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The Edelweiss Pirates: An Exploratory Study

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THE EDELWEISS PIRATES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Abstract

The Edelweiss Pirates were teenagers who came together in and around Cologne during the Third Reich to escape the discipline and control of the Hitler Youth. Among other activities, members would gather in the evenings and take trips on the weekends; some members also assaulted Hitler Youth patrols and distributed Allied propaganda. For years, scholars and other authorities have debated whether the Edelweiss Pirates should be categorized as anti-Nazi resisters or juvenile delinquents. However, there are perhaps no objectively correct answers, which stems in part from ambiguity in assessing the motives, ideologies, and behaviors exhibited by members of the group. Moreover, historical understanding of the group is limited. This thesis thus seeks to increase and contribute to that understanding. This is accomplished through comprehensive searches of ten German archives, and analyses of the relevant archived materials: police records, government reports, newspaper articles, scholarly literature, and other obscure sources. This paper introduces these materials and their content, while also considering the complexity of determining the place of the Edelweiss Pirates in the history of the Third Reich.

Keywords: Edelweisspiraten, Edelweiss Pirates, Third Reich, Nazi Germany
The Edelweiss Pirates: An Exploratory Study

The *Edelweisspiraten* (Edelweiss Pirates) were teenagers who came together in and around *Köln* (Cologne), during the Third Reich to escape the discipline and control of the *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth) (Biddiscombe, 1995, p. 37). Among other youthful activities, the members would gather in parks and on the streets, take trips to other cities, and hike on the weekends (Peukert, 1987, pp. 155-156). Some members also assaulted members of the Hitler Youth and distributed Allied propaganda (Peukert, 1987, pp. 159-164). Were the Edelweiss Pirates resisters or juvenile delinquents?

My research began with this question, but it quickly became apparent that there are no objectively correct answers, which stems in part from ambiguity in assessing the motives, ideologies, and behaviors exhibited by members of the group. Adding to the complexity of the problem, scholars and other authorities have expressed varying opinions and come to conflicting conclusions. Therefore, while I do return to the resistance question with my own response based on an assessment of the evidence, my research is focused more on collecting and exploring the available evidence. With this understanding, my research questions are exploratory: what more might we be able to learn about the Edelweiss Pirates? What sources and materials are available in German archives to help us understand the Edelweiss Pirates? And what do those materials suggest about the Edelweiss Pirates?

With these questions in mind, I learned German, traveled abroad to visit archives that contain holdings on the group, and found books, scholarly literature, newspaper articles, police records, and various other materials that may help us learn more about the Edelweiss Pirates.

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1 When appropriate, German words and phrases are presented in italics, followed by the English translation in parentheses; the English translation is then used throughout the remainder of the paper (with some exceptions). Some translations may not be exact and may vary among outside sources, and this is because some German words do not have perfect English equivalents.
Working with these materials, I have been able to explore the historical legacy and collective memory of the group. This paper thus serves to introduce those archived materials and their content, while also considering the complexity of determining the place of the Edelweiss Pirates in the history of the Third Reich.

**Background Information: Hitler and the Nazis**

One of the things that originally interested me about the Edelweiss Pirates is that they existed within the context of Hitler and Nazi totalitarianism – how did thousands of teenagers manage to create and grow an illegal youth movement while living in perhaps the most oppressive society in recent history? The Edelweiss Pirates clearly cannot be understood outside the context of their time.

**The Rise of Hitler and the Nazis**

At the end of the First World War, Germany was in a state of desperation – starvation, strikes, and mass demonstrations convulsed the nation, while the authority of the German government was declining (Fulbrook, 2009, p. 22; Mitcham, 1996, p. 1). Additionally, the abdication of Kaiser (German Emperor) Wilhelm II marked the end of the German monarchical government (Mitcham, 1996, p. 13). In the midst of this turbulence, a new markedly liberal and progressive constitution establishing a parliamentary democratic republic, the *Weimarer Republik* (Weimar Republic), was enacted on the 11th of August 1919 (Fulbrook, 2009, p. 25; Shirer, 1960, p. 56). Problems nevertheless arose from the newly established electoral system because it facilitated the development of many small splinter parties, which made it nearly impossible for any one party to gain and maintain a governing majority in the *Reichstag*.

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2 The Edelweiss Pirates were an illegal youth movement because the Nazis had forbade all youth organizations, with the exception of the Hitler Youth.
(German Parliament) (Mitcham, 1996, p. 27; Shirer, 1960, p. 56). One party nevertheless managed to overcome this problem and rise to power over the years.

The *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German Workers’ Party) – or DAP – was founded on January 5, 1919 in Munich by Anton Drexler, and was based on nationalist and anti-Semitic ideologies (Kershaw, 2008, p. 82). With its status as a workers’ party, the DAP aroused the suspicions of the military, and in September 1919, the army sent a soldier to spy on a DAP meeting (Shirer, 2008, p. 35). That soldier was Adolf Hitler, and though he came as an informant, he nonetheless raised his voice at the meeting in a heated argument with a vocal detractor (Kershaw, 2008, p. 75). This impressed Drexler, who then extended an invitation for Hitler to join the DAP (Kershaw, 2008, p. 75). Although initially hesitant, Hitler subsequently joined the party as its 55th member (Mitcham, 1996, p. 67). Shortly thereafter, in February 1920, the party was renamed the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (National Socialist German Workers’ Party) – otherwise known as the NSDAP or Nazi Party (Broszat, 1987, p. 1).

Although the Nazis promoted a broad and vague “world-view made up of a number of prejudices with varied appeals to different audiences,” Hitler was originally concerned with two particular themes: radical anti-Semitism and ambitious foreign policy goals aimed at domination (Fulbrook, 2008, p. 44). Nevertheless, Hitler still managed to appeal to many different groups because he did not offer very specific details relating to his plans (Fulbrook, 2008, p. 44). Moreover, the appeal of Hitler is often attributed to his oratorical skills; he could hold forth about “the rebirth of the nation in a tone of religious conviction which almost always guaranteed him a profoundly moved audience” (Broszat, 1987, p. 2).

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3 The Party had created a twenty-five point program, and as Shirer (1960) explains, “They [the points] are certainly a hodgepodge, a catchall for the workers, the lower middle class and the peasants, and most of them were forgotten by the time the party came to power” (pp. 40-41).
In July of 1921, roughly two years after joining the Party, Hitler became its leader, after threatening to resign unless he was given dictatorial powers (Shirer, 1960, pp. 44-46). Hitler had, in fact, proven to be an essential member since joining the Party – its membership numbers increased from roughly 200 in January 1920 to more than 3,000 by August 1921, and that growth is largely attributed to Hitler (Kershaw, 2008, p. 89). Hitler continued to attract new members, and the membership of the Party rose to 50,000 by late-1923 (Broszat, 1987, p. 7).

Despite this extraordinary success, Hitler faced a major setback when he attempted an insurrection in Munich against the German government on the 8th and 9th of November 1923 (“Beer Hall Putsch,” 2016). Commonly referred to as the Bierkeller Putsch (Beer Hall Putsch), the insurrection was aborted and Hitler arrested (“Beer Hall Putsch,” 2016). He was sentenced to five years in prison, which he began in April 1924, though he was nevertheless released in December of that year (Lewis, 2000, pp. 16-17).

While in prison, Hitler began writing his infamous book, Mein Kampf (Broszat, 1987, pp. 53-54). The book, which includes autobiographical parts and sections expressing political and ideological views, sold 287,000 copies by the end of January 1933 (Broszat, 1987, p. 54). The first volume highlights some of the racist beliefs held by Hitler; with regards to the chapter entitled, “Volk and Race,” for instance, Broszat (1987) explains:

The hundreds of race-theoretical, anti-Semitic and Social-Darwinist pamphlets which he [Hitler] had read in his adolescence in Vienna were combined here with a pseudo-systematic dogmatism into a cosmology of the eternal struggle of the Aryan who creates culture versus the Jew who is said to undermine the cultural and racial substance of the former (p. 54)

The second volume highlights another idea held by Hitler: “large-scale expansion towards the East as a means of gaining the territorial base for an empire dominated by the German master race” (Broszat, 1987, p. 56).
Shortly after his release from prison, Hitler met with the Bavarian Minister-President and promised that he would approach his future political pursuits lawfully (Broszat, 1987, p. 58). The Bavarian government subsequently lifted the ban on the Nazis, though Hitler was nevertheless banned from making public speeches until 1927 (Broszat, 1987, pp. 58-61). On February 26, 1925, Hitler met with his supporters in Munich and re-founded the NSDAP, effectively bringing the older party back together by asserting sole leadership (Broszat, 1987, p. 58). The Party struggled in regional and national elections in the following years, though it began to grow quite rapidly after 1928 (Broszat, 1987, pp. 64-65).

The Nazis received 2.6 percent of the vote – about 800,000 votes – in the Reichstag election of May 20, 1928 (Broszat, 1987, p. 65). However, the Wall Street Collapse in October 1929, and the resulting global depression, “precipitated the collapse of Weimar democracy and paved the way for the rise of the Nazis to power” (Fulbrook, 2008, p. 45). After the economic disaster, the Nazis received 18.3 percent of the vote – 6.4 million votes – in the national elections of September 14, 1930, and thus “became the second largest party in the Reichstag” (Fulbrook, 2008, p. 47). Less than two years later, the Nazis received more than 37 percent of the vote in the national elections of July 31, 1932, becoming “the largest party in the Reichstag” (Fulbrook, 2008, p. 51). Another national election took place later that year on November 6, 1932, and the Nazis actually lost two million votes (Fulbrook, 2008, p. 53). Despite this loss and the resulting reduction in parliamentary representation, Hitler was nonetheless appointed Chancellor on January 30, 1933 (Fulbrook, 2008, pp. 53-56).

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4 The appointment of Hitler was not without “political drama” (Kershaw, 2008, p. 249). The President, Paul von Hindenburg, was distrusting of Hitler (Kershaw, 2008, pp. 243); and Kershaw (2008) explains that the ultimate appointment was largely due to “political miscalculation” by those already in power (p. 257).
Not long after Hitler came to power as Chancellor, the Reichstag was burned down on February 27, 1933 (Shirer, 1960, pp. 191-192). Evidence suggests that the fire was probably orchestrated by the Nazis, but the blame was placed on the Communists, and Hitler used the event to persuade President Hindenburg to issue a decree entitled, *Verordnung des Reichspräsidenten zum Schutz von Volk und Staat* (Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of People and State) (Shirer, 1960, pp. 192-194). Commonly known as the Reichstag Fire Decree, the decree was issued on February 28, 1933, and it suspended many civil liberties and individual rights (Fulbrook, 2008, pp. 56-57; “Reichstag Fire Decree,” n.d.). It also allowed the government to make arrests at will and without due process (“Reichstag Fire Decree,” n.d.). Hitler used these powers to exert control over his opponents and the political process – he and the Nazis arrested Communists and Social Democrats, suppressed the press, and banned party meetings (Shirer, 1960, p. 194). Shortly after that, the Nazis received 43.9 percent of the vote in the national elections of March 5, 1933 (Fulbrook, 2008, p. 57).<sup>5</sup> Later that month, on March 23, the Reichstag passed an amendment to the Constitution entitled, *Gesetz zur Behebung der Not von Volk und Reich* (Law to Remedy the Distress of People and Reich) (Fulbrook, 2008, p. 57; Shirer, 1960, p. 198). Commonly known as the Enabling Act, the legislation allowed the German Cabinet, and effectively Hitler, to enact laws without the permission of the national legislature (Shirer, 1960, p. 198). Not too long after that, Hitler was given even more power when all political parties (except the NSDAP) were outlawed on July 14, 1933 (Shirer, 1960, p. 201). Nevertheless, Hindenburg continued to hold the reins of power until his death on August 2, 1934

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<sup>5</sup> At 43.9 percent, the Nazi vote was indeed significant, and certainly an increase from the election of November 1932. Nevertheless, even with all the aggression and suppression, the Nazis had clearly failed to obtain a majority (Shirer, 1960, p. 195). Hitler, however, did not necessarily need a majority to control the legislature because he could manipulate it with the powers afforded to him by the Reichstag Fire Decree – by arresting opposing party members before legislative sessions (Shirer, 1960, p. 196).
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(Shirer, 1960, p. 226). Just the day before, the Cabinet declared that, upon the death of President Hindenburg, the presidency would cease to exist, and instead, Hitler would assume the powers of both the Chancellor and President; thus, on August 2, 1934, Hitler became the *Führer und Reichskanzler* (Führer and Reich Chancellor) (Shirer, 1960, p. 226).

**The Totalitarian Regime**

Hitler had become a dictator, and Germany a totalitarian regime. The Nazis aimed at transforming the German people into a “racially pure” *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community), and Hitler sought to do this through indoctrination, and by transforming social organizations and asserting control over daily life (Fulbrook, 2008, pp. 62-63). Nevertheless, “For most Germans, memories of the 1930s were characterized not by terror, murder and repression, but by order, calm, employment and prosperity” (Hughes & Mann, 2000, p. 76). At least in the early years, most of the German population was unaffected by the crimes that have become synonymous with the Nazis, and much of the population actually supported the Nazis with “genuine enthusiasm” (Shirer, 1960, p. 231). This is because, as Shirer (1960), explains: “Hitler was liquidating the past, with all its frustrations and disappointments” – he was strengthening the German military and tackling unemployment (p. 231). These observations, however accurate, do not paint the whole picture of the German situation.

After Hitler became Chancellor in 1933, the Nazis quickly began establishing what Fulbrook (2008) calls, “an elaborate apparatus of terror” (p. 61). For example, in Prussia in February of 1933, the police were ordered to support the Nazis and use all necessary force to

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6 Dictatorships are “governments in which one person or a small group possesses absolute power without effective constitutional limitations” (“Dictatorship,” 2016). Totalitarian societies are “characterized by strong central rule that attempts to control and direct all aspects of individual life through coercion and repression” (“Totalitarianism,” 2016). These definitions are simplistic, though they provide a foundation on which to examine the nature of the Third Reich.
fight those organizations that were at odds with the will of the nation, which led to extreme violence and intimidation against political opponents and Jews (Kershaw, 2008, pp. 272-273). Kershaw (2008) elaborates: “Individuals were brutally beaten, tortured, seriously wounded, or killed, with total impunity. Communist meetings and demonstrations were banned, in Prussia and in other states under Nazi control, as were their newspapers” (p. 273). Hitler publicly deplored the violence, and even indicated that he would punish the participants, but the reality was that much more was to come in the near future (Kershaw, 2008, p. 273).

**Himmler and the police state.** The Nazis had access to paramilitary forces as early as 1921, with the formation of its first paramilitary organization, the *Sturmabteilung* (Assault Division) – otherwise known as the SA or Storm Troopers (“SA,” 2016). Later, in 1925, the Nazis formed the *Schutzstaffel* (Protection Squadron) – commonly known simply as the SS (“SS,” 2016). Both organizations would continue to serve the Nazis once they came to power in 1933, though the SS was undoubtedly more important. In fact, on June 30, 1934 during the *Nacht der langen Messer* (Night of the Long Knives), Hitler used the SS to kill members of the SA because he felt that the organization “had become too powerful” (“Night of the Long Knives,” 2016), and also because it was at odds with the regular army (“SA,” 2016).

Beginning in 1933, the SS was allowed to arrest and torture people without regard for due process (Fulbrook, 2008, p. 61). Led by Heinrich Himmler, the organization had several divisions, including the *Geheime Staatspolizei* (Secret State Police), also known as the Gestapo (“Gestapo,” 2016; “SS,” 2016) – a ruthless organization that sought to arrest political opponents and other individuals who were at odds with the Nazis (“SS Police State,” n.d.). The Gestapo

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7 The SA was active throughout the 1920s, doing what would later become legal: protecting the Nazis, intimidating political opponents, and marching in the streets (“SA,” 2016).
operated on its own terms, without judicial restraints, and often sent its arrestees to concentration camps ("Gestapo," 2016).

The first "regular" concentration camp was opened at an ammunitions facility in Dachau, outside of Munich, in March 1933 ("Dachau," n.d.). The camp was originally used primarily for political prisoners, and held around 5,000 prisoners in its first year ("Dachau," n.d.). Prisoners were forced to work, subjected to medical experimentation, and executed when deemed necessary ("Dachau," n.d.). By 1945, the camp had held more than 180,000 prisoners, and tens of thousands of those individuals died ("Dachau," n.d.). Dachau was followed by the addition of other camps throughout Germany and other Nazi-occupied countries in subsequent years (Fulbrook, 2008, p. 61; "Nazi Camps," n.d.). Though they varied in purpose and size, more than 40,000 camps were set up between 1933 and 1945 ("Nazi Camps," n.d.).

**Goebbels and culture.** While Heinrich Himmler commanded the SS, Joseph Goebbels commanded the *Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* (Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda), which was perhaps just as oppressive as the SS. The organization oversaw the burning of books, produced and distributed propaganda, and censored the media (Fulbrook, 2008, p. 63). Goebbels was particularly effective at asserting extreme control over the press and other media; he told them what could and could not be reported, and how to report the news (Shirer, 1960, pp. 244-248). The Nazis had complete authority over the media and radio, owned newspapers, took over others, and forced many to end publication (Shirer, 1960, pp. 244-248).

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8 Note that Dachau was the first "regular" concentration camp; other "makeshift" camps had also been set up throughout Germany ("SS Police State," n.d.).
The Hitler Youth

The Hitler Youth was an organization that “promised young Germans excitement, achievement, comradeship, adventure and a great future in a great Germany,” but which also intended to “create a generation which knew nothing but Nazi principles and Nazi ideology, and to ensure that they reared their own children in exactly the same way” (Lewis, 2000, p. 7). Perhaps it is unsurprising that the Nazis had such an organization, but it might be surprising that the idea for the Hitler Youth did not originate within the ranks of the Nazis (Koch, 1976, p. 46).

The origins of the Hitler Youth can be traced back to 1922, when it was started in response to a request by a teenager named Gustav Adolf Lenk (Koch, 1976, p. 46; Lewis, 2000, p. 12). Lenk wanted to join the Nazi Party in 1921, but was too young and thus turned away; however, he suggested that the Party add a youth section (Koch, 1976, p. 46; Lewis, 2000, p. 12). Hitler accepted the idea and announced the founding of the youth section on February 25, 1922 (Koch, 1976, p. 47). Less than two months later, the Youth League was officially founded with Lenk as its leader on May 13, 1922 (Koch, 1976, p. 49; Lewis, 2000, p. 12). Nevertheless, many other youth organizations already existed, which made it difficult for the Youth League to gain traction in its early years (Lewis, 2000, p. 12). Moreover, another setback arose when Hitler was imprisoned in 1924 after his attempted putsch – both the Nazi Party and the Youth League were banned (Lewis, 2000, p. 15). Lenk tried to keep the Youth League alive by starting another youth organization that “was nothing more than the continuation of the outlawed Youth League of the NSDAP under a different name,” but was subsequently imprisoned (Koch, 1976, p. 58).

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9 Although Lenk was the formal leader of the Youth League, he was subordinated to the SA, under which the Youth League was organized (Koch, 1976, pp. 47-49).

10 Youth organizations were nothing new in the early years of the Nazis; there were already more than 2,000 youth organizations in Germany by 1920 (Lewis, 2000, p. 8).
Lenk was released from prison shortly thereafter, and started yet another illegal youth organization, for which he was imprisoned again until December 1924 (Koch, 1976, p. 58).

After Hitler was released from prison, he began work on rebuilding the Nazi Party and the Youth League (Lewis, 2000, p. 17). A little over two years later, in July of 1926, Hitler officially established the Hitler Youth (Koch, 1976, p. 64; Lewis, 2000, p. 9). The organization was led by Kurt Gruber, who would prove to be quite successful, increasing “the size of the youth movement tenfold between 1927 and 1928, his first two years, and generating another 30 per cent increase between 1928 and 1929” (Lewis, 2000, p. 17). Nevertheless, his success began to wane with slowed growth of the organization beginning in mid-1930 (Koch, 1976, p. 78).

Gruber was forced to resign in October 1931, and was replaced by Baldur von Schirach, who was named Reichsjugendführer (Reich Youth Leader) on the 30th of that month (Lewis, 2000, pp. 27-30). An aristocrat, Schirach was unlike many of his working-class subordinates (Lewis, 2000, p. 29). Nevertheless, Schirach was an otherwise reasonable choice due to his “strong will, great organising ability and the knack of enthusing young men and boys with ideals of comradeship, patriotism and honour” (Lewis, 2000, p. 29). Less than two years after becoming the Reich Youth Leader, Schirach was named Jugendführer des Deutschen Reiches (Youth Leader of Germany) by now-Chancellor Hitler on June 17, 1933 (Koch, 1976, p. 100). Although the titles may seem indistinguishable, the new title was for a government (not just a Party) position that brought with it new powers and responsibilities: supervision “over all youth activities in Germany” (Koch, 1976, p. 100). Moreover, shortly after Hitler became Chancellor in 1933, the Nazis banned all rival youth movements, with the exception of Catholic
organizations, though they were also outlawed in 1936, effectively banning all non-Nazi youth organizations (Lewis, 2000, p. 9).

**Membership and organization.** The Hitler Youth had four divisions that were instituted by Schirach shortly after he became the Youth Leader of Germany, and they remained in effect until 1945 (Koch, 1976, p. 101). Generally referred to collectively as the Hitler Youth, the divisions are the *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth), the *Deutsches Jungvolk* (German Young People), the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (League of German Girls), and the *Jungmädel* (Young Girls) (“Hitler Youth,” 2016). While the HJ consisted of boys between 14- and 18-years-old, the German Young People consisted of boys between 10- and 14-years-old (“Hitler Youth,” 2016; Koch, 1976, p. 101). The League of German Girls, which was the female-counterpart to the HJ, included girls between 14- and 18-years-old, and focused on preparing them for domestic lives (“Hitler Youth,” 2016). The Young Girls was the younger-counterpart to the League of German Girls, and included girls between 10- and 14-years-old (“Hitler Youth,” 2016).

**Activities and education.** According to Lewis (2000), “Life in the Hitler Youth was a carefully planned combination of energetic activity, excitement, discipline, compulsion and indoctrination, with particular emphasis placed on the ideal of physical perfection dedicated to the greater glory of the Fatherland” (p. 47). Competitive sport was particularly important to the organization, as it promoted exercise and health, in addition to patriotism and aggression (Lewis, 2000, p. 47). Despite its emphasis on domestic living, even the League of German Girls promoted physical exercise (Lewis, 2000, p. 52).

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11 The Catholic Church resisted and ultimately ratified a concordat that guaranteed certain rights, which included continued operation of the Catholic Youth League (Lewis, 2000, p. 36).

12 The double-use of the Hitler Youth name might be confusing, as it refers to both the collective organization and the division for teenage boys. Koch (1967) uses “Hitler Youth” to refer to the collective organization, and “HJ” (short for Hitlerjugend) for the division. To ease understanding, this paper will do the same from this point forward.
Although Hitler encouraged excellence in sport, he did quite the opposite when it came to traditional education and academia – lessons were restructured, history was rewritten, and books were burned and censored; this facilitated Nazification and indoctrination in the school system (Lewis, 2000, pp. 65-79). Beyond the practical applications, the backwards education system is sometimes attributed to academic failure experienced by Hitler as an adolescent, which made him despise “academic freedom” and “academic success” (Lewis, 2000, pp. 65-67).

**Resistance to Hitler**

Hoffman (1988) explains that knowledge of Nazi crimes, though it was limited and incomplete, “revealed such a monstrous menace to the country and to humanity that it shook a number of Germans to the depths of their being and drove them into anti-Nazi activities at the risk of their lives” (p. 1). Can these “anti-Nazi activities” always be defined as resistance?

Resistance is a broad term that has been defined differently by individual historians. Pellechia (2004) offers a broad definition declaring that, in relation to the Nazi era, resistance means “any conscious attempt to stand up against the National Socialist regime” (p. 23). Kershaw (2002) is more restrictive, defining resistance as “active participation in organized attempts to work against the regime with the conscious aim of undermining it or planning for the moment of its demise” (p. 3). Hoffman (1988) offers a middle ground, placing anti-Nazi resistance on a broad spectrum, “from semipublic gestures to direct antigovernment activity at the highest level” (Hoffman, 1988, p. 55).\(^\text{13}\)

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\^\text{13} Hoffman (1988) argues that refusing to say “Heil Hitler” (“Hail Hitler” – the Nazi greeting) or contribute money to Nazi fund drives could constitute opposition (p. 55). On the other hand, opposition and resistance might also be defined by “high treason,” such as the attempted assassination of Hitler on July 20, 1944 (Hoffman, 1988, p. 57). Between those extremes, resistance was also manifested in other ways, such as distributing antigovernment propaganda and helping persecuted groups escape the Nazis (Hoffman, 1988, pp. 55-56).
Although historians have disagreed on how to define resistance, there are several notable examples that satisfy one or all of the definitions, such as the *Rote Kapelle* (Red Orchestra), which was a Communist resistance group and “international spy ring” that sent coded information about the Nazis to the Soviet Union during the Second World War (Bookbinder, 2004, p. 7; Friedman, 2004, pp. 151-152); the *Weisse Rose* (White Rose), which was a student group at the University of Munich that distributed anti-Nazi propaganda in the early-1940s (Bookbinder, 2004, p. 8); the “Rosenstrasse Protest,” which is the name given to a protest that occurred on Rosenstrasse (street in Berlin) between late-February and early-March 1943 “by non-Jewish relatives of Jews the Gestapo had arrested in a massive arrest” (Stoltzfus, 2004, p. 163); and the “July Plot,” codenamed *Walküre* (Valkyrie), which was carried out by German military leaders on July 20, 1944, and was an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Hitler with a bomb (“July Plot,” 2016).

These examples demonstrate that resistance came in many forms and was perpetrated by many different groups, from university students to Communist spies, and from disgruntled families to treasonous military leaders. This brings our attention to categories of resistance.

**Categories.** The German resistance to Hitler can be categorized in different ways, and viewing resistance in this way – as “varieties” – may be more “historically accurate” than trying to define the phenomenon (Large, 1991, p. 2). As this approach relates to the historical context and analysis of the Edelweiss Pirates, there is one categorization that is particularly relevant. Peukert (1991), in his assessment of the “working-class\textsuperscript{14} resistance,” introduces “a sliding scale of dissident behavior in the Third Reich” (pp. 35-36). On this scale, behavior ranges from “nonconformist behavior” (defined by “private” dissidence and “partial […] criticism of the

\textsuperscript{14} Herein lies the relevance: many of the Edelweiss Pirates came from working-class families and lived in working-class communities, as will be discussed.
system”), to “resistance” (“public/political” dissidence and “general […] criticism of the system”), with “refusal” and “protest” in the middle (Peukert, 1991, pp. 36-37).

The Youth Situation

It was noted above that there were many youth organizations in Germany before the Nazis came to power. Many of these were “attached” to other organizations, including Catholic and Protestants churches, and political parties (Crossman, 1984, p. xxi). There was also the “Free Youth Movement” – an “unattached” organization “of youth, by youth, and for youth” (Crossman, 1984, pp. xxi-xxii). Hitler and Schirach were quick to quench and suppress non-Nazi youth organizations (although the Catholics were granted an exception) beginning in early-1933. Nevertheless, some groups continued to operate, albeit underground, keeping the spirit of the once-burgeoning youth movement alive.

The youth movement. The “Free Youth Movement,” which was both distinctive and unique to Germany (Crossman, 1984, p. xxi), began with the founding of the “Wandervogel, Ausschuss für Schülerfahrten” (“Wandervogel, committee for school boys’ rambles,” or as it is more commonly known, just “Wandervogel”) in 1901 (Laqueur, 1984, p. 17). The Wandervogel, which was originally organized by grammar school students (and several adults) in a middle-class suburb of Berlin, allowed young people to take trips to the countryside and camp in the great outdoors (Stachura, 1981, pp. 19-20). Stachura (1981) explains: “The Wandervogel arose spontaneously as a movement of youthful protest against the stuffy and constricting conventions of late Wilhelmine society” (p. 15). Indeed, the Wandervogel must have

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15 This was the year of its official founding, though it technically had been around since 1896 (Laqueur, 1984, p. 15-17). Laqueur (1984) also notes that the “roots” of the youth movement go back to a much earlier time, by at least a century (p. 3).
struck a chord with many because it grew quite rapidly: the membership increased from around one hundred in 1901 to twenty-five thousand by 1914 (Stachura, 1981, p. 21).

As the Wandervogel grew in size, similar groups formed independently and as offshoots of the original group in Berlin (Laqueur, 1984, pp. 10-11). The youth movement failed to garner attention in some regions and communities, but other youth organizations nonetheless “borrowed and successfully popularized many of the outward activities first developed by the autonomous youth movement” (Laqueur, 1984, pp. 11-14).

When the First World War began in 1914, many members of the youth movement were actually excited because it posed an opportunity for nationalism and “total identification with the Fatherland” (Laqueur, 1984, p. 87). Nevertheless, the war ended in total defeat, and although the youth movement would survive, it was severely weakened: “Nothing was certain any more and even some members of the youth movement had wondered if time had run out for them” (Stachura, 1981, p. 38). Youth organizations nevertheless continued to exist, only to be outlawed by Hitler and the Nazis in 1933.

Although the Hitler Youth became the only lawful youth organization, the youth movement must have lived on through illegal organizations and associations. Some of the most notable of these “nonconformist” organizations include the *Meuten* (Meuten), the *Swingjugend* (Swing Youth), and the Edelweiss Pirates (Peukert, 1987, p. 154).
The Edelweiss Pirates

The Edelweiss Pirates began appearing in the late-1930s throughout the western German State of Nordrhein-Westfalen (North Rhine-Westphalia) (Peukert, 1987, p. 154). More exact dates are elusive, perhaps in part due to the loose structure and organization of the group, which was composed of subgroups that operated throughout North Rhine-Westphalia. Moreover, the Edelweiss Pirates, as a name does not necessarily refer to any one subgroup. The name is jointly attributed to groups that had their own names in different cities, yet shared similar motives and missions; the three main groups were the Navajos (Navajos) in Cologne, the Kittelbachpiraten (Kittelbach Pirates) in Düsseldorf and Oberhausen, and the Fahrtenstenze (Roving Dudes) in Essen (Peukert, 1987, p. 154). Despite having their own names and being located in different cities, the subgroups were collectively part of the Edelweiss Pirates (Peukert, 1987, p. 154).

Membership

Although members identified themselves as belonging both to the Edelweiss Pirates and to their specific subgroups, they all “came together spontaneously” and “gathered in loose associations” (Heberer, 2011, pp. 251-252). Coming from working-class communities, the group members – teenagers generally between the ages of 14 and 18 – would participate in spontaneous

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16 This section serves to introduce the Edelweiss Pirates and provide background information on the group, and thus, primarily draws from secondary sources. I do supplement this section with my own notes, observations, and discussions; however, my main findings (i.e., the archived materials) and observations are presented later in the paper. I believe that it is more appropriate to separate the “already established” (i.e., previous research done by others) from the “newly established” (i.e., my own research).

17 Many sources state that the subgroups date back to the mid-1930s, whereas the Edelweiss Pirates (the collective group) are noted as having originated in the late-1930s. Throughout my research, I observed that mention of the subgroups mostly occurs in documents written in the mid-1930s, whereas mention of the Edelweiss Pirates generally does not occur in documents written prior to the early-1940s. I also observed that the subgroups are identified in documents by their respective names until the late-1930s, but that those same groups were later referred to as the Edelweiss Pirates. Several archived documents even suggest that the Kittelbach Pirates were around prior to 1933.
gatherings in the evenings and/or over the weekends (Heberer, 2011, pp. 251-252; Peukert, 1987, pp. 154-155). Although most of the members were boys, there were also girls who participated in the activities of the Edelweiss Pirates (Heberer, 2011, p. 252; Peukert, 1987, p. 156).

The spontaneity of the Edelweiss Pirates is unique, but it makes it difficult to quantify the membership of the group. It is known that individual associations and gatherings were generally quite small, but the total membership of the Edelweiss Pirates is limited to estimates and subject to speculation. Peukert (1987) explains that Gestapo records name several hundred members, but “The numbers of those undetected cannot be determined, seeing that the phenomenon was one in which spontaneous everyday associations shaded into more unequivocal gang-style features” (p. 162). Kellerman (n.d.) asserts that there may have been more than 5,000 members, with as many as 3,000 in Cologne. And Biddiscombe (1995) suggests that at least five percent of the youth (presumably in the western Germany region) “may have been involved” with the Edelweiss Pirates (p. 37).

**Motives and Principles**

Coming together as Edelweiss Pirates, individual members and their subgroups shared similar motives, including “the joy of wild romance, adventure, freedom, and friendly get-together” (Hellfeld, 1981, p. 19). Moreover, the group specifically rejected the discipline and control of the Hitler Youth (Biddiscombe, 1995, p. 37). The motives and principles of the group were thus quite broad, and came in many forms. Markmann (1980) elaborates on this breadth, stating that the group organized with motives ranging from “apolitical refusal to deliberate and

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18 Peukert (1987) states that the associations (or as he calls them, “gangs”) generally had around twelve individuals (mostly boys and some girls) (p. 156).

19 Translated from the original German: “die Freude an wilder Romantik, Abenteuern, Freiheit und freundschaftlichem Beisammensein.” Hellfeld (1981) states that this was the “Hauptmotive” (“main motive”) of the group (p. 19).
antifascist resistance” (as cited in Hellfeld, 1981, p. 19). This large scope makes understanding the motives of the Edelweiss Pirates quite complex.

Peukert (1987) explains that, while “[a]ll Edelweiss Pirates rejected the Nazis,” they did not all have “a political point of view” – in fact, few did (p. 164). Moreover, Heberer (2011) asserts that the group “demonstrated no clearly politicized identity” (p. 253). And Biddiscombe (1995) argues that the members of the group “rarely adopted any political goals at odds with the predominate National Socialist agenda” (p. 37). This makes sense, considering that the Edelweiss Pirates were teenagers (Peukert, 1987, p. 164). Nevertheless, it is hard to imagine that the Edelweiss Pirates were not influenced by political sentiments, given that their very existence was based on a rejection of National Socialist ideology and practice.

Prior to the seizure of power by the Nazis in 1933, the Communist and Social Democrats were well represented in the working-class communities out of which the Edelweiss Pirates originated (Heberer, 2011, p. 253). Therefore, the members of the Edelweiss Pirates probably grew up around individuals who did not subscribe to the NSDAP and its politics, instead subscribing to the absolute political enemies of the Nazis – the Communists and Social Democrats. Surrounding by these sentiments, the Edelweiss Pirates were likely influenced by, and possibly even shared in, the ideologies of their families, communities, and social

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21 In fact, in the Reichstag election of November 1932, the Nazis received 20.4 percent of the vote in Cologne, the Communists 24.5, and the Social Democrats 17.4 (“Kölner Statistisches Handbuch,” 1958, p. 274). Roughly five months later (after the enactment of the Reichstag Fire Decree in February 1933), in the Reichstag election of March 1933, the Nazis received 32.9 percent of the vote in Cologne, the Communists 14.8, and the Social Democrats 13.5 (“Kölner Statistisches Handbuch,” 1958, p. 274).

22 Biddiscombe (1995) notes that “many parents of the Piraten had voted for the KPD [Communist Party of Germany] prior to 1933” (p. 41).
environments. In fact, one Gestapo record from 1943 states that a leader of the group was a “geborene Jungkommunist” (“born young Communist”).

On the other hand, the motives of the Edelweiss Pirates also may have indirectly stemmed from the political and social atmosphere under the Nazis. Coming from working-class families and communities, the Edelweiss Pirates found themselves in conflict with the “middle-class-imbued” social institutions of the Nazis (Peukert, 1987, p. 164). Horn (1973) explains that many members of the Edelweiss Pirates “simply could not adjust to the compulsion and coercion practiced by the HJ leadership” (p. 33). Therefore, while the motives may not have been grossly political, they may have been responses to political conditions.

**Characteristics**

Members of the Edelweiss Pirates could be identified by their emblems and badges of the edelweiss flower (Dittmar, 2011, p. 20). They had other recognizable characteristics as well: “The girls wore self-made pleated skirts with plaid, colorful blouses, short windbreakers and white knee socks, the boys wore short corduroy trousers, colorful shirts and white knee socks;” and their guitars were decorated with colorful ribbons and commemorative patches from their wanderings (Theilen, 1984, pp. 21-22).

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23 Biddiscombe (1995) notes that there were Communist (and also Catholic) influences within the Edelweiss Pirates (p. 40).
24 See Appendix item (A)(1); State Archive of North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland Department, (henceforth, “NRW Rhineland”) file number: Gerichte Rep. 0030, Nr. 106
25 The edelweiss is a white flower that grows in the European Alps. The flower has come to symbolize “nobility” and “adventure and great sacrifice” (“Edelweiss Flower Meaning,” n.d.).
26 Translated from the original German: “Die Mädchen trugen selbstgenähte Faltenröcke mit Schottenmuster, bunte Blusen, kurze Windjacken und weiße Kniestrümpfe, die Jungen kurze Manchesterhosen, bunte Hemden und ebenfalls weiße Kniestrümpfe.”
27 Translated and paraphrased from the original German: “An den Gitarren hingen viele bunte Bänder, die geschmückt waren mit Erinnerungsplaketten von Orten, die Ziel oder Station ihrer Wanderungen gewesen waren.”
Edelweiss Pirates from the militaristic, cleanly dressed and groomed Hitler Youth; they embraced a unique identity in a society that did not generally tolerate such identities.

**Activities and Behaviors**

The activities of the Edelweiss Pirates reflected their motives: liberation and adventure, with varying degrees of political influence; ranging from singing songs together and hiking on the weekends, to assaulting Hitler Youth patrols and distributing Allied propaganda materials (Heberer, 2011, pp. 252-253; Peukert, 1987, pp. 156-157). Groups would come together in the evenings on the streets, in parks, and various other locales, including bars and canals to play music, sing songs, and tell stories (Heberer, 2011, p. 252; Peukert, 1987, p. 155-157). During the weekends, when they had time away from work and other obligations, some would take trips to nearby cities or more distant locations, where they would camp and hike (Heberer, 2011, p. 252; Peukert, 1987, p. 156-157). Activities such as these are indeed quite reflective of the Wandervogel and the youth movement from earlier times (Heberer, 2011, p. 252).

The Edelweiss Pirates also participated in more aggressive and antisocial activities, which often are associated the group (e.g., assaulting Hitler Youth patrols); fewer engaged in behaviors that are arguably more indicative of resistance (e.g., distributing Allied propaganda) (Peukert, 1987, pp. 159-164). Some members also engaged in activities that are recognizably delinquent, with some to little potential for rationalization based on the main motives and ideologies of the group. These activities, which include burglary and theft, are detailed in some archived police records concerning the Edelweiss Pirates.  

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28 These activities might be separable into two categories, such as “liberation” and “aggression,” or “passive opposition” and “active opposition,” respectively; and while I believe that these might aid in understanding, I will refrain from this possibly equivocal categorization.

29 These are some of the more “notable” observations that I made throughout my research, and I discuss them in more detail later in the paper.
Nazi Response

On November 10, 1944, in the Ehrenfeld neighborhood of Cologne, thirteen individuals were hanged by the Nazis, and six of the persecuted were associated with the Edelweiss Pirates (“NS-Dokumentationszentrum Köln,” n.d.). These executions, however, occurred toward the end of the Second World War (a desperate and chaotic time in Germany), and are not necessarily representative of the overall Nazi response to the Edelweiss Pirates. In fact, when we consider that there were probably many more members than the ones named in Gestapo records (Peukert, 1987, p. 162), it is apparent that many members were presumably not subject to punishment beyond that which was informal (e.g., verbal warnings).

For those who were punished, the Nazi response ranged from warnings to imprisonment, and obviously for some, death (Peukert, 1987, p. 161). Nevertheless, the possible responses were subject to constraints and limitations because the Nazis needed German youth for work and war (Peukert, 1987, p. 161). Moreover, the Nazis also found it difficult to effectively respond to the Edelweiss Pirates simply on account of the complex nature of the group, for as Horn (1973) explains, increasingly more youth felt alienated by the HJ, and the Nazis were unable to understand the “organizational and ideological changes” of the “dissident youngsters” (p. 36).

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30 In the case of the hanging, the persecuted were executed without trial (Kellerman, n.d.). I was unable to find the exact reason for the hanging; but an interview with a former member of the Edelweiss Pirates seems to suggest that the hangings occurred because the persecuted allegedly killed someone (possibly a member of the Gestapo) (Kellerman, n.d.).

31 This is accurate under the assumption that the Nazis documented most of their interactions with the Edelweiss Pirates. This assumption is actually quite possible because the Nazis are known to have kept many records: the Allied powers found “millions of documents” at the end of the war in 1945, and many of those were used in the Nuremberg trials against the Nazis (“Combating Holocaust Denial,” n.d.).
The Process and Methodology

This paper has been a long process – a process that dates back to my first semester at Florida State University in the fall of 2012. After learning about the Edelweiss Pirates in a freshman seminar, I wanted to know more about them, so I began pursuing an honors thesis on the group. Between then and the spring of 2016, I learned German, studied the history and context of the time, conducted research at foreign archives, translated and analyzed the materials found in those archives, and wrote my thesis.

The Process

From the beginning, the main problem was that most of the relevant sources are written in German and located in German archives – I did not have the leisure of being able to pull from previously compiled datasets or neatly organized collections of primary sources. Fortunately, this issue was identified during my freshman year, and I would not formally begin my thesis until my junior year, so I had time to prepare.

My preparations began with learning German. I had to learn enough of the language to navigate archives and do cursory reviews of the documents. That required at least three semesters of language studies. I could do this at Florida State, but I wanted to be immersed in the culture and become truly proficient in the language.

During the summer of 2013, I traveled to Germany to take an intensive German class at the Goethe Institute in Freiburg. It was a four-week program, with classes lasting four hours almost every morning. When we finished our lessons, we would spend the rest of the day walking around the city and practicing German. Finally, at the end of the trip, I stayed for a week with some distant relatives (who spoke nothing but German) in the Bavarian countryside, and not
only was I able to communicate with them, but my German also improved while I was there. At Florida State, I took two additional German classes to continue developing my language skills.

Around the time that I began planning my German studies, I also laid out a timeline for conducting the necessary research. As with German, I had no experience with archives – how would I go about visiting, navigating, and utilizing the archives? I figured that the best way to gain some experience was to do some preliminary research at the archives, which would allow me to become familiar with the process as well.

During the summer of 2014, I returned to Germany to begin my preliminary archival research. Over two weeks, I visited four archives: (listed in chronological order) (1) the Berlin-Lichterfelde Bundesarchiv (Berlin-Lichterfelde Federal Archive); (2) the Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln (Historical Archive of the City of Cologne); (3) the NS-Dokumentationszentrum der Stadt Köln (National Socialism Documentation Center of the City of Cologne); and (4) the Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen Abteilung Rheinland (State Archive of North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland Department). I visited these archives because they are the ones in which it seemed most likely that I would find substantial documentation about the Edelweiss Pirates. Although I found many relevant materials during this trip, the plan was always for it to be a preliminary excursion – I used this trip to gain research experience and prepare for a more intensive trip during the following summer.

When I returned to FSU in the fall of 2014, I formally began my honors thesis. During this time, I also began preparing for a follow-up research trip. I received two grants: a “Bess H. Ward Honors Thesis Award” for $600, which was used to pay for many of the materials that I had acquired during my first trip; and an “Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity
Award” (URCAA) for $4,000, which would be used to fund another trip to Germany to conduct additional research in the summer of 2015.

During the summer of 2015, I returned to Germany to complete my archival research. Over four weeks, I visited eight archives: (listed in chronological order) (1) the Historical Archive of the City of Cologne (again); (2) the Stadtarchiv Bonn (City Archive of Bonn); (3) the Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Düsseldorf (Düsseldorf Memorial Center); (4) the Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf (City Archive of Düsseldorf); (5) the Stadtarchiv Solingen (City Archive of Solingen); (6) the State Archive of North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland Department (again); (7) the Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen Abteilung Westfalen (State Archive of North Rhine-Westphalia, Westphalia Department); and (8) the Stadtarchiv Essen (City Archive of Essen). The trip was particularly beneficial because it allowed me to visit the Cologne and North Rhine-Westphalia (Rhineland Department) archives again, which was needed because I had been unable to complete my research at those archives during my first research trip in 2014. I selected the other six archives because I wanted to search for archived materials in other cities where the Edelweiss Pirates are known to have (or are likely to have) been located.

The Archives

Throughout my two summers conducting research in Germany, I visited ten different archives containing collections relevant to the Edelweiss Pirates. The following sections detail my time at those archives, and the archives are separated into those sections according to three categories: (1) primary, (2) secondary, and (3) miscellaneous. The primary archives are those in which I found substantial amounts of original documentation; the secondary archives are those in which I found substantial amounts of secondary literature; and the miscellaneous archives are those that I visited but contained scattered or few pertinent materials.
The primary archives.

*The Berlin-Lichterfelde Federal Archive.* This is one of the German Federal Archives and is located in the Lichterfelde neighborhood of Berlin. My archival research began here in the summer of 2014, and I spent one week searching for and reviewing materials with mention of the Edelweiss Pirates. I uncovered several hundred physical documents and several hundred additional documents on microfiche. These include correspondence between government officials expressing concerns and sharing general knowledge about the Edelweiss Pirates, as well as police reports, records of individual members of the Edelweiss Pirates, and interviews that were conducted decades later with former members.

Originally, I had not expected to find many documents about the Edelweiss Pirates in the Federal Archive because they were a regional group that presented regional challenges to the regime. I viewed the archive as a place where I might have found a few documents pertaining to the Edelweiss Pirates; but through my early correspondence with the archivists, I was made aware of the many documents available.

*The State Archive of North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland Department.* The State Archive of North Rhine-Westphalia includes several divisions: the Rhineland department in Duisburg, the Westphalia department in Münster, and another department in Detmold. I was primarily concerned with the Rhineland department because the Edelweiss Pirates were primarily located in the Rhineland region. As I learned during my trip in 2014, the Rhineland department contains police reports and court records that discuss members of the Edelweiss Pirates. The problem that arose, however, is that the individuals mentioned in these records were juveniles when the records were originally generated. In order to view these documents, I would have to obtain a special permit that authorizes access to the records. That took some time, so I
applied for the permit and planned another visit with the archivists. I was ultimately granted a permit, and I returned to the archive during my trip in 2015 to complete my research.

Upon my arrival in 2015, I was greeted by the archivists with several thousand pages of documents that contained mention of the Edelweiss Pirates. I spent an intensive week at the archive, and I used the time to narrow down several hundred documents that I deemed to be of considerable value to my research. This was accomplished by visually scanning each individual document in search for keywords and phrases as they relate to the Edelweiss Pirates. In reviewing these documents, I searched for subject-relevance (referring to the relationship between the subject of the document and the Edelweiss Pirates), content-substantiality (referring to the amount of information presented within the document), and research-value (referring to the overall level of importance and/or novelty of the information within the document). Once I came across a word or phrase indicating that a document met those criteria, I would read through the document and determine whether to have it copied for further analysis.

*The State Archive of North Rhine-Westphalia, Westphalia Department.* In addition to visiting the Rhineland department, I also visited the other Westphalia department in Münster. As with the Rhineland department, the Westphalia department contained police reports and court records about the Edelweiss Pirates in the region. However, these records were limited to the group in the City of Dortmund, which is relatively close to Münster. Moreover, there were not nearly as many documents in this archive as there were in the Rhineland department. This was expected, however, because the Rhineland department covers the Rhineland region of the State, while the Westphalia department covers the Westphalia region. Because the three main

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32 Examples of those words and phrases include any the names associated with the Edelweiss Pirates (e.g., Navajos, Kittelbach Pirates, Fahrtenstenze), labels used to identify and describe the group (e.g., cliques and prohibited youth gangs), and names of leaders and recognized members.
subgroups of the Edelweiss Pirates existed in the Rhineland region, it makes sense that most
documentation pertaining to the group would be housed in the Rhineland department.

Nevertheless, the Edelweiss Pirates do have some history (at least at one point) in Dortmund.

**The secondary archives.**

*The Historical Archive of the City of Cologne.* The Cologne city archive collapsed in
2009, which irreversibly damaged many documents, while severely soiling many others.

Nevertheless, during my visit to the archive in 2014, I reviewed secondary literature about the
history of Cologne and the Edelweiss Pirates, including literature that was specifically produced
for the archive. During my visit in 2015, I examined literature about the political and cultural
atmosphere of Cologne during the time of the Edelweiss Pirates in order to learn more about how
and why the group may have formed.

*The National Socialism Documentation Center of the City of Cologne.* Archivists at the
Cologne city archive referred me to the nearby National Socialism Documentation Center. The
center was essentially a library containing books and various other records concerning National
Socialism. The library had a large section specifically dedicated to resistance in Cologne, and I
found nearly a dozen books that mention the Edelweiss Pirates. This was particularly beneficial
because many of those books are relatively rare. I was able to purchase several of the books that
I found in the documentation center, and some are cited in this paper.

**The miscellaneous archives.**

*The City Archive of Bonn.* Bonn is a medium-size city south of Cologne. There is not
much evidence suggesting that the Edelweiss Pirates were active in Bonn, though the archive
contained several reparation files about members of the group who argued that they were victims
who had been wronged during the war. These documents were interesting, but lacked context, and will be discussed in the section about the archived materials.

**The Düsseldorf Memorial Center.** The Düsseldorf Memorial Center “is a memorial to the victims and survivors of the Nazi regime and the members of the resistance” (‘Memorial to the Victims of the Nazi Regime,’ n.d.). The Center is not an archive, but turned out to be quite useful. The staff provided me with valuable secondary literature and pointed me in the direction of other archives that were beneficial to my research.

**The City Archive of Düsseldorf.** The Düsseldorf city archive contained a relatively limited collection of records concerning the Edelweiss Pirates. Most of the documents are newspaper articles, in addition to some secondary literature and academic articles. The newspaper articles include some from the 1930s and 1940s, as well as others from decades later. The articles from the 30s and 40s report on the activities and organization of the Edelweiss Pirates, though those articles are limited in number. The articles from later decades are more numerous, and reminisce – as opposed to report – about the Edelweiss Pirates. For example, these articles share interesting stories, offer opinions on whether the Edelweiss Pirates were delinquents or resisters, and discuss the impact of their efforts, among other things.

**The City Archive of Solingen.** Solingen is a medium-size city east of Düsseldorf. While I was in Düsseldorf, I figured that it might be valuable to venture outside the city and visit some smaller cities. Solingen was one such city, and I had already heard about it from other archivists. I was initially hesitant to visit this archive because there is limited evidence of the Edelweiss Pirates having been active in Solingen. Nevertheless, I ultimately decided to visit the archive because I received a positive response from the archivists, and I had extra time as well. My research uncovered several newspaper articles (post-1945) about the Edelweiss Pirates in
Solingen, and some secondary literature about their activities in the city. As was expected, however, the amount of literature and documentation was limited.

*The City Archive of Essen.* The Essen city archive contained one of the larger collections of documents relating to the Edelweiss Pirates. The documents include government records, police reports, community letters, and newspaper articles. Despite the large collection, I consider the Essen archive to be among the miscellaneous archives because the contents of the collection were scattered and varied. For example, the archive contained letters between scholars about the Edelweiss Pirates, though they lack context and discernable value. Additionally, I discovered copies of original Gestapo records that, once again, lack context and citable information.

*Notes about the archives.* An interesting thing that I learned about Germany during the research process is that Germany, as a whole, is very efficient at record keeping. The State of North Rhine-Westphalia, for instance, has an extraordinary number of archives: archives in most municipalities, many private archives, many university archives, and several church archives. This number of archives both eased and complicated the research process. With a simple assumption about any individual archive’s potential with respect to my research (e.g., an archive in a city near Cologne may have records about the Edelweiss Pirates), I could contact the archive, receive an answer about whether the archive has any relevant records, and receive advice and referrals to other archives. On the other hand, the sheer number of archives made the research process particularly difficult. For example, if an archive contains a limited number of relevant documents, was it worth visiting? Moreover, “definitive” archives often led me toward unpredictable dead ends. The Oberhausen archive, for instance, was one such definitive archive (Oberhausen is a relatively large city in which some of the Kittelbach Pirates are known to have existed), but the Nazis in Oberhausen destroyed most documents at the end of the war.
Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the Cologne archive might have once been a definitive archive, but it was completely destroyed (along with many materials) in 2009 after it collapsed.

**Translation and Analysis**

Exploring and searching the archives allowed me to identify documents and other materials that are relevant to the history of the Edelweiss Pirates. Most of those materials had to be translated, and all of those materials had to be examined and analyzed. The analysis process served two purposes: (1) to identify the content within the materials, and (2) to categorize the materials. The analysis process, as it relates to the first purpose, was accomplished by reading through each of the materials individually and making notes on the content within those materials. The analysis process, as it relates to the second purpose, was accomplished by first typifying each of the documents (e.g., police report, reparation file, correspondence, etc.) using the aforementioned notes, and then separating the specific types into more general categories: police and court records, other government records (i.e., those records that are neither police nor court records), pre-1945 newspaper articles, post-1945 newspaper articles, books and academic literature, and miscellaneous records. The results of the translation and analysis process are described in the section about the archived materials and also in the Appendix.

Most of the translation and analysis of the archived materials took place while visiting the archives. My knowledge of the German language allowed me to read portions of the materials, and I was thus able to make notes and summarize the materials while reviewing them for the first time. Nevertheless, many parts of the materials contain German words and grammar that are too complex for my understanding; and also, many of the materials are too long and detailed to have been accurately analyzed while sitting in the archives.
When I was unable to translate and analyze the materials on my own (or at least while sitting in the archives), I utilized translation and “optical character recognition” (OCR) software to overcome this problem. Using copies of the materials that I had made while visiting the archives, I used OCR software to convert the physical text to digital text, and with that digital text, I used translation software to translate the German text to English text. This allowed me to read through longer and more complex materials more quickly than I could have otherwise done on my own accord. Nevertheless, the problem with this method is that neither OCR software nor translation software is perfect, and when used together, the end results are rudimentary at best. However, those results were acceptable because I only used them to quickly identify smaller sections that I would then read and translate on my own.

Problems and Considerations

My research was not without problems. Many of those problems were expected from the beginning, yet others arose as the research progressed. Moreover, there are two things that need to be mentioned with regards to my research: legal considerations, and the overall generalizability of the observations expressed within this paper.

Problems. The biggest problem was time constraints, and that is really the only problem about which I particularly need to speak. I benefited from starting my research years before my thesis would be completed, and this allowed me to become proficient in the German language and visit ten foreign archives. In a perfect world, however, I would have visited additional archives and spent more time at others. Each of the archives opened more doors and pointed me in new directions. Nevertheless, with the amount of time that I had, I am content with the archives that I was able to visit. Speaking in retrospect though, I would not have visited the “miscellaneous archives” because my time could have been better spent elsewhere.
Legal considerations. Many of the archives required me to sign legal agreements that prevent me from publishing some of the content contained within the archived materials. Additionally, I had to acquire permits to access many of the police and court records referenced in this paper. Those permits were, understandably, restrictive because many of the individuals named in those records were juveniles when the records were conceived. Those individuals are not named or specifically identified in this paper.

Generalizability of the observations. I cannot, and do not, make any assertions that my findings and observations are generalizable to the whole of the Edelweiss Pirates. My observations are based on the content contained within the archived materials, and while those observations tell us a great deal about the Edelweiss Pirates, it would be inappropriate to use those observations to make generalizations.

Moreover, it is close to impossible to say that my findings and observations are complete as they relate to the whole of the Edelweiss Pirates. The reasons for this are numerous: there were many members of the group (which means that there could be “outliers” and exceptions to any rule or generalization made about the group), there may not have been records about some aspects of the group, there may have been records that were destroyed by the Nazis (which was confirmed by several archivists), there may be records that I did not come across while searching the archives, and there may be records that are in other archives that I did not visit. Additionally, there is also the consideration that my translations may not have been perfect. Any and all of these considerations are possible, and they are worth noting before examining my findings.
The Archived Materials

Throughout my archival research, I collected both primary and secondary sources relevant to the history and memory of the Edelweiss Pirates. The secondary sources include books, academic articles, and periodicals. The primary sources, on the other hand, are more varied. They include government records about the Edelweiss Pirates, court records, police records, newspaper articles, and documentary transcripts, and other miscellaneous – often obscure – materials. Overall, the sources can be separated into six main categories: police and court records, other government records, pre-1945 newspaper articles, post-1945 newspaper articles, books and academic literature, and other miscellaneous materials. These materials are introduced in the following sub-sections, and they are specifically detailed in the Appendix.

Police and Court Records

Finding and acquiring police and court records about the Edelweiss Pirates was difficult, but the records are also extremely numerous and undoubtedly valuable. Some members and associates of the Edelweiss Pirates had documented involvements with the Gestapo and the criminal justice system. Often, the files include documentation on everything from the initial investigations to final dispositions. Of the files that I found, almost every record was held in the State Archive of North Rhine-Westphalia in both Duisburg (Rhineland Department) and Münster (Westphalia Department). (Other files were also held in the Berlin-Lichterfelde Federal Archive). As discussed earlier, I had to acquire permits in order to view the most of the records because most of the members of the Edelweiss Pirates were juveniles at the time of arrest. After receiving the permits, I was granted restricted access to several thousand pages of police and court records pertaining to the Edelweiss Pirates, and those were subsequently reduced to several hundred pages (this process is detailed in the earlier section about the North-Rhine Westphalia
State Archive). Of those pages, perhaps the most interesting observation that I made is that the police and court records detail actions that are perhaps more indicative of juvenile delinquency than resistance. This specific observation (and other notable observations and matters concerning the police and court records) is discussed below.

It should be noted that, much like the newspaper articles from before 1945, the accuracy of the police and court records is debatable. Can we say that the records are truthful and accurate with regards to the charges, narratives, and affidavits? I find it doubtful, and especially so when we consider that the Gestapo had so much power in its hands. Of course, the records should not be written off as entirely inaccurate simply on account of their historical context.

**Other Government Records**

The police and court records are two types of government records, but I also discovered scores of other government records that mention the Edelweiss Pirates. These files are nonetheless obscure and varied, and thus elude more specific categorization. Examples of the more numerous government records include communications among government officials about the Edelweiss Pirates, discussion among government officials about juvenile crime, and post-war reparation records concerning members of the group. These records are long, hard to read, and lack sufficient context necessary for understanding. Additionally, many of the records are void of considerable mention of the Edelweiss Pirates.

**Pre-1945 Newspaper Articles**

From the beginning, I actively sought to discover newspaper articles from the time of the Edelweiss Pirates. The potential value of journalistic accounts detailing matters related to the group is indisputable because they are likely to offer accounts and perspectives that differ from
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that of the police records. Nevertheless, relevant newspapers articles from the time were anything but readily available during my search of the archives. I came across fewer than five newspaper articles about the group from the years preceding 1945.

Like many of the other archived materials, the Nazis destroyed many records at the end of the war in 1945. Still, for an organization as notable as the Edelweiss Pirates, one might reasonably expect there to be more newspaper articles about their activities and existence. There are, of course, other reasonable explanations as to why my archival research failed to identify more articles. Perhaps the media did not know about the group, or did not want to write about the group, or were not allowed to write about them. The first theory is doubtful because the Edelweiss Pirates caused many problems; but there is merit in the latter two propositions – why would the Nazis have allowed the media to report on an illegal youth movement? To the Nazis, reporting on the Edelweiss Pirates – in their rebellion and rejection of the Hitler Youth – could have undermined the collective German spirit and disparaged the Nazis.

Post-1945 Newspaper Articles

Contrary to those articles published prior to the fall of the Nazis, newspaper articles from the decades after 1945 are relatively numerous. Many of these articles focus on the story of the Edelweiss Pirates. Some articles also take an academic approach as they discuss whether the Edelweiss Pirates were juvenile delinquents or anti-Nazi resisters. What makes the articles particularly interesting is that they demonstrate how the legacy of the Edelweiss Pirates continues to live on decades after the fall of the Third Reich. Of the articles that I found, there was one from the 1970s, four from the 1980s, three from the 1990s, and seven from the 2000s.

33 Nevertheless, the novelty and integrity of the articles are questionable. As discussed in earlier sections, Joseph Goebbels controlled the media. There was no freedom of the press, and that which was published was certainly influenced by propaganda.
Prior to 1990, the articles are generally more concerned about the resistance question; after 1990, the articles are generally more focused on telling the story of the group.

**Books and Academic Literature**

The more common reason among researchers for visiting archives is to search for original materials and other primary sources, and this was certainly my main reason as well. Nevertheless, the archives were also bountiful with books and other secondary literature that I did not think existed. With computers and other modern tools, research concerning secondary literature is relatively simple – conduct web searches and utilize electronic academic databases. This is what I did when I began looking for books and articles on the Edelweiss Pirates, but those searches were anything but fruitful. I was convinced that very little literature about the Edelweiss Pirates was available, and that I would be limited to finding primary sources (though I was originally unconvinced about finding many of those either). Not long after stepping foot into the first archive, this assumption proved false. I found many books about the Edelweiss Pirates, in addition to many other secondary sources that mention the group. Even though most of these sources are published (often commercially), their accessibility and discoverability is generally limited to the archives. Sometimes the materials had been specifically produced for the archives, and other times they were simply old and rare.

In any case, the books and related materials were a valuable surprise. The secondary literature in question can be separated into three main categories: (1) literature that was specifically written about the Edelweiss Pirates; (2) literature that was written about the more general topic of resistance in Nazi Germany; and (3) literature concerning other relevant topics

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34 This refers to my observation that, while many of the books can be found without visiting the archives (I even purchased several of the books online from used booksellers), it would have been difficult to learn about their existence without first finding them in the archives.
(e.g., histories of the region, statistical data, etc.). These books are listed in the Appendix with translated titles, brief descriptions, and other pertinent information. Some of the books are also referenced in earlier sections of the paper.

**Miscellaneous Records**

The final category is for the other sources and materials that, as with the “other” government records, are too obscure and varied to specifically categorize. Examples include things such as transcripts of interviews with former members of the Edelweiss Pirates, copies of propaganda materials supporting resistance, copies of community letters against prohibited youth organizations, and correspondence between scholars discussing the group. These records are all listed individually in Section (F) of the Appendix.

**Notable Observations: Pirates and the Police**

While analyzing and reviewing the archived police and government records, I made two observations that, in my opinion, are particularly notable: the nature of the delinquent behaviors, and one statement that is attributed to a group member. Most of the records were discovered in the State Archive of North Rhine-Westphalia (Rhineland Department), though some of the records also came from the Westphalia Department.

**The Behaviors**

Some of the records indicate that the subjects (members and/or associates of the Edelweiss Pirates) were arrested (or at least investigated) for engaging in behaviors that are discernibly delinquent – even by the standards of today: loitering,\(^{35}\) assaulting Hitler Youth patrols,\(^{36}\) purchasing/owning firearms,\(^{37}\) and burglary and theft. Some of these behaviors are to

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\(^{35}\) See Appendix item (A)(1); NRW Rhineland, file number: *Ger. Rep. 0030, Nr. 106-108*

\(^{36}\) See Appendix item (A)(4); NRW Rhineland, file number: *Ger. Rep. 0156, Nr. 42-43*

\(^{37}\) See Appendix item (A)(1); NRW Rhineland, file number: *Ger. Rep. 0030, Nr. 106-108*
be expected (i.e., loitering);\(^{38}\) others well known (i.e., assaulting Hitler Youth patrols);\(^{39}\) and yet others are rather ambiguous as to their motive (i.e., purchasing/owning firearms).\(^{40}\) Nevertheless, the significance of the remaining behaviors (i.e., burglary and theft) cannot be understated, and perhaps then the best way to express this significance is in question form: how could the Edelweiss Pirates have reconciled these behaviors with their supposedly virtuous and commendable motives? I struggle to rationalize how behaviors that affect the at-large community could have advanced an ideological desire for liberation, and I fail to see how such behaviors provide any evidence in support of the argument that the Edelweiss Pirates were resisters.

**Burglary and theft.** On the night of February 11, 1943, in the City of Krefeld, several individuals allegedly broke into an unidentified office and stole money (several hundred Reichsmarks).\(^{41}\) One of those individuals is identified in other documents as the leader of the local group of the Edelweiss Pirates. Meanwhile, on the other side of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, in December 1943, in the City of Dortmund, 30 individuals were charged with various crimes, including burglaries and thefts.\(^{42}\) Most of the named individuals are identified in the records as associates of the Edelweiss Pirates.\(^{43}\) What should we make of these behaviors?

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\(^{38}\) In the case of loitering, several members of the Edelweiss Pirates were identified by the local police because they were singing songs at the train station. These activities are to be expected because, as we know, much of what the Edelweiss Pirates did is hang out in the evenings on the streets, if for no other purpose than to have some entertainment after work.

\(^{39}\) It is well known that some of the Edelweiss Pirates assaulted Hitler Youth patrols. What is interesting about this specific instance though, is that the records indicate that the individuals jumped from a vehicle and beat up the Hitler Youth with sticks and brass knuckles. This suggests that the act was premeditated, which may be more representative of resistance.

\(^{40}\) The report does not go into much detail as to why the members were purchasing firearms. Perhaps it was to facilitate an act of resistance, or maybe just to assault Hitler Youth patrols.

\(^{41}\) See Appendix item (A)(1); NRW Rhineland, file number: *Ger. Rep. 0030, Nr. 106*

\(^{42}\) See Appendix item (A)(5); State Archive of North Rhine-Westphalia, Westphalia Department, file number: *Q 520, Nr. 105*

\(^{43}\) Some of the associates/members had allegedly burglarized a liquor store, and others were simply charged with participating in a banned group – the Edelweiss Pirates.
Perhaps it could be argued that, in seeking to liberate themselves from the Hitler Youth, the Edelweiss Pirates needed to have travel money, or alcohol and cigarettes for good times. This might have been their idea, but the behaviors are nonetheless so deplorable that the inherent delinquency overshadows their opposition to the Hitler Youth. Maybe then, it could be argued that the members were only loose associates of the Edelweiss Pirates, and do not represent the overall group. This is certainly possible, but it does little to mitigate the damaging effects of the behaviors on the overall reputation of the Edelweiss Pirates.

**One Statement**

Upon reviewing one Gestapo file about the Edelweiss Pirates, I noticed a statement attributed to one of the members: “We have nothing against the HJ, only the duty of the HJ.” On its face, the statement seems to suggest that the Edelweiss Pirates do not have any ideological issues with the Hitler Youth; instead, only issues with the requirements of the organization. This is entirely possible, as many members of the Edelweiss Pirates probably once belonged to the Hitler Youth (or technically still did), only to have left or been kicked out for not following the rules (Heberer, 2011, p. 254). To add to the significance of this statement, the individual who made it is identified in the records as the leader of the local Edelweiss Pirates group in the City of Krefeld. This should mean that the statement and its implications are more generalizable to the whole of the Edelweiss Pirates than they might be otherwise, but it actually makes assessing the motives and ideologies of the entire organization that much more difficult.

Some members of the Edelweiss Pirates were assaulting and beating up Hitler Youth patrols, so why would a recognized leader of the Edelweiss Pirates make a statement suggesting that his group has “nothing against the HJ”? If it is true, then it leads me to conclude that at least

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44 See Appendix item (A)(1); NRW Rhineland, file number: *Ger. Rep. 0030, Nr. 106*; trans. from the original German: “Wir haben nichts gegen die H.J., nur die Pflicht – H.J. wir ab.”
some assaults on the Hitler Youth can be attributed to nothing more than aggressive delinquency without political reason. On the other hand, if it is false, or at best not generalizable to the whole of the Edelweiss Pirates, then it demonstrates that the motives of the group lacked uniformity.

**Conclusion**

To me, the archived materials represent the collective memory of the Edelweiss Pirates. They are all different, but they speak on the same subject. They tell us more about the Edelweiss Pirates, and they share unique perspectives in the process. My survey of the materials is not by any means complete, and my observations do not necessarily apply to the bunch, but they should help us better understand the overall legacy of the Edelweiss Pirates.

**The Original Question: Resisters or Delinquents?**

The answer (if it should be called that) to the resistance question is largely dependent on how we define resistance. For example, Pellechia (2004) defines resistance as “any conscious attempt to stand up against the National Socialist regime” (p. 23); Kershaw (2002) defines it as “active participation in organized attempts to work against the regime with the conscious aim of undermining it or planning for the moment of its demise” (p. 3). With the Pellechia definition, the Edelweiss Pirates might have been resisters simply because they rejected membership in the Hitler Youth and joined an illegal youth organization (thus standing up against the laws and norms of the Third Reich). With the more narrow Kershaw definition, can we as easily say that the Edelweiss Pirates were resisters? Probably not.

Therefore, in asking whether the Edelweiss Pirates were resisters or delinquents, I think that we are asking the wrong question. Instead, we should be asking how to more objectively define resistance, and also where to draw the line between resistance and other nonconformist behaviors (such as juvenile delinquency).
Nevertheless, returning to the original question, and ignoring the problem with the definitions, the Edelweiss Pirates might have been both juvenile delinquents and resisters. If the most broad definition of delinquency is used to assess the behaviors of the Edelweiss Pirates, then every member of the group (except for the adults) was a delinquent: they committed a crime simply by joining an illegal youth organization. And if the most broad definition of resistance is used, then every member of the group was a resister: they rejected and thus refused (i.e., resisted) membership in the Hitler Youth.

Perhaps some (or none) of the Edelweiss Pirates were resisters, and maybe the others were juvenile delinquents; but is it even necessary to reduce the motives, ideologies, and behaviors of the group to labels? This method of labeling trivializes the complexity of the Edelweiss Pirates, and it forces us to understand the group according to how it has been categorized, as opposed to what its members believed and how they behaved. I suggest that we remove ourselves from the resistance question, and instead work towards increasing our understanding and knowledge of the Edelweiss Pirates.

**Implications for History and Criminology**

My research has the potential to increase our historical understanding of the Edelweiss Pirates because the archived materials provide varying perspectives, opinions, and information concerning the overall legacy of the Edelweiss Pirates. These materials have been compiled, centralized, and categorized in this thesis, and can thus be used to initiate and facilitate additional historical research on the group. For instance, an entire study could be done about how the Edelweiss Pirates are remembered in modern newspapers and periodicals.

On the other hand, the implications for criminology may not be quite as apparent; the Edelweiss Pirates are a historical group, and thus, they have been studied in that context.
Nevertheless, the phenomenon of the Edelweiss Pirates is an unparalleled opportunity to reassess and advance our understanding of juvenile delinquency as it relates to criminology and its theories. What can we learn from teenagers who managed to engage in nonconformist acts and behaviors on a grand scale while living in a totalitarian society?

**Final Thoughts**

This thesis has been an extraordinary learning opportunity in many regards. I started this project over three years ago with no knowledge of the Edelweiss Pirates, limited knowledge about the Third Reich and its related historical themes, no experience in conducting archival research, and no familiarity with the German language. After three trips to Germany, several semesters of language study, research in foreign archives, and countless hours spent reading books and archived materials about niche historical topics, I have come to be knowledgeable about and experienced in things that I would have never considered had I not pursued this thesis. I owe a lot to this thesis and those who have helped me along the way; now I only hope that my research will help us better understand the Edelweiss Pirates.
References


Appendix
The Archived Materials

The specific materials that were found in the archives are listed and described here. These materials are separated into six categories: Police and Court Records; Other Government Records; Pre-1945 Newspaper Articles; Post-1945 Newspaper Articles; Books and Academic Literature; and Miscellaneous Records. The categories are lettered, and the individual materials numbered, to facilitate reference within the paper. Note that the materials within these categories are listed in no particular order; also that these only represent the materials that were found in the archives, and do not represent every source available.

Police and Court Records (Category A)

(1) Police records from Krefeld

- **Description:** Gestapo records and reports from the City of Krefeld (which is northwest of Düsseldorf) from 1942/1943; includes records about and interviews with individual members of the Edelweiss Pirates, and an overall summary about the group; records indicate that some members were involved in delinquent activities, such as burglary, theft, “mischief” (i.e., loitering and hanging out at train stations and parks), and antagonizing and assaulting Hitler Youth patrols; some interviews also indicate that some members had access to and/or were going to purchase heavy firearms (i.e., machine guns)
- **Notes:** I find these documents to be very interesting because, while they provide good examples of the Edelweiss Pirates trying to liberate themselves from the Hitler Youth, they also demonstrate that some members engaged in more deplorable behaviors
- **Type:** Police and Court Records
- **Archive:** North Rhine-Westphalia State Archive (Rhineland Department)
- **Archive File Number:** Gerichte Rep. 0030, Nr. 106-108

(2) Police records from Wuppertal

- **Description:** Gestapo records and reports from the City of Wuppertal (which is to the east of Düsseldorf) from 1944; includes records about individual members of the Edelweiss Pirates; records indicate that the members were identified for loitering at the train station and on the local trains; the individuals are noted as having “messy” looks and playing “Jazz-style” music
- **Notes:** These records are not necessarily unsurprising, as the Edelweiss Pirates are known to have gathered together to play music and hang out in the evenings
- **Type:** Police and Court Records
- **Archive:** North Rhine-Westphalia State Archive (Rhineland Department)
- **Archive File Number:** Gerichte Rep. 0092, Nr. 90
(3) **Police records from Cologne**

- **Description**: Police records and reports from the City of Cologne; include specific and general records about the Edelweiss Pirates; the records name many different members, and some of those members are repeatedly named, possibly as the leaders of the group; the records indicate that illegal youth organizations, such as the Edelweiss Pirates, starting arising increasingly in 1942; most of the records are interviews with suspected members; some members disavow membership
- **Notes**: These records are interesting because some of the alleged members state that they never participated in the Edelweiss Pirates, but their statements seem, to me, to be more-or-less excuses to avoid trouble with the police; if these members were actually members, then they were probably casual members
- **Type**: Police and Court Records
- **Archive**: North Rhine-Westphalia State Archive (Rhineland Department)
- **Archive File Number**: Gerichte Rep. 0112, Nr. 18704-18709

(4) **Police records from Cologne**

- **Description**: Police records and reports from the City of Cologne; include specific and general records about the Edelweiss Pirates; the records name a few different members; the records indicate that some members of the Edelweiss Pirates “jumped” and assaulted members of the Hitler Youth in 1943; the records also indicate that some members served jail time for their crimes
- **Notes**: These records are interesting because it appears that most of the members listed in the records are more “serious” members (possibly leaders), which contrast the more “casual” members who might have just participated for the intrigue
- **Type**: Police and Court Records
- **Archive**: North Rhine-Westphalia State Archive (Rhineland Department)
- **Archive File Number**: Gerichte Rep. 0156, Nr. 42-43

(5) **Police records from Dortmund**

- **Description**: Police records and reports from the City of Dortmund (which is northeast of Düsseldorf and south of Münster) from 1943; includes a police report against 30 individuals, and some of them were members of the Edelweiss Pirates; indicates that the individuals were involved in stealing alcohol and cigarettes
- **Notes**: These were the only records about the Edelweiss Pirates that I found in the North Rhine-Westphalia State Archive (Westphalia Department), which was unsurprising because the group was primarily active the Cologne/Düsseldorf region; nevertheless, the records are interesting because, like some of the records from the Rhineland Department, they demonstrate that the Edelweiss Pirates participated in some recognizably delinquent activities
- **Type**: Police and Court Records
- **Archive**: North Rhine-Westphalia State Archive (Westphalia Department)
- **Archive File Number**: Q 520, Nr. 105
(6) Police records about an associate of the Edelweiss Pirates

- **Description:** Police records from 1944 detailing an investigation concerning an individual who was associated with the Edelweiss Pirates in Dortmund
- **Notes:** I had trouble translating this document and establishing the context, but the document does note that the Edelweiss Pirates were problematic
- **Type:** Police and Court Records
- **Archive:** Berlin-Lichterfelde Federal Archive
- **Archive File Number:** R/3017/5aJ1106/4

(7) Police records concerning a youth organization near Frankfurt

- **Description:** Police records from 1943/1944 detailing an investigation concerning two individuals who had allegedly participation in a youth organization that stood against National Socialism
- **Notes:** The materials were tagged (presumably by the archive) with labels indicating that the documents are related to the Edelweiss Pirates, but I did not find any mention of the group in the documents
- **Type:** Police and Court Records
- **Archive:** Berlin-Lichterfelde Federal Archive
- **Archive File Number:** R/3017/7J8144

(8) Police records about prohibited youth organizations

- **Description:** Five Gestapo and police records/files from Essen about the Edelweiss Pirates, Kittelbach Pirates, and similar groups/gangs; one is dated 1935, one 1937, and the other three are from the early-1940s; all are in reference to individuals participating in prohibited youth organizations
- **Notes:** I found these scattered among various other materials; they were only a few pages, and they lacked context and background information
- **Type:** Police and Court Records
- **Archive:** City Archive of Essen
- **Archive File Number:** 19-344, #1, 4-8
Other Government Records (Section B)

(1) **Government and police records from Cologne**

- **Description**: Government and police (youth prosecutors and other related officials) records from the City of Cologne from 1943 about youth organizations; includes a general discussion about the Edelweiss Pirates; explains that the members of the Edelweiss Pirates wore unique outfits consisting of, among other things, pins and badges, long hair, plaid shirts, climbing jackets, and knapsacks; states that the members often gather on nights and weekends to sing songs and hang out; identify the Edelweiss Pirates as an “oppositional youth group” with an overall antisocial and delinquent nature; indicates that the Edelweiss Pirates became progressively more problematic and delinquent

- **Notes**: The records provide much useful information on the Edelweiss Pirates; in addition to the information highlighted in the description, the records also point out, for example, that most of the members are between the ages of 14 and 18, but that some adults (in their late-twenties) are also members of the group; also, the records notes that the members tended to change jobs often

- **Type**: Other Government Records
- **Archive**: North Rhine-Westphalia State Archive (Rhineland Department)
- **Archive File Number**: Gerichte Rep. 0449, Nr. 57

(2) **Post-war records from Wuppertal**

- **Description**: Post-war records from the City of Wuppertal from 1948; appear to be records indicating that a former criminal secretary was arrested for war crimes; includes testimony from members of the Edelweiss Pirates in which they claim that the criminal secretary mistreated them

- **Notes**: These are interesting, but it is nonetheless unsurprising that the tables would later be turned against the Nazis (who were prosecuted for war crimes) for arresting and investigating the Edelweiss Pirates

- **Type**: Other Government Records
- **Archive**: North Rhine-Westphalia State Archive (Rhineland Department)
- **Archive File Number**: Gerichte Rep. 0191, Nr. 115
(3) **Post-war records from Cologne**

- **Description:** Post-war records from the City of Cologne from 1948/1950; appear to mention individuals who wronged members of the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** The guilt of the individuals is questioned in the documents; one document makes the point that the Edelweiss Pirates were illegal under the law at the time, and that some members of the Edelweiss Pirates took advantage of the “chaotic” situation in Cologne toward the end of the war in 1944
- **Type:** Other Government Records
- **Archive:** North Rhine-Westphalia State Archive (Rhineland Department)
- **Archive File Number:** Gerichte Rep. 0231, Nr. 362

(4) **Records on juvenile crime**

- **Description:** Reports and records by the Reich Justice Ministry concerning juvenile crime; includes mention of the Edelweiss Pirates, but the use of the group name is sporadic and varied throughout the hundreds of documents
- **Notes:** These documents lacked context and were hard for me to understand
- **Type:** Other Government Records
- **Archive:** Berlin-Lichterfelde Federal Archive
- **Archive File Number:** R/3001/21177

(5) **SS internal investigation from 1944**

- **Description:** Appears to be an SS internal investigation into a young SS member from Duisburg who was accused of attending multiple meetings of the Edelweiss Pirates in 1942; the individual states that he came across the group singing songs on a “beach” in Duisburg
- **Notes:** The file is not very long, and it is the only such material that I found
- **Type:** Other Government Records
- **Archive:** Berlin-Lichterfelde Federal Archive
- **Archive File Number:** NS/7/1112
(6) **“Compensation Committee Report” from Bonn**

- **Description:** Reparation report (presumably from after the war) concerning members of the Edelweiss Pirates who sought compensation for being wronged by the Nazis; this specific report is written from the perspective of a member of the Edelweiss Pirates; the member explains that he helped formed an Edelweiss Pirates group in 1943; he explains that he and his group assaulted HJ members, and had collections of guns and other weapons; he reports that the Gestapo interrogated him and sent him to weekend detention on several occasions; also explains that he and some of his comrades were drafted into the military towards the end of the war
- **Notes:** This is interesting and notable for two reasons: (1) it offers additional insight into the activities of the Edelweiss Pirates; and (2) it suggests that, by asking for compensation on account of how the Nazis treated them, the Edelweiss Pirates did not feel guilt for their activities and behaviors
- **Type:** Other Government Records
- **Archive:** City Archive of Bonn
- **Archive File Number:** N1985-1405

(7) **Reparation reports from Bonn**

- **Description:** Four reparation reports (three from 1945; one from 1949) concerning individual members of the Edelweiss Pirates who sought compensation/reparation
- **Notes:** These files supplement N1985-1405; unlike N1985-1405, these files are very limited, do not have much information (one paragraph each at most; all saying similar things), and lack context; the archivists told me that they are reparation reports
- **Type:** Other Government Records
- **Archive:** City Archive of Bonn
- **Archive File Number:** N1985-1402; N1985-1419; N1985-1427; N1985-1932

(8) **Records on property ownership**

- **Description:** Government records on property ownership; include records on a Catholic Youth Group referred to simply as “Edelweiss”
- **Notes:** I am not sure whether these records refer to the Edelweiss Pirates; but it has been suggested in other research that the Edelweiss Pirates might have been associated with the Catholic Church
- **Type:** Other Government Records
- **Archive:** Berlin-Lichterfelde Federal Archive
- **Archive File Number:** NS/1/1351
(9) **Records on youth organizations and illegal activities**

- **Description:** Government and police records about youth organizations and illegal activities; include mention of a youth organization referred to simply as “Edelweiss”; discusses the distribution of illegal newspapers and propaganda in Southern Germany
- **Notes:** I do not believe that these records refer to the Edelweiss Pirates; I do not have evidence that the Edelweiss Pirates were active in Southern Germany; however, it is nonetheless interesting that the group in question (the “Edelweiss”) existed
- **Type:** Other Government Records
- **Archive:** Berlin-Lichterfelde Federal Archive
- **Archive File Number:** R/58/4114
Pre-1945 Newspaper Articles (Section C)

(1) “Zehn Kittelbach-Piraten vor dem Sondergericht”
(“10 Kittelbach Pirates before the Special Court”)

- **Description:** Newspaper article by unknown author (February 15, 1936) in the *Düsseldorfer Nachrichten*; states that 10 members of the Kittelbach Pirates appeared before the Special Court
- **Notes:** One of the few articles concerning the group from before 1945; however, I cannot read this article because it is written in old-German typography (which is even difficult for some fluent Germans)
- **Type:** Pre-1945 Newspaper Articles
- **Archive:** City Archive of Düsseldorf
- **Archive File Number:** 7-6-42-109.0000

(2) “Streich kostet ein Jahr Gefängnis: Junge Burschen als ‘Piraten’ der Landstrasse”
(“String Costs a Year in Prison: Young Boys ‘Pirates’ of the Road”)

- **Description:** Newspaper article by unknown author (and with unknown date) in an unknown newspaper; reports that some members of the Edelweiss Pirates were sentenced to jail
- **Notes:** This article was available in the archive as a newspaper clipping, so it did not have the date, author, or newspaper name; however, appears to be from the 1930s; I was unable to read the article because it is written in old-German typography
- **Type:** Pre-1945 Newspaper Articles
- **Archive:** City Archive of Essen
- **Archive File Number:** 19-344, #3

(3) “Sie kommen sich wie ‘Männer’ vor…und sind doch nur *unknown word* Clowns”
(“They Come as ‘Men’ before…And Are Still Only *unknown word* Clowns”)

- **Description:** Newspaper article by H. Jansen (unknown date) in an unknown newspaper; reports about youth cliques and the Hitler Youth; does not appear to specifically mention the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** The article appears to be from before 1945 because the title alone suggests Nazi propaganda/influence; I am unable to read the entire article because it is written in old-German typography; moreover, I cannot read one word in the title
- **Type:** Pre-1945 Newspaper Articles
- **Archive:** City Archive of Essen
- **Archive File Number:** 19-451, #2
(4) Newspaper article about ten Kittelbach Pirates appearing before the special court
(*cannot read original title*)

- **Description:** Newspaper article by unknown author (October 6, 1935) in an unknown newspaper; reports on ten members of the Kittelbach Pirates appearing before the special court
- **Notes:** I could not read the entire title, much less the entire article, because it is written in old-German typography
- **Type:** Pre-1945 Newspaper Articles
- **Archive:** City Archive of Essen
- **Archive File Number:** 19-451, #3
Post-1945 Newspaper Articles (Section D)

(1) “Vor 50 Jahren: Großrazzia gegen Edelweißpiraten”
(“50 Years Ago: Large Raid against Edelweiss Pirates”)

- **Description:** Newspaper article by Volker Zimmerman (December 5, 1992) in the *Rheinische Post* about the Edelweiss Pirates; short article about the Gestapo conducting raids against members of the Edelweiss Pirates on December 7, 1942; provides some introductory information about the group; part one of two (part two: “Razzia gegen Edelweißpiraten in Düsseldorf (Teil 2)”)  
- **Notes:** The content is nothing novel, but it is interesting to see how the legacy of the Edelweiss Pirates lives on periodically through the media  
- **Type:** Post-1945 Newspaper Articles  
- **Archive:** City Archive of Düsseldorf  
- **Archive File Number:** 7-6-85-480.0000

(2) “Razzia gegen Edelweißpiraten in Düsseldorf (Teil 2)”
(“Raids against Edelweiss Pirates in Düsseldorf (Part 2)”)  

- **Description:** Newspaper article by Volker Zimmerman (December 7, 1992) in the *Rheinische Post* about the Edelweiss Pirates; part two of two (part one: “Vor 50 Jahren: Großrazzia gegen Edelweißpiraten”); poses a question asking whether the Edelweiss Pirates were a youth subculture or resisters; suggests that most of the Edelweiss Pirates were not resisters; also notes that the Kittelbach Pirates, prior to 1933, fought against Communism with the SA  
- **Notes:** This article is particularly interesting because of its note about the Kittelbach Pirates having been against Communism with the SA prior to 1933; in fact, other sources have noted that the Kittelbach Pirates interacted with the SA prior to 1934  
- **Type:** Post-1945 Newspaper Articles  
- **Archive:** City Archive of Düsseldorf  
- **Archive File Number:** 7-6-85-480.0000

(3) “Als die HJ Angst vor Prügel hatte”
(“When the HJ Was Afraid of Beatings”)

- **Description:** Newspaper article by Alexander Schulte (June 14, 2007) in the *Westdeutsche Zeitung*; talks about the Edelweiss Pirates Festival in Düsseldorf; also provides some introductory information about the group  
- **Notes:** The *Edelweisspiratenfestival* (Edelweiss Pirates Festival) appears to be a music and historical festival that happens every year (since when, I do not know) in Cologne and Düsseldorf; otherwise, the content of the article is nothing novel, but it is interesting to see how the legacy of the Edelweiss Pirates lives on periodically through the media; also note that this article is available online  
- **Type:** Post-1945 Newspaper Articles  
- **Archive:** City Archive of Düsseldorf  
- **Archive File Number:** 7-6-103-260.0000
“Zwischen Protest und Widerstand”
(“Between Protest and Resistance”)

- **Description:** Newspaper article by Sven Steinacker (September 11, 2007) in the *Westdeutsche Zeitung*; talks about the Edelweiss Pirates Festival in Düsseldorf; also provides some introductory information about the group
- **Notes:** One thing that is interesting is that the article suggests that the Edelweiss Pirates are still little known by people
- **Type:** Post-1945 Newspaper Articles
- **Archive:** City Archive of Düsseldorf
- **Archive File Number:** 7-6-103-263.0000

“Kittelbach-Piraten keine linke Jugend”
(“Kittelbach Pirates No Left Youth”)

- **Description:** Newspaper article (May 4, 1977) in the *Düsseldorfer Nachrichten*; appears to be a commentary/opinion written by a former member of the Kittelbach Pirates; argues that the Kittelbach Pirates were not left-wing youth, and that they even fought against the Communists in the early 1930s; also indicates they were not antifascists, and that they did not have strong ties with the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** This was written by one former member of the Kittelbach Pirates, and thus, is not necessarily generalizable; moreover, the member was born in 1920, meaning that he would have been many years older than the Edelweiss Pirates in the 1940s (when they were particularly active); nevertheless, the article is very interesting
- **Type:** Post-1945 Newspaper Articles
- **Archive:** City Archive of Düsseldorf
- **Archive File Number:** 7-6-42-360.0000

“‘Piraten’ hassten braunen Einheitslook”
(“‘Pirates’ Hated Brown Uniform Look”)

- **Description:** Newspaper article by Alexander Schulte (December 4, 2000) in the *Westdeutsche Zeitung*; states that most youth during National Socialism were “well behaved” in the HJ, but that some were ill-adapted members of the Kittelbach Pirates; provides some introductory information about the Kittelbach Pirates
- **Notes:** This information is expected, but it is nonetheless interesting
- **Type:** Post-1945 Newspaper Articles
- **Archive:** City Archive of Düsseldorf
- **Archive File Number:** 7-6-103-197.0000
(7) “Edelweißpiraten und Rebellen gegen Hitlerjugend”
(“Edelweiss Pirates and Rebels against Hitler Youth”)

- **Description:** Newspaper article by Herbert Weber (August 9, 2004) in the *Solinger Tageblatt*; provides some information about the Edelweiss Pirates; states that the group was substantially composed of teenagers in Cologne, and that they came together beginning around 1942, with roots in other youth movements; also states that their activities included sabotaging Ford plants, derailing Wehrmacht supply trains, delivering food to deprived prisoners, and fighting with Hitler Youth
- **Notes:** This is useful and interesting because it provides some additional information about the Edelweiss Pirates; nevertheless, the author acknowledges that there is little information about the group and that he would like to know more
- **Type:** Post-1945 Newspaper Articles
- **Archive:** City Archive of Solingen
- **Archive File Number:** ST 09.08.2004

(8) “Heil Moskau’: die Solinger Edelweißpiraten”
(“Hail Moscow’: The Solingen Edelweiss Pirates’”)

- **Description:** Newspaper article by unknown author (October 7, 2005) in the *Solinger Tageblatt*; provides some information about the Edelweiss Pirates in Solingen; poses the question asking whether the group was just “immature boys” or rebels
- **Notes:** The content is not necessarily novel, but it is nonetheless interesting to see how the Edelweiss Pirates are remembered in the media
- **Type:** Post-1945 Newspaper Articles
- **Archive:** City Archive of Solingen
- **Archive File Number:** ST 07.10.2005

(9) “Schnoor-Gutachten über Kölner Nazi-Opfer: Der Widerstand der “Edelweisspiraten” ist nur ein Mythos; Dennoch nicht als Kriminelle eingeschätzt”
(“Schnoor Opinion about Cologne Nazi Victims: The Resistance of the Edelweiss Pirates is only a Myth; Yet Not Considered Criminals”)

- **Description:** Newspaper commentary/opinion article by Eberhard Fehre (January 9, 1988) in the *Solinger Tageblatt*; argues that the Edelweiss Pirates were neither resisters nor criminals; presents information about the Köln-Ehrenfeld group
- **Notes:** This article shares similar sentiments with many other articles and opinions
- **Type:** Post-1945 Newspaper Article
- **Archive:** City Archive of Solingen
- **Archive File Number:** Ve 073-23
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(10) “Junge Kölners bezahlten mit ihrem Leben für den Kampf gegen Nazi-Diktatur: Es geht um ein ehrendes Gedächtnis: Edelweisspiraten”
(“Young Cologne People Paid with Their Lives for the Fight against Nazi Dictatorship; This is about an Honor to their Memory: Edelweiss Pirates”)

- Description: Newspaper article (possibly magazine) by unknown author (1984) in the Kunst Kurier (Issue 3); tells the story of the Edelweiss Pirates, with particular emphasis on the Cologne-Ehrenfeld group
- Notes: Appears to argue that the Edelweiss Pirates did good things, and that Gestapo records do not tell the full story of the group
- Type: Post-1945 Newspaper Articles
- Archive: City Archive of Essen
- Archive File Number: 1944-69, #6

(11) “Streit um die Edelweisspiraten”
(“Dispute over the Edelweiss Pirates”)

- Description: Newspaper article by unknown author (January 29, 1988) in the Deutsche Volkzeitung (Nr. 4); introduces and discusses various opinions about the Edelweiss Pirates; includes interviews with various historians
- Notes: Interesting article about the Edelweiss Pirates; I was unable to read through it all, but it seems to follow an overall pattern in post-1945 newspapers of debating the motives of the Edelweiss Pirates
- Type: Post-1945 Newspaper Articles
- Archive: City Archive of Essen
- Archive File Number: 1944-69, #7

(12) “Nicht alle wollten mitmarschieren”
(“Not Everyone Wants to March”)

- Description: Newspaper article by Pascal Beucker (2005) in the TAZ NRW; provides introductory information and tells the story of the Edelweiss Pirates; specifically references the Cologne-Ehrenfeld executions
- Notes: N/A
- Type: Post-1945 Newspaper Articles
- Archive: City Archive of Essen
- Archive File Number: 19-344, #9
(13) “Unbekannte Widerständler”
(“Unknown Resisters”)

- **Description:** Newspaper article by Andreas Fasel (2003) in the *NRW Zeitgeschehen*; provides some information about the Edelweiss Pirates; includes quotes from a former member of the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** Articles such as this one are useful because they utilize quotes from former members of the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Type:** Post-1945 Newspaper Articles
- **Archive:** City Archive of Essen
- **Archive File Number:** 19-344, #10

(14) “Als Junge nicht in die HJ: Heinz Lippe, ein Edelweiss-Pirat”
 “When Youth Not in the HJ: Heinz Lippe, an Edelweiss-Pirate”

- **Description:** Newspaper article by Gudrun Katz-Norbisrath (September 8, 1984) in the *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*; discussion/interview with a former member of the Edelweiss Pirates, about the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** An interesting note at the end of the article states that “We have suffered a lot”; this sounds much like the sentiments expressed in the reparation files
- **Type:** Post-1945 Newspaper Articles
- **Archive:** City Archive of Essen
- **Archive File Number:** 19-451, #5

(15) “Widerstandskämpfer oder Jugendbande?”
 (“Resistance Fighters or Youth Gang?”)

- **Description:** Newspaper article by Joachim H. Knoll (February 8-16, 1990) in *Die Zeit* (Nr. 8); periodical discussion about whether the Edelweiss Pirates were resisters or youth gang
- **Notes:** N/A
- **Type:** Post-1945 Newspaper Articles
- **Archive:** City Archive of Essen
- **Archive File Number:** 19-501, Mappe 2, #4

(16) Collection of newspaper articles about the Edelweiss Pirates

- **Description:** Six or seven (one may be a continuation of another article) newspaper articles about the Edelweiss Pirates; express opinions and give informational anecdotes about the group
- **Notes:** They are all clippings, and thus, do not all have the newspaper names
- **Type:** Post-1945 Newspaper Articles
- **Archive:** City Archive of Essen
- **Archive File Number:** 19-501, Mappe 2, #3
Books and Academic Literature (Section E)

(1)  
Verfolgung und Widerstand im Rheinland und in Westfalen 1933-1945  
(Persecution and Resistance in the Rhineland and in Westphalia 1933-1945)

- **Description:** Book edited by Anselm Faust (1992) about persecution and resistance in North Rhine-Westphalia between 1933 and 1945; includes mention of the Edelweiss Pirates (pp. 175-185) in a discussion about the Bündische Jugend and political resistance
- **Notes:** Briefly covers the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** National Socialism Documentation Center of the City of Cologne
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

(2)  
Widerstand an Rhein und Ruhr 1933-1945  
(Resistance in the Rhine and Ruhr 1933-1945)

- **Description:** Book authored by Karl Schabrod (1969) about resistance in the Rhine and Ruhr (large metropolitan area that includes Cologne and Düsseldorf) between 1933 and 1945; could not find mention of the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** I could not find mention of the Edelweiss Pirates, but it is nevertheless a very detailed book about resistance in a very specific region
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** National Socialism Documentation Center of the City of Cologne
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

(3)  
Widerstand und Verfolgung in Köln 1933-1945  
(Resistance and Persecution in Cologne 1933-1945)

- **Description:** Book by unknown author (1981) about resistance and persecution in Cologne between 1933 and 1945; includes mention of the Edelweiss Pirates (p. 394)
- **Notes:** I found very little mention of the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** National Socialism Documentation Center of the City of Cologne
- **Archive File Number:** N/A
(4) **Edelweißpiraten in Köln: Jugendrebellion gegen das 3. Reich**  
*(Edelweiss Pirates in Cologne: Youth Rebellion against the Third Reich)*

- **Description:** Book authored by Matthias von Hellfeld (1981) about the Edelweiss Pirates; includes sections about the Ehrenfeld Group, motives, and interviews
- **Notes:** Hellfeld is a notable German historian who has done research on resistance; this is a useful book because it provides some in depth information about the Edelweiss Pirates; it is cited in the paper
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** National Socialism Documentation Center of the City of Cologne
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

(5) **Edelweiß: Meine Jugend als Widerstands-Kämpferin**  
*(Edelweiss: My Youth as Resistance Fighter)*

- **Description:** Book authored by Gertrud Koch (2006) about the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** Koch is a self-identified former member of the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** National Socialism Documentation Center of the City of Cologne
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

(6) **Die Edelweißpiraten: Protestbewegungen jugendlicher Arbeiter im Dritten Reich**  
*(The Edelweiss Pirates: Protest Movements of Youth Workers in the Third Reich)*

- **Description:** Authored by Detlev Peukert (1980) about the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** Peukert is a very notable historian about resistance and the Edelweiss Pirates; I did not utilize this book, but I did find his other book (*Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life*) to be very useful; it is heavily cited in the paper
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** National Socialism Documentation Center of the City of Cologne
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

(7) **Edelweißpiraten**  
*(Edelweiss Pirates)*

- **Description:** Authored by Fritz Theilen (1984) about the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** Theilen is a self-identified former member of the Edelweiss Pirates; provides firsthand accounts of the Edelweiss Pirates, and particularly the Navajos in Cologne; it is cited in the paper
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** National Socialism Documentation Center of the City of Cologne
- **Archive File Number:** N/A
“Wir wollen frei von Hitler sein”: Jugendwiderstand im Dritten Reich am Beispiel von drei Kölner Edelweißpiraten
(“We Want to Be Free of Hitler”: Youth Resistance in the Third Reich with an Example of Three Cologne Edelweiss Pirates)

- **Description:** Book authored by Simone Dittmar (2011); appears to be a thesis/dissertation about the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** Provides information about the Edelweiss Pirates; cited in the paper
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** National Socialism Documentation Center of the City of Cologne
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

Kohldampf, Knast un Kamelle: Ein Edelweißpirat erzählt sein Leben
(Kohldampf, Knast, and Kamelle: An Edelweiss Pirate Explains His Life)

- **Description:** Authored by Jean Jülich (2003) about the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** Jülich is a self-identified former member of the Edelweiss Pirates; the three words in the first part of the title seem to have no English translation
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** National Socialism Documentation Center of the City of Cologne
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

Gefährliche Lieder: Lieder und Geschichten der unangepassten Jugend im Rheinland 1933-1945
(Dangerous Songs: Songs and Stories of Maladjusted Youth in the Rhineland 1933-1945)

- **Description:** Book authored by Doris Werheid, Jan Krauthäuser, and Jörg Seyffarth (2010); project of the Edelweiss Pirates Club; book about the Edelweiss Stories; includes, as the title suggests, songs and stories
- **Notes:** I was unable to find this book outside the archive
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** National Socialism Documentation Center of the City of Cologne
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

Piraten, Swings, und Junge Garde: Jugendwiderstand im Nationalsozialismus
(Pirates, Swings, and Young Guards: Youth Resistance in National Socialism)

- **Description:** Book authored by Matthias von Hellfeld (1991) about the Edelweiss Pirates and related groups
- **Notes:** Hellfeld is a notable historian
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** Düsseldorf Memorial Center
- **Archive File Number:** N/A
(12) **Jugend im Dritten Reich: Die Hitlerjugend und ihre Gegner**  
*Youth in the Third Reich: The Hitler Youth and Their Opponents*

- **Description:** Book authored by Arno Klönne (2008) about the Hitler Youth and other youth during the time of National Socialism
- **Notes:** Klönne is a notable German historian, especially with regards to youth and the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** Düsseldorf Memorial Center
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

(13) **Widerstand gegen Flick und Florian: Düsseldorfer Antifaschisten über ihren Widerstand 1933-1945**  
*Resistance against Flick and Florian: Düsseldorf Antifascists about Their Resistance 1933-1945*

- **Description:** Book authored by Karl Schabrod (1978) about resistance in Düsseldorf
- **Notes:** Schabrod was a politician in Germany
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** Düsseldorf Memorial Center
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

(14) **Widerstand gegen die nationalsozialistische Diktatur 1933-1945**  
*Resistance against the National Socialist Dictator 1933-1945*

- **Description:** Book edited by Peter Steinbach and Johannes Tuchel (2004) about resistance against National Socialism
- **Notes:** N/A
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** Düsseldorf Memorial Center
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

(15) **Meuten, Swings, & Edelweisspiraten: Jugendkultur und Opposition im Nationalsozialismus**  
*Meuten, Swings, & Edelweiss Pirates: Youth Culture and Opposition in National Socialism*

- **Description:** Book authored by Sascha Lange (2015) about the Edelweiss Pirates and related groups
- **Notes:** N/A
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** Düsseldorf Memorial Center
- **Archive File Number:** N/A
(16) Wilde Jugend: Lebenswelt großstädtischer Jugendlicher zwischen Weltwirtschaftskrise, Nationalsozialismus und Währungsreform
(Wild Youth: Living Environment of Metropolitan Youth between the Great Depression, National Socialism, and Currency Reform)

- **Description:** Authored by Alfons Kenkmann (2002) about youth before, during, and after the time of National Socialism
- **Notes:** N/A
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** Düsseldorf Memorial Center
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

(17) Verfolgung und Widerstand in Düsseldorf 1933-1945
(Persecution and Resistance in Düsseldorf 1933-1945)

- **Description:** Book edited by Angela Genger (1990) about resistance in Düsseldorf
- **Notes:** N/A
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** Düsseldorf Memorial Center
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

(18) “Wild Jugend” gegen Hitler: Edelweißpiraten in Düsseldorf und im Rheinland zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus
(“Wild Youth” against Hitler: Edelweiss Pirates in Düsseldorf and in Rhineland during the Time of National Socialism)

- **Description:** Book by unknown author (and with unknown date); book produced by and for the Düsseldorf Memorial Center; short publication that provides some anecdotes and history about the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** I was given this book by the Düsseldorf Memorial Center
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** Düsseldorf Memorial Center
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

(19) “Großstadtjugend unter NS-Herrschaft und alliiertem Besatzung”
“Urban Youth under Nazi Rule and Allied Occupation”

- **Description:** Academic article by Alfons Kenkmann (1995) in Geschichte im Westen (academic journal); includes discussion and mention of the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** N/A
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** City Archive of Düsseldorf
- **Archive File Number:** M179 (10) 1995
(20) “Waren die ‘Edelweisspiraten’ in Düsseldorf-Gerresheim eine kommunistische Widerstandsorganisation? Über die Möglichkeit des Widerstands in einem totalitären Staat”

(“Were the ‘Edelweiss Pirates’ in Düsseldorf-Gerresheim a Communist Resistance Organization? About the Possibility of Resistance in a Totalitarian State”)

• Description: Academic essay (unknown date) about the Edelweiss Pirates
• Notes: N/A
• Type: Books and Academic Literature
• Archive: City Archive of Düsseldorf
• Archive File Number: 0-1-23-1352.0000 1983

(21) Geschichte der Stadt Köln: Köln in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus

(History of the City of Cologne: Cologne in the Time of National Socialism)

• Description: Book authored by Horst Matzerath (unknown date) about the history of Cologne in the time of National Socialism; includes a brief section about the Navajos and the Edelweiss Pirates (pp. 428-436)
• Notes: Provides some insight concerning the origins of the Navajos, suggesting that they formed from the outlawed Bündische Jugend in the mid-1930s; also describes and provides some overview of the activities of the Edelweiss Pirates
• Type: Books and Academic Literature
• Archive: Historical Archive of the City of Cologne
• Archive File Number: N/A

(22) Chronik zur Geschichte der Stadt Köln, Band 2: Von 1400 bis zur Gegenwart

(Chronicle of the History of the City of Cologne, Volume 2: From 1400 to the Present)

• Description: Book edited by Peter Fuchs (1991) about the history of Cologne; includes mention of the Edelweiss Pirates; also has election statistics (pp. 379-380)
• Notes: Briefly describes the hanging of some members of the Edelweiss Pirates in 1944 (p. 249); the election statistics are useful because they reveal information about the political environment in Cologne prior to 1933
• Type: Books and Academic Literature
• Archive: Historical Archive of the City of Cologne
• Archive File Number: N/A
(23) **Kölner Statistisches Handbuch**  
*(Cologne Statistics Handbook)*

- **Description:** Book by unknown author (1958); has various statistics as they relate to Cologne; includes election statistics and demographics
- **Notes:** The election statistics are useful because they reveal information about the political environment in Cologne prior to 1933; also provides information about the religious and employment demographics in Cologne
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** Historical Archive of the City of Cologne
- **Archive File Number:** N/A

(24) **Das Stigma**  
*(The Stigma)*

- **Description:** Book authored by Paulus Buscher (unknown date); pamphlet/short book about the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** N/A
- **Type:** Books and Academic Literature
- **Archive:** City Archive of Essen
- **Archive File Number:** 19-793, #1
Miscellaneous Records (Section F)

(1) Memories and anecdotes about the Edelweiss Pirates

- **Description:** Transcripts from podium discussions and interviews with former members of the Edelweiss Pirates; text from a film about the Edelweiss Pirates, “Nachforschungen über die Edelweißpiraten” (1980) (Translation: “Investigation about the Edelweiss Pirates”)
- **Notes:** There are some former members of the Edelweiss Pirates who have written books and been vocal about the history of the group, and comments/dialogue from some of these individuals are included in this file; also, concerning the movie, there was another one about the group that was released in 2004: “The Edelweiss Pirates”
- **Type:** Miscellaneous Records
- **Archive:** Berlin-Lichterfelde Federal Archive
- **Archive File Number:** SGY/30/6015

(2) Various materials from Solingen about the Edelweiss Pirates

- **Description:** Various materials about the Edelweiss Pirates; appear to be interviews and discussions with a former member of the group; talk about the Cologne-Ehrenfeld group and its actions
- **Notes:** These materials lack context; dated after the war (one is from 1946, one 1949, one 1967, one 1981)
- **Type:** Miscellaneous Records
- **Archive:** City Archive of Solingen
- **Archive File Number:** Ve 073-23

(3) Documents/letters from historians about the Edelweiss Pirates

- **Description:** Appear to be letters to the government expressing opinions about the Cologne-Ehrenfeld group and its actions; written by three historians; two historians seem to suggest that records about the Cologne-Ehrenfeld group were falsified by the Nazis; the other seems to counter this, arguing that the opinion lacks objectivity
- **Notes:** Two of the historians are quite notable; the third appears to have been a member of the Edelweiss Pirates (or similar group)
- **Type:** Miscellaneous Records
- **Archive:** City Archive of Essen
- **Archive File Number:** 1944-69, #1-5
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(4) **Leaflets about/from the Edelweiss Pirates**

- **Description:** One is dated 1942; contains a poem and statements encouraging young people to break free
- **Notes:** These are handwritten in old-German typography, so it was difficult for me to read; nevertheless, the archivists provided me with some notes
- **Type:** Miscellaneous Records
- **Archive:** City Archive of Essen
- **Archive File Number:** 19-344, #2

(5) **Letter about the Edelweiss Pirates and Kittelbach Pirates**

- **Description:** Commentary/opinion letter (1990) arguing that there are many inaccurate assessments (such as in newspapers) about the history of the Edelweiss Pirates, Kittelbach Pirates, and other groups; states that they were around prior to 1933, and that they were not as big as some sources make them out to have been
- **Notes:** I do not know for what purpose (or to whom) the letter was written; the author may have been around during the time of the Edelweiss Pirates; other documents and notes from the archive suggest that he may have been an HJ leader
- **Type:** Miscellaneous Records
- **Archive:** City Archive of Essen
- **Archive File Number:** 19-501, Mappe 2, #1

(6) **Letter about the Edelweiss Pirates from the perspective of former HJ member**

- **Description:** Letter (1990) expressing personal memories and experiences with the Edelweiss Pirates; describes some of the activities of the Edelweiss Pirates
- **Notes:** The letter lacks context, and I could not determine for what purpose (or to whom) the letter was written
- **Type:** Miscellaneous Records
- **Archive:** City Archive of Essen
- **Archive File Number:** 19-501, Mappe 2, #2