rhetoric and enforcement concerned religion. He wanted his men, their wives, and their children to break with their respective churches and proclaim themselves to be believers in God (Gottgläubig), but his orders regarding religious belief and activity never demanded that they do so. In the mid 1930’s, Himmler laid out the official position of the SS, basing his decree on the one written for the party by Hitler’s deputy Rudolf Heß. In October 1933, Heß had stated that “No National Socialist can be disadvantaged somehow because he is not of a certain belief or denomination or because he admits no denomination at all. Belief is a private matter for everyone; one is only responsible to his conscience.” Himmler allowed his men to profess freely that they were Catholic or Protestant; such affiliation and their participation in church-related activities did not affect their standing in the SS. The only exception was for men who served in a leadership capacity in their church; priests and ministers had to choose between their religious service and membership in the SS, although if they chose the former, they received an honorable discharge. This incompatibility between service in the SS and in a religious denomination was also one adopted by the Catholic Church, which forbade priests and clerics from joining the SS as of 1934 and the party as of 1937; disobeying these edicts led to excommunication.

Furthermore, Himmler did not tolerate mockery or scorn when it came to religion. If an SS man were caught disrespecting the religion of another member, he would be expelled from

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130 Deschner, 102.
the SS. Nevertheless, Himmler encouraged his men to leave their denominations. He preferred that when they did so, they did not state that they were renouncing formal religion because of their membership in the SS. He felt that such a reason would tarnish the reputation of the SS and preferred that a man simply specify that an “end of personal conviction” had prompted his choice. However, Himmler did remind those men who chose to leave their church that they still had to pay church taxes for the final year in which they had belonged; a withdrawal from the church did not exempt anyone from fiscal responsibility. Finally, while granting his men a choice when it came to having an official denomination or not, Himmler refused to tolerate atheism. Belief in God was an absolute necessity in the SS, most likely because the Nazis had spent many years haranguing communists for being godless.

This tolerance for religious beliefs was reflected in the numbers. By the late 1930’s, only 18-25% of SS men had declared themselves to be Gottgläubig. Approximately the same percentage of men remained Catholic, while more than half of the men proclaimed they were Protestant. As with other statistics, the group who best complied with Himmler’s wishes were the highest-ranking SS officers; just over 70% of these officers proclaimed themselves to be Gottgläubig. However, this lack of religiosity was apparently easy to rectify after the war, especially if one were a Catholic. SS-Obergruppenführer Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski learned that, because he had only filed paperwork with the SS but had never made a request to his priest to leave the church, the Catholic Church still regarded him in good standing.

There is one other significant note with religion. Whereas most men appeared to have chosen to remain affiliated with their denomination, a much higher percentage of them willingly participated in a non-religious wedding ceremony. RuSHA statistics from mid 1941 through early 1942 show that over 75% of men and over 95% of officers did not have a traditional church wedding. In this regard, Himmler had the greatest success. By allowing his men the freedom

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133 “Kirchenaustritte,” 3 April 1937, IfZ MA 330/frame 2654012.
135 Kersten, 150.
138 For the details of this ceremony, see chapter 4.
to do as they pleased, he found them more accommodating in their compliance.

These three cases revolved around choices that each SS man made regarding his personal life. The fact that a member of the SS could evade ideological orders does not suggest that Himmler was not serious when it came to regulating personal affairs and decisions, but that there were certain circumstances where someone could evade ideological orders. Even when it came to orders relating to one’s official position, the ability to elude obeying a command existed. This feasibility is the most evident in the case of the Einsatzgruppen, mobile killing units of SS and police personnel responsible for executing Jews in Eastern Europe prior to the opening of the death camps. While bourgeois morality certain did not inhibit most of the men in these battalions from committing mass murder, as historian Christopher Browning has shown, they were able to decline participating in the executions without punishment.\footnote{Christopher R. Browning, \textit{Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland} (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998).} The possibility of a court-martial followed by incarceration in a concentration camp or execution did not dissuade a minority these men from choosing not to obey, belying the impression given by many high-ranking SS officers after the war that disobeying an order was simply not possible.\footnote{During the Nuremberg Trial, Otto Ohlendorf testified that disobeying an order would have resulted in a court martial. He did not actually believe it was possible to evade any orders issued by a superior, a point also made by Franz Stangl, the commandant Treblinka, in a personal interview and Erich von Bach-Zelewski and Richard Hildebrant during the RuSHA Trial. IMT, volume 4, 354; Sereny, \textit{Into that Darkness}, 52, 55, and 134; and \textit{US v. Greifelt}, 451 and 4053.} Other historians have also suggested that evasion was possible, and even Albert Speer, Hitler’s court architect and the head of the Reich Armaments Ministry (Reichsministerium für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion) during the war, contended that an individual could mitigate the orders he had received.\footnote{Hans Buchheim, “Command and Compliance,” 371; Karl O. Patel, “The Reign of the Black Order. The Final Phase of National Socialism: The SS Counter-State,” in \textit{The Third Reich}, edited by Maurice Beaumont (New York: Praeger, 1954), 665; and Albert Speer, \textit{Infiltration}, translated by Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1981), 9.}

These examples and the possibility of evading orders have relevance with regards to commands attempting to regulate fatherhood in the SS. If a man were willing to risk death to avoid fulfilling a duty-related order with which he disagreed, he certainly would have had no objection to being expelled from the SS for disregarding an order that impinged on his personal

life. Furthermore, enforcing complete compliance would have required an effective apparatus dictating clear guidelines for how each order was to be obeyed and the specific process through which punishment would be administered. The SS did have a court system, but, as was shown with the engagement and marriage and command, even those men who left due to a lack of compliance were later forgiven and re-admitted. Without a system in place to enforce policies and commands consistently, individual SS men could feasibly avoid following Himmler’s orders without fear of severe reprisal. In addition, even if an efficient system had been created, it could have only succeeded if Himmler did not micromanage it. He could not have created exceptions to the rules he had created. He would have had to allow this system to function without constantly intervening, which, given his predilection for getting involved in everything, would have been nearly impossible.

With this ultimate inability of Himmler and the SS as an organization to entice or force hundreds of thousands of men – plus their wives – to comply with commands intended to regulate every their personal lives, only one question remains: under what circumstances could there have been greater success? There are two parts to this answer – time and education. The Third Reich only lasted for twelve years, the SS for twenty. In that two decade existence, Himmler controlled the organization for sixteen years, and the most significant of his eugenic decrees, the engagement and marriage command, existed for less than fourteen years. Therefore, there was simply not enough time for either the SS or the Nazi regime to have completely reshaped the mentality of the people, even its most loyal followers.

Yet, given more time, there could have been a different outcome. Had Nazi Germany existed longer, there may have been better results with future generations who would have grown up in and only knew the Third Reich. These younger generations would have learned a new national and racial identity through the government, the party, and every related organization. They would have learned who belonged to their racial state and who did not. Each successive generation would have moreover learned to adhere to the racial ideology of the Third Reich, and this acceptance would have connected them with the state that fostered this mentality.\textsuperscript{143} The primary arena where the state would have sought to transform the thinking of its people would have been in the education system, as education represented one of the most significant areas to

\textsuperscript{143} Anderson, 4 and 141; Hobsbawm, \textit{Nations and Nationalism}, 34 and 46; Marx, xi and 24; and Zimmer, 50.
promote change.\textsuperscript{144}

Hitler recognized the importance of education to win over the youth. In \textit{Mein Kampf}, he stated that not only did the state need to concern itself with the production of healthy racial offspring, but it also needed to educate the youth physically and mentally. Specifically, the state had the responsibility to make sure that each boy and girl understood the value of racial purity.\textsuperscript{145} Two decades later, Hitler reaffirmed his views, commenting that once the youth became attached to an idea, no one could stop them from propagating it.\textsuperscript{146} Therefore, the Nazi government attempted to re-align the education system to promote its racial and ideological perspective as early as 1933.\textsuperscript{147} Many subjects were affected by the subsequent curriculum modifications mandated by the Reich Ministry for Science, Art, and Education, but none more so than biology and history.

Biological education began early. Kindergarten teachers were instructed to introduce their students to the concepts of racial identity, the National Socialist view of genetics, and the task of each individual to improve the race.\textsuperscript{148} From this early start, racially-based biological education continued year after year.\textsuperscript{149} Textbooks promoted racial hygiene and hereditary health. They stressed the significance of the Nordic race to Germany and informed their readers how this race was threatened through racial mixing, excessive hereditary illness, and a decline in the number of healthy children born.\textsuperscript{150} Students even learned how to measure one another’s skulls and use this and other physical data to determine each person’s racial type.\textsuperscript{151} The end result of this biological education was to ensure that every child completely comprehended Nazi racial theory and was prepared to use this knowledge when he (or she) chose a spouse and had children.

\textsuperscript{144} Hobsbawm, \textit{Nations and Nationalism}, 91-92.
\textsuperscript{146} Trevor-Roper, \textit{Hitler’s Table Talk}, 394.
\textsuperscript{148} “Health education,” in Noakes, 274-75 and “Racial Instruction and the National Community,” in Mosse, \textit{Nazi Culture}, 283-84.
\textsuperscript{150} Emil Jörns and Julius Schwab, \textit{Rassenhygiene Fibel} (Berlin: Alfred Metzner, 1933) and Philipp Depdolla, \textit{Erblehre, Rasse, Bevölkerungspolitik, vornehmlich für den Unterricht in höhern Schulen bestimmt} (Berlin: Alfred Metzner Verlag, 1934).
\textsuperscript{151} Grunberger, \textit{12 Year Reich}, 288-89.
Students learned that each decision they made had implications for the Reich, a lesson reinforced through history classes, which taught them the importance of race in Germany’s past, present, and future. History books emphasized the contributions of the Nordic race to German and European culture and imparted how the National Socialist government fought to prevent the death of this race. They stated that each racially healthy person was part of the solution because these students and their descendents represented the future of the Reich. To buttress these biological and historical lessons on racial ideology, mathematics provided further indoctrination. For example, students had to solve arithmetic problems where they determined how much money the state had to spend to keep a mentally ill person hospitalized or what percentage of the German population was of Nordic descent and had blond hair.

Formal schooling was reinforced by extra-curricular education, primarily through membership in the Hitler Youth or League of German Maidens. Created in 1925 and 1930, these organizations were designed to foster a bond between the youth and the Nazi party and later the Nazi state. They were an additional avenue through which the Nazi government could convince young and impressionable boys and girls that its racial ideology was a crucial element in daily life. The Hitler Youth even had a guidebook that endorsed the racial views of the Nazi state. This primer advocated the Nazi belief in the supremacy of the Nordic race. Nordic men represented the best; no other race was as intelligent, as physically beautiful, or as fit for leadership. Between the information provided in this Hitler Youth manual and in the school

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153 Evans, 265.

154 There were also specialized schools such as the National Political High Schools, or NAPOLAS, and the Adolf Hitler Schools. Lynn H. Nicholas, *Cruel World: The Children of Europe in the Nazi Web* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 118-19.


textbooks and lessons, the Nazi government used both informal and formal education to reiterate constantly who racially constituted the best members of society. It aimed to affirm in the youth a sense of pride in their Nordic heritage because the Nordic race embodied the healthy German population which the government wanted to reproduce.

If the Third Reich had lasted longer, this racial education would have benefitted the state immensely. The government would have undoubtedly reinforced the measures it had already introduced in the 1930’s and early 1940’s with additional educational mandates. As the future Nazi youth received this education, they would have grown up in a place where race and biology defined the nation. This extended education would have also been a boon to the SS. Prospective members would have already been well-versed in the requisite racial knowledge. When men sought to enlist as members and women as wives, they would have long since accepted racial ideology as a part of their everyday lives. By the time these men and women could have joined the SS family community, conforming to the martial and genealogical requirements of the organization would have already been second nature.

Furthermore, while these new members and their wives would have still been expected to lead the German people when it came to setting racial and reproductive standards, if the entire society were well-educated about and accepted Nazi racial ideology, then this society would have most likely been supportive of the marital and reproductive goals of the SS. There would have been no guarantee that the continued existence of the Third Reich and the extended period of racial education would have completely solved the demographic decline of the country or ensured the political and social ascendency of the SS. The other factors mentioned above which limited reproduction would have still been formidable obstacles. However, as education is a basis for nationalism and national thought, it is quite possible that with more time to educate the German people to accept its racial ideology, the Nazi regime and the SS could have had greater reproductive and demographic success.

This time, of course, did not exist, as the Third Reich came to a violent and destructive end in mid-1945. The desires and goals of Nazi leaders never completely came to fruition, and among the failures were the population ideals of Himmler. He had sought to build the SS into an ever-lasting elite, and while he did construct an inflated bureaucracy capable of a great many things – most of which were deadly in nature – his ultimate objectives were never reached. Among the goals which he failed to achieve were ones relating to the family. Himmler wanted
to foster the creation of a racially healthy family community, but for many reasons, most notably the inability of or choice by his own men not to cooperate, his designs came to naught.
Although the master plan to construct a racially and hereditarily healthy SS family community (*Sippengemeinschaft*) failed, examining its facets in greater detail provides historians with a stronger understanding of what the SS was and how it functioned within the Nazi party and the German Reich. The core element in creating this community was convincing each SS man that he had the responsibility to ensure a victory in the cradle; his contribution to the SS as a father was as significant as his efforts toward advancing first the political victory of the Nazi party and then the military victory of the Nazi state. The SS, and in particular its leader Heinrich Himmler, utilized a wide variety of measures designed to encourage each man to establish not just a racially healthy family, but a child-rich one as well. These children would ensure the continuation of the SS as an elite organization that would not only serve the Reich in the present, but perpetually in the future.

An entire system was created within the SS, primarily through the work of the Race and Settlement Main Office, to foster and assist these racially healthy families. The inaugural procedure of this system was the engagement and marriage process, where RuSHA ensured that each SS man and his future wife were racially suitable to found a child-rich family. Once each couple had been successfully vetted, a barrage of rhetoric persistently encouraged them to begin a family. Furthermore, this couple was supported financially both by the state and the SS, and RuSHA provided material support in addition to creating new ceremonies to celebrate their union as well as to inaugurate the birth of their children. The continual availability of these resources both before and during the war meant that any SS member or SS family who wanted to take advantage of them could do so. Based on the low marriage rates and numbers of children born, the majority of SS men did not avail themselves of these incentives. For various reasons, they were either unable to or chose not to do so, and even granting them a modicum of leeway during the war when it came to their compliance with racially-based orders did not generate more favorable results.

Nevertheless, the very existence of this entire system, the quantity of resources dedicated
to it, and the ongoing efforts expended to implement it demonstrates the significance of the family community within the SS. The construction of this community was designed to work in conjunction with the trajectory of the Third Reich, particularly the crusade of the Nazi party to reshape the nation into a racial state. As evinced by many new laws, such as the 1933 sterilization law, Nazi leaders also sought to restructure the German Volk. They wanted to create a national community (Volksgemeinschaft) which had the ability to unite the people under the banner of the Nazi party and its charismatic leader and to lead the country forward as a proud, strong, and revitalized nation. The founding and cultivation of the SS family community was to be at the core of this renewal; SS men and their families were to be the vanguard of this state, willingly setting and meeting higher standards to become the racial elite.

However, the various measures employed by the SS (and that Nazi state as well) to found this community by regulating the marriages, reproduction, and family lives of its members were not of its own making. Himmler and other leaders in the SS, most notably the first RuSHA chief Richard Walther Darré, embraced the ideals of the internationally-respected science of eugenics and implemented them. Eugenicists, including those in Germany, had wanted for decades to find a humane means of selection to improve the quantity and quality of the population. Based on their individual class, racial, religious, or national bias, they wanted to limit benignly the reproduction of certain people while strongly encouraging other people to have more children. In seeking to control the right of each person to reproduce, eugenicists created a wide range of measures, many of which Himmler embraced. He selectively utilized those eugenic ideas which best suited his plans. Thus, what Himmler and the SS, particularly RuSHA, attempted to do was turn rhetoric into reality by applying eugenic ideals.

Nonetheless, the employment of eugenics to shape an entire system for constructing an SS family community did not come without consequences. To manage this vast enterprise and to supervise literally every phase of family life, RuSHA – like most SS main offices in their respective work – became a large and complicated bureaucracy which rendered all personal decisions subject to organizational oversight. The engagement and marriage procedure represents the best example. When the SS only had 15,000 members, it was simple enough for Himmler to require a thorough review of each application and to oversee personally most if not all of them. As the SS expanded numerically, this process became more cumbersome. Thus, RuSHA had to expand to meet the needs of the applicants and their resulting families.
This expansion demonstrates the complicated nature of overseeing the personal lives of other people, a facet which eugenicists had not imagined, or had at least not acknowledged in their works. These ramifications were compounded by the fact that there were many reasons which inhibited an SS man and his wife from choosing to or having the ability to have a child-rich family. Eugenicists could not have accounted for all of these diverse reasons – including a catastrophic depression and another world war – when they proposed their suggestions for how to improve the genetic stock of the population. Therefore, the inability of the SS to use eugenics to create a supposedly superior master race was not just a failure for the organization and for Himmler’s plans, but for the science of eugenics as well.

The ideas emanating from this science were sound in theory, but not in practice. Increasing the well-being of the population through fostering the birth of healthy generations of children was unattainable through positive eugenic measures. Unfortunately, negative measures, primarily exemplified through sterilization laws and genocide, had far greater consequences. Taking away someone’s right to have children, or even his right to live, was far easier to achieve through force than persuading a person to comply willingly with edicts designed to encourage the creation of life. Due to this destructive use, eugenics became discredited as a science following the Second World War, although many of its constituent fields did not suffer any immediate repercussions. For example, the idea of using science to create healthier offspring not only survived, but still flourishes in the related field of genetics. Genetic engineering, gene therapy, genetic counseling, and in-vitro fertilization are just a few of the ways in which this science could be used to influence the biological heritage of future generations.\(^1\) Among the most recent genetics research, the work with the greatest potential application to mankind was the Human Genome Project. One of its explicit purposes is the application of genetic knowledge to improve the health and well-being of human beings.\(^2\)

Besides the continual use of science to enhance the biological heritage of next generation, the major field to emerge from the war and its connection with eugenics relatively unscathed was anthropology. The work of anthropologists, such as Eugen Fischer, had been vital to eugenics,


\(^2\) While improving humanity is one of the explicit purposes of this project, there is a conscious recognition among the scientists conducting this research that their work potentially has non-scientific ramifications. More on the Human Genome Project and its goals can be found via at <http://www.genome.gov/10001772> and <http://www.ornl.gov/sci/techresources/Human_Genome/hg5yp/index.shtml> and both accessed 8 February 2010.
and anthropological traditions in Nazi Germany, as with eugenics, did not deviate from how this science was practiced in other countries. Furthermore, race had been a significant factor in anthropological studies both in Germany and elsewhere. This connection between race and anthropology did not disappear in the post-war era; some anthropologists continued to cite the importance of race, while others completely rejected it. Nonetheless, subsequent changes to the field of anthropology both nationally and internationally in the following decades were primarily caused by the confluence of older categories, such as social and cultural anthropology, and the emergence of new branches, such as educational anthropology. These changes had little to do with racial science, as used by eugenicists and anthropologists earlier in the century. Moreover, many prominent German anthropologists retained their academic positions regardless of their work during and for the Nazi regime. Even affiliation with either the Nazi party or the SS did not harm their post-war prospects. Many anthropologists served in leading roles in anthropological societies and institutes as well as at universities without having to distance themselves from their previous work, which included their views on race.

The only significant change in post-war anthropology related to the KWI-A. The Allied powers, especially the United States, wanted to shut down the entire Kaiser Wilhelm Society. Allied Control Council Law 25 allowed for any German institute, including KWI’s, to be liquidated unless its research was of use for the war effort against Japan. Due to its association


For example, craniology, a field that was of value to early anthropological studies, was based on the presumption of the superior of the white race of the basis of measuring and weighing the brains and skulls of people of various races. Stephan Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 57, 83-85, and 115-30. Gould also examined the connections between race and intelligence testing in this book, using it, like craniology, as a means to debunk the idea of biological determinism.

For example, one of the original purposes of the journal *Mankind Quarterly*, which was founded in 1960 and still exists today, is to examine the relevance of race research to anthropology. The journal immediately came under attack by other anthropological publications for embodying the racists views of the past, but the journal defended its position and has continued to defend its position anytime it publishes an article which has been considered controversial by other anthropologists or scientists in related fields. L.C. Dunn, “Cross Currents in the History of Human Genetics,” Presidential address presented at the meeting of the American Society of Human Genetics, 3 May 1961, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1932193/pdf/ajhg00555-0002.pdf>, accessed 17 February 2010, page 9 and J. Philippe Rushton, “Race is More than Just Skin Deep: A Psychologists View,” *Mankind Quarterly*, volume 39, number 2 (Winter 1998): 240.


Draft for the “Dissolution of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society for the Promotion of Sciences,” 26 September 1946, NA
with Nazi racial policies, the KWI-A was the most discredited and it only remained open until 1948. By that point, the Max Planck Society had been founded in the British zone as the successor organization to the Kaiser Wilhelm Society. There were no plans to create a successor institute for the KWI-A, although several related organizations were eventually founded. Furthermore, despite the taint of Nazism, most of the scientists who had worked for the KWI-A had no problems finding employment in the post-war era, among them Fritz Lenz and Otmar von Verschuer, both of whom had successful post-war careers in the university system.

Eugenics as used in Nazi Germany has a multi-faceted legacy. Many of its ideals – namely its primary goal of seeking to use science to improve mankind and of being the “wellborn” science – still survive, although eugenics itself is now defunct and primarily viewed through the prism of Nazism. The appropriation of eugenics to establish the family ideology of the SS is a vital part of this legacy and perception. Heinrich Himmler and the SS applied eugenic principles to a select group as no other individual, organization, or state had ever done before. Their work showed the possibilities, but also the problems of applying science to society. Their failure to establish a blood-based elite by successfully implementing eugenic principles demonstrated the limitations of practical eugenics. Additionally, it meant that the ideal family community which Himmler sought to build could not come to fruition. The ultimate inability to create families of good blood left the Black Order and the Nazi state which it served without a strong biological legacy to sustain the nation that the party and the government had labored for just over twelve years to construct. Without a solid family foundation, there could be no long-lasting Thousand Year Reich ruled by an SS aristocracy. The German nation thus imagined could not exist.

RG466/250/71/33/3/entry UD3/Box 68.

9 There was originally an MPI for Applied Anthropology, but currently there are two anthropological institutes, the MPI for Evolutionary Anthropology and the MPI for Social Anthropology, and six institutes related to genetics and medicine, the MPG for Molecular Biomedicine, the MPI for Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics, the MPI for Developmental Biology, the MPI for Evolutionary Biology, the MPI for Molecular Genetics, and the MPI for Human Development. “Max Planck Institutes,” Max Planck Gesellschaft, <http://www.mpg.de/english/institutesProjectsFacilities/instituteChoice/index.html>, accessed 8 February 2010.

### APPENDIX A

**NUMERICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENTIRE SS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notable event</th>
<th>Number of members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 9, 1925</td>
<td>Founding of the SS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1925</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 6, 1929</td>
<td>Himmler appointed RFSS</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1929</td>
<td></td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1930</td>
<td></td>
<td>2727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1931</td>
<td></td>
<td>14,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 13, 1932</td>
<td></td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 14, 1932</td>
<td></td>
<td>41,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1932</td>
<td></td>
<td>52,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 30, 1933</td>
<td>Hitler appointed Chancellor</td>
<td>52,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1933</td>
<td></td>
<td>113,094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1933</td>
<td></td>
<td>209,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1934</td>
<td>As of the Röhm purge</td>
<td>221,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1934</td>
<td></td>
<td>196,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1935</td>
<td></td>
<td>199,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1936</td>
<td></td>
<td>200,129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1937</td>
<td></td>
<td>208,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1938</td>
<td></td>
<td>238,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1939</td>
<td></td>
<td>258,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1, 1940</td>
<td></td>
<td>254,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1940</td>
<td></td>
<td>331,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1941</td>
<td></td>
<td>222,252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1941</td>
<td></td>
<td>397,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1942</td>
<td></td>
<td>465,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31, 1943</td>
<td></td>
<td>706,797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1944</td>
<td></td>
<td>794,941</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## APPENDIX B

## RANK COMPARISONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SS Ranks</th>
<th>German Army Ranks</th>
<th>American Army Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reichsführer-SS</td>
<td>Generalfeldmarschall</td>
<td>General of the Army</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Commissioned Officer Grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SS-Oberstgruppenführer</th>
<th>Generaloberst</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SS-Obergruppenführer</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Lieutenant General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Gruppenführer</td>
<td>Generalleutnant</td>
<td>Major General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Brigadeführer</td>
<td>Generalmajor</td>
<td>Brigadier General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Oberführer</td>
<td>(no equivalent)</td>
<td>(no equivalent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Standartenführer</td>
<td>Oberst</td>
<td>Colonel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Obersturmbannführer</td>
<td>Oberstleutnant</td>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Sturmbannführer</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Hauptsturmführer</td>
<td>Hauptmann</td>
<td>Captain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Obersturmführer</td>
<td>Oberleutnant</td>
<td>First Lieutenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Untersturmführer</td>
<td>Leutnant</td>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Non-commissioned Officer Grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SS-Sturmscharführer</th>
<th>Stabsfeldwebel</th>
<th>Sergeant Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SS-Standarten-Oberjunker</td>
<td>Oberfähnrich</td>
<td>(no equivalent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Stabscharführer</td>
<td>Hauptfeldwebel</td>
<td>(no equivalent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Hauptscharführer</td>
<td>Oberfeldwebel</td>
<td>Master &amp; First Sergeant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Oberscharführer</td>
<td>Feldwebel</td>
<td>Technical Sergeant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Standartenjunker</td>
<td>Fähnrich</td>
<td>(no equivalent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Scharführer</td>
<td>Unterfeldwebel</td>
<td>Staff Sergeant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Unterscharführer</td>
<td>Unteroffizier</td>
<td>Sergeant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Enlisted Grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SS-Rottenführer</th>
<th>Stabgefreiter &amp; Obergefreiter</th>
<th>Corporal (NCO grade)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SS-Sturmmann</td>
<td>Gefreiter</td>
<td>(no equivalent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Oberschütze (SS-Mann)</td>
<td>Oberschütze</td>
<td>Private First Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Schütze (SS-Mann)</td>
<td>Schütze</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS-Anwärter</td>
<td>Rekrut</td>
<td>(no equivalent)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This chart is based on the information found in Ziegler, *Nazi Germany's New Aristocracy*, 149; Gelwick, “Personnel Policies and Procedures of the Waffen-SS,” 252, and *Trials of War Criminals before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10*, volume 2, 331. A slightly different comparison can be found in Blandford, *Hitler's Second Army*, 199.
The Reichsführer-SS
Munich 31 December 1931

1. The SS is an association selected from particular Germanic, Nordic men.

2. According to the National Socialist world view and in the realization that the future of our Volk is found in the selection and conservation of the race and hereditary health of good blood, I introduce on January 1, 1932 for all unmarried members of the SS the “marriage authorization.”

3. The goal to aim for is the hereditary healthily [and] valuable clan of German Nordic type.

4. The marriage authorization is given and refused solely on racial and hereditary health criteria.

5. Every SS-Man who intends to marry has to obtain the marriage authorization of the Reichführer-SS.

6. SS members who marry despite having been denied the marriage authorization will be dismissed from the SS; they will be given the option of resigning.

7. The appropriate processing of the marriage requests is the task of the “Race Office” of the SS.

8. The race office of the SS is in charge of the “Clan book of the SS,” in which the families of the SS-members are written down after the granting of the marriage authorization or approval of the request for registration.

9. The Reichführer-SS, the leader of the Race Office, and the advisors of this office are bound to secrecy by their word of honor.

10. The SS is clear that with this order it has taken a step of great importance. Mockery, scorn, and misunderstanding do not affect us; the future belongs to us!

The Reichführer-SS
[signed] H. Himmler

Copies of this order can be found in the following primary sources: BA NS19/1934; BA NS19/752; IMT, volume XXIX, document 2284-PS; and d’Alquen, 10.
APPENDIX D

“ON RELATIONS AND FAMILY”

The first edition of “Aus Sippe und Familie,” 8 May 1935, page 4
Wir haben den Willen zum Sieg des Kindes und wir werden diesen Sieg erfechten,

[Text von der Seite]

“Wir haben den Willen zum Sieg des Kindes und wir werden diesen Sieg erfechten,” 2 February 1939, page 4
"Aus Sippe und Familie," 22 June 1939, page 5
Aus Sippe und Familie

Eheschließungen


Ein Sohn wurde geboren


Eine Tochter wurde geboren:


APPENDIX E

“FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS”

The first edition of “Familien Anzeigen,” 19 June 1935, page 16
Death announcements from the first wartime publication of “Familien Anzeigen,” 7 September 1939, page 17
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  PK: NSDAP Party Correspondence
  RS: Race and Settlement Main Office Files
  SSO: SS Officers Personnel Files
  NS2: SS Rasse und Siedlungshauptamt
  NS3: SS-Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt
  NS5: Deutsche Arbeitsfront Arbeitswissenschaftliches Institut
  NS6: Partei Kanzlei der NSDAP
  NS7: SS- und Polizeigerichtsbarkeit
  NS18: Reichspropagandaleiter der NSDAP
  NS19: Reichsführer-SS
  NS20: Kleine Erwerbungen NSDAP
  NS21: Lehr- und Forschungsgemeinschaft Ahnenerbe
  NS22: Reichsorganisationleiter der NSDAP
  NS26: Hauptarchiv der NSDAP
  NS31: SS-Hauptamt
  NS33: SS-Führungshauptamt
  NS34: SS-Personalhauptamt
  NS37: Hauptamt für Volkswohlfahrt
  NS47: Allgemeine SS
  NS48: Sonstige zentrale Dienstellen und Einrichtungen der SS
  R55: Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda
  R58: Reichssicherheitshauptamt
  R86: Reichsgesundheitsamt
  R187: Sammlung Schumacher
  R1501: Reichsministerium des Innern
  R3102: Statistisches Reichsamt

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  RS: Race and Settlement Main Office Files
  SSO: SS Officers Personnel Files
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  RG263: Records of the Central Intelligence Agency
  RG331: Allied Operation and Occupation Headquarters, WWII, SHAEF
RG466: Records of the US High Commissioner for Germany
T70: Records of the Reich Ministry for Propaganda
T175: Records of the Reich Leader SS and Chief of the German Police
T354: Miscellaneous SS Records
T580: Captured German Records Filmed at Berlin – American Historical Association
T611: Captured German Records Filmed at Berlin – University of Nebraska

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