When Wombs Became Weapons: Women, Policy, and Propaganda in the Third Reich

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When Wombs Became Weapons:  
Women, Policy, and Propaganda in the Third Reich

A Thesis

Presented to the
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts
Duquesne University
In partial fulfillment of
The requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

By
Melanie Anne Predis

March 16, 2006
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Acknowledgments

This thesis is the byproduct of many years of personal inquiry and scholarly endeavor. Throughout these years of intellectual sorting and sifting, there have been many individuals whose encouragement, support, and thoughtful conversation have assisted me greatly with my ongoing interest in the Holocaust. First and foremost, I would like to thank my mother for her continual encouragement and academic example. While I am certain that it seemed odd at times to have a ten year old who could not read enough about the Holocaust, she never once discouraged my questions, and instead, she supported me in my pursuit of exploring the facts and ideas that my mind continuously pondered. In addition, I would also like to thank my sisters, aunts, and grandmother for their support and love. Any success that I have achieved, I owe to these people who have faithfully reminded me of the power contained in knowledge and dedicated scholarship.

I would also like to sincerely acknowledge Drs. Charles Rubin, Clifford Bob, Richard Colignon, Bernard Weiss, and the many other Duquesne University Faculty members who have lent their assistance and advisement during the completion of this thesis. Without their insight and commentary, I am certain that this finalized product would be lacking in the quality of its present form. I would also like to appreciatively acknowledge in particular Ms. Joan Lapyczak and more generally, the administrative support personnel of the Graduate Center for Social and Public Policy at Duquesne University. Their helpfulness in navigating University policies and procedures has certainly made a difficult task seem quite manageable. More broadly, I would also like to thank the Policy Center and the larger institution of Duquesne University for their
gracious financial support during the past three years. Without this, this thesis would most likely, not exist.

In terms of materials used, I am most indebted to Dr. Randy Bytwerk of Calvin College for allowing me to select and use a variety of images from his Nazi propaganda website. The quality, quantity, and reproducibility of these images greatly enhanced opportunities for thorough analysis in terms of the visual forms of propaganda that I sought to study.

On a personal note, I would like to thank Stephanie Haughan, Melanie Oppenheim, Leonora Borelli, Beth Buhout, Frank Bruce, and many other dear friends too numerous to name. I thank you for reminding me that I am capable of accomplishing great things by working on them one day at a time.” I am blessed to have all such people in my life, and I am certain that I am a better person with a richer existence thanks to the gift of their friendship.

Finally and most importantly, I would like to thank all of the survivors of the Holocaust who have devoted their lives to telling and retelling their pain in order to benefit future generations. While very young, I had the privilege to encounter one such survivor, without ever having known his name. I am most deeply indebted to this man, simply for having survived, simply for having talked to me that day so many years ago in the Wilkinsburgh Public Library. It is to this nameless face and his legions of comrades that this thesis is most specifically dedicated. Thank you for your enduring courage and your generous hearts.
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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how the Nazi State used visual forms of propaganda in order to convey certain gender-specific policy aims to women living in the Third Reich. This will be accomplished by using the novel scholarly approach (referred to as the New Intentionalist approach) that these policy aims were not only fulfilling a State-centered need, but they also were reflecting a desire and a voice of agreement within the German population of women. In other words, while these policies were certainly driven by the immediate political needs of the National Socialists, such policies could not and would not have succeeded had they not made use of pre-existing cultural sensibilities and a uniquely German sense of gender-specific possibilities, thereby allowing an “old but new” version of engendered socio-cultural goals, responsibilities, and even moral imperatives to emerge. The selected pieces of visual propaganda to be studied will be used as a point of scholarly access, thereby becoming a means of more deeply examining both the roots and the evolving nature of the National Socialist policy regarding German women and the role that they were assigned within the political sphere of the Third Reich.
Introduction

At roughly the age of 10, I began my initial explorations into the historical and human realm known as the Holocaust. I cannot explain the source of this interest. My family is not Jewish. There was not any extensive presentation of related material in my history class. There were no current events at the time that helped to trigger a public discourse on the subject. In spite of this apparent lack of context, I nevertheless developed an interest, and it was consequent to this interest that I began a quest into the world of text, always with the explicit goal of gaining more knowledge than I had previously possessed in order to understand more deeply a historical event that so many deemed to exist beyond the limits of human comprehension.

Since the age of 10 and continuing into the present, I have sought consistently to move beyond the commonly circulated secular and scholarly claim that equates the Holocaust with the reaches of hell, thereby removing it from the realm of that which can be methodically studied. In my opinion, such an outlook seems to suggest that any scholarship directed towards obtaining the deeper insight of which I previously spoke, will simply spin inward on itself, never bringing any new or richer sense of understanding to the surface. Ultimately, in such a scenario, students of the Holocaust can hope for nothing more than a scholarly dead end, a point where all academic inquiry will be forever trumped by the face of evil incarnate. While I would certainly agree that the Holocaust remains, at the very least, an overwhelming human, spiritual, and scholarly endeavor, it is by no means a subject matter that resides outside of the domain of our thoughtful consideration and thorough investigation. To claim that the Holocaust “defies understanding,” is to forgo the opportunity to learn something from the more tragic
moments of our past, thereby abandoning the chance to make sense of both the historical and the contemporary dark undercurrents of the human experience.

Through scholarly projects such as this thesis and other similar past and present undertakings, students of the Holocaust are continuing to add to the ever-growing discourse of serious Holocaust scholarship, thereby bringing the “incomprehensible” a bit more within the realm of our human understanding. In the work of such dedicated scholars, we come to see that the Holocaust was not a freakish historical aberration. Instead, it was the product of a tyrannical yet calculating leader who was able to make cunningly good use of particular historic currents and socio-cultural forces in order to enact a plan of global takeover and world domination along starkly racial lines. These factors of leadership, political maneuvering, tactical warfare, and socio-cultural leanings seem to contradict the statement that, “The Holocaust defies understanding.” What they do make clear, however, is that the quest to achieve this understanding is by no means an easy or uncomplicated task. Rather, like all serious and perplexing historical questions, there are layers and dimensions to our work, none of them uncomplicated in its own right.

In having read so extensively about the Holocaust, I have observed a certain continuum in the literature, a continuum that even in its fullness leaves many questions unanswered. If one were to attempt to classify and define the stages of such a continuum, they might very well look something like this: tabloid-style information on the personal and sexual oddities of key Nazi personalities; psychological analysis of these same personalities; detailed historical accounts of these personalities and the roles that they played in executing the Holocaust; detailed historical accounts of the
institutionalization of the Holocaust; personal memoirs written by the Holocaust victims; and those texts that seek somehow to answer the larger questions pertaining to the “How’s” and “Why’s” of the Holocaust. Although there is much to be gained from all of this literature (perhaps with the exception of the “pulp” category), I have noticed that one often feels trapped in a circle of causal explanations that rest heavily on the nuances of social conditions, cultural vestiges not fully explored, and psychological arguments that when evaluated alone, do not provide answers that are sufficient to explain the depth and range of destruction that was perpetrated on the part of the National Socialists.

It is therefore the goal of this thesis to begin to seek deeper answers to questions that demand further investigation. The general point of entry in undertaking this inquiry will be to examine how visual forms of propaganda were used by the Nazi State to convey certain gender-specific policy aims to women living in the Third Reich, while using the novel scholarly approach that these policy aims were not only fulfilling a State-centered need but also reflected a desire and a voice of agreement within the German population of women. In other words, while these policies were certainly driven by the immediate political needs of the National Socialists, such policies could not and would not have succeeded had they not made use of pre-existing cultural sensibilities and a uniquely German sense of gender-specific possibilities, thereby allowing an “old but new” version of engendered socio-cultural goals, responsibilities, and even “virtues” to emerge.

Although this study will focus primarily on the role of German women vis-à-vis the Nazi State, thereby leaving large segments of the German population out of the scholarly equation, I think this starting point is a key to the aforementioned deeper answers might be gained. For, if the ultimate goal of National Socialism was to be world domination,
then the achievement of such a goal was certainly contingent upon the complete and total participation of women, as it would be women who would assist the Nazi State through their biologically specific reproductive capabilities.

In order to examine most thoroughly the above noted points of interest, the following general outline will be employed: I. Background section; II. Germany’s Lebensraum policy; III. Examination of various examples of the visual propaganda of the Third Reich; IV. Generalized conclusions regarding this propaganda in light of what we know in terms of background information and the Nazi Lebensraum policy; V. Study limitations; and VI. Additional implications of this research.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Due to the multifaceted nature of the argument being presented in this thesis, it is of critical importance first to offer background information on the following key concepts: (A) The development of Holocaust studies and its different schools of thought; (B) Novel modifications to the existing theoretical frameworks of Holocaust studies; (C) The political, cultural, and intellectual landscape of Pre-World War II Germany; (D) The role of women within this Pre-World War II Germany; and (E) An examination of definitions of political propaganda, from both an “insider” (i.e. Nazi) and “outsider” (i.e. scholarly) perspective.

A. The Development of Holocaust Studies and Its Different Schools of Thought

In many ways, my personal academic sensibility in regard to Holocaust scholarship is mirrored in the development of Holocaust studies as a whole. Beginning in the 1960’s,
following the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem, the field of Holocaust studies saw the emergence of “…a wave of interest and a wealth of serious scholarship” (Marrus 201). With the advantage of the passage of temporal and emotional time, these scholars began an undertaking that was somewhat unlikely, if not impossible, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. With the advent of this scholarly quest, researchers stemming from a number of different disciplines began to ask the deeper questions of “How” and “Why” the Holocaust had come to pass. It is thanks to them that the Holocaust, while not necessarily any more comprehensible, has become a historical moment with definable dimensions and describable characteristics.

It was in this act of questioning and defining the “How’s” and “Why’s” of the Holocaust, that three particular schools of thought emerged from within the larger field of Holocaust studies. For the sake of clarity, these three schools of thought can be best divided into the following distinct and academically accepted categories: Intentionalists, Functionalists, and Moderate Intentionalists. For the Intentionalists, the Holocaust is seen as a planned and calculated operation, with its roots firmly planted in Hitler’s manifesto, Mein Kampf. Sitting in a prison cell in Munich as consequent to his participation in the Bier Hall Putsch of 1923, Hitler told the world through his own carefully chosen words what his answer to the “Jewish Question” would be. According to intentionalist scholars, such as Daniel Goldhagen, Hitler used the Second World War as a cover for his ultimate goal of genocide, a genocide that had been planned beginning with the politics of resentment found running rampant throughout Vienna and Munich during the years following World War I.
Such an interpretation, while doing much for accurately addressing issues of guilt and complicity within the formal Nazi hierarchy, does not seem to account for many of the chaotic and ever-changing personalities of the Nazi regime or the dramatic and unforeseen consequences that various military operatives had upon the event that would ultimately become known as the Nazi Holocaust. In addition to this critique of the intentionalist school, another point left relatively neglected by the Intentionalists relates to the depth and breadth of European anti-Semitism, as that anti-Semitism existed both before and during the Second World War within the larger German populace. Stated quite simply, if one were using only the intentionalist paradigm as one’s central theoretical focus, it would seem that the Holocaust began and ended with Hitler, with Hitler being the primary definer, articulator, and enactor of the anti-Semitic worldview that informed the Nazi ethos. When comparing such information to what we know today to be true of European social and cultural history, we can clearly see that such a diagnosis is inaccurate at best. While the role of Hitler was undeniably important to the development and enactment of the Holocaust, it must be duly noted that Hitler was also a man of his times, an individual who existed in an ever-changing dialogue with both his own sensibilities and with those belonging to the community that supported him. Also quite malleable in nature, these sensibilities can be noted as being historically and culturally constructed, with the packaged product being continually redefined throughout the course of the 1920’s, 1930’s, and 1940’s.

In response to such critiques of the Intentionalists, the Functionalists emerged as a group of scholars who came to view the Holocaust as a historical phenomenon that did not rise to the forefront fully composed, thanks solely to the workmanship of Hitler.
Instead, the Holocaust came to pass in its known form one piece at a time, with those pieces being positioned by a number of different voices, each with its own unique motivation. Such scholars noted how the personalities of the Nazi power structure and the turning twists and tides of war ultimately helped to give shape to the Holocaust as an event that was built and enacted over a period of cultural and historical time. For such Functionalists, the Holocaust served an emergent and constructed societal and political function, a function that remained constantly in negotiation during the years encapsulated by the reign of Hitler’s Third Reich.

Such an approach is well exemplified by Gerald Reitlinger in his well documented and historically dense account, *The SS: Alibi of a Nation, 1922-1945* (1957). In this book, Reitlinger attempts to disprove the commonly held myth that the SS (*Schutzstaffeln*), operating within the capacity of Hitler’s chosen elite squadron of men, were the individuals who held the primary responsibility and culpability for the phenomenon known as the Holocaust. By giving much evidence to support the personality-driven, chaotic, and fragmented nature of the SS, Reitlinger shows that the organization operated in conjunction with various arms of the Nazi bureaucratic machine in order to plan and enact the Holocaust. With Reitlinger’s powerful and compelling set of historical facts in place, the reader is given the profound sense that guilt can no longer be simply and solely placed on Hitler, as he operated in conjunction with his secret “Death’s Head” squadron. Rather, it is because of the embedded and multifaceted nature of the SS, with that nature being one that was continually redefined through the passage of political time, that one must note that the rivers of responsibility run vast and wide
throughout not only the terrain of various government branches and foreign offices but also through the German populace as a whole.

To define and reiterate further these relevant qualities of historic depth and personality driven politics regarding the Holocaust, it is worth mentioning in a bit more detail Reitlinger’s developmental account of the SA (Sturmabteilungen), or the precursor to Hitler’s SS. With its roots located in the German Freikorps movement following World War I (1918), the SA began as the branch of strong arm men of the Nazi party. With its culturally supported and endorsed history of self-armament and brutish tactics, this “…political fighting force…performed the task of stewards at Hitler’s earliest political meetings…to create scenes of violence…and by any means possible to command attention” (Reitlinger 3). Once legally and securely in power, however, the needs of the Nazi regime had changed, and such thug tactics were sensed by Hitler to go against the changing political and social climate of Germany. The German people were now looking for status quo comfort and the subsequent respectability that comes with such a social milieu. Consequently, in 1934, the SA was to become the SS or “…the political police force of Hitler’s so-called revolution” (Reitlinger 2). Such a shift as it was carefully planned with staged arrests and executions made certain that “…brute force was to be camouflaged,” and that “…the marching young men in brown shirts must be made to impress the prosperous and conventional” (Reitlinger 11).

With all of these political maneuverings in place, Hitler had created through the new and emergent SS a sense of impressive mystique (Reitlinger 453). Here, the German populace could witness the emergence of a hand-selected and elite group of Aryan young men whose charge it was to protect their Fuehrer, their Fatherland, and their “so-called
revolution.” As the war began and continued, however, the face of the SS changed yet again in dramatic ways. “At the time of the capitulation of Germany there were half a million men, the greater part of them foreigners, wearing the insignia of the SS on their German uniforms” (Reitlinger 1). Consequently, by the end of the war, to be an SS man meant virtually nothing in terms of elite qualifications or selection status. It did, however, mean something quite relevant when viewed in conjunction with the genocide of the Holocaust.

As was noted above, by the war’s close, the SS was no longer Nazi Germany’s cultural poster child of the National Socialist movement. What had remained the same, however, was the laundry list of duties assigned to the SS. The SS was still, in many ways, the force responsible for the manpower that handled the Final Solution. When viewing this fact in conjunction with the “…co-operation of the entire German bureaucracy” (Reitlinger 452) in its ability to undertake mass murder, it does not take a great deal of insight to note that the web of complicity surrounding the Holocaust had grown by leaps and bounds. If solely from a statistical standpoint, the SS could no longer provide “…the German nation with a convenient scapegoat” (Reitlinger 452).

Responsibility was now to be found not only in the offices of the Gestapo, but rather, it was also to be located in various interlocking government ministries (Reitlinger 452) and all of the populations that supplied the SS with its vast and numerous ranks. It is within these details that one can see how the enactors of the Holocaust were not a predefined group or one particular individual, but rather, such identities and responsibilities were being continually redefined throughout the course of the Second World War.
While Reitlinger’s functionalist study seems to address many of the inadequacies of the aforementioned intentionalist approach, certain concerns still remain. In particular, while greater attention is paid here to political dynamism and cooperation stemming from the German populace, one begins to get the sense that both the Nazis and the ordinary Germans were only using the “State” and its given policy aims as a very brutal means of Realpolitik, thereby hoping to achieve their own desires for increased control and power. In such a paradigm, the deep grammar of anti-Semitism and racism would appear to be nothing more than the ingredients used in a very cruel recipe for world domination, with these concepts carrying little cultural value in and of themselves. In this way, genocide, as such, would seem to be an evil form of “political housekeeping,” for any means might accomplish the German goal of global takeover. Knowing what we currently do regarding the Nazi worldview, however, to employ such a functionalist sense of genocide is simply incorrect and extremely inadequate. Both the functionaries and the civilian supporters of National Socialism did indeed desire power, but this power was specifically racial in both its details and in its ultimate aims. For the Nazis, genocide was much more than a one-dimensional means to an end; it was also a deadly end in and of itself.

Between the intentionalist and functionalist approaches, there exists a compromise interpretation, the Moderate Functionalist approach. For the Moderate Functionalists, while the purposefulness of Hitler’s methodology and motives cannot be ignored, allowances must also be made for the “bit by bit” process that was mentioned in the previous description of the purely functionalist approach. In addition, here, the consequences of individual motivations when viewed in conjunction with a variety of
social functions seem to take on heightened importance in terms of the enactment of the Holocaust.

Such an interpretation of the Holocaust is perhaps better understood by briefly examining Christopher Browning’s book, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Battalion 101 and the Final Solution* (1992). In his book based upon the “judicial interrogations” (Browning xx) of particular members of Reserve Battalion 101, a group of non-combat, German Order Police assigned duties in Poland’s Generalgouvernment during the years 1942-1943, Browning seeks to answer the questions pertaining to how and why “Ordinary Men” became mass murderers in the context of the Holocaust. Beginning in the preface of his inquiry, Browning states that “…the writing of such a history requires the rejection of demonization (of the perpetrators)” (Browning xx). In place of pursuing such a one-dimensional thesis premised upon the mass undertaking of evil, Browning instead promotes an attempt to “…understand the perpetrators in human terms” (Browning xx), thereby relying upon the roles that authority and conformity played in Battalion 101’s participation in the deportation and murder of at least 83,200 Polish Jews (Browning 225-226). It is Browning’s hope that such a social/psychological approach will open a dialog based upon true understanding, even if that understanding throws students of the Holocaust into Primo Levi’s metaphorical “Gray Zone,” where the lines between killer and victim often become blurred (Browning 186).

As was previously mentioned, the members of Reserve Battalion 101 were men who, for the most part, fell outside of the category of those one might consider to be typical candidates for hardened and committed participation in the Nazi enterprise of
genocidal mass murder. According to Browning, “On the basis of rank and file-middle-aged, mostly working-class, from Hamburg- (these men) did not represent special selection or even random selection but for all practical purposes negative selection for the task at hand” (Browning 164). In such a statement, one then is drawn to the obvious question: If not “statistically predisposed” to the atrocities committed at places such as Jozwgow, Lomazy, and Miedzyrzec, then how did Battalion 101 become who it did and undertake what was done? For Browning, the answer to such an inquiry lies in the experiments of two key social scientists: Namely, Philip Zimbardo and Stanley Milgram.

Forgoing addressing the exact details of the experiments mentioned above, for brevity’s sake, it will suffice to say that what Browning takes from the inquires of Zimbardo and Milgram can be located under the two broad sub-headings of “authority” and “conformity.” While noting that there remain vast discrepancies when comparing the conditions of the scientific experiments and the real-life massacres in question, Browning nevertheless states that striking parallels exist between laboratory observations and what took place in real time at places like Jozefow (Browning 168, 174). For Browning, the men of Battalion 101 were in many ways bowing to an extended system of authority, as that authority was chiefly held by the larger Nazi power structure and German society as a whole. Even though the Battalion’s commander, “Papa Trapp” represented quite a weak extension of that authority, the men of the Reserve Unit 101 understood quite well that he was but a manifestation and representation of a vast and powerful hierarchical power structure that went far beyond their individual existences (Browning 174).

In terms of conformity, Browning notes the importance of particular “binding factors” that gave rise to the continued participation of Battalion 101 in the genocide
perpetrated in particular Polish towns (Browning 173). Here, Browning places a great deal of importance upon the points of “…refusing one’s share of an unpleasant collective obligation” and the “threat of isolation” from one’s Battalion comrades (Browning 185). While Browning does concede that Nazi ideology with its “…intensifying effects of war and racism” did help to spur on this mutually reinforcing system of authority and conformity, he does not seek to spend much time dwelling upon the possible ramifications and effects of war-time propaganda (Browning 186).

When evaluating Browning’s final social/psychological set of conclusions, I do not find his specific application of the Moderate-Functionalist approach compelling enough to the answer the questions of “How” and “Why” such historical events occurred. There were many “Jozefow’s” and “Lomazy’s” that created the final numbers of 8 million plus dead. Did all of these individual perpetrators fear authority and respect conformity in exactly the same ways, as to allow for their complete and often willing (if not joyful) participation in genocide? It would seem that the answer to such a question would most certainly be no. In summary, after reviewing the intentionalist, functionalist, and moderate functionalist arguments, it becomes quite clear that a new approach must be adopted, if we are indeed interested in arriving at a richer sense of meaning in reference to the Holocaust and levels of participation by ordinary Germans.

B. Novel Modifications to the Existing Theoretical Frameworks within Holocaust Studies

To reiterate, after reviewing both the strengths and the weaknesses of the intentionalist, the functionalist, and the moderate functionalist schools, it becomes clear that another approach must be adopted, if we indeed wish to understand more fully the
phenomenon known as the Holocaust. For the purposes of this thesis, I have created a new categorical framework that from this point forward will be defined as the “new intentionalist” approach. By using the term, “new intentionalist,” I wish to convey that the Nazi worldview could be best defined as a dynamic dialectic that was deeply purposeful in nature. Stated more specifically, the Nazi ethos fulfilled a dual purpose, in that it serviced both the needs of the National Socialist State and the aspirations held by many of the citizens of that State. In addition, this two-pronged purpose carries with it an obvious evolutionary quality; despite the overarching framework of totalitarianism, there existed a pointed and ongoing dialogue regarding racial policy between the Nazi State and the German populace. As is the case in any dialogue, be it conversational or cultural in nature, a certain sense of path-dependency emerges, with each string of “conversation” being both affected by and affecting the series of actions that come before and after it.

In many ways, this definition and application of the term, “new intentionalist,” succeeds in moving us beyond the previously mentioned limitations of the intentionalist, functionalist, and moderate functionalist schools. No longer are we limited by the stagnancy and State-centeredness of the intentionalist framework. In addition, we are also freed from the incorrect “means to an end” sense of genocide employed by both the functionalist and moderate functionalist camps. Instead, within the new intentionalist approach, we succeed in creating a means of scholarship that allows for a more open, fluid, and historically accurate read of the National Socialist policy as it related to genocide. Armed with an academic approach such as this, we certainly stand in better stead to begin to answer the deeper questions of meaning from which I earlier spoke.
In applying the new intentionalist framework to the specifics of my study, I am attempting to illuminate better the formerly misunderstood intersection between the Hitlerian-based leadership of the Third Reich and the populace of Germans and other conquered peoples whom that Reich sought to control and to use towards its own advantage. In my research on the Nazi State and its formidable propaganda campaign, I examine how visual forms of propaganda were used by the Nazis in order to convey certain gender-specific policy aims to women. In undertaking this task, I maintain that the policy aims of the Third Reich were not only fulfilling a State-centered need, but they were also reflecting a desire and a voice of agreement within the German population of women. In other words, while such policies were certainly driven by the immediate political needs of the National Socialists, such policies could not and would not have succeeded had they not made use of pre-existing cultural sensibilities and a uniquely German dialectic of emergent gender-specific possibilities and constraints.

C. An Examination of the Political, Cultural, and Intellectual Landscape of Pre-World War II Germany:

Regarding sociopolitical circumstances and conditions existing within Pre-World War II Germany, it is necessary first to undertake a brief historical analysis of the situation, while keeping the particular focus on how that situation relates to the thesis at hand. For such purposes, I will concentrate my inquiry on two particularly relevant points: Namely, the terms and consequences (both actual and perceived) of the Versailles Treaty and the appearance of a modern, democratic Weimar Republic. Both of these political situations were of significant importance in terms of addressing the self-
definition process of the National Socialist movement and the identity of the German populace with whom that movement politically interacted.

For the purposes of this discussion, it is sufficient to summarize Germany’s role in World War I as that of an aggressive, resentful, and perpetually dissatisfied political bully. “Indeed from 1914 until the failed offensive in 1918 they (Germany) had openly stated that the vanquished would be forced to pay dearly for any German suffering. England and France in particular were to be ‘ruined’” (Richie 318). In October 1918, upon facing an inevitable loss, the German military leadership under the direction of Generals Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff “…convinced the civilian government that it was necessary to sue for peace” (Bergen 26). On July 28th, 1919, after much political and public debate, the Versalles Treaty was “reluctantly” signed by the Germans (Burleigh 49), who thereby found themselves ushered into a social atmosphere best characterized by a “…widespread refusal to accept the reality of defeat” (Bergen 47). It is in this sense of lingering post-war denial and dissatisfaction that one can locate critical ingredients for a future “recipe for disaster.”

In recounting the actual terms of the Versailles Treaty, one can best summarize the document by noting the following four points: (1) The militarization of the Rhine Valley by the French (for fifteen years following the signing of the Treaty and the acquisition of Alsace-Lorraine by the French; (2) The “War Guilt” clause and the payment of war reparations by Germany to the French; (3) The refashioning of the border between Germany and Poland, with Poland receiving the industrial area of Upper Silesia, the corridor of Western Prussia, and the “free city” of Danzig; and (4) The almost total demilitarization of Germany (Richie 315).
When taken in sum, these criteria ultimately resulted in the German loss of its former military prowess, “…13 percent of her territory, 10 percent of her population, 15 percent of arable land, 75 percent of iron ore, 16 percent of rye, 13 percent of wheat, 6 million people, and 70,000 square kilometers” (Richie 316). Although such terms were harsh, they were by no means the worst that history has ever seen. As we will see later, however, it is not so much the reality of the Versailles Treaty that was critical, but rather it was the German public’s interpretation of this Treaty that took on supreme importance, especially in the later National Socialist context.

As mentioned earlier, “The Germans were totally unprepared for the treaty which was eventually presented to them, and of which even Wilson had said that it was meant to be harsh” (Stern 223). Throughout the course of World War I, Germany had presented itself as an imperialistic force that sought to broaden its own borders at the expense of other nations’ sovereignty. Such a fact, when coupled with allied considerations of Germany’s historical legacy of military leadership and one-leader might, led the allies to believe that control, pressure, and punishment would keep the self-aggrandizing German State in line with internationally defined criteria pertaining to the protection of peace and stability until it could create for itself a culture of political compliance and fair play. Stated in simple terms, the allies took the “once bitten, twice shy” approach when considering German history and the country’s observable behavior during World War I (Burleigh 49). The allied forces clearly felt that they “…had no reason to disbelieve” that the German claims of political and military aggression would cease entirely of their own accord (Richie 318). Instead, the allies made the assumption that by penalizing and controlling a wayward German State, they would hopefully bring
that State into compliance with the international standards required for future political stability.

In assessing the German reaction to the Treaty of Versailles, one can clearly note a unified sense of deep disapproval, regardless of particular political orientations and divisions. “The reaction ranged from stupefaction on the left to bitter nationalist resentment on the center and right. Even the independents and pacifists were appalled” (Richie 316). In addition to these voices of discontent within Germany proper, there also existed the 13 percent of the German population that “…was now marooned beyond the borders of the former German Reich” (Burleigh 48). These ethnic Germans living in the newly acquired French and Polish territories were often the victims of discrimination and offensive treatment (Burleigh 48). Finally, it should also be noted that nearly six million Austrian Germans became formally detached from the Reich by virtue of the Versailles treaty (Burleigh 269). It is not surprising that all of these abandoned populations felt a particularly unique sense of sociopolitical animosity vis-à-vis the Weimar Republic.

In addition to these points relating to Versailles Treaty, it is also of particular relevance to consider the emergence of the Weimar Republic, taking note of both its positive effects and the negative perceptions held by particular segments of the German populace regarding this particular form of governance. “In the wake of military defeat in 1918, Germans were introduced a form of government new to them: a republic based on a democratic constitution” (Bergen 45). This emergent liberal State, temporarily housed in the city of Weimar, created during its 14-year life span, a landscape filled with all of the democratic entitlements and diversities that are today attributable to any modern civil society. German women were the first Europeans of their sex to gain suffrage, and a
lively and articulate creative cultural life sprang into being in numerous German cities. In addition, Weimar Germany joined the League of Nations in 1926, thereby showing its willingness to participate in a global political community (Bergen 45).

In spite of these relatively positive effects attributable to the Weimar Republic, according to Doris Bergen in her book, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of Genocide* (2003), “In the eyes of many Germans, their new, democratic government symbolized the civilian weaklings who had supposedly betrayed Germany’s fighting heroes” (Bergen 48). In other words, because the German population equated Weimar and its Versailles Treaty signers with feelings of unmet territorial desires and a marred international reputation, true investment and belief in not only the Weimar Republic but also in democratic government as a whole (as it was an instrument of the international pressures in question) came into popular questioning. “For large segments of the educated classes, the Weimar Republic was discredited in advance, morally bankrupt before it was established” (Stern xxix).

In addition to this point, while the Weimar government existed as an institution committed to diversity and liberalism, it was also quite cognizant of the fact that it must answer to a relatively conservative populace. Consequently, when faced with extremist critiques based upon the above noted disillusionment with Versailles, “Weimar authorities tended to crack down hard on the left but treated the right with leniency” (Bergen 48). The ultimate result of such social and political circumstances could, in many ways, be characterized as a pressure cooker, for while the German population resented liberal democracy in the form of the Weimar Republic, by the very definition of the Republic’s existence, Weimar had to allow such right-wing, conservative, and
nationalistic interests the space to voice their political views. In taking such a position of friendly tolerance, such groups were given the opportunity to define and articulate themselves further, while simultaneously gathering support for their emergent political platforms. Such facts were probably not taken into consideration by the creators of the Versailles Treaty. Rather, instead of taking notice of the Post-Versailles German political scene, the allied forces sat back foolishly satisfied with a seemingly “controlled and democratic” Germany.

By this point in the analysis, it should become quite clear that the allies simply did not take certain critical points into consideration in terms of managing Germany as a possible future threat to international peace and stability. Germany, while dissatisfied at the beginning of World War I, did not miraculously reach a point of satiation upon its suit for peace in 1918. In addition, while the Weimar Republic was a liberal, democratic State, it was also a political and social infant, barely out of the cultural cradle. While international pressure as it was applied through the Versailles treaty could accomplish much, it could not satisfy Germany while penalizing it. Nor could it in its stated form bring stability and respectability to a new and emergent government institution such as Weimar.

These two points, namely (1) The clearly apparent domestic dissatisfaction stemming from unmet political goals and (2) The precarious nature of a newly emergent form of government that lacked substantial domestic, cultural, and social support, seem to have had powerful consequences in regard to the National Socialist political platform that was yet to be unveiled. Stated in the simplest terms, if Germany were committed enough to the pursuit of territorial aggrandizement that it would ignite a World War, why would
it suddenly become satisfied and compliant in the context of an imposed peace? In addition, with this sense of deep dissatisfaction and political disappointment lurking in the wings, how could it reasonably be expected that Germany would immediately embrace, nurture, and engage in a new and drastically different form of government that was equated with the very causes of the underlying German resentments? In the case of Post-World War I Germany, it becomes quite clear how the well-intended measures of the Allied forces were ultimately manipulated and mutated into one particular strain of thought within the destructive Nazi worldview, a worldview that advocated itself by destroying all others. Regarding our new intentionalist perspective, it is also important to recognize how the events of Versailles and Weimar had created in the public a particular ideological hunger for such an ego and hate driven discourse.

Overall, the perception of most Germans, whether living within or outside of the Reich’s pre-World War I borders, was such that something had been lost that could not be replaced by continuing to exist within the terms and confines of the Versailles treaty and the Weimar Republic. This sense of irreplaceable loss and resentment seems to have selected three particular targets to which it could attach its feelings. These three groups, namely the Weimar Republic, the West/the Allies/the International community, and the Jews, seem, at first glance, to share little, if anything, in common. Upon further examination of the German Post-World War I propaganda, however, one clearly emerges with a sense of complicity and causality existing between the three groups. This chain of responsibility could be best defined as Weimar being perceived as a “sell-out” to the allies and the international community. In turn, the allies and international community were noted to be held within the controlling hands of the Jews. In order better to
illustrate these causal and complicitous links, it is worthwhile at this point to examine some of the specific strains of philosophical discourse that were circulating within Post-World War I Germany.

According to Fritz Stern in his account of popular post-Versailles/Pre-Nazi German philosophers, Paul de Lagarde, Julius Langbehn, and Moeller van den Bruck, “Weimar had no voice and no symbol that commanded respect. Moeller and many of his friends hoped as much for moral certitude and social cohesion as for any definite political program” (Stern 225). Here, once again, one can see how Weimar was perceived as empty and invalid by the Conservative populace. Germany’s need for military might and a strong one-leader government seemed to fall on deaf ears within the chambers of the Weimar Reichstag. In addition to this lack of a “Fuehrer” concept, because of Weimar’s connection to the perceived punitive measures stemming from Versailles, “…democracy was identified with the West, with the same group of countries that had inflicted a crippling peace upon Germany. After Versailles, “…the enemy stood in the West…and many turned violently against all those politicians in Weimar who sought to emulate Western political forms” (Stern 232). According to Moeller in one of his well-circulated essays, “Liberalism is the death of nations” (Stern 236). In such popular statements as that made by Moeller, one begins to see the emergence of a particular strain of thought that made clear the connections between a failed government in the form of Weimar and the enemy who was housed in the West.

When speaking of the West, a West that was heavily identified with the Allied forces of World War I and all international institutions, the perception among Germans was that “Germany had become an Allied colony, the most demeaning fate to impose on
civilized Europeans at a time when they unselfconsciously imposed these arrangements on the rest of mankind” (Burleigh 269). This sense of colonialist-based resentment seems to have been further heightened by the fact that “In four years of fighting, they (Germans) had defined their apartness from, and their superiority to, the West. Now, in June 1919, the West demonstrated its vengeful duplicity” (Stern 223). In the eyes of many Germans, the allied moves at Versailles seemed to “…enmesh Germany in a network of restrictions and obligations in perpetuity,” thereby leaving the end of this terrible colonial phase to be nowhere in sight (Burleigh 47). Such anti-western thoughts were further compounded by a “…skepticism and distrust of international law and institutions” (Burleigh 269), as these institutions seemed to hold little regard for uniquely German concerns. When taking all of these resentments into account, it appears, once again, that the solution for many Germans would be “…to tear Germany from its Western course” (Stern 246), thereby “…rejecting the republic” and returning “…to a political vision of a much earlier (if not mythic) time” (Stern 222).

Following directly from the complicitous relationship existing between Weimar and the West, there also appeared to be a collaborative partnership existing between the West and the Jews within the German cultural consciousness. This strain of Post-Versailles propaganda is clearly evidenced in the popular “Stab in the Back” legend that linked together the loss of World War I not with poor military strategizing but instead with the Jews, as they were the key players in an international financial conspiracy against Germany, with their connections being housed in the Allied West. In the loaded and dramatic words of General Schulenburg, a German World War I hero, the legend stated most simply that “Our (i.e. German) men will claim that they were stabbed in the
back by their comrades-at-arms, the navy, together with Jewish war profiteers” (Richie 318). In this statement, along with others that noted that the Versailles Treaty was nothing more than a “Jewish victory,” we can dully observe the final link in this lethal propaganda chain (Burleigh 46). With the loss of the war and the political and financial casualties of Versailles, there stood profits to be made at the expense of German honor and well being. The recipients of these profits, in the German mind, were most certainly the Jews with their powerful links to Western and international financial institutions.

One need not dig very deeply under the surface of this causal chain in order to uncover the powerful sentiments that would foreshadow a forthcoming deadly political, social, and cultural solution.

In the emergent German political consciousness following the public pronouncement of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, the solution to the problematic chain of causality noted above would eventually become the strong and clearly articulated call for a unified, militarized, and nationalized Germany. An intellectual and social consciousness emerged among and across the multiple divisions of German society that highlighted the important role that “…nationalism, militarism, anti-Semitism and neo-Romanticism” would play in constructing a new, powerful, and capable Germany (Richie 365). In the words of Wilhelm Stapel, the editor of the nationalist German newspaper the Deutsches Volkstum, Germany now wished to see “…the growth of a national myth, a myth that is not sweated out of the nerves, but one that blossoms forth from the blood” (Richie 365).

Such notions, as they were thoroughly articulated in the German intellectual and popular cultures were then easily and readily translated into the German political culture
by way of the party platforms of several nationalist political groups, including the early Nazi party. Due to the ever-present international pressures and “watch dogging” as created by the Versailles Treaty, however, the working political solutions sought by Germany had to remain essentially covert in nature. Prior to the formal solidification of the Nazi party in 1933, these pragmatic outcroppings of the ideological solutions already firmly in place included the development of the Freikorps and other paramilitary police forces that succeeded in going unnoticed by the non-military clauses of the Versailles treaty (Browning 3, Reitlinger 39, and Lifton 117). This two-pronged approach of both ideological and institutional components assisted in giving shape to the Nazi party’s political manifesto, while simultaneously creating a voting constituency. On a more theoretical level, these two components also add further evidence to support the notion of an ongoing political dialogue, as that dialogue existed between the State and the German populace. It is based upon factors such as these that the historian Alexandra Richie was able to make the statement that, “Hitler did not need to ‘crush Berlin’ into submission; he found a ready audience eager to listen and to give him their votes” (Richie 363).

D. The Role of Women within Pre-World War II Germany

The cities of Germany, like many other modern, Western, urban areas of the time, experienced a change in attitudes towards women, their emancipation, and motherhood during the 1920’s. With the “Roaring 1920’s” came the thought that women were no longer destined only for marriage and childbearing, but rather, they were also capable of operating within the larger, public domain of civil society that had been previously denied to them. On the flipside of this cultural current, however, remained the fact that
Germany was still a largely agricultural country, and as a result, many German women and men stood strikingly untouched by such changing cultural attitudes. For these individuals, the role of women was still very much confined to the domains of “Kinder, Kueche, und Kirche” or “Children, Kitchen, and Church.

In addition to these aforementioned elements, it is also of relevance to note that since the unification of Germany under the rule of Bismarck in the late 1800’s, there had been and continued to remain a very strong German disposition towards viewing the German peasant and his or her work as the most pure and noble of efforts. As the peasant and his or her labors were tied to the German soil, he or she was the keeper of the German people, the German blood, and hence, the German future. Within this paradigm, the German peasant woman was therefore of the noblest stature, as she was not only a tiller of German soil but also the figurative mother of a future pure and perfect nation. This concept of racially defined motherhood certainly melded itself quite nicely with the traditionalist framework that was well established in pre-WWII Germany.

With elements relating to both the modern and traditional aspects of German womanhood thrown into the cultural pot, the 1920’s brought in yet two additional historical dimensions to the German landscape: The Treaty of Versailles and the Weimar Republic. As was noted in the previous section, these two historic events brought with them their own series of positives and negatives. With Versailles, came a deep sense of cultural longing and economic loss. With Weimar, a hopeful glance towards the possibility for increased civic and political participation was cast. In either case, the societal liminality created by the extremes of military defeat and political change, coupled with a crippling economic depression, created a “break” in the cultural structure.
of Germany as a whole. As a result, the previously mentioned elements relating to modern and traditional sensibilities regarding German femininity, along with the Germans’ former preoccupation with the cult of the noble, peasant woman, were placed in the cultural background, at least for the moment. As we shall soon see, however, all of these dynamics, along with nuances of resentment and democratic zeal, attributable to the events of the 1920’s, were soon to be called forth and refashioned in the knowing hands of the National Socialists, in order to create a entirely new, yet somehow, familiar, political message.

With the ending of the chaos of the 1920’s and the rise of the Nazi power machine in 1933, came the beginnings of a formerly absent sense of peace, stability, and national pride for the German people. As the Nazi government began to make public its views on its ultimate policy aims and goals, so too was it beginning to address the role that women would play within the emerging German, political framework. As the grand aim of the National Socialists was to create a worldwide German Reich, the question of populating that Reich became critically important. It was here that the role of the German woman would become essential to the National Socialist movement, as it was the woman who would bring forth, of course, the future of the race. As we shall soon see, the time was now ripe for the Nazis to call forth the previously articulated cultural notions pertaining to the modern and traditional, as such elements already existed within the German discourse on what constituted the “Female” domain.

There was a preexisting tendency and fondness towards the traditional within the pre-Nazi German worldview, especially as it pertained to women. This former notion of women as earthy mothers and “spiritually called” breeders was certainly something that
could be employed within the racially colored political framework of the National Socialist context. It is of key importance to note, however, that this philosophy was not perfectly matched with nor ready made for Nazi purposes. If the goal of the National Socialists was to conquer foreign territories, exterminate unwanted populations from these territories, and repopulate these territories with only the members of a pure, Aryan race, the sentimentality of motherhood and the morality of the nuclear family structure would need to be removed for the sake of efficiency. As stated by Gisela Bock in her essay, “Ordinary Women in Nazi Germany: Perpetrators, Victims, Followers, and Bystanders,” “Nazi women’s elite groups and authors of the women’s press. . . had to turn against traditional views of motherhood and women as mothers. Female maternalism became the object of a racist polemic and was condemned as sentimental humanitarianism” (Bock 88). In other words, if women were to be the propagators of the Aryan race, they would then need to be conditioned to view their biological capabilities as specifically female tools to be employed in service to the racial policies of the National Socialist government and not as part of a traditional family structure. This attitude would then need to flow forward from the individual into the larger, public domain, until all of Germany was no longer attached to its former understanding of marriage, family, and motherhood. Instead, the German public needed to be schooled to the newly emergent concepts of racially based conquest, especially as they pertained to the female and hence, biological sphere.

Following this same line of cultural manipulation but now relating to the “modern” piece of the equation, the Nazis recognized that they could also benefit from the sense of emancipation and public participation that had emerged among many
German women during the 1920’s. While the National Socialists most certainly equated the cultural and social demise of Germany with the liberalization of women that took place during the Weimar Republic (Koonz 98), they were also aware that this movement towards equality had left women with a sense of heightened potential power and increased political spirit. This sensibility could and would, from this point forward, be harnessed into a driving force that would eventually enable women to see their previous roles of mother and childbearer as politically relevant and hence, vital to the success of the ever-growing Reich. As was noted by Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, a key player in the female arm of the Nazi party, “Woman is the tool of the State. . . We will not itemize what obligations the State owes to us women; we know only that the State has given us obligations that we must recognize and cheerfully fulfill” (Koonz 168).

In examining this redefinition of both motherhood and the distinctly female civic sense, one can clearly see how the Nazi government sought to make use of what existing social “tools” it had at its disposal. “By rewarding assertiveness, ambition, and physical fitness, the Nazi regime offered the ‘New Mother’ as an alternative to both the careerist New Woman and the cultured lady” (Koonz 178). Once again, returning to our new intentionalist framework, it is critical to note that many German women felt inspired to seek a new sense of female virtue and political possibility as per the emergence of the Nazi polemic. It is thanks to the creation of this novel conversational space that the National Socialists were well on their way to finding the biological warehouses that would become essential in the ultimate project of fashioning, forming, and furthering the emerging Aryan nation.
E. Propaganda

Within the social sciences, “Propaganda” exists as a term with a variety of definitions and applications, with each of these definitions and applications being grossly dependent upon both the specific culture of the academic discipline in question and the very nature of the subject being examined. Rather than delve heavily into the various historical and contemporary debates surrounding both the meaning and usage of the term, I will confine my objective understanding of propaganda to selected insights taken from Harold D. Lasswell, one of the pioneers in the field of political propaganda studies. In addition, I will also make use of statements attributable to Josef Goebbels, the official propaganda minister of the Third Reich. In this way, I hope to offer both an objective and subjective accounting of the possibilities inherent in propaganda, as it is understood to be an effective tool for public policy transmission.

Before taking a deeper look at the specifics of both the objective and subjective perspectives on propaganda, it is worthwhile to mention why this approach has been selected. As has already been stated throughout the background section of this thesis, the primary goal of my research is to understand the inner workings of the political dialectic that existed between the National Socialist regime and the population of ordinary Germans living within the framework of that regime. In selecting this as the central point of analytical focus, it becomes critically important to employ the use of indigenous sensibilities regarding political propaganda, as the examination of such sensibilities becomes our only true means of understanding the “How’s” and “Why’s” of the Holocaust from an insider perspective. By using the work of Lasswell as an objective, scholarly framing device, it is hoped that Goebbels’ subjective sense of propaganda will
become clearer. While I am certainly not of the opinion that there is nothing to be gained from undertaking a more intense, scholarly reading of the subject, ultimately, if we wish to understand the role and function that visual propaganda performed within the hands of the National Socialists, then we must look primarily to the words of the political elites themselves, as they used these words to describe this functionality.

According to Lasswell, the “Success (of propaganda) depends upon traditional prejudices, objective connections between nations, and the changing level of popular irritability” (Lasswell 192). Here, we come to see that in order for propaganda to be most effective, it must not only be substantiated by a shared set of ideas held by a particular group or nation, often regarding another group or nation (Lasswell 185), but it must also be disseminated during a time in which “…public anxiety, nervousness, irritability, unrest, discontent, or strain” are operating at particularly high levels within a given society (Lasswell 190). For Lasswell, propaganda can therefore be seen as possessing both a definitive and an active component, in that it must be cooperatively understood and systematically unleashed at a particular point in time in order to fulfill its function as a political tool worthy of the State’s employ. Mirroring the work undertaken by many linguists at the time, Lasswell attributes to propaganda, much like linguists attach to language, both a structural or grammatical element (lingua) and a functional or conversational role (parole). In considering what we know to be true regarding shared German socio-cultural constructs and the obvious tumultuousness of the 1920’s-1930’s within Germany, one could safely state that the National Socialists stood in a time and place that according to Lasswell, was ripe for the effective and meaningful use of political propaganda.
In addition to these points relating to structure and function, Lasswell also notes that in order for propaganda to be effective, it “...must reach the meanest as well as the keenest intelligence,” as a civil society is composed of the full spectrum of human capabilities and interests (Lasswell 201). According to Lasswell, “It is perfectly safe to launch the crude and sophisticated together, for the people capable of reacting to the latter will not be estranged by the former; they will merely remain indifferent and condescending” (Lasswell 201). Here, one begins to acquire a sense of how and why visual propaganda was indeed an extremely efficient and effective method of public policy transmission for the National Socialists. For in its inherent broadness, visual political propaganda allowed the National Socialists to cater to the tastes and abilities of all members of German society, while simultaneously serving all of these unique individuals from the same political plate.

In attempting to address the subjective, Nazi perspective on propaganda, I have found in my research that the speech made by Goebbels in 1934 at the yearly Nuremberg rally seems to be particularly useful. Delivered to the German populace quite early in the National Socialist era, Goebbels succeeds in clearly defining the role that propaganda should and will play within the unfolding of the Third Reich. In reviewing the details of this speech, it becomes quite clear that for Goebbels, effective propaganda should ultimately seek to connect the aims of the National Socialist State with the will of the German people in order to fashion and maintain a means of political instruction that was pointedly directed towards permanent State-building. To this effect, Goebbels begins his speech by stating that, “Political Propaganda in principal is active and revolutionary…It speaks the language of the people because it wants to be understood by the people”
(Goebbels 2). Flowing forth from this idea, he then moves on to note that in order to be effective, the “genuine propagandist…must be a master of the popular soul…The only thing that is important is whether or not (propaganda’s) words are true and genuine expressions of the people” (Goebbels 2). Here, one can see that Goebbels does not necessarily view propaganda as a simplistic means of political brainwashing, rather, he notes that in order for the National Socialist State to be truly effective and formidable in its long term policy aims, it must, first and foremost, seek to understand the deep sentiments, desires, and civic aims of the populace, so that it might be able to manipulate those goals in such a way as to accomplish both its own ends and those of the populace that comprises its ranks. Within this scenario, propaganda can be seen by Goebbels to be a neutral “means to an end,” created by the German State as a “Treffpunkt” or meeting place for meaningful and mutually concerned conversation between the Nazi State and its citizenry (Goebbels 2).

Building further upon this idea of propaganda existing as a tool to be employed in the aim of fostering a deep, lasting, and mutually meaningful political dialectic between the Nazi State and its populace, Goebbels continues by noting that:

Political propaganda, the art of anchoring the things of the state in the broad masses so that the whole nation will feel a part of them, cannot therefore remain merely a means to the goal of winning power. It must become a means of building and keeping power (Goebbels 3)

Further substantiating this point wherein propaganda is touted as a cementing force to be used in the process of State-building and political education/re-education, Goebbels notes that “Propaganda remains our sharpest weapon in defending and building
the state” (Goebbels 2), as propaganda exists as “…the means of coordinating the political will of the nation with the aims of the State . . . thereby (filling) the void that had hitherto existed between the government and the people” (Welch 19). Ultimately, for Goebbels, by uniting the dual forces of propaganda and education (Goebbels 2, 5), the National Socialists will be able to create a relationship between themselves and the German nation that will be forever characterized by an intimate closeness, thereby allowing for the development of a “…type of modern democracy for which Germany (will be) the model for the entire world in the twentieth century” (Goebbels 5).

Goebbels also takes care to note that in order for propaganda to perform properly these functional duties directed towards State-building, it must always be constructed in a systematic way, not haphazardly thrown together without keeping a long term policy agenda in the forefront of the political mind. According to Goebbels, “Propaganda must be learned. It must be led only by people with a fine and sure instinct for the often changeable feelings of the people. They must be able to reach into the world of the broad masses and draw out their wishes and hopes” (Goebbels 3). Building further upon this concept of process within propaganda usage and dissemination, Goebbels notes that:

It (Propaganda) must prepare the way actively and educationally. Its task is to prepare the way for practical actions. It must follow these actions step by step, never losing sight of them. Such propaganda in the end miraculously makes the unpopular popular, enabling even a government’s most difficult decisions to secure the resolute support of the people (Goebbels 5).

When viewed in conjunction with Goebbels’ previous statements regarding propaganda’s functionality, these ideas alluding to the process-oriented and systemic
nature of propaganda do much to substantiate the new intentionalist approach being employed within the body of this thesis. According to Goebbels, at its finest, propaganda becomes a means of allowing for the articulation of both State-centered and population-based needs. Because these needs are not fully fashioned from their immediate point of inception but rather, are constructed over a period of unfolding political time, in order to be most effective, propaganda needs to take this path-dependent quality of itself into account. As we shall soon see in our examination and subsequent analysis of actual propaganda samples, Goebbels and his National Socialist peers certainly understood that in order for propaganda to become a truly effective means of channeling lasting political ideas between the Nazi State and its German populace, then that said propaganda would need to be sitting on the political pulse of the German population, ever ready to respond to and capture emergent civic “tastes” within the political marketplace.

II. LEBENSRAUM POLICY:

Before moving on to examine the specific details of the National Socialist Lebensraum policy, it is thought to be helpful at this point to say a few words regarding the debate surrounding the “uniqueness” of racial policy, population control measures, and genocide, as such elements operated within the context of the Third Reich. One need not delve very deeply into either current events or the annals of history to see that racially based policy making regarding population control (with genocide being a most extreme example of such policies) is an unfortunate, yet common, aspect of the human, political condition. Whether pondering occurrences of State-sponsored genocide programs in Rwanda, the United States’ various eugenics policies aimed at the mentally ill during the
early 1900’s, or the continuing preoccupation and discomfort with interracial dating and marriage as it exists throughout the modern world, it becomes clear that when populations feel themselves to be threatened by a definable “Other,” they will often react politically and formally to squelch that threat through a variety of violent, calculated, and mechanistic measures.

While there are a variety of scholars who feel that Nazi racial policies and the Holocaust are nothing more than very grotesque examples existing along a racially based population policy continuum, there are also many academics who vehemently disagree. This opposing attitude, which is also the opinion adopted throughout this thesis, is well summarized by Daniel Lerner in his essay, “The Nazi Elite.” Here, Lerner states that while the Nazi rise to power could in many ways be compared to that of many other modern, totalitarian movements, it was differentiated by the fact that the gruesomeness of its crimes occurred “…in a great modern industrial nation and in one decade of activity” (Lerner in Lasswell, Lerner, eds., 195). I would agree that it is in these dual elements of modern industrialization and almost total complicity on the part of ordinary Germans (as that complicity is evidenced by the swiftness of the Nazi takeover), that we become better acquainted with the uniqueness of the Nazi era. For when else in history have technology, science, philosophy, tactical warfare, the modern State, eugenics, and almost total societal participation come together in such a way as to allow for such a sudden, extreme, and successful shift in socio-cultural and political consciousness? While there is certainly much to be gained by studying the individual elements of the Nazi rise to power in comparison to other similar occurrences of such elements, as those occurrences existed in different geographic, political, social, and temporal locations, I am of the
opinion that there exists no other similar historical event that encapsulates all of these constituent pieces in quite the same unfortunate yet unique constellation.

So, it becomes imperative that if we are to understand the Holocaust in its fullest sense, then we must begin by attempting to dissect the National Socialist racial policy, as that policy and its articulation existed in all of its unique facets. Literally translated as “Living Space,” Lebensraum was the political term employed by the Nazis to summarize their overarching outlook regarding race and space within the context of the Third Reich. The specific tenants of Germany’s Lebensraum policy that will be more fully explored here are as follows: (1) The formulation, articulation, and dissemination of a worldview in which Germans were noted to be the only perfect and hence, master race; (2) the creation and clarification of a non-German and hence, sub-human “Other”; and (3) the reconciliation of the relationship existing between the German master race and the non-German “Other”: Namely, the extermination of the “Other” and the propagation of those individuals who had been previously defined as compromising the German master race.

From these three specific points, two particular aspects of the Lebensraum policy as they related to German women begin to emerge with a certain degree of clarity. These two aspects, which I will refer to as “race” and “space,” carry with them a sense of negative and positive policy making, respectively. Stated more specifically, race-related policy within the National Socialist context was often defined not only by who was Aryan but also by who was not. Consequent to such definitions, as they were articulated in the Nurenburgh Laws of 1935, particular groups found themselves to be on the losing side of the racial equation, simply by nature of who they were not. It is in this sense that one might begin to think of race as the “negative” element of the Lebensraum policy.
Regarding the positive piece of this paradigm, space emerges as a concept relating to an end that might be gained, provided that one stood on the winning side of the racial divide. As Germany saw itself to be the rightful recipient of territories acquired through conquest, so too would it need to populate such territories by means of increasing the numbers of racially desirable people. It is here, in both the acquiring and in the populating, that space takes on its positive connotation, as space becomes something that might be gained and subsequently populated by Aryan Germans.

While one could certainly make a case for an argument in which race should be noted as the positive policy element (i.e. Aryan racial qualities were those that were valued) and space as the negative element (i.e. Non-Aryan peoples stood the risk of losing their space due to their perceived racial inferiority), for our present purposes, a perspective such as this seems to leave key questions unanswered, as it takes as its starting point a victim-centered perspective. If ultimately we are concerned with how and why the Holocaust occurred, especially with visual, State-sponsored propaganda existing as a critical political tool within this process, then we must first focus on the worldview of the perpetrators as an inroad to understanding the deep dynamics of this particular event of genocide. This is, of course, not to say that the view point of the victims is inconsequential; it is simply to note that the Holocaust did not come to be by will of the victims, and consequently, if we seek to understand it, we must seek to identify and deconstruct the viewpoint of those who created it.

In order to identify more clearly and concretely the two previously mentioned elements of race and space as they operated within actual Nazi policy initiatives, it is thought to be helpful at this point to review one such program in its particulars, namely
the Nazi Lebensborn program. In it we come to see how the German policy of global takeover and world domination was critically dependent upon the minds and bodies of German women, especially as those minds and bodies were utilized as tools within the negative (race)/positive (space) paradigm. In addition, the new intentionalist framework is well supported by the Lebensborn program, in that this particular piece of National Socialist policy exemplifies both the Nazi “sale” and the German “buy” as this “purchase” operated within the cultural market place of the Third Reich.

Lebensborn, literally translated from the German as “Fountain of Life,” was an intensive Eugenics program first discussed and formulated by the Nazis in 1933. Spearheaded by Heinrich Himmler, the chief of the infamous German SS (Staat Sicherheitpolizei or State Security Police), this program had essentially two main aims, with each of these two aims possessing a more covert and unpublicized sub-goal. Firstly, the Lebensborn program, as a critical piece of National Socialist public policy, sought to offer unwed German mothers of a particular, pre-approved racial type, a place to reside and be cared for both during and after their pregnancies. This stay was, of course, contingent upon the fact that the mother could prove that she and the unborn child’s father were both of a certain racial type (Ideally, fathers should have come from the ranks of the SS). Following pregnancy, the women could either keep their children or give them to the State, where they would then be raised as future Aryan warriors and mothers. The more covert goal of this first aim was to offer a place for women to “meet” men who could potentially father Aryan offspring. Documentation clearly shows that the female staff of the Lebensborn homes (often women who chose to remain in the homes after giving birth) met SS men during their periods of employment in the facilities and
subsequently, such women often became pregnant without marrying or continuing relationships with these men (Hillel 79). On the other end of this procreation spectrum, SS men were encouraged to “... break the moral ban on unwed mothers” (Hoess 329). This method of race propagation was the ideal of the Nazi policy of the time, as unwed mothers were a resource to be continually reemployed by the State in order to propagate the race, especially outwards towards the newly acquired territories of the Third Reich.

A second aim of the Lebensborn program was the kidnapping and theft of Aryan or Aryan-appearing children from the occupied territories. These children were often acquired in one of two ways: Either (1) They were taken from villages by means of intricate stalking, or (2) they were selected from concentration camps. It is estimated that approximately 200,000 children were kidnapped from Poland, 50,000 were taken from the Ukraine, and about 50,000 children were abducted from the Baltic regions (www.holocaust-history.org). The more covert goal of this second aim was to offer pregnant, non-German women who appeared to have Aryan backgrounds and could prove that the child’s father was a SS man or a German police official on duty in an occupied territory, the opportunity to be housed in a Lebensborn home. Upon birth, the woman’s child was usually taken from her, and she was then either deported back to her home country or to a concentration camp where extermination generally followed. This act of disposal of the foreign mother on the part of the Germans was a calculated tactic directed towards permanently removing the true identity of the foreign mother, thereby leaving behind a seemingly true and perfect German body in her absence.

In evaluating these two components of the Lebensborn program, one can see how the Nazis had successfully taken a formerly culturally degraded status, namely, that of the
unwed mother and elevated that status to the place of national hero in order to accomplish particular racial policy aims. In doing so, the Nazi policy makers clearly showed that the definition of motherhood had shifted from that which was previously understood within the traditional framework. The evidence for this shift could be seen not only in the policy produced by the politicians but also in the willing consumption of that policy by a number of ordinary Germans. By creating State endorsed institutions such as the Lebensborn homes, unwed mothers were no longer to be seen as social pariahs, but rather, these women could now be perceived as doing their part to further the most critical aspects of the National Socialist political regime. In turn, these same women began to see themselves in a positive and powerful light, as formerly scorned behaviors became a means of participating in a cultural and historical moment that was much larger than the isolated self. As was stated by Rudolph Hoess, the SS Kommandant of Auschwitz, “Thousands of children remained unborn because unmarried women were afraid of disgrace. . . Against this disrespect and all disadvantages that arose from it, all means should be employed and used to eradicate it” (Hoess 327). As evidenced by this statement taken from Hoess’ memoirs, the National Socialists were certainly seeking to transform traditional views pertaining to motherhood and marriage. This transformation was being implemented in order to sustain the flow of German blood to the newly acquired Lebensraum that was being constantly sequestered through Nazi military advances (Stephenson 42). Ultimately and at least on paper, the Nazis had certainly created a working and effective political mechanism within the Lebensborn program. Now, the question would become if this mechanism would accomplish the aims that it so deeply desired to achieve.
Because of the inhumane aspects of the National Socialist Lebensborn program, much of the documentation and narrative surrounding it has been destroyed and purposefully forgotten by those with insider knowledge of its details. Consequently, scholarly analysis of the program’s successes and failures is scant, at best, and as a result, any assessment of the Lebensborn program as a piece of Nazi public policy must be done by gathering together the remaining pieces of a very fragmented puzzle. It is estimated that “... several hundred thousand women or girls were involved with the Lebensborn organization in one way or another. The figure of 12,000 births was put forward at the American trial in Nuremberg of members of the RuSHA and the Lebensborn organization in 1947-8” (Hillel 89). This estimated figure of 12,000 does not, however, include the approximately 300,000 kidnapped children and their mothers who came from the occupied territories. In addition, there is evidence of complicity and participation on the part of the Scandinavian countries, although exact statistics are somewhat difficult to obtain. While such figures might be viewed as insignificant by many, especially given the lofty aims of Nazi world domination, the numbers are important when viewed within the cultural context of the time. More clearly stated, within a relatively short period of three to five years, the National Socialists were able to reshape firmly placed traditional attitudes regarding motherhood and marriage into a format that would meet both the social needs of many German women and the political aspirations of the racially motivated and defined Nazi State. Through the carefully planned use of propaganda, be that propaganda in the form of political pamphlets, State sponsored women’s organizations, or radio and film (Lacey 189), the National Socialists had helped to create
and foster a change in public attitude that would enable them to move forward towards their goal of global takeover.

As one can discern from the above statistics, this forward movement did continue for a time, and many have postulated that it was only after the loss of life and hope following the German military defeat at Stalingrad, that the Nazi “... deception became threadbare and willful ignorance flaccid” (Koonz 14). For many women who chose to participate in the emergent view of the “New German Mother”, the “reality was becoming starkly clear: Motherhood would henceforth be viewed in purely biological terms, just as Hitler’s enemies had warned” (Koonz 197). As the war continued and the death toll increased, concerns over lost husbands and sons coupled with the harsh realities of a life lived under the extreme conditions of a continual Blitzkrieg took precedence over idealized versions of State sanctioned breeding. With the impending doom brought on by the devastation as created by Hitler’s Total War, German women became more concerned with the maintenance of their own lives rather than with those which the State was begging them to create.

Viewed through such a lens as the one stated by Goebbels in his previously described views on propaganda, one could certainly see how the Lebensborn program and the shift in the German cultural consciousness that it spurned forward were successful, at least to a recognizable degree. Regardless of the particular numbers involved in participation, German women as a community did begin to define themselves and their roles as females and mothers in terms of the newly created racial policy aims of the State. In a relatively short period of time, many German women found value in their potential membership within the “New German Mother” cult, whether they were being
enticed towards this end thanks to State-sponsored monetary incentives for multiple births, exposure to State-sanctioned propaganda, and/or simply, an “ethical,” “moral,” and “spiritual” connection to the racial policy aims of the Nazi State. Prior to the military defeats and their subsequent social, economic, and cultural ramifications upon the German people, German women were being willingly reeducated into a new way of viewing their responsibilities towards the National Socialist regime and their fellow country people. If nothing more, this widespread willingness to “take part” by German woman can be seen as a success for the Nazi goal to create breeders in order to fulfill its “Ueber” dream for a final and ultimate German Reich.

Ultimately, in the Lebensborn program, we become better acquainted with the uniquely National Socialistic melding of the formerly separate and distinct traditional and modern female domains, thereby creating a truly new German mother and woman, an archetype quite particular to the Nazi era. In addition, and as has already been mentioned throughout this section, it is in the Lebensborn program that we become more familiar with one particular piece of National Socialist legislation that offers much in the way of support for the new intentionalist framework. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for our present purposes, we come to recognize in the particulars of the Lebensborn program the uniqueness aspects of the National Socialist approach to racially based policy making and population control/dissemination measures.

III. EXAMINATION OF VISUAL PROPAGANDA EXAMPLES:

According to Fritz Morstein Marx, a contemporary and colleague of Harold D. Lasswell’s, “A symbol and an idea must supplement each other. Never is the symbol a
lasting substitute for at least some bricks or straws from which a comprehensible ideology may be framed” (Marx in Lasswell, ed., 19). In considering this statement from Marx, we are presented with an excellent intellectual bridge between the previously presented information included in the background section and our more primary exploration of how such information was conveyed to and consumed by German women living in the Third Reich through the use of visual propaganda. The selected propaganda examples do not merely contain accepted symbols that trigger some vague aspects of a shared cultural memory, but rather, they encapsulate within themselves a visual description of National Socialist ideology, thereby educating, informing, and reframing the outlooks of their intended consumers in a very deep and meaningful way.

In terms of the actual social artifacts studied, one source has been of particular importance. In an attempt to catalogue and make use of his growing collection of German propaganda, Randall Bytwerk, Ph.D., a professor at Calvin College, has created an immensely helpful website operated through his academic institution. This website not only contains specific speeches made by various Nazi leaders, but it also catalogues a variety of visual propaganda types. Because of its clarity of organization and its variety of primary resource material, this website has proven itself to be an invaluable resource for my thesis. I am certainly tremendously grateful to Dr. Bytwerk for allowing me to make use of materials from his site (please see appendix #1).

Regarding previously undertaken scholarly analysis of such visual propaganda examples, there clearly exists a gap in the literature in regard to content specific examinations of visual propaganda examples that speak specifically to the relationship existing between German women and the Nazi State. In many ways, this gap led me to
the very subject of this thesis, for I felt that further exploration into this previously unexplored domain would offer critical insight into understanding better the deeper questions of historical and cultural meaning that still remain unanswered within the fields of Holocaust, propaganda, and ethnic conflict studies. Because of this apparent lack of a preexisting theoretical framework from which to begin my analysis of the visual propaganda sampling, I have created a list of questions that will be posed in regard to each image, with the answers to these questions being offered in the text directly following the image’s presentation. For the sake of clarity, the questions to be applied are as follows:

**Questions to be Asked in Evaluating the Propaganda:**

1.) What are the predominate images being conveyed?

2.) What specific issues and political messages are being addressed?

3.) What specifically German, cultural sensibilities are being highlighted?

4.) To which aspects of Germany’s Lebensraum policy are these sensibilities connected?

5.) What is the desired end effect on German women knowing what we do in terms of both Nazi Germany’s female oriented policies and the values held by German women living in this time period?

In addition it is worthwhile to recall from the previous discussion on propaganda, that the interpretation of such representations can be defined as an extremely subjective exercise, at best. According to Lasswell, this inherent predicament that one continuously encounters in the study of the “subjective” results from a process beginning in “…the cradle,” where after there ensues a continuous “…exposure to environments that result in
progressive modification of the inherited predispositions” (Lasswell in Smith, Lasswell, Casey, eds., 117). In an attempt to overcome this predicament of the “culturally constructed self” to the best of my ability, I sought first to offer a rich description of socio-cultural and historical background information prior to the presentation of the actual propaganda examples. In this way, I sought to bring both my readers and myself into a historical and cultural framework that at least somewhat closely parallels that of the National Socialist worldview. Moving on from the presentation of background information and into my forthcoming analysis, I pose the same set of questions to each image being presented. By engaging with the propaganda samples in this systematic way, I hope to arrive at an analysis that remains consistent both across and between images.

In spite of these factors, however, I must still admit that I am certainly not a German whose “cradle” was situated within the social and historical context of the Third Reich. Consequently, any interpretations of the propaganda samples that I will soon offer are informed by my own particular understandings of the previously presented background information, along with additional insight being provided by my academic advisors and colleagues. These insights are, of course, colored by elements unique to our own subjective, interpretive gazes.
(1) In this Nazi Charitable organization poster, the overall theme is that of an idyllic landscape, wherein both the Aryan mother and her child are at peace, looming largely in the poster’s foreground, over and upon the German “Heimat” or countryside. The dominant images in the poster’s background consist of a farmer and his plow, a village church, and the surrounding rural community. In addition to the foreground and background of the poster, it is also of relevance to note that there exists a third dimension to this propaganda piece, in which the only image being presented is that of an early Nazi party symbol, as it is lightly sketched in red within the upper left hand corner of the poster. (2) The specific issues and political messages being highlighted in this poster address the positive social value placed upon charitable contributions, specifically as those contributions benefit needy mother and child. Assumptions that flow from this idea speak to the importance of Germans taking care of other Germans, the value of
motherhood for all of Germany, and the relative unimportance of the status of that motherhood, be it of a single or two parent nature (as there is clearly no father figure present in this poster and Germans are being encouraged to give charity to mother-child organizations that most likely support single mothers, as they are in greater financial need). In addition, the placement of mother and child in the foreground, above the German countryside, seems to suggest that motherhood, while related to the activity of domesticating the earth, is certainly more valuable than farming in and of itself, when viewed along a culturally defined continuum. Finally, the presence of the party symbol in the top left quadrant of the poster’s third dimension seems to suggest that both the land and the German mother exist in service to and are subsequently protected by the power of the Nazi State. (3) German sensibilities regarding the noble stature of the peasant woman as mother of the earth and keeper of the German future figure prominently in this depiction. On a more subtle level, however, one might also recognize a certain leaning towards the more traditional images of mother and noble peasant woman, as this poster stems from a time relatively early in the Nazi era. In addition, subtleties relating to the relationship existing between individual needs and the Nazi State are also being addressed, thanks to the purposeful placement of the party symbol above all of the human images. (4) Regarding Lebensraum, ideas relating to what constitutes the racial ideal are well noted, as the mother and child are both fair and blond, with the adult woman possessing rather chiseled and definitive facial features. Space, on the other hand, is not being addressed, as World War II had not yet begun. (5) Because of the dominance and prominence given to the mother-child image, it might be surmised that this poster is foreshadowing an upcoming shift in regard to the status of motherhood within the new
German Reich, wherein the social and cultural position of mother will be elevated from its previously politically neutral position to the new category of national icon and powerful political actor.

(1) In this magazine cover the dominant images being conveyed are those of a young German woman and her child in the foreground, a primitive looking, youthful male warrior in the middle ground, and an older male farmer in the background. Each person is holding some implement indicative of his or her particular age/gender role in hand, with the mother cradling her child, the young man clutching his shield and sword, and the older man grasping the handles of his plow. Rays of golden sunlight are shining downward onto all three of the characters, with these beams highlighting in particular the tallest of the human figures, namely, the young male, warrior. (2) The political messages being conveyed in this poster speak to the value placed upon each age group and gender role, respectively. In the new Nazi State, all such roles are of vital importance, but it is of relevance to note that each of these roles is distinct in nature, with some being, perhaps,
more important than others. For example, the placement of the young, teutonic warrior in the poster’s middle ground (between the mother and farmer figures, both of whom are more closely connected to the earth and mundane “reality”), seems to suggest that the young, male soldier will play a particularly critical role in the creation of the new and emergent Nazi State, as he will be charged with securing the safety of the young, the old, and the female alike. A god-like mediator of sorts, the importance of this figure is further suggested by the emphasis placed upon him, as he stands closest to the golden rays of the sun and farthest removed from the toils of an earthly existence. (3) The specifically German cultural sensibilities being highlighted in this poster are still rather traditional in nature, with the woman performing her duties of mother, the older gentleman acting as a farmer, and the young man acting as a soldier and protector. In addition, themes relating to the strength and power inherent in the noble, warrior tradition are suggested, thanks to the primitive nature of the young soldier’s clothing and weaponry. (4) Certainly, Aryan racial characteristics are being touted here as the most desirable of genetic traits, as the racial aspects of the Lebensraum policy are being visually presented. (5) The desired effect upon German women is certainly one in which traditional values pertaining to womanhood and motherhood are upheld, but here, they are being cast in a new and potentially powerful political light, as they are compared to the work being assigned to men, who were the traditionally defined political actors.
(1) In examining these two magazine covers, one can note a general theme relating to family, parenting, and motherhood. In the upper photograph, dated 1938, a father figure is still present within the family unit, whereas in the photo dated 1939, he is suddenly absent from the scene. In addition, the earlier photo cover depicts a small, nuclear family, with only one, young child. The later image, however, shows a mother alone with her three young children, all of whom are dressed in very traditional, German, Landeskledung. In both photographs, the adults are wearing work cloths, as they are
most likely engaged in household and/or farming activities. Finally, in both covers, the sky is quite blue and the landscape rural and green, thereby suggesting that both of these families are geographically situated in villages versus urban-type settings. (2) The political messages being conveyed in these two covers are somewhat similar but also interestingly different, especially when considering their years of publication. While both of these periodical covers speak to the importance of family, parenting, and motherhood, each does so in a slightly unique way. In cover #3, dated 1938, the year before the Germans invaded Poland, the father figure is still present in the family, and his wife is relatively young, with only one, small child. In poster #4, however, the mother being presented is slightly older and without a husband, accompanied only by her three, small children. It certainly comes as no surprise that prior to the advent of organized and official military activity, there is still a father present within his family. After 1938, however, men are beginning to be taken away from the home due to the call of military duty. Because of this change in social conditions, women are now being called upon to support their families alone, relying upon their maturity and maternal strength to protect and care for their children. In addition, it is interesting to note that with the beginning of the formal Nazi military campaign in 1939, the number of children being presented in the covers increases dramatically from one to three. Once again, this does not seem extremely surprising, as the Reich will now need more children to service both the needs of the State and to populate that State’s soon to increase territories. (3) In considering that both of these covers were presented to the German public relatively early in the National Socialist era, we are confronted with German cultural sensibilities that are more traditional in nature. While one can certainly gleam nuances of a political agenda yet to
come (in that motherhood is rising in terms of its political importance), here, the National Socialists are more concerned with the fundamental task of first politicizing the traditional, only later to reinvent that traditional within the context of the unfolding of the Third Reich. (4) Hints at the negative (racial) aspects of the Lebensraum policy are being offered in both of these photographs, as racially pure, Aryan Germans are being presented as the most ideal and hence, most desirable members of the Nazi State. In addition, the allusion made to the desirability attached to having increased numbers of children seems to suggest that the Nazis are planting the seed for future population policies (Lebensborn) yet to be revealed. (5) Ultimately, the desired policy effect of such images is one of complete and total political participation for all members of the chosen race, with women being called to fulfill their duties of wife, mother, and child bearer joyfully, all for the good and benefit of the Reich.

(5)

Title: “The Fueher Speaks,”
by Paul Padua

Propaganda Type: Painting

Dated: 1939

Source: Permission for Reproduction obtained from Dr. Randy Bytwerk, Nazi Propaganda Website, Department of History, Calvin College
(1) In this painting, one sees an extended family listening to a speech being given by their Fueher, courtesy of the Deutsche Rundfunk. Of interest is the rather attentive attitude attributed to the prepubescent child of the family, who sits surrounded by his or her sleepy and/or unaffected grandfather, mother, younger sibling, father and perhaps, older brother or uncle. In addition, the spartan accessories of the room, coupled with the rather simple clothing (shoeless uncle or older brother) of the family, seem to suggest a family who most likely belongs to either the working or lower classes. This idea seems to be further substantiated by the details attributed to the Fueher’s picture, as it is unframed and loosely tacked to the wall with nothing but a nail or two. (2) One political message being conveyed by this painting would seem to be that the German mother must now begin to play a central role within the family, as she is strikingly located within the center of the painting. In addition, young Germans in particular must be in tune with the words and wishes of the Fueher, as they will be the future of the Reich. Building further upon this idea of the promise and possibilities inherent in youth, one might deduce that for those young people who listen to the Fueher, there will certainly be a new life to come, one in which the tattered wall hangings and substandard accessories of working class living will become a thing of the past within the context of the new, National Socialist Germany. (3) The shared German cultural sensibilities being highlighted in this painting clearly speak to both the economic distress and the hopeful desire for political and social change that existed in Germany following the Versailles Treaty and the failure of the Weimar Republic. In addition, the presentation of the youth as the assurance of future German success seems to play a prominent role. (4) As it is quite early in the war, notions pertaining to the “spatial” element of Lebensraum are not being directly addressed, but
the detailing of desirable racial characteristics are well noted, as all of the family members, with the exception of the downtrodden and shoeless older brother/uncle are blond, fair, and Nordic in their appearances. (5) While this painting’s desired effect upon German women is certainly subjective, it can be surmised that women are being affirmed in their traditional roles as mothers and caretakers, while they are simultaneously being assured that better and brighter days are yet to come, provided that they continue to produce the children necessary for bringing those days into existence.

(1) In this Nazi County Rally poster dated 1941, we encounter a woman in the poster’s foreground, as she tills the land with plow in hand, gazing hopefully upward towards the image’s background, where an image of a Wehrmacht soldier fighting with his bayonet in hand is being presented. In addition, a third dimension is also apparent in this poster,
wherein the German eagle soars above both the woman in the foreground and the soldier in the background, firmly holding a golden branch of peace and success within his talons.

(2) The specific issues and political messages being conveyed in this poster speak to the critical role of German women, as they were the keepers of domestic stability and productivity during a time of war in which men had to remain absent from the homefront because of their specific military duties. This idea of politically vital and socially significant female productivity and participation is further strengthened by the visual line that seems to run between the woman with her plow, the soldier with his bayonet, and the eagle with its golden branch. Here, one certainly gets the sense that in order for the German State to succeed fully in its desired aims of global conquest, each level within German society must do its respective part, with the stability of each of these levels being heavily dependent upon the full complicity of the layer situated beneath it. (3-4) In terms of the uniquely German cultural sensibilities being conveyed, we once again become acquainted with the connection existing between the German soil, the female body, the German future, and a subsequent racially based sense of entitlement to Lebensraum.

(5) Knowing what we now do regarding both Nazi policy aims and distinctly German female values, it seems that the desired effect of this poster was to encourage women to fulfill their traditional role of noble peasant/agriculturist for a new and powerfully important purpose. Thanks to the policy aims of the Third Reich, this purpose would now move itself beyond its original and relatively neutral function into the vastly important and politicized realm of supporting the male-dominated military that would ultimately be responsible for the creation of a new and ever-enlarging German nation.
(1) In this periodical cover, the dominant image located in the foreground is that of a group of cheerful and exuberant, young, adolescent German girls, who are sitting close to one another, as if they are posing for a team photo. All of the girls are dressed in white tank tops that are marked with a similar logo, most likely indicating that they are part of either a sports team or a special sporting club. Interestingly, all of these girls are seated, thereby concealing most of their pubescent bodies that are rather sparsely clad. In the background, the faces and upper torsos of two, adolescent Soviet boys can be seen, looming above the images of the German girls located in the cover’s foreground. These two boys are cast in a shadowy and darkened haze, and their visages seem to indicate sickness, hunger, anger, and even a hint of lust directed towards the bodies of the German girls. Overlaying both the background and foreground images is a small, postage stamp style box, in which the translated text reads, “Weary and ruined faces characterize the neglected children of the Soviet State. Cheerful and healthy on the other hand the youth of greater Germany are participating in sports festivals everywhere in the country.”

(2) In terms of the political message being conveyed by this cover, one quickly notices that the
propagandist is seeking to idealize the youth policies of the Third Reich by juxtaposing the foreground image of the young German girls with a morally degrading picture of the Soviet boys/enemy. Clearly, here, the National Socialist cause is presented as a positive and socially conscious political movement that wants only the best for its young people and their futures, whereas the Soviet Union exists as a nation that deprives its youth of health, opportunity, and the freedom to excel. In addition, the purposeful placement of the background image as it is located above the bodies of the young, German girls would seem to indicate that the Soviet enemy, even in its youngest ranks, wishes to prey upon the well-being and even the bodies of German women. This idea is further supported when one considers the menacing facial expressions of the young, Soviet boys.

Ultimately, the enemy is a dangerous and predatory force in this photo, one for whom the destruction of Germany purity is of the utmost importance. (3) The cultural sensibilities being highlighted speak to the valuing of youth, health, and youth culture, as such concepts will be those that will secure for Nazi Germany a long and prosperous future. In addition, the desire to protect and guard the chastity of young German women, as they are the keepers of the pure Aryan race is also being addressed. (4) Certainly, issues relating to race are addressed, as that which is desirable is attributed to light and Aryan racial characteristics, whereas the darkened and sallow faces of the enemy are portrayed in a negative and menacing way. In addition, in so far as matters pertaining to sexual purity are also being highlighted, one might surmise that a general warning against racial intermixing is being communicated, especially in the face of the enemy that is looming not so far behind (and in this case, above). (5) Published and circulated in 1941, the desired effect of this cover can be assumed to be the creation of a sustainable sense of
victory, triumph, and progress for Nazi Germany and its female members, when compared to the somewhat dismal and deserved fate attributable to the Soviet enemy. This message also carries with it a word of caution, as German women are being encouraged to protect themselves and their racial purity from the tainted and evil hands of the enemy. In 1941, Germany was certainly in the full swing of the war and its military successes. Consequently, it became critically important for the National Socialists to present an image of certain and deserved victory to its citizens, but always with a word of caution to the reality of the enemy threat.

(8)

Text Reads: “Bringing their full enthusiasm and fresh strength of youth, our Labor Service girls are serving in the regained German territory in the East”

Propaganda Type: Das Deutsche Maedel Cover (The Nazi Party’s monthly illustrated magazine for German girls in the Hitler Youth organization)

Dated: May 1942

Source: Permission for Reproduction obtained from Dr. Randy Bytwerk, Nazi Propaganda Website, Department of History, Calvin College

(1) In this Deutsche Maedel cover, the dominate images located in the foreground consist of three, teen-aged, German women who are dressed in work clothes, all with agricultural tools in hand. Their faces are happy, healthy, and full of youthful vigor, as they walk arm in arm, onwards towards the task at hand. In the background of the cover, a single tree stands in isolation, purposefully placed along a barren and desolate landscape. Superimposed upon both the background and the foreground of the cover, we once again can note the presence of a small textblock, containing the image’s caption, “Bringing
their full enthusiasm and fresh strength of youth, our Labor Service girls are serving in
the regained German territory in the East.” (2) In this cover, the primary political
message being highlighted seems to be the call for all Germans to do their part in service
to the Fatherland, regardless of their age or their sex. To engage in the fulfillment of
such roles, is to be assured a life filled with joy, purpose, camaraderie, forward
momentum, and the promise of a bright and exciting future. In addition, a more subtle
message being conveyed in this cover seems to speak to the vastness of the territories to
be acquired by the Reich and the importance of domesticating and making fertile such
territories once they are securely conquered. Finally, this visual image also seems to
speak to deeper issues of culturally based entitlement premised upon resentment linked to
the perceived mistreatment that the Germans had received under the terms of the
Versailles treaty, with this concept being supported by the particular wording of the
caption’s text (i.e. “the regained German territory in the East”). (3) The specifically
German cultural sensibilities that are being highlighted herein deal with both the political
role that was assigned to young German women living within the Third Reich and the
culture of resentment that sought to justify Germany “regaining its territory in the East”
through vigorous military conquests, State-sponsored work-corps programs, and even the
unspoken element of ethnic cleansing. (4) Both the negative and positive elements of the
Lebensraum policy are being addressed, as it is young Aryans who now are able to make
good use of the Eastern territories gained through previously undertaken military battles
and acts of ethnic cleansing. Certainly, the sum total of Nazi policies pertaining to race
and space are being presented, along with a positive sense of what it means to be a young
German woman living in the Third Reich. (5) According to this cover, when such a
young woman willingly chooses to participate in the ideology and policies of the National Socialists, she can be safely assured a place of political importance, personal happiness, and material security within both the existing Germany and the Germany of the future.

(1) This series of photographs was taken from a monthly magazine that sought to highlight both the positive and negative aspects of Nazi racial ideology. Within this grouping of images, the viewer is most generally presented with a visual listing of criteria that speak to the constituent elements of racial purity, as that purity was defined within the National Socialist context. More specifically, the four photographs seem to be divided into an upper and lower half, with the upper two photographs showing two older, adolescent girls in comparison to two younger girls positioned in the lower half of the image. In further comparing the upper and lower images, the two, older girls located in the top photographs seem to be much more exuberant (left-most, upper photo) and more

(9)

Text Reads: “As long as the German people has racially valuable children, its future is assured.”

Propaganda Type: Taken from _Volk und Rasse_ (A monthly Nazi magazine)

Dated: June 1942 issue

Source: Permission for Reproduction obtained from Dr. Randy Bytwerk, Nazi Propaganda Website, Department of History, Calvin College
knowledgeable (right-most, upper photo) than the younger girls being depicted in the pictures beneath them, with these younger girls barely possessing any affect at all. (2) The purposeful display of the four photographs mentioned above seems to suggest that opportunities for engaging in meaningful political participation and acquiring political knowledge increase with age and bring with them a heightened sense of excitement, maturity, and even wisdom, in comparison to what younger German girls can expect. (3) The specific German cultural sensibilities being highlighted here deal with matters of Aryan racial superiority and the value placed upon being female, in so far as that female is old enough to take part in the aims of the National Socialist State. (4) After taking the images and text in sum, it becomes quite clear that both the negative (Race) and positive (space) aspects of the Lebensraum policy are being addressed by this set of photographs. This fact becomes even more clear when viewing these images in conjunction with the attached text (please see above translation), as the text alludes to what is promised to those members of the German people who belong to the group predefined as the master race. (5) The desired effect of this piece of Nazi propaganda could certainly be viewed as being both educational and encouraging in nature, in that it makes clear that all those who possess Aryan racial characteristics in adulthood will be promised a happy and secure future within the National Socialist Reich. In addition, this promise of hope and safety, as it was attached to the adult, German, female identity, seems to be even more charged when further considering that the year of publication for this image was 1942, the year that marked the beginning of the end of consistent German military successes. In this way, it becomes even clearer why German women, both young and old alike, needed an extra dose of reassurance from the guiding hand of the
Nazi State, while that State itself also needed an extra dose of supportive participation from all of its female members.

(1) In this periodical cover, women are no longer preoccupied with children and motherhood, but rather they are engaged in manual labor, with the dominant image herein being that of an older, mature, and somewhat tired looking German woman, who is working steadfastly at her sewing machine, intently concentrating on the task at hand. The image itself is rather blurred and smoky, with a shadowy light coming into the image from the lower right hand corner of the photograph. These two elements, namely, the poor image quality and the selective filtering of light, seem to add a sense of bare minimum material conditions being the norm rather than the exception during these dark days of total war. This idea is further supported by the propagandist’s decision to employ a stark, one dimensional, black and white photograph, as opposed to some of the colorful and layered images that we have previously encountered. The caption of the photograph reads, “German women always know that it is a matter of existence or nonexistence of
their people. Total war is the demand of the hour. Everybody help!” When translated from the German, this statement ends with an imperative, thereby emphasizing that total German participation in the ongoing war effort is not a mere suggestion, but rather, it is a command from the State. (2) The political message of this image, especially when viewed in conjunction with the text, speaks to three political issues in particular: Namely, the Nazi State’s dependence upon total German participation in the war effort and in this case, especially German female participation, as women were politically knowledgeable and also available members of the Third Reich; the ultimate future of the German race being contingent upon this total participation; and the necessity of all Germans being willing to sacrifice their personal and material comforts for the survival of the Nazi State. (3) The German cultural sensibilities being highlighted here address the reinvention of female roles and duties that had taken place by 1943 and the importance placed upon self-sacrifice when undertaken for the well-being of the Nation as a whole. (4) As 1943 represents a turning point for the worse in terms of previous German military successes, the Lebensraum policy remains in the shadows of this photographic cover, as the very existence of the German people now begins to come into question. (5) Clearly, the desired effect of this cover upon German women could certainly be viewed as a call for complete political participation in the efforts of the Reich, as these women are being reminded that without such participation, there might very well be no future Reich for them to consider.
(1) In the final *Deutsche Maedel* cover to be analyzed, it is not difficult to note a dramatic shift in mood from the youthful frivolity that was contained in the previously presented covers. Here, a noticeably serious and somewhat stern presentation of political commitment is being displayed, with the dominant image in the foreground portraying a group of pre-pubescent German girls, who are diligently working on tasks that require fine motor skills and very small hands. While it is unclear from the photograph what exactly this task is, it has been well recorded that during the final days of the war, young children were used in the making of various military items, as their small hands could accomplish tasks that were too cumbersome for adults. All four of the girls being portrayed in this cover are wearing the uniform of the Hitler youth organization for young women, and they appear to be working in an organized and formal setting, leading one to believe that this group has most likely been pulled together under the advisement and supervision of adults. In the background of the cover, one can distinctly note the face of a Wehrmacht soldier, who seems to be proudly looking on, over and above the handiwork.
of the young girls. Further in the background, behind the representation of the soldier, one can detect a series of light flashes and sparks, all of which are most likely placed there to indicate the presence of the now explosive Eastern Front, as it was the winter of 1943. (2) The political messages being conveyed in this cover speak to the idea that all Germans, be they old, young, male, or female, must participate and support the war effort, if they indeed wish for the Third Reich to exist in the future. Once again, we are confronted with the juxtaposition of the typical male and female roles, with each being politically valuable in its own right. As the war drags on and greater tolls are to be paid, it becomes not only the responsibility of German women to become and remain politically active, but it is now also a call to which young German woman are expected to respond. Finally, in the line existing between young/female, older/male, and bombs/heavens, we encounter a sequential message that speaks to the causality of current events. In other words, if all Germans, including young women, do their part to support the soldiers fighting on the Eastern Front, then the bomb-ridden skies will eventually become peaceful once again, as they wrap themselves safely around the pure and perfect German Nation. (3) As was the case with the previously presented Frauen Warte covers, the specifically German cultural sensibilities being drawn upon here deal with matters pertaining to the newly constructed National Socialist sense of female political participation, along with ideas that seek to promote the importance of German militarism, especially during these final and most dire days of the war. (4) Once again, here we see how the Lebensraum policy loses some of its immediate appeal, as by 1943-1944, the German people were more concerned with saving the German lives that already existed, rather than expending their energy to create additional German bodies that must also be
protected from the enemy threat. (5) In this cover, the National Socialists are once again seeking to achieve the desired policy effect of distinctly male or female political participation, premised upon the gender role that one is assigned, with all of these roles being directed towards achieving the betterment, security, and continued existence of the Third Reich.

(1) In this final magazine cover, we are presented with an overall image premised upon the juxtaposition of the homefront with the Eastern Front. Here, the promises of a safe and secure future are clearly premised upon the successes achieved on the battlefield, while the successes achieved on the battlefield are simultaneously reinforced by the support that the Wehrmacht soldiers receive from those individuals and family members living at home. On the left side of the cover, the dominant image is that of a German family who is celebrating the “Winter Solstice” season in the comfort and safety of their warm and brightly lit home. It is worth mentioning here that the National Socialists did not officially celebrate any of the Christian holidays, as they were opposed to the practice
of organized religion as a whole. Rather, the Nazis sought to replace such events with pre-Christian celebrations that occurred during similar times of the year, thereby satiating the cultural “need” with an event that they found to be much less threatening to the stability of the State. Returning to the cover, both the mother and the father of this family, along with their two young children, appear to be well dressed, with their faces radiating the peacefulness and serenity of the season. In addition, the portrayal of this family around their newborn’s cradle seems to be suggestive of a modern nativity scene, in which the family is protected by the heavens, thanks to their selection as God’s “chosen race.” Moving onto the right side of the magazine cover, the side that seeks to depict the Eastern Front, the pine tree is covered in ice and snow, as opposed to the candle-lit “Christmas” tree mirroring it on the left side of the cover. Here, two young, German soldiers attempt to light a fire in order to keep themselves warm against the frigid Russian winds. While it is a bit difficult to ascertain exactly from where the soldiers have received this candle, it seems as if the artist wishes for us to believe that both the candle and its light have come from the pine tree and the glowing, golden fire belonging to the family being displayed on the left. (2) As was mentioned before, the political message being conveyed in this cover certainly speaks to the interrelationship existing between the homefront and the battlefield, as each side of this equation does much to affirm and confirm the existence of the other. In addition, as this cover was published during a very bleak period of the war, a period when the loses sustained by Germany were quickly accumulating, the propagandists certainly felt it to be their duty to muster support for the troops who were continuing the fight needed to protect the very lives of the German people. Ultimately, in this cover, we are once again being
confronted with a last ditch attempt by the Nazi State to gather support for the war effort, by simultaneously reminding the German people that their very lives were at stake, should continued victories be granted to the enemy cause. (3) In this cover, we see a somewhat surprising return to more traditional, German cultural sensibilities, as great emphasis is being placed upon family, male military service, and even, to a certain degree, the value inherent in the Christian faith. In considering that these were some of the darkest days of Hitler’s total war, this is perhaps not as great of a surprise as it might initially appear to be. For in the end, when people feel that their lives are in danger and the future remains uncertain, there is much to be said for the comfort that can be found in that which is old, comfortable, and familiar, even when this familiarity seems to contradict the ideology of the “revolution.” (4) Building further upon these ideas relating to fear and a reprioritization of what is deemed to be important under the heavy hand of war, the Lebensraum policy, in both its positive and negative aspects, seems to be quite absent from this cover, as issues pertaining to actual physical survival seem to take precedence. (5) In this cover, the message being conveyed to German women seems to be that if these women wish to keep their way of life safe and secure from threat, than it is imperative that they support the war effort in whatever way is being asked of them, regardless if that way be more traditional or more political in nature.
(1) In this street placard, the viewer is confronted with an overall image that conveys a sense of instinctive and extreme action undertaken during a time of powerful political urgency. Here, with the dark threat of enemy attack looming in the background, in the poster’s foreground, we become acquainted with a wild eyed mother who is pushing onward with her brood, facing into the wind of an uncertain and perhaps, even frightening future. All of the children, with the exception of the youngest boy who is planted firmly on his mother’s hip, appear to be rather stoic and unafraid, even in the face of the unknown. In the third dimension of this poster, the viewer is confronted with an imperative printed in red (as it is translated from the German), thereby commanding all German mothers now to fight for their children. Here, there are neither men nor any technical implements of war present, and mothers are being told to use the only weapon that still remains available to them, namely, their primal, maternal instincts.

(2) Published during the closing years of the war, the specific political message being conveyed by this poster is the call for all German women to become warriors employed in the cause of protecting the well being of their children and ultimately, the future of the
Nazi State, along with the German race as a whole. While the youngest children might be fearful, the older Germans remain assured and combative, thereby attesting to the fact that all Germans beyond the age of three or four are being expected to do their part to save the Reich during its final hours. (3) In this image, we encounter the fully altered German cultural sensibility towards women and mothers, as now, such roles have been completely taken out of their previous domestic domains and placed within a highly politicized, if not militarized framework. One can, however, note a rather surprising and functionally driven reliance on particular aspects of the outdated, traditional framework, in that mothers are now being encouraged to draw upon their closeted maternal instincts that had since been placed in the cultural background, during the “Golden Years” of the Nazi regime. (4) As the very survival of the German people is now being called into question, the Lebensraum policy seems to be placed on the back burner for the moment, pending the resolution of concerns relating to matters of life and death. (5) Clearly, the desired effect of this poster on German women can be noted as the demand for total German participation during the final hours of the war. Without each and every German hand carrying its specific portion of the military load, the German State will most certainly meet its demise at the hands of the allied enemy.

IV. CONCLUSIONS REGARDING PROPAGANDA:

Having presented these examples of National Socialist visual propaganda, I will now offer a series of generalized conclusions regarding them, with these examples being selected because they were felt to be excellent representations of particular motifs and policies that can be found to repeat themselves within the more general body of Nazi
propaganda. Because this study involves the qualitative examination of materials that could be most appropriately defined as socially archival in nature, variables must be operationally defined in descriptive, rather than quantitative terms. In such a situation, classifying variables as strictly “Independent” or “Dependent” can become problematic. In response to this, however, a continuum showing the progression from causative elements to end results can be created and utilized for analytical purposes. In the case of this study, such a sequence might seek to examine the given variables in the following way:

(1) The historical and socio-cultural roots of a distinctly Germanic worldview coupled with a unique historical moment allowed for the creation and articulation of National Socialism’s Lebensraum policy

(2) Particular aspects of this policy (in this case, the establishment of Germans as the master race, the creation and extermination of a definable “Other,” and the subsequent proliferation of the German race into the newly acquired territories), as they were informed by items of a shared German cultural consciousness, were aimed specifically at German women

(3) One method used to disseminated these aims to German women was through the use of visual propaganda

(4a) The willing consumption of this propaganda by German women allowed the Nazi regime to accomplish particular aspects of their Lebensraum policies with varying degrees of success.

(4b) Quite importantly, this also allowed German women to participate in an endeavor that appeared highly desirable, politically rich, and eventually, even moral to them.
Now, with this “variable” continuum in place, let us return to the process of creating a series of generalized conclusions from the specific details contained within the propaganda samples that were presented in the previous section. In summary, three particular aspects begin to emerge when evaluating these selected pieces of visual propaganda as they exist in relationship with one another. For our present purposes, these three aspects will be referred to as “political motifs,” “parallel socialization and education,” and “policy progression.” These three aspects also work well when attempting to answer larger questions related to understanding the role and function of political propaganda and the “How’s” and “Why’s” of the Holocaust.

In addressing the issue of political motifs, one can note a pervasive recycling of a particular constellations of images: Namely, (1) the creation of a hierarchy of importance in regard to gender specified political duties; (2) the newly emergent politicization of motherhood and female domestic activities within the National Socialist context; (3) the value inherent in youth and children, as these identities were extremely vital to the well-being of the Nazi State; and (4) the highlighting of the positive (space) and/or negative (race) aspects of the Lebensraum policy, thereby conveying a sense of genetic superiority and racially based entitlement to the newly acquired territories.

Regarding theme #1, posters #2 (1937), #6 (1941), and #11(1943) each display a hierarchy of importance regarding gender specific duties that are to be performed in service to the Nazi State. In each of these three posters, the female/elderly duties are clearly being performed in order to offer support to the work of the young, male soldier, who in turn, through his various military activities, is most intimately connected with protecting and enlarging the actual physical territory of the Third Reich. As is the case in
any hierarchy, each level is vital to the existence of the level that rests upon it, and the
total sum of all parts of the hierarchy could not exist in its finalized form without the
presence of each and every component piece. It is also interesting to note that this
hierarchical motif appears consistently throughout the years of the Third Reich, and for
the most part, it undergoes little if any change in spite of the passage of political and
chronological time.

Regarding motif #2, one can also note its appearance throughout the course of the
Nazi years, with examples of it being found in posters #1, #3, #5, #6, #9, #10, #11, and
#13. With this rich variety of propaganda pieces that speak well to the newly emergent
 politicization of motherhood and female domestic activities within the National Socialist
context, one can see how a particular motif, while recurring, can nevertheless alter itself
over time. This concept of “policy progression” will be further addressed in the
following pages, but for now, it is simply of importance to note that the motifs of
motherhood and female activity continue to reappear throughout the time span of all
propaganda samples that were examined.

The motif wherein youth and children are highlighted as identities that are
particularly valuable for the well being of the State is clearly evidenced in posters #5
(1939), #7 (1941), #8 (1942), and #9 (1942). It is rather interesting to note that the bulk
of posters that find themselves concerned with this specific political motif occur during
the early to middle years of the war, a time in which the national mood of Germany was
triumphant and hopeful. In later years, as the war dragged on and greater losses were
incurred on the Eastern Front, youth continues to be a part of Nazi propaganda, but now
only in so far as it can be utilized as merely another “group of available hands” necessary for accomplishing the task at hand (as is the case in poster #11).

In terms of the final political motif relating to the Lebensraum policy (#4), the years of publication for the selected propaganda pieces play a particularly critical role. In poster #1 (early 1930’s) through #5 (1939), only matters pertaining to the theme of race are being addressed. In poster #6 (1941) through #9 (1942), both race and space play critical roles in the images being displayed. During the final years of the war, i.e. 1943-1945, Lebensraum, as a particular policy in and of itself, is simply not discussed, as life and death issues take on greater importance, as the costs of war accumulate and German success comes into serious question.

Now, turning to the aspect of “parallel socialization and education,” it becomes strikingly obvious that the recycled themes referred to in the previous paragraphs are being targeted at both young and adult German women alike, with each of these respective audiences receiving a slightly different version of the same theme based upon their respective ages. For example, in comparing poster #11 with posters #2 and #6, we come to see how both young women and adult women are being encouraged to do their distinctly female parts for the war effort, while men are being encouraged to do the same. Building further on this idea of complete female participation, when evaluating poster #10 with poster #11, we once again come to see how both young and mature German women are being supported by the State in their desire to participate in the ongoing efforts of the National Socialist movement. While poster #8 presents a slightly more cheerful representation of what that support should look like, both #8 and #11 are
ultimately being directed towards the similar goal of encouraging German women to take part in the building of a Nazi State.

This aspect of parallel socialization and education melds quite nicely with the previously presented statements taken from Goebbels regarding the role that propaganda could and should play in regard to acculturating the German youth. Briefly, to reiterate, for Goebbels, propaganda existed as a cementing force to be used in the process of State-building, in that it offered the State the opportunity to mold young minds to the State’s specific ends during the course of their most formidable years. In addition, Goebbels also believed that by uniting the dual forces of propaganda and education (Goebbels 2, 5), the National Socialists would stand in an excellent position to create a unique relationship between themselves and the German people, a relationship in which a “…type of modern democracy” would emerge that would become “… the model for the entire world in the twentieth century” (Goebbels 5).

While the National Socialists were certainly not successful in creating a lasting model for democracy in the modern era, they were definitely adept in their ability to build a State through a specialized process of reeducation that followed German citizens from the cradle to the grave. In addition, when considering that the parents of the children in question were raised during a very different socio-cultural era, it is quite amazing what the National Socialists were able to accomplish in such a relatively short period of time, thanks to a vastly coordinated web of propaganda and formalized educational programming. In many ways, the relationship existing between State-sponsored propaganda and German youth living under the Nazi regime holds a great many clues as to how propaganda can become most effectively applied during periods of extreme
social, cultural, and political revolution. While using propaganda to reeducate is certainly not a new concept, the speed at which the National Socialists were able to accomplish their particular brand of reeducation is certainly worthy of deeper examination. Based on the information gleaned from the propaganda samples that were mentioned above, it would seem that parallel socialization and education are particularly powerful mechanisms to be applied in propelling the speed of this State-building process.

Finally, “policy progression” means that when evaluating the selected images across time, one can note how a particular policy continuum begins to take shape, as the Nazi propagandists were working in conjunction with the population of German women in order to create a newly emergent German female political consciousness. By first drawing upon traditional notions held by German women regarding motherhood and female domestic duties during the early Nazi years, the National Socialists, in collaboration and conversation with German women, were later able continually to tweak such ideas in order to accomplish particular aspects of their emergent Lebensraum policy, as those aspects dealt specifically with German women. When evaluated in conjunction with the previously presented statements from Goebbels regarding the systemization of propaganda, such a process becomes particularly interesting, as the Nazi propagandists can be noted as being particularly in touch with the ever changing political sensibilities and living conditions of German women.

In order to make this powerful point a bit more clear, it is perhaps helpful to engage in a more detailed analysis, seeking to place specific propaganda examples along a policy timeline, based upon their respective years of dissemination. In the early years of the Third Reich (1930-1939), one can see how a more traditional German worldview
took precedence, with motherhood and female activity looking very much as they had in the years prior to the Nazi takeover. In posters #1, #2, #3, #4, and #5, motherhood and female domestic activity appear to be rather non-political in nature, but yet with slight nuances pointing towards a shift yet to be revealed. This shift is perhaps best detected in posters #1 through #3, as here, one can note a hint of stoicism and seriousness regarding the duties of the motherhood, as such duties will soon become more political and less maternal/sentimental in nature. This foreshadowing is further evidenced in posters #2 and #6 where traditionally female duties are put on par with the work of men vis-à-vis a visual juxtaposition. Here, once again, while the images being conveyed are still overwhelmingly traditional in nature, there are suggestions that an upcoming change therein is fast on the horizon.

Moving onto the middle years of the Third Reich (1940-1942), the female domains of motherhood and domestic work have now become fully politicized in a dramatically positive way. In posters #6, #7, and #8, we become well acquainted with the triumphant effects of what the German female political effort can accomplish for the betterment of the Reich. In addition, in poster #9, we see how membership in the Aryan race brings with it a sense of hopeful certainty when addressing issues of the future stability and security of the German people and the National Socialist State. Ultimately, during the middle years of the Reich, German women can be noted as having become quite comfortable with their newly acquired political prowess, enjoying the opportunities that such a stature affords to both themselves and to the German State at large.

By the end of the war years (1943-1945), during and following the decimation of German forces at Stalingrad, the previously achieved politicizing of motherhood and
female domestic duties now seems to take on a direly serious tone, as survival takes precedence over the previous preoccupation with racial propagation. In posters #10, 11, #12, and #13, we come to see how German mothers and young German women must now become female warriors, fighting to protect their young, their men, and ultimately, their very way of life. It is interesting to note, once again, how parallel socialization is still taking place, even at the end of the war, as is the case with posters #10 and #11. In these two posters, both young girls and older women are being supported in their efforts to save the Third Reich from extinction during its final days. Also of interest in posters #10 through #13, one can note a slight return to more traditional motifs, in an effort to seek comfort and stability during a time of complete social and political upheaval.

Clearly, after examining these conclusions in light of the new intentionalist framework, it would appear that there is much knowledge to be gained in terms of developing a deeper and richer understanding of the Nazi Holocaust. According to what can be deduced from the policy progression that is readily observable within the given propaganda samples, the Holocaust and the particular role that German women played in its unfolding, was not something that existed only within the mind of the Nazi State, later to be pounded into the heads of its citizens through methods of tactical brainwashing and violent coercion. Rather, in its female ranks, the National Socialist regime had found a group of willing conversational partners who were ready to consume the political messages of the day, as these messages were made available to them bit by bit, through the passage of political time.

This act of consumption most certainly spoke to a set of needs and desires within the hearts and minds of German women, as these women sought to become politically
potent members of the Third Reich, with definitive civic activities that would be viewed on par with the duties ascribed to their male peers. These needs and desires housed in the inner psyches of German women living in the National Socialist State were certainly not created in their entirety when the Nazis officially assumed power in 1933. Rather, in much the same way as the State itself developed its political goals over time, so too did German women engage in a similar process, constantly tweaking their aspirations in response to their own ever changing worldviews, with these worldviews being consistently altered by the shifting needs and goals of the State itself.

When evaluating all of these conclusions in sum, it becomes even clearer what Goebbels meant when he made the following statement:

It (propaganda) is also a function of the modern state…It rises from the depths of the people, and must always return to the people to find its roots and strength. It may be good to have power based on weapons. It is better and longer lasting, however, to win and hold the heart of a nation (Goebbels 8).

Clearly, the heart of the German nation had been made strong by the propaganda of the Third Reich. In turn, that Reich had been made strong by the political conversation that it had shared with the people of the German nation.

V. STUDY LIMITATIONS:

As in any academic inquiry, there have certainly been particular limitations to my research. One critical issue was the limited amount of available Nazi visual propaganda directed specifically towards German women. While I did make use of the bulk of such examples contained within Dr. Bytwerk’s website, one does not know how much
propaganda exists beyond these particular images. Perhaps, there are indeed more telling and informative examples than those that have been selected for this particular analysis. As is the case in the study of any grouping of social artifacts, time often acts as a constraining factor, for through the years, certain items are lost, destroyed, and disregarded. Those items that have been saved and archived are not necessarily the only pieces of a collective past nor are they necessarily the most representative examples; instead, they are simply what we have left from a historical moment now gone, and so, at the risk of sounding trite, we must make due with that which is available to us at the given time.

In addition to this issue, I also encountered a variety of ethical considerations in evaluating the sources of the existing data. In my search for propaganda examples, I discovered that much of the available Nazi propaganda is currently housed on Neo-Nazi websites. While I certainly did encounter many rich propaganda examples for purchase on such sites, I made the decision not to buy these items for fear of financially supporting the cause of a contemporary hate group. Some might advance the argument that because such items would ultimately be purchased in order to understand better the nature of genocide and hate-based racial movements, thereby making the purchase acceptable, I fundamentally disagree. I remain of the opinion that the ideas set forth in this thesis were solidly substantiated by the propaganda examples that I was able to obtain from ethical sources alone, without augmentation from such aforementioned problematic sites.

Another limitation to this study was the lack of opportunities for first-hand ethnographic analysis, as I did not possess either the funding or the time to travel to Germany to conduct interviews, thereby forcing me to rely solely on secondary source
accounts. Although I have attempted to do as thorough a job as possible in searching for and selecting objective and scholarly sources, one must consider the fact that this study would have been greatly enhanced by direct participant oriented interviews and fieldwork. It is my hope that if the opportunity for future research on this subject ever presents itself to me again, that I will be able, at that time, to employ a more ethnographically oriented methodology.

One final limitation of this thesis was my decision not to include cross-cultural and/or cross-historical examples of similar propaganda forms and motifs. While I felt that my thesis was firmly and fully supported by employing a strictly rich, yet non-comparative approach, there does exist the possibility that my conclusions might have been strengthened by making use of additional propaganda samples that contain constituent elements that are similar to those found within the Nazi posters. What I gained in depth, I may have lost in breadth, and consequently, this limitation might be a point to be considered if the opportunity for future study ever arises.

VI. POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC POLICY:

Throughout the course of this thesis, I have attempted to show the ways in which both Holocaust and propaganda studies might benefit from the new intentionalist approach, as I have defined and applied it here. In viewing the given propaganda samples in light of what we know to be true regarding the National Socialists’ policy aims, the socio-political and cultural aspirations of German women, and the actual historical events of the war years, it can be seen how the visual images contained in the included body of propaganda can be interpreted as speaking both to the needs of the Nazi State and to the
aspirations of German women. While we will never know for certain what German women actually felt or understood when viewing these images at the time, we do know some of the political, social, and cultural issues that preoccupied these women, thanks to the verifiable historical record, with relevant portions of that record having been detailed in the background section of this thesis. It is consequent to our knowledge of this particular set of issues, that we might very well read the propaganda samples as if we were German women of the time, thereby attempting to consume with the same eyes that these women would have used during their own respective historical readings of the visual texts. By engaging in this speculative act, it becomes possible to understand how German women of the Nazi era could see not only the aims of the State within the propaganda being presented to them, but also encounter a means of how they too might achieve their own socio-political goals and aspirations.

While this study did not address the explicitly Jewish propaganda that paved the way for the Holocaust, nor could it study obvious “pro-genocide” propaganda, as such propaganda did not exist in the Third Reich, the Nazi manipulation of gender roles and motherhood is suggestive of a larger such effort. In support of this point, let us return briefly to the statement made by Daniel Lerner regarding the uniqueness of the Holocaust. According to Lerner, we can deduce from the swiftness and completeness of the societal change that the Nazis were able to enact, that something in their political message must have spoken well and clearly to the hearts and minds of the German people. Otherwise, how could this swiftness and complicity have occurred exactly as it did, with an end product being one in which each and every layer of German society was affected? While some might argue that this second point is an “after the fact” type of
analysis, wherein the gruesome nature of German complicity is being potentially overemphasized rather than focusing on the relevance of State-sponsored brainwashing and coercive tactics, I disagree. Certainly, there were some Germans who supported the Nazi status quo out of fear, greed, or just sheer apathy. Could this, however, be said with certainty for each and every individual German living under the Nazi regime? In a country that was rich with culture, academic tradition, religiosity, and individuality of every given type, could all German citizens suddenly abandon their previous ways of life simply because of fear, pride, and laziness? Perhaps even more compelling than these questions are those facts that speak to the many layers of German society that had to participate in order for the war and the genocide to unfold as they did. Clearly, people were seeing the realization of their own dreams in the Nazi State, for as the previously presented quote from Richie reminds us, “Hitler did not need to ‘crush Berlin’ into submission; he found a ready audience eager to listen and to give him their votes” (Richie 363).

With these points relating to the two-pronged nature of the new intentionalist method now more clearly defined, it is possible to begin to address the larger questions related to the applicability of this method to the broader domains of public policy and political propaganda usage. While the Holocaust was not necessarily unique in all of its facets, it was certainly an extreme example of one particular variant of genocide, a variant in which both the State and its citizens had a shared stake in the perpetuation of ethnic cleansing. As was stated by Claudia Koonz, “The Nazi revival of motherhood, like other aspects of Nazi social policy, carried to the grotesque, extreme plans that other nations advanced only timidly” (Koonz 177). There is much to be found in the “extreme”
nature of National Socialism that can be used to understand better the subtle variants of contemporary genocide and the potential policy solutions that aim to deal with those variants in their specific details.

In light of the conclusions of this thesis, it would seem that the use of the term “extreme” in reference to the Holocaust speaks not only to the event’s ghastliness but also to its vastness, requiring active participation of essentially all levels of German society. The analysis of propaganda undertaken here succeeds in revealing how and why the Nazi State and large segments of the German populace had a shared stake in the ultimate political and socio-cultural outcomes of racially based policy making. While there certainly could exist examples of ethnic cleansing in which only one party, either the State or some part of its citizenry, has a genocidal agenda, this thesis speaks directly to the particular variant wherein a connection between the aims of the State and those of the State’s citizenry seems to exist. In this research, it is thanks to the detailed study of propaganda that we are able to draw such conclusions. Now, moving from the realm of historical analysis and into the present, contemporary third parties seeking to intervene in the perpetuation of genocide might make ample use of such conclusions. For by engaging in careful, context driven analysis of propaganda from a given State and/or that State’s populace, it then becomes possible to better determine the actual political source for a desired action of genocide. In making this determination, analysts will then stand in a far more informed position from which they can then tailor their specific policy solutions.

In order to emphasize the dire importance of the correct location of a genocide’s source, we should briefly reflect back to the information presented earlier regarding Post-
World War I Germany. Here, we are confronted with ample evidence of what can happen when international pressure forces make the wrong assumptions regarding the source of problems within a wayward State. As was previously noted, the Allies assumed that the problems with Germany resulted solely from the government of Germany, with none of Germany’s political misbehavior stemming from the goals and aspirations of the discontented German populace. Because of this faulty assumption, pressure was placed heavily upon the observable activities of the State, with little if any direct pressure being aimed at the political activities that were being initiated by ordinary Germans at the grassroots levels. Consequently, while the State remained apparently complaint, its populace was able to further articulate a host of non-compliant political outlooks and aims. When the time was right, however, the German State then found itself to be in a position of political reunion with its citizens, a reunion that was both supported and defined by the visual images of the State’s various propaganda campaigns.

This research suggests, then, that analysts should never dismiss statements from political actors in actual or potential cases of genocide as “mere propaganda.” A careful reading of propaganda may provide important clues about the intellectual, social, and political factors existing behind the pursuit of genocidal efforts. In considering the source or sources of a given State’s political and social discontent, outside pressure forces will then be able to more accurately understand where they should seek to aim their intervention strategies in order to become most effective. If, for example, contextualized propaganda analysis reveals that genocide is being primarily proposed at the suggestion of the State, then certain intervention strategies can be employed that either (1) put pressure on the State to conform to international human rights standards and/or (2) seek
to work with that State in order to accomplish the same political goals without the implementation of genocide. Similar approaches can also be employed in cases where the responsible party seems to be the State’s citizenry, with such instances requiring that the involved third parties work directly with non-compliant populations in order to determine and implement alternative ways of dealing with socio-political problems.

Taking this point a step further, propaganda can then become a means not only by which analysts can hope to better understand the sources for a genocidal threat, but it can also provide international pressure forces with effective political tools to potentially alter how the non-complaint State and/or its population views any interventions that might already be underway. Based on what we know from the application of the two-pronged nature of the new intentionalist approach, however, such intervention could only be expected to succeed if there already existed points similar to those of the intervention internal to the dynamic existing between the State and its citizens. In other words, such intervention points would have to reflect aspirations as deeply grounded in (although not the same as) the types being exploited by supporters of genocide. In order to accomplish this melding of “outside” and “inside” political agendas more successfully, it might be most effective to reach out to the population in question during particularly vulnerable time points. In addition, pressure forces could also consider disseminating their contradictory propaganda to especially “influential” communities (such as hospitals, religious institutions, and socio-cultural community organizations), where it is known that (1) ideological discord with the status quo exists and (2) there is continued and sustainable contact between these institutions and the local citizens, thereby making these institutions sites for sustainable and meaningful contact.
In reflecting more deeply upon this set of potential applications, it seems quite
unfortunate that such lessons must come to us at the expense of so many lives lost and so
much suffering endured. This, however, is the gift and the promise of applied historical
study. For in thoughtfully contemplating the dark moments of our human past, we stand
in a much better position to avoid such recurrences in the present, thereby showing our
willingness to rise above the limitations of our previous circumstances and become the
true moral agents that our humanity calls us to be.
Works Cited


WWW.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa.

WWW.holocaust-history.org.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Email from Dr. Bytwerk