

Between “Germans” and “Jews”

How individuals navigated the language of categorization in Nazi Germany, 1933–1941

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ABSTRACT

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Émilie Duranceau Lapointe

This thesis examines requests for exemption submitted by German citizens, whom the Nazi regime categorized as “Jews” or “Mixed breeds,” between 1933 and 1941. The petitioners’ vocabulary developed alongside Nazi propaganda; they adopted the regime’s definitions of categories, increasingly defining themselves and their fellow German citizens in racial terms. This thesis seeks to understand and explain how the Nazis defined and enforced racial categories; how petitioners responded to the imposed categorization through legal means; how they used the Nazis’ racial categories as tools to assure their survival; and how their use of the state’s rhetoric impacted the Nazis’ system of racial categorization.

Petitioners not only attempted to contest the categories imposed upon them, but they were also able to strategically use the state’s rhetoric to their advantage. Their objectives were not to question or transform the system—over which they had no power—but rather to maneuver within its constraints. However, to engage the state in a dialogue, they had to pretend to adhere to the Nazis’ “Aryan” state and work within its logic. In their attempts to circumvent state-led persecution by resisting and negotiating their status using the state’s rhetoric, the petitioners might have contributed to the crystallization of categories and the system of racial classification, and they might have unintentionally enabled the authorities to redefine the population along certain categorical lines. This sheds light on how categories are created and maintained in an interactive process between “top” and “bottom” and how and why state-imposed categories can gain traction on the ground.

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Introduction

In 1933, following the Nazis' rise to power, Walter Levy experienced discrimination at work and harassment from his neighbors. He believed this was due to his "Jewish" name.¹ Therefore, he requested permission to change it to "König." He saw no reason to bear a "Jewish name," as he, as well as his wife, daughter, and mother were Evangelical Lutheran. While his father had been born Jewish, he later converted to Christianity, and was buried by an Evangelical Lutheran pastor. Most importantly, Levy believed he deserved to bear a "German name," because "[his] family [was] Christian and German,"² and he was more than a German citizen, he was a "German at heart."³

In 1937, Max Boddien petitioned the German authorities for permission to marry his fiancée, Erna Gericke. Following the adoption of the Nuremberg laws of 1935, Boddien had been categorized as a "Mixed breed," while his fiancée was a "German citizen of German blood"; therefore, they were not allowed to marry. He explained that his grandmothers were Jewish, but he was baptized Evangelical Lutheran at the age of five and had no relationship to Judaism. While he might be considered partly "racially Jewish," his family members were German nationalists. In fact, his brother joined the NSDAP in 1930 and was even in the SA.⁴

In October 1939, Emilie Cantor wrote to the police headquarters in Mainz, where she resided, arguing that blood should prevail over religion, and thus her categorization was based on a mistake. She wrote, "My father was of pure Aryan descent and belonged to the Evangelical

¹ Please note that the terms "Jew/Jewish" will be within quotes when referring to a category and without quotes when referring to a self-identification.

² "[...] meine Familie ist christlich und deutsch denkend [...]" Siegfried Levy, "Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge : Levy in König," 1933, 241-1 I_881, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

Please note that I have translated all German-language archival sources.

³ "[...] deutschführender Staatsbürger [...]" Levy, "Bescheide."

⁴ NSDAP—*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*—National Socialist German Workers' Party—also known as the Nazi Party. The SA—*Sturmabteilung*—Storm troopers—was a paramilitary unit of the Nazi party.

Max Boddien and Erna Gericke, "1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von 'Mischlingen' nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen," 1937, 131-6_34 Band 1 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 1, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

religion, while my mother was of Jewish descent but was of the Evangelical denomination.”⁵ She had belonged to the Evangelical religion since birth, and thus, she should have been categorized as a “Mixed breed.” However, her husband, Alfred, was an Evangelical Christian of “Jewish descent,” which made her “Jewish” in the eyes of the law.⁶ She wrote, “Considering that legally-speaking, descent depends on blood, I am not to be considered as a Jewess and should be released from the obligation of getting an identification card.”⁷ Her best chance was not to deny any association with the Jewish religious community but rather to contest the prevalence of religion over blood.

Levy, Boddien, and Cantor were three of thousands of German citizens categorized as “Jews” and “Mixed breeds” who decided to resist Nazi-imposed categorization and its negative consequences through legal means. Their cases, as well as others like theirs, raise a myriad of questions. How did German citizens categorized as “Jews” and “Mixed breeds” respond to the state-imposed categorization through legal means? Which language did they use when in dialogue with the authorities? How did they define “Jewishness,” “Germanness,” and “Aryanness”? More broadly, what do these cases tell us about how individuals maneuver the state’s legal system to counter its categorization? How could they adapt to rapidly changing definitions of the nation to find themselves a space within it? Finally, which role do individuals’ interactions with the state play in the process of categorization?

To answer these questions, I have analyzed requests for exemption submitted by German citizens, whom the Nazi regime categorized as “Jews” or “Jewish Mixed breeds.”⁸ The majority of these requests were from the Hanseatic city of Hamburg and a few from other German cities,

⁵ “Mein Vater war rein arischer Abstammung und gehörte der evangelischen Religion an, während meine Mutter jüdischer Abstammung, aber evangelischer Konfession war.” Emilie Cantor, “Einspruch von Emmy Cantor (1881-1942) gegen die Erteilung einer Kennkarte,” May 10, 1939, 2000/176/18 001-002, Jüdisches Museum Berlin; Emilie Cantor, “Brief,” May 10, 1939, 2000/176/18, Jüdisches Museum Berlin.

⁶ Cantor, “Einspruch;” Cantor, “Brief.”

⁷ “Mit Rücksicht darauf, dass es nach der oben angeführten Verordnung lediglich auf die blutmässige Abstammung ankommt, bin ich im Sinne dieser Verordnung nicht als Jüdin anzusehen und von der Verpflichtung auf Erteilung einer Kennkarte befreit.” Cantor, “Einspruch;” Cantor, “Brief.”

⁸ These documents were discovered in the summer of 2016 in the *Staatsarchiv Hamburg*, as well as in the archives of the *Jüdisches Museum Berlin* and the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte*. They include but are not limited to requests to change one’s “Jewish name” into a “German name,” requests to change one’s categorization; requests to be exempted from “Jewish quotas” at universities; and requests to appeal notices of dismissal from one’s position in the state bureaucracy.

such as Berlin. The interest for the case of Hamburg started upon learning that, in Weimar Germany, the city had the second highest rate of interconfessional marriages between Christians and Jews after Berlin.⁹ This indicated that it might be a good case-study to examine how individuals defined themselves when the state attempted to fix once fluid categories. Thus, I analyzed how petitioners portrayed themselves to the state, and how they attempted to convince the authorities to change their state-imposed categorization. Furthermore, I looked into the state's and the petitioners' definitions of "Germanness," "Jewishness," and "Aryanness"—and their evolution over time. Thus, each chapter covers a different time period under the Nazi regime in Germany: 1933–1934, 1935–1937, and 1938–1941. The reason for this division is to highlight the change in petitioners' behaviors in parallel with three waves of anti-"Jewish" measures imposed by the Nazi Party.¹⁰

The first wave started in 1933 with the Boycott of Jewish Stores and the first antisemitic measures initiating the marginalization of German "Jews" from economic and public life.¹¹ Before 1935, the Nazi regime had not yet officially defined the term "Jew." Their anti-"Jewish" measures were meant to target non-"Aryans," and the term "Aryan" was understood as a synonym of "German." In this context, petitioners defined "Jews" in religious terms, i.e., as members of the Jewish faith, and "Germans" in civic terms, i.e., as citizens of Germany. Therefore, their petitions reflected these definitions, and they argued for their rights as citizens not to be persecuted.

The second wave took shape with the Nuremberg laws. These legally defined the categories "Jews" and "Mixed breeds" in racial terms and deprived their targets of their citizenship rights, attempting to exclude them from German civil society.¹² In their requests, petitioners argued for

⁹ I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Marion Kaplan for encouraging me to look into the case of Hamburg by sharing this information with me.

Beate Meyer, ed., *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der Hamburger Juden 1933-1945. Geschichte. Zeugnis. Erinnerung.* (Hamburg: Wallstein Verlag, 2006), 79.

¹⁰ Doris L. Bergen, *The Holocaust: A Concise History* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 51-100; Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 30-32, 127-130, 132; Nikolaus Wachsmann, "The Policy of Exclusion: Repression in the Nazi State, 1933-1939," in *Nazi Germany*, ed. Jane Caplan, *The Short Oxford History of Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 122-128, 137-145.

¹¹ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 51-69; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 32-33; Wachsmann, "The Policy of Exclusion," 123-128, 137-139.

¹² Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 70-78; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 52-54; Wachsmann, "The Policy of Exclusion,"

“Jewishness” as a religious identity and “Germanness” as a civic and national identity. As well as hoping to avoid persecution, petitioners sought to change their categorization to regain equal rights. To do so, they portrayed themselves as “nationalist Germans” and highlighted not only their patriotic actions and contributions to the German state, but they also described their “German upbringing” and their “German values.”

Finally, the third wave started with the November pogrom and is marked by the start of the Second World War. This wave is characterized by its use of physical means: segregation, deportation, and large-scale physical violence. “Jewish” identity cards and “yellow badges” branded those categorized as “Jews” and transformed them into clearly visible targets, permanently differentiating them from the rest of the population. The Nazis created a dichotomy between “Germans” and “Jews.” On the one hand, they portrayed “Germans” as an amalgam of “race” (“Aryans”), political affiliation (Nazis), national affiliation (German nationalists), and civic affiliation (German citizens). On the other hand, they described “Jews” as “enemies of Germany” and “Jewishness” as a “race.” Ultimately, the anti-“Jewish” measures culminated with the physical removal of “Jews” from Germany: their deportation outside of the *Reich* and into concentration camps and later, death camps.¹³ More than an attempt to avoid persecution and regain equal rights, petitioners sought to change their categorization as a matter of life or death. To do so, they adopted the language of the Nazi racial state and claimed their “Aryanness” based on their “German” nationalist attitudes and behaviors.

The analysis of the petitions made between 1933 and 1941 shows a change from a religious to a racial definition of “Jewishness.” As the Nazis reduced the definition of “Germanness”—from a civic, political, and national identity to a racial identity encompassing all these elements—petitioners adapted their self-portrayal to the authorities by focusing on the multifariousness of “Germanness” and using the language of the Nazi racial state. The petitioners’ vocabulary developed alongside Nazi propaganda; they adopted the regime’s definitions of categories, increasingly defining themselves and their fellow German citizens in racial terms. A decade after Hitler’s rise to power, once fluid and multilayered understandings of “Germanness” and

123-128, 137-139.

¹³ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 79-100; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 95-97, 133-135; Wachsmann, “The Policy of Exclusion,” 139-145.

“Jewishness” were determined by pseudo-scientific racial theories, which penetrated into the discourse of the population.

These categories predated the Third *Reich*. The full legal emancipation of “Jews” in Germany came with the country’s unification in 1871.¹⁴ It resulted in the cultural, civic, legal, and political assimilation of German “Jews.” The “Jews,” as with most state-imposed categories, did not represent a bounded entity. On the contrary, the feeling of belonging to the Jewish religious community not only took different forms and had various meanings among its self-identified members, but it was also lacking among those who identified themselves differently.¹⁵ Therefore, the category “Jew” existed prior to 1933, but it was fluid. For instance, one could change from being a Jew to being Christian through conversion. There were also variations within the category (e.g., Orthodox Jews and Reformed Jews). While before 1933 the category “Jew” was fluid, mainly religiously defined, and self-determined, after 1935, it was fixed and based on a gross generalization that eliminated all distinctions of age, gender, class, country of birth, religious practices, and self-identification. Thus, it included even those who no longer, never, or only partly self-identified as Jewish.¹⁶ Categories existed and were largely accepted in society before the Nazis’ rise to power, which made possible a framework of “collective categorization” that allowed people to believe that all “Jews” were the same.¹⁷

To understand how the Nazis defined and imposed the category “Jew” in Germany, I

¹⁴ The term “emancipation” is defined as the legislation that removed restrictions against “Jews” and gave them legal equality and citizenship rights. That is not to say that antisemitism suddenly disappeared or that German “Jews” enjoyed equal access to employment and benefits. Officially, they were full and equal German citizens, but unofficially, many restrictions were still in place.

¹⁵ The diversity can be seen in terms of religious observances (e.g. synagogue attendance, holidays celebrated, respect of Jewish dietary laws), but also in terms of self-identification. Being Jewish was not necessarily measured in terms of one’s level of orthodoxy, but also in one’s own definition of Judaism. For example, Berlin was the home of Reform Judaism (also known as Liberal or Progressive Judaism), founded in 1845, which stressed the evolving nature of religion and the importance of its ethical, rather than ceremonial aspects. It de-emphasized ritual and personal observances and encouraged an openness to external influences and progressive values. Moreover, following emancipation, a growing number of “Jews” intermarried and some even converted to Christianity and raised their children as Christians.

¹⁶ Regulations enacted after 1933, included as “Jews” people who had never, no longer, or only partly, identified themselves as being Jewish, as 40 000 Jews of Christian faith and 50 000 Mischlinge. (Beate Meyer, “*Jüdische Mischlinge.*” *Rassenpolitik und Verfolgungserfahrung 1933-1945* (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz Verlag, 1999), 162-165.

¹⁷ Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 9, 20, 225-226.

examine their laws and implementation measures, as well as identify the decision makers and actors involved in this process. Social scientists have contributed to our understanding of categorization as a means for social organization.¹⁸ In this vein, states use categorization to simplify and standardize their population, as well as facilitate their control.¹⁹ However, the categorization process can sometimes lead, or serve to facilitate violence. In the case of Nazi Germany, historian Thomas Pegelow Kaplan argues that categorization can be a form of “linguistic violence,” in which language is used to isolate and marginalize individuals.²⁰ By creating categories, and then marginalizing and defining them as enemies, it enables extreme violence against them.²¹ Political scientist Scott Straus refers to this phenomenon as “collective ethnic categorization.” Taking the case of Rwanda in the 1990s, he explains that the authorities, by imposing identity cards defined in ethnic or racial terms, institutionalized and ethnicized or racialized categories.²² This resulted in the hardening of once fluid categories. Most importantly, Straus argues that the escalation into extreme violence can be due in part to the pre-existence of these collective categories.²³ The latter can create a lens through which the population can categorize individuals into a unitary “group.” In turn, this permits the authorities to define all supposed members of a “group” as enemies of the state.²⁴

Thus, it is vital to understand the role of categorization and the process of institutionalization and racialization of categories in cases of extreme violence.²⁵ Nonetheless,

¹⁸ Fredrik Barth, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969); Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Yang Su, *Collective Killings in Rural China during the Cultural Revolution* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁹ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

²⁰ Thomas Pegelow Kaplan, *The Language of Nazi Genocide: Linguistic Violence and the Struggle of Germans of Jewish Ancestry* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

²¹ Pegelow Kaplan, *The Language of Nazi Genocide*.

²² Straus, *The Order of Genocide*, 7-10.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Eric Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof: Genealogy, Racial Science, and the Final Solution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007); Straus, *The Order of Genocide*.

anthropologists and sociologists also argue for the distinction between groups as self-conscious and internally defined, and categories as externally defined.²⁶ This distinction is essential to understand the difference between Jews as self-identified members of a group and “Jews” as a Nazi-imposed category. Furthermore, scholars of categorization have shown that state-imposed categories do not automatically overtake or deactivate all other forms of identity. Many argue that identities—as forms of self-identification with and/or allegiances to groups—are multilayered and fluid, constantly changing and evolving.²⁷ In this respect, we should study the categorization process both *from above*, i.e., how institutions of power—such as the state, in this case, the Nazi regime—institutionalize and implement categories, and *from below*, i.e., how “ordinary people” appropriate, internalize, and transform categories.²⁸

When analyzing “Jewish” responses to persecution, Holocaust scholars have often portrayed the extremes, i.e., collaboration and armed resistance, but rarely have they studied the more subtle responses.²⁹ Interested in filling that gap, some historians have looked, for instance, at how “Jews” responded to the growing pressure on an individual level and on a daily basis, but they often focus on coping mechanisms, such as ways to obtain food and clothing in times of restrictions.³⁰ Others contribute to our understanding of victims’ responses to violence with

²⁶ Barth, “Introduction;” Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1997); Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*; Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

²⁷ Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*; Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Alon Confino, *A World Without Jews. The Nazi Imagination from Persecution to Genocide* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014); Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009); Valère P. Jr. Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War. Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Fujii, *Killing Neighbors*; Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Su, *Collective Killings*; Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls. National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).

²⁸ Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*.

²⁹ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Revised (New York, NY: Holmes & Meier, 1961); Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair. Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Longerich, *Holocaust*; Jürgen Matthäus, “Evading Persecution: German-Jewish Behavior Patterns after 1933,” in *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany. Dilemmas and Responses*, ed. Francis R. Nicosia and David Scrase, Vermont Studies on Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2010), 47–70.

³⁰ Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*; Jürgen Matthäus and Mark Roseman, *Jewish Responses to*

typologies.³¹ While useful tools for the study of victims' responses, many cases fail to fit into these generalized categories, and often these typologies provide few insights into legal strategies, such as petitions and requests to the state in Nazi Germany.³² For instance, historian Raul Hilberg's concept of alleviation and political scientist Evgeny Finkel's concept of coping both fail to account for cases in which individuals contest their categorization as "Jews" and thus their targeting by anti-"Jewish" measures.³³ Furthermore, they both define evasion as a physical retreat, by hiding or fleeing, and fail to encompass a legal variation, e.g., attempts to escape persecution by changing one's social status or legal category.³⁴ Finally, scholars of resistance—whether violent or non-violent—define it primarily as actions aiming at harming the perpetrators or compromising their plans.³⁵ Thus, it does not provide us with a framework to understand and explain individual actions using and even taking advantage of the system in place, rather than trying to destroy it.

Some historians of the Holocaust have analyzed petitions to the Nazi regime as forms of resistance.³⁶ Pegelow Kaplan explains that petitioners used "discursive contestation," defined as

Persecution. 1933–1938. (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010).

³¹ Raul Hilberg's typology ranges from resistance, through alleviation and evasion, to paralysis and compliance. In response to Hilberg, Evgeny Finkel offers a new typology ranging from cooperation and collaboration, through coping and compliance and evasion, to resistance.

Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival during the Holocaust* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017); Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*.

³² Finkel, *Ordinary Jews*; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*.

³³ Hilberg defines alleviation as a strategy that Jewish communities and individuals used to appeal to the authorities to improve their community's and their own conditions and avoid persecution. (Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*.)

Finkel defines coping as a mechanism Jews used in the ghettos as a means to avoid persecution and assure one's survival. Furthermore, Finkel argues that individuals who used coping as a tactic for survival were those who had been less integrated in non-Jewish society and mainly lived in and depended on intra-Jewish networks. Their lack of knowledge of the local languages, as well as contacts outside of the ghettos prohibited them from fleeing. By looking at the case of Germany, we quickly realize the limitations of his explanation. Coping as a strategy was mainly available to individuals who had resources—i.e., legal, cultural, and political knowledge—to properly frame their requests. In other words, they needed to have a great understanding of the German language and legal system, as well as of the Nazi ideology. (Finkel, *Ordinary Jews*; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*.)

³⁴ Finkel, *Ordinary Jews*; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*.

³⁵ Finkel, *Ordinary Jews*; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*; Pegelow Kaplan, *The Language of Nazi Genocide*.

³⁶ Meyer, "Jüdische Mischlinge"; Matthäus, "Evading Persecution"; Pegelow Kaplan, *The Language of Nazi Genocide*.

“[...] defying racial categories imposed on them by official discourse.”³⁷ However, this approach fails to explain the resort to petitions, in which people sought to use the system in place, rather than contesting it openly or trying to destroy it. Historian Jürgen Matthäus’s concept of “evasion by compliance”—defined as, escaping Nazi racial policy by using the legal system in place—highlights the importance of the appearance of compliance in legal petitions.³⁸ Interestingly, this has echoes in political scientist James C. Scott’s concept of “everyday forms of resistance.” He explains that individuals in a position of extreme subordination, such as “Jews” in Nazi Germany, cannot afford open insubordination, as it might have disastrous consequences. Thus, their only option resides in subdued forms of resistance that never openly contest the structures of power.³⁹ In doing so, they can act individually and avoid direct confrontation.⁴⁰ Scott wrote, “Resistance could succeed only to the extent that it hid behind the mask of public compliance.”⁴¹ In the case of Nazi Germany, the petitioners’ objectives were to contest how the laws applied to their cases, not the laws themselves. They aimed to improve their current status, meet their pressing needs—such as safety, food, housing—and avoid social and economic isolation, physical violence, deportation, and death.⁴²

Some scholars of violence and nationalism have reflected on individuals’ strategic deployment of state ideology as a means to respond to persecution.⁴³ Indeed, they have shown that individuals subjected to state-imposed policies can learn to use the state’s structures, despite being confined within its constraints. In the case of legal petitions in Nazi Germany, the goal of petitioners was to reject their “out-group” membership and join the “in-group,” or at least join a

³⁷ Pegelow Kaplan, *The Language of Nazi Genocide*, 10.

³⁸ Matthäus, “Evading Persecution”.

³⁹ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 33.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴³ Veena Das, *Life and Words. Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007); Theodora Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands: Nationality and Emigration among the Greeks of Bulgaria, 1900-1949* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Fujii, *Killing Neighbors*; Gross, *Neighbors*; Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*; Scott, *Seeing Like a State*; Su, *Collective Killings*; Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*.

less contentious minority (such as “Mixed breeds”).⁴⁴ To do so, they strategically deployed Nazi ideology, such as Nazi definitions of racial categories, in their request to change their categorization. Pegelow Kaplan examines that individuals learned, through newspapers, how to “speak Nazi”—to “[...] acquire Nazi parlance as part of a remaking of a public self more in line with the Nazi-propagated imagery of the new Germans.”⁴⁵ Historians of the Holocaust have offered interesting but brief studies of petitions to the Nazi regime.⁴⁶ While they shed light on the use of state ideology as a tool, they do not address the mosaic of strategies and the use—and changes in use—of the language of nationalism as a tool to fit into to the Nazis’ evolving definition of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

When state authorities radically alter the political field that determines forms of categorization along racial, religious, civic, political, and national lines, how do people define the “nation” and what does it mean to belong to it? Inspired by Stephen Kotkin’s concept of “speaking Bolshevik,” historian Theodora Dragostinova, in her study of “Greeks” in Bulgaria, argues that by “speaking national”—using nationalist idioms—individuals can maneuver their national allegiances to gain benefits.⁴⁷ She introduces the concept of “emergency identity”: a rhetoric strategy to officially declare one’s allegiance and loyalty to a national group, in the hopes to improve one’s economic, social, or political status, or even assure one’s survival.⁴⁸ Dragostinova helps us understand the use of nationalism and the state’s language of national identity as instruments to improve one’s situation and avoid persecution.

Inspired by the work of Dragostinova, Matthäus, Pegelow Kaplan, and Scott, this thesis analyzes petitioners’ requests to change their categorization as survival techniques. Rather than attempts at changing or destroying the system, these petitions were efforts to circumvent

⁴⁴ Matthäus, “Evading Persecution”; Meyer, “*Jüdische Mischlinge*”; Pegelow Kaplan, *The Language of Nazi Genocide*.

⁴⁵ Pegelow Kaplan, *The Language of Nazi Genocide*, 153.

⁴⁶ Matthäus, “Evading Persecution”; Meyer, “*Jüdische Mischlinge*”; Pegelow Kaplan, *The Language of Nazi Genocide*.

⁴⁷ Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*. See also: Stephen Kotkin, “Speaking Bolshevik,” in *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization*, Revised (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 198–237; Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*.

⁴⁸ Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*.

persecution at all costs to assure the petitioners' and/or their families' survival. Furthermore, I look at these actions as means of navigating the Nazi system of categorization and explain how different actors defined racial categories and used the language of racial categorization. To do so, I examine perpetrators and victims, not as separate entities but rather as part of an interactive process. I shed light on how the Nazis were able to fix once fluid and multilayered understandings of "Germanness" and "Jewishness." The petitioners' stories, in turn, illuminate the myriad ways individuals—who have often been portrayed as an undifferentiated mass of passive victims—were active agents, and tried to use the system.⁴⁹

Yet, I go further and reflect on how individuals can impact the process of categorization through their interactions with the state. Petitioners in Nazi Germany were not empowered to change the system itself and were constrained to act within the state's rules to assure their survival. Thus, I endeavor to explain how their use of the state's language might have contributed to the crystallization of these categories along the Nazi racial lines. The analysis of petitioners' arguments in their requests to the Nazi state from 1933 to 1941 traces the changes between a multifarious to a racial definition of "Jewishness" and "Germaness," following the Nazis' attempts to fix once fluid and multilayered categories. It is through this process that empty categories—i.e., legal, state-imposed categories, whose members do not represent a bounded, homogeneous group who self-identify as such—might be given substance. In other words, by forcing individuals into these rigid categories and constraining them to acknowledge the "realness" of these groups simply to enter into a dialogue with the authorities, the state is giving these legal creations real power and is attempting to make these constructions into social realities.

⁴⁹ This problem in the scholarship has been noted by: Christian Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies. Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators Victims Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933-1945* (New York, NY: Aaron Asher Books, 1992).

I. “A Jewish Type does not exist!”¹

“Non-Aryan” German citizens fighting for equality, 1933–1934

On June 26, 1933, Ruth Nathan wrote to the Senate of Hamburg to request to change her name to Freitag—her mother’s maiden name. She started her letter by stating that while her father was Jewish, her mother and herself were Evangelical Lutheran. She added: “I was raised Christian and do not feel the least bit Jewish.”² Then, she explained her difficulties finding employment, which she believed was due to her “Jewish name.” She supported her claim with clear proof of the deterrent effect of a “Jewish name” when looking for work in Hitler’s Germany. However, it was not the employers’ blatant antisemitism she criticized but the fact that *she* would be its target. “If I looked and felt Jewish, I would have to put up with such things. But I am baptized, confirmed, and feel absolutely like a Christian German.”³ As a practicing Christian, a proud German, and the daughter of a World War I veteran, she claimed that she should not have to endure such ill treatments.⁴

Ruth Nathan’s case raises a myriad of questions. How did petitioners define “Germanness” and “Jewishness”? How did they perceive themselves within German society? How did the Nazis’ rise to power and implementation of anti-“Jewish” measures impact their understanding of national and religious identities? In response to the state’s policies of exclusion, many German citizens, officially categorized as “Jews,” wrote to the regional authorities and state representatives to change their names in order not to “sound Jewish,” to appeal notices of dismissal from their position in the state bureaucracy, and to be exempted from “Jewish quotas” at universities. In this chapter, I analyze the arguments used by petitioners when in dialogue with the authorities in the first few years of the Nazi regime. The goal is to understand how they made sense of the state-

¹ “[...] das [sic] nicht ein Typ jüdischer [sic] vorhanden ist, [...]” Hilda Heymann, “Jüdische Abstammung der Hilda Heymann,” November 16, 1933; February 25, 1934, 241-1 I_882, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

² “Ich wurde christlich erzogen und fühle mich nicht im geringsten jüdisch.” Ruth Nathan, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge : Nathan,” May 24, 1933, 241-1 I_881, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

³ “Wenn ich jüdisch aussähe und fühlte, müsste ich mich auch mit solchen Sachen abfinden. Aber ich bin getauft, konfirmiert und fühle mich absolut als christlicher Deutscher.” Nathan, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

⁴ Nathan, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

imposed categorization, and how they attempted to work around it in their favor.

As the Nazis had not yet legally defined the category “Jew,” the petitioners defined “Jewishness” as a religious affiliation and argued for exemptions on religious grounds: they were Christians. Moreover, as the Nazis’ first targets were their political opponents, petitioners might have believed that by proving that they shared the Nazis’ values and worldview, they would be exempted from persecutory measures—especially that the latter often contained exemptions, for example, for veterans of the First World War. This strengthened the petitioners’ feelings that their actions in favor of Germany spoke louder than their ancestors’ religious affiliations. Finally, they petitioned the state as German citizens. They claimed that they fulfilled their duties, and thus their rights should be respected. In other words, they requested to be treated equally—as any other “Aryan” German citizen—under the law.

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany. During the following two years, the Nazis imposed anti-“Jewish” measures, which had profound economic, professional, and social consequences for German citizens categorized as “Jews.”⁵ In June 1933, the general census defined “Germans” based on their religious affiliations and nationality.⁶ While the Nazis considered “Jews” to form a homogeneous group, in reality those categorized as “Jews” differed on various facets defining identity, such as religious and political affiliations.⁷ In fact, since their emancipation, German “Jews” believed in the idea of “German-Jewish symbiosis,” and many Germans of all faith agreed that the process of acculturation of “Jews” into German culture

⁵ Avraham Barkai and Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, vol. 4. *Renewal and Destruction. 1918–1945*, 4 vols. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996), 197-8; Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 58-60; Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, vol. *The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*, 2 vols. (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997), 18-19; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 29-33.

⁶ Approximately 500,000 German inhabitants declared themselves to be members of the Jewish religious community, among whom 100,000 were not German citizens—primarily immigrants from Eastern Europe, commonly referred to as “Eastern Jews” (*Ostjuden*). In addition, 40,000 German citizens were categorized as “Jews,” but did not identify as such.

⁷ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 4-11; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 38-9; Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus, “Chapter 1. Social Outsiders and the Construction of the Community of the People,” in *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany*, ed. Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 6-7; Matthäus, “Evading Persecution,” 48-49.

had been successful.⁸ This idea was supported by the many contributions self-identified German Jews made to German society, as well as their fervent patriotism. Most were German citizens and felt as such. They defined Judaism as a religion, not a nationality, nor a race. Some even converted to Christianity, and others saw no issue with being German and Jewish. They thought that the best way to fight antisemitism was by proving unity between “Germanness” and “Jewishness.” According to historian Sidney Bolkosky, “German Jews did not seek to reject their Judaism or their ‘Jewishness.’ Rather, they attempted to redefine it in terms of Germanness.”⁹

According to Straus, the pre-existence of a framework of categorization allows for the collective categorization along those lines. In other words, the fact that the categories “Jews” and “Germans” existed before the Nazis’ rise to power gave the German population the ability to see and divide citizens into categories. Straus came to that conclusion by examining the case of Rwanda, in which he argues that the preexistence of the categories “Hutus” and “Tutsis” before the genocide, even though their definition has changed from a fluid social category to a fixed ethnic and racial category, gave these new categories a ground to stand on. In the case of Nazi Germany, that allowed the Nazis to categorize all “Jews” as members of a homogeneous group, described as “potential enemies,” and to collectively persecute them. Matthäus notes, “the idea of *the Jew* or *the Jewish community* was a shibboleth, invented by the Nazis despite the prevalence of fragmentation among Jews. True, to some extent, the Nazis had indeed turned the Jews as they imagined them into a reality since their blanket policies brought a heterogeneous group under one definition.”¹⁰ In other words, the anti-“Jewish” measures and policies turned the idea of a homogeneous “Jewish” group into a legal reality.

Once the Nazis came to power, their *Judenpolitik*, which German historian Peter Longerich defines as anti-“Jewish” measures and policies, aimed at marginalizing “Jews” from German society. Through economic and social measures, the Nazis hoped to make life in Germany so difficult for “Jews” that they would be forced to emigrate. However, many of those categorized as German “Jews” believed that the Nazis would only temporarily be in power and that the German

⁸ For more information about “emancipation,” see the *Introduction*, page 4.

⁹ Sidney M. Bolkosky, *The Distorted Image. German Jewish Perceptions of Germans and Germany, 1918-1935* (New York, NY: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1975), 70.

¹⁰ Matthäus, “Evading Persecution,” 33.

people and its army would rise against the discriminatory government. Furthermore, as the Nazi authorities were unable to offer a clear definition of “Jew” and were granting exemptions for some subgroups—such as World War I veterans and their families—the targets of these measures believed they still had some power to protest their ill treatments.¹¹

Nevertheless, the rights of German citizens, most importantly of German-“Jewish” citizens, proportionally decreased with the Nazis’ increased strength and power and their exclusionary measures.¹² The “Coordination—*Gleichschaltung*,” the “Nazification” process, which aimed at controlling and coordinating all aspects of life in Germany, also aimed at getting rid of all “enemies of the Reich.”¹³ While these laws’ first targets were the Nazis’ political opponents—such as communists, social democrats, and trade unionists—they still had tremendous

¹¹ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 58-60; Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, 108; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 29-33.

¹² On February 27, 1933, approximately a month after Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor of Germany, the Reichstag burned down. Blaming the Communists for the arson, the Nazis used this event to justify drastic reprisals against them. The very next day, they implemented the *Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of the People and the State—Verordnung des Reichspräsidenten zum Schutz von Volk und Staat*, also known as the *Reichstag Fire Decree—Reichstagsbrandverordnung*. It suspended articles of the German constitution protecting individual rights and civil liberties, thus restricting freedoms of speech, press, and assembly. This negatively impacted the due process of law, as it gave permission to the Nazi regime to arrest and incarcerate political opponents without charges. A few days earlier, on February 17, Hermann Göring, then Prussian Minister of the Interior, issued the “Shooting decree—*Schießerlass*” allowing the police to use their weapons against “enemies of the State.” Additionally, on February 22, he reinforced the police forces with 50,000 auxiliary policemen from the SA and SS, granting them the same rights to chase the Nazis’ political opponents. (The SA—*Sturmabteilung*, Storm troopers—and the SS—*Schutzstaffel*, Protection Squadron—were paramilitary units of the Nazi party.) A month later, on March 23, 1933, the Nazi regime implemented the *Law to Remedy the Distress of the People and the Empire—Gesetz zur Behebung der Not von Volk und Reich*, also known as the *Enabling Law—Ermächtigungsgesetz*. This allowed the Nazis to pass any measure without the approval of the Reichstag. This effectively ended democracy in Germany.

¹³ Barkai and Mendes-Flohr, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, 202-203; Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 53-54, 62-64; Chapoutot, *Histoire de l’Allemagne de 1806 à nos jours*, 2nd ed., Que sais-je? 4020 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2017), 80-82; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 17; Peter Fritzsche, “The NSDAP 1919-1934: From Fringe Politics to the Seizure of Power,” in *Nazi Germany*, ed. Jane Caplan, *The Short Oxford History of Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 69-70; Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, Updated, Cambridge Concise Histories (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 178-180; Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2008. The Divided Nation*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 56-58; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 18; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 33; N.S.D.A.P., “Gesetz zur Behebung der Not von Volk und Reich,” March 24, 1933, Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gesetz_zur_Behebung_der_Not_von_Volk_und_Staat_1933.jpg; N.S.D.A.P., “Verordnung des Reichspräsidenten zum Schutz von Volk und Staat,” February 28, 1933, Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:VO_zum_Schutz_von_Volk_und_Staat_1933.JPG; Dietrich Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany. 1871-Present*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ.: Pearson Education, 2008), 175, 183; Jill Stephenson, “Inclusion: Building the National Community in Propaganda and Practice,” in *Nazi Germany*, ed. Jane Caplan, *The Short Oxford History of Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 107; Wachsmann, “The Policy of Exclusion,” 123-124.

impact on the German “Jewish” population. They severely limited their ability to speak against the regime and silenced those who could have defended them. In this context, the Nazis started imposing anti-“Jewish” measures. For instance, on April 1, 1933, they organized the *Boycott of Jewish Stores*. It targeted “Jewish”-owned businesses and offices of “Jewish” professionals.¹⁴ Then, on April 7, 1933, the Nazis imposed the *Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service*.¹⁵ This measure forbade individuals “of non-Aryan descent” and “politically unreliable” individuals from working in the German civil service.¹⁶ A few weeks later, on April 25, 1933, the Nazis implemented the *Law against Overcrowding in Schools and Universities*,¹⁷ which limited the number of “Jewish” students permitted into public schools.¹⁸ Exempted from this law were children of German army veterans, as well as students who only had one or two Jewish grandparents, and those who were not members of the Jewish religious community.¹⁹

¹⁴ Ever since Hitler rose to power, Germany was getting increasingly negative international press coverage. The Nazis blamed it on the “Jews” and explained the boycott as a “defensive measure.”

Barkai and Mendes-Flohr, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, 199-201; Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 58-60; Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 77-78; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 19; Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 186; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 21-22; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 33; Meyer, “*Jüdische Mischlinge*,” 29-30; Léon Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine. Le IIIe Reich et les Juifs* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1951), 1, 4; Wachsmann, “The Policy of Exclusion,” 124-125.

¹⁵ *Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums*.

¹⁶ Barkai and Mendes-Flohr, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, 201-202; Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 58-60; Jörg Berkemann and Ina Lorenz, *Die Hamburger Juden im NS-Staat 1933 bis 1938/9*, vol. 1. *Monografie*, 7 vols. (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2016), 436; Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, 78-9; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 27; Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 186; Fulbrook, *A History of Germany*, 58-59; Gellately and Stoltzfus, “Social Outsiders,” 7; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 24-5; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 38; Meyer, “*Jüdische Mischlinge*,” 29-30; N.S.D.A.P., “Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums,” April 7, 1933, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek - ALEX Historische Rechts und Gesetzestexte Online, <http://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?apm=0&aid=dra&datum=19330007&seite=00000175&zoom=2>; Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany*, 185-186; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 1; Wachsmann, “The Policy of Exclusion,” 124-125.

¹⁷ *Gesetz gegen die Überfüllung deutscher Schulen und Hochschulen*.

¹⁸ “Non-Aryans” could not comprise more than 1.5% of new admissions and 5% of the total school population. While “Jews” in Germany formed less than 1% of the country’s inhabitants, they often lived in cities where they represented a larger percentage of the population. The drastic exclusion is more evident when one learns that “Jews” represented almost 10% of the university student body.

¹⁹ Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 30; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 94-95; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 39; Meyer, “*Jüdische Mischlinge*,” 192; Wachsmann, “The Policy of Exclusion,” 124-125.

These Nazis' policies could be summarized in two words: race and space. The Nazis believed that the world was composed of competing "races," and that the "Aryans" needed space and resources to expand. This plan required the creation of an organic, harmonious, "racial community," which was politically united and shared a collective history and destiny. This process began with the elimination of all "aliens of the community" (*Gemeinschaftsfremde*)—people considered threats for racial and/or political reasons, such as political opponents, social outcasts, and "racial aliens"—from the "Community of the People" (*Volksgemeinschaft*). "Jews" were considered as "racial aliens" and perceived as "enemies of the Reich." For this reason, the Nazis' anti-"Jewish" measures aimed to socially and economically isolate "Jews," to compel them to emigrate.²⁰

These anti-"Jewish" measures targeted German citizens, whom the Nazis categorized as "Jews." However, these measures were not as successful as the Nazis had hoped because there was no definition of who was a "Jew" and who was not. Yet, the absence of definition allowed for petitioners to seek exemptions, using arguments based on their own understanding of "Jews" and "Germans." Interestingly, this strategic deployment of state ideology seems to be a more generalized phenomenon. Many scholars have noted the use of this tactic by individuals as a means to respond to persecution in a myriad of other contexts of extreme violence in the 20th century in various countries in Asia and Europe.²¹ They learned "to use the system," which constrained them and discriminated against them, to their own advantage. Their ultimate objective was to avoid persecution. For instance, Sociologist Yang Su, who examined cases of collective killings in rural China during the Cultural Revolution (1967-68), mentions various cases of individual victims who learned to speak the language of classist categorization and/or to use the class system to their

²⁰ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 36-7; Berkemann and Lorenz, *Die Hamburger Juden im NS-Staat 1933 bis 1938/9. Monografie*, 437-438; Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, 80; Chapoutot, *Histoire de l'Allemagne*, 82-84; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 27-28; Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 196-7; Fulbrook, *A History of Germany*, 62-3; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 14-15; Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany*, 180-181; Richard Steigmann-Gall, "Religion and the Churches," in *Nazi Germany*, ed. Jane Caplan, *The Short Oxford History of Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 163-166; Wachsmann, "The Policy of Exclusion," 137-143.

²¹ Das, *Life and Words*; Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*; Fujii, *Killing Neighbors*; Gross, *Neighbors*; Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*; Scott, *Seeing Like a State*; Su, *Collective Killings*; Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*.

advantage, e.g., changing their status through marriage or adoption.²² This highlights the importance of the use of legal means to resist and eschew persecution and violence.

In Nazi Germany, these requests to the state were actually quite common. The President of the District Court in Hamburg oversaw the evaluation of petitioners' requests to change their "Jewish" names. In one of the reports he wrote to the Regional Administration of Justice, he rejected a request, because "the petitioner is only following a common trend of getting rid of Jewish last names [...]."²³ Furthermore, this indicates that it might have been common for petitioners to believe that the removal of any external signs of "Jewishness"—e.g., "Jewish" last names—might suffice to avoid persecution.

Some German citizens, categorized as "Jews," filed requests to change their names in the weeks and months following the *Boycott of Jewish Stores*. They feared that their "Jewish" names might be impediments to their professional success. For instance, the twenty-three-year-old Richard Jacques Dresdner was hoping to start his own business. Unfortunately, he feared that it would suffer due to his "Jewish" name. Therefore, he asked to change it to "Dressert."²⁴ Similarly, Walter Levy had been experiencing hostilities from colleagues and customers at work, which he explained as being due to his name. He wrote that, "I am being torn apart and boycotted by my colleagues in such a manner that even the guests notice it and are outraged."²⁵ He added that he had found notes on his apartment door, denouncing him as a "Jew." For these reasons, he wanted to change his name to "König," his mother's maiden name.²⁶

Some petitioners were unemployed and explained their inability to find work due to their name. Like Walter Levy, some of them asked to bear their mothers' maiden names. This could

²² Su, *Collective Killings*.

²³ "Da Gesuchsteller nur die Tendenz verfolgt, seinen jüdischen Familiennamen los zu werden, vermag ich den Antrag nicht zu befürworten." President of the District Court in Hamburg in Albert Wertheim, "Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge: Wertheim in Steinkopf," April 13, 1933; May 08, 1933; May 29, 1933, 241-1 I_881, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

²⁴ Richard Jacques Dresdner, "Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge : Dresdner in Dressert," April 8, 1933, 241-1 I_881, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

²⁵ "In meinem Berufe als Kellner werde ich durch meine eigenen Kollegen in einer Weise gereist [sic] und boykottiert, dass selbst die Gäste aufmerksam werden und sich darüber empören." Walter Levy, "Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge: Levy in König," June 30, 1933; July 20, 1933; July 24, 1933; July 12, 1934; July 13, 1934, 241-1 I_881, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

²⁶ Levy, "Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge."

also serve to highlight that their mothers had “German” names, thus were “Aryans.” This was the case for Albert Wertheim, who filed a request to change his name to “Steinkopf.” He thought it might be more advantageous to take his mother’s maiden name.²⁷ Facing a similar situation, Ruth Nathan requested to take her mother’s maiden name, “Freitag.” She stated, “When I apply for jobs, the employers tell me that they personally have nothing against Jews, but they must consider their business. Others say nothing, but the moment they see my name, the position is suddenly already filled, or they tell me that I should wait for further notice, which never comes.”²⁸

In other cases, petitioners sought to prevent problems before they arose, like Margarita Jadassohn, who requested to change her “Jewish” name to “Bodenstedt,” her stepfather’s name, to avoid difficulties later in life.²⁹ For this same reason, Carl Jacobsohn made a request for himself, as well as for his wife and three children. He asked to change everyone’s name to “Stöterau,” his wife’s maiden name. He stated that he had suffered personal and professional disadvantages due to his “Jewish” last name, and he hoped that his children would not have to face the same challenges.³⁰ In addition to petitioning for himself, his wife, and his children, Curt Friedenheim asked to change their names to “Friedrichs.” His firm believed his “Jewish” name would hurt their business; therefore, he “[...] feared that, because of his name, he might soon be unemployed.”³¹ He hoped that by changing his name, he could avoid getting fired and prevent his children from getting teased once they got to school.³²

Petitioners’ focus on changing their last names, which they perceived to be an external sign of “Jewishness”—was partly due to the fact that the Nazis had not yet defined the category “Jew.”

²⁷ Wertheim, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

²⁸ “Denn wenn ich mich tatsächlich vorstelle, sagt mit der Arbeitsgeber, dass er persönlich nichts gegen Juden hätte, aber mit Rücksicht auf sein Geschäft usw. Einige sagen auch garnichts, aber sowie sie den Namen sehen, ist die Stellung plötzlich schon besetzt oder ich soll auf weitere Nachrichten warten, die aber nie kommen.” Nathan, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

²⁹ Margarita Bertha Helene Jadassohn, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge : Jadassohn in Bodenstedt,” May 16, 1933, 241-1 I_881, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

³⁰ Carl Gustav Friedrich Jacobsohn, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge : Jacobsohn in Stöterau,” June 9, 1933, 241-1 I_881, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

³¹ “Der Antragsteller befürchtet, daß er wegen seines Namens brotlos werden könne.” Curt Paul Friedenheim, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge : Friedenheim in Friedrichs,” January 2, 1934, 241-1 I_881, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

³² Friedenheim, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge: Friedenheim in Friedrichs.”

Then, on April 11, the Nazis introduced a supplementary decree to the *Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service*. It aimed to provide a legal definition of “non-Aryan.” Due to the heterogeneity of central Europeans, the Nazis were unable to define “Aryans.” Therefore, they implemented their racial policy based on negative criteria. They defined “non-Aryan” as a person “who is descended from non-Aryan, especially Jewish parents or grandparents. This premise especially obtains if one parent or grandparent was of Jewish faith.”³³ In other words, individuals could prove their “Aryan” ancestry by proving that it did not contain any “Jewish” or “racially alien” ancestors. Furthermore, race was based on religious affiliation.³⁴ The ambiguous line between religion and race transpired in petitioners’ request to change their categorization to avoid being subjected to anti-“Jewish” measures.

The petitioners’ main argument for exemption was religious. Many stated that while their father belonged to the Jewish religion—hence the “Jewish” name—they, and sometimes their mother too, were non-denominational or belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church.³⁵ Additionally, some stated that they had no relationship with their Jewish father.³⁶ Often, the petitioners were quite specific in their attempts to prove that they were not religious Jews. For instance, Ruth Nathan clearly stated that she was baptized and confirmed and “absolutely fe[lt] like a Christian German.”³⁷ Walter Levy added that his wife and daughter were Evangelical Lutheran and that he had been paying church taxes to the Evangelical Lutheran Church for years.³⁸

³³ *Erste Verordnung zur Durchführung des Gesetzes zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums. Vom 11. April 1933* (RGBl. I S. 195), in Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, 9. In the original German in Jörg Berkemann and Ina Lorenz, *Die Hamburger Juden im NS-Staat 1933 bis 1938/9*, vol. 5. *Dokumente*, 7 vols. (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2016), 379-380.

³⁴ Barkai and Mendes-Flohr, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, 211; Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 58-60, 72; Berkemann and Lorenz, *Die Hamburger Juden im NS-Staat 1933 bis 1938/9. Monografie*, 435-437; Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, 9, 108; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 38-39; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 27-29; Hilberg, *Perpetrators Victims Bystanders*, 150; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 14-15; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 30.

³⁵ Dresdner, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge;” Levy, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge;” Jacobsohn, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge;” Jadassohn, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge;” Nathan, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge;” Wertheim, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

³⁶ Wertheim, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

³⁷ “Aber ich bin getauft, konfirmiert und fühle mich absolut als christlicher Deutscher.” Nathan, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

³⁸ Levy, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

Moreover, some put the emphasis on their “Jewish” parent’s conversion. For example, Levy stated that his father considered himself a Christian and was even buried by an Evangelical Lutheran pastor.³⁹

Furthermore, religious arguments were particularly prominent in requests for marriage permission. The *Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service* not only controlled who could occupy positions in the German civil service, it also sought to control who the civil servants could marry. In response, Hilda Heymann wrote a letter to Adolf Hitler, pleading to be considered “Aryan,” so she could marry her fiancé, who was an official. She wrote that she was born an illegitimate child, but “my mother raised me so that I would never forget to devote myself to my religion, and now and then go to Church! I was baptized and confirmed in the Evangelical faith, and I received my communion as per the request of my mother.”⁴⁰ She never knew her father, and only after her mother’s death, did she learn that her biological father was Jewish, making her “non-Aryan” in the eyes of the law. Heymann’s request was denied.⁴¹

While most petitioners protested what they saw as their wrongful categorization, few questioned the process of categorization itself. They did not criticize the Nazis’ discriminatory policies against “Jews,” but rather sought exemptions for themselves. This is clear in Ruth Nathan’s request. She had faced many difficulties due to her “Jewish” name, and had she looked or felt “Jewish,” she would have put up with the discrimination. However, she was a Christian and a German citizen, and for these reasons her persecution was unacceptable to her.⁴² This highlights an important fact concerning petitioners in Nazi Germany: very few opposed the imposed categorization *in principle*, but rather sought an exemption from it, by playing by the system’s rules. Scott, in his study of peasant revolts in Asia, Europe, and America, explains this phenomenon as “everyday forms of resistance.” “Jews” in Germany were restrained in their ability to contest the Nazi rule of law.⁴³ Petitions to the regime allowed them to act individually, while

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Meine Mutter erzog mich so das ich nie vergass meiner Religion mich zu widmen, und dann und wann auch einmal die Kirche zu besuchen! Ich wurde evangelisch getauft und konfirmiert, und erhielt auch auf Wunsch meiner Mutter das Abendmahl. Heymann, “Jüdische Abstammung der Hilda Heymann.”

⁴¹ Heymann, “Jüdische Abstammung der Hilda Heymann.”

⁴² Nathan, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

⁴³ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 33.

avoiding directly challenging the structures of power.⁴⁴ They had better chances at success if they appeared compliant.⁴⁵ Therefore, their objective was to contest how the laws applied to their cases, not the laws themselves.

Some questioned the logic behind the Nazis' definition of "non-Aryans" based on their grandparents' religious affiliation. For instance, as a result of the *Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service*, Louise Hohnsbein was dismissed due to her "non-Aryan descent." In a letter to Senator Curt Rothenberger,⁴⁶ she requested her dismissal to be withdrawn and stated that she was Evangelical Lutheran, and so were her parents, paternal grandparents, and maternal grandmother. However, her maternal grandfather was born into the Jewish religion. She stated that it seemed illogical to be dismissed for the religious beliefs of one grandparent. Unfortunately, the state did not agree, and her request was rejected.⁴⁷ Analyzing these requests at the local level sheds light on individuals' ability to use the state's own legal apparatus and to adapt their political claims—and the language they used to support them—to the state's rhetoric. Looking at individuals on the ground, and in interaction with state officials, illuminates how the state fixed the language of categorization. Categories, which were once fluid, were now forcibly imposed from above. Furthermore, the state compelled petitioners to use a language, which was forcing them into a homogeneous category. This interaction between state and individuals using the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁶ Curt Ferdinand Rothenberger, 1896–1959. German Jurist and NSDAP politician, he was appointed "Senator of Justice" (*Justizsenator*) in Hamburg in 1933. He wanted all judges in Hamburg to be National-Socialists. In this vein, "Jewish" judges were dismissed as early as March 1933. In 1934, he became the regional leader (*Gauführer*) of the Association of National Socialist German Legal Professionals (*Bund Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Juristen*). In April 1935, he then became President of the Hanseatic Higher Regional Court (*Hanseatischen Oberlandesgericht*). In May of the same year, he was appointed President of the Higher Administrative Court of Hamburg (*Hamburgisches Obergerverwaltungsgericht*). In August 1942, he was appointed State Secretary of the Reich Ministry of Justice, but he was dismissed in December 1943. He contributed to the elaboration of the plan for the persecution of "asocials" in Germany. For this reason, he was arrested in May 1945, and in December 1947, during the Nuremberg trials, he was sentenced to seven years in prison. He was released in 1950 and committed suicide in 1959. (Klaus Bästlein, "Vom Hanseatischen Richtertum Zum Nationalsozialistischen Justiz-Verbrechen. Zur Person Und Tätigkeit Curt Rothenbergers 1896-1959.," in "Für Führer, Volk Und Vaterland..." *Hamburger Justiz Im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Justizbehörde Hamburg (Hrsg.) et al. (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 1992), 74–145)

⁴⁷ Louise Hohnsbein, "Hohnsbein, Louise Anna Marie," March 21, 1932; September 30, 1933, 213-3_456, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg; Louise Hohnsbein, "Kündigung der Büroangestellten beim Landgericht Louise Anna Marie Hohnsbein wegen jüdischer Abstammung und Gesuche um Rücknahme der Kündigung," October 4, 1933, 241-1 I_2209, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

language of categorization turned these constructions into perceived realities. Only by looking at categorization as an interactive process between state and petitioners can we begin to understand it.

Many petitioners, like Louise Hohnsbein, were in fact Christians, and the Nazi regime was still unclear as to how to treat them. Furthermore, the vagueness of the Nazis' category "Jew" led to the fear of antagonizing potential supporters by mistakenly categorizing them as "Jews." In this vein, the Nazis did not dare promote attacks on World War I veterans or "Aryans" married to "Jewish" spouses. This also led to a series of exemptions. What is interesting to note is that the *Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service* exempted those who had worked in the civil service since August 1, 1914, those who were veterans of World War I, and those whose father or son was killed in action during the First World War. It gave permission to the *Reich* Minister of the Interior to grant more exemptions. Similarly, the *Law against Overcrowding in Schools and Universities* exempted children of World War I veterans, children of "mixed marriages" (as long as they had no more than two "Jewish" grandparents), and "Jewish" children with foreign citizenship.⁴⁸

These exemptions allowed targeted individuals to believe that their actions might speak louder than their imposed category. In the Nazis' first two years in power (1933–1934), they primarily targeted political opponents, branding them "enemies of the *Reich*," as well as arresting them, deporting them to concentration camps, and even killing them. However, by justifying these measures as means to protect Germany against its enemies, it pretended to be targeting only those who might be dangerous to the German state. Hence, "Jews," who could prove that their political ideas aligned with those of the Nazis, might have believed that they were not the primary targets of these measures and sought exemptions.

On June 30, 1934, during the *Night of the Long Knives*—also known as the *Röhm Putsch*—the SS led by Hitler himself arrested and killed leading members of the SA, including Ernst Röhm.⁴⁹ Some German "Jews" might have feared for their lives; if such a fate could befall the

⁴⁸ Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 30; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 94-95; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 39; Meyer, "Jüdische Mischlinge," 192; Wachsmann, "The Policy of Exclusion," 124-125.

⁴⁹ The SA—*Sturmabteilung*, Storm troopers—and the SS—*Schutzstaffel*, Protection Squadron—were paramilitary units of the Nazi party. Night of the Long Knives—*Nacht der langen Messer*.

Nazis' own supporters, what did they have in store for the "Jews"? Nevertheless, the Nazi propaganda justified their actions as necessary for the safety of the German people and portrayed the victims of this purge as traitors, who had to be punished for their crimes.⁵⁰ In this light, most German "Jews" might instead have believed that this again proved that if they could show their loyalty to the NSDAP, and most importantly to Hitler himself, they would be considered useful additions to the "Community of People."

In the same vein, on July 14, 1933, the *Law for the Repeal of Naturalization and Recognition of German Citizenship*, also known as the *De-Naturalization Law*, revoked the citizenship of naturalized "Jews" and "undesirables."⁵¹ Some of the naturalized "Jews" had been living in Germany for decades. However, this law underlined the idea that being born in Germany from descendants born on German soil was an important element of "Germanness." Most German "Jews" did fit these criteria. Furthermore, many actually believed in the validity of these criteria for determining "Germanness." But this also added to the idea that, as "true German citizens," their behaviors towards the welfare of the German state could counterbalance their supposed "Jewish" ancestry.

Additionally, on May 1, 1935, the Nazis banned Jehovah's Witnesses' organizations. As the Jehovah's Witnesses believed that their sole master was God, their religious convictions forbid an oath of allegiance to, or service in the armed forces of, any temporal power. Their refusal to swear allegiance to Adolf Hitler and to serve in the German military resulted in their marginalization, incarceration, and death.⁵² They were targeted for the political consequences of their religious beliefs; conversely, this might also have furthered the notion that individuals' political ideas and patriotic actions, if they aligned with the Nazis', could save them from persecution.

In this regard, petitioners strategically stated their "Germanness" and emphasized their ardent nationalism, such as by stating their relationship to the NSDAP, their "German" upbringing,

⁵⁰ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 68-69; Chapoutot, *Histoire de l'Allemagne*, 84-85; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 114-115; Fritzsche, "The NSDAP 1919-1934," 70-71; Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 180-181; Fulbrook, *A History of Germany*, 60-61; Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany*, 182.

⁵¹ *Gesetz über den Widerruf von Einbürgerungen und die Aberkennung der deutschen Staatsangehörigkeit*. Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 26-28; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 38-41.

⁵² Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 23-25; Steigmann-Gall, "Religion and the Churches," 162-163.

or their military service. First, many petitioners tried to establish their relationship with the current state. Albert Wertheim, in a letter to the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, expressed his “deep shock” when discovering that his initial request to change his name was rejected. He had always voted for the NSDAP out of strong conviction. He felt that he could “call himself a nationalist German with good conscience,”⁵³ and that his nationalism transpired in his voting pattern. Then, in an attempt to strengthen his claim, he mentioned that he was a member of the “German National Union of Commercial Employees”⁵⁴—a German nationalist, antisemitic, and anti-democratic labor union.⁵⁵

Second, some petitioners mentioned their nationalist upbringing.⁵⁶ Walter Levy, for instance, claimed that a large part of his family was involved in the NSDAP.⁵⁷ Indeed, self-identification played an important role in signifying to the readers that the petitioners regarded themselves as Germans and were proud of their “Germanness.”⁵⁸ Levy stated that he had a “thoroughly Aryan appearance,” that he and his family thought like “good Christians and Germans,” and that he had been educating his child in the same manner.⁵⁹ He believed that his statement showed that he and his family demonstrated a “good German mind and German behavior.”⁶⁰ In his following request, he stated that a “German citizen, who is German at heart,”⁶¹ like himself, should not be marginalized, because it would negatively impact the unity of Germans.⁶²

⁵³ “Ich kann mit gutem Gewissen den Titel eines nationalen Deutschen für mich in Anspruch nehmen und habe dies seit meinem Wahlrecht in der Wahl der "N.S.D.A.P." zum Ausdruck gegeben.” Wertheim, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

⁵⁴ German National Union of Commercial Employees—*Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfen-Verband*.

⁵⁵ Wertheim, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

⁵⁶ Levy, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge;” Wertheim, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

⁵⁷ Levy, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ “Ich habe ein durchaus arisches Aussehen, meine Familie ist christlich und deutsch denkend und die Erziehung unseres Kindes soll ganz in demselben Sinne erfolgen.” Levy, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

⁶⁰ “[...] gut deutscher Sinn und deutsche Art.” Levy, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

⁶¹ “[...] deutschführender Staatsbürger [...]” Levy, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

⁶² Levy, “Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge.”

Third, World War I played an important role in the German historical imagination. For the petitioners, mentioning their or their family members' participation in the war served as a concrete example of their devotion to Germany. Many specifically mentioned a loved ones' death in war, such as a brother or a father.⁶³ Ernst Vogel highlighted his family's military history in his request to exempt his son from the *Law against Overcrowding in Schools and Universities*. On August 30, 1933, he wrote to Senator Dr. Rothenberger to explain that his wife was considered "non-Aryan" according to the law; thus, he feared that his son, Carl-Wilhelm, a student of law, would encounter difficulties until the end of his studies, as well as in his career. He then proceeded to explain the reasons why he believed his son should be considered "Aryan": His "[...] ancestors have fought and shed blood for Germany in all the wars since the 'liberation wars' [*Befreiungskriege*, 1813]."⁶⁴ Additionally, he personally took part in World War I and spent almost four years on the front before being gravely wounded. To the letter, he attached a personal card stating his army ranking. While his wife might not be considered "Aryan," he still highlighted the fact that she came from the old and highly regarded business family Sanders, who distinguished themselves in Hamburg, particularly in the fields of business and politics.⁶⁵

Ernst Vogel was himself categorized as an "Aryan"; however, petitioning for his "non-Aryan" son, he was using similar arguments as other "non-Aryan" petitioners. This might be explained by the fact that between 1933 and 1934, Germans categorized as "Jews" were not yet ostracized or isolated from the rest of German society. While their economic, political, and social statuses were negatively impacted, many still received support from the non-Jewish population. Hence, many still perceived themselves to be German citizens with equal rights, including the right to petition for exemptions. Dragostinova, in her case study of Bulgarian Greeks, analyzes petitioners' uses of patriotism—such as statements of loyalty to the state and self-description as proud citizens—when in dialogue with the authorities. She notes that they are not only signs of

⁶³ Levy, "Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge;" Jacobsohn, "Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge;" Nathan, "Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge;" Wertheim, "Bescheide auf Namensänderungsanträge."

⁶⁴ "Meine Vorfahren haben seit den Befreiungskriegen in allen Kriegen für Deutschland gekämpft und geblutet." Ernst Vogel, "Gesuch des Ernst Vogel, um Ausnahme für seinen 'halbjüdischen' Sohn Carl-Wilhelm von den Bestimmungen des Gesetzes zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums hinsichtlich der Rechtskandidaten," August 30, 1933, 241-1 I_1239, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

⁶⁵ Vogel, "Gesuch des Ernst Vogel."

their devotion to the state, but also attempts to remind the authorities that, as loyal citizens, they also have rights. Furthermore, by stating that they were born in the country, that they had completed their military service, and that they had paid their taxes, thus proving their dedication to the state's welfare, they claimed their rights to equal citizenship.⁶⁶ Dragostinova refers to this use of “national rhetoric as a discursive weapon for asserting allegiance to the state” as “speaking national.”⁶⁷

Most requests in 1933 and 1934 followed that trend: self-defining one's religious affiliations, as well as stating one's national sense of belonging. Moreover, they did not contain any reference to Judaism as a race or any racial discourse. Understood in religious terms, being “Jewish” was not yet defined in racial terms, as something biologically inherited. While propaganda had shown images of “Jews” based on already existing stereotypes—e.g., aquiline noses, dark hair, and dark eyes—there was no clearly defined, pseudo-scientific definition available yet.⁶⁸ In fact, Hilda Heymann attempted to counter these stereotypes by sending along a photograph of herself for Hitler to evaluate, with the note: “I took the liberty of enclosing my photograph herewith to show you that a Jewish type does not exist, and I cannot believe that I would be punished for that!”⁶⁹ This ability to talk back to the state, disagreeing with its collective categorization, shows that Heymann still felt entitled to the same rights as any other German citizens.

However, looking through the petitioners' approaches to the authorities in 1934 and onward, it is clear that their rights as citizens seemed to be fading. Hence, they adapted their strategy. Hilda Heymann's claims to “Aryanness” based on religious arguments failed in 1933, but she wrote another letter to the authorities in February 1934 with a different strategy. This time, she

⁶⁶ Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*.

⁶⁷ Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*, 71.

⁶⁸ Berkemann and Lorenz explain that Nazis propagated stereotypes, prejudices, clichés, and morally negative descriptions of “Jews” wished to create an image of the “Jews” as enemies of Germany. This aimed to ostracize “Jews” from the rest of society. Once isolated, such false descriptions would be easier to propagate, creating an intensifying spiral of exclusion. (Berkemann and Lorenz, *Die Hamburger Juden im NS-Staat 1933 bis 1938/9. Monografie*, 436-437)

⁶⁹ “Anbei erlaube ich mir, mein Bild mit hinein zu legen, um Ihnen zu zeigen das [sic] nicht ein Typ jüdischer [sic] vorhanden ist, und ich mir garnicht [sic] vorstellen kann, dass ich so hort [sic] dafür bestraft werde!” Heymann, “Jüdische Abstammung der Hilda Heymann.”

claimed that her alleged biological father, Mr. Friedberg, refuted the paternity. He supposedly stated that her mother had another “friend,” who he believed was the biological father. Based on Friedberg’s allegations, she asked to get her categorization modified to “Aryan.”⁷⁰ Heymann attempted to infuse enough doubt so that the Nazis would reconsider her categorization. Unfortunately, Nazi officials considered an unknown father as “Jewish.”⁷¹

While the fate of most of the petitioners introduced in this chapter remains a mystery, we found a trace of Curt Friedenheim, as well as of his children Erika and Kurt. They appeared in a 1947 edition of *The London Gazette*. Approximately thirteen years after his request, he and his children were listed as “[...] Aliens to whom Certificates of Naturalization have been granted by the Secretary of State, and whose Oaths of Allegiance have been registered in the House Office during the month of March 1947.”⁷² Their names had not changed, and they were now naturalized British citizens. While we cannot speak about the Friedenheims’ experiences between 1934 and 1947, we can deduce that, as for many German “Jews,” their situation in Germany pushed them to emigrate. Whether one’s request to change one’s name was successful or not would become irrelevant less than five years later. In 1938, the Nazi regime imposed the *Law on the Alteration of Family and Personal Names*, which canceled any name changes made after 1933 and forbade “Jews” from changing their names.⁷³ This brought many petitioners back to the drawing board.

⁷⁰ Heymann, “Jüdische Abstammung der Hilda Heymann.”

⁷¹ The unknown fathers of illegitimate children born before 1918 of “Jewish” mothers were considered to be “Jewish.” Conversely, the unknown fathers of illegitimate children born after 1918 of “Jewish” mothers were considered to be “Aryans.” This is what the Nazis referred to as the “emancipation theory,” which stated that “Jews” did not mix with non-Jews before 1918, while the years after the First World War gave them the opportunities to integrate into German society. On the other hand, the unknown fathers of illegitimate children—born before or after 1918—of “Aryan” mothers were recognized as “Aryans” and so were the children. (Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 32-4) Ehrenreich offers a similar explanation; however, he states that the cutting point was not 1918 but the year of “Jewish emancipation”—1871 in Germany. (Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, 104)

Berkemann and Lorenz, *Die Hamburger Juden im NS-Staat 1933 bis 1938/9. Monografie*, 479.

⁷² The London Gazette. “List of Aliens to Whom Certificates of Naturalization Have Been Granted by the Secretary of State, and Whose Oaths of Allegiance Have Been Registered in the Home Office during the Month of March, 1947.” April 25, 1947, 1827-1855. The London Gazette. [https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/37940/page/\[Page number: 1827-1855\]/data.pdf](https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/37940/page/[Page number: 1827-1855]/data.pdf).

⁷³ *Gesetz über die Änderung von Familiennamen und Vornamen*.

Berkemann and Lorenz, *Die Hamburger Juden im NS-Staat 1933 bis 1938/9. Monografie*, 611; Longerich,

Following the Nazis' rise to power, they imposed anti-“Jewish” measures, but left the targeted individuals without a clear definition of the category “Jew.” Petitioners, in their requests to the state, defined “Jewishness” as a religious affiliation; they argued for exemptions from anti-“Jewish” measures by stating their belonging to Christianity. Furthermore, as the Nazis primarily focused on their political opponents following their arrival in power, petitioners might have believed that they would be treated differently were they to prove that they shared the Nazis' political ideas and values. Additionally, many of the laws, which were adopted in 1933 and 1934, included exemptions—for instance, for World War I veterans. This further supported the idea that their feeling of belonging and their devotion to Germany spoke louder than their religious belonging or their ancestors'. Indeed, they claimed their rights to exemptions on the basis of German citizenship. As such, they believed that their rights deserved to be respected because they had fulfilled their duties—e.g., loyalty to the German state, German patriotism, and German military service, especially during World War I. In short, they requested equality with all “Aryan” German citizens. As shown through Ernst Vogel's request, “Aryans” and “non-Aryans” seem to have used similar arguments. This shows that, at this point, religion and nationality were independent from one another, and that “race” was not yet considered relevant in this issue. It also shows that German citizens, “Aryans” and “non-Aryans,” still shared a common understanding of “Germanness.” But what happened when, in 1935, the Nazis imposed a racial definition of German citizenship, which defined and excluded “Jews?”

II. “[...] she never felt like a member of the Jewish race; in fact, she rather abhorred it and fought against it.”¹

“Jewish” and “Mixed breed” German nationals fighting for their “Germanness,” 1935–1937

Hildegard Walbaum was in her late twenties when the Nazis introduced the Nuremberg laws, which categorized her as a “Mixed breed 1st Degree.” She had two Jewish paternal grandparents but had been baptized and confirmed Evangelical Lutheran. Furthermore, her father, Otto, had converted to Christianity in 1895; he was a doctor, who fought and died during the First World War. Her family members were fervent German patriots who raised their children with great love for their fatherland. She thought that she was deserving of an exemption and thus wrote to the Senate of Hamburg. She argued that German nationalism and German values had been passed down from generation to generation amongst the Walbaums. The accomplishments of her ancestors proved their devotion to Germany: her paternal grandfather, Siegfried, also served in the German army’s medical corps, while her paternal great-grandfather, Abraham, served almost two decades in the Prussian army. Finally, when asked about her self-identification, she stated that, “she never felt like a member of the Jewish race; in fact, she rather abhorred it and fought against it.”²

Hildegard Walbaum was responding to the Nuremberg laws, which the Nazis implemented on September 15, 1935.³ These laws served to institutionalize Nazi racial ideology and provide the legal framework for the systematic persecution of “Jews” in Germany. They did not categorize “Jews” (*Jude*) or “Mixed breeds” (*Mischlinge*) according to their belonging to a religious community. Rather, they defined “Jews” as individuals with three or four Jewish grandparents, and “Mixed breeds” as individuals with one or two Jewish grandparents. While “Jews” became “subjects of the state” and lost their German citizenship, as well as its affiliated rights, “Mixed

¹ “[...] sie sich niemals als Mitglied der jüdischen Rasse gefühlt, diese vielmehr verabscheut und bekämpft habe.” Hildegard Walbaum, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” March 4, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 2 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 2, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

² “[...] sie sich niemals als Mitglied der jüdischen Rasse gefühlt, diese vielmehr verabscheut und bekämpft habe.” Walbaum, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

³ The Nuremberg Laws were the Reich Citizenship Law—*Reichsbürgergesetz*—and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor—*Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre*.

breeds” were granted the title of “provisional citizens,” a legal limbo significantly reducing their rights.⁴ Ultimately, the Nuremberg laws created a legal divide between “Jews”—and “Jewish Mixed breeds”—and “Germans.”⁵

Hildegard Walbaum’s case raises the question of how German nationals categorized as “Jews” or “Mixed breeds” reacted to the implementation of the Nuremberg laws? In what ways did their definitions of “Germanness” and “Jewishness” change? How did they adapt, and which arguments did they use to counter their state-imposed racial categorization? Which status were they hoping to acquire, and which means was best for achieving their aims? This chapter explains the Nuremberg laws and their legal, social, and economic impact on those it categorized as “Jews” and “Mixed breeds,” and most importantly, the latter’s legal responses. To do so, I look into twenty-three reports made by senators in Hamburg concerning twenty-two different cases dated between 1935 and 1938. These reports are summaries of petitions made by, or in the name of, twenty-two individuals categorized as “Jews” or “Mixed breeds.” I closely examine their arguments to understand how they portrayed themselves to the Nazi state in the hopes of changing their categorization and avoiding persecution.

German “Jews” and “Mixed breeds” had lost their rights as German citizens but still spoke the civic language of “Germanness,” highlighting how they had fulfilled their duties and thus deserved the recognition of their rights. By doing so, they adopted the dichotomous understanding of “Germans” and “Jews”, which the Nazis created with the Nuremberg laws. Petitioners argued that their German national, cultural, social—and for some even religious—identities proved that their “Germanness” prevailed over their purported “Jewishness.” When compared to the requests made before 1935, this highlights the petitioners’ ability to understand and adapt the Nazi state’s language and logic of categorization to their own advantage.

⁴ *Vorläufige Reichsbürger*. (Meyer, “*Jüdische Mischlinge*,” 20-21)

⁵ Barkai and Mendes-Flohr, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, 210-216; Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 71-72; Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, 82-84; Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proofdr*, 59-61, 108; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 142, 144; Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 186-187; Fulbrook, *A History of Germany*, 72-73; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 29-38; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 74-80; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 52-53, 57-61; Meyer, “*Jüdische Mischlinge*,” 20-21; Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany*, 216; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 4-5; Wachsmann, “The Policy of Exclusion,” 137-139.

On September 15, 1935, the Nazis implemented the *Reich Citizenship Law* and the *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor*, collectively referred to as the Nuremberg Laws.⁶ The *Reich Citizenship Law* of September 15, 1935 institutionalized a racial definition of citizenship.⁷ It defined “subject of the state” (*Staatsangehöriger*), as “anyone who enjoys the protection of the German Reich and who, in return, has particular obligations to the Reich.”⁸ However, it granted “Reich citizenship” (*Reichsbürgerschaft*) only to a “subject who is of German or related blood, and who, by his conduct, demonstrates that he is both willing and suited to serve faithfully the German people and the Reich.”⁹ Therefore, “Jews” lost their citizenship and its associated rights, while “Mixed breeds” were granted the title of “provisional citizens” (*Vorläufige Reichsbürger*).¹⁰ The *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor*—also known as the *Blood Protection Law*—aimed to isolate “Jews” from German society by regulating all contact—physical, social, professional—between “Germans” and “Jews.”¹¹ It prohibited marriage between “Jews” and “nationals of German or related blood.”¹² Furthermore, it criminalized

⁶ Reich Citizenship Law—*Reichsbürgergesetz*—and the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor—*Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre*.

⁷ Reich Citizenship Law—*Reichsbürgergesetz*. Barkai and Mendes-Flohr, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, 210-211; Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 71-72; Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, 82-84; Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, 59-61, 108; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, The Years of Persecution*, 142; and Stoltzfus, 2001; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 29-32; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 74-80; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 60; N.S.D.A.P., “Reichsbürgergesetz,” September 15, 1935, Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blutschutzgesetz_v.15.9.1935_-_RGBI_I_1146gesamt.jpg; Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany*, 216; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 4-5.

⁸ Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 444.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Meyer, “*Jüdische Mischlinge*,” 20-21.

¹¹ Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor—*Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre*—*Blutschutzgesetz*.

Barkai and Mendes-Flohr, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, 211-213; Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 71-72; Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, 82-84; Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, 59-61, 108; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, The Years of Persecution*, 142; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 29; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 74-80; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 60; N.S.D.A.P., “Gesetz zum Schutz des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre,” September 15, 1935, Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blutschutzgesetz_v.15.9.1935_-_RGBI_I_1146gesamt.jpg; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blutschutzgesetz_v.15.9.1935_-_RGBI_I_1147.jpg; Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany*, 216; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 4-5.

¹² *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor*. “Article 1: Marriages between Jews and nationals of German or related blood are prohibited.” (Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 444)

extramarital relations between “Jews” and “nationals of German or related blood,” labeling them as “race defilement” (*Rassenschande*).¹³

On November 14, 1935, the first supplementary decree of the *Reich Citizenship Law* was enacted. It sought to define “Jews” as a racial group and did not take into consideration individuals’ self-identification. The Nazis defined “race” using the religious affiliations of individuals’ ancestors, often going back three or four generations. Their religious affiliations were believed to be good indicators of their “racial status,” because, as a race, “Jewishness” was deemed biologically transmittable. Therefore, people with one, two, three or more “Jewish grandparents” were categorized respectively as “Mixed breeds 2nd Degree,” “Mixed breeds 1st Degree,” and “Jews.”¹⁴ Whether the children, parents, grandparents, or even great-grandparents were born Christians or had converted to Christianity did not matter if they or their ancestors were once members of the Jewish religious community.¹⁵ Moreover, the supplementary decree stated that, “A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He has no right to vote on political matters and he cannot hold public office.”¹⁶ “Jews” were “subjects of the state” but no longer “citizens of the Reich.” It reversed the process of emancipation, whereby Jews were German citizens with full membership and equal rights. They were now second-class citizens.¹⁷

¹³ *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor*. “Article 2: Extramarital relations between Jews and nationals of German or related blood are prohibited.” (Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 444)

For more information about “race defilement,” see Chapter 3.

¹⁴ *First Supplementary decree of the Reich Citizenship Law*. Paragraph 2: “A Jewish Mischling is anyone who is descended from one or two grandparents who are racially full Jews. [...] A grandparent is considered a full-blooded Jew if he or she belonged to the Jewish religious community. [...] Paragraph 5: “A Jew is anyone who is descended from at least three grandparents who are racially full Jews. [...] (Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 445)

¹⁵ Barkai and Mendes-Flohr, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, 210-211; Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 71-72; Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, 82-84; Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, 59-61, 108; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, The Years of Persecution*, 142; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 32-38; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 74-80; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 61-62; N.S.D.A.P., “Reichsbürgergesetz;” Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany*; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haïne*, 4-5.

¹⁶ First Supplementary decree of the Reich Citizenship Law. Paragraph 4. Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 445.

¹⁷ Barkai and Mendes-Flohr, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, 210-211; Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 71-72; Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, 82-84; Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, 59-61, 108; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, The Years of Persecution*, 142, 144; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 29-38; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 74-80; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 60; Orlow, *A History of*

The Nuremberg laws defined “Germans” and “Jews” as mutually exclusive groups. However, by doing so, it also created the conditions for this divide to be transposed into reality. By isolating those considered to be “Jews” from “Germans” in the public sphere—e.g., at school, at work, in cultural centers—the Nazis aimed to create distance between “Jews” and “Germans” in the private sphere as well. Furthermore, by regulating all types of relations between “Jews” and “Germans,” the Nazis asserted their power over all aspects of life in Germany. They successfully created an atmosphere of fear, which dissuaded individuals from having contact with “Jews.” And by avoiding “Jews,” they—willingly or not—gave their consent to the regime’s measures.¹⁸

The anti-“Jewish” measures and policies isolating “Jews” from “Germans” were an integral part of the Nazis’ “Four-Year Plan,” which aimed at preparing Germany’s economy and army for war within four years’ time: 1936–1940. It followed two aims: race and space. It was portrayed as a racial war—to “clean” Germany, and potentially the rest of Europe, of “racially undesirable elements”—as well as a territorial war—to expand the territory of the *Reich* by conquering more land, referred to as “living space” (*Lebensraum*).¹⁹ Even before their rise to power, the Nazis had been blaming “Jews” for the economic, political, and social issues in Germany.²⁰ These antisemitic ideas presented “Jews” as a threat to Germany’s existence, and the annihilation of “Jews” as the only means to assure Germany’s survival.²¹

In this context, the Nuremberg laws opened the doors to a myriad of anti-“Jewish” measures aiming at the exclusion of “Jews” from German society. Yet, most of the Nazis’ laws and policies permitted individuals to request exemptions. The *Reich Citizenship Law* even stated, “The Führer and Reich Chancellor can grant exemptions.”²² Therefore, many German citizens

Modern Germany, 216; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 4-5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 36-37; Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, 84-86; Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 188-189; Fulbrook, *A History of Germany*, 72-73; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 62-66.

²⁰ For instance, the “Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy” theory stated that there was a pact between “Jewish” financial capitalists and Bolsheviks to conquer the world. This justified the contemporary intensification of discriminatory measures against “Jews” and a future war against Europe’s Jewry and the Soviet Union.

²¹ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 36-37; Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, 84-86; Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 188-189; Fulbrook, *A History of Germany*, 72-73; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 62-66.

²² *First Supplementary decree of the Reich Citizenship Law*. Paragraph 7: “The Führer and Reich Chancellor can grant exemptions from the regulations laid down in this supplementary decree.” (Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish*

categorized as “Jews” or “Mixed breeds” petitioned the Nazi state to change their categorization and be “freed from the Nuremberg laws,”²³ either requesting legal equality with “German citizens of German blood”²⁴ or seeking recognition as “Mixed breeds.”²⁵

In Hamburg, these petitions were evaluated by the Senate. It summarized the petitioners’ requests and arguments, as well as the evaluation of “experts.” Finally, it recommended either the acceptance or refusal of the request, and it sent the report to the Ministry of the Interior.²⁶ German historian Beate Meyer explains the evaluating process of the petitions in greater details:

The requests were collected by the Department of Domestic Affairs and the Police Department. They were then evaluated and signed by a senator—in Hamburg, this was done by Senators Richter, Prützmann, or von Allwörden. Next, they were transmitted to the State Office, which controlled the traffic of requests sent to the higher authorities of the Reich. Afterwards, they were transcribed in the form of letters from the Reich Governor of the Senate of Hamburg and transferred to the Reich and Prussian Minister of the Interior, later entitled the Reich Ministry of the Interior. Beforehand, the Division of Registration and Passport of the Police Department had gathered information about the petitioners, as well as their criminal records. The Gestapo [*Geheime Staatspolizei*—Secret State Police], the local branch of the NSDAP, and the regional administration of the NSDAP had also gathered information about the political reliability of the petitioners. [...] A summary of the request, as well as a recommendation—usually negative—from the senator or the Leader of the State Office, Senator Ahrens, was sent to the Ministry

Responses to Persecution, 445)

²³ *Antrag auf Befreiung von Vorschriften des Reichsbürgergesetzes—Befreiung gemäß SS 7 desr. 1. Verordnung zum Reichsbürgergesetz vom 14. 11. 1935.*

Philipp Bachmann, Gerd Bollert and Charlotte Bollert, Hans Christlieb, Anne Goerisch and Anne Blume, Inge Grünberg, Emil Hartogh, Erwin Hirsch-Schweigger, Erwin Jacobsen, Albert Levy, Walther Oldag, Walther Ottenstroer, Bertha Philipp, Hans Plaß, Kurt Prenzlau, Wilhelm Remé, Ferdinand and Lisa Riggers, Hans-Werner Salomon, Mathilde and Robert Vogel, Hildegard Walbaum, Fritz Waldau.

²⁴ *Antrag auf rechtliche Gleichstellung mit deutschblütigen deutschen Staatsangehörigen.*

Gerd Bollert and Charlotte Bollert, Hans Christlieb, Inge Grünberg, Erwin Hirsch-Schweigger, Erwin Jacobsen, Walther Oldag, Bertha Philipp, Hans Plaß, Wilhelm Remé, Ferdinand and Lisa Riggers, Hans-Werner Salomon, Mathilde and Robert Vogel, Hildegard Walbaum, Fritz Wildau.

²⁵ *Antrag auf Anerkennung als [jüdischer] Mischling [ersten Grades].*

Philipp Bachmann, Max Boddien and Erna Gericke, Anne Goerisch and Anne Blume, Emil Hartogh, Ernst Heilbut, Albert Levy, Walther Ottenstroer, Kurt Prenzlau.

²⁶ Berkemann and Lorenz, *Die Hamburger Juden im NS-Staat 1933 bis 1938/9. Monografie*, 473-474, 484-485; Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, 61-70.

of the Interior. The bureaucratic work necessary for this due process was accomplished at the regional level.²⁷

The highest authority in terms of “race determination” was the *Reich Office for Kinship Research*—renamed the *Reich Kinship Office* in 1940.²⁸ However, due to its work overload and the scarcity of its resources, regional authorities had to do most of the work before sending a petition to their offices.²⁹

The analysis of petitions in this chapter is based on summaries written by senators in Hamburg. Some were written by Senators Hans-Adolf Prützmann, Georg Ahrens, and Wilhelm von Allwörden, while most were the work of Senator Alfred Richter.³⁰ First, the reports stated the

²⁷ I translated and adapted the original German quote. Original quote: „Die Befreiungsgesuche wurden in der Innen- und Polizeibehörde gesammelt, mit Unterschrift der jeweiligen Senatoren Richter, Prützmann und von Allwörden an das Staatsamt weitergegeben, das den Verkehr mit den Reichsbehörden zu dieser Zeit regelte. Von dort wurden sie als Schreiben des Reichsstatthalters in Hamburg, Senat, an den Reichs- und Preußischen Minister des Innern, später das Reichsministerium des Innern, weitergeleitet. Zuvor war die Polizeibehörde, Abteilung Melde- und Paßpolizei, eingeschaltet worden, die Angaben zur Person und Familie sammelte sowie das Strafregister heranzog. Auskünfte über die politische Zuverlässigkeit wurden von der Gestapo, der NSDAP-Ortsgruppe sowie der Gauleitung der NSDAP eingeholt. [...] Eine Zusammenfassung des Antrages mit — in der Regel ablehnender — Empfehlung der für die Polizei zuständigen Senatoren bzw. des Leiters des Staatsamtes, Senator Ahrens, gelangte an das Innenministerium. Der bürokratische Aufwand dieses Verfahrens war also bereits auf regionaler Ebene erheblich.“ (Meyer, “*Jüdische Mischlinge*,” 106)

²⁸ Reich Office for Kinship Research—*Reichsstelle für Sippenforschung*. Reich Kinship Office—*Reichssippenamt* or RSA. This Office was part of the Reich Ministry of the Interior.

²⁹ Berkemann and Lorenz, *Die Hamburger Juden im NS-Staat 1933 bis 1938/9. Monografie*, 473-474, 484-485; Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, 61-70.

³⁰ Hans-Adolf Prützmann, 1901-1945. As a young adult, he joined the “Free Corps” (*Freikorps*)—a right-wing paramilitary militia. In 1929, he joined the SA and transferred to the SS in 1930. In 1933, he was appointed SS-Brigade leader (*Brigadeführer*) and in 1934, he was promoted to SS-Group leader (*Gruppenführer*). From 1937 until 1941, he was the “Higher SS- and Police leader” (*Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer*) of the SS Northwest Division in Hamburg. He then occupied the same position in the SS Northeast Division in Latvia, as well as in Ukraine and the USSR, from 1941 to 1944. In 1944, he was appointed General Inspector of Special Defense (*Generalinspekteur für Spezialabwehr*) in charge of the *Werwolf* taskforce. In 1945, he was captured by the Allies and committed suicide in May. (Ernst Klee, *Das Personenlexikon zum Dritten Reich. Wer war was vor und nach 1945.*, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2011).)

Georg Friedrich Ahrens, 1896–1974. In 1930, he became a member of the NSDAP. In 1931, he was elected Representative of the NSDAP in the Parliament of the City-State of Hamburg (*Hamburger Bürgerschaft*), and he was the chairperson of the faction and deputy of the faction leader Wilhelm von Allwörden. In 1933, he was promoted to the Senate Council (*Senatsrat*). He was the deputy of the District Leader (*Gauleiter*) and Governor of the Reich (*Reichsstatthalter*), Karl Kaufmann. Then he was promoted to State Secretary (*Staatssekretär*). In 1934, he was appointed Senator and Mayor of Hamburg. He became one of the most influential people in Hamburg under the Nazi regime. He stayed in charge of the Administration of Hamburg until 1945. He was arrested in 1945; in 1948, he was sentenced to six years in prison; and he was released in 1949. (Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte in Hamburg, ed., *Hamburg im Dritten Reich* (Hamburg: Wallstein Verlag, 2005).)

Wilhelm von Allwörden, 1892–1955. In 1925, he joined the NSDAP and became the head of propaganda for

petitioners' categorization as well as their citizenship status.³¹ The reports summarized the petitioners' ancestry and/or religious practices to justify their categorization.

These categorizations did not take into account the individuals' religious beliefs, self-identification, or belonging to a religious community. In fact, some German nationals who were categorized as "Jews" or "Mixed-breeds" but were baptized Evangelical Lutheran at an early age, or had never practiced Judaism.³² For instance, Hildegard Walbaum was categorized as a "Jewish

Altona and Schleswig-Holstein. In 1926, he also joined the SA. In 1928, he became head of the local branch of the NSDAP in Altona. In 1929, he was elected as NSDAP deputy for the Altona City Council (*Stadtverordnetenversammlung*). In 1930, he was promoted to district leader (*Gauleiter*) and Chairperson (*Geschäftsführer*) of the District Hamburg. From 1931 until 1933, he was the NSDAP faction leader at the Hamburg City-State Parliament (*Hamburgische Bürgerschaft*). In 1933, he joined the Hamburg Senate, as Senator of the Department of Welfare, then as Minister of Culture in Hamburg (*Kultursenator*). As such, he was in charge of the education system and schools in Hamburg. For instance, he oversaw the removal of "Jewish" students from the public schools. In 1938, he became Commissioner of the Harbour and Aryanisation (*Hafen- und Arisierungskommissar*). In 1939, he was promoted to the position of "Business Commissioner" (*Wirtschaftsbeauftragter*) for the Reich Governor. He was one of the most important decision makers in Hamburg under the Nazi regime. In 1942, he joined the Reich Ministry for the occupied Eastern territories as Head of the Economic Department (*Referent in der Wirtschaftsabteilung*). In 1943, he became SS-Group leader and Head of the main department "Administration" (*Leiter der Hauptabteilung "Verwaltung"*). In 1945, he was arrested and released in 1948. (Klee, *Das Personenlexikon zum Dritten Reich*)

Alfred Friedrich Carl Wilhelm Richter, 1895–1981. He joined the NSDAP in 1923. In 1930, he became the Chairperson (*Geschäftsführer*) of the NSDAP, and in 1931, he was elected as a representative of the NSDAP in the Hamburg City-State Parliament (*Hamburgische Bürgerschaft*). In 1933, he was promoted to Reich Commissioner (*Reichskommissar*) and Chief of Police (*Polizeiherr*) in Hamburg. He was also appointed to the Hamburg Senate. In 1938, he became Councillor for the Internal Administration in Hamburg (*Beigeordneter für die Hamburger Innenverwaltung*). In 1945, he was arrested, and he was released in 1947. (Katharina Tenti, "Alfred Richter," Archives, Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung. Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Hamburg. (blog), 2017, <http://www.hamburg.de/clp/dabeigewesene-dokumente/clp1/ns-dabeigewesene/onepage.php?BIOID=24&strasse=5781&qR=R>)

³¹ *Full-Jews*: Philipp Bachmann, Ernst Heilbut, Erwin Jacobsen, Albert Levy, Walther Ottenstrauer, Bertha Philipp, Kurt Prenzlau, Mathilde and Robert Vogel. — *Jewish Mixed breeds 1st degree*: Max Boddien and Erna Gericke, Gerd Bollert and Charlotte Bollert, Inge Grünberg, Erwin Hirsch-Schweigger, Walther Oldag, Hildegard Walbaum. — *Jewish Mixed breeds 2nd degree*: Hans Christlieb, Walther Oldag, Ferdinand and Lisa Riggers, Hans-Werner Salomon, Fritz Wildau. — "German state subjects"—*albeit not "of German blood"*: Max Boddien and Erna Gericke, Gerd Bollert and Charlotte Bollert, Walther Oldag, Hans-Werner Salomon, Fritz Wildau.

³² Max Boddien's maternal grandparents and Inge Grünberg's father were Jewish; thus, they were both categorized as "Jewish Mixed breeds 1st Degree," even though they were baptized Evangelical Lutheran at the age of 5 and 6, respectively. Emil Hartogh had been raised Evangelical Lutheran but was categorized as a "Full-Jew," because he had three "racially Jewish" grandparents.

Max Boddien and Erna Gericke, "1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von 'Mischlingen' nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen," June 1, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 1 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 1, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg; Inge Grünberg, "2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von 'Mischlingen' nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen," March 08, 1937 and June 29, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 2 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 2, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg; Emil Hartogh, "3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von 'Mischlingen' nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf

Mixed breed 1st Degree,” because her father’s parents were Jewish, even though her father had converted to Christianity in 1895.³³ Similarly, the “German citizen of German blood” Ferdinand Riggers petitioned in the name of his Evangelical Lutheran daughter, Lisa. She was categorized as a “Mixed breed 2nd Degree” because she had two Jewish maternal great-grandparents.³⁴ In these examples, the categorization was based on ancestors’ religious affiliations. Regardless of the fact that religion was perceived as a clear indicator of “Jewishness” in the past, under the Nazi regime, “Jewishness” was defined as a race, and one’s current religious affiliation had little or no impact on the decision. This is particularly clear in requests made by petitioners, whose families had left the Jewish religious community decades earlier and had converted to Christianity.³⁵ For instance, Wilhelm Remé was baptized Evangelical Lutheran by his uncle, the Pastor Richard Remé. But he had one “Jewish” maternal grandfather, and he was thus categorized as a “Jewish Mixed breed 2nd Degree.” Interestingly, this “Jewish” grandfather, Adolph Jacoby, had always declared himself Evangelical, and when allowed, he converted to this faith.³⁶

A striking example is the case of Hans and Margarethe Christlieb. These siblings were both baptized Evangelical Lutheran but were categorized as “Mixed breed 2nd Degree.” Their “Jewish”

Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” December 13, 1935 and December 16, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 3 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 3, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

³³ Walbaum, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

³⁴ Ferdinand Riggers and Lisa Riggers, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” March 15, 1937 and December 31, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 3 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 3, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

³⁵ Hans Plaß, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” February 1936 and November 23, 1936, 131-6_34 Band 1 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 1, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg; Hans-Werner Salomon, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” November 11, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 3 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 3, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.; Fritz Wildau, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” August 27, 1937 and November 11, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 3 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 3, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

³⁶ Wilhelm Remé, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” April 26, 1937 and September 07, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 3 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 3, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

paternal great-grandfather, Johann Friedrich, converted to the Evangelical Lutheran Church and married an “Aryan.” Of this marriage, they had two sons, the youngest one, Johannes Heinrich, born in 1856, was baptized at birth; therefore, his descendants were then considered “Aryans.” However, the oldest one, their grandfather, born in 1846, was first a member of the Jewish religious community and only converted to Christianity in 1854.³⁷ Interestingly, these two brothers were born of the same parents, they shared the same ancestry, but their descendants were categorized differently. In this case, it seems that religion could weigh more than blood. Most importantly, it highlights the mendacity of the Nazi pseudoscientific “racial” categorization.

On the other hand, the first supplementary decree of the *Reich Citizenship Law* stated that “Mixed breeds,” “[...] who belonged to the Jewish religious community [...]” when the law was issued, were to be deemed “Jews.”³⁸ For instance, “Mixed breeds” Walther Ottenstroer, Ernst Heilbut, and Albert Levy left the Jewish religious community respectively in November 1935, December 1935, and 1936, and thus, they were still considered “Full-Jews.”³⁹ This is yet another example of how behavior could matter as much as, if not more than, one’s racial category. Likewise, Bertha Philipp, being the child of a Jewish father and a mother “of German blood” (who was raised Evangelical but later joined to the “German-Israelite community”), was categorized as a “Full-Jew.” State officials further supported her categorization as a “Full-Jew,” because her deceased husband was a “Full-Jew.”⁴⁰ This can be explained by another section of the

³⁷ Hans Christlieb, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” October 30, 1937 and February 24, 1938, 131-6_34 Band 3 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 3, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

³⁸ *First Supplementary decree of the Reich Citizenship Law*. Paragraph 5: “[...] Also deemed to be a Jew is a Jewish Mischling who is descended from two fully Jewish grandparents, a. who belonged to the Jewish religious community at the time this law is issued, or joined the community at a later date, [...]” (Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 445)

³⁹ Ernst Heilbut, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” October 9, 1936 and December 19, 1936, 131-6_34 Band 1 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 1, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg; Albert Levy, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” May 5, 1936 and April 09, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 2 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 2, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg; Walther Ottenstroer, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” February 15, 1937 and April 14, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 2 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 2, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

⁴⁰ Bertha Philipp, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz

supplementary decree of the *Reich Citizenship Law*, which stated that “Mixed breeds” married to “Full-Jews” were also to be deemed “Jews.”⁴¹ While Philipp might have belonged to the Jewish religious community as a child, she considered herself non-religious (until 1936 when she became Evangelical Lutheran member) at the time the law was issued. But the fact that she had married a “Jew” made her personal religious beliefs questionable, according to the Nazis.

In some cases, it seems like leaving the Jewish religious community before the Nuremberg laws were passed was not sufficient. The “German of German blood” Philip Bachmann was raised Catholic, but converted to Judaism to marry his Jewish wife, Meta. In his petition, he stated that he and his children, Ilse and Werner, requested to leave the Jewish religious community in 1933. He even registered his children into Catholic schools and religious classes, and his wife converted to Christianity in 1937. However, as the children had previously attended Jewish schools—the Jewish private school of Dr. Löwenberg and the Jewish *Talmud-Tora* school in Hamburg—for most of their schooling, the authorities questioned Bachmann and his children’s motives for leaving the Jewish religious community.⁴²

Understandably, many Jewish petitioners left the Jewish religious community before and after the Nuremberg Laws to avoid persecution. Since the Nazis’ rise to power, the livelihood of those categorized as “Jews”—their businesses, their jobs—had been targeted, making it harder to survive economically. The Nuremberg laws defined and categorized every citizen. It made those categorized as “Jews” and “Mixed breeds” clear and visible targets for further discriminatory measures. For instance, “Jewish” doctors were not allowed to treat “non-Jews,” and the licenses of “Jewish” lawyers were revoked.⁴³ In response, many medical doctors petitioned to retain their

auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” June 28, 1937 and September 15, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 3 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 3, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

⁴¹ *First Supplementary decree of the Reich Citizenship Law*. Paragraph 5: “[...] Also deemed to be a Jew is a Jewish Mischling who is descended from two fully Jewish grandparents, [...] b. who was married to a Jew when the law was issued or marries one subsequently, [...]” (Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 445.)

⁴² Philipp Bachmann, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” August 24, 1936 and July 23, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 2 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 2, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

⁴³ Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, The Years of Persecution*, 144; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 74-80; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 57-61.

right to work for and with “Aryans.”⁴⁴ Others petitioned for the right to advance their career, such as Wilhelm Remé, who requested legal equality so he could take the junior judge exam.⁴⁵

The Nuremberg laws represented more than a loss of livelihood. They also impacted individuals’ personal lives, such as by prohibiting marriage and extramarital relations between “Jews” and people “of German or related blood.”⁴⁶ This forced some individuals to petition the state to gain the right to marry those who were categorized differently. For example, Max Boddien, categorized as a “Mixed breed 1st Degree,” requested permission to marry Erna Gericke, a “German citizen of German blood.”⁴⁷ The *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor* also forbade “Jews” from employing “non-Jews” under the age of forty-five in their household.⁴⁸ The latter restriction was based on the idea that “Jewish” men were not to be trusted around “German” women, such as maids, and “Jews” might entice “Germans” into committing “race defilement.”⁴⁹ In response, Robert Vogel, who had employed a “German citizen of German blood,” Klara Hahn, as a domestic servant in his household, petitioned the state to gain legal equality so he would not be persecuted for breaking the law.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Hartogh, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen;” Erwin Jacobsen, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” February 24, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 2 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 2, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg; Erwin Jacobsen, “Anklage gegen Erwin Jacobsen wegen ‘Rassenschande,’” 1939, 621-1/86_54, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg; Plaß, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen;” Robert Vogel and Mathilde Vogel, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” October 12, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 1 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 1, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

⁴⁵ Remé, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁴⁶ *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor*. Barkai and Mendes-Flohr, *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, 211-3; Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 71-2; Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, 82-4; Ehrenreich, *The Nazi Ancestral Proof*, 59-61, 108; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, The Years of Persecution*, 142, 158-61; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 74-80; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 60; Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany*, 216; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 4-5.

⁴⁷ Boddien and Gericke, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁴⁸ *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor*. “Article 3: Jews are not permitted to employ in their households female nationals who are of German or related blood and who are under 45.” Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 444.

⁴⁹ Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, The Years of Persecution*, 142; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 29; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 74-80; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 57-61; Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany*; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 4-5.

⁵⁰ Vogel and Vogel, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

Additionally, the *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor* forbade “Jews” from displaying a “*Reich* and national flag,” but it allowed them to display “the Jewish colors.”⁵¹ This insinuated that “Jews” had different national interests and allegiances than “Germans,” and by doing so, it portrayed “Jews” as disloyal and potentially dangerous. Not only had they lost their rights as German citizens, but also their sense of belonging to the German state. Moreover, their show of German nationalism was portrayed as undesirable. For instance, on May 21, 1935, “Jews” were expelled from the army, furthering the dichotomy between German citizens and “Jews.” Furthermore, the Nazis attempted to write them out of German history: in December 1935, the *Reich* Propaganda Ministry issued a decree forbidding the inclusion of the names of “Jewish” soldiers who died during World War I on memorials.⁵²

Petitioners therefore might have perceived their requests as means to prove their allegiance and dedication to Germany. Hans Gustav Plaß did not simply request equal rights as a doctor and a citizen. He also demanded that “both of his sons, who still belong to the *Hitler Youth* and the SA, be granted the right to remain in the NSDAP.”⁵³ More than a right, this was a proof of his desire for his sons to serve and fulfill their duties as citizens. As German nationals, many petitioners stressed that they perceived citizenship as more than an exchange of rights and duties but also a feeling of belonging to Germany. Dragostinova has shed light on a similar process amongst “Greeks” in Bulgaria. Individuals “spoke national”—i.e., used nationalist idioms—and adopted “emergency identities,” that is declared their allegiance to the national group, which could offer the most benefits.⁵⁴ For instance, they declared their loyalty and devotion to the nation, whichever was beneficial, and proved it by listing their contributions and giving examples of their exemplary

⁵¹ *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor*. “Article 4: Jews are forbidden to display the Reich and national flag or the colors of the Reich [but are] allowed to display the Jewish colors.” (Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 444.)

⁵² Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, The Years of Persecution*, 292-293; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 29; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 74-80; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 59-60; Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany*; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 4-5.

⁵³ The Hitler Youth—*Hitlerjugend*—was as youth organization of the Nazi party. The SA—*Sturmabteilung*, Storm troopers—and the SS—*Schutzstaffel*, Protection Squadron—were paramilitary units of the Nazi party.

“seinen beiden Söhnen das Recht zu zuerkennen, in der NSDAP., welcher sie als Hitlerjunge bzw. als S.A.-Mann noch immer angehören, weiter verbleiben zu können.” Plaß, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁵⁴ Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*. See also: Kotkin, “Speaking Bolshevik,” 198–237; Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*.

behavior as citizens. This same strategy was adopted by German citizens categorized as “Jews” in Nazi Germany. According to Dragostinova, this shows that, “[...] ordinary people were not simply objects of state-sponsored national policies but were active agents that shaped the national discourse and practice to serve their needs and priorities.”⁵⁵ The analysis of petitions to the Nazi regime sheds light on the petitioners’ ability to understand and maneuver the state ideology to their own advantage.

Declaring one’s “Germanness” was a popular tool used by petitioners to prove their patriotism. They defined it as a personal feeling. For instance, Inge Grünberg and Fritz Wildau stated that they “felt like Germans.”⁵⁶ Furthermore, they often referred to it as values passed down through their parents’ education. Hans Plaß indicated that “his parents raised him with core German values (*kerndeutsch*).” “He had always felt German and acted accordingly.”⁵⁷ Similarly, Max Boddien stated that “his family had always been nationalistically oriented.”⁵⁸ Finally, petitioning for his daughter Lisa, Ferdinand Riggers made sure to mention that he had raised her “in the German spirit.”⁵⁹ While the Nazis argued that “Germanness” was biologically inherited, the petitioners highlighted how they acquired it as a family legacy. Here, petitioners sought to counter the idea that “Germanness” ran through one’s veins, as well as to prove that it was acquired through education and demonstrated through patriotic actions. By redefining “Germanness” in cultural terms, they put themselves on equal grounds with “Aryans,” justified their claims to it, and maintained their value as fellow German patriots.

For many petitioners, this legacy of “German values” extended to the political realm. In this vein, they stated their support for right-wing politics and national-socialist ideas.⁶⁰ For

⁵⁵ Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*, 13.

⁵⁶ Grünberg: “[...] sie sich als christliche Deutsche fühle.” Wildau: “er [...] sich stets als Deutscher gefühlt habe.” Grünberg, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen,” Wildau, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁵⁷ “[...] er von seinen Eltern kerndeutsch erzogen sei, si[ch] stets als Deutscher gefühlt und entsprechend gehandelt ha[t].” Plaß, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁵⁸ “Seine Familie sei immer national eingestellt gewesen.” Boddien and Gericke, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁵⁹ “Er habe sein Kind nur im deutschen Geiste erzogen.” Riggers and Riggers, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁶⁰ Kurt Prenzlau, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” May 19, 1936 and March 30, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 2 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 2, Staatsarchiv der Freien und

instance, Robert Vogel claimed that he had always “served the interests of the fight against Marxism and contributed to setting up the spiritual foundations of the Third Reich.”⁶¹ Furthermore, many highlighted their contributions to the national-socialist movement, especially in the years before 1933.⁶² And many showed great devotion to the cause. Since the Nazis’ rise to power, Wilhelm Remé had been volunteering his managerial skills, as well as legal expertise to various organizations linked to the Party.⁶³ Moreover, Robert Vogel demonstrated to the authorities that “[...] all of his feelings and aspirations are directed towards the promotion of the Reich’s military-political interests; this is a logical continuation of his spiritual attitude[...]” towards National-Socialism.⁶⁴ Actually, at the time of his request, he was working on “an invention of vital importance” to the army.⁶⁵ Finally, those who did not have a personal link to the NSDAP, made connections within their families. For instance, Max Boddien highlighted the fact that his brother joined the NSDAP in 1930, as well as the SA later on.⁶⁶

Hansestadt Hamburg; Vogel and Vogel, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁶¹ “Abgesehen von seiner aktiven Teilnahme am Weltkriege habe er auch seitdem sich stets fördernd, beratend und unter aktiven Einsatz seiner Person an allen Bestrebungen beteiligt, die der Bekämpfung des Marxismus dienen und die geistigen Grundlagen für die Errichtung des 3. Reiches schufen.” Vogel and Vogel, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁶² Prenzlau, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen;” Walther Oldag, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” February 12, 1937, 131-6_34 Band 3 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 3, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg; Vogel and Vogel, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁶³ Remé volunteered for the Hamm-Nord District management office of the NSDAP/*Kreisleitung Hamm-Nord der NSDAP*. Hamm-Nord is a sub-district of the administrative district of Hamburg-Mitte part of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. He was also a solicitor and a legal advisor (“*Rechtsreferent*”/“*Rechtsberater*”) for the NSDAP Foreign Organization Service for Seafaring in Hamburg (*NSDAP Auslandsorganisation Amt Seefahrt in Hamburg*), the German Work Front Foreign Organization for Maritime Traffic in Bremerhaven and Wesermünde (*Deutschen Arbeitsfront Auslandsorganisation Seeschiffahrt in Bremerhaven/Wesermünde*), and the Subsection of the NSDAP’s Foreign Organization Service for Seafaring in Bremerhaven (*Unterabschnitt Bremerhaven der NSDAP Außlandsorganisatton Amt Seefahrt*). Remé, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁶⁴ “Ebenso ist es Tatsache, daß auch heute noch sein ganzes Fühlen und Trachten auf die Förderung der wehrpolitischen Belange des Reichs gerichtet ist, in folgerichtiger Fortsetzung seiner geistigen Haltung, die ihn in den Reihen der Freikorpskämpfer marschieren ließ und seine Angehörigkeit zum Stahlhelm bestimmte. ” Vogel and Vogel, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁶⁵ “Dr. V. arbeitet gegenwärtig an einer Erfindung von heereswichtiger Bedeutung, [...]” Vogel and Vogel, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁶⁶ Boddien and Gericke, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

For some, believing in or supporting the NSDAP was not limited to politics. For instance, Inge Grünberg stated that “she lived in accordance with the values of National Socialism.”⁶⁷ Furthermore, Bertha Philipp not only stated that “she felt like a National Socialist,”⁶⁸ but also that she could only live in a “spiritually related world of ideas,” in which she could use her writing skills to trigger the “people’s interests.”⁶⁹ Pointing to one’s possible contribution to the NSDAP was another means to argue for legal equality. Hans-Werner Salomon, planning to study engineering, stated that he would love to join the Nazi Student Organization during his studies. However, it required its members to be legally equal to “Aryans.”⁷⁰ Historian Tara Zahra, in her case study of German and Czech nationalists’ battle over children’s education in the Bohemian Lands, also reported the conflation between National-Socialism and “Germanness.” The Nazis conflated the terms “Nazi” and “German” and defined “Germanness” as loyalty to and belief in National-Socialism and its values, which pressured Germans in the Bohemian Lands to join the Nazi Party to prove that they were “true Germans.”⁷¹ Thus, we could deduce that petitioners might have believed that proving their devotion to the Nazi Party was a means to show their loyalty to Germany.

Yet the greatest contribution was to fight for Germany. The Nazis held in high regard German veterans of World War I. In this respect, they granted exemptions on the basis of military service during the First World War and recognized former service to the state. Consequently, petitioners highlighted their service in the German army during World War I. Kurt Prenzlau, Ferdinand Riggers, and Robert Vogel fought as soldiers, while Erwin Jacobsen participated as a doctor.⁷² Hans Plaß was also part of the medical corps, and he added that he was enthusiastic at

⁶⁷ “Sie lebe ganz im Sinne des Nationalsozialismus.” Grünberg, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁶⁸ “[...] sie sich als Nationalsozialistin fühle [...]” Philipp, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁶⁹ “seelisch verwandten Ideenwelt” Philipp, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁷⁰ *NS-Studentenbund*. Salomon, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁷¹ Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*, 201-202.

⁷² Jacobsen, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen;” Jacobsen, “Anklage gegen Erwin Jacobsen wegen ‘Rassenschande;’” Prenzlau, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen;” Riggers and Riggers, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen;” Vogel and Vogel, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

the idea of being a soldier.⁷³ Indeed, it was with great pride that he was awarded the “Iron Cross 2nd Class,” the “Hanseatic Cross of Hamburg,” and the “Cross of Honour for Combatants.”⁷⁴ Many petitioners listed their military medals and decorations to prove not only their devotion to Germany—and readiness to fight for their country—but also their zeal and dedication to the task. Emil Hartogh stated that he received a “National Decoration Awarded for War Aid” and an “Honour Cross for Combatants” for his participation in the World War.⁷⁵

Petitioners also underlined their various military-related contributions to the German state. For instance, after his military service, Ferdinand Riggers joined the Police Force in Hamburg. At the time of his request, he had been promoted to Sergeant. Petitioning for his daughter, Lisa, he emphasized the fact that, “since his most noble aspiration has always been to serve his fatherland, the idea of seeing his child put aside to favor German children of German blood was intolerable to him.”⁷⁶ This highlighted the fact that he had proudly fulfilled his duties to his country, and thus expected his children to be granted equal rights. Categorized as a “German citizen of German blood,” he had not lost his citizenship and its associated rights and could use the civic argument of duties and rights. While this argument was often used by German “Jews” before the Nuremberg laws, it had vanished from their requests afterwards.

However, the idea that rights would be granted to those who fulfill their duties stayed in the minds of most petitioners. Those who were too young to have fought during the First World War would underline their recent involvement in the German state and its military. Hans-Werner Salomon pointed to his long-standing involvement with the *Pan-German Youth Movement* and the *Hitler Youth* before and after the Nazis’ rise to power.⁷⁷ Furthermore, he volunteered for the *Reich*

⁷³ Plaß, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁷⁴ Eisernes Kreuz II. Klasse—Hamburgische Hanseaten-Kreuz—Ehrenkreuz für Frontkämpfer. Plaß, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁷⁵ *Verdienstkreuz für Kriegshilfe*—Ehrenkreuz für Kriegsteilnehmer. Hartogh, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁷⁶ “Da von jeher sein vornehmstes Streben gewesen sei, seinem Vaterlande zu dienen, sei ihm der Gedanke unerträglich, sein Kind vor deutschblütigen Stämmigen zurückgestellt zu sehen.” Riggers and Riggers, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁷⁷ The Pan-German Youth Movement—*Großdeutschen Jugendbewegung*—was a youth organization in the Weimar Republic, which was authoritarian and monarchist, as well as politically right-wing and conservative.

Labour Service and joined the *Wehrmacht* in 1935, where he served until 1937.⁷⁸ Cleverly, petitioners who had been unable to serve in the military highlighted their services to the German state; while others included their fathers' or brothers' military accomplishments.⁷⁹ This latter strategy was often used by women petitioners. Since they were not allowed to join the army themselves, they would attempt to get the benefits by proxy. Indeed, the Nazis had created exemptions for individuals whose son or father had died during World War I. Therefore, such requests were not as far-fetched as they might seem. For instance, Inge Grünberg proudly noted that her father was a combatant from 1914 to 1918.⁸⁰ And Hildegard Walbaum mentioned that her father, Otto, died on September 12, 1915 due to an injury he sustained in Galicia during the First World War, while working as a doctor in the medical corps.⁸¹

Moreover, some petitioners included a history of their family's military accomplishments in the name of Germany, or even of Prussia. For example, Wilhelm Remé's maternal grandfather participated in the Franco-Prussian war (1870/71) as a musketeer.⁸² Hildegard Walbaum also highlighted the loss of her paternal grandfather, Siegfried, who also served in the medical corps as a doctor during the First World War, and of her paternal great-grandfather, Abraham, who served 17 years in the 11th Royal Prussian Hussar regiment.⁸³ The Walbaum family tree truly impressed Senator Richter of the Senate of Hamburg. He noted that the "personal disposition of [Hildegard Walbaum's] paternal forefathers—their display of patriotic and German convictions by participating in the World Wars—could not be described as Jewish."⁸⁴ In the Senator's eyes, this

⁷⁸ The Reich Labour Service—*Reichsarbeitsdienst*—was the Reich's official labour service, which started as an agency to fight against unemployment. Quickly, it expanded its goals: it militarized and indoctrinated the workforce. Starting in June 1935, men between the age of 18 and 25 had to serve six months in the Reich Labour Service before their military service.

The *Wehrmacht* was the name of the unified German armed forces in Nazi Germany between 1935 and 1946.

Salomon, "3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

⁷⁹ Remé, "3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

⁸⁰ Grünberg, "2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

⁸¹ Walbaum, "2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

⁸² Remé, "3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

⁸³ Walbaum, "2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

⁸⁴ "Die charakterliche Veranlagung ihrer Vorfahren väterlicherseits könne insofern, als diese verantwortliche Ämter bekleidet und ihre vaterländische und deutsche Gesinnung durch ihre Teilnahme am Weltkriege bewiesen

showed that although Walbaum's paternal ancestors were Jewish, they shared core "German" values, which they have passed down to her.

Many petitioners attempted to show how they acquired "Germanness" through education or social contact. In this vein, many highlighted their relationships with "Aryans" as proof of their belonging to German culture and society. For instance, Albert Levy stated that he only had Christian friends and acquaintances. Furthermore, he stressed his family's "Germanness" by sharing that his three brothers were married to Evangelical Lutheran women.⁸⁵ Similarly, some petitioners stressed the fact that they had only married men or women "of Aryan descent." This argument was used especially by individuals in their second, third, or even fourth marriages, to truly shed light on the marital pattern. For instance, Erwin Jacobsen and Hans Plaß were respectively in their second and third marriage, and all of their wives were "of German blood."⁸⁶ Likewise, Emil Hartogh was married twice to women "of Aryan descent." Moreover, he emphasized the aptness of his choice, by mentioning that his second wife was a volunteer matron at the military hospital in Wandsbek during the First World War and received the Red Cross medal.⁸⁷

This tendency to show themselves as "Germans," and deeply integrated into German society, was often accompanied with their distancing themselves from "Jewishness." As the Nuremberg laws institutionalized the idea that "Jews" and "Germans" were profoundly different, petitioners applied the same dichotomous vision. Meanwhile, those raised in the Jewish faith attempted to separate Judaism as a religion from "Jewish ways of life." Walther Ottenstroer was "raised in the Jewish faith," but he maintained that "his parents' ways of life were in no way Jewish," and that, "they only celebrated the holidays of the Evangelical Church."⁸⁸ Some simply

haben, nicht als jüdisch bezeichnet werden." Walbaum, "2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

⁸⁵ "[...] er nur mit christlichen Freunden und Bekannten verkehrt habe [...]" Levy, "2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

⁸⁶ Jacobsen, "2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen;" Plaß, "1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

⁸⁷ *Roten Kreuz Medaille*. Hartogh, "3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

⁸⁸ "Er wurde auch im jüdischen Glauben erzogen. Ottenstroer begründet sein Gesuch insbesondere damit, daß die gesamte Lebenseinstellung seiner Eltern in keiner Weise jüdisch sei, und nur die Feste der evangelischen Kirche gefeiert würden." Ottenstroer, "2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

stated that they never had any connections to Judaism and/or to the Jewish religious community.⁸⁹ Others swore that they were unaware of their “Jewish roots.” For instance, Max Boddien maintained that he did not know that his mother was “Jewish.” Furthermore, he assured the authorities that, “he was not influenced by the Jewish religion nor its customs, and that he was raised Christian.”⁹⁰ Interestingly, many stated that Judaism was foreign to them.⁹¹ Inge Grünberg stated that, “she had never learned Jewish manners and customs,” and that, “Judaism was completely alien to her.”⁹² Some petitioners went further and adopted the Nazis’ negative attitude towards “Jewishness.” Fritz Wildau stated that, “he felt like Judaism was foreign and negative.”⁹³ Hildegard Walbaum declared that, “she never felt like a member of the Jewish race; in fact, she rather abhorred it and fought against it.”⁹⁴ Such examples recall the work of sociologist Rogers Brubaker, who explains that ethnicity—or race or nationalism or religious identity—can be a tool, which individuals overcommunicate, i.e., intentionally emphasize, or undercommunicate, i.e., intentionally downplay, depending on the desired outcomes.⁹⁵ In the context of his research in post-1990 Cluj in Romania, Hungarian and Romanian identities were flexibly used to serve individuals’ interests. In the case studied here, this dynamic was also at work, with those categorized as “Jews” downplaying their “Jewishness” as a means to survive but maybe also out of real conviction.

Thus, while some petitioners might have truly shared the Nazis’ antisemitism, others used it as a strategy. Philipp Bachmann, petitioning for legal equality for his children, Ilse and Werner, resorted to it in his second request after his first petition failed. First, he downplayed his children’s

⁸⁹ Plaß, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen;” Vogel and Vogel, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁹⁰ “Er sei von der jüdischem Religion und Sitte nicht beeinflusst und christlich erzogen werden.” Boddien and Gericke, “1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁹¹ “Er will dartun daß er jedem jüdischen Denken und Trachten innerlich völlig fremd gegenübersteht.” Salomon, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁹² “In ihrem Elternhause habe sie jüdische Sitten und Gebräuche nicht kennen gelernt und stehe dem Judentum völlig fremd gegenüber.” Grünberg, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁹³ “[...] daß er dem Judentum völlig fremd und ablehnend gegenüberstehe und sich stets als Deutscher gefühlt habe.” Wildau, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁹⁴ “[...] sie sich niemals als Mitglied der jüdischen Rasse gefühlt, diese vielmehr verabscheut und bekämpft habe.” Walbaum, “2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁹⁵ Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*, 222, 224, 228.

Jewish education. He stated that Ilse and Werner were baptized Catholic in 1936, but they started their Catholic religious instruction in 1935. He clarified that while his son attended the *Talmud-Tora-Schule*, a Jewish school, from 1934 to 1938, he first went to *Jahn Schule*, a public school, from 1929 to 1934.⁹⁶ Moreover, in 1938, he switched to the Catholic community school in Hamburg. Then, Bachmann highlighted that Judaism—as a religion and a set of values—was foreign to his children. He noted that the principal of the *Talmud-Tora* school was surprised by how little Werner knew about Judaism, and that Jewish teachings seemed “fully foreign” to him, proving that Werner had not been raised Jewish nor been “under Jewish influences.”⁹⁷ Second, Bachmann had to justify his own conversion to Judaism. He astutely played into the Nazis’ own fears of “Jews” as threats. He argued that he was forced to convert to Judaism by his father-in-law. Furthermore, as early as June 24, 1933, as if saved by the Nazis’ arrival in power, he and his children left the Jewish religious community.⁹⁸ In the end, the state agreed to categorize his children as “Mixed breeds 1st Degree,” and he and his children survived the Second World War. It is safe to assume that Bachmann’s request to change his children’s categorization played an important role in their survival.⁹⁹

What truly saved Bachmann and his children was not his arguments, but rather the fact that they had left the Jewish religious community in 1933. By 1937, arguments defining “Germanness” as values and behaviors, which can be taught and acquired, were met with reports from “experts”

⁹⁶ *Jahn Schule* was a public school—*Volkschule*—and was situated in an area with a large “Jewish” population. (Meyer, “*Jüdische Mischlinge*,” 192)

⁹⁷ “[...] Werner Bachmann nicht jüdisch erzogen ist oder unter jüdischen Einfluß gestanden hat, ferner daß ihm die jüdische Religionslehre vollkommen fremd war. [...]” Philipp Bachmann, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen, Anträge von ‘Mischlingen’ nach dem Reichsbürgergesetz auf Zuerkennung der Reichsbürgerschaft, Prüfung von Staatsangehörigkeiten, Ausweisungen,” February 1, 1938 and March 15, 1938, 131-6_34 Band 3 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S14052 Akte 34 Band 3, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

⁹⁸ Bachmann, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

⁹⁹ Unfortunately, his wife, Meta, was categorized as a “Full-Jew.” In July 1942, she was deported to the ghetto of Theresienstadt, and in May 1944, she was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, where she died

Bachmann, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen;” Bundesarchiv and the International Tracing Service, “Meta Stern,” in *Gedenkbuch. Opfer der Verfolgung der Juden unter der nationalsozialistischen Gewaltherrschaft in Deutschland 1933-1945* (Koblenz: Bundesarchiv, 1986), in Yad Vashem - The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, *The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names*, <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=11460627&ind=0>

at the *National Health Department*.¹⁰⁰ They evaluated the petitioners' physical appearance and psychological qualities. For instance, they described Hildegard Walbaum as calm and sensible but also noted a certain arrogance about her. Thus, they concluded that even though it appeared that her mother's education and regular contact with "Aryans" had an influence on her, it could not justify the granting of an exemption.¹⁰¹ They also rejected Max Boddien's request to marry his fiancée "of German blood," because he showed "a series of Jewish racial markers."¹⁰² Similarly, the "experts" stated that while Fritz Wildau did not show any "psychological characteristics which would be considered Jewish," he supposedly had "a series of Near Eastern racial markers," a synonym for "Jewish" in the Nazi bureaucracy.¹⁰³ The petitioners' attempts to define "Germanness" in cultural terms failed against the Nazis' racial definitions; thus, they needed to adapt their arguments and learn how to use the racial discourse to their advantage.

In fact, some petitioners were successful in their requests, and the evaluation from the "experts" seemed to have helped. For instance, Ferdinand Riggers—a "German citizen of German blood" petitioning for his daughter Lisa—stated that her physical appearance and character descended entirely from him. The evaluating doctor from the *National Health Department* described Lisa as a "prototype of the northern girl."¹⁰⁴ He maintained that she did not exhibit any "Near Eastern facial features," even though "her full lips made her look Jewish."¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, Lisa did not seem "atypical, on the contrary, she made a nice, friendly, modest, and intelligent impression" on him.¹⁰⁶ Senator Prützmann believed that, "thanks to her ancestors of German blood, she inherited a valuable racial heritage."¹⁰⁷ Moreover, "the appearance of very few signs of

¹⁰⁰ "Staatliche Gesundheitsamt"

¹⁰¹ Walbaum, "2. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

¹⁰² "[...] eine Reihe jüdischer Rassenmerkmale [...]" Boddien and Gericke, "1. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

¹⁰³ "[...] eine Reihe vorderasiatischer Rassemerkmale [...]" Charakterlich seien keine Züge auffindbar, welche als jüdisch zu werten seien." Wildau, "3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

¹⁰⁴ "[...] Lisa Riggers als den Prototyp des nordischen Mädchens [...]" Riggers and Riggers, "3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

¹⁰⁵ "[...] vorderasiatische Gesichtszüge [...]" die Mundpartie durch die vollen Lippen etwas jüdisch wirke." Riggers and Riggers, "3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

¹⁰⁶ "Ebenso sei sie nicht artfremd, sondern mache einen netten, freundlichen, bescheidenen und intelligenten Eindruck." Riggers and Riggers, "3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen."

¹⁰⁷ "Lisa Riggers stammt [...] durch ihre deutschblütigen Vorfahren von rassisch hochwertigen Volksgut ab."

Jewishness proved that the Jewish blood mixture seems to have been eliminated.”¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Lisa’s father, not only raised her in accordance with National Socialist values, but, as a policeman, he had also proven his support for the Nazi state.¹⁰⁹ For these reasons, Senator Prützmann believed that Riggers’s request should be granted.

Senator Prützmann also recommended Wilhelm Remé’s request. Remé had collected a few glowing references from the President of the Hanseatic Higher Regional Court in Hamburg, the Director of the Industrial Tribunal, and the District Court Judge Möller, stating that he was a hard worker, devoted to serving the German people, and ready to exert himself in service to the new state.¹¹⁰ Additionally, the evaluating doctor from the *National Health Department* guaranteed that he had no “Jewish features or characteristics.”¹¹¹ Therefore, Senator Prützmann recommended Remé’s request and added that, Remé’s “paternal ancestors [‘of German blood’] have undoubtedly contributed to the German intellectual life for more than a hundred years.”¹¹²

Unfortunately, most petitions were not successful. Many petitioners did not survive the economic and professional pressure they were put under, such as Emil Hartogh, who committed suicide in November 1938. Like many “Full-Jews” in “mixed marriages,” the Nuremberg laws led him to believe that his family would be better off without him. Other petitioners opted for emigration, which was not accessible to all, due to its cost and many bureaucratic obstacles. In September 1938, the Vogel family emigrated to Sweden and then to Lima, Peru, where they established themselves permanently. In the same year, Erwin Jacobsen was accused of “race defilement” and imprisoned in the Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp. He was released in May 1939 under the condition of his immediate emigration. Without a choice, he fled to England, where he was arrested as an “enemy alien” and sent to internment camps on the Isle of Man and in Australia.

Riggers and Riggers, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

¹⁰⁸ “Hinzukommt, daß die jüdische Blutsbeimischung bis auf geringe äußerliche Merkmale charakterlich vollkommen ausgeschaltet zu sein scheint.” Riggers and Riggers, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

¹⁰⁹ Riggers and Riggers, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

¹¹⁰ Präsident des Hanseatischen Oberlandesgerichts in Hamburg, Arbeitsgerichtsdirektor, Amtsrichter Möller. Remé, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

¹¹¹ “Jüdische Merkmale oder Charakterzüge [...]” Remé, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

¹¹² “Die Vorfahren des Antragstellers väterlicherseits haben ohne Zweifel seit mehr als 100 Jahren am deutschen Geistesleben regen Anteil gehabt.” Remé, “3. Ein- und Ausbürgerungen.”

In 1946, he was finally reunited with his wife and two sons in England.¹¹³

In 1935, the Nazis intensified their anti-“Jewish” measures and further excluded “Jews” economically, politically, and socially. This forced many to emigrate, while others hoped they might be permitted to stay in their homeland. In this ever more exclusionary world, those categorized as “Jews” and “Mixed breeds” made requests to the state. However, unlike in the first few years of the Nazi regime, they had lost their citizenship—or became “provisional citizens”—and were deprived of most of their rights. They could no longer ask for exemptions on the basis of their rights as equal citizens. Nevertheless, the arguments used in their requests showed that they still believed that they were Germans. They still defined “Germanness” as a civic identity based on an exchange of duties and rights. But they also enlarged its definition to encompass national, cultural, social—and for some even religious—affiliations, behaviors, and practices, all of which proving that their “Germanness” prevailed over their purported “Jewishness.” However, by doing so, they were constrained to use the dichotomy between “Germans” and “Jews,” which the Nazis implemented with the Nuremberg laws. In comparison with the petitions made before 1935, one notes the petitioners’ ability to adapt their definitions of “Jewishness” and “Germanness” to fit the Nazis’ changing understandings of these categories.

Since the Nazis’ rise to power, the arguments used by the “Mixed-breeds” were very similar to those of “Jews.” Both “groups” hoped to regain their rights as equal German citizens. However, the Nuremberg laws not only divided “Jews” and “Germans,” but also separated the “Mixed breeds” into a “third race.” They were in a state of uncertainty, neither “Jews” nor “Germans.” Already, we noted that “Mixed breeds” petitioners used antisemitism to distance themselves from “Jews.” After 1937, as the war approached, the anti-“Jewish” measures quickly intensified, and the “Jews” started being marked with “Jewish” identity cards, the letter “J” in their passports, and eventually the “Star of David.” Did the strategies and arguments of petitioners categorized as “Jews” and “Mixed-breeds” change? Were their arguments still based on proving their merit, or did they discover new arguments and methods to convince the Nazi officials?

¹¹³ Anna von Villiez, *Mit aller Kraft verdrängt. Entrechtung und Verfolgung „nicht arischer“ Ärzte in Hamburg 1933 bis 1945*, ed. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum and Andreas Brämer, vol. Studien zur jüdischen Geschichte. Band 11. (München - Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz Verlag, 2009), 301-302.

III. “My attitude towards State and People is absolutely positive; it is not only learned, but also genetically inherited.”¹

“Jewish” and “Mixed breed” German nationals fighting for their “Aryanness,” 1938–1941

In 1943, Rudolf Briske petitioned the authorities to gain legal equality with people “of German blood.” While he, as well as his parents, were Evangelical Lutheran, he was categorized as a “Mixed breed 1st Degree,” because of his Jewish paternal ancestors. His father fought in the First World War and was a fervent German patriot, and his paternal grandfather was “the most willing Prussian soldier in the war of 1870/71. [...] He was an enthusiastic German his entire life.”² Briske added, “Consequently, during this war [Second World War], my brother and I were the third generation to fight on the same battlefields of France.”³ Briske had been a devoted German soldier for many years, when in 1940, he was dismissed due to his descent. He wrote, “Today, as every healthy man is required to contribute to the victory more urgently than ever, it is my dearest wish to be a soldier again [...] and now or later, to receive full equal rights as a German.”⁴ He insisted that, “I have always felt German and lived accordingly, identified as a National-Socialist, and never acted in any *prosemitic* [emphasis added] manner.”⁵ Finally, Briske’s most important argument was that his “Germanness” ran through his veins, that his family’s fervent nationalism was passed down through a rigorous patriotic education, as well as genetically inherited. His genetic make-up was responsible for his “German” characteristics and lifestyle, which, he argued,

¹ “Meine Einstellung zu Staat und Volk ist absolut positiv; sie ist nicht nur anerzogen, sondern auch blutmässig bedingt. [...] Charakter, Erscheinungsbild und Lebensführung zeigen, dass die arischen Eigenschaften in mir eindeutig überwiegen.” Rudolf Briske, “Biographische Aufzeichnungen Enthält: Unterlagen zum Lebensverlauf Rudolf Briske, o.A.” September 28, 1940; June 3, 1943; July 17, 1943; May 29, 1989; June 3, 1989, ED 363/18, Institut für Zeitgeschichte.

² “Mein jüdischer Grossvater Julius Briske nahm als begeisterter Preusse als Kriegsfreiwilliger am Kriege 1870/71 teil, u.a. am 19. Januar 1871 an der Schlacht bei St. Quentin. [...] Er war zeitlebens begeisterter Deutscher.” Briske, “Biographische.”

³ “Somit kämpften mein Bruder und ich in diesem Kriege in dritter Generation auf den gleichen Schlachtfeldern Frankreichs.” Briske, “Biographische.”

⁴ “Heute, wo jeder gesunde Mann zur Erzwingung des Sieges dringender denn je benötigt wird, ist es mein heisser Wunsch, wieder Soldat zu werden [...] und jetzt oder später die volle Gleichberechtigung als Deutscher zu erhalten.” Briske, “Biographische.”

⁵ “Ich habe mich stets als Deutscher gefühlt und entsprechend gelebt, mich als Nationalsozialist bekannt und niemals prosemitisch gehandelt.” Briske, “Biographische.”

were clear indicators of the predominance of his “Aryan” genes.⁶

Rudolf Briske’s case raises important questions. After years of Nazi racial categorization and propaganda, how did those categorized as “Jews” or “Mixed breeds” adapt to the changing definitions of “Germanness” and how did their understandings of “Jewishness” and “Aryanness” change? With intensifying anti-“Jewish” measures and the start of war, which status could protect them from deportation and death? How did they portray themselves to the state, and how could they convince the authorities to change their state-imposed categorization?

To answer these questions, we can examine the arguments used by “Jewish” and “Mixed breed” petitioners to the Nazi state between 1937 and 1941. Several dynamics emerge. The Nazis implemented anti-“Jewish” measures aimed at identifying “Jews”—such as “Jewish” identity cards and badges—and to isolate them from the rest of society. Furthermore, the beginning of the Second World War allowed the Nazis to create a “war frame,” portraying “Jews” as enemies of Germany and threats to the German people. Moreover, the Nazis conflated “Germans” and “Aryans”; thus, race was not only the determining factor for citizenship but also for access to “German” values and culture. This served to portray “Jewishness” and “Germanness” as immutable, as well as to create a dichotomy between “Germans” and “Jews.”

As seen in the previous chapters, petitioners sought exemptions from specific laws. For instance, Heinrich Haeckel, a “Mixed breed,” contested his dismissal and pleaded the authorities to keep him in office.⁷ Others attempted to hide their “Jewish ancestry.” The “Mixed breed” sisters, Margot Bohlens, Betty Lüdemann, Kate Meyer, and Stella Meyer, attested that they were “fully Aryans” to keep their teaching positions, trying to circumvent the *Reich* Ministry of Education’s ban of Jewish teachers in public schools of October 15, 1936.⁸ However, the difficulties faced by

⁶ Briske, “Biographische.”

⁷ Heinrich Haeckel, “1.3 Urkunden, Dokumente II Zeugnisse, Bescheinigungen, Korrespondenzen,” February 26, 1938, ED 558/3, Institut für Zeitgeschichte; Ursula Haeckel, “1. Persönliches, Familiendokumente 1.1 Biographien,” 2012, ED 558/1, Institut für Zeitgeschichte.

⁸ Betty Christine Mary Lüdemann, “Lüdemann, geb. Meyer, Betty Christine Mary, Lehrerin, wegen unwahrer Angaben über ihre ‘arische Abstammung,’” January 9, 1939, 221-10_540, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg; Kate Cäcilie Augusta Meyer, “Meyer, Kate Cäcilie Augusta, Lehrerin, wegen unwahrer Angaben über ihre ‘arische Abstammung,’” June 21, 1937; September 26, 1938; January 09, 1939, 221-10_537, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg; Stella Elise Antonie Meyer, “Meyer, Stella Elise Antonie, Lehrerin, wegen unwahrer Angaben über ihre ‘arische Abstammung,’” January 9, 1939; March 30, 1939; August 22, 1939, 221-10_541, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

“Jews” and “Mixed breeds” in Germany were ever increasing, and this pushed petitioners to ask for their categorization to be changed. For instance, Rudolf Briske was granted permission to pursue his studies in 1940, but in 1943, he sought to be categorized as equivalent to a person “of German blood” in order to be released from the Nuremberg laws.⁹ Especially after the November pogrom, many petitioners realized that circumventing particular rules was not enough, they needed to change their categorization to truly stand a chance. Emilie Cantor, categorized as a “Jew,” argued that her categorization was based on a mistake, and that if blood truly prevails over religion, she should be a “Mixed breed.”¹⁰ In the same vein, Moritz and Helene Schönmann, whose children were “racially Mixed breeds” but categorized as “Jews,” hoped that blood would have the final word.¹¹

The petitioners’ only option against the state’s attempts at fixing their identities as “Jews” and “Mixed breeds” was to redefine their patriotic acts for Germany, their personal values, as well as their family history in racial terms. They needed to speak the language of race. Even though the Nazis racially defined the nation, conflating “Germans” and “Aryans,” petitioners redefined their “German” traits in racial terms to fit into the Nazi national narrative. While scholars, such as Dragostinova, have shown how individuals were able to use the state’s ideological language to their own advantage, what we witness here is that petitioners were constrained, in their interactions with local and federal authorities, to adopt the state’s efforts to create and reify this language.

Between 1933 and 1939, the Nazi regime issued more than 400 decrees and regulations restricting public and private life in Germany.¹² The *Law on the Modification of Family and First Names* of January 5, 1938 declared that “Jews” and “Mixed breeds” were no longer allowed to change their names and that all name changes made since 1933 could be revoked.¹³ In August, a

⁹ “Equivalent to a person of German blood”—*Geltungsdeutschblütiger*. Briske, “Biographische.”

¹⁰ Emilie Cantor, “Einspruch von Emmy Cantor (1881-1942) gegen die Erteilung einer Kennkarte,” May 10, 1939, 2000/176/18 001-002, Jüdisches Museum Berlin; Emilie Cantor, “Brief,” May 10, 1939, 2000/176/18, Jüdisches Museum Berlin.

¹¹ Moritz Schönmann and Helene Schönmann, “Schönmann, Moritz Israel,” June 28, 1941, October 27, 1941, January 29, 1942, 213-11_2080/42, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

¹² Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 58–61; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 4–5, 17, 119, 145; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 29–33, 52–54, 95–97, 127–130; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 13-14.

¹³ *Gesetz über die Änderung von Familiennamen und Vornamen*. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 78,

supplementary decree required all “Jews” bearing non-“Jewish” first names to add “Sara” for women and “Israel” for men to their given names before January 1, 1939.¹⁴ Then on October 5, 1938, the *Reich* Ministry of the Interior required that “Jews” have the red letter “J,” for “Jew” (*Jude*), stamped in their passports. Furthermore, all “Jews” in Germany had to carry an identity card at all times, that clearly indicated their “Jewish descent.”¹⁵ This fixed their “identity” and made them easily recognizable by the authorities. The importance of visible markers is highlighted by political scientists who have studied the Rwandan genocide.¹⁶ The categories “Hutus” and “Tutsis” existed for decades before the genocide; however, they were based on social and economic status and were actually quite fluid. Their redefinition along racial lines, as well as the introduction of identity cards, made these “ethnic categories” seem immutable and fixed.¹⁷ Once “stamped,” the authorities could easily target them. In the case of Nazi Germany, the creation of such categories eventually made mass arrests and deportations possible.

Then, on November 9–10, 1938, the November pogrom—an anti-“Jewish” pogrom, also known as *Kristallnacht*—took place in Germany, Austria, and in the Sudetenland.¹⁸ It was the first mass arrest of “Jews” based solely on their state-imposed categorization.¹⁹ Following it, the Nazis

146; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 98; Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 448.

¹⁴ *Zweite Verordnung zur Durchführung des Gesetzes über die Änderung von Familiennamen und Vornamen*. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 78, 146; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 98; Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 450.

¹⁵ Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 120; Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 450; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 17.

¹⁶ Fujii, *Killing Neighbors*, 103–127; Straus, *The Order of Genocide*, 20–22.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Sudetenland, in the former Czechoslovakia.

Up to 30,000 “Jewish” men were arrested, imprisoned, or sent to concentration camps. 91 “Jews” were killed during the November pogrom. However, this number only includes the killings which happened that night; it does not include the suicides, nor the people who were arrested that night and died in detention or in concentration camps in the following days, weeks, and months. (Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 123)

¹⁹ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 84–89; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 269–274; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 121–123; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 109–113; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 17–20.

The deportation of Polish “Jews,” in October 1938, was the first mass roundup and deportation of “Jews” without regards to their age, gender, or political activities. However, Polish “Jews” were deported to Poland, not to a prison, ghetto, or concentration camp. The November pogrom was the first time “Jews” were arrested and sent to a concentration camp for the simple reason of being “Jewish.” (Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 85; Hilberg, *The Destruction of*

radicalized their policies, resulting in the increasing segregation and isolation of German “Jews.”²⁰ Then, the beginning of the Second World War on September 1, 1939, provided a rationale for the intensification of anti-“Jewish” measures. “Jews” had been portrayed as “enemies of the state” since the Nazis’ rise to power. And the war added a layer by transforming their presence into an issue of national security.²¹

This phenomenon can be seen in different contexts, such as in Rwanda in 1994, Bulgaria in the 1930s, and China in 1967-68. In these cases, the authorities, responding to an approaching war or desiring to create a “war frame” to gain power and control, targeted segments of the population—“Tutsis” in Rwanda, “Greeks” in Bulgaria, and “the Four Types” in China—and categorized them collectively as “enemies,” “undesirables,” or “class enemies.”²² Straus argues that the pre-existence and ubiquity of ethnic categories in Rwanda before the genocide made the equation between “Tutsis” and “enemies” possible; “collective categorization” as “enemies” was a lens that could be easily added to the pre-existing frame that divided the population into purported groups.²³ Furthermore, once portrayed as “enemies” the targeted individuals became subject to further persecution, discrimination, and physical violence.

In this vein, following the outbreak of war, the Nazis imposed new anti-“Jewish” measures severely restricting the lives of “Jews.”²⁴ On September 1, 1939, the Nazis imposed a curfew on

the European Jews, 158; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 120–121; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 109–110).

²⁰ For instance, on November 28, 1938, the *Reich* Ministry of the Interior restricted the freedom of movement of “Jews” and in March 1939, “Jews” were excluded from the military and labour service. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 145; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 117–120.

²¹ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 146; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 29–32, 132, 265–271.

²² Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*, 210–216; Straus, *The Order of Genocide*, 9; Su, *Collective Killings*, 97-98, 101, 218.

²³ Straus, *The Order of Genocide*, 9.

²⁴ For instance, in 1939, the Nazis imposed food rations on all “Jews” in Germany. The rationing intensified as the war evolved and was later imposed on clothing as well. On August 28, 1939, the Nazis imposed food rationing on all Germans. However, “Jews” were given “Jewish” ration cards and allotted smaller rations and forbidden to buy certain “Aryan” foods, such as asparagus. As the war intensified, the list of forbidden items grew to include anything in small supply, such as sugar, coffee, meat, or even milk. Furthermore, “Jews” were often restricted to one hour of shopping per day, when all “Jews” had to do their shopping at the same time, and when “Aryans” would still get priority. Rationing extended to other products, such as clothing, and in 1940, “Jews” stopped receiving ration cards for clothes.

Moreover, in April 1939, the Nazis allowed “Aryan” landlords to give their “Jewish” tenants immediate notices of eviction. The latter could then only find lodging with the permission of local authorities. On October 28,

“Jews.” However, women whose husbands or sons were serving in the *Wehrmacht* were exempted from the curfew regulations.²⁵ Such exemptions might have proven to the petitioners that service in the German army was still recognized as a proof of one’s devotion to Germany. Nevertheless, only “Mixed breeds” were still allowed to join the German military. In 1939, unemployed “Jews” fit for work were required to join a forced labor unit, and in the spring of 1940, it encompassed all “Jews” fit to work, including women.²⁶ Again, petitioners might have believed that if they could prove they were hard workers and had always worked in Germany’s best interest, they might be granted an exemption.

On September 1, 1941—in effect on September 15, 1941—the Ministry of the Interior ordered that “Jews” over the age of six wear the Star of David, called the “Jewish Star” (*Judenstern*), on their outer clothing in public at all times. Inside the Star, the word “Jew” (*Jude*) was inscribed. These badges not only stigmatized and humiliated those forced to wear them, but most importantly made them visible at all times, facilitating their surveillance, control, and persecution, as well as eventually their roundups and deportation.²⁷ At that point, almost half of Germany’s “Jews” had emigrated. With the start of war, the Nazis needed to remind the population of the continuing presence of the “Jewish problem” within their borders.²⁸

On October 15, 1941, the systematic deportation of German “Jews” on a mass scale began. Some groups were temporarily exempted from deportation based on categorization, status, and behaviors, such as religious practices.²⁹ For instance, “Jews” in “privileged mixed marriages” and

1939, “Jewish” homes were to be marked with a white Star of David. These measures resulted in the ghettoization of “Jews” and facilitated roundups. In fact, in May 1939, the Nazis started forcibly moving “Jews” into “Jewish houses” (*Judenhäuser*) and other designated apartments.

Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, vol. *The Years of Extermination, 1939–1945*, 2 vols. (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2008), 48–50; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 150–155, 159; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 134; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 67.

²⁵ Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Extermination*, 49–50.

The *Wehrmacht* was the name of the unified German armed forces in Nazi Germany between 1935 and 1946.

²⁶ Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 173–175; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 134.

²⁷ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 147; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Extermination*, 251–256; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 157–159; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 284–285; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 67.

²⁸ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 29–32, 132, 265–271; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 67.

²⁹ At first, war veterans and people over the age of sixty-five, as well as “Jews” living in “privileged mixed

Christian “Mixed breeds” were exempted from the early waves of deportations.³⁰ The reason behind this exemption was the Nazis’ fear of angering the “Aryan” population if they were to deport their family members.³¹ In hopes of avoiding persecution and eventually deportation, some German citizens categorized as “Jews” or “Mixed breeds” were hoping to be considered as “Mixed breeds” or “Aryans.”³² In some cases, petitioners were “racially Mixed breeds,” but due to their current or past religious beliefs, they were categorized as “Jews.”³³ While Herbert Pommer had left the Jewish religious community in 1934, he explained that, “after the death of my father, I paid two German marks monthly [to the Israelite Community] during the year of mourning, until August 1938, as an act of piety.”³⁴ While he did this out of respect for his father, the fact that he

marriages” and their “Mixed breeds” children were exempted from deportation. Later, the authorities decided to deport “Mixed breeds” who had been raised Jewish, “Jews” in “mixed marriages” who had remained members of the Jewish religious community, and “Jews” in “mixed marriages” which had been dissolved by death or divorce. Eventually, the authorities decided to deport the disabled and highly decorated war veterans, as well as elderly or prominent “Jews” to the Theresienstadt ghetto. (The Theresienstadt ghetto was situated in the town of Terezín. Today, Terezín is in the Czech Republic. It was in Czechoslovakia until the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1938. After which, it became part of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.) They were often transferred to death camps, such as the Auschwitz concentration camp complex.

³⁰ In Germany, since the nineteenth century, “mixed marriages” (*Mischehen*) referred to marriages between two individuals of different confessions. According to the Nazi regime, it referred to marriages between “Jews” and people “of German blood.” On December 28, 1938, the Nazis declared that as of April 1939, there would be two types of “mixed marriages”: “privileged” and “nonprivileged.” A “privileged mixed marriage” was either composed of an “Aryan” man and a “Jewish” woman with or without children who had been baptized and raised as Christians, or of an “Aryan” woman and a “Jewish” man with children who had been baptized and raised as Christians. A “nonprivileged mixed marriage” was composed of an “Aryan” woman and a “Jewish” man without children. It also included “mixed marriages” whose children had been members of the Jewish religious community as of the Nuremberg laws in September 1935, or in which the “Aryan” partner had converted to Judaism. On the one hand, “nonprivileged” couples and families were forced to live in “Jewish houses” (*Judenhäuser*), and the “Jewish” partner and their children, known as “equivalent to Jews” (*Geltungsjuden*), were later forced to wear the Star of David. On the other hand, “privileged” couples could stay in their own apartments and neither did the “Jewish” partner, nor the children, had to wear the Star of David. (Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 148–149; Meyer, “*Jüdische Mischlinge*,” 30)

³¹ Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Extermination*, 265–267; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 162–163, 166; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 179–180, 184–194; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 284–289; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 70–71.

³² “Jews” to “Aryans”: Endré Froszt. — “Jews” to “Mixed breeds”: Emilie Cantor, Oskar and Sara Martiny, Herbert Pommer, Moritz Schönmann. — “Mixed breeds” to “Aryans”: Rudolf Briske, Heinrich Haeckel, Rolf Hülsz, Betty Lüdemann, Kate Meyer, Stella Meyer.

³³ For instance, Herbert and Hans Schönmann were categorized as “Jews,” although they were “racially Mixed breeds 1st Degree.” Their father, Moritz, was Jewish, and their mother, Helene, was an “Aryan” who converted to Judaism. Stolpersteine Hamburg, “Herbert Schönmann,” *Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Hamburg*, Accessed on May 25, 2017. http://www.stolpersteine-hamburg.de/?&MAIN_ID=7&BIO_ID=3970

³⁴ “Nach dem Tode meines Vaters bezahlte ich in dem Trauerjahr (year of mourning) bis zum August 1938

had not yet converted to a Christian religion—he supposedly wished to convert to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, but short of the 100 German marks necessary to get baptized, he remained without denominations—led the authorities to believe that he was “Jewish.”³⁵

In other cases, “racially mixed” Christian petitioners were categorized as “Jews,” because they were married to “Jews.” Oskar Martiny—born Grünspan—had been raised Jewish, but converted to the Evangelical Lutheran Church years before the Nuremberg laws. The authorities considered his marriage to Sara, a “Jewess,” a sufficient reason to categorize him as a “Jew.”³⁶ Likewise, Emilie Cantor was categorized as a “Jewess,” because her husband Alfred was of “Jewish descent,” even though she had always been Evangelical Lutheran.³⁷ In fact, many petitioners who were practicing Christians were considered “Mixed breeds” because of their Jewish ancestors.³⁸ Julie Meyer was Evangelical Lutheran, but her parents were born Jewish and only later converted to Christianity; thus, she was considered “Jewish.” For the same reason, her daughters, Margot Bohlen, Betty Lüdemann, Kate Meyer, and Stella Meyer, were categorized as “Jewish Mixed breeds.”³⁹ Indeed, some “Mixed breeds” had been Christians for many generations. For instance, Heinrich Haeckel, as well as his parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents were Evangelical. However, his maternal great-grandfather was born Jewish and converted to the Evangelical Church in 1818 at the age of thirteen and his maternal great-grandmother was born of Jewish parents, who converted to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1814 and 1817 in their twenties. So even though his “Jewish” side of the family had converted to Christianity more than a century ago, he was still considered a “Mixed breed.”⁴⁰

Some petitioners either pretended or sincerely did not know of their connection with

aus Pietät monatlich DM 2.” Herbert Pommer, “Anklage gegen Herbert Pommer wegen ‘Rassenschande,’” December 1, 1938; March 1, 1939; March 22, 1939; March 23, 1939; August 3, 1939, 621-1/86_55, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

³⁵ Pommer, “Anklage.”

³⁶ Oskar Martiny and Sara Martiny, “Martiny, Sara wg. Nichtbeantragung einer Kennkarte; KennkartenVO.,” July 19, 1939; July 20, 1939, 213-11_08710/39, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

³⁷ Cantor, “Einspruch;” Cantor, “Brief.”

³⁸ Rudolf Briske. Briske, “Biographische.”

³⁹ Lüdemann, “Lüdemann;” Meyer, “Meyer, Kate;” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

⁴⁰ Haeckel, “1.3 Urkunden;” Haeckel, “1. Persönliches.”

Judaism, but were still considered “Jewish.” For example, Endré Froszt was a practicing Catholic and stated that his parents—Lipolt Frost and Irma, born Kohn (Froszt claimed her maiden name was Aldor)—were Catholics too.⁴¹ However, the authorities believed otherwise.⁴² Meanwhile, others tried to hide their “Jewish descent,” such as Sara Martiny. Her mother, Tina Brettner, was Jewish, and her adoptive father, Friedrich Hoffmann, was “of German blood.” Martiny was born out of marriage, and her biological father was unknown. In these cases, the authorities assumed that the unknown biological parent was “Jewish.”⁴³ In any case, Martiny later admitted that, “I was aware that my biological father was the Dutch Jew Taubenblatt [...] Until my marriage in 1893, I carried the name Taubenblatt.”⁴⁴ As highlighted by sociologist Rogers Brubaker in his case study of Cluj in Romania, the ability of individuals to undercommunicate their identity, in this case, hiding their Jewishness, can be a strategy for survival.⁴⁵

Actually, if classified as a “Jew,” changing one’s category was of vital importance. According to the *Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor* any sexual intercourse between “Jews” and non-“Jews” was subject to accusations of “race defilement.”⁴⁶ Moreover, any contact between “Aryans” and “Jews” which could be construed as having some sexual connotation was forbidden and were punished by imprisonment and deportation to concentration camps. This law aimed at reducing contact between “Jews” and non-“Jews” and

⁴¹ Tata is today in Hungary.

⁴² Endré Froszt, “Anklage gegen Endré Froszt wegen ‘Rassenschande,’” January 5, 1939; January 14, 1939; January 16, 1939, 621-1/86_56, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg; Endré Froszt, “Froszt, Endré, wegen Betrugs und Unzucht mit minderjährigen weiblichen Lehrlingen in zwei Fälle,” April 24, 1939; December 12, 1939; March 10, 1940; March 11, 1940, 242-1 II_3872, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

⁴³ For more information regarding the categorization of illegitimate children, see chapter 1, note 71.

⁴⁴ “Ich will jetzt zugeben, daß mir bekannt war, daß mein Erzeuger der holländische Jude Taubenblatt [...] ist. [...] Bis zu meiner Verheiratung im Jahre 1893 führte ich den Namen Taubenblatt.” Martiny and Martiny, “Martiny, Sara.”

⁴⁵ Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*, 222, 224, 228.

⁴⁶ “Race defilement”—*Rassenschande*.

On December 9, 1935, the Supreme Court defined the term “sexual intercourse” as “[...] all forms of natural and unnatural sexual intercourse—that is, coition as well as those sexual activities with the person of the opposite sex which are designed, in the manner in which they are performed, to serve in place of coition to satisfy the sex drive of at least one of the partners.” (Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 159).

increasing the social isolation of “Jews.”⁴⁷ Thus, for “Jewish” petitioners accused of “race defilement,” changing one’s category was the key to avoid prosecution. For instance, the “Jew” Herbert Pommer was accused of having had sexual intercourse outside of marriage with Irmgard Wilken, a “German citizen of German blood.” His best defense was not to prove that he did not commit adultery, but rather that he was a “Mixed breed.”⁴⁸ In the same vein, Oskar and Sara Martiny were accused of organizing “interracial” orgies. While they inevitably denied committing these crimes, they primarily argued that they should be categorized as “Mixed breeds” rather than “Jews.” Finally, Endré Froszt had allegedly attempted to have sexual intercourse with Christian women “of German blood.”⁴⁹ He did not deny these accusations but attempted to prove that he was an “Aryan” and a German nationalist.

To change their categorization, petitioners had to use arguments mirroring the Nazis’ understanding of race, religion, and “Germanness.” Thus, petitioners highlighted their and their ancestors’ contributions to Germany. Military service was one of the most valued contributions of all, especially during the First World War. Endré Froszt wrote, “In 1914, I registered as a war volunteer and served during the First World War on the Russian-Polish front and later on the Romanian front.”⁵⁰ Those who were too young to have fought in World War I, highlighted their more recent military accomplishments. Rudolf Briske stated, “Since 1934, I repeatedly registered for the completion of my military service. [...] In 1937, I became an active soldier due to my voluntary registration. [...] Consequently, during this war, my brother and I were the third generation to fight on the same battlefields of France.”⁵¹

After being dismissed from the army in 1940 due to his descent, Briske wrote, “today, as every healthy man is required to contribute to the victory more urgently than ever, it is my dearest

⁴⁷ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 71–72, 90–91; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 142–144, 149–150, 152–153, 158–162; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 29; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 74–83; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 52–54, 57–61; Poliakov, *Bréviaire de la Haine*, 7-8.

⁴⁸ Pommer, “Anklage.”

⁴⁹ Froszt, “Anklage.”

⁵⁰ “Im Jahre 1914 meldete ich mich kriegsfreiwillig und habe den Weltkrieg an der russisch-polnischen Front, später an der rumänischen Front mitgemacht.” Froszt, “Anklage;” Froszt, “Froszt, Endré.”

⁵¹ “Seit 1934 meldete ich mich wiederholt zur Ableistung des Wehrdienstes. [...] 1937 wurde ich auf Grund freiwilliger Meldung aktiver Soldat. [...] Somit kämpften mein Bruder und ich in diesem Kriege in dritter Generation auf den gleichen Schlachtfeldern Frankreichs.” Briske, “Biographische.”

wish to be a soldier again [...] and now or later, to receive full equal rights as a German.”⁵² But he first petitioned the authorities in 1940 to be granted permission to study.⁵³ The Nazis imposed a quota on “Jewish” university students. However, “Mixed breeds” were officially allowed to attend school until 1942. Unofficially, almost all of their applications were rejected before the war began in 1939. Furthermore, starting in 1940, “Mixed breeds” could stay in school only with the permission of the Ministry of Education, who granted exemptions to students who accomplished “exceptional military service.”⁵⁴ In this vein, Briske’s military service might have been done as a duty, but it also served as an argument to be allowed to complete his university studies.

To show a continuity between generations, petitioners also listed their family members and ancestors’ military service. For instance, Briske’s father was an officer during the First World War.⁵⁵ Moreover, his paternal uncle died in combat in 1914 and his paternal grandfather, Julius, fought in the Franco-Prussian war.⁵⁶ Briske described his paternal grandfather as “the most willing Prussian soldier in the war of 1870/71. [...] He was an enthusiastic German his entire life.”⁵⁷ Underlining the military service of one’s ancestors was particularly important when the petitioners themselves had not completed their military service, as was the case for young “Jewish” men, who were no longer allowed to join the German army. For example, Herbert Pommer’s father fought during the First World War and was wounded.⁵⁸ In the same vein, Heinrich Haeckel detailed the experiences of his father, Georg, in the German army, going as far as listing the various battles he was involved in during the First World War. Furthermore, his great-grandfather, Karl, took part in

⁵² “Heute, wo jeder gesunde Mann zur Erzwingung des Sieges dringender denn je benötigt wird, ist es mein heisser Wunsch, wieder Soldat zu werden [...] und jetzt oder später die volle Gleichberechtigung als Deutscher zu erhalten.” Briske, “Biographische.”

⁵³ Briske, “Biographische.”

⁵⁴ Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 227–229; Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 439, 447; Meyer, “*Jüdische Mischlinge*,” 200.

⁵⁵ Briske, “Biographische.”

⁵⁶ Briske, “Biographische.”

⁵⁷ “Mein jüdischer Grossvater Julius Briske nahm als begeisterter Preusse als Kriegsfreiwilliger am Kriege 1870/71 teil, u.a. am 19. Januar 1871 an der Schlacht bei St. Quentin. [...] Er war zeitlebens begeisterter Deutscher.” Briske, “Biographische.”

⁵⁸ Pommer, “Anklage.”

the Franco-Prussian war.⁵⁹

Similarly, women, who were not allowed to serve in the German army at the time, had to resort to highlighting their male ancestors' contributions. For instance, the Meyer sisters portrayed their ancestors as proud and loyal citizens of Germany. About their grandfather, Johannes Albert Bendixen, Stella Meyer wrote, "I would like to mention that he was loyal to the Fatherland. He was a captain in the Hamburg citizens' army. Two of his sons were sent to the colonies, one came back terminally ill and died here. His youngest son was killed at the Somme in 1916. He shed blood for and invested in Germany."⁶⁰ Moreover, petitioners often listed their female family members and ancestors' contributions on the home front. For instance, Heinrich Haeckel's mother joined the Patriotic Women's Association of the Red Cross, for which she was awarded the Civil Merit Cross.⁶¹ Another means of underlining the military contributions of one's ancestors was by listing their medals and decorations, underlining their qualities as soldiers.⁶² Furthermore, petitioners sometimes also included their family members and ancestors' academic, professional, and personal accomplishments, which furthered the interests of the German state.⁶³ Heinrich Haeckel listed in painstaking detail his and his wife's ancestors "of German blood's" military accomplishments and services to the state from 1500 onwards.⁶⁴ For instance, his paternal uncle, Siegfried, was a chemist for I.G. Farben Factories in Ludwigshafen and in counterintelligence espionage in Berlin. Moreover, his paternal great-uncle, Ernst, was a famous German natural scientist. One of his paternal great-great-grandfathers, Christoph Sethe, was supposedly the most eminent lawyer of his time. Going back to the 16th century, he stated that seven generations preceding his maternal grandfather, Ludwig Korn, were Evangelical priests.

⁵⁹ *Befreiungskrieg*. Literal translation: War of Liberation. Haeckel, "1.3 Urkunden;" Haeckel, "1. Persönliches."

⁶⁰ "Zur Person meines Großvaters, Herrn Johannes Albert Bendixen, möchte ich erwähnen, daß er ein vaterlandstreuer Mann war. Er selbst war Hauptmann beim Hamburger Bürgermilitär. Zwei seiner Söhne hat er in die Kolonien geschickt, der eine ist todkrank zurückgekommen und hier gestorben. Sein jüngster Sohn ist 1916 an der Somme gefallen. Er setzte Gut und Blut für Deutschland ein." Meyer, "Meyer, Stella."

⁶¹ *Vaterländischen Frauenverein vom Roten Kreuz—Zivilverdienstkreuz*. Haeckel, "1.3 Urkunden."

⁶² Briske, "Biographische;" Haeckel, "1.3 Urkunden;" Pommer, "Anklage."

⁶³ Haeckel, "1.3 Urkunden."

⁶⁴ Haeckel, "1.3 Urkunden;" Haeckel, "1. Persönliches."

In addition, petitioners underlined contemporary contributions to the Nazi state and participation in the Nazi apparatus. For instance, Heinrich Haeckel was put in charge of the treatment (the registering and gathering) of “Asocials” in 1934, and he asked that, “[...] my contribution to the resolution of fundamental questions regarding the area of responsibility of National-Socialist social policies in talks and articles in specialized journals be taken into consideration.”⁶⁵ For her part, Stella Meyer attempted to join the NSDAP in June 1937 out of her own volition; it was not required of teachers at her school at the time. Furthermore, she explained her disappointment when, “[...] the day before *our* [emphasis added] Führer visited Hamburg [...], he [the school’s principal] forbade me from watching the Führer from the balcony of our school, because he could not authorize it as long as I did not have a proof of Aryan ancestry.”⁶⁶ Moreover, Oskar Martiny was a member of the “National Socialist People’s Welfare” and “National Air Raid Protection League.”⁶⁷ He added,

I did a lot for the movement. Before the seizure of power, when I still had my bar in St. Pauli [neighborhood in Hamburg], it [the movement] was repeatedly wrecked by local authorities. At the time, I accommodated and took care of a SA guard group composed of twelve men in my bar. I have bought many SA uniforms, and I have printed propaganda pamphlets for the movement at my own cost. [...] I consider myself entitled to use the German greeting, as well as to show the Swastika flag. Already in 1930, I had a Swastika flag in my bar on the Reeperbahn [street in St. Pauli, Hamburg].⁶⁸

⁶⁵ “[...] für die Behandlung der Asozialen. [...] Außerdem bitte ich meine Beiträge zur Lösung der grundsätzlichen Fragen dieses Aufgabengebiets der nationalsozialistischen Sozialpolitik in Vorträgen und Aufsätzen für Fachzeitschriften zu berücksichtigen. [...]” Haeckel, “1.3 Urkunden;” Haeckel, “1. Persönliches.”

⁶⁶ “[...] am Tage, bevor unser Führer Hamburg besuchte. [...] Da verbot er mir, vom Balkon unserer Schule den Führer zu sehen, weil er es nicht verantworten könnte, solange ich keinen arischen Nachweis hätte.” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

⁶⁷ National Socialist People’s Welfare—*Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt* (NSV). National Air Raid Protection League—*Reichsluftschutzbundes* (RLB).

⁶⁸ “Ich habe viel für die Bewegung getan. Als ich vor der Machtergreifung noch mein Lokal auf St. Pauli hatte, ist dasselbe mehrfach durch die Kommune demoliert worden. Ich habe dann zeitweilig eine SA Wache von 12 Mann in meinem Lokal gehabt und diese gepflegt. Ich habe vielen SA Männern Uniform gekauft und habe Propagandazettel für die Bewegung auf meine Kosten drucken lassen. [...] Ich hielt mich für berechtigt, den deutschen Gruß anzuwenden und auch die Hakenkreuzflagge zu zeigen. Schon im Jahre 1930 habe ich von meinem Lokal auf der Reeperbahn die Hakenkreuzfahne gezeigt.” Martiny and Martiny, “Martiny, Sara.”

The SA—*Sturmabteilung*, Storm troopers—was a paramilitary unit of the Nazi Party.

The “Swastika flag” was the National flag of Germany under the Nazi regime.

In the same vein, Rudolf Briske also showed his dedication to the NSDAP's ideals before the Nazis' rise to power. From 1927 to 1933, he belonged to the Pan-German Youth Organization led by Admiral Von Trotha and joined the Hitler Youth in 1933.⁶⁹

Petitioners also mentioned their loved ones' involvement with the NSDAP and its organizations. This served to prove that they surrounded themselves with "good Germans." For instance, in 1928, Heinrich Haeckel joined the Old Social Democratic Party of Germany—which, according to Haeckel, supported National-Socialist ideals.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, his wife was a member of the German Women's Charity and the National Socialist People's Welfare.⁷¹ Most importantly, petitioners would state their ancestors and descendants' involvement as a sign that sharing National-Socialist values—and German nationalism—might be hereditary. For example, some proudly stated that their children were members of the Hitler Youth.⁷² Rudolf Briske's father "[...] willingly joined the Front of the People in 1919, which fought against the red revolutionaries."⁷³ Furthermore, "when the family left Berlin in 1923 for business, the Briske children sang

⁶⁹ Briske, "Biographische."

The Pan-German Youth Organization—*Großdeutscher Jugendbund*—was a right-wing, conservative, and monarchist youth organization during the Weimar Republic. It was created in 1919 and was assimilated into the Hitler Youth in 1933.

Admiral Adolf Lebrecht von Trotha (1868–1940) was the head of the Pan-German Youth Organization. He fought during the First World War. He supported the Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch (failed coup on 13 March 1920, organized by Wolfgang Kapp and Walther von Lüttwitz. It aimed to overthrow the Weimar Republic and establish a right-wing autocratic government in its place. It had support in the military, as well as with conservatives, nationalists, and monarchists).

The Hitler Youth—*Hitlerjugend*—was as youth organization of the Nazi Party.

⁷⁰ Old Social Democratic Party of Germany—*Alte Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*.

Haeckel, "1.3 Urkunden;" Haeckel, "1. Persönliches."

⁷¹ German Women's Charity—*Deutsches Frauenwerk*. National Socialist People's Welfare—*N.S. Volkswohlfahrt*.

⁷² Froszt, "Froszt, Endré."

The Hitler Youth—*Hitlerjugend*—was as youth organization of the Nazi Party.

⁷³ "[...] er sich 1919 freiwillig aktiv in die Front der Bevölkerung gegen die roten Revolutionäre (Einwohnerwehr) einreichte [...]" Briske, "Biographische."

Front of the People—*Front der Bevölkerung*.

Germany's song [German national anthem] under the black-white-red flag."⁷⁴ The Nazi authorities perceived these actions as particularly patriotic, especially because they happened at a time when exhibiting support for the National-Socialist movement and its values was greatly disadvantageous.

In 1989, Briske wrote,

My father approved of Hitler's internal political successes (elimination of unemployment) and the external politics (liberation from the Treaty of Versailles, occupation of the Rhineland, reintroduction of the universal compulsory military service). He was also enthusiastic about the military successes, in France and then, in Russia (he was a lifelong opponent to Bolshevism). After his sister, Elisabeth Briske, was deported to the East in 1942, he became an enraged and bitter opponent of Hitler.⁷⁵

As Zahra pointed out in her case study of German and Czech nationalists in the Bohemian Lands, the Nazis conflated the terms "Nazi" and "German."⁷⁶ Thus, petitioners might have thought that showing support for the Nazi Party would highlight their "Germanness." While the lack of personal writing from most petitioners makes it impossible to know whether they believed in the arguments they used to convince the Nazi authorities to change their categorization, Briske's postwar letter shows that, at least in some cases, some petitioners might have shared Nazi values and ideologies. This is important as it allows us to look at the petitions, not only as survival tools, but also as claims to their right to national self-identification.

⁷⁴ "[...] die Kinder Briske bei der Abreise der Familie in das Ausland (geschäftlicher Auftrag des Vaters) im Jahre 1923 mit der schwarz-weiß-rotem Fahne unter Absingung des Deutschlandliedes aus Berlin-Südende abzogen." Briske, "Biographische."

Black-White-Red—*Schwarz-Weiß-Rot*. Black-White-Red were the colours of the North German Confederation (*Norddeutschen Bund*) starting in 1867 and became the official colours of the national flag of the German *Reich* (*Deutsches Kaiserreich*) in 1892. From 1919 until 1933, during the Weimar Republic, the national colours were Black-Red-Gold (*Schwarz-Rot-Gold*), while the Black-White-Red were used for the merchant flag from 1922–1933. However, during this same time, Black-White-Red were also used by groups who opposed the Republic, such as monarchists, right-wing conservatives, and national-socialists. In 1933, when the Nazis rose to power, the Black-White-Red became the colours of the Third *Reich*. (Chapoutot, *Histoire de l'Allemagne*, 71; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution*, 142; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 59)

⁷⁵ "Mein Vater bejahte die innenpolitischen Erfolge Hitlers (beseitigung der Arbeitslosigkeit) und die aussenpolitischen (Befreiung von Versailles, Besetzung des Rheinlandes, wiedereinführung der allgemeinen Wehrpflicht). Er war auch begeistert von den Kriegserfolgen, zunächst in Frankreich, dann in Russland (er war Zeitlebens Gegner der Bolschewismus). Erst nach der Verschleppung seiner Schwester Elisabeth Briske 1942 in den Osten wurde er zum erbitterten Gegner Hitlers." Briske, "Biographische."

⁷⁶ Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*, 201-202.

Petitioners explained their desire to serve their country as motivated by their profound loyalty to Germany. This might have been a means to strengthen their argument for legal equality: provided with equal chances, they could work for and support the Nazi regime. At the time of his petition, Heinrich Haeckel wished to remain in office “to fulfill his duty, serve the German People and Reich with all his strength, and thus, be true to the oath he swore to the Führer and Reich Chancellor as a civil servant and a soldier.”⁷⁷ He reiterated his absolute loyalty: “I believe I have sufficiently proven with all this, that it is not just for economic reasons that I want to remain in my post, but it is my innermost wish to be allowed to contribute to the great tasks of the German national community as I have done up until now, with all my strength, enthusiasm, and profoundest sense of duty.”⁷⁸ For his part, Rudolf Briske not only declared his support for National-Socialism, but also clearly stated that he would put Germany’s interests before his own.⁷⁹ This profound sense of duty and devotion to the state are portrayed as important “German” qualities, acquired through years of education at home and in school. Petitioners claimed that these National-Socialist values were reflected in how they raised their children. Heinrich Haeckel proudly stated that, his three children, Dorothee, Bernhard, and Helmut “were of German descent according to the Reich Citizenship Law and had been raised as National-Socialists and in the tradition of their German ancestors.”⁸⁰

Petitioners also sought to prove that these values had been defining their own lives years before the Nazis’ rise to power. First and foremost, they highlighted their hard work which emphasized their desire to prove they could be useful additions to Germany. Endré Froszt claimed that his company contributed to the “people’s economic interests.”⁸¹ For years, “it gave bread and

⁷⁷ “Diese Bitte begründe ich [...] mit meinem Wunsch und meiner Bereitschaft, im Sinn der Eides den ich Beamter und Soldat auf den Führer und Reichskanzler geleistet habe, auch weiterhin meine Pflicht zu tun und dem Deutschen Volk und Reich mit allen Kräften zu dienen.” Haeckel, “1.3 Urkunden;” Haeckel, “1. Persönliches.”

⁷⁸ “Ich glaube, mit dem Gesagten hinreichend begründet zuhaben, daß mir an meinem Verbleiben im Amt nicht nur aus wirtschaftlichen Gründen gelegen ist, sondern aus dem innersten Wunsch, wie bisher an den großen Aufgaben der deutschen Volksgemeinschaft alle Kräfte freudig ans tiefsten Pflichtbewußtsein einsetzen zu dürfen.” Haeckel, “1.3 Urkunden;” Haeckel, “1. Persönliches.”

⁷⁹ Briske, “ Biographische.”

⁸⁰ “Unsere drei Kinder Dorothee, geb. 11.2.1930, Bernhard, geb. 12.5.1933 und Helmut, geb.2.12.1936, sind deutschstämmig im Sinn des Reichsbürgergesetzes und werden von uns nationalsozialistisch und ausschließlich in den Ueberlieferungen unserer deutschen Vorfahren erzogen.” Haeckel, “1.3 Urkunden;” Haeckel, “1. Persönliches.”

⁸¹ “Wenn ich mich aus dem Ruinen, eines über 6 und halb Jahre stillliegenden Betriebes, unter den größten Opfern einen Betrieb, seit dem Jahre 1936, geschaffen habe, der als dringend im volkwirtschaftlichem Interesse

work to 30–35 German comrades.”⁸² Giving work to the German people was his pride and joy.⁸³ Moreover, petitioners described their parents as hard workers, hoping to show this characteristic as learned, as well as inherited. Margot Bohlens proudly stated that she admired and highly respected her parents, who have shown excellent character and exceptional efficiency in their work. Her father owned a business in Hamburg for fifty years. She wrote, “Thanks to his entrepreneurial spirit, diligence, and reliability, he gave work and bread to his thirty employees for many years.”⁸⁴ Petitioners talked about their businesses in human terms, rather than in an economic tone. In doing so, they sought to show that they were not motivated by greed, but rather by a desire to contribute to German society. This lined up with Nazi propaganda, which “[...] prais[ed] the small businessman as the personification of the ‘honest’ merchant, and contrasted him with the avaricious Jewish ‘peddler’ [...]”⁸⁵ Thus, petitioners sought to appear not only as sharing “German” values, but also as the opposites of “Jewish” stereotypes.

The display of family values was praised by the Nazis, and the mother figure played a central role in their ideal.⁸⁶ Margot Bohlens underlined her mother’s qualities as a parent and as a wife. “[My mother] gave her Aryan husband six children and raised them. What this symbolizes can only be estimated by the one who experienced it.”⁸⁷ Moreover, female petitioners often described themselves using characteristics reminiscent of the ideals of motherhood. It could have been an attempt at inserting themselves into the Nazi ideals of family, showing the authorities that

arbeitender Betrieb anerkannt ist, und der seit Jahren 30-35 deutschen Volksgenossen Brot und Arbeit gibt, so ist dies mein Verdienst.” Froszt, “Anklage.”

⁸² “Wenn ich mich aus dem Ruinen, eines über 6 und halb Jahre stillliegenden Betriebes, unter den größten Opfern einen Betrieb, seit dem Jahre 1936, geschaffen habe, der als dringend im volkswirtschaftlichem Interesse arbeitender Betrieb anerkannt ist, und der seit Jahren 30-35 deutschen Volksgenossen Brot und Arbeit gibt, so ist dies mein Verdienst.” Froszt, “Anklage.”

⁸³ Froszt, “Anklage.”

⁸⁴ “Durch seinen Unternehmungsgeist, Fleiss und Zuverlässigkeit hat er seinen ca. 30 Angestellten die vielen Jahre Arbeit und Brot verschafft.” Margot Nanny Camilla Bohlens, “Bohlens, geb. Meyer, Margot Nanny Camilla, Lehrerin, wegen unwahrer Abstammung über ihre ‘arische Abstammung,’” September 28, 1938, 221-10_539, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

⁸⁵ Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany*, 181.

⁸⁶ Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor*, 170–171

⁸⁷ “Sie hat ihrem arischen Manne 6 Kinder geboren und grossgezogen, was das bedeutet, kann nur der ermessen, der es selbst durchmacht.” Bohlens, “Bohlens.”

they could be great additions to the National-Socialist project. Stella Meyer was a teacher, and she devoted herself to caring for and educating “her children.”⁸⁸ She wrote, “[...] and every [child] knows that even if life separates us, if they need me, I will, of course, be there for them.”⁸⁹ Furthermore, she claimed that, “I have used all of my strength for my children; I have taught them with care, won their trust and protected them, cared for their health, and helped them carry the load of their lives.”⁹⁰ She was motivated by the joy “her children” brought her and the “deep and strong love” she had for them.⁹¹ Moreover, Stella Meyer portrayed herself as an ideal National-Socialist educator, who promoted the ideals of nature. For instance, on a beautiful day, she would “[...] take the children outside in the afternoon after school hours by the Elbe or in the woods.”⁹² The children would get to breathe fresh air and play away from the “crowds and dust of the streets.”⁹³ She wrote, “How much cheerfulness blossomed here! Through games, the children learned to observe and love their homeland.”⁹⁴ By joining the love of nature and of Fatherland, she portrayed essential Nazi values based on the *völkisch* movement.⁹⁵

To strengthen their identification with the German people, petitioners proudly stated that their families had lived in Germany for decades or even centuries.⁹⁶ The Meyer sisters’ family had lived in Hamburg for generations. And although, their father had emigrated to the United States

⁸⁸ Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

⁸⁹ “[...] und alle wissen, wenn auch das Leben uns auseinander führt, so wie sie mich brauchen, bin ich selbstverständlich für sie da.” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

⁹⁰ “Ich habe meine ganze Kraft für meine Kinder eingesetzt, sie sorgfältig unterrichtet, ihr Vertrauen gewonnen und gehütet, für ihre Gesundheit gesorgt und die Last ihres Lebens mitgetragen.” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

⁹¹ “[...] eine Starke, tiefe Liebe.” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

⁹² “Hatten wir einen schönen Tag, so ging ich mit ihnen nachmittags außerhalb der Schulzeit an den Elbstrand oder in den Wald.” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

⁹³ “Gewühl und Staub der Verkehrsstraßen” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

⁹⁴ “Wieviel Frohsinn blühte hier auf und unmerklich beim Spiel lernten die Kinder beobachten und ihre Heimat lieben.” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

⁹⁵ The *völkisch* movement was a populist movement, born out of German romanticism. It opposed the modernity of the Wilhelmine Period (approximately 1890 to 1918) and encouraged a return to tradition and nature. It emphasized a definition of the nation as an “organic” unity and defined its people using racist criteria. (Longerich, *Holocaust*, 12).

Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor*, 112–113, 178–179.

⁹⁶ Briske, “Biographische.”

for a few years, he decided to come back.⁹⁷ Margot Bohlens stated that her parents' dedication to their homeland is why she "[...] felt so perfectly at home here [in Germany]."⁹⁸ Furthermore, her sister, Stella Meyer wrote, "It would go against my nature to say that I belong to another race, since I belong here in the Holstein region, next to the Elbe."⁹⁹ "According to my father, I am very similar to his mother, in nature and appearance. Her family came from the Wilstermarsch [a subregion in Holstein, Germany] generations ago."¹⁰⁰ Here, Stella Meyer conflated territory and family ancestry with race.

This connection between people and land is a reminder of *Heimat* images. *Heimat* is a concept dating back to the creation of Germany. It aimed to unite all regions and create a sense of belonging to the state through a standardized representation of the nation.¹⁰¹ It imagined the German people as a community sharing a territory, a culture, a set of values, and a history.¹⁰² In this vein, petitioners used these indicators of "Germanness" to prove their belonging to the German nation and Nazism. They omitted the historicity of German borders and forgot that Germany was created as a union in 1871. By describing important historical events and their impact on their lives, as well as by highlighting their ancestors' exploits in the name of Prussia and/or Germany, they attempted to create a link between the German national past and its present, with their family at its center, and wrote themselves into the Nazi historical narrative of the German nation. Heinrich Haeckel argued that being raised in the context of the First World War and the French occupation in Saarbrücken shaped him and his worldview. Living close to the front, he had to live through numerous air raids and increasing food shortages, which developed his sense of duty and loyalty to Germany.¹⁰³ Rudolf Briske explained that he was "raised with the ghost of the Versailles

⁹⁷ Bohlens, "Bohlens."

⁹⁸ "Einer meiner Gründe, mich hier vollkommen beheimatet zu fühlen." Bohlens, "Bohlens."

⁹⁹ "Es widerspricht meinem Wesen, von mir zu sagen, ich gehöre zu einer andern Rasse. Denn ich gehöre hier ins holsteiner Land, an die Elbe [...]" Meyer, "Meyer, Stella."

¹⁰⁰ "[...] und soll nach den Worten meines Vaters seiner Mutter im Wesen und im Aussehen besonders ähnlich sein. [...] Die Familie dieser Großmutter stammt seit Generationen aus der Wilstermarsch." Meyer, "Meyer, Stella."

¹⁰¹ Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor*, 9, 169.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 13–15.

¹⁰³ Haeckel, "1.3 Urkunden;" Haeckel, "1. Persönliches."

Treaty.”¹⁰⁴ Not only were these examples used as proof of a shared history with all Germans, but most importantly, it played into the Nazi narrative of the First World War and the Versailles Treaty as sources of humiliation and pain for all Germans. The petitioners showed that they too had to endure the same sufferings as all other Germans.

Moreover, petitioners attempted to prove that they never questioned their “Aryanness,” as a means to prove that their “Germanness” was ingrained in them. The Meyer sisters argued that the thought of not being “Aryans” or of their mother being “Jewish” never crossed their minds. Furthermore, their parents denied any “non-Aryan” descent, and supposedly, their mother truly believed herself to be “Aryan.”¹⁰⁵ In fact, some petitioners attempted to reorient the question from descent to self-perception.¹⁰⁶ During Endré Froszt’s physical evaluation, the authorities discovered that he was circumcised, which was an undeniable sign of his “Jewishness” in their eyes. However, Froszt denied being aware that he was circumcised, let alone being Jewish.¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, his police report stated that witnesses testified that he hoisted the “Swastika flag” at every possible opportunity. Froszt wrote, “I believed the hoisting of the Swastika flag as the Reich and National flag to be a National-Socialist duty.”¹⁰⁸ Oskar Martiny’s police report stated, “He was forbidden to show the Swastika flag and to use the greeting ‘Heil Hitler!’ Regarding this matter, it should be said that Martiny greeted the authorized official in his apartment, as well as in the office building with ‘Heil Hitler!’ At first, this was not criticized, because Martiny indicated that he was a ‘Mixed breed.’ Furthermore, it was determined that Martiny waved the Swastika flag from his balcony on July 21, 1939.”¹⁰⁹ Those arrested for

¹⁰⁴ “Wir Kinder wurden durch das Elternhaus „im Geiste von Versailles“ national erzogen.” Briske, “Biographische.”

¹⁰⁵ Bohlens, “Bohlens;” Lüdemann, “Lüdemann;” Meyer, “Meyer, Kate;” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

¹⁰⁶ Froszt, “Anklage;” Froszt, “Froszt, Endré;” Martiny and Martiny, “Martiny, Sara;” Bohlens, “Bohlens;” Lüdemann, “Lüdemann;” Meyer, “Meyer, Kate;” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

¹⁰⁷ Froszt, “Anklage;” Froszt, “Froszt, Endré.”

¹⁰⁸ “Mit dem Hissen der Hackenkreuzflagge als Reichs und Nationalflagge, glaubte ich einer national sozialistischen Verpflichtung, [...]” Froszt, “Anklage;” Froszt, “Froszt, Endré.”

¹⁰⁹ “Er wurde ihm ferner untersagt, die Hakenkreuzfahne zu zeigen und mit "Heil Hitler" zu grüßen. Zu diesem Sachverhalt [sic] ist zu sagen, daß Martiny die unterzeichneten Beamten in seiner Wohnung und auch im Dienstgebäude mit "Heil Hitler" begrüßte. Dieses wurde zunächst nicht beanstandet, weil Martiny ja angegeben hatte, er sei Mischling. Ferner wurde festgestellt, daß Martiny am 21.7.39 von seinem Balkon, Roßberg 14 I die Hakenkreuzflagge zeigte.” Martiny and Martiny, “Martiny, Sara.”

showing unauthorized patriotic support in defiance of the Nuremberg laws used it as proof of their love for and loyalty to Germany.¹¹⁰

Moreover, petitioners highlighted the fact that they only surrounded with “Aryan” friends, arguing that they thus could be trusted to share “German” values. Indeed, they believed in these values—work ethics, family values, patriotism—so much that they sought them out in their friendships and companionships.¹¹¹ Herbert Pommer “[...] had always navigated only in Aryan circles [...]” and never had any relationships with “Jews.”¹¹² Similarly, Rudolf Briske wrote, “In accordance with the *völkisch* attitude of the army, I never considered running in non-Aryan circles; I have never had non-Aryan friends in school nor in university, and I committed myself to German and National-Socialist matters.”¹¹³ He insisted on the great influence his friends from the Hitler Youth—who were in the SS and the SD at the time of the petition—had in shaping his worldviews.¹¹⁴ This logic was also used to justify “mixed marriages.” For instance, Herbert Pommer argued that the fact that his wife, Louise, was “Aryan” proved his genuine connection with “Aryans.”¹¹⁵ More than just stating their self-identification as Germans, many petitioners also distanced themselves from “Jews.” For instance, Endré Froszt’s first wife was “Jewish” but clearly stated that he was a Catholic when he married her and divorced her because she was “Jewish.”¹¹⁶

Petitioners’ blatant use of antisemitic statements might have been an attempt at proving that they were indeed Germans, in a context in which the Nazis created a dichotomy between

¹¹⁰ Froszt, “Anklage;” Froszt, “Froszt, Endré;” Martiny and Martiny, “Martiny, Sara.”

¹¹¹ Bohlens, “Bohlens;” Margot Bohlens in Lüdemann, “Lüdemann;” Meyer, “Meyer, Kate;” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

¹¹² “Der Angeklagte hat ständig nur in arischen Kreisen verkehrt und Umgang gehabt.” Pommer, “Anklage.”

¹¹³ “Im Sinne der völkischen Einstellung des Bundes kam für mich ein Verkehr mit nichtarischen Kreisen niemals in Betracht; ich habe weder privat noch in Schule und Hochschule nichtarische Freunde gehabt und mich überall zur deutschen und nationalsozialistischen Sache bekannt.” Briske, “Biographische.”

¹¹⁴ “Meine Weltanschauliche Haltung geschah durch Kameraden der SS und des SD.” Briske, “Biographische.”

The Hitler Youth—*Hitlerjugend*—was as youth organization of the Nazi Party.

The SS—*Schutzstaffel*, Protection Squadron—was a paramilitary unit of the Nazi Party. The SD—*Sicherheitsdienst*, Security Service—was the intelligence agency of the SS and the Nazi Party.

¹¹⁵ Pommer, “Anklage.”

¹¹⁶ Froszt, “Anklage;” Froszt, “Froszt, Endré.”

“Germans” and “Jews.” For instance, Sara Martiny wrote, “It has always been very embarrassing to me that I am of Jewish descent. [...] My descent has always been kept a secret. [...] My current husband and my children never knew that I was once named Taubenblatt.”¹¹⁷ For his part, Endré Froszt claimed that he refused “Jewish” investments in his company, passing great financial opportunities to stay loyal to Germany.¹¹⁸ Rudolf Briske proudly declared that, “I have always felt German and lived accordingly, identified as a National-Socialist, and never acted in any *prosemitic* [emphasis added] manner.”¹¹⁹ However, in 1989 (in a testimony he wrote later in life), he admitted that his antisemitism was more than a tool to convince the Nazis of his devotion. Between school and the youth association, he wrote that he soon “became an antisemite.”¹²⁰ “In 1929, when I learned of my [Jewish] descent from my parents, I was so horrified that I hid in the cellar of our apartment for the whole day.”¹²¹ In 1933, as a good German citizen, he believed he should join the army, and he swore an oath of allegiance to Adolf Hitler. “I swore this holy oath two more times: in 1937 as a soldier and in 1945 in the *Volkssturm*. I never broke an oath.”¹²² “Until this day, except for my [paternal] grandmother and a few relatives, I have never met Jews. Technically, I remained an antisemite.”¹²³

Other petitioners attempted to distance themselves from “Jewishness” by highlighting their and their family members’ Christian religious beliefs and observances, as well as the decades since

¹¹⁷ “Es war immer sehr peinlich, daß ich jüdischer Abstammung bin. [...] Meine Abstammung habe ich immer als Geheimnis gehütet. [...] Mein jetziger Mann und meine Kinder haben nicht gewußt, daß ich Taubenblatt hieß.” Martiny and Martiny, “Martiny, Sara.”

¹¹⁸ Froszt, “Anklage.”

¹¹⁹ “Ich habe mich stets als Deutscher gefühlt und entsprechend gelebt, mich als Nationalsozialist bekannt und niemals prosemitisch gehandelt.” Briske, “Biographische.”

¹²⁰ “In Schule und Jugendbund wurde ich früh zum Antisemiten.” Briske, “Biographische.”

¹²¹ “Etwa 1929 erfuhr ich durch die Eltern von meiner Abstammung. Ich war so entsetzt, dass ich mich tagelang im Keller unserer Wohnung versteckte.” Briske, “Biographische.”

¹²² “Diesen heiligen Eid leistete ich noch zweimal: 1937 als Soldat und 1945 im Volkssturm. Ich habe meinen Eid nie gebrochen.” Briske, “Biographische.”

The *Volkssturm* was a military unit resulting from the national mobilization of all able-bodied men between the ages of fifteen and sixty to support the *Wehrmacht* in September 1944. (Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 221)

The *Wehrmacht* was the name of the unified German armed forces in Nazi Germany between 1935 and 1946.

¹²³ “Bis auf meine Grossmutter und einige Verwandte habe ich bis heute keine Juden kennengelernt. Im Grunde genommen bin ich Antisemit geblieben.” Briske, “Biographische.”

their Jewish ancestors converted to Christianity.¹²⁴ Endré Froszt considered himself a Catholic. He had been raised in the Catholic faith, attending a Catholic boarding school starting at the age of five. In fact, while in prison, he demanded to be visited by Catholic priests and attend mass.¹²⁵ For these Christians categorized as “Jews,” their hope relied on religion prevailing over their ancestry. However, those who identified as Jewish but were “racially Mixed breeds” tried to contest the prevalence of religion over blood. Emilie Cantor wrote, “Considering that legally speaking descent depends on blood, I am not to be considered as a Jewess and should be released from the obligation of getting an identification card.”¹²⁶ As for the Schönmanns, their children were categorized as “equivalents to Jews.”¹²⁷ But their “German blooded” mother, Helene, who had converted to Judaism in 1921, argued that her sons’ bloodlines made them “Mixed breeds 1st Degree.” The Schönmanns’ requests were rejected, forcing them to get “Jewish” identity cards for their sons, to add “Israel” to their names, and to wear the “Yellow Star.”¹²⁸ Su notes a similar use of arguments during the Cultural Revolution in China. He describes cases in which targeted parents, whose spouses were of poor-peasant origins, argued that half of their children should be spared.¹²⁹ The state defined “class enemies” in political and economic terms, but the behaviors of individuals, both past and present, were rarely taken into consideration. Therefore, the targeted individuals might have believed that by adopting the perpetrators’ biological definition of “enemies”—as an “emergency identity”—they might at least save some of their children.¹³⁰ This dynamic was at work among these categorized as “Jews” in Germany.

Most petitioners argued that their ancestors’ patriotic exploits showed a nationalist fiber that was passed down through generations. More than the result of being raised in a patriotic home,

¹²⁴ Bohlens, “Bohlens;” Margot Bohlens in Lüdemann, “Lüdemann;” Meyer, “Meyer, Kate;” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

¹²⁵ Froszt, “Anklage;” Froszt, “Froszt, Endré.”

¹²⁶ “Mit Rücksicht darauf, dass es nach der oben angeführten Verordnung lediglich auf die blutmässige Abstammung ankommt, bin ich im Sinne dieser Verordnung nicht als Jüdin anzusehen und von der Verpflichtung auf Erteilung einer Kennkarte befreit.” Cantor, “Einspruch;” Cantor, “Brief.”

¹²⁷ “Equivalent to Jews”—*Geltungsjuden*.

¹²⁸ Schönmann and Schönmann, “Schönmann;” Stolpersteine Hamburg, “Herbert Schönmann.”

¹²⁹ Su, *Collective Killings*, 126.

¹³⁰ Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*; Su, *Collective Killings*, 97-98, 101.

in a nationalist spirit, and surrounded by patriotic parents and friends, their “Germanness” ran through their veins.¹³¹ And the Nazis’ obsession with “race” and genetics, in some cases, supported the petitioners’ arguments. For instance, in 1943, when Dr. Herbert Wuttke completed Rudolf Briske’s “hereditary character assessment,” he was adamant that the Briske family’s fervent nationalism was transferred to his descendants. “The mother comes from a family, whose accomplishments demonstrate their high levels of Northern blood.”¹³² This belief was strengthened through anecdotes. For instance, Rudolf Briske was baptized “Hans Rudolf” in memory of his patriotic paternal uncle Hans, who died as a soldier on the first day of battle on the battlefield of Flanders close to Dixmuiden. Briske wrote, “He died with the German national anthem on his lips.”¹³³

Interestingly, petitioners gave a “racial twist” to their behavioral arguments, stating that their physical and psychological characteristics proved that they were carriers of “Aryan genes.” For “Mixed breeds,” this served to prove that their “Aryan genes” were stronger and more numerous than their “Jewish genes.” In this vein, Rudolf Briske argued that, “My attitude towards State and People is absolutely positive; it is not only learned, but also genetically inherited. This genetic make-up should also be a guarantee that a relapse into anti-German attitudes from any descendant is ruled out. Character, appearance, and lifestyle show, that the Aryan qualities in me are unambiguously predominant.”¹³⁴ Dr. Wuttke wrote, “[Briske’s] whole personality is undoubtedly the picture of today’s German youth in its best light, and his national and moral qualities outshine most.”¹³⁵ Furthermore, this also suggested that descendants will share their pro-German attitudes. Rudolf Briske underlined that his maternal “Aryan” ancestors were of “high

¹³¹ Briske, “Biographische.”

¹³² “Die Mutter entstammt einer Familie, die in ihren Leistungen ihren hohen nordischen Blutsanteil erweist.” Dr. Herbert Wuttke, In Briske, “Biographische.”

¹³³ “Er fiel [...] mit dem Deutschlandlied auf den Lippen.” Briske, “Biographische.”

¹³⁴ “Meine Einstellung zu Staat und Volk ist absolut positiv; sie ist nicht nur anerzogen, sondern auch blutmässig bedingt. Diese Erbmasse dürfte auch die Garantie geben, dass ein Rückfall etwaiger Nachkommen in einer antideutsche Haltung ausgeschlossen ist. Charakter, Erscheinungsbild und Lebensführung zeigen, dass die arischen Eigenschaften in mir eindeutig überwiegen.” Briske, “Biographische.”

¹³⁵ “Briske stellt so in seiner Gesamtpersönlichkeit unzweifelhaft das Bild des heutigen jungen Deutschen im besten Sinne dar, der den Durchschnitt in den ihm eigenen national - sittlichen Qualitäten weit überragt.” Dr. Herbert Wuttke, in Briske, “Biographische.”

social and genetic quality,” and his paternal “non-Aryan” ancestors showed a “flawless sense of patriotism.”¹³⁶ Moreover, Dr. Wuttke believed that Rudolf Briske’s father was a great example of a “genetic borderline case within the Jewish people.”¹³⁷ So much as that he was unlikely to pass down any “Jewish predispositions” to his offspring, but his union with Briske’s mother, who came from a “racially valuable family,” has practically eliminated this possibility.¹³⁸ Dr. Wuttke even believed that, provided Briske chooses a suitable spouse, his descendants should be genetically above average. “For these reasons, it [to refuse equality to Briske] would be a loss for our German folklore.”¹³⁹

By the end of the 1930s, the Nazis’ pseudo-scientific definition of races had penetrated into ordinary citizens’ perceptions of themselves and others. Petitioners might or might not have believed in racist ways of thinking, but they had to acknowledge and use them to their own advantage to fight against it. In the Meyer’s case, witnesses were called in to testify to the “Jewish” physical appearance of their mother, Julie Meyer. They agreed that she looked like “a typical old Jewish woman,” without defining which characteristics permitted them to come to that conclusion.¹⁴⁰ What is particularly interesting here is the fact that ordinary citizens seemed to have internalized the Nazis’ physical portrayal of “Jews” and were convinced of their ability to “detect” them. The sisters objected and claimed that their mother looked “Aryan.”¹⁴¹ But their best defense laid in showing the court that they understood Nazi racial theories. Stella Meyer shed doubt on one of the witnesses’ credibility.¹⁴² “I have never held long limbs for a typical sign of the Aryan race,

¹³⁶ “[...] besonders hochwertigen Sippe [...]”—“[...] einwandfrei national-deutsche Einstellung [...]” Dr. Herbert Wuttke, in Briske, “Biographische.”

¹³⁷ “[...] genetischen Grenzfall innerhalb des jüdischen Volkes [...]” Dr. Herbert Wuttke, in Briske, “Biographische.”

¹³⁸ “[...] rassisch besonders hochwertigen Sippe [...]” Dr. Herbert Wuttke, in Briske, “Biographische.”

¹³⁹ “Aus diesem Grunde wäre es ein großer Verlust, wenn dieser unserem deutschen Volkstum verloren gehen würde.” Dr. Herbert Wuttke, in Briske, “Biographische.”

¹⁴⁰ “[...] die Mutter der Beschuldigten auf dem vorgelegten Bild den typischen Eindruck einer alten jüdischen Frau macht. [...] ihre Mutter ein typisch jüdisches Aussehen hatte.” Lüdemann, “Lüdemann;” Meyer, “Meyer, Kate;” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

¹⁴¹ Lüdemann, “Lüdemann;” Meyer, “Meyer, Kate;” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

¹⁴² Dora Boeter stated that she learned of the Meyers’ “Jewish ancestry” in 1928, during a hiking trip in the Black Forest with Stella Meyer. One day, unable to get a key at the top of a cupboard, Stella asked for Boeter’s help. Stella supposedly said that Boeter, with her long legs typical of “another race” would be able to reach higher up than her, who was of the “Jewish race.” (Dora Boeter. In Lüdemann, “Lüdemann;” Meyer, “Meyer, Kate;” Meyer, “Meyer,

since there are small, slender Aryans, as well as members of other races, like Blacks and Indians, with long arms and legs.”¹⁴³ Furthermore, she explained that there are different types of “Aryans,” such as “the strong and wide east Prussian” or the “elegantly built Rhineländer,” “the clumsy fisherman” or “the agile mountain dweller.”¹⁴⁴ “Rather, I recognize racial differences by the skin color, the cranial form, the ocular position, and the state of the hair.”¹⁴⁵

Interestingly, political scientist Lee Ann Fujii, in her work on Rwanda, notes this adaptation and strategic use of racial stereotypes by “Tutsis” during the Rwandan genocide. She explains that, while the state first assigned categories based on self-identification, the former were eventually fixed. But people learned that ethnic categories could be flexible and employed strategically, and that stereotypes could be adapted, disregarded, and refashioned depending on their situation and goals. In this vein, she notes that “Tutsis” highlighted physical or cultural traits, which were associated with “Hutus” to prove that they were in fact “Hutus.”¹⁴⁶ Similarly, we see that German nationals categorized as “Jews” or “Mixed breeds” underlined physical and cultural traits, associated with “Germans,” to prove that their “Aryanness” had overcome their “Jewishness.” In addition, the testimonies from the witnesses at the Meyer sisters’ trial prove that these same stereotypes were used against them, forcing them to twist them in their favor.

The Meyer sisters’ requests were not successful. In 1938, they were “very brutally let go from [their] teaching position without notice and without a pension.”¹⁴⁷ And in 1940, they were

Stella.”)

¹⁴³ “Ich habe lange Glieder noch nie für ein charakteristisches Merkmal der arischen Rasse gehalten. Denn es gibt feingliedrige, kleine Arier und Angehörige anderer Rassen, wie Neger und Indianer mit langen Armen und Beinen.” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

¹⁴⁴ “[...] einen kräftigen, breiten Ostpreußen im Gegensatz zu einem zierlich gebauten Rheinländer, oder einen schwerfälligen Fischer im Gegensatz zu einem beweglichen Bergbewohner.” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

¹⁴⁵ “Ich erkenne Rassenunterschiede an der Hautfarbe, der Schädelform, der Augenstellung und der Beschaffenheit der Haare.” Meyer, “Meyer, Stella.”

¹⁴⁶ Fujii, *Killing Neighbors*, 103-127.

¹⁴⁷ “Ich ersuche um Wiedergutmachung des mir durch die Nürnberger Gesetze zugefügten Schadens.” “[...] sehr brutal fristlos entlassen.” Stella Elise Antonie Meyer, “Meyer, Stella Elise Antonie,” February 19, 1951, 351-11_22304, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg; Kate Cäcilie Augusta Meyer, “Meyer, Kate Cäcilie Augusta,” April 22, 1954, 351-11_15033, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg; Margot Nanny Camilla Bohlens, “Bohlens, Margot Nanny Camilla, geboren Meyer,” May 19, 1959, 351-11_18050, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

forced into retirement, because of their “Jewish descent.”¹⁴⁸ Fortunately, they survived the Holocaust. For his part, Rudolf Briske wrote in 1989 that being discharged from the German army in 1940 was a cruel stroke of faith for him, that his life purpose of devoting himself to Germany had been shattered.¹⁴⁹ We do not know whether he was granted legal equality, but he was able to survive the rest of the war in Germany. Unfortunately, most petitioners, whose requests were denied, did not have the same luck. Herbert Pommer was arrested in 1938, charged for “race defilement” in 1939, and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in 1943, where he died on January 3, 1944.¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, in June 1943, only six days after Herbert’s release from Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp, he and his brother, Hans Joachim, were deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto because of their “Aryan blood share.”¹⁵¹ In September 1944, Herbert was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp as part of the “Fall transports,” and in October to Kaufering concentration camp, where he died on January 7, 1945.¹⁵² Hans Joachim stayed in Theresienstadt, where he was liberated on May 8, 1945.

While petitioners could not have known the fate that awaited them, their growing exclusion and persecution as “Jews” and “Mixed breeds” made it clear that changing their categorization

¹⁴⁸ Meyer, “Meyer, Stella Elise;” Meyer, “Meyer, Kate Cäcilie;” Bohlens, “Bohlens, Margot.”

¹⁴⁹ Briske, “Biographische.”

¹⁵⁰ He was arrested in 1938 and held at the remand prison Hamburg-City. (Remand prison Hamburg-City—*Untersuchungsgefängnis Hamburg-Stadt.*) He was charged with “race defilement” in 1939 and imprisoned in Altstrelitzer Prison. (In the town of Neustrelitz, in the region of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, in Germany.)

Bundesarchiv in Koblenz and the Internationalen Suchdienst in Arolsen, “Herbert Pommer,” Gedenkbuch. Opfer der Verfolgung der Juden unter der nationalsozialistischen Gewaltherrschaft in Deutschland 1933–1945, Band 1–2, 1986, accessed through Yad Vashem, The Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names, on July 12, 2016, <http://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=11609066&ind=1>; Pommer, “Anklage.”

¹⁵¹ The Schönmanns were forced to move into a “Jewish house” in 1942. In 1943, Herbert spent a month in the Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp. It was a prison built in 1879. Parts of it were converted into a concentration camp in 1933. It was located in a northern neighborhood of Hamburg.

“Aryan blood share”—*arischer Blutanteil*. (Stolpersteine Hamburg, “Herbert Schönmann.”) The Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names [TCDoSVN], “Herbert Schönmann,” Yad Vashem, Accessed on May 25, 2017, <http://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=4817976&ind=0>; <http://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=11628790&ind=1>

¹⁵² Fall transports—*Herbsttransporte*.

Kaufering concentration camp was a satellite of Dachau concentration camp.

Stolpersteine Hamburg, “Herbert Schönmann;” TCDoSVN, “Herbert Schönmann.”

could make the difference between life and bare survival, or even death. While the state attempted to fix their identities as “Jews” and “Mixed breeds,” they demanded the recognition of their “Germanness,” which they defined in terms of political beliefs, values, cultural traits, and a shared history. As the Nazis racially defined the nation, conflating “Germans” and “Aryans,” petitioners redefined their “German” traits in racial terms to fit into the Nazi national narrative.

At the end of 1941, as the deportations of German “Jews” began, “Jews” and “Mixed breeds” were fighting their last battle, hoping to avoid the unknown fate reserved to those sent to the East. By May 1943, the Nazi authorities declared the *Reich* “free of Jews” (*Judenrein* or *Judenfrei*). Fewer than 20,000 Jews were still in Germany, most living in “privileged mixed marriages” or as “Mixed breeds.” In these circumstances, changing one’s categorization from “Jew” to “Mixed breed” could mean the difference between life and death.¹⁵³ In the context of the Wannsee Conference and the most destructive years of the Holocaust, how did German “Jews” use legal means to convince the state to spare them? Which arguments did petitioners use in such a life-threatening situation? Did they still define themselves along racial lines? What role did their “German” beliefs, values, and contributions play in their petitions?

¹⁵³ Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 189–193.

Conclusion

In the fall of 1941 and the winter of 1942, the anti-“Jewish” measures were aimed at the complete social and economic isolation of all “Jews” in Germany.¹ Then, on January 20, 1942, Reinhard Heydrich chaired the Wannsee Conference, which aimed to formalize the plans for the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question,” in other words, the mass deportation and killing of all “Jews” in Europe.² By the end of the war, only one percent of German “Jews” who were not in “mixed marriages” had survived in Nazi Germany.³ They were next on the deportation list by late 1944, but the end of the war saved them. In this context, Ruth Katzenstein, Heinz Jordan, and Rudolf Mond petitioned the Nazi authorities to change their categorization. They were all “racially Mixed breeds” but were categorized as “Jews” because of their membership in the Jewish religious community at the time of the Nuremberg laws.⁴

First case. January 1942, Ruth Katzenstein received a letter informing her of their imminent evacuation to the East.⁵ To avoid deportation, Ruth contested the legitimacy of her Jewish father,

¹ They were no longer allowed to leave their homes without the permission of the authorities, to use public transport, to own a bicycle, to use public telephones, to receive newspapers by mail, nor to visit non-“Jews.”

Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 146-147; Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939 — March 1942* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 173; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Extermination*, 288-9; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 157-159

² Reinhard Tristan Eugen Heydrich (1904-1942) was an SS-Senior Group Leader (*Obergruppenführer*), Chief of Police (*General der Polizei*), and Chief of the Reich Main Security Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*), which included the Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei*—Secret State Police), Kripo (*Kriminalpolizei*—Criminal Police), and SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*—Intelligence Agency). Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 164-165; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Extermination*, 339-345; Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 198-199; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 305-307.

³ Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 190-191.

⁴ Ruth Katzenstein’s father Siegfried, was Jewish, and her mother, Wilhelmine, born Grimmer, was “Aryan.” Heinz Jordan was the son of Willibald, who was Jewish, and Igenes Antonia, born Napiontek, who was of “German blood.” Similarly, Rudolf Mond’s mother, Caecilie Amanda, born Runge, was “Aryan,” while his father, Berthold, was of “Jewish descent.”

⁵ Ruth’s family name changed numerous time during her life. We will refer to her as Ruth Katzenstein, her birth name, to facilitate the reading. However, to be precise, Ruth bore the name Katzenstein from her birth, in 1906, until her first marriage. She married Walter Lichtenstein in 1926 and took his name. In 1935, he committed suicide, and she changed her name back to Katzenstein. In 1942, once her petition was approved, she changed her name to Grimmer, her mother’s cousin’s name, who was supposedly her biological father. In 1943, she married Heinz Gützlaff and took his name.

Furthermore, she married Walter Lichtenstein, a Jewish man, and they had a son together. Lichtenstein

Siegfried, as her biological father.⁶ Instead, her mother, Wilhelmine, claimed that her cousin, Max Grimmer, was the biological father. As they were both “Aryans,” this would make Ruth “Aryan” and save her life.⁷ Wilhelmine declared that she had been romantically and sexually involved with Max until the day before her wedding to her husband, Siegfried. She wrote, “On January 20, 1906, almost exactly 9 months after my last get-together with my cousin and my wedding, my daughter Ruth Anna-Liese was born. From the beginning, I was convinced that my cousin, Max Grimmer, was the father of the child.”⁸ However, an oath was not enough to convince the Nazi authorities. Therefore, pictures—of Ruth, her parents, her siblings, and her supposed biological father—were attached to the application to show that Ruth showed “no features typical of the Jewish race.”⁹ The evaluating doctors of the *Polyclinic for Heritage and Racial Care*¹⁰ meticulously recorded in excruciating details the examinees’ corporal features, but especially facial features.¹¹ The goal was to determine “scientifically” whether Ruth showed any resemblance to her siblings and mother, but especially to Siegfried or Max. Moreover, it sought to determine whether Ruth showed “typical markers of Jews and Jewish Mixed-breeds” or any “characteristic, which would point to a Jewish

committed suicide in 1935, and in 1938, Ruth’s brother emigrated to England with her son.

Ruth Gützlaff, “Lebenslauf Ruth Gützlaff (1906-1988),” September 29, 1967, 2000/316/80 001-002, Jüdisches Museum Berlin.

⁶ Ruth Lichtenstein, “Ehelichkeitsanfechtungsklage gegen Ruth Lichtenstein (1906-1988),” July 15, 1942, 2000/316/53 001-002, Jüdisches Museum Berlin; Ruth Lichtenstein, “Urteil des Landgerichts Berlin in der Ehelichkeitsanfechtungsklage gegen Ruth Lichtenstein (1906-1988),” August 17, 1942, 2000/316/58 001-002, Jüdisches Museum Berlin; Ruth Lichtenstein, “Urteil für Ruth Lichtenstein (1906-1988) zur Anfechtung der Ehelichkeit,” August 17, 1942, 2000/316/60 001-003, Jüdisches Museum Berlin.

⁷ Ruth Lichtenstein, “Antrag auf Anfechtung der Ehelichkeit,” March 14, 1942, 2000/316/46, Jüdisches Museum Berlin.

⁸ “Am 20. Januar 1906, also fast genau 9 Monate nach meinem letzten Zusammensein mit meinem Vetter und meiner Eheschliessung, wurde mir meine Tochter Ruth Anna-Liese geboren. Ich war von Anfang an der Überzeugung, dass mein Vetter Max Grimmer der Vater des Kindes sei.” Wilhelmine Katzenstein, “Eidestattliche Erklärung von Wilhelmine Katzenstein (1875-1964),” December 19, 1941, 2000/316/38, Jüdisches Museum Berlin.

⁹ Lichtenstein, “Antrag auf Anfechtung der Ehelichkeit.”

¹⁰ Poliklinik für Erb- und Rassenpflege.

¹¹ Corporal features, such as height, length of legs, posture, skin consistency, skin color, adiposity, size and shape of hands and feet (for instance, describing their foot vaults), and size and form of their skulls; and facial features, such as the size and form of their foreheads, noses, eyes, mouths, hair, and ears, and more precisely: palpebral fissure, eyelids, eyebrows, eyeballs, nasal bridge, nasal points, nose hangs, wide mucous membrane lips, lower lips, lower lip chin furrows, chins, ear lobes, hair colors, hair forms, and body hair.

blood strain.”¹² Luckily for Ruth, she looked like the Nazis’ propaganda image of the perfect “Aryan.”¹³ Thus, not only did experts write that, “[Ruth] showed no resemblance to her legal father, Siegfried Katzenstein,”¹⁴ but they also believed that she shared many characteristics with Grimmer.¹⁵ They concluded, “It is clear that the biological father of [Ruth] is a man of German blood.”¹⁶

Second case. Rudolf Mond was a professor at the Hanseatic University, and as such, he was requested to prove his “Aryan ancestry” in order to keep his position. Rudolf was unable or unwilling to obtain the proper documentation. However, he and his mother claimed that he was born out of marriage, and that Berthold Mond, his legal father, married his mother a year after his birth and recognized him as his son.¹⁷ They stated that his biological father was Hermann Meincke, a “German of German blood.” The fathers of illegitimate children of “Aryan” mothers were usually considered “Aryans.”¹⁸ Thus, if successful, Rudolf would be categorized as an “Aryan,” and allowed to remain in his position. In February 1942, unable to find this man, the *Reich Kinship Office* decided to conduct a physical examination of Rudolf, as well as of his mother and of a photograph of his legal father, Berthold. “The expert’s report ascertains that a resemblance between the examinee and Berthold cannot be recognized. For instance, nothing in the examinee’s appearance could point to a Jewish influence.”¹⁹ These results could not eliminate all probabilities

¹² Lichtenstein, “Erbgutachten.”

¹³ Katzenstein, “Eidstattliche Erklärung von Wilhelmine Katzenstein.”

¹⁴ “Mit dem gesetzlichen jüdischen Vater hat P keine Ähnlichkeit.” Lichtenstein, “Erbgutachten für Ruth Lichtenstein.”

¹⁵ Lichtenstein, “Urteil des Landgerichts Berlin;” Lichtenstein, “Urteil für Ruth Lichtenstein.”

¹⁶ “Es ist daher eher anzunehmen, daß der Erzeuger von P ein deutschblutiger Mann (in vorliegendem Fall ist wegen einiger gemeinsamer Merkmale bei P und Grimmer an diesen zu denken) der Erzeuger von P gewesen ist.” Lichtenstein, “Erbgutachten für Ruth Lichtenstein.”

¹⁷ Rudolf Mond, “Feststellung der arischen Abstammung von Prof.Dr.Rudolf Mond durch das Reichssippenamt,” 1938-1942, 113-5_B V 104 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S13984, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

Rudolf Mond, “Feststellung der arischen Abstammung von Prof. Dr. Rudolf Mond durch das Reichssippenamt,” 1938-42, 113-5_B V 104 in Filmarchiv 741-4 S13984, Staatsarchiv der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg.

¹⁸ For more information regarding the categorization of illegitimate children, see chapter 1, note 71.

¹⁹ “Das Gutachten vom 9.2.1942 stellt fest, daß eine Ähnlichkeit zwischen dem Prüfung und Berthold Mond

that Berthold Mond might be the father; but it strongly suggested that Dr. Mond's father was "Aryan."²⁰

Third case. Heinz Jordan claimed to be Evangelical and wished to be categorized as a Mixed breeds.²¹ The first step was for his Jewish father's paternity to be doubted. Luckily for him, the district court of Hamburg ruled that he was "[...] not the legitimate child of the Jewish merchant Willibald Jordan."²² Then, Jordan stated that, Bruno Usèe, a man of "German blood," was his biological father.²³ To prove this statement, an expert from the *Reich Agency for Genealogical Research*, Prof. Dr. Hans Weigert, had to evaluate Heinz Jordan, as well as photographs of Willibald Jordan and Bruno Usèe.²⁴ He declared that Heinz Jordan showed "no Jewish features," and no commonality with Willibald Jordan.²⁵ Furthermore, he wrote, "the resemblance of the candidate [Heinz Jordan] and the man of German blood Bruno Usèe was so obvious that his paternity could be confirmed with certainty."²⁶

All three cases were successful. Katzenstein's categorization was changed to German "of German blood."²⁷ The *Reich Kinship Office* officially categorized Mond as being of "German or

nicht zu erkennen sei, wie überhaupt im Gesamterscheinungsbild des Prüflings sich nichts zeige, was auf einen jüdischen Einschlag hindeuten könnte." Mond, "Feststellung der arischen Abstammung."

²⁰ Mond, "Feststellung der arischen Abstammung."

²¹ Heinz Jordan, "Brief von Heinz Jordan (1919-1994) an das Arbeitsamt Fontanepromenade," February 5, 1941, 2008/97/56, Jüdisches Museum Berlin; Heinz Jordan, "Brief von Heinz Jordan (1919-1994) an das Arbeitsamt Fontanepromenade," June 1, 1941, 2008/197/57, Jüdisches Museum Berlin.

Heinz Jordan, "Abstammungsbescheid für Heinz Jordan (1919-1994)," April 8, 1940, 2008/97/19, Jüdisches Museum Berlin; Heinz Jordan, "Abstammungsbescheid für Heinz Jordan (1919-1994)," May 17, 1943, 2008/97/16 001-002, Jüdisches Museum Berlin.

²² "Es wird festgestellt, daß der Beklagte nicht das eheliche Kind des jüdischen Kaufmann Willibald Jordan ist." Heinz Jordan, "Gerichtsurteil über die Ehelichkeitsklage von Heinz Jordan (1919-1994)," February 13, 1943, 2008/97/18, Jüdisches Museum Berlin.

²³ Jordan, "Gerichtsurteil über die Ehelichkeitsklage von Heinz Jordan;" Jordan, "Abstammungsbescheid für Heinz Jordan."

²⁴ *Reich Agency for Genealogical Research—Reichsstelle für Sippenforschung*.

²⁵ "[...] keine jüdischen Merkmale [...]" Jordan, "Abstammungsbescheid für Heinz Jordan."

²⁶ "Die Übereinstimmung des Prüflings mit dem deutschblutigen Bruno Usèe sei so offensichtlich, daß dessen Erzeugerschaft mit Sicherheit festgestellt worden sei." Jordan, "Abstammungsbescheid für Heinz Jordan."

²⁷ Ruth Lichtenstein, "Bericht zum Abstammungsnachweis Ruth Lichtenstein (1906-1988)," September 10, 1942, 2000/316/62, Jüdisches Museum Berlin.

kindred blood.”²⁸ And the Director of the *Reich Agency for Genealogical Research* declared Jordan to be “of German or kindred blood.”²⁹ After the war, Katzenstein wrote, “At the beginning of January 1942, I was summoned to the Jewish religious community for the evacuations [deportations]. However, I could postpone my appointment, because my mother, in order to save my life and my son’s life, attempted legal proceedings at the prosecuting attorney’s office through which I was declared illegitimate in August 1942.”³⁰ Not only did she explain that Siegfried Katzenstein was her biological father, but she also clearly stated that declaring herself the illegitimate child of Max Grimmer was a strategy to avoid deportations.

In the context of the most devastating years of the Holocaust, Katzenstein, Mond, and Jordan successfully petitioned the Nazi authorities, and thus survived. They did not highlight, nor even mention, their religious beliefs, patriotic actions, political affiliations, contributions to the German state, and values. It appears that the racialization of “German” identity as designed by the Nazis was, by this part, complete. The only means to counter the deleterious effects of the racial state was to adopt its language and logic. They proclaimed their “Aryanness” based on the argument of “blood”: their legal “Jewish” fathers were not their biological fathers.

This ability to understand and use the Nazi language of identity evolved in less than a decade. This research explained this evolution in three steps. After their rise to power, the Nazis imposed anti-“Jewish” measures, aiming to isolate and marginalize all “Jews” in Germany. These measures hit German society in three waves, and petitioners to the regime adapted their arguments to mirror the changes in *Judenpolitik*—anti-“Jewish” measures and policies.³¹ First, in 1933 and 1934, the anti-“Jewish” measures targeted segments of the “Jewish” population in Germany—for

²⁸ Mond, “Feststellung der arischen Abstammung.”

²⁹ “[...] nach dem Gutachten des Prof. Dr. Hans Weigert, Kiel, der Prüfling keine jüdischen Merkmale aufweise, es habe sie nichts finden lassen, was eine Abstammung des Prüflings von Willibald Jordan vermuten lassen könne. Die Übereinstimmung des Prüflings mit dem deutschblutigen Bruno Usèe sei so offensichtlich, daß dessen Erzeugerschaft mit Sicherheit festgestellt worden sei. Somit ergibt sich die Feststellung, daß Heinz Jordan deutschblutig ist.” Jordan, “Abstammungsbescheid für Heinz Jordan.”

³⁰ “Ich wurde Anfang Januar 1942 bereits zur Jüd. Gemeinde zwecks Evakuierung vorgeladen, konnte den Termin verlängern, weil meine Mutter, um meinem Jungen und mir das Leben zu retten, bei der Staatsanwaltschaft einen Prozess angestrengt hatte, bei dem ich im Aug. 42 als uneheliche Kind meiner Mutter erklärt wurde.” Ruth Gützlaff, “Lebenslauf Ruth Gützlaff.”

³¹ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 51-100; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 30-32, 127-130, 132; Wachsmann, “The Policy of Exclusion,” 122-128, 137-145.

instance, the *Boycott of Jewish Stores* aimed to exclude “Jews” who owned their own business, from economic life and to force them to emigrate.³² Petitioners’ requests reflected the lack of a legal definition of the term “Jew” and adopted the commonly understood definitions of “Jewishness” as a sense of belonging to the Jewish faith and “Germanness” as a sense of belonging to Germany as German citizens.

Second, in 1935, with the implementation of the Nuremberg Laws, the Nazis legally defined the categories “Jew” and “Jewish Mixed breed” in racial terms. Those who found themselves as part of this category respectively lost all or parts of their citizenship rights, excluding them from German civil society.³³ They were petitioning not only to avoid persecution but also to regain their rights as German citizens. To do so, they emphasized their patriotic actions and contributions to the German state, portraying themselves as more than German citizens—“nationalist Germans”—who were brought up with love and devotion for “German” culture and values. They attempted to counter the dichotomy of “Germans” and “Jews,” and resist the Nazis’ racialist discourse, by defining “Jewishness” as a religious identity and “Germanness” as a national identity.

Third, the November pogrom in 1938, followed by the beginning of World War II in 1939, marked the start of mass-scale physical violence. “Jews” were branded with identity cards and “yellow badges,” making them easily identifiable and facilitating their arrest. Meanwhile, the Nazis furthered their dichotomy of “Germans” and “Jews.” They defined “Germanness” as a race, which also encompassed political affiliations, national identity, and civic status. In this vein, “Germans” were “Aryans,” Nazis, German nationalists, and German citizens. They also defined “Jewishness” as a “race,” described as the opposite of “Germanness,” as a guarantee of anti-“German” and anti-“Nazi” attitudes, and as a threat to “German” culture, values, and people. In doing so, the Nazis portrayed the complete physical annihilation of “Jews” in Germany as the only means to counter this threat. The “Final Solution” was the deportation of all “Jews” out of the *Reich* and into concentration and death camps.³⁴ For petitioners, changing their categorization was

³² Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 51-69; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 32-33; Wachsmann, “The Policy of Exclusion,” 123-128, 137-139.

³³ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 70-78; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 52-54; Wachsmann, “The Policy of Exclusion,” 123-128, 137-139.

³⁴ Bergen, *The Holocaust*, 79-100; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 95-97, 133-135; Wachsmann, “The Policy of

a question of life or death. Their requests now mirrored the Nazis' racial discourse and attempted to use it to their own advantage by supporting their arguments with physical characteristics and racist logic. They highlighted their "German nationalism" as proof of their "Aryanness," and some hoped that their anti-"Jewish" behaviors and attitudes would invalidate their categorization as "Jews" or "Jewish Mixed breeds."

Through the stories of various German petitioners under the Nazi regime, this research sought to understand and explain how the Nazis defined and enforced racial categories; how petitioners responded to the imposed categorization through legal means; how they used the Nazis' racial categories as tools to assure their survival; and how their use of the state's rhetoric has impacted the Nazis' system of racial categorization. Examining how the petitioners adapted their arguments to mirror the changing Nazis' legal language sheds light on how citizens of Germany, whom the Nazis categorized as "Jews," responded to the imposed categorization through legal means. These responses highlight not only how persecuted individuals attempted to contest imposed categories, but how they were able to strategically use the state's rhetoric to their advantage. This is vital to our understanding of racial, ethnic, religious, and national identities and categories. Moreover, this is a reminder that individuals' use of ethnic, national, and/or racial language does not mean that they necessarily self-identify along these lines or that they think these categories represent real, bounded, and homogeneous entities. As Dragostinova has argued, "[...] ordinary people were not simply objects of state-sponsored national policies but were active agents that shaped the national discourse and practice to serve their needs and priorities."³⁵ However, petitioners' objectives were not to contest or transform the system—over which they had no power—but rather to play within its constraints. Their status forced them to act by "follow[ing] the line of least resistance."³⁶ The concept of resistance sheds light on petitioners as agents—who might not have been empowered to change the system itself—but who were still able to maneuver it. By looking at their requests as strategies to navigate the system, it illuminates the ways in which petitions can be seen as survival techniques.

Exclusion," 139-145.

³⁵ Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*, 13.

³⁶ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 35.

Yet, these requests might have—unintentionally—fortified the system of persecution, which petitioners were attempting to circumvent. Scholars have highlighted the fact that state-imposed categories are defined by a host of different actors; such as bureaucrats and “scientific experts,” as well as the state’s targets. They note that these categories, in and of themselves, are empty and unstable. They are not constituted by the state alone; everyone involved in the process might contribute to their creation and re-creation. They only gain traction through application.³⁷ Looking at both perpetrators and victims, even though they have unequal access to power, we can shed light on how categories are created and maintained in an interactive process. However, it is important to note that not all actors are empowered to change the process itself. In other words, many are constrained to partake in the process to ensure their survival. In the case of the Nazi regime, the system itself was created to allow this interaction between state and individuals. In fact, the *Reich Citizenship Law* stated, “The Führer and Reich Chancellor can grant exemptions.”³⁸ But to engage the state in a dialogue, petitioners had to pretend to adhere to the Nazis’ “Aryan” state and work within its logic. However, by using the state’s rhetoric in their requests, the categories and the system of racial classification were crystallized.

To sum up, I argue that individuals, subjected to state-imposed categorization, in their attempts to circumvent state-led persecution by resisting and negotiating their status within the system’s constraints, might unintentionally enable the authorities to redefine the population along certain categorical lines. In this regards, this complicates our understanding of categorization as a top-down process, coming from the state and imposed upon the population.³⁹ Furthermore, this goes beyond most scholars’ analysis of the position of individuals on the ground as one of reaction.⁴⁰ I seek to build upon and go further than the work of Dragostinova—which analyzes

³⁷ See also, Ariela Julie Gross, *What Blood Won’t Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Kelly Lythe Hernandez, *Migra!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects. Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Updated (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

³⁸ First Supplementary decree of the Reich Citizenship Law. Paragraph 7: “The Führer and Reich Chancellor can grant exemptions from the regulations laid down in this supplementary decree.” (Matthäus and Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, 445).

³⁹ Straus, *The Order of Genocide*; Scott, *Seeing like a State*.

⁴⁰ Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands*; Matthäus, “Evading Persecution;” Pegelow Kaplan, *The Language of Nazi Genocide*; Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*.

individuals as agents—to examine the role of their actions in the process of creating and reifying categories. This is vital to our understanding not only of categories under the Nazi regime, but also of the process of ethnic and racial categorization. This sheds light on how and why state-imposed categories can gain traction on the ground.

Expanding on this current research, we should consider whether people who use the vocabulary of categorization in their requests to the state, also use this same vocabulary in personal settings. This could shed light on the difference between learning to speak the official language of categorization and the internalization of it, or lack thereof. Decades after the end of the war, the history of the Holocaust is still taught as the story of two opposing groups, the Germans and the Jews. However, this does not mean that categorized individuals self-identified as such or that state-imposed categorization deactivated all their other forms of identity. How can we write a history of the Holocaust that respects the voices of the victims, rather than only using the language of the perpetrators? This leads us to wonder how German citizens, whom the Nazis categorized as “Jews,” self-identified before, during, and after the Holocaust? Future research should seek to analyze how Nazi-imposed categorization affected their forms of self-identification. The challenge will be to reveal how they internalized, rejected, or transformed this externally imposed categorization. More broadly, it would seek to answer whether the imposition of official categorization can create a sense of *groupness* which did not previously exist. Did the Nazis, through their imposed forms of categorization and policies of persecution, actually help to create a sense of *groupness* among the very same people of whom they were so ferociously trying to rid Germany?

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