

**HOMOSEXUALS AFTER THE HOLOCAUST:
SEXUAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY IN
GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES, 1945 – 2008**

by

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DEDICATION

For my husband, Dennis.

This project is finished, but ours is not. We are the authors of our own stories, and I know the best chapters of our history together have yet to be written.

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“It takes a village to raise a child.” We’ve all heard the old adage several times before, but now I know that it also takes a village to write a dissertation. As I’ve come to complete this work, the acknowledgments section is the one I’ve been most looking forward to writing. I hope the following words can fully express my deepest gratitude to all of the people who have helped me write this history over the past six years.

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gracious host during my time in Hanover, and many times encouraged me to answer questions that I hadn't even asked myself yet. Albert Knoll made my time in the archives of the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site as pleasant as such an experience can be. And when, at the last minute I had to cut short my stay in Munich, Albert and the volunteer team at the Forum Homosexualität München scrambled their schedules, coming in before and after work so that I could continue to do my research. The same can be said for Friedrich Schregel at Cologne's Centrum Schwule Geschichte. There were many evenings when he came straight from work to let me in the archives. And of course, Jens Dobler and the faculty at Berlin's wonderful Schwules Museum were fantastic at helping me locate a plethora of material for my dissertation.

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history and understanding the human experience. Her insightful comments forced me to articulate myself more clearly, and on more than one occasion, it was evident that she understood what I was saying better than I did. Moreover, Susan is one of the kindest and most generous souls I've ever met, and I'm thankful I got to know her. Dr. Sasha Pack was always quick to provide keen feedback that encouraged me to push into the finer detail and be more concise about what I was trying to argue. And I'm certainly grateful for the advice offered by Dr. Geoffrey Giles. Since we met at a German Studies Association conference, Geoffrey has been a friend and, as a leading expert on the Nazi persecution of homosexuals, his feedback has made this dissertation all the better.

I also want to thank the professors at Valdosta State University who so greatly influenced me as a student, a scholar, and as a person. Dr. Charles Johnson was my undergraduate advisor, and he taught me the discipline it takes to write history. I will never forget the day that Charles simply asked me to leave his office because he could tell I had written my paper at the last minute; he told me to only come back when I had put some real effort into it! So, Charles taught me to be disciplined, but more importantly, he also taught me to look up from the books and learn from the world around me. In many ways, I owe my outlook on life as a scholar and as a person to Dr. Matthew Richard. His cultural anthropology courses taught me to think critically and approach questions with an interdisciplinary mindset. At the conclusion of my first semester with Matthew, I remember feeling as if I had discovered an extra sense that allowed me to see the world more clearly. Most importantly, though, Matthew instilled in me a deep conviction that education should be a form of activism, a force for positive and meaningful social change in the world. I also learned a lot from Dr. Ofelia Nikolova, who was the director of VSU's Honors Program. She's a larger than life character with a keen intellect and a heart as good as gold. She encouraged all of her students to get out of the classroom, engage in their own research, and then present it at conferences. I'll always be thankful for Ofelia's encouragement, which made this boy from rural southwest Georgia feel confident enough to stand before crowds of scholars and present his ideas. I would also be remiss if I did not thank Dr. Susan Eischeid. She continues to be a great friend, and one of the things I'm grateful for was how she never made me feel like I was just a student. She treated me like I was a historian, even if I was still a historian-in-training. She also introduced me to the history of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. Her Pink Triangle

Project convinced me that it was an important topic that needed further research. So, in a practical sense, I wouldn't have come to this topic without her.

It is certainly no stretch of the imagination to say that I could not have done this dissertation without the members of the JACKEMS writing group. Averill, Colin, Kathryn, Ellie, Maggie, and Sarah read rough drafts of everything I wrote. Ling, too, offered her helpful insight in the early months, back when we were still the JACKELS. Having their keen eyes and critical perspectives helped me improve my ideas and writing. Our meetings every two weeks kept me motivated to write on those days when all I wanted to do was binge on Netflix or reread the Harry Potter series. But, long before we were colleagues and fellow dissertators, we were all friends, exploring Buffalo together, making our presence known on the local trivia circuit (Citation Station all the way!), staying up into all hours of the morning playing board games, and singing until we were hoarse on karaoke nights. Proud Mary, keep on burning. After I moved away from Buffalo, video conferencing into our writing group meetings was not only a way to talk about research; it was also a way for me to keep in touch, get in a good laugh, and catch up on gossip. All of these things are necessary for surviving the all-too-often soul-crushing endeavor that is graduate school. In that regard, I'm grateful for all of my friends who are scattered everywhere from Buffalo, Valdosta, and Atlanta, to San Diego, Berlin, and Marburg.

Naturally, my family deserves a lot of credit for always giving me their support, but also for putting up with years of unsolicited history lessons and impromptu lectures (diatribes?) around the dinner table. My parents, Clay and Tammy Newsome, have encouraged me every step of the way. My father, who comes from a long line of farmers, supported my decision to become a historian, and he instilled in me perseverance and a strong work ethic. My mother has taught me many things about life, but I am always humbled by her deep sense of compassion for humanity. And in my opinion, a good work of history is an act of compassion; it gives a voice to those who have been silenced and marginalized. To my brothers, Luke and Cayden, thank you for always making me laugh. Studying the Holocaust is a dark endeavor, so I'm thankful that you could always give me something to smile about. My grandparents, Judy and Dick Moseley, are two of the most wonderful human beings I've had the privilege of knowing, and in many ways, they helped me write this dissertation. Nanny nurtured my love of the past, and if I ever complained in high school that history was boring, she insisted that either the teacher wasn't teaching it right, or I wasn't really paying attention. As usual, she was right. Papa taught me to

love hearing and telling stories. I can't count how many times we'd be piddling around the family farm and something would cause him to stop, smile, and say, "That reminds me of a story." And after all, one of the primary functions and privileges of a historian is to be humanity's storyteller.

And then there's Dennis. We met during my first semester in the Ph.D. program, so he has been with me (and this project) from the very beginning. He has put up with hours and hours of lecturing and brainstorming; read countless drafts of chapters, cover letters, and grant applications; pretended to be as excited as I was when I found a random scrap of information on an obscure topic in the archives; and attended more history conferences than he ever thought he would...all while being an IT specialist. Someone once told me that doing this dissertation has made me the leading authority on my topic. If that's true, then Dennis is the second most leading expert on the postwar legacies of the Nazis' persecution of homosexuals. So, to Dennis: thank you for being interested, for having confidence in me, and for cracking the whip and motivating me to finish as quickly as possible. But, also thank you for taking me on surprise escapades along the way, for daydreaming with me, and for simply being you. I love you. I can't wait to go on our next great adventure together.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
List of Figures and Images	ix
List of Abbreviations	x
Abstract	xi
Introduction	1
Chapter One: “The Damnedest of the Damned:” The Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals, 1933-1945.....	20
Chapter Two: “For Homosexuals the Third Reich Hasn’t Ended Yet:” Memory, Victimhood, and the Law in West Germany, 1945-1969.....	65
Chapter Three: “Come Out for Yourself...Come Out for Justice:” The Nazi Past, Sexual Citizenship, and Transatlantic Gay Rights Activism, 1969-1989.....	109
Chapter Four: “Remembrances of Things Once Hidden:” The Grassroots Efforts to Construct the Pink Triangle Past in Germany and the United States, 1979-2008.....	160
Conclusion: “Remembering Must Also Have Consequences”.....	219
Bibliography	230

LIST OF FIGURES AND IMAGES

Figure 1: Annual Convictions for §175 in Germany.....	88
Image 1: “Stop the Brown Danger – Gays and Lesbians against Nazis”.....	130
Image 2: “Repeal Sodomy Laws”.....	150
Image 3: “March on Washington for Lesbian & Gay Rights, 1987”.....	151

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AGD:** Archives of the *KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau* (Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site)
- ACT UP:** AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power
- AKG:** *Allgemeine Kriegsfolgenesetz* (General Consequences of War Law)
- BEG:** *Bundesentschädigungsgesetz* (Federal Compensation Law)
- CID:** *Comité International de Dachau* (International Dachau Committee)
- GLBT:** Archives of the GLBT Historical Society
- CDU:** Christian Democratic Union
- CSG:** Archives of the *Centrum Schwule Geschichte-Köln* (Center for Gay History, Cologne)
- GDR:** German Democratic Republic (“East Germany”)
- FHM:** Archives of the *Forum Homosexualität München: Lesben & Schwulen Geschichte & Kultur* (Forum on Homosexuality, Munich: Lesbian & Gay History & Culture)
- FRG:** Federal Republic of Germany (“West Germany”)
- HAW:** *Homosexuelle Aktion Westberlin* (Gay Action West Berlin)
- HuK:** *Homosexuelle und Kirche* (Homosexuals and the Church)
- SARCH:** *Schwulesbisches Archiv Hannover* (Gay-Lesbian Archive of Hanover)
- SHC:** Scientific Humanitarian Committee
- SM:** Archives of the *Schwules Museum* (Gay Museum, Berlin)
- SNMA:** Stonewall National Museum and Archives (Ft. Lauderdale, Florida)
- SPD:** Social Democratic Party
- THP:** Archives of The History Project: Documenting GLBT Boston
- USHMM:** United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington, D.C.)
- VSG:** *Verein für sexuelle Gleichberechtigung* (Society for Sexual Equality)

ABSTRACT

“Homosexuals after the Holocaust” explores how various actors in the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States of America transformed collective memories of the Nazis’ persecution of homosexuals into transnational discourses that shaped modern conceptions of human rights and civil liberties. I argue that judges, homosexual concentration camp survivors, gay rights activists, professional historians, playwrights, journalists, and state officials on both sides of the Atlantic used the past to mediate the meaning of sexuality, justice, citizenship, and civil rights in the present. At the heart of this dissertation, therefore, is a study of the relationship between the politics of memory and sexual citizenship.

Chapter One provides an overview of the experiences of homosexual men and women in the Third Reich, which later became the foundation for postwar collective memories. This chapter situates the Nazis’ campaign against homosexuality in the context of a broader redefinition of citizenship along racial lines. The second chapter demonstrates that the politics of memory in the Adenauer era resulted in the rejection of homosexuals from the official definition of “victimhood,” which excluded homosexual survivors from the process of *Wiedergutmachung* and relegated homosexuals to second-class citizens in West Germany. Chapter Three shows that the public discourses surrounding the terrorization of homosexuals in the Third Reich, though originating in Germany, ultimately transcended national boundaries. Collective memories of the Nazi past provided historical roots for a transatlantic gay identity and empowered a transnational social movement for the rights of gay and lesbian citizens on both sides of the Atlantic. The final chapter argues that, beginning in the 1980s, a rapid proliferation of public discourses transformed the Nazi persecution of homosexuals into a moral, political, and scholarly topic about human rights in a diverse, democratic society.

INTRODUCTION

When the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP, or Nazi Party) came to power in 1933, its leaders quickly crushed the dynamic scenes that homosexual men and women had created for themselves in the urban centers of Weimar Germany.¹ Within months, the Nazis began cracking down on homosexual meeting places, organizations, and publications across the country. During the twelve years that constituted Adolf Hitler's so-called Thousand Year Reich, the Nazi regime arrested roughly 100,000 men for violating Paragraph 175, Germany's federal law prohibiting "indecent" between men. The law, which had existed since the founding of the German nation-state in 1871, reflected a widespread belief among German lawmakers that homosexuality was a criminal act, although female homosexuality did not pose as great a risk to the nation as same-sex relations between men. As a result, female same-sex acts were not included in Paragraph 175, and therefore remained legal in Germany.

One of the men arrested during the Nazi regime was Heinz F. He was apprehended in the late 1930s and sent without trial to the infamous Dachau concentration camp outside of Munich. After his release eighteen months later, German law enforcement agencies placed Heinz under surveillance, and he did not get to enjoy his freedom for very long. Heinz was arrested again and this time formally charged for violating Paragraph 175. He was one of over 53,000 men who were ultimately convicted under the statute during the Nazi reign. The vast majority of those convictions were handed down after jurists amended the law, so that after 1935 everything from

¹ Throughout this dissertation, I utilize the contemporary terms that were used to describe same-sex desires, actions, and identities at the time. For passages on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, "homosexual" was the common term. Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, "homophile" described (primarily male) homosexuals who were politically active in the homosexual emancipation movement. By the 1970s, "gay" and "lesbian" had become specific identities, although "lesbian" had already been in use. The acronym LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer) only gained currency in the 1990s and into the twenty-first century.

sexual intercourse to a “lustful gaze” between men could be considered “indecent,” and thus punishable by up to ten years in prison.

After his sentencing, Heinz became one of the estimated 10,000 homosexual men who were imprisoned in concentration camps across the Nazi Reich. He was sent this time to Buchenwald, one of the largest camps in Germany. All incoming prisoners had to wear a badge on their uniform that denoted their reason for internment. Upon his arrival, Heinz was assigned a symbol that had become a standard way of identifying homosexual prisoners: a pink triangle.² Ultimately, he spent over eight hellish years incarcerated in various prisons and concentration camps for his sexual orientation. Heinz survived until the war’s end, yet, two out of three men who wore a pink triangle died behind the barbed wire.

This dissertation explores how various actors in the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States of America transformed collective memories of the Nazis’ persecution of homosexuals into transnational discourses that shaped modern conceptions of human rights and civil liberties. I argue that the impassioned postwar debates about Hitler’s homosexual victims represented much more than dialogues about past events. Judges, homosexual concentration camp survivors, gay rights activists, professional historians, playwrights, journalists, and state officials on both sides of the Atlantic were also using the past to mediate the meaning of sexuality, justice, citizenship, and civil rights in the present. At the heart of this dissertation, therefore, is a study of the relationship between the politics of memory and sexual citizenship.

Although this originates as a German history, the public discourses surrounding the terrorization of homosexuals in the Third Reich ultimately transcended national boundaries.

² Some of the homosexual men, like Heinz F. when he had been in Dachau, had “175er” sewn to their jacket in reference to Paragraph 175. Others had a large “A” “on their uniform for “*Arschficker*,” German for “ass fucker.” Heinz tells his story in the documentary *Paragraph 175*, directed by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman. (Telling Pictures Production, 2000), DVD.

During the 1970s, gay activists transformed the pink triangle into the most powerful symbol of the transnational gay rights movement. And when American activists began using the pink triangle, they not only adopted a political logo from their West German counterparts; they also embraced a chapter of German history as their own. Thus, the pink triangle – as a political symbol and collection of memories – contributed to the establishment of a shared history to which the gay communities in the Federal Republic and the United States could refer. The specter of the Nazi past simultaneously provided historical roots for a transatlantic gay identity and empowered a transnational social movement for the rights of gay and lesbian citizens on both sides of the Atlantic. In short, the pink triangle and transatlantic memories of Nazi past bound the politics of memory to the definition of sexual citizenship in West Germany and the United States.

I utilize a broad range of source materials to tell and analyze this complex story: autobiographical accounts and articles in the gay and mainstream presses; novels and stage plays; parliamentary debates and political manifestos; posters and fliers used in social activism; as well as personal correspondences and oral history interviews I conducted over a period of two years. This approach allows me to not only investigate the legal and cultural debates about homosexuality, victimhood, criminality, and restitution that developed in the occupation period and the early years of the Federal Republic. The multitude of sources also allows me to trace how gay rights activists on both sides of the Atlantic began to embrace and politicize the Nazi past beginning in the 1970s. The resulting interaction and exchanges helped to forge a special, transatlantic relationship between the gay communities in West Germany and the US. In this study, I also analyze how the grassroots movement to write the history of the Nazis persecution of homosexuals, a past that had allegedly been “forgotten” for nearly five decades, became a

transnational endeavor by the end of the twentieth century. This dissertation ends with the ultimately successful efforts in Germany and the United States to construct memorials honoring the Nazis' homosexual victims, which culminated in the dedication in Berlin of the federally funded Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime in 2008. Most broadly, therefore, "Homosexuals after the Holocaust," speaks to the role of history in establishing, protecting, or denying human rights and civil liberties. My research adds to the literature on the role of Holocaust memories and the Nazi past in modern European and North American societies, and more broadly helps us understand the dynamic relationship between identity politics, history, and civil society in the twentieth century.

~*~

Scholars ignored the Nazi persecution of homosexuals for decades after the end of the Second World War. It was not until 1977 that a team of West German sociologists led by Rüdiger Lautmann published the first scholarship on the topic that was based on archival research.³ The work, which appeared in an edited collection on *Society and Homosexuality*, provided a detailed study of the fate of homosexuals in Nazi concentration camps. Among the work's most important findings was that the total number of homosexual men interned in concentration camps during the Third Reich was somewhere between 5,000 and 15,000, which was drastically lower than the number of victims purported during gay rights demonstrations.

The 1980s witnessed the initial developments of historical scholarship on the topic, though it primarily remained a field in which only gays and lesbians themselves researched. Hans-Georg Stümke, a gay rights activist and student of history, published original interviews with homosexual concentration camp survivors, and made primary source material on the Nazis'

³ Rüdiger Lautmann, Winifried Grikschat, and Egbert Schmidt, "Der rosa Winkel in den nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern," in *Seminar: Gesellschaft und Homosexualität*, ed. Rüdiger Lautmann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 325-365

anti-homosexual policies available to a general reading audience.⁴ Claudia Schoppmann's pioneering work on the fate of lesbians in the Third Reich shed light on a topic that was largely ignored even in the gay research community. More importantly, though, Schoppmann urged readers to broaden their understanding of "persecution," arguing that lesbians faced widespread ostracization and terrorization, even if they did not have to fear prosecution under Germany's anti-sodomy law.⁵ By the close of the twentieth century, scholarship revealed that the ideologies driving the Nazis' campaign against homosexuality were much more nuanced than previously understood. Although the persecution was intense, deliberate, and violent, anti-homosexual policies evolved over time and often contradicted each other. Ultimately, many scholars came to agree with historian Burkhard Jellonnek's claim that, the "National Socialists' homosexual policy did not culminate in notions of extermination, nor did it aspire to the radical obliteration of all homosexuals in the sense of a 'Final Solution.'"⁶

By the 1990s, research on the Nazi persecution of homosexuals began influencing and contributing to the broader historiography on the Third Reich. In demonstrating that the Nazi persecution of homosexuals was much more complicated than simplified narratives of extermination or "gay genocide" would suggest, work by Lautmann, Jellonnek, and others influenced our understanding that the Nazi regime was not a monolithic state.⁷ It was polycratic, consisting of a wide range of party and state institutions that often competed for political power

⁴ Hans-Georg Stümke and Rudi Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen: Homosexuelle und "Gesundes Volksempfinden" von Auschwitz bis heute* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1981); See also Hans-Georg Stümke, *Homosexuelle in Deutschland: Eine politische Geschichte* (Munich: Beck, 1989).

⁵ Claudia Schoppmann, *Nationalsozialistische Sexualpolitik und weibliche Homosexualität* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1991); *Zeit der Maskierung: Lebensgeschichten lesbischer Frauen im "Dritten Reich"* (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1993); *Days of Masquerade: Life Stories of Lesbians During the Third Reich*. Translated by Allison Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); *Verbotene Verhältnisse: Frauenliebe 1938-1945* (Berlin: Quer Verlag, 1999).

⁶ Burkhard Jellonnek, *Homosexuelle unter dem Hakenkreuz: die Verfolgung von Homosexuellen im Dritten Reich* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 1990), 36.

⁷ Lautmann, Grikschat, and Schmidt, "Der rosa Winkel in den nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern;" Jellonnek, *Homosexuelle unter dem Hakenkreuz*; Burkhard Jellonnek and Rüdiger Lautmann, eds., *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle: Verdrängt und ungesühnt* (Schöningh: Paderborn, 2002).

and sometimes disagreed on the best way to turn National Socialist ideology into reality.

Additionally, decades of research by historian Geoffrey Giles has not only made him one of the world's leading experts on the Nazi persecution of homosexuals, but has also contributed to a more complex interpretation of the Third Reich itself. His research on the existence of homoeroticism and homosexuality within Nazi institutions sheds light on how Nazi leadership dealt with incongruities between ideology and practice.⁸ Giles's work on the judicial underpinnings of the campaign against homosexuality has provided scholars a much broader understanding of the legal mechanisms of the Nazi state as a whole.⁹

The scholarly study of sexuality under the swastika, a subfield that largely emerged from the study of the persecution of homosexuals, has greatly altered our conceptualization of National Socialism as an ideology and political entity. In conjuncture with the growing scholarship on eugenics and racial theories, historians' exploration of the motivations driving the Nazis' campaign against homosexuality helped prove that the Nazi state was not only an anti-Semitic dictatorship. Rather, it was a regime driven by deeper, biological and racial ideologies.

⁸ Geoffrey J. Giles, "Straight Talk for Nazi Youth: The Attempt to Transmit Heterosexual Norms," in *Education and Cultural Transmission: Historical Studies of Continuity and Change in Families, Schooling and Youth Cultures*, ed. Johan Sturm, Jeroen Dekker, Richard Aldrich & Frank Simon. *Paedagogica Historica* Supplementary Series Volume II (Gent: 1996), 305-318; "The Institutionalization of Homosexual Panic in the Third Reich," in *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany*, ed. Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 223-255; "Männerbund mit Homo-Panik: Die Angst der Nazis vor der Rolle der Erotik," in *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle: Verdrängt und ungesühnt*, eds. Burkhard Jellonnek and Rüdiger Lautmann (Schöningh: Paderborn, 2002), 105-118; "The Denial of Homosexuality: Same-Sex Incidents in Himmler's SS and Police," in *Sexuality and German Fascism*, ed. Dagmar Herzog (New York: Berghahn, 2005) 256-290. Andrew Wackerfuss has also studied the existence of homosexuality within the Nazi movement. See: *Stormtrooper Families: Homosexuality and Community in the Early Nazi Movement* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2015).

⁹ For Giles' works on the legal aspects of the Nazis' persecution of homosexuality, see: Geoffrey J. Giles, "The Most Unkindest Cut of All: Castration, Homosexuality, and Nazi Justice," *Journal of Contemporary History* 27, no. 1, (Jan. 1992): 41-61; "Legislating Homophobia in the Third Reich: The Radicalization of Prosecution Against Homosexuality by the Legal Profession," *German History* 23, no. 3 (July 2005): 339-354; "The Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals in Occupied Countries: A Lenient Exception to Normal Justice against Non-Germans?" in *The Holocaust in Hungary: A European Perspective*, ed. Judit Molnar (Budapest: Balassi Kiado, 2005), 418-434; and "A Gray Zone Among the Field Gray Men: Confusion in the Discrimination Against Homosexuals in the Wehrmacht," in *Gray Zones: Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*, ed. Jonathan Petropoulos and John K. Roth (New York: Berghahn, 2005), 127-146.

Therefore, sexuality in Nazi Germany, a topic that had been ignored for decades, became central to understanding National Socialism itself.¹⁰

My dissertation builds on the work of Lautmann, Jellonnek, Giles, and countless others who have gradually built a robust scholarship on the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. Ultimately, though, my work contributes to the foundation of a new, nascent scholarship on the postwar legacies of the Nazis' violent campaign against homosexuality. I join the handful of scholars who have, in the last decade, studied how the fate of homosexuals under Hitler has been remembered since the end of the Second World War. In her groundbreaking work *Sex after Fascism*, Dagmar Herzog explores the ways West and East Germans used sexuality as a means to grapple with the Nazi past. She argues that, "Because the reworking of sexual mores had been such an important feature of the Third Reich, attempts to come to terms with the legacies of fascism in Germany could not help but address sexual matters."¹¹ Naturally, the changing social attitudes towards homosexuality were important factors in the broader refashioning of sexual values in the postwar German states. But because the scope of Herzog's work is on the larger theme of sexuality and covers the entire twentieth century, she does not explore in detail the nuanced processes that bound sexual citizenship to the politics of memory regarding the Nazis' homosexual victims. My work, therefore, contributes to Herzog's and places these forces in a larger, transnational context.

Dorthe Seifert on the other hand, studies a specific manifestation of "pink triangle memories," a shorthand I use throughout this dissertation to refer to collective memories of the

¹⁰ For some overviews on sexuality and Nazism, see: Herzog, ed., *Sexuality and German Fascism*; Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*; Susanne zur Nieden, ed. *Homosexualität und Staatsräson: Männlichkeit, Homophobie und Politik in Deutschland 1900-1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2005); Elizabeth D. Heineman, "Gender, Sexuality, and Coming to Terms with the Nazi Past," *Central European History* 38, no. 1 (2005): 41-74.

¹¹ Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 1.

Nazi persecution of homosexuals. In her 2003 article “Between Silence and License,” Seifert analyzes some of the fictional accounts that depict the treatment of homosexuals during the Third Reich.¹² She argues that although these literary works, such as Martin Sherman’s *Bent*, are largely historically inaccurate, they helped construct a modern homosexual identity. Historian Jennifer Evans has evaluated the public and heated debates surrounding the national Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime. As a whole, Evans’s chapter highlights the politics of memory by showing how contemporary concerns shape the memorialization of the past.¹³ Political scientist Angelika von Wahl has also explored the politics of confronting the Nazis’ terrorization of homosexuals. She argues that the social and political mobilization of the gay community in recent decades has led to “symbolic reparations” for homosexual victims of the Nazi regime, such as public apologies, acknowledgment of suffering, and inclusion in commemoration ceremonies. Wahl asserts that material reparations, however, “have basically been a failure.”¹⁴ My dissertation builds on the work by Seifert, Evans, and Wahl by showing that fictional accounts, memorialization, and the debates about compensation for homosexual victims are part of a larger and longer process of coming to terms with the pink triangle past.

Erik Jensen was the first to offer a critical analysis of the history of the pink triangle as a gay rights symbol.¹⁵ He asserts that the Nazi past came to represent a collective memory for gays

¹² Dorth Seifert, “Between Silence and License: The Representation of the National Socialist Persecution of Homosexuality in Anglo-American Fiction and Film,” *History and Memory* 15, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2003): 94-129.

¹³ Jennifer V. Evans, “Harmless kisses and infinite loops: Making space for queer place in twenty-first century Berlin” in *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures: Europe since 1945*, ed. Matt Cook and Jennifer V. Evans (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 75-94.

¹⁴ Angelika von Wahl, “How Sexuality Changes Agency: Gay Men, Jews, and Transitional Justice,” in *Gender in Transitional Justice*, ed. Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Ruth Stanley (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 212.

¹⁵ Erik N. Jensen, “The Pink Triangle and Political Consciousness: Gays, Lesbians, and the Memory of Nazi Persecution,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 1/2, Special Issue: Sexuality and German Fascism. (Jan. – Apr., 2002): 319-349. Jensen’s article later appeared as a chapter in *Sexuality and German Fascism*, ed. Dagmar Herzog (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 319-349. In 1996, the political scientist Amy Elman published a short

and lesbians, which helped serve “as a locus for gay identity.”¹⁶ Yet, Jensen ultimately situates this as an international process, one that is happening more or less simultaneously in the FRG and the USA. My dissertation introduces important differentiations and suggests that the politicization of pink triangle memories was a transnational process as people, ideas, information, and histories constantly flowed back and forth across the Atlantic. Therefore, the collective identity that Jensen refers to is, I argue, actually a transatlantic collective identity.

While these scholars have each studied specific aspects of these postwar memories, my dissertation is the first work to analyze the politics of pink triangle memories as a whole. Only by examining these various collective practices and politics of memory together can we fully grasp the ways in which these discourses also shaped broader understandings of persecution, victimhood, homosexuality, citizenship, and human rights.

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One of my central arguments in this dissertation is that after World War II, the Nazi persecution of homosexuals became a topic in which history, social activism, and the politics of memory converged during intense negotiations over the rights of citizenship for gays and lesbians in West Germany and the United States.¹⁷ Beginning in the 1990s, scholars began studying the correlations between the ways in which societies understand human sexuality and how they define the boundaries of citizenship. This scholarship produced the notion of “sexual citizenship,” a term that some have described as a status, while others frame it as an analytic

article in which she talks about the Nazi origins of the pink triangle, but the article lacks historical analysis. Ultimately, Elman uses her article to argue that the pink triangle should *not* be used as a gay rights logo. See: R. Amy Elman, “Triangles and Tribulations: The Politics of Nazi Symbols,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 30, no. 3 (1996): 1-11

¹⁶ Jensen, “The Pink Triangle and Political Consciousness,” 328.

¹⁷ The gay rights movement that emerged in the late 1960s focused almost exclusively on the rights of gay men and lesbians. Other sexual minorities, such as bisexual and transgendered individuals, did not become represented in the movement until the 1990s.

concept to understand a nexus of complex processes.¹⁸ Throughout this dissertation, I use it to describe the reciprocal relationship between sexuality and citizenship, one that is negotiated by legislation and governmental policies on the one hand, and individuals' acceptance or rejection of those policies on the other.

In Chapter One, I contextualize the Nazis' persecution of homosexual men as part of a larger redefinition of citizenship in the Third Reich along racial lines. After assuming complete control of Germany, the Nazi Party implemented a wide range of laws and policies – such as the 1935 Nuremberg Laws – that bound full citizenship to the alleged purity of Aryan blood. As such, racially “fit” homosexuals were legal citizens of the Third Reich by virtue of their German heritage. However, according to Nazi ideology, homosexual men abandoned their duty to the nation by refusing to father children. This made homosexuals not only a moral threat, but also racial and political threats to future of the Aryan *Volk*. As such, homosexual men in Nazi Germany were stripped of their civil rights, became subject to harassment, were often dismissed from their jobs, placed under surveillance, and imprisoned in concentration camps. In 1935, jurists sought to conform German law with National Socialist ideology by amending Paragraph 175, thus granting the Nazi state unprecedented legal authority in its campaign against so-called “indecent among men.” I argue that the amendment of the anti-sodomy law was not merely an expression of Nazi homophobia, but is rather best understood as the confluence of complex understandings of sexuality, race, and citizenship.

¹⁸ For some of the foundational literature on sexual citizenship, see: David T. Evans, *Sexual Citizenship: The Material Construction of Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1993); Jeffrey Weeks, “The Sexual Citizen,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 15, no. 3 (August 1998): 35-52; Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “Sex in Public,” in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Steven During (London: Routledge, 1999), 354-70. Annette Timm provides a helpful overview of the historiography on “the sexual duties of citizenship” in her recent book *The Politics of Fertility in Twentieth-Century Berlin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. 21-34.

My dissertation builds on work by historians Annette Timm and Margot Canaday by demonstrating that citizenship is not only a legal or political status.¹⁹ Ultimately, citizenship is simultaneously a status granted by the state (and thus embodied by an individual) and a practice that is enacted through a reciprocal relationship between citizens and the state. Individuals that embody and experience what I refer to as “full citizenship” are those who enjoy all of the rights and privileges granted to them by the state, as well as fulfill their civic duties and responsibilities to the state. Not everyone experiences citizenship equally. Paragraph 175, for example, represented blatant discrimination, because it regulated the sexual activity of some citizens, but not of all. Such discriminatory measures and practices created what Canaday calls a “stratified citizenry.”²⁰ So, while homosexuals may have enjoyed the legal status of citizenship, in practice they were second-class citizens.

A second central argument in my dissertation is that at various junctures in time, the Nazi persecution of homosexuals became a site of negotiation in which notions of persecution, understandings of homosexuality, and the boundaries of citizenship were defined individually and in conjunction with each other. Underlying this work, then, is a study of the politics of memory. In using this phrase, I refer to two related processes. First, the politics of memory refers to the “politics” involved in crafting memories. Memories are not mere reflections on the past that have been stored in our mind. Rather, each memory is a new construct, inescapably shaped by new information, experiences, and changes in perspective. Memories, then, are historical events in and of themselves, subject to transformations, contingent upon ever-changing social circumstances, articulated with changing intensity and goals by individual and collective actors.

¹⁹ Annette F. Timm, *The Politics of Fertility in Twentieth-Century Berlin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

²⁰ Canaday, *The Straight State*, 4.

In Chapter Two, for example, I demonstrate how social and cultural aversions to homosexuality in the postwar period contributed to West Germans remembering homosexuals as criminals who had been legitimately punished for violating a federal law, rather than victims of Nazi injustice. Because homosexuals were understood as criminals, the new West German courts felt justified in upholding the legitimacy of Paragraph 175, even though the Nazis had amended it to fit their needs in 1935.

Second, the politics of memory also refers to the politicization of memories. Memories of the past can, and often do, become a currency of sorts, a means to achieve certain political ends. Therefore, the politics of memory is a reflexive process. Just as contemporary ideals shaped how West Germans remembered the Nazis' anti-homosexual policies, the continued existence of the Nazi version of Paragraph 175 in the Federal Republic dictated that homosexuals *had* to be remembered as criminals. If homosexuals were remembered as victims of an unjust law – a law that was still in use – it would shed light on uncomfortable continuities between a defeated fascist dictatorship and a new democratic state. My dissertation, then, explores the ability of law and memory to shape each other.

Because homosexuals were remembered as criminals – and treated as such by laws and the courts – they were not included in the broader West German acknowledgement of Nazi victims in the postwar years. Until the mid-1980s, no one mentioned homosexuals on occasions devoted to commemorating the victims of the Nazi past, and historical scholarship ignored them altogether. The politics of memory in West Germany from the 1940s to the 1960s created an illusion that the Nazis' homosexual victims had been “forgotten” by scholars, politicians, and the public. In contrast, my research clearly demonstrates, that referring to them as forgotten greatly distorts the reality of the situation. This distortion results from the double meaning of the word

forgotten. On the one hand, to forget implies a passive occurrence, the outcome of an innocent slipping of the mind. On the other hand, forgetting can be a very active, intentional act akin to ignoring. This is what happened to men who had worn the pink triangle in concentration camps.

Chapter Two also demonstrates that there were financial, legal, and social implications of the ongoing legal discrimination of male homosexuals. The reflexive relationship between memory and law led to the continued use of the Nazi version of Paragraph 175 in the Federal Republic. Ultimately, over 59,000 West German men were arrested and sentenced on the basis of this law between 1949 and 1969, when the law was finally amended, but not fully repealed. Additionally, because homosexual survivors were considered criminals rather than victims, they were not only erased from the collective history of Nazi victimhood, they were also deprived of the financial reparations and judicial rehabilitation that came with official victim status. In the West German process of *Wiedergutmachung* (“a making good again”), the government of the Federal Republic refused to include homosexuals among those who should be “made good again” until the dawn of the twenty-first century. The initial denial and eventual acknowledgement of Hitler’s homosexual victims is a significant part of understanding Germany’s *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or larger attempts to come to terms with its past.

I argue that the disputes over the process of *Wiedergutmachung* and the legal debates surrounding the legality of Paragraph 175 are best understood as a fundamental negotiation of what rights homosexual West Germans could or should expect from their new constitution. Law and memory, therefore, were deployed in a larger discussion of what it meant to be a citizen *and* homosexual in a liberal democracy. Much of the scholarship on sexual citizenship has understandably focused on the ways in which sexuality has kept individuals from fully participating in or experiencing all of the rights and benefits of citizenship. In her recent book,

historian Annette Timm has offered a helpful corrective and encouraged scholars to also examine the sense of community created by the broad system of rewards and incentives for those who upheld what she calls their “sexual duty.”²¹ Taking Timm’s lead and building on recent work by historian Robert Moeller, I situate the continued exclusion of homosexuals (from collective memories and from full citizenship) as part of attempts by West German leaders to establish cohesion and stability in the young state.²²

The nature of the debates over homosexual rights changed radically with the onset of the West German gay rights movement (*Schwulenbewegung*) in the early 1970s. In Chapter Three, I explore how the pink triangle became a widespread gay rights logo, first in the Federal Republic and then in the United States, where a radical gay liberation movement had begun several years earlier. Through its use in social activism, the pink triangle became an important tool in renegotiating the ties between sexuality and citizenship. The specter of the Nazi past became a way to add potency to activists’ claim that, in a post-Holocaust world, no government had the right or moral authority to regulate the sexual lives of its citizens, or to use policies that discriminated against minorities. In both West Germany and the United States, activists rhetorically linked anti-gay policies to Nazism, and asserted that as long as their governments continued discriminating against homosexuals, the ideals of liberal democracy had not yet been fully achieved.

Ultimately, these activists were forging a new and broader definition of personhood in which the expression of sexuality was just one aspect on an individual’s constitutionally guaranteed freedom and rights. This activism was not only aimed at ending second-class

²¹ Timm, *The Politics of Fertility in Twentieth-Century Berlin*.

²² Robert Moeller, “Private Acts, Public Anxieties, and the Fight to Decriminalize Male Homosexuality in West Germany,” *Feminist Studies* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 528-552; Robert Moeller, “The Homosexual Man is a ‘Man,’ the Homosexual Woman is a ‘Woman’: Sex, Society, and the Law in Postwar West Germany,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, no. 3 (1994): 395-429.

citizenship for homosexuals, but was rather part of a larger movement to bring all minorities more completely into the experience of full citizenship. Therefore my dissertation also contributes to our understanding of the radical social movements of the “long sixties.” All of the recent scholarship that seeks to situate the worldwide social protests of the 1960s as a transnational, global phenomenon completely ignores the gay rights movements.²³ Yet, my research shows that these gay activists never thought of themselves as only gay activists. They understood themselves as part of the larger protest movement that crossed national borders and sought to challenge the status quo of the Cold War world. The activists I interviewed marched in gay rights demonstrations, but also protested against the Vietnam War and campaigned against the use of atomic energy. Many considered themselves a “child of the New Left” or a “sixties baby,” because they also advocated for workers’ rights and joined the cause for the rights of social, racial, and political minorities.

Beginning with Chapter Three, the history I have written here is not simply international, or merely happening in two countries at the same time. Rather, it is truly transnational. In the introduction to their recent book, Belinda Davis et al. write that, “transnational history’s major interest is in the movements, flows, and circulation of people, practices, and ideas, and in their interaction, interpenetration, and entanglement.”²⁴ My work in the archives in both countries uncovered communication between West German and American gay activists, as well as scores

²³ For example, *1968: The World Transformed*, edited by Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) contains seventeen chapters on different themes or geographical locations, but none of the studies even mention the gay rights movement. Similarly, *Changing the World, Changing Oneself: Political Protest and Collective Identities in West Germany and the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s*, edited by Belinda Davis, Wilfried Mausbach, Martin Klimke, and Carla MacDougall (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010) contains studies on the New Left, the African American civil rights movement, protests against the Vietnam War, Cold War politics, and terrorism, but does not even have an entry for “homosexual” or “gay” in the index. Martin Klimke’s recent book *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010) also ignores the existence of gays and lesbians in the transatlantic student movement.

²⁴ Davis et al., *Changing the World, Changing Oneself*, x.

of articles in the gay presses that chronicled important developments in the movements of their brethren across the Atlantic. These archival findings, taken in conjuncture with the oral interviews I conducted, show that there was a constant flow of gay and lesbian activists between the USA and FRG beginning in the late 1960s. As these activists travelled, they shared news, political strategies, and ideas. Through these transatlantic ties, gay activists in the US were able to learn about the Nazi persecution of homosexuals and integrate the pink triangle into their own activism. The formation of pink triangle memories in West Germany and the United States helped form the basis of a shared gay history that connected gays and lesbians on both sides of the Atlantic.

A confluence of historical factors converged in such a way that gay men and women in the German Democratic Republic (GDR, “East Germany”) did not share in this transnational history. The most significant of these factors is that there was no widespread, organized, and radical gay rights movement in the GDR.²⁵ Therefore, while gay West Germans could identify with their eastern brethren as fellow Germans, there was not a shared identity as gay rights activists. The sharing of histories and of similar contemporary political concerns forged a special, transnational relationship between the gay communities in West Germany and the US that simply did not exist between East and West Germany, and certainly not between the US and East Germany.²⁶

The growth of the gay rights movement not only spurred interest in the past for contemporary political agendas; it also initiated a grassroots wave of historical scholarship on

²⁵ Dagmar Herzog also notes that, “In the officially secularized East, sex was not a main site for managing the legacies of Nazism because the East secured its antifascist status above all by emphasizing its anti-capitalism,” *Sex after Fascism*, 194. For a thorough examination of the situation of homosexuals living in East Germany, see Erik G. Huneke, “Morality, Law, and the Socialist Sexual Self in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1972,” (doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 2013).

²⁶ Because of these factors, I do not include the GDR in the study of my dissertation, although research on how East Germans remembered the Nazi persecution of homosexuals would be a fruitful area of future research.

gay history written by and for gays themselves. Chapter Four explores the ways that activists, journalists, scholars, and playwrights began piecing together a history of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals, which was a topic that had been completely ignored by the historical profession since the war's end. In analyzing this story, I trace the emergence of broader collective memories of homosexual suffering in the Third Reich. As such, in Chapter Four I draw on a vast array of sources to trace the sudden proliferation beginning in the late 1970s of public discourses about Hitler's homosexual victims. In articles in the gay and mainstream presses, novels, politicians' speeches, and public commemoration ceremonies, West Germans and Americans sought to understand the fate of homosexuals in the Third Reich.

A central focus of Chapter Four is the gradual emergence of what would come to be a rich scholarship on the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. During the first two decades of this research, the lines between activist and scholar were blurred, or simply nonexistent. For activists such as Hans-Georg Stümke, it was important that the emerging gay community have a tangible and written past.²⁷ So, they delved into the archives, conducted interviews, and published their initial findings in the limited outlets available to them: gay periodicals, new gay publishing firms (such as Berlin's Rosa Winkel Verlag), and even as part of the playbills for the stage productions of *Bent*. Writing the history of Nazi persecution became part of a larger process to develop historical roots meant to give legitimacy to the new gay identity forged in the 1970s.

In this chapter, I also trace the emergence and then implications of the so-called "Homocaust" debate. The widespread narrative of persecution that had emerged through social activism, in the gay press, and on the stage made very little differentiation between the terror that homosexuals faced under Nazi rule and the systematic genocide of the Jews. As scholars

²⁷ Stümke was an influential gay rights activist and student of history in West Germany. For his published works, see: Stümke and Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*; and Stümke, *Homosexuelle in Deutschland*.

eventually began archival research, however, they challenged the notion that the Nazis had sought to exterminate all of Europe's homosexuals, and demonstrated that the number of homosexual victims was much lower than initially suggested. Yet, I argue that it is hard to retrospectively blame activists for presenting an inaccurate historical narrative when there was no historical scholarship available on the topic at the time. What is significant is that the grassroots gay movement was attempting to fill a void left by professional historians, and in doing so, it was shaping how an entire generation understood the Nazi period and gay history.

More importantly, Chapter Four shows that, beginning in the 1980s, the Nazi persecution of homosexuals was transformed from an issue that was primarily of interest to the gay community into a moral, political, and scholarly topic with a much broader resonance. The chapter shows how states and citizens negotiated the meaning of the past through public debates, museum exhibits, governmental policies, and constructing memorials. Beginning in the mid-1980s, the push for the official recognition of homosexuals as victims during commemoration ceremonies sparked renewed debates about victimhood, persecution, and justice in a democratic society. The chapter also deals with the efforts in West Germany and the United States to construct memorials to Hitler's homosexual victims. The debates surrounding their construction as well as the physical monuments themselves were not simply places to honor the memory of the past. They became and continue to be sites of mediation about the place of minorities in contemporary life.

By the time that the national Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime was dedicated in Berlin in 2008, there were sixteen other memorials to Hitler's homosexual victims located in seven countries around the world. The construction of these memorials reveals that the transatlantic gay identity that began in the context of gay rights

activism in the 1970s has taken on global dimensions. The existence of these memorials indicates that people throughout the world feel that the Nazi persecution of homosexuals is not a historical event that only Germans should commemorate and memorialize. The pink triangle past has become a lesson in responsible citizenship and the need to safeguard minority rights in a globalized society.

CHAPTER ONE

“The Damnedest of the Damned:” The Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals, 1933-1945

Richard Grune enjoyed a relatively comfortable childhood in northern Germany. Born in the fall of 1903, he was one of eight children living in the family home in Flensburg, a small coastal city nestled along the German-Danish border. As a young man, Grune studied art and travelled widely throughout Germany before moving to Berlin in February 1933. Once in the metropolis, he immersed himself in the dynamic homosexual scene that had developed in Germany’s capital. During the fall of 1934, he hosted two parties at his flat for many of his homosexual friends. By all accounts, they were lively and festive occasions, but they attracted unwanted attention. On December 1, 1934, the Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei*, the Nazi “secret state police”) apprehended Grune under suspicion of violating Paragraph 175 of the German Penal code, which had prohibited same-sex activity among men since the unification of Germany in 1871. Grune spent five months in prison before ever facing trial, and in the summer of 1935, he was convicted of “unnatural indecency” and sentenced to another year in prison. After serving his sentence, the Gestapo apprehended Grune again. He then spent the next ten years in various concentration camps throughout the German Reich.²⁸

Until the 1990s, essentially nothing was known about the lives of individuals like Richard Grune, who were persecuted by the Nazis for their homosexuality. Given the legal prohibitions against and social stigmatization of homosexuality after the end of the Second World War, most individuals did everything possible to leave behind no trace of their sexual orientation. Apart

²⁸ Grune’s story is retold in Joachim Müller and Andreas Sternweiler, *Homosexuelle Männer im KZ Sachsenhausen* (Berlin: Verlag Rosa Winkel, 2002), 190. For more information, see: “One Person’s Story,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s online exhibition of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals: http://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/persecution-of-homosexuals/id_grune.php (Accessed April 21, 2016.)

from the handful of survivor testimonies that were printed in small, somewhat obscure publications, the voices of homosexual victims remained virtually absent from the historical record and public discussions of the Nazi period. The few first-hand accounts of this period came from concentration camp survivors and tended to focus almost exclusively on two main themes: the role of Paragraph 175 in the persecution of homosexuality and the treatment of “the men with the pink triangle” in the concentration camps. As a result, the collective memories that emerged after the end of World War II emphasized Paragraph 175 and life behind the barbed wire.

In this chapter, I describe the parameters under which homosexuals lived during the Third Reich. This overview allows us to sketch the historical, lived experiences of homosexual men and women that later became the foundation for the postwar memories and representations that are the focus of this dissertation. Throughout the Nazis’ twelve-year reign, nearly 100,000 men were arrested for violating Paragraph 175, and half of them were ultimately sentenced. Somewhere between 5,000 and 15,000 homosexuals were shipped away to concentration camps, many without ever standing trial. The vast majority homosexuals living in Nazi Germany, however, were not apprehended and did not have to endure the hardships of camp life. Nonetheless, their lives, too, were devastated to varying degrees by the National Socialist campaign to forge a master race.

Studying the persecution of homosexuals offers valuable perspectives for understanding the Third Reich itself. While the Nazis’ homosexual policies have often been characterized as culminating in a “gay genocide,” I demonstrate in this chapter that there was no systematic attempt to eradicate all of Europe’s homosexuals. Such a narrative misconstrues both the Nazi understanding of (homo)sexuality and the Hitler regime itself. The Nazi state was not a monolithic institution that coherently implemented a unified policy against all homosexuals

within its jurisdiction. The National Socialist regime was polycratic, consisted of numerous organizations, departments, and branches, all of which often competed for varying degrees of power and influence. This was also true in the Nazis' approach to homosexuality. Ultimately, while the Nazi persecution of homosexuality was both violent and deliberate, it was also inconsistent and evolved over time through a radicalization of the nexus between sexuality, race, and the future of the German people.

Furthermore, the motivation driving the persecution of homosexuals in the Third Reich is best understood as part of the broader, racial ideologies of National Socialism. Homosexuality, according to Nazis, robbed the *Volk* of offspring and sapped men of their masculine and virile nature. An exploration of the Nazi terrorization of homosexual men and women, therefore, contributes to our understanding of the Nazi state as one driven by racial and biological interests. Moreover, the persecution of homosexuals offers insight into the interrelation of sexuality, race, and citizenship in the Third Reich. Legislation, such as the infamous Nuremberg Laws, defined citizenship along racial lines, but laws and policies also regulated the sexual citizenship of Germans. Consequently, while homosexual men may have been legal citizens of the Reich by virtue of being German, Nazi ideology held that they had forfeited the rights of full citizenship when they renounced their "sexual duty" of supplying the nation's next generation of Aryan children.²⁹ And in Nazi Germany, the rights of citizenship were often tied to the rights to life.

Paragraph 175 and the Policing of Male Homosexuality in Germany, 1871-1933

Legal prohibitions of homosexuality have a long history in the Western world. In the German lands, sexual intercourse among members of the same sex was a crime punishable by death

²⁹ Annette Timm explores the concept of "sexual duty" in her book *The Politics of Fertility in Twentieth-Century Berlin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

throughout the duration of the Holy Roman Empire. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Kingdom of Prussia replaced the death penalty with imprisonment and the possible loss of civil rights. Paragraph 143 of Prussia's civil code (*Allgemeines Landrecht*) – the law against male homosexuality – was also the same statute against bestiality, or sex with animals.³⁰ When the numerous German kingdoms and principalities were unified into the German Empire (*Kaiserreich*) in 1871, many of Prussia's laws were implemented across the new state. This was also true for the prohibition against same-sex sex, and when the penal code of the new German Reich went into effect on January 1, 1872, Prussia's Paragraph 143 became the new German Paragraph 175, which read: "Unnatural indecency among men or between humans and beasts is punishable with imprisonment; a loss of civil rights may also be sentenced."³¹

Within a decade of the nationwide implementation of Paragraph 175, the German courts developed a precedent of convicting men accused of homosexuality only if an "intercourse-like" (*beischlafähnlich*) act had taken place. That meant that while judges may have found non-intercourse-like acts, such as oral sex or masturbation, morally reprehensible, they did not convict the men who took part in them. As a practice, the lower courts only meted out convictions when penetrative, anal sex between two men could be proven. Since most cases brought before the court involved two consenting adults, one or both of the defendants could simply deny that any such act had taken place, and the case would be thrown out.³² Still, by the time the German *Kaiserreich* was defeated in the First World War, German courts had issued nearly ten thousand Paragraph 175 convictions.³³

³⁰ Hans-Georg Stümke, *Homosexuelle in Deutschland: Eine politische Geschichte* (Munich: C.H. Beck 1989), 21.

³¹ The German term *widernatürliche Unzucht* is also translated as "unnatural fornication." The law applied only to men, and efforts to include a legal prohibition against lesbianism are discussed later in this chapter.

³² Geoffrey J. Giles, "Legislating Homophobia in the Third Reich: the Radicalization of Prosecution against Homosexuality by the Legal Profession," *German History* 23, no. 3 (2005): 339.

³³ Rainer Hoffschmidt, "140.000 Verurteilungen nach "§175," *Invertito: Jahrbuch für die Geschichte der Homosexualitäten* 4 (2002): 148-149.

The German Empire was succeeded in 1918 by the Weimar Republic, an experiment in democracy that Germans found simultaneously exciting, modern, decadent, and frightening. The fifteen years constituting the Weimar era were filled with a mix of political ideologies, artistic movements, technological advances, and socially progressive attitudes, at least in the largest of German cities. Historian Eric Weitz called Weimar politics and society “lively, democratic, engaged, and divided and divisive.”³⁴ This fundamental ambivalence was most pronounced in Germany’s largest urban areas, such as Berlin. Artists, entrepreneurs, misfits, and adventure-seekers travelled to the capital city from all across Germany, Europe, and North America.

Weimar Germany was also an incubator for new social movements and ideals. Attitudes towards sex changed, too, and generally became characterized by a greater degree of openness to the discussion of sex itself and of the diverse expressions of human sexuality. Again, this shift was most pronounced in Berlin and the largest German cities such as Hamburg, Cologne, Munich, and Frankfurt am Main. New outlooks on the role of eroticism and sexual pleasure before and during marriage led to campaigns for greater access to contraceptives of all sorts. In Germany, as all across the Western world, feminists and sex reform advocates sought to establish sex as a joyful, self-determined practice that meant more than a mere mechanism of reproduction. These ideas were embraced among the wider population, particularly among the white, bourgeois classes. Moreover, the Weimar government abolished official censorship, and as a result, sex reformers and sexologists were able to openly discuss their research and views. While many Christian conservatives criticized this new openness to sexuality, many Germans felt that sexuality represented much more than procreation or physical pleasure and shaped larger notions of politics, modernity, and the self.

³⁴ Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 78.

Homosexual men and women discovered that they could enjoy a level of freedom and tolerance in Berlin and other larger German cities during the Weimar period. This was, to a great extent, thanks to the sudden proliferation of the scientific study of sexuality – and homosexuality in particular – that had already begun in Germany during the *Kaiserreich* period. The term “homosexual” (*homosexuell* in German) itself was first coined in 1869 by the Austro-Hungarian author Karl-Maria Kertbeny as he campaigned against what he held as unfair sodomy laws in Germany.³⁵ Thirty years later, the medical doctor Magnus Hirschfeld founded the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee* (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee, SHC) in Berlin in 1898. One of the chief goals of the committee was to advocate for the protection of homosexuals from legal prosecution based on the belief that same-sex desire was inborn. As such, the SHC has often been called the first gay rights group in history.³⁶ The main focus of the SHC became the campaign to repeal Paragraph 175. Like the lawyer and theologian Karl Heinrich Ulrichs had done before him, Hirschfeld and the SHC argued that because homosexual desire was inborn, homosexuals could not change their sexual orientation, and therefore should not be arrested as criminals. In other words, Hirschfeld claimed that homosexuality was a medical question, not a legal one. By the late 1920s, it even appeared that there was a very real chance Paragraph 175 would be repealed, or at least drastically altered. In October 1929, thanks to grass roots efforts on the part of Hirschfeld and the SHC as well as support from the Social Democratic and Communist parties, the German Criminal Code Committee accepted a draft of a revised Paragraph 175 that would have legalized homosexual activities between consenting adults.

³⁵Kertbeny was not alone. In 1867, the lawyer and theologian Karl Heinrich Ulrichs told the five hundred men of the Sixth Congress of German Jurists that people who had a “sexual nature opposed to common custom” were being socially and legally discriminated against for desires that “nature, mysteriously governing and creating, had implanted in them.” Ulrichs was subsequently forced offstage. Quoted in Alex Ross, “Berlin Story: How the Germans Invented Gay Rights – More than a Century Ago,” *The New Yorker*, January 26, 2015. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/01/26/berlin-story?mbid=social_facebook. (Accessed April 21, 2016).

³⁶ See, for example: John Gallagher, “Take a Wilde Ride: From Oscar Wilde to the Rev. Jimmy Creech, a Selective History of Gay and Lesbian Activism,” *The Advocate*, August 17, 1999, 9.

Ultimately, the amendment of Paragraph 175 was never brought to the parliament floor for a vote, and the law remained in effect throughout the duration of the Republic.³⁷ Weimar judges continued the legal precedent of requiring proof of “intercourse-like” actions among men, and in spite of the relative freedom enjoyed by homosexuals in Berlin, the average number of annual Paragraph 175 convictions rose during the Weimar era. Whereas an average of 207 men had been convicted per year during the *Kaiserreich*, the number of annual convictions more than doubled during the Weimar Republic to 530. In all, 7,957 men were convicted of “unnatural indecency” between 1918 and 1933.³⁸

Yet, by that time distinct homosexual scenes had already emerged in Germany’s urban centers, which historian Robert Beachy credits to an “incredibly progressive and...tolerant policing policy” that had been introduced in Berlin in the late nineteenth century.³⁹ As a result, Weimar Berlin witnessed a burgeoning homosexual landscape. Individuals who were attracted to members of the same sex enjoyed a certain degree of tolerance, if not full acceptance, as they carved out visible spaces for themselves in public. By the early 1920s, there were over one hundred bars, cafes, and nightclubs in Berlin alone that catered either exclusively to homosexual men and women or at least provided a supportive environment for homosexuals, cross dressers, or any other individuals who felt that their sense of identity was different from their fellow Berliners.⁴⁰ Magazines, journals, and newsletters that were written by and for homosexuals

³⁷ Claudia Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade: Life Stories of Lesbians during the Third Reich* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 7-8.

³⁸ Statistics from Rainer Hoffschmidt, “140.000 Verurteilungen nach “§175,” 148-149.

³⁹ Robert Beachy, “Between World Wars, Gay Culture flourished in Berlin,” interview with Terry Gross, host of *Fresh Air* radio program on National Public Radio. December 17, 2014. Transcript available: <http://www.npr.org/2014/12/17/371424790/between-world-wars-gay-culture-flourished-in-berlin> (Accessed April 21, 2016.)

⁴⁰ There exists a growing literature on various aspects of Berlin’s homosexual scene during the Weimar era. See Laurie Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015); Claudia Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade: Life Stories of Lesbians During the*

provided same-sex desiring men and women a network through which they could identify and interact with others, thus nurturing a sense of belonging and establishing gradually a sense of community. The circulation of homosexual publications throughout Germany during the Weimar years reached nearly one million.⁴¹

Speaking on homosexuality in the Weimar Republic, Beachy states that, “I think there probably had never been anything like this before and there was no culture as open again until the 1970s.”⁴² While it is true that homosexuals in Weimar Berlin enjoyed a hitherto unmatched level of relative freedom, we must be careful however, not to portray the Weimar Republic in too progressive a light.⁴³ The growing homosexual spaces, publications, and networks did not amount to a “gay utopia,” a “liberal hotbed of homosexuality,” or an “uninhibited urban sexual scene” as it has recently been portrayed in public outlets.⁴⁴ Gertrude Sandmann, a Jewish lesbian in her mid-twenties in Weimar-era Berlin, later warned of a “misplaced nostalgia” about the level of acceptance homosexuals enjoyed during the Weimar Republic.⁴⁵ The new level of freedom enjoyed by Germany’s homosexual men and women was unique in the Western world. But it was also fragile and built atop a pervasive and historical homophobia that was prevalent in Germany and much of the world. After decades of efforts by Magnus Hirschfeld and others to

Third Reich (New York: Columbia University, 1996); interviewees in the documentary *Paragraph 175* also discuss life during the Weimar period. Directed by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman. (Telling Pictures Production, 2000), DVD.

⁴¹ Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade*, 4.

⁴² Beachy, interview for *Fresh Air*, December 17, 2014.

⁴³ Historian Stefan Micheler also cautions that Weimar in the 1920s was “not as golden, liberal, or tolerant as has often been assumed.” Stefan Micheler, “Homophobic Propaganda and the Denunciation of Same-Sex-Desiring Men under National Socialism,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 1/2, Special Issue: Sexuality and German Fascism, (Jan. – Apr., 2002): 102.

⁴⁴ While the U.K.’s *Daily Mail*, certainly does not exemplify a scholarly publication, it reveals that the portrayal of Weimar Berlin as a gay Mecca of sorts has permeated the public sphere. Caroline Howe, “Berlin was a liberal hotbed of homosexuality,” November 25, 2014. Online: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2847643/Berlin-liberal-hotbed-homosexuality-mecca-cross-dressers-transsexuals-male-female-surgery-performed-Nazis-came-power-new-book-reveals.html> (Accessed April 21, 2016).

⁴⁵ Gertrude Sandmann, “Anfang des lesbischen Zusammenschlusses: die Clubs der zwanziger Jahre,” in *Unsere Kleine Zeitung*, 2(7/8) 1976, 4. Quoted in Claudia Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade*, 80.

establish the homosexual movement in Germany, the Hitler regime was able to destroy the structures of Germany's homosexual scenes within only a few years.

Homosexuality as a Threat to the Racial *Volksgemeinschaft*

By 1932, the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP, or Nazi Party) had become the largest party in the Reichstag, Germany's national parliament. On January 30, 1933, the party's leader, Adolf Hitler, was appointed chancellor of Germany. Anti-homosexual sentiments had never been a central pillar of National Socialist ideology in the years leading to the Nazis' election, but party leadership had made its position on the issue clear on multiple occasions. In a June 1927 parliamentary debate about the possible amendment of Paragraph 175 to legalize homosexual acts among consenting adults, Reichstag deputy Wilhelm Frick declared that "unnatural sex acts among men must be persecuted with all severity, as this vice will lead to the downfall of the German people."⁴⁶ Three years later, the official press outlet of the Nazi party released another statement on the fate of the suggested reform of Paragraph 175: "Don't believe that we Germans would leave such a law in effect for even a single day if we came to power."⁴⁷

Immediately upon acquiring complete control, Hitler and the Nazi Party began rolling back the progress made during the Weimar years that had benefited women, homosexuals, and political minorities. Ultimately, the Nazis made the Weimar Republic the scapegoat for all of Germany's perceived problems: defeat in the Great War, economic failure, and a weakening of the German *Volk*. Most Nazi leaders, ranging from Hitler and Goebbels to Göring and especially Himmler, associated homosexual desire with decadence, emasculation, racial decline, and

⁴⁶ Verhandlungen des Reichstags, 3. Wahlperiode, 1924-1928, Berlin 1927, 393:10993. Quoted in Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade*, 7.

⁴⁷ *Völkischer Beobachter*, August 2, 1930. Quoted in Hans-Georg Stümke and Rudi Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen: Homosexuelle und "Gesundes Volksempfinden" von Auschwitz bis heute* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1981), 96.

Jewishness – everything that was allegedly allowed to run rampant in the Weimar era. Ernst Röhm, leader of the storm troopers (*Sturmabteilung*, SA) and known homosexual, was a notable exception to the general abhorrence of homosexuality among Nazi leadership.⁴⁸ Ultimately, the National Socialists positioned themselves as the party that would clean up the mess left by Germany’s failed attempt at democracy, and in doing so, forge a master race that would return the nation to its rightful place in the world.

This goal required not only reorganizing German structures of power and rewriting Germany’s laws. It also meant initiating a far-reaching project of demographic engineering aimed at re-forging the German people on a more fundamental, biological and racial level. To this end, certain bodies were singled out early on as not belonging to the *Volksgemeinschaft*, or the racially defined national community. Excluded from the Aryan *Volk* were the alleged “lesser” races like the Roma and Sinti (“Gypsies”) and the Jews, who were the Nazis’ primary targets, but also Germans who could not contribute to the future of the race. Groundbreaking work by historian Henry Friedlander, for example, revealed that Germans with disabilities were the first to be systematically and violently removed from the German *Volk* by the architects of the Third Reich.⁴⁹ The eugenic underpinnings of the Nazis’ racial policies dictated that while these individuals were German, their supposed inherent weaknesses would be passed on to future generations, thus harming the German national body. The forced sterilization and eventual murder of these individuals became justified in the name of protecting the racial whole.

Homosexuals also found themselves excluded from the *Volksgemeinschaft* and became targets of the regime’s violence, though for slightly different reasons. Although the Nazis

⁴⁸ There are reports of homosexual men in Germany joining the SA because they felt that Röhm would protect them. For more information on homosexuality in the SA, see: Andrew Wackerfuss, *Stormtrooper Families: Homosexuality and Community in the Early Nazi Movement* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2015).

⁴⁹ Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

certainly positioned themselves as reactionaries against the changes in sexual mores that developed during the Weimar Republic, it would be misleading to assume that they simply implemented a conservative or repressive sexual regime on its citizens to counteract the perceived excess of the previous era. In reality, sexuality under the swastika was much more complex and inextricably entangled with contemporary notions of race, citizenship, and power.⁵⁰ Moreover, there was no consensus on the role of sexuality in the realization of Nazi goals, nor was there a single understanding of what constituted good or abhorrent sex. Instead, what existed was what historian Dagmar Herzog called a “cacophony of often competing injunctions.”⁵¹

Despite these inconsistencies, it is possible to tease out a redefinition of sexuality under the Nazis that coalesced with their goals for the future of the German *Volk*. Driven by the eugenic belief that racial characteristics were hereditary – and thus passed down through procreative, heterosexual sex – the National Socialists desperately sought to control sexuality and obsessed over its implications for the German race. If sex was the means through which race was reproduced, then sexuality was central to the project of racial engineering and led to the establishment of a new sexual regime in the Third Reich. The boundaries of permissible sex were drawn along racial lines, albeit in often inconsistent and contradictory ways.

Nazis, therefore, used sexuality to protect and reproduce the master race. To this end, they promoted heterosexual, procreative sex among Aryans, outlawed the sale of all

⁵⁰ A growing historiography on sexuality under the swastika exists. *Sexuality and German Fascism*, edited by Dagmar Herzog (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002) includes eleven superb essays by leading experts on a number of different aspects of the topic. For other major works, see: Jennifer V. Evans and Jane Freeland. “Rethinking Sexual Modernity in 20th Century Germany,” *Social History* 37, no. 3 (August 2012): 314-327; George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1985); Suzanne zur Nieden, ed., *Homosexualität und Staatsräson: Männlichkeit, Homophobie und Politik in Deutschland 1900-1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2005); William J. Spurlin, *Lost Intimacies: Rethinking Homosexuality under National Socialism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009); Richard Wetzell and Edward R. Dickinson. “The Historiography of Sexuality in Modern Germany,” *German History* 23 (2005): 291-305.

⁵¹ Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 17.

contraceptives in 1941 (though the army received an exemption for condoms to help prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases), and in 1943 introduced the death penalty as a possible punishment for those providing abortion services.⁵² On the other side of the coin, however, the Nazis radicalized their commitment to “negative” eugenics and forcibly sterilized hundreds of thousands of those deemed racially inferior, robbing them of their sexual ability to reproduce.⁵³ So, while the Nazi regime went beyond strictly prohibiting sex for the vast swath of its population that it considered racially unfit (by asserting control of individual bodies through coerced sterilization and eventually murder), the Nazis simultaneously incited its Aryan citizens to seek pleasure in heterosexual sex. “The legitimization of terror and the invitation to pleasure,” Herzog reminds us, “operated in tandem.”⁵⁴

This invitation was not extended to homosexuals, however. Same-sex desire clearly existed well outside the bounds of acceptable sexuality in National Socialist ideology for multiple reasons. First and foremost, since two men could not produce offspring, homosexuality robbed the German *Volk* of children, which was conceived as especially heinous after the population losses of World War I. Homosexuality, then, was not understood as simply a moral transgression; it was a much more egregious threat to the future of the Germanic race itself. Second, men who sought sexual pleasure from other men were construed as weak, and their alleged feminine demeanor denoted an inversion of their natural, masculine gender. This meant that homosexual men contained a propensity to renounce their rightful position as leaders of their

⁵² Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1975), 38. Also Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 70.

⁵³ Hitler’s regime certainly did not have a monopoly on eugenic thought and policies. Proponents of both positive eugenics and negative eugenics garnered astounding amounts of support throughout Europe and North America at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. For a general overview of the movement and the transatlantic aspects, see: W. Jake Newsome, “‘The Submerged Tenth:’ American Eugenics and German Racial Hygiene in the Early 20th Century,” in *Omnino: Undergraduate Research Journal of Valdosta State University* 1, no. 1 (2010-2011): 143-167.

⁵⁴ Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*, 18.

families, the economy, and most importantly, the nation, since leadership was envisioned as a masculine role. Nazi jurists, as well as lawmakers in the *Kaiserreich* and Weimar era, did not conceive of lesbian sex as a threat comparable to that posed by homosexual men. As such, homosexual sex among women remained completely legal.

One further aspect of sexuality under the swastika is vital to understanding the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. Although there was disagreement over what constituted, caused, encouraged, or dispelled same-sex desire, the predominant belief held by most Nazi leaders was that homosexuality was a set of actions, a vice. The position that homosexuality was inborn and constituted a fundamental difference between heterosexuals and homosexuals had not yet gained widespread acceptance outside of the sexology field. Instead, Nazis – as most contemporaries in the transatlantic world – believed that sexual attraction to a member of the same sex was a temptation that could potentially seduce anyone.

The belief that sexual desire was not biologically determined meant that most Nazis did not see the genetic transference of homosexuality to future generations as the predominant threat that same-sex desire posed to the *Volk*. Instead, the threat that homosexuals posed to the Aryan people was that, in the indulgence of this vice, they would rob the nation of potential children. If left unchecked, homosexuality may continue to spread, especially among the all-male Nazi organizations like the SS or Hitler Youth, and sap Germany's men of their masculine ideals, ultimately leading to the downfall of the Fatherland itself. In this way, the threat that homosexuals posed to the *Volksgemeinschaft* was somewhat different than that posed by the other bodies labeled as racial threats, like the Jews, Roma and Sinti, and people with disabilities. Nazi leadership ultimately slated these groups for physical extermination, but while their treatment of homosexuals was inconsistent and occasionally involved murder, the official Nazi

policy towards men caught having sex with each other remained focused on ending the homosexual acts themselves.

The Crackdown on Homosexuality Begins, 1933-1935

Within a month of Hitler's appointment as chancellor, the Gestapo and local police forces began their crackdown on homosexuality, and as the "homosexual capital" of Germany and the capital of the new Nazi state, Berlin was the first target of the Nazis' campaign.⁵⁵ The most prominent of the same-sex cafés, bars, and nightclubs that existed throughout the city were shut down within months, but research indicates that many – perhaps even most – of these locales continued to exist with varying degrees of secrecy into the mid-to-late 1930s.⁵⁶ The Nazi state wasted no time, however, in destroying the network of the most active homosexual organizations and banning all homosexual publications. The Institute of Sexual Sciences, founded by the homosexual, Jewish socialist Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, was a primary target of this purge. Hirschfeld himself was abroad on a lecture tour as a group of one hundred Nazi students, including a marching band, stormed and looted the Institute of Sexual Sciences, destroying years of research. Days later, the contents of the institute's archives and library were burned in front of a cheering crowd. As Hirschfeld watched the scene unfold on a newsreel in France, he told a

⁵⁵ While the polycratic structure of the Third Reich has often been cited as causing inefficiency in the Nazi State, historian Andreas Pretzel argues that the existence of numerous agencies and Reich institutions in Berlin, such as the Gestapo, the SS, and the Berlin police, seems to have led to a more concerted campaign to identify and arrest homosexual men in the city. See: Andreas Pretzel, "Vom Staatsfeind zum Volksfeind: zur Radikalisierung der Homosexuellenverfolgung im Zusammenwirken von Polizei und Justiz," in *Homosexualität und Staatsräson: Männlichkeit, Homophobie und Politik in Deutschland 1900-1945*, ed. Suzanne zur Nieden (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2005), 217.

⁵⁶ Robert Beachy, "The Nazi Anti-Sodomy Statute of 1935," conference presentation. German Studies Association Annual Meeting, Washington D.C., October 2, 2015. See also: Rainer Hoffschmidt, *Olivia: Die bisher geheime Geschichte des Tabus Homosexualität und der Verfolgung der Homosexuellen in Hannover* (Hanover: Selbstverlag, 1992), 92; Albert Knoll, "Homosexuelle Häftlinge im KZ Dachau," *Invertito: Jahrbuch für die Geschichte der Homosexualitäten* 4 (2002).

friend that it was like witnessing his own funeral.⁵⁷ He died in exile two years later. Outside of Berlin, the crackdown was slower to manifest. Large-scale, concerted raids and arrests did not occur in Munich until the following summer.⁵⁸ Pubs that were frequented by homosexual men and women in Hamburg, Germany's second-largest city, stayed in business until mid-1936, despite the city's reputation as a "homosexual stronghold."⁵⁹

Although the closure of homosexual locales and even the number of Paragraph 175 convictions were unevenly distributed across the German Reich, propaganda against homosexuality became widespread. This homophobic propaganda became the earliest and most widespread form of persecution that most homosexuals faced during Nazi rule because it reached beyond the limits of Germany's larger cities to rural locations where there were very few or no Paragraph 175 convictions. And it was not only Nazi Party mouthpieces that painted homosexuality in a negative light; local newspapers also played a part in fanning anti-homosexual sentiment throughout Germany.⁶⁰ In 1936, the Hamburg *Fremdenblatt* lamented that a weakening of moral standards during the Weimar years had resulted in a rise in homosexuality, which forced the Nazi party to begin its "vigorous crackdown" in Berlin so that it would not spread to the rural countryside.⁶¹ The *Hamburger Anzeiger* characterized homosexuality as such:

At best it turns men into effeminate, furtive seekers of pleasure. It erodes their moral fiber and character, it destroys their righteous male honor, and in many cases, unfortunately, it leads to crime. The most hardened criminals often are recruited from homosexual circles. The new Germany has no use for criminals and weaklings, perverts and inverts, but requires

⁵⁷ Christopher Turner, "The Rise of Sexology," TheGuardian.com, November 7, 2014.

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/nov/07/the-rise-and-rise-of-sexology-welcome>. (Accessed April 21, 2016)

⁵⁸ Knoll, "Homosexuelle Häftlinge im KZ Dachau," 70.

⁵⁹ Micheler, "Homophobic Propaganda," 96-98.

⁶⁰ It is not surprising that these local papers would toe the Nazi Party line on any number of issues. The Propaganda Ministry had issued press instructions (*Presseanweisungen*) to media outlets since its creation in 1933. Beginning in 1939, the Party issued daily slogans or topics (*Tagesparolen*) that newspapers should cover. These policies fostered self-censorship among local newspapers that reported what the Party wanted if they intended to stay in business.

⁶¹ "Gegen die Sittenentartung. Strafprozesse im Bereiche des §175," *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, August 26, 1936, evening edition, 5.

instead straightforward and sincere manly souls, and so we must combat homosexuality with the means available to us – education, observation, the law, the police, and the courts.⁶²

In short, the Nazi regime's propaganda portrayed homosexuals as both criminals and sexual perverts. Press accounts in both local and national newspapers reinforced this image. This seemingly sudden and nearly unanimous attack on homosexuality can be partly attributed to the fact that the 1926 Protection of Youth from Trashy and Dirty Writings had already outlawed the distribution of publications promoting what the government considered immorality, which included homosexuality. Therefore, publications that portrayed homosexuality in a positive light were prohibited years before the Nazi Party came to power, but the homophobic stance of the Nazi regime further emboldened others to express their own anti-homosexual sentiments.

The fact that such propaganda was able to spread so widely and was so generally tolerated reveals an aversion to homosexuality that existed before the Nazis came to power.⁶³ Friedrich-Paul von Groszheim, a homosexual man born in 1906 in Lübeck, was sentenced to prison for violating Paragraph 175. Once he was released from prison, no one would hire him and long-time acquaintances would not speak to him. Later von Groszheim recalled, "I must say that, when it came to that, the majority of the population was clearly on the Nazis' side."⁶⁴ Widespread homophobia was certainly not unique to twentieth century Germany. Throughout Europe and North America, public condemnation of homosexuals was driven by religious

⁶² "Es wird durchgegriffen. . .im Kampf gegen die Homosexualität," *Hamburger Anzeiger*, August 26, 1936, 1.

⁶³ Micheler, "Homophobic Propaganda," 98.

⁶⁴ Friedrich-Paul von Groszheim tells his story in Lutz van Dijk, *Einsam war ich nie: Schwule unter dem Hakenkreuz 1933-1945*, (Berlin: Querverlag, 2003), 26.

statutes, moral reprehension, and a growing discourse that homosexuals themselves were not only criminally dangerous, but psychologically ill as well.⁶⁵

Robert Gellately's research reveals that the majority of Germans supported the Nazis' heavy-handed war against those who were officially categorized and ostracized as "outsiders," "asocials," "useless eaters," or "criminals."⁶⁶ Denunciations of known or suspected homosexual men by civilians (uninvolved third parties such as neighbors, or even jealous ex-lovers) played a significant role in the Nazi state's ability to locate and arrest those in violation of Paragraph 175. Hermann, a homosexual man who lived in Hamburg during the Nazi years, later recalled that it was an open secret how the Gestapo worked to gain information on homosexuals: "First they'd arrest one of us, and place him under a lot of pressure. Then, they'd torture a confession out of him, as well as names of other gays. When the Gestapo felt they had enough names, they'd go to [the named person's] office, march through the different departments, and arrest the man."⁶⁷ Members of a Hitler Youth group in Hamburg apparently felt that denouncing homosexual men was not effective enough, and they decided to go a step further. In 1934, one of the troop's leaders, Herr Lüders, urged the local police to use the Hitler Youth organization to entrap homosexuals and hustlers who hung around the Hamburg Central Train Station. In a report, Lüders "underlined the necessity of the Hitler Youth involvement in combating these

⁶⁵ For some introductory texts on the history of homosexuality in Europe and North America, see: Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe*; Anna Clark, *Desire: A History of European Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2008); John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); for essays focusing on the medicalization of homosexuality, see Vernon A. Rosario, ed., *Science and Homosexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

⁶⁶ Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), vii.

⁶⁷ "Hermann" from Hamburg. Quoted in Stümke and Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*, 250.

‘conditions.’”⁶⁸ The practice of entrapment to capture homosexual men became relatively common by the end of the 1930s.

Police officers in Frankfurt am Main and Cologne also asserted that the best way to take men into custody was to catch them in the act.⁶⁹ As such, it was not uncommon for police officers to dress in plainclothes and patrol areas known to be frequented by homosexuals. In 1938, Reich Minister of Justice Franz Gürtner wrote a letter to the SS-Chief Heinrich Himmler, stating that, “Although I do not deny that a ruthless struggle against homosexuality is urgently required to maintain the strength of the German *Volk*, I consider it intolerable for the reputation of the police that the officers should put up their own bodies to trap homosexuals.” Five months later, Himmler responded that, “I am also unable to approve of steps taken by some police officers in Frankfurt am Main to trap homosexuals. I have arranged for the officers in question to be taught that their behavior is unacceptable.”⁷⁰ This exchange between two of the highest ranking officials in the Third Reich is indicative of the fear by Nazi leadership that even members of their own organizations could be tempted and corrupted by homosexuality.⁷¹

Repositories of Gestapo and police records from Berlin and Hamburg reveal that the number of arrests of homosexual men resulting from “active” police work, such as surveillance and raids, actually fell from twenty-two percent in 1936 to eight percent in 1938. The number of

⁶⁸ Excerpts from Meeting Minutes of the Hamburg Hitler Youth, October 5, 1934. “Complaints about ‘conditions’ at Hamburg Main Railway Station, October 1934.” Quoted in Günter Grau, ed. *Hidden Holocaust? Gay and Lesbian Persecution in Germany 1933-45*, with a contribution by Claudia Schoppmann. Trans. Patrick Camiller. (London: Cassell, 1995), 40-43.

⁶⁹ Jürgen Müller, *Ausgrenzung der Homosexuellen aus der “Volksgemeinschaft:” die Verfolgung von Homosexuellen in Köln 1933-45* (Cologne: Emons Verlag, 2003), 120.

⁷⁰ Letter from the Reich Minister of Justice to the Reichsführer-SS, January 24, 1938. Reply from H. Himmler on June 7, 1938. Quoted in Grau, *Hidden Holocaust?*, 147-150.

⁷¹ Averill Earls has recently written about the fine line that law enforcement agents had to walk when tracking down, observing, and apprehending homosexuals, especially when using tactics such as entrapment and clandestine surveillance. See her forthcoming publication: “The Guards are Watching: The Eroticization of Policing and Courtroom Testimony in Dublin, 1925-1955,” in Peter Hession, ed., *Unfree State? Control and Disobedience in Irish Society, 1923-68*. This contribution is explored more fully in Chapter Three of her dissertation, “Queering Dublin: Same-Sex Desire and Masculinities in Ireland, 1884 to 1950” (doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2016).

arrests resulting from denunciations, on the other hand, rose in proportionate numbers. The number of denunciations rose so dramatically that some newspapers even urged their readers not to overburden their police departments. Of all the Paragraph 175 cases in the lower courts for the duration of the Nazi regime, approximately thirty percent were the result of civilian denunciations.⁷² It is clear that the persecution of homosexuals during the Third Reich did not stem only from the Nazi state itself, but instead involved and depended on hostile discrimination from large portions of the German population.

“H.L.,” a homosexual man living under the Nazi regime later recalled that for those like him who lived in the countryside, it was terrifying to read about what was happening to homosexuals in the cities. “When something went on in Berlin,” he wrote, “word spread right quickly to the other cities, because someone you knew was always just coming from Berlin.” He later recalled that, “One had the feeling that something horrible was brewing.”⁷³ Despite this increasingly homophobic atmosphere, many homosexuals did not anticipate the coming terror. Hermann R., who ultimately survived imprisonment in a concentration camp, later stated in an interview that many homosexual men and women continued going to bars, parks, or house parties with friends or to meet new people.⁷⁴ Albrecht Becker, a homosexual man living in Würzburg at the time, could even pinpoint why he felt assured that the situation for Germany’s homosexuals would never get much worse: Ernst Röhm, the leader of the Nazi *Sturmabteilung* (Storm Troopers, SA), made no secret about his sexual attraction to other men.⁷⁵ Becker later stated in an interview, “the homosexual people were quite sure that nothing would happen

⁷² Micheler, “Homophobic Propaganda,” 125-126.

⁷³ H.L., quoted in Stümke and Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*, 237.

⁷⁴ Hermann R., quoted in Stümke and Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*, 247.

⁷⁵ In his memoirs, the English journalist Sefton Delmer stated that in 1931, he had even shared a drink with the Röhm at Berlin’s famed Eldorado club. Delmer Sefton. “Ein Photo von Stalins Ohrläppchen. In *Der Spiegel*. Nr. 44, 1962, 46. Available online: <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-45124291.html> (Accessed April 21, 2016.)

because one of the government men was like them.”⁷⁶ A bloody incident in the summer of 1934 would prove Becker wrong.

The Murder of Ernst Röhm and Emergence of Homosexuals as “Enemies of the State”

Ernst Julius Röhm was a loyal Nazi. He had marched alongside Hitler through the streets of Munich during the infamous 1923 Beer Hall Putsch, the failed attempt to overthrow the Bavarian government. He was a leader of the brown-shirted Storm Troopers (SA), a rapidly growing army of heavy-handed, working-class men that ultimately proved vital in drumming up support for the National Socialist cause and instilling fear in political opponents through violence. Moreover, Röhm was one of the very few people whom Hitler considered a friend. He was one of a half dozen individuals who addressed Hitler with the informal *Du*, whereas essentially everyone else was required to address Hitler with the formal and less personal *Sie*.⁷⁷

Despite Röhm’s loyalty to the Party, Hitler ordered in the spring of 1934 that the SA leadership was to be executed. The murder of Ernst Röhm, which came to be known as the Night of the Long Knives, has come to occupy a significant place in collective memories of the Nazi campaign against same-sex activity, often portrayed as the “first shot of the persecution of homosexuals in the Third Reich.”⁷⁸ However, in contrast to rumors among the population at the time and speculation in the newspapers about the role of Röhm’s homosexuality in the bloody purge, historical evidence demonstrates that the move to oust the SA leadership was motivated

⁷⁶ Albrecht Becker, interview in *Paragraph 175*, directed by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, (Telling Pictures Production, 2000), DVD. Also see Becker’s autobiography: Andreas, Sternweiler, ed. *Fotos sind mein Leben: Albrecht Becker* (Berlin: Rosa Winkel Verlag, 1993).

⁷⁷ For example, in a letter dated December 31, 1933, Hitler writes to Röhm: “I am very thankful that fate has allowed me to name men such as yourself as my friends and comrades in arms.” The letter is signed “In heartfelt friendship and thankful appreciation, Yours, Adolf Hitler.” Quoted in Stümke & Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*, 175.

⁷⁸ This quote is taken from the documentary *We Were Marked with a Big A*, VHS 1991.

by political ambitions, not homophobia.⁷⁹ Political rivals had publicized Röhm's homosexuality in an attempt to damage the Nazi Party, but Hitler himself sought to protect Röhm's reputation by issuing a directive to NSDAP leaders declaring that the sexual lives of SA leadership was a private matter.⁸⁰ Hitler did not move against Röhm until the SA leader became a political threat. In the competition for power in Hitler's Germany, the SS, the Gestapo, and the German army viewed Röhm's SA as a threat to their own influence. And with a membership of nearly three million rabble-rousing men, the SA was certainly a formidable force, one that dwarfed the 100,000 man German army. By the spring of 1934, leading Nazi officials had convinced Hitler that Röhm was planning to use the SA to launch a coup and overthrow Hitler, thus initiating a "second revolution" that would more fully realize National Socialist ideals. High treason, then, was the central accusation leveled at Röhm and the SA leadership.

Beginning on June 30, 1934, over one thousand individuals perceived by the state to be political threats were arrested throughout Germany. Many of them, including Röhm and nearly fifty other SA members, were summarily executed without trials. When "Operation Hummingbird" finally came to a close on July 2, eighty-five people were confirmed dead, but some estimates put the number of victims nearer to 150. While one of the primary targets of the operation was homosexual, it is clear that the operation was a wide-ranging, political action meant to eradicate opponents and consolidate power, not to purge the party of homosexuals.⁸¹

The Nazi movement had embraced violence as a political means since its beginnings and had even used state authority to sanction various manifestations of violence, including street

⁷⁹ Micheler, "Homophobic Propaganda" 108.

⁸⁰ Adolf Hitler, Directive No. 1 of February 3, 1931. See: Micheler, "Homophobic Propaganda," 105-106.

⁸¹ For statistics on the Night of the Long Knives, see Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin Group, 2005), 39; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1889-1936, Hubris* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 517; and Otto Gritschneider, *Der Führer hat Sie zum Tode verurteilt... Hitlers "Röhm-Putsch" – Morde vor Gericht* (Munich: Beck, 1993).

brawls and seizure of property. But, the Night of the Long Knives revealed that Nazi leadership was willing to sanction the murder of not only their political rivals, but of one of their own in order to achieve their political goals. On July 13, 1934, Hitler justified Röhm's murder in a speech that was broadcast on radios across the Reich:

In this hour I was responsible for the fate of the German people, and thereby I became the supreme judge of the German people. I gave the order to shoot the ringleaders in this treason, and I further gave the order to cauterize down to the raw flesh the ulcers of the poisoning of the wells in our domestic life. Let the nation know that its existence – which depends on its internal order and security – cannot be threatened with impunity by anyone! And let it be known for all time to come that if anyone raises his hand to strike the State, then certain death is his lot.⁸²

These murders, then, consolidated Hitler's position as absolute ruler by removing potential rivals and by demonstrating to the German people that he acted as judge, jury, and executioner.

While the impetus for Röhm's murder was not driven by homophobia, the public discourse that emerged from it certainly signaled a shift in the Nazi war on same-sex sex. Within days of Röhm's execution, Nazi officials were spinning the operation as evidence of the state's efforts to clean up Germany's loose morals. Historian Geoffrey Giles notes that Hitler's decision to present the execution of Röhm as a part of the campaign against homosexuality can be understood as "attempts at consensus building." By framing Nazi anti-homosexual policies in terms of cleaning up a morally corrupt Germany, Hitler was able to gain support from conservatives and the moral right.⁸³ Hitler framed the purge of homosexuality from the SA in moral terms in a directive to the new SA chief of staff, Viktor Lutze:

I expect all SA leaders to help the SA maintain and reinforce its standing as a pure and untainted organization. I want every mother to be able to send her son to the SA, the party, and the Hitler Youth without fearing

⁸² Adolf Hitler, speech before the Reichstag, July 13, 1934. Quoted in Joachim Fest, *Hitler* (New York: Harcourt, 1974), 469.

⁸³ Giles, "Legislating Homophobia," 352.

that he might there be debased in his manners or morals. For this reason, I want all SA leaders to be strict in ensuring that any offence against §175 results in the immediate expulsion of the accused from the SA and the party. SA men should be leaders, not ludicrous apes.⁸⁴

After the Night of the Long Knives, the Nazi rhetoric on homosexuality also underwent a much more significant transformation than mere political expediency. Homosexual men were no longer presented as just a racial threat to the procreation of the German *Volk*, but instead as political enemies of the state. Two weeks after Röhm's murder, Hitler told politicians gathered in the Reichstag that "a small group of individuals joined by a common predisposition" whom Röhm had promoted through the ranks "simply because they belonged to the circle of those afflicted with this particular predisposition," had engaged in treason and sought to overthrow him.⁸⁵ Thus, the issue of homosexuality had become politicized, and as Hitler's speech before the Reichstag asserted, the Nazi state reserved the right to physically eliminate enemies of the state. The Röhm purge, therefore, was a chilling foreshadowing of what was to come.⁸⁶

The Nazi-Amendment of Paragraph 175 and the Legal Redefinition of Homosexuality

The amendment of Paragraph 175 in 1935 by Nazi jurists is perhaps the single most important event to affect the countless homosexual men living in Germany during the Third Reich. But, the changes in the law, which broadened the definition of "indecent" and sharpened the punishments for those acts, cannot be understood as simply a manifestation of institutional homophobia. Instead, it should be contextualized as one development in a larger

⁸⁴ Tagesbefehl an Chef des Stabes, Viktor Lutze," June 30, 1934, reprinted in Max Domarus, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen 1932-1945. Kommentiert von einem deutschen Zeitgenossen. Teil I: Triumph 1932-1938*, 4th ed. (Leonberg, 1988), 401.

⁸⁵ Adolf Hitler, *Reichstagsrede*, July 13, 1934, reprinted in Domarus, *Hitler. Reden und Proklamationen, Teil I*, 410-24.

⁸⁶ To read some recollections of gay men's reaction to the murder of Ernst Röhm, see "Chapter One: Erich and Karl, Introduced by Geoffrey J. Giles," in Jürgen Lemke, *Gay Voices from East Germany* (Indiana University Press, 1991), 11 – 36 (especially pages 18 and 31, but note Giles's comment on Karl's memory on page 11).

Gleichschaltung, or forced conformity, that was meant to bring German law into line with National Socialist ideals.

The task to reform Paragraph 175 fell to an official of the Reich Ministry of Justice named Oyen, and he sought to craft a law that more closely aligned with “the healthy moral sensibility” (*das gesunde Sittlichkeitsgefühl*) of the German people.⁸⁷ First, Oyen attempted to find a way around the constricting precedents of relying on proof of anal sex for convictions. The problem, he felt, was with the justifier “unnatural” before “indecenty.” As Giles has noted, “Masturbation might be indecent, but was not regarded as sufficiently unnatural as to be covered by §175.”⁸⁸ So, Oyen simply deleted “unnatural,” though he did leave in the clause specifying intercourse-like acts. When the members of a subcommittee reviewed a first revision in September 1934, they insisted that the proving “intercourse-like acts” was “devilishly difficult for prosecutors in the courtroom.”⁸⁹ Dr. Gerhard Lorenz, who was the chief judge of the Leipzig district court, insisted that the new version of the law should contain less specific language so that “every indecency between men” could be considered a crime.⁹⁰

The committee, it seems, agreed with Lorenz, and the finalized version of the amended Paragraph 175 read: “A man who commits indecency with another man, or allows himself to be misused indecently, will be punished with prison.” The language was purposely vague, allowing prosecutors and judges to convict as many homosexual men as possible. Moreover, the new version of the law also criminalized both men involved, whereas previously, the “passive” participant had almost always been understood as a victim, and was therefore not in danger of conviction. As of the summer of 1935, anything from sex or mutual masturbation to a quick kiss

⁸⁷ The available records do not provide a first name for Assessor Oyen. Giles, “Legislating Homophobia,” 341.

⁸⁸ Giles, “Legislating Homophobia,” 341.

⁸⁹ Giles, “Legislating Homophobia,” 341.

⁹⁰ Protokoll Strafrechtskommission 45. Sitzung, 18 Sept. 1934, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum archives: 2000.39/BAL R22/973.

or a touch that lingered too long could land a man in prison. Eventually, even “lustful intent” acted as enough evidence for a Paragraph 175 conviction. A 1944 legal commentary stated that it was “not necessary that a physical contact has taken place;” it sufficed if homosexuality was “even just intended.”⁹¹

Interestingly, during his reworking of the law, Assessor Oyen included a clause to protect youths from conviction, which explicitly stated that courts could refrain from punishment if those arrested were under the age of twenty-one. Addressing the decision to include the age-limit clause, the official commentary on the new version of the law resounded with a “boys will be boys” attitude:

The language of the new provisions per se also encompasses misdemeanors that occur from time to time, as experience shows, among schoolboys, especially in boarding schools. Even if they do represent a regrettable vice to be suppressed with all the rigor of school discipline, they do not as a rule cause any lasting damage to those concerned. Such cases do not require judgment from a criminal court judge.”⁹²

This commentary again reifies the predominant contemporary understanding that sexual desire was fluid, and that same-sex experiences may even be a part of growing up; a single homosexual encounter did not make one “a homosexual.” Therefore, the law continued to criminalize homosexual acts, not being homosexual. While the new version of the law may have been lenient on youths, it did include severely sharpened punishments for adult men who used their positions of authority or cash incentives to coerce others into sexual encounters. Violating this new clause, Paragraph 175a, carried a penitentiary sentence of up to ten years with hard labor.

The redrafting of Paragraph 175 also allowed for revisiting a topic that had been debated for decades by German jurists: whether or not to criminalize female homosexuality. Since 1909,

⁹¹ Quoted in Stümke and Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*, 216.

⁹² *Die Strafrechtsnovellen v. 28. Juni 1935*, pp. 80,39.

there had been efforts to extend the power of Germany's laws to include the policing of homosexual activity among women, but time and again, jurists ultimately decided that doing so was an unnecessary action.⁹³ Despite the fact that some leading Nazis argued that, "the criminal law should provide protection against sexual degeneracy regardless of gender," female homosexuality remained legal under the Nazi regime.⁹⁴ The questionable legality of lesbianism was discussed at length during a meeting of the Criminal Law Commission in preparation for the amendment of Paragraph 175. As Claudia Schoppmann, the leading expert on the fate of lesbians during the Third Reich, has convincingly demonstrated, a number of factors contributed to the decision not to criminalize lesbian sex. The greatest factor was the historical gender hierarchy that existed in Germany. Hitler declared in 1933 that, "in my State, the mother is the most important citizen," and it is true that Aryan motherhood – birthing Aryan children and instilling in them National Socialist principles – was idealized and hailed as a position of racial and national significance.⁹⁵ But, that position of significance was limited to the home, and while the separation of gendered spheres in the Third Reich was not as oppressive towards women as previously thought, it did mean that women were mostly excluded from leadership roles in politics, the economy, and the military.⁹⁶ Therefore there was no need, the jurists reviewing

⁹³ Legislators proposing in 1909 that lesbian sex should also be criminalized stated, "The danger to family life and to youth is the same...It lies therefore in the interest of morality as in that of the general welfare that penal provisions be expanded also to women." Quoted in Stümke, *Homosexuelle in Deutschland*, 50.

⁹⁴ Ernst Jenne, "Should §175 of the Penal Code be extended to women?" Quoted in Grau, *Hidden Holocaust?*, 78-80.

⁹⁵ Adolf Hitler, speech to the NS-Frauenschaft, September 8, 1933 in Domarus, ed., *Hitler. Reden und Proklamationen*, Vol. 1, 449-52.

⁹⁶ For a fascinating reevaluation of the role of women in Nazi Germany, see Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); also: Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

Paragraph 175 asserted, to criminalize same-sex sex among women since the so-called inversion would not affect the running of the German state.⁹⁷

Moreover, the Nazis acted under the assumption that women either had no sexuality of their own – at least not comparable to men’s virile sexuality – or, that if women did possess sexuality, it was ultimately dependent upon men for stimulation and for physical and emotional satisfaction. Josef Meisinger, one of the leading crusaders against male homosexuality, doubted if lesbian desire existed at all, suggesting that when two women had sexual encounters together, they were both fantasizing about sex with a man (as evidence, Meisinger pointed out that lesbians used phallic-shaped objects, like the “ever popular candle,” to bring themselves to orgasm).⁹⁸ Sexual desire among women, then, posed no serious, lasting threat to the German *Volk* since it was assumed that lesbian women would be naturally drawn back towards heterosexual sex when a man came calling. When faced with arguments about the danger of female homosexuality to the German birthrate, jurists asserted that unlike homosexual men, whose affliction made it nearly impossible to become adequately aroused for heterosexual intercourse, lesbians could still easily become pregnant, whether they were aroused or not. In 1934, Otto Georg Thierack, who would become Justice Minister in 1942, asserted that the purpose of Germany’s laws against sex offences was never to enforce morality, but instead was to “protect fertility.” “Unlike men,” he stated, “women are always prepared for sex.”⁹⁹

The Nazi version of Paragraph 175 was published on June 28, 1935, coincidentally almost one year to the day after the murder of Ernst Röhm; it then went into effect on the first of

⁹⁷ Heinrich Himmler did fear the masculinization of women, though, and blamed the Nazi movement’s over zealous emphasis on militarization, uniforms, and masculine bravado as inadvertently – and perhaps inescapably – making women too masculine, thus eroding the “natural” divide of the genders. Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade*, 18.

⁹⁸ Josef Meisinger, lecture delivered at the assembly of medical heads of departments and experts on April 5-6, 1937, Berlin. Quoted in Grau, ed., *Hidden Holocaust?*, 115.

⁹⁹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz R/22/973, fol. 5. Quoted in Grau, ed., *Hidden Holocaust?*, 10.

September. It marked a radical expansion of violence, persecution, and fear for Germany's homosexual men, but the Nazis also extended their legal persecution of other minorities during the summer and fall of 1935. On June 26, just two days before the new Paragraph 175 went into effect, Nazi lawmakers announced changes to the Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases, which legalized the forced sterilization of individuals with alleged hereditary defects. This amendment to a 1933 law increased the eugenic reach of the Nazi state to the womb. Doctors now had the legal prerogative to abort fetuses within the first six months of pregnancy if the mother had been deemed "hereditarily ill" by one of the state Hereditary Health Courts.¹⁰⁰ The infamous Nuremberg Race Laws were also passed in 1935. These included the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, which criminalized marriages and sexual relations between ethnic Germans and Jews, as well as the Reich Citizenship Law that defined German citizenship through the purity of blood. At first, these laws were aimed specifically at Jews, but two months later, a supplemental decree of the Nuremberg Laws prohibited other "carriers of alien blood," like blacks and the Roma and Sinti, from marrying or having sexual relations with Germans.¹⁰¹

Homosexuals in Germany occupied a legal and ideological grey zone. Their German ethnicity granted them citizenship in the Third Reich. Yet, their alleged sexual deviance violated the ultimate law in Nazi Germany: the supremacy of the *Volksgemeinschaft* above the desires and interests of the individual. According to Nazi ideology, when homosexuals forsook their sexual duty to provide offspring for the Fatherland, they surrendered the rights and protections of

¹⁰⁰ The list of those who could be forcibly sterilized included those suffering from: "congenital feeble-mindedness," schizophrenia, manic depression, Huntington's chorea, hereditary blindness or deafness, those with serious physical deformities, and even chronic alcoholics. It is estimated that between 320,000 and 350,000 people were coercively sterilized under this law. For more information, see Chapter Six of Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ippenmann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991; 15th Printing, 2008).

¹⁰¹ Burleigh and Ippenmann, *The Racial State*, 116.

full citizenship, which were reserved for heterosexual Aryans. Leaders, such as Heinrich Himmler, therefore created the ideological – if not always legal – prerogative to destroy Germany’s homosexual scenes, place homosexuals under surveillance, arrest them, subject them to torture, and even incarcerate them in concentration camps. The amendment of Paragraph 175 in June 1935, then, represents a significant development in the ongoing definition of sexual citizenship in Nazi Germany.

After two years of rule that were characterized by demagoguery and street violence, the Nazi Party was attempting to codify and legitimate its ideologies into German law. When seen in conjunction with the other racially-driven laws passed in the summer and fall months of 1935, the amendment of Paragraph 175 is understood not just as an important event in the Nazi persecution of homosexuals, but as an integral part of the National Socialists’ overall efforts to legally define their racial *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Heinrich Himmler and the Radicalization of Homosexual Persecution

After the 1935 revision of Paragraph 175, the number of convictions for “indecent” among men skyrocketed. Edward Dickinson calculates that the number of Paragraph 175 convictions handed down by German courts rose by an astounding 900 percent in the first five years of Nazi rule alone.¹⁰² In all, records indicate that around 100,000 men were arrested in Germany between 1933 and 1945 on the grounds of homosexual activity. According to researcher Rainer Hoffschilt, of those men arrested, 53,480 were ultimately convicted; ninety-five percent of those convictions came after the 1935 amendment of the anti-sodomy statute.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Edward Ross Dickinson, “Policing Sex in Germany, 1882-1982: A Preliminary Statistical Analysis,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15, no. 2 (May, 2007): 206.

¹⁰³ Hoffschilt, “140.000 Verurteilungen nach §175,” 148. These statistics are revealing, but can also be somewhat misleading. Dickinson notes that the ravages of war destroyed many of the records from the final years of the Third

More than any other single individual, Heinrich Himmler was the driving force behind these astounding numbers. By 1936, Himmler was arguably the second most powerful man in the Third Reich. In addition to his command of the Gestapo, he had consolidated his control over all of Germany's police. He had transformed the *Schutzstaffel* (SS) from Hitler's personal bodyguard into an enormous apparatus that answered only to Himmler and Hitler. Through the SS, Himmler ran the empire of nearly one thousand concentration camps, sub-camps, and beginning in 1942, death camps spread throughout Germany and the occupied territories.¹⁰⁴ The impulse to remove homosexuality from the Reich was seemingly a personal preoccupation for Himmler, and Giles has noted that, Himmler's "speeches and writings dealt more obsessively with homosexuality than did those of any other Nazi leader."¹⁰⁵

In 1936, Himmler established the Reich Central Office for Combating Homosexuality and Abortion. Housed in the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin, the Central Office had at its disposal the resources of Himmler's various SS and policing agencies. Josef Meisinger, an SS lieutenant later known as "the Butcher of Warsaw," was the Central Office's first leader, and he answered only to Himmler; as such, the Central Office largely functioned outside of the law. As can be discerned from its name, the primary purpose of the Central Office was concerned with

Reich, so conviction numbers from roughly 1942 to 1945 are the result of educated estimates. Hoffschildt also notes that some men were convicted on multiple different occasions, so the number of convictions is just that: a count of convictions, not necessarily a count of men who were convicted. And then there is the fact that an unknowable number of men were arrested by the Gestapo and detained indefinitely without a trial, so the fate of these men is not represented by the numbers above.

¹⁰⁴ A recent study conducted by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has revealed a truly staggering number of camps and ghettos throughout Nazi-Occupied Europe. Researchers have catalogued 42,500 Nazi ghettos, concentration camps, euthanasia centers, slave labor sites, sex-slave brothels, and extermination camps. The project, which began in the year 2000 is the first comprehensive study that compiled all such camps into one interactive map that shows how widespread these centers were. See: Eric Lichtblau, "The Holocaust Just Got More Shocking," *The New York Times*, (March 3, 2013), SR3. Also available online: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/03/sunday-review/the-holocaust-just-got-more-shocking.html?_r=0 (Accessed April 21, 2016)

¹⁰⁵ Geoffrey J. Giles, "The Denial of Homosexuality: Same-Sex Incidents in Himmler's SS and Police," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 1/2, Special Issue: Sexuality and German Fascism (Jan. – Apr., 2002): 257.

implementing National Socialist population policies by combatting two specific threats to the German birthrate: homosexuality and abortion.¹⁰⁶

Concerning the issue of homosexuality, the staff of the Central Office focused on collecting data on men who were even suspected of homosexual activities. Members of the Gestapo and SS worked with the Central Office to compile and consolidate hundreds of “pink lists” (*rosa Listen*) that could then be used to make arrests. They did not have to start from scratch, though, because such lists had existed since the *Kaiserreich*, and in many cases, the Central Office had to simply request that local police forces turn them over.¹⁰⁷ Armed with “pink lists,” denunciations, and forced confessions, Himmler’s henchmen were able to infiltrate homosexual circles and arrest men on individual bases or in large-scale raids. In a radio address to the German nation on January 15, 1937, Himmler stressed the importance of the Central Office’s work, warning that if left unchecked, homosexuals would lead the nation into an abyss. He declared that his duty would be to pursue homosexuals in a “merciless and pitiless” manner.¹⁰⁸ Eight days later, an estimated 230 men were arrested on a single night when Hamburg officials launched a series of concerted raids throughout the city.¹⁰⁹

Himmler was not just concerned with eradicating homosexuality among Germany’s citizens; he also desperately sought to eliminate the so-called vice in the SS and Gestapo.¹¹⁰ The fear that homosexuals donned Nazi uniforms was not one isolated to the SS. Andrew Wackerfuss’s latest research, for example, shows that there was always tension between cultivating strong and often passionate bonds of camaraderie in the homosocial atmosphere of

¹⁰⁶ Stümke and Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*, 243.

¹⁰⁷ Micheler, “Homophobic Propaganda,” 109. These “pink lists” only contained the names of men.

¹⁰⁸ Radio address by Himmler on the occasion of the Tag der deutschen Polizei 1937 (January 15, 1937), text in Hans Volz, ed., *Von der Großmacht zur Weltmacht 1937* (Dokumente der deutschen Politik, 5, Berlin, 1938), 235-40. Quoted in Giles, “Legislating Homophobia,” 350.

¹⁰⁹ Lutz van Dijk, *Einsam war ich nie*, 24.

¹¹⁰ Giles, “The Denial of Homosexuality.”

the numerous all-male Nazi organizations and keeping those bonds from turning homosexual.¹¹¹ In a February 1937 speech to his senior SS officers, Himmler expressed how seriously he took the efforts to excise his organizations of homosexuals. From that point forward, he announced, any SS man caught engaging in homosexuality would be publicly ridiculed, found guilty during a trial, serve a prison sentence, and then thrown into a concentration camp where he would be shot while “attempting to escape.”¹¹²

Because he felt that the issue was of such importance, Himmler did not leave it up to the German courts to adequately police homosexuality. As was the case for Richard Grune from the opening of this chapter, it was not uncommon for the Gestapo to apprehend a man suspected of being a homosexual and keep him imprisoned for indefinite periods without trial. After the expansion of Himmler’s powers in 1936, it also became common for the Gestapo to pick up a man after the completion of his prison sentence – especially if he was a repeat offender – and place him in “protective custody” (*Schutzhaft*) in a concentration camp. It is significant to note that protective custody in a camp was not stipulated as a legal punishment under Paragraph 175. This put the Gestapo and SS at odds with the German judicial and legal systems, but Himmler felt that the mission of the Nazi Party superseded any legal confines of the German state. In this way, the inconsistent persecution of homosexuals reflects Ernst Fraenkel’s understanding of Nazi Germany as a “dual state.” The “normative state” established and protected legal order through executive administration, court statutes, and legislation, such as the slew of 1935 laws meant to codify and legalize the Nazis’ racial policies. The “prerogative state,” on the other hand, was

¹¹¹ Wackerfuss, *Stormtrooper Families*. See also: Geoffrey J. Giles, “Männerbund mit Homo-Panik: Die Angst der Nazis vor der Rolle der Erotik,” in Burkhard Jellonnek and Rüdiger Lautmann, eds., *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle: Verdrängt und ungesühnt* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002), 105-118.

¹¹² Heinrich Himmler, speech to SS-Gruppenführer, February 18, 1937. Quoted in Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, 192-193.

governed by the ideals of the Nazi Party and, as such, positioned itself as above the law.¹¹³ As was the case with Heinrich Himmler and the architects of Paragraph 175, these two “dual states” were not always on the same side of an issue.

Himmler’s willingness to combat homosexuality at whatever cost stemmed from his belief that homosexuality posed a grave threat to the successful realization of Nazi goals. In the aforementioned speech, he derided the estimated two million German men who engaged in same-sex sex and renounced their “duty to procreate.” Himmler knew that sex was never just sex, and he ridiculed those who claimed that what happened in their bedrooms was a personal matter, stating pointedly, “All things which take place in the sexual sphere are not the private affair of the individual, but signify the life and death of the nation.”¹¹⁴ Himmler’s views on this issue were in line with those of most other leaders of Third Reich. But, the fervor with which he pursued the fight against homosexual sex can also be attributed to his belief – in contradiction to many of his colleagues, including the authors of the new Paragraph 175 – that not all homosexuals were simply indulging a vice. A small minority of them (around two percent, he estimated) were “real” homosexuals, and their same-sex attraction was inborn, caused by a biological inversion of the sex drive.¹¹⁵ A simple prison sentence, therefore, was not sufficient to prevent these men from seducing others into their degenerate lifestyle. That is why the SS and Gestapo sent anywhere from 5,000 to 15,000 men to concentration camps, where life became hell on Earth.

¹¹³ Ernst Fraenkel, *The Dual State: A Contribution to the Theory of Dictatorship*. Trans. E.A. Shils (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941).

¹¹⁴ Heinrich Himmler, speech to SS-Gruppenführer, February 18, 1937. Quoted in Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*, 192-193.

¹¹⁵ The estimation of two percent first surfaced in the official weekly newspaper of the SS. See: “Das sind Staatsfeinde!,” *Das Schwarze Korps*, March 6, 1937, 1.

Inside the Concentration Camp Universe: The Men with the Pink Triangle

Most of the postwar histories of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals focus on the fate of homosexual men in the concentration camps. This is an understandable emphasis, in spite of the fact that only a small fraction of the homosexual men convicted under Paragraph 175 were sent to camps, and those convicted represented a small fraction of those arrested, who in turn, were only a very small percentage of homosexual men in Germany at the time. Many studies now detail the lives of homosexual inmates in the camps, so I will focus on the specific aspects that played a substantial role in the later formation of collective memories of Nazi persecution.¹¹⁶

Upon arrival at a concentration camp, all inmates were stripped of their possessions, clothes, and even their names. They were subsequently shaven, deloused, and assigned a badge that represented the reason for their incarceration. The autobiography of the homosexual concentration camp survivor Heinz Heger illustrates the procedure: when he arrived at Sachsenhausen concentration camp in January 1940, after a thirteen-day trip in a boxcar, each prisoner was given a colored triangle that was to be sewn on their striped shirt. Heger describes the cloth triangles as being two inches wide, with the peak facing down, and then explained what each color signified: “yellow for Jews, black for anti-socials, red for politicals, purple for Jehovah’s Witnesses, green for criminals, blue for emigrants, pink for homosexuals, brown for Gypsies.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ The most extensive studies of homosexuals in concentration camps are primarily available only in German. For a selection, see: *Invertito: Jahrbuch für die Geschichte der Homosexualitäten*, Vol. 4: *Denunziert, verfolgt, ermordet: Homosexuelle Männer und Frauen in der NS-Zeit*. (Hamburg: Männerschwarm, 2002); Jellonnek and Lautmann, eds., *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle*; Müller and Sternweiler. *Homosexuelle Männer im KZ Sachsenhausen*. For some English-language articles on homosexual concentration camp inmates, see: Günter Grau, “Final Solution of the Homosexual Question? The Antihomosexual Policies of the Nazis and the Social Consequences for Homosexual Men,” in *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 338-344; Rüdiger Lautmann, “Categorization in Concentration Camps as a Collective Fate: A Comparison of Homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Political Prisoners,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 19 (1990): 66-88; Wolfgang Röhl, “Homosexual Inmates in the Buchenwald Concentration Camp,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 3, no. 4 (1996): 1-28.

¹¹⁷ Heinz Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle: The True Life-and-Death Story of Homosexuals in the Nazi Death Camps*. 2nd ed. Translated by David Fernbach. Introduction by Klaus Müller (New York: Alyson Books, 1994), 31.

Heger also noted that the pink triangles were roughly one inch larger than the others, which, he supposed, was so that they could be identified from further away.

The pink triangle was not the only badge that homosexual prisoners wore. Some homosexual men were labeled as political prisoners, simply as criminals, or as “asocials,” an umbrella term used by Nazis to describe nearly anyone who did not or could not fulfill their duty to the Third Reich. While interned in Neuengamme on charges of habitual homosexuality, for example, Hans G. from Berlin was prisoner number 997 and wore a black triangle, the mark of “asocials.”¹¹⁸ The Frenchman Pierre Seel, wore a small, blue bar during his time in the Schirmeck camp, noting in his autobiography that it was the same symbol for Catholic inmates and “asocials.” He never saw a pink triangle during his imprisonment in the camp.¹¹⁹ A 1936 report of the prisoners in Dachau states that all prisoners interned on the basis of their homosexuality were labeled with “175” in large letters on their shirt.¹²⁰ Others still wore a large “A” sewn onto the leg of their trousers, standing for *Arschficker*: Ass Fucker.¹²¹ Undoubtedly, there were lesbians in concentration camps, too. Some of them may have even worn a black triangle, the badge for “asocials,” but not all women wearing a black triangle were not necessarily arrested for having lesbian sex.

Homosexual men made up only a very small percentage of the total prisoners in a camp at any given time. Only 585 prisoners were admitted into Dachau on the basis of homosexuality, for example. That means that homosexual inmates made up 0.25 percent of the total number of prisoners housed in Dachau during its twelve-year existence.¹²² Homosexuals constituted

¹¹⁸ Stümke & Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*, 305.

¹¹⁹ Pierre Seel, *I, Pierre Seel, Deported Homosexual: A Memoir of Nazi Terror*. Translated by Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 30.

¹²⁰ Deutschlandberichte SPD, 1936, pg 1005f. Quoted. in Stümke and Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*, 281.

¹²¹ Susan Eischeid, “Suppressed, Silenced, and Shunned: The Story of the Pink Triangle Prisoners in Hitler’s Reich,” lecture at Valdosta State University. February 15, 2010.

¹²² Knoll, “Homosexuelle Häftlinge im KZ Dachau,” 68.

similarly small groups in other concentration camps. Out of the 250,000 prisoners in Buchenwald, just 697 were listed as homosexual (0.28% of the total prisoner population).¹²³ Given the small number of homosexual inmates and the fact that they often came from different social, economic, or educational backgrounds, there was not necessarily a common sense of belonging among them. The forced isolation of pink triangle prisoners, then, meant that this already small group could not belong to the sense of community that sometimes developed among concentration camp prisoners. More specifically, it meant that they could not benefit from the black market trading of valuable scraps of food, pieces of clothing, or perhaps extra shoes that often meant the difference between life and death. The exclusion from these alternative methods of securing food were especially damning for homosexual men given that “175ers” were often provided with less food and harder work details.

Overall, the horrors that pink triangle prisoners faced were comparable to those faced by their fellow inmates. But, the very few autobiographical accounts from homosexual men who survived their imprisonment in the camps consistently suggest that the men with the pink triangle occupied the absolute lowest position on the unwritten hierarchy of camp prisoners. Heger writes that, “We were to remain isolated as the damnedest of the damned, the camp’s ‘shitty queers.’”¹²⁴ Although it may be difficult – perhaps impossible or even unfruitful – to establish accurately a hierarchy of suffering and deduce which group of prisoners was treated the worst, it is telling that the narrative of “the damnedest of the damned” overcame the attempts by some in post-war Germany to suppress these memories and went on to become the foundation for broader, more cohesive collective memories about this period. The claim that homosexual inmates were excessively

¹²³ Rainer Hoffschmidt, “Projekt zur namentlichen Erfassung verfolgter Homosexueller im Naziregime,” in Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, ed. *Der homosexuellen NS-Opfer gedenken*, Mit einer Einleitung der Initiative HomoMonument, (Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung), 107.

¹²⁴ Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 34.

mistreated by both camp guards and fellow prisoners is not just a reflection of gay rights activists' focus on the widespread social ostracization of gays and lesbians in society in the 1970s; it is also backed by historical evidence. In his groundbreaking 1977 study, Rüdiger Lautmann commented that the violent homophobia among the camp inmates "reflected the social situation in Germany at the time, but then escalated to threatening dimensions in the concentration camps...nothing hindered the transition from moral degradation to physical aggression."¹²⁵

Burkhard, a prisoner in Dachau, recalled that the SS zeroed in on the incoming homosexual prisoners, ridiculed them, and physically abused them at every given opportunity.¹²⁶ Kurt von Ruffin vividly remembered one occasion in which a male cross-dresser was brought into the camp. The SS guards stripped him naked and then shoved his head into a latrine until he drowned in human excrement.¹²⁷ A survivor of the Sachsenhausen camp recalled that homosexual prisoners were used to "test out shoes" that were created in one of the camp factories; they were forced to run up to twenty four miles per day while being chased by dogs.¹²⁸

In his memoirs, Heger mentions that the men with the pink triangle were kept in separate barracks, segregated from the rest of the prisoners at night. He added that they were not even allowed to speak to other inmates, since the SS guards thought the "175ers" might try to seduce the other men. Upon arrival in Sachsenhausen, Heger's barrack Kapo informed them that the lights would be kept on all night in the "queer barracks" to make sure the men did not have sex with each other. Moreover, each man was required to sleep with his hands outside of the

¹²⁵ Rüdiger Lautmann, Winifried Grikschat, and Egbert Schmidt, "Der rosa Winkel in den nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern," in *Seminar: Gesellschaft und Homosexualität*, ed. Rüdiger Lautmann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft Verlag, 1977), 336-337.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Stümke and Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*, 281.

¹²⁷ Interviewed in the documentary *We Were Marked with a Big A*. VHS, 1991.

¹²⁸ Interviewed in the documentary *We Were Marked with a Big A*. VHS, 1991. It is also worth noting that Jewish prisoners were also given these 'work assignments.'

blankets. “You queer assholes aren’t going to start jerking off here!” the Kapo yelled at them.¹²⁹

Speaking of his observations during six years as a prisoner in Buchenwald, Eugen Kogon said that isolating homosexuals into their own barracks gave the SS – whom he called “unconscionable creatures” – the chance to exercise their lust for power and carry out “shameless extortion, abuse, and rape” without fear of consequences.¹³⁰

Heger recalls witnessing a group of intoxicated SS officers torturing one of the pink triangle prisoners by dipping his testicles into boiling water, raping him with a broomstick, and then beating him to death.¹³¹ In his memoirs, Seel describes the event that “contributed more than anything else to making [him] a silent, obedient shadow among the others.” On the orders of the SS, over three hundred prisoners were gathered and forced to watch as a newly incarcerated homosexual prisoner was executed. Seel concealed a gasp as he realized that the prisoner was his former lover, who had managed to escape capture until then. The SS guards let loose several German shepherds on the prisoner, and as Seel recounts, “they devoured him right in front of us.”¹³²

The combination of forced isolation, harder work details, lack of food, and deadly medical experiments created an environment that caused the death of the majority of homosexuals sent to concentration camps, although it is impossible to know exactly how many of them died there. Albert Knoll has deduced that 120 of the 585 homosexual prisoners at Dachau died in the camp (142 were liberated on April 29, 1945; the fate of the rest is unknown).¹³³ Giles estimates that sixty-five percent of men imprisoned as homosexuals died in

¹²⁹ Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 34.

¹³⁰ Eugen Kogon, *Der SS-Staat. Das System der deutschen Konzentrationslager*. Revised ed. (Munich: Karl Aber, 1977), 284.

¹³¹ Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 84-85.

¹³² Seel, *I, Pierre Seel, a Deported Homosexual*, 43.

¹³³ Knoll, “Homosexuelle Häftlinge im KZ Dachau,” 76.

the camps. Seventy-five percent of those deaths occurred within one year of walking through the camp gates.¹³⁴

The End Goal of Nazi Anti-Homosexual Policies

As the subsequent chapters of this dissertation demonstrate, the Nazi persecution of homosexuals was, beginning in the 1970s, often portrayed as a gay genocide, or even a “Homocaust.”

Characterizing the treatment of homosexuals during the Third Reich as such, however, would suggest a targeted policy of extermination. As this chapter has shown so far, Nazi ideologues did not even agree about the fundamental nature of homosexual desire itself. While the judicial system focused on curtailing homosexual acts among German men, Himmler utilized much more extreme and violent measures against homosexuals, especially those whom he feared were biologically different than “normal” men, perhaps irrevocably so. Ultimately, the various arms of the Nazi state had different understandings of and approaches to the alleged problem of same-sex sex, so there was no systematic implantation of a single policy, and certainly not a policy of mass murder.

While the Nazis attempted various solutions to combating homosexuality, evidence suggests that a primary goal in the campaign against same-sex sex was the reeducation of the men involved. The work of historian Burkhard Jellonnek has shown that the concentration camps were principally meant to re-orient or cure the pink triangle prisoners of their homosexuality. This stance is evidenced by the fact that homosexuals were never slated for murder in the extermination camps in the east. When homosexuals were murdered in death camps, it was

¹³⁴ Giles, “Legislating Homophobia,” 352. Also, While 65% of all pink triangle prisoners died within a year of entering the camps, it was worse on older men. Auschwitz records reveal that a 23-year old pink triangle prisoner managed to survive for five months; a 36 year old survived for 14 months; but a 51 year old and 50 year old prisoner both died within a few days of their arrival. Dijk, *Einsam war ich nie*, 58-59.

primarily because they were subsumed under a more egregious category, such as being Jewish. Germans in Auschwitz – including prisoners wearing the pink triangle – were spared the fate of Jews, the Roma and Sinti, and even Slavic prisoners whose status as carriers of “inferior blood” meant that they could not be “cured.” For those German prisoners, then, Auschwitz remained a reeducation camp. Jörg Hutter concludes, “The conversion plans for the citizens of the German Reich cannot be compared to the ‘Final Solution to the Jewish question.’”¹³⁵ The pink triangle, therefore, did not mean certain death like a Jewish star did. Instead, through its empire of camps, the SS sought to rid pink triangle prisoners of their homosexuality and, if possible, reintegrate them back into the populace as productive members of society.

To this end, in the early 1940s, Himmler ordered that brothels be set up in the camps, supplied by workers from one of the women’s camps, like Ravensbrück. Heinz Heger vividly remembers his mandated visits to the camp brothel. “Himmler’s idea... was that those of us in the pink triangle category should be ‘cured’ of our homosexual disposition by compulsory visits to the brothel. We were obliged to show up there once a week, in order to ‘learn’ the joys of the other sex.”¹³⁶ Historian Klaus Müller explains that part of Himmler’s plan was for any pink triangle inmates deemed cured by “virtue of their consistent good conduct in the brothel” (which was judged by camp officials’ observation through holes in the brothel walls) to be released from the camps and sent back to prison where they would be observed for a probationary period to see if they had really been reoriented.¹³⁷ Again, this suggests that a primary goal of the SS, as an arm of the “prerogative

¹³⁵ Jörg Hutter, “Konzentrationslager Auschwitz: die Häftlinge mit dem rosa Winkel,” in *Homosexuellen in Konzentrationslagern: Vorträge von der Wissenschaftliche Tagung, 12./13/ September 1997 – KZ-Gedenkstätte Mittelbau-Dora, Nordhausen*, ed. Olaf Mußmann (Berlin: Westkreuz-Verlag, 2000), 117.

¹³⁶ Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 98. Recent research has demonstrated that these brothel visits were not compulsory, but homosexuals could volunteer as a way to prove that they were “cured.” See: Robert Sommer, *Das KZ-Bordell: Sexuelle Zwangsarbeit in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schönigh, 2009).

¹³⁷ Klaus Müller in a note to Heger’s text in *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 100.

state” that was willing to go above and beyond the punitive measures laid out in Paragraph 175, was to eradicate homosexual actions, not to physically eliminate the homosexual men themselves.

If pink triangle prisoners could not be reeducated or otherwise compelled to embrace a “normal” sexual orientation, the SS had other methods of assuring that these men would no longer indulge in the vice of “indecent.” Himmler funded medical experiments meant to provide a scientific way of combatting the unnatural same-sex urges. In one instance, Himmler provided the Danish doctor Carl Vaernet with 1,500 Reich Marks per month to carry out testing on homosexual prisoners in Buchenwald. Ten months later, Vaernet reported that he had implanted an “artificial sex gland” into these men that would release testosterone and a cocktail of other drugs in an attempt to “normalize the sexual orientation of homosexual persons.” Vaernet admitted that so far the results were inconclusive, but he remained optimistic.¹³⁸ In case all else failed, in 1942, the central authority in charge of concentration camps granted camp commandants the permission to administer forced sterilization to remove the sex drives of homosexuals who were repeat offenders or who would not give up their perversion. Ultimately, developments in the war prevented this 1942 order from ever being implemented.¹³⁹

The distinctions between the Nazis’ program for homosexuals (persecuted for what they did) and other non-Aryan groups such as the Jews (persecuted for who they were) are vital for accurately understanding the situation for homosexuals under Hitler. But over-emphasizing the ideological basis for conversion policies may prevent a clear picture of how homosexuals, especially those in concentration camps, were treated in reality. Moreover, it does little to explain the few documented

¹³⁸ Order to pay 1,500 RM, Memo from the Economic & Administrative Headquarters of the SS, December 3, 1943. Quoted in Grau, ed., *Hidden Holocaust?*, 283. Report from Carl Vaernet, October 30, 1944, Quoted in Grau, ed., *Hidden Holocaust?*, 286-7.

¹³⁹ Heger recalls that at the end of 1943, the pink triangle men of Flossenbürg were told that if they submitted to castration, they would be released (*The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 90). For the 1942 sterilization order, see Grau, ed., *Hidden Holocaust?*, 249. The agency, under Dr. Hans Hefelmann, that would have been in charge of these sterilizations was the same agency that administered the euthanasia of people with mental disabilities.

cases of the coordinated killing of homosexual men. Heinz F., a homosexual camp survivor who spent over eight years in different concentration camps, attested that nearly all of the homosexuals in the Mauthausen camp were killed during a single initiative. He was only spared because he had already been scheduled for transport to Buchenwald.¹⁴⁰

The systematic murder of inmates through fatal working conditions is well documented, and the conditions for pink triangle prisoners at Sachsenhausen have led to the camp's designation as "the Auschwitz for the gays."¹⁴¹ Andreas Sternweiler estimates that in total, nearly six hundred of the roughly 1,100 pink triangle prisoners in Sachsenhausen between 1936 and 1945 were intentionally murdered through work details and other euphemistically termed "unnatural fatalities."¹⁴² The *Klinkerwerk* was a brick factory in the camp that was so notorious for being lethally dangerous that Sachsenhausen prisoners referred to it as "the murder compound."¹⁴³ By July and August 1942, only pink triangle prisoners were assigned to work at the *Klinkerwerk*, and one political prisoner later recalled that, "the SS men were pleased when some of the 175ers were left by the wayside at the end of the day."¹⁴⁴ During a six-week period in the summer of 1942, eighty-nine homosexual men were killed during their work at the *Klinkerwerk*, which leads historian Joachim Müller to designate the deadly summer as an "extensive murder campaign."¹⁴⁵

Such examples of intentional murder reiterate that Nazi practices towards homosexuals were inconsistent. While official policy may have been the conversion of homosexual desire, some Nazi officials took it upon themselves to physically remove homosexual individuals from the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Therefore, to say that there was no coordinated genocide of homosexual men

¹⁴⁰ Heinz F., interview in *Paragraph 175*, 2000.

¹⁴¹ Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 41.

¹⁴² Andreas Sternweiler, "Introduction," in Müller and Sternweiler, *Homosexuelle Männer im KZ Sachsenhausen*, 14.

¹⁴³ Joachim Müller, "'Unnatürliche Todesfälle:' Vorfälle in den Außenbereichen Klinkwerk, Schießplatz und Tongrube," in Müller and Sternweiler, *Homosexuelle Männer im KZ Sachsenhausen*, 216.

¹⁴⁴ Heinrich Lienau, *Zwölf Jahre Nacht*, (Flensburg, 1949), 70.

¹⁴⁵ Joachim Müller, "'Unnatürliche Todesfälle,'" 216.

does not mean that there were not instances of systematic murder. Moreover, it is fruitful to question the actual intention behind such “conversion” policies. The fact that the majority of homosexual inmates died in the camps raises doubts about the earnestness of Nazi conversion policies. This may lead to the challenging of the gas chamber or firing squad as the primary measurement of “systematic murder” in the Nazi camps. Rainer Schulze, for example, asserts that while the Nazis may not have planned to exterminate all of Germany’s homosexuals, to claim that there was no systematic murder of homosexual of gay men during the Third Reich is going too far. “‘The men with the pink triangle’ were not exterminated systematically in gas chambers, but murdered by a mixture of total physical exhaustion through ‘terror work,’ brutal treatment, and induced starvation.” Schulze insists that these alternative forms of killing culminated in what he calls “indirect mass annihilation,” a process that was used against many victim groups.¹⁴⁶

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Himmler’s homophobic empire and the Nazi judicial system continued to prosecute homosexual men until the very end. Even in April 1945, less than a month before the unconditional surrender of Germany and the end of the war, homosexual men were sentenced to prison. On April 24, 1945, a group of men that had been charged with desertion and subversion of the war effort were released from prison, pardoned, and sent to fight in the *Volkssturm*, the national militia established in the final months of the war to aid the efforts of the army. On the same day, four police officers charged with homosexual activity were lined up in front of a prison wall and shot.¹⁴⁷ It seems that the threat posed by homosexuality was more pressing than the need for manpower in the effort to win the war.

¹⁴⁶ Rainer Schulze, “18 February 1937: Himmler’s Crusade Against (Male) Homosexuality and the Continuing Stigmatisation of LGBT People after 1945,” *The Holocaust in History and Memory* 4, Special Issue: The Pink Triangle – The Long Shadow of the Nazi Persecution of Gay Men (2011): 26.

¹⁴⁷ Andreas Pretzel, “Vom Staatsfiend zum Volksfeind:” in zur Nieden, ed., *Homosexualität und Staatsräson*, 250.

Although gay men and lesbians were not primary targets of systematic extermination, the study of their terrorization, ostracization, and even murder more broadly contextualizes the Holocaust of the Jews by exploring the full scope of the Nazis' genocidal quest to forge a "master race." Therefore, understanding the Nazi campaign against homosexual sex enlightens our understanding of the Third Reich and its racial goals. Studying the inconsistent and even contradictory ways in which different National Socialist institutions combatted homosexuality also provides insight into the polycratic nature of the Nazi state as it attempted to codify its ideals and define the best way to turn them into reality. In 1935, Nazi jurists passed a series of laws that legally defined who belonged to the racially pure national community. German homosexuals found themselves caught in a net of contradictory policies. As Germans, they should have enjoyed the rewards and benefits of being a citizen of the Third Reich. Paragraph 175, on the other hand, stripped them of their civil rights and branded them as criminals. Although the anti-sodomy law predated the Third Reich, Nazi lawmakers amended it to grant the state unprecedented authority to combat what it defined as "indecent among men." As the following chapters of this dissertation will demonstrate, Paragraph 175 remained at the heart of the discourses and politics of sexual citizenship in Germany for the next half-century.

To say that there was no concerted "final solution to the homosexual question" is not to downplay the hardship, harassment, and overall terror that homosexuals experienced in Hitler's Germany. Though inconsistent, Nazi homosexual policies succeeded in effectively destroying the most liberal and expansive homosexual emancipation movement that the world had seen up to that point. The daily lives of millions of homosexuals in Germany were affected by the ascent of the Nazi Party to power when homosexual publications, bars, and other institutions were shut down and the entire homosexual culture driven underground. Out of the estimated ten thousand men who were

locked away in concentration camps for being homosexual, a few thousand survived to experience the Allies' liberation of the camps. Chapter Two explores the stories of those men, like Richard Grune, who quickly realized that unlike the war, their persecution was not over.

CHAPTER TWO

“For Homosexuals, the Third Reich Hasn’t Ended Yet:” Memory, Victimhood, and the Law in West Germany, 1945-1969

For decades after the end of the Second World War, homosexuals remained one of the so-called “forgotten victims” of the Nazi regime. Until the end of the 1970s, historical scholarship on the Third Reich bypassed the persecution of homosexual men and women. The prisoners with the pink triangle were never mentioned during the commemoration ceremonies that took place at former concentration camps each year, and there was no recognition by the West German public that homosexuals had been victims of the Hitler state. It is misleading, however to claim that homosexuals had been forgotten; instead, as this chapter demonstrates, homosexuals had been intentionally ignored as victims of Nazi terror for decades.

Further inspection of the evidence demonstrates, however, that there was never a complete silence surrounding the suffering of homosexual men during the Third Reich.¹ Instead, during the postwar era a complex discourse developed in which various individuals and institutions, including concentration camp survivors and justices of the West German High Court, discussed at length the National Socialist campaign against homosexuality. It was a competition of individual and collective memories in which some participants had much more political, legal, and cultural authority than others. West German legislators and jurists, for example, had the backing of the state, while laws helped sustain a situation in which homosexuals were not permitted to openly voice their memories without fear of legal

¹ W. Jake Newsome, “Liberation Was Only for Others: Breaking the Silence in Germany Surrounding the Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals,” *The Holocaust in History and Memory* 7 (2014): 53-71. Other works that directly challenge the notion of homosexuals as “forgotten” victims include: Rainer Hoffschildt, “Projekt zur namentlichen Erfassung verfolgter Homosexueller im Naziregime,” in *Der homosexuellen NS-Opfer gedenken*, ed. Heinrich Böll Stiftung (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 1999), 105-111; See also Burkhard Jellonnek and Rüdiger Lautmann, eds., *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuell: Verdrängt und ungesühnt* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002).

repercussions. As such, I argue that the “unholy tradition of silence” surrounding Hitler’s homosexual victims should not be understood as an absence of memory, a void that had to be filled.² Rather, it was the outcome of an imbalanced, unfair competition over the correct interpretation of the past. The illusion of silence was a form of memory in itself.

The various, competing memories about the situation of homosexuals under Hitler both reflected and contributed to the larger attempts at defining notions of guilt, victimhood, and injustice in West Germany. As historical studies have shown, West Germans during the immediate postwar years tended to focus on the hardships that Germans themselves suffered during the chaos of global war. As the war trials of Nazi criminals continued, the centrality of the Jews in the Nazis’ genocidal quest to forge a master race became ever more clear. At the same time, the fate of other groups such as homosexuals, so-called asocials, victims of “euthanasia” programs, Jehovah’s witnesses, and the Roma and Sinti went largely ignored. Tracing the initial denial and eventual acknowledgement of these “forgotten victim” groups is a significant part of understanding how West Germans understood the nature of the Holocaust.

The politics of memory and the debates over the legacy of the Nazis’ violent homosexual campaign were not simply semantic discussions over abstract definitions of the boundaries of victimhood. They had concrete and often drastic consequences for thousands of individuals living in West Germany by perpetuating an environment that was hostile towards homosexuals. When the Federal Republic was founded in May 1949, jurists and lawmakers chose not to repeal Paragraph 175 or even revert the law back to its original wording. Instead, they chose to keep the version that Nazi officials had amended in 1935. Therefore, even if homosexual survivors decided to face the social repercussions of speaking publicly about their experiences, they would

² Historian Klaus Müller characterized the postwar period as “an unholy tradition of silence.” Cited in Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum* (New York: Viking, 1995), 189.

be admitting to acts that were still illegal in the Federal Republic. Moreover, the 1953 Law against the Distribution of Written Material Endangering Youth prohibited, among other things, the circulation of homosexual publications, which took away one of the only spaces in which homosexual survivors had been able to share their stories. Collectively, Paragraph 175 and the new “trash and smut” law created a metaphorical closet in which homosexuals had to hide not only their sexuality, but their memories as well.

Contemporary aversions to homosexuality influenced the law and shaped how the past was officially remembered in the Federal Republic. This chapter also shows how the continued use of Paragraph 175, a law tainted by National Socialism, also dictated that the Nazis’ treatment of homosexuals had to be remembered in a certain way. If West German officials had agreed that homosexuals had been victims of injustice during the Third Reich, it would have meant that the thousands of men convicted with the same version of Paragraph 175 after 1945 were also unjustly prosecuted. Doing so would have drawn uncomfortable parallels between the Nazi state and the Federal Republic. As such, homosexuals remained branded as criminals. Politics of the present, therefore, shaped memories of the past.

In much of this chapter, I focus on the interconnections of law and memory. Yet, I also argue that these memories and laws were representative of a larger public discussion about what it meant to be homosexual and what it meant to be a citizen in the new Federal Republic of Germany. At the heart of these discourses was a central question: could one truly be both? Seen in this light, the debates about Paragraph 175, the prohibition of homosexual publications, and the exclusion of homosexuals from restitution proceedings were also drawing the parameters of sexual citizenship in West Germany. Those Germans persecuted by the Nazis for being homosexual – including thousands of concentration camp survivors – were denied any form of

financial reparation or judicial rehabilitation from the West German government. Moreover, another generation of homosexual men were arrested, placed under surveillance, stripped of certifications and organizational memberships, and denied equal protection under the law. In short, they were denied the full rights of citizenship their new constitution had just granted them.

Further east, the socialist government of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) had a different understanding of politics, sexuality, and the past. East German politicians viewed the existing Paragraph 175 as tainted by National Socialist ideology, and for this reason, the anti-sodomy law reverted to its pre-1935 version within a year of the GDR's foundation. This led to a drastically lower number of arrests and convictions of homosexual men in East Germany in the postwar decades.³ Ultimately, nearly 100,000 men in West Germany were arrested for “indecent” between 1945 and 1969; over half of those men were convicted for violating Paragraph 175 and given a prison sentence or fine. While it is important to emphasize that the situation for West German homosexuals had certainly improved after the defeat of the Third Reich – there were no concentration camps, for example – the continuities in law, social attitudes, and even police and judicial personnel are striking. By 1963, historian Hans-Joachim Schoeps felt justified in claiming that, “For homosexuals, the Third Reich hasn't ended yet.”⁴

“Liberation Was Only for Others:” Occupation and the Seeds of Silence

Josef Kohout was a homosexual prisoner in the Flössenburg concentration camp when the Second World War came to an end. He had spent six years in different camps for violating the Nazis' law against “indecent among men.” He survived years of hunger, torture, and the

³ For a thorough examination of the situation of homosexuals living in East Germany, see Erik G. Huneke, “Morality, Law, and the Socialist Sexual Self in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1972,” (doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 2013).

⁴ Hans-Joachim Schoeps, ed. *Der homosexuelle Nächste: Ein Symposium* (Hamburg: Furche-Verlag, 1963), 86.

various methods of dehumanization that the SS had perfected while organizing the system of camps. Throughout all that time, Kohout managed to keep a journal, and the entry for April 23, 1945 contains only two words: “Americans came.” At long last, he was free.⁵

Two weeks later, the European theater of World War II officially ended on May 8, 1945, with the unconditional surrender of Germany to the Allied forces. The Allies subsequently divided Germany into occupation zones that were run by military administrations. Much of Germany’s easternmost territories were ceded to Poland and the Soviet Union and the eastern half of what remained of Germany was also relegated to the Soviet zone. The western territories were divided into the British, French, and American zones. An immediate issue facing the Allies was how to deal with the thousands of concentration camp prisoners scattered throughout Germany and its former territories in the east. The survivors were malnourished, little more than walking skeletons, and there was little infrastructure left with which food and medical supplies could be easily transported.⁶ Most of those inmates who survived their hellacious experience desperately wanted to return to a home that most likely no longer existed. In this regard, Josef Kohout was lucky. In the months after liberation, he was able to slowly make his way back to his hometown of Vienna, where he lived until he died in 1994 at the age of seventy-seven.⁷ For other survivors, their newfound freedom and the moment of liberation were difficult to comprehend.

One survivor of Sachsenhausen recalled that, although the gates of the camp had been opened, he

⁵ United State Holocaust Memorial Museum archives, RG-33.002, Acc. 1994.A.0332, Folder 10: Josef K./Wilhelm K. papers, 1939-1948. Josef Kohout later wrote *Die Männer mit dem rosa Winkel: Der Bericht eines Homosexuellen über seine KZ-Haft von 1939-1945* under the pseudonym Heinz Heger (Hamburg: Merlin-Verlag, 1972).

⁶ A recent *New York Times* article by Eric Lichtblau about the American treatment of Jewish displaced persons after the war’s end has sparked tremendous criticism from experts on the topic. See Lichtblau, “Surviving the Nazis, only to be Jailed by America,” *New York Times*, NY Edition, February 8, 2015, SR3. Also available online: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/08/sunday-review/surviving-the-nazis-only-to-be-jailed-by-america.html?_r=1; (Accessed April 21, 2016). For historians’ discussion of the article, see: Anita Grossmann, “Regarding Eric Lichtblau’s News Analysis” Surviving the Nazis, Only to be Jailed by America,” on H-Net. <https://networks.h-net.org/node/35008/blog/62019/atina-grossmann-regarding-eric-lichtblau%E2%80%99s-news-analysis-%E2%80%9Csurviving-nazis> (Accessed April 21, 2016).

⁷ David W. Dunlap, “Personalizing Nazis’ Homosexual Victims,” *The New York Times*, June 26, 1996. <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/06/26/us/personalizing-nazis-homosexual-victims.html> (Accessed April 21, 2016.)

chose to stay within the walls for months; he feared that after years of being treated like an animal, he would not know how to act like, or be treated like, a human.⁸

In the final weeks of the war, General Dwight Eisenhower sent a communication to the United States Congress, asking the legislative body to send a delegation to Germany to witness firsthand the atrocities of the Nazi regime. “I can state unequivocally,” Eisenhower wrote, “that all written statements up to now do not paint the full horror” of the condition inside the concentration camps that had been discovered by advancing Allied forces.⁹ Representatives of the Allied governments needed to see it for themselves. During the last week of April 1945, six senators and six representatives from the U.S. Congress toured the liberated camps of Buchenwald, Dachau, and Dora. After visiting Buchenwald, Senator Kenneth Wherry noted four types of prisoners. Those with red triangles were political prisoners. Green triangles denoted habitual criminals. Prisoners wearing black triangles were allegedly those who refused to work. And the men wearing “rose triangles,” Wherry noted, were “conscientious objectors.” It is unclear whether Wherry himself misunderstood the true meaning of the black and pink triangles, or if he was deliberately misinformed by his tour guides. Either way, the result was the same. This moment represents one of the first of what would be many erasures of homosexual prisoners from the official documentation of the Nazis’ victims.¹⁰

Although the United States Congress may have been misinformed about the Nazi labels, Allied officials who took over the camps were well aware of what the pink triangles meant. After American forces liberated the Dachau concentration camp on April 29, 1945, there were

⁸ Anonymous survivor testimony presented at the Sachsenhausen Camp Memorial Site.

⁹ Dwight Eisenhower, cablegram to General George C. Marshall, April 20, 1945. Quoted in “Atrocities and other Conditions in Concentration Camps in Germany: Report of the Committee Requested by Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower through the Chief of Staff, Gen. George C. Marshall to the Congress of the United States.” Presented by Sen. Alben Barkley to the Committee on Foreign Relations, May 15, 1945. 79th Congress, 1st Session. Document No. 47. Available online: <http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/Atrocities-01.pdf> (Accessed January 23, 2016.)

¹⁰ Randolph W. Baxter, “‘Homo-Hunting’ in the Early Cold War: Senator Kenneth Wherry and the Homophobic Side of McCarthyism,” *Nebraska History* 84 (2003): 121.

liberation celebrations throughout the camps and sub-camps that night. Hermann R., a prisoner at Landsberg Fortress, a sub-camp located southwest of Dachau later recalled that, “It was an indescribable experience.” Two weeks passed before the American military commission’s meticulous examination of the prisoners brought an inspector to Hermann’s cell.

Standing before this commissioner, I experienced yet another surprise. There was only one piece of paper in my file. I can still hear the echoes of what the interrogating officer then said to me: “Homosexual – that’s a crime. You’re staying here!” I was dumbfounded.

A sympathetic administrator promised to approach the commissioner again on Hermann’s behalf, but two days later, the appeal for his release was rejected again. Hermann R. remained a prisoner at Landsberg, for an entire year before the American military commission approved his release.¹¹

Most homosexuals in defeated Germany expected that the arrival of the Allies also signaled the end of the intensified campaign against same-sex sex that the Nazis had so violently waged for the previous twelve years. However, these expectations were abruptly shattered, and it quickly became apparent that the Allied powers had little sympathy for homosexuals. The American policy towards homosexual inmates in the US-controlled zone of occupation was based on the *Handbook for Military Government in Germany Prior to Defeat or Surrender*, which was compiled by the United States War Department in 1944. Part of the *Handbook* was dedicated to directing American troops how to classify and handle the large number of survivors they inherited when they liberated the concentration camps.¹² The policy for those interned based on criminal actions stated: “Ordinary criminals with a prison sentence still to serve will be

¹¹ Hermann R., quoted in Hans-Georg Stümke and Rudi Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen: Homosexuelle und “Gesundes Volksempfinden” von Auschwitz bis heute* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1981), 329. In 1944, Hermann had been sentenced to three years of hard labor in a penitentiary (*Zuchthaus*) for “attempted indecency” (*versuchte Unzucht*) with a member of the Hitler Youth. But, at the time of liberation, he was still in holding at Landsberg prison, the relatively comfortable prison where Hitler had served a short stint for his role in the failed 1923 Beer Hall Putsch in Munich. Perhaps the American officials did not understand all of the details of Hermann’s case, which may partially explain why they decided not to immediately release him.

¹² Michele Weber, “When Does Our Liberation Come?: The Policing of Homosexuality in the American Zone of Occupation, Germany, 1945-1949” (master’s Thesis, Marquette University, 2013), 12.

transferred to civil prisons.”¹³ Since the men with the pink triangle had been incarcerated in the camps for violating Paragraph 175, a law of the German Criminal Code that pre-dated the Nazi regime, the Americans also classified them as criminals. Those who had not finished serving their sentence were often transferred to prisons. Those who had never been formally sentenced, or those who had already served their full term yet remained in the camps under “protective custody,” were released.¹⁴

The fate of Paragraph 175 was still unclear at the beginning of the occupation period. Immediately upon the war’s end, the victors began a process of denazification that included an attempt to eliminate unjust and discriminatory laws passed by the Nazi judicial system.¹⁵ Law Number 11 of the Control Council concerning Nazi Law, enacted by the Allied Control Authority, stated:

No German law, however or whenever enacted or enumerated, shall be applied judicially or administratively within the occupied territory in any instance where such application would cause injustice or inequality...by discriminating against any person by reason of his race, nationality, religious beliefs or opposition to the National Socialist Party or its doctrines.¹⁶

There is very little evidence left by homosexuals in the historical record from this time period, but it can be assumed with a degree of certainty that many homosexuals in the occupation zones hoped that the Allied Law Number 11 would at least revert Paragraph 175 to its original, pre-

¹³ United States War Department, *Handbook for Military Government in Germany Prior to Defeat or Surrender* (Fort Gordon, Georgia: US Army, 1944), Paragraph 482.

¹⁴ Weber, “When Does Our Liberation Come?,” 14.

¹⁵ For works on the various processes of denazification, see: Norbert Frei, *Adenauer’s Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration*, translated by Joel Gold, foreword by Fritz Stern (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995*, trans. Brandon Hunziker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Frederick Taylor, *Exorcising Hitler: The Occupation and Denazification of Germany* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011).

¹⁶ Allied Control Authority, Germany (145-1948) *Enactment and Approved Papers of the Control Council* (Library of Congress, 2012). http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/Enactments/law-index.pdf (pg, 101, accessed June 1, 2015.)

1935 version, which had much more lenient punishments and a narrower definition of what was considered illegal. After all, the Nazis had amended the law because they viewed homosexuality not just as a criminal act, but as both a racial and political threat as well; so how could the Nazi version remain in effect after the regime's defeat? But when the United States released the list of laws that would be abolished in the new German penal code, Paragraph 175 was not included.¹⁷ It was left up to the Germans to decide what to do with Paragraph 175.¹⁸ In a recollection of his youth, Johannes Werres, a German journalist who became a homosexual rights activist in the 1950s, wrote that, "Many gays hoped that the Allies would denazify Paragraph 175 since it had been intensified by the Nazis...But, that was decidedly too optimistic."¹⁹ So, while the United States Military Council did not explicitly uphold Germany's anti-sodomy law, it did not repeal it either. In doing so, the United States had "formally legalized" the "continued oppression and persecution of the homosexual population of Germany."²⁰

The decision to keep Paragraph 175 should come as no surprise given the widespread homophobia that existed in the home countries of the Allied powers. Moreover, homosexual activity was illegal in all branches of the US armed forces, which meant that all US soldiers in the occupied zones were prohibited from having homosexual sex.²¹ It was no stretch, then, for the US Military Council to also uphold the German prohibition against homosexuality in its zone. Historian Michelle Weber is correct in her assertion that the US Military Council's

¹⁷ Allied Control Authority, Germany (145-1948) *Enactment and Approved Papers of the Control Council* (Library of Congress, 2012). http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/Enactments/law-index.pdf (pg, 101, accessed June 1, 2015)

¹⁸ Robert Moeller, "Private Acts, Public Anxieties, and the Fight to Decriminalize Male Homosexuality in West Germany," *Feminist Studies* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 530.

¹⁹ Schwullesbisches Archive Hannover (SARCH), Ordner 86: Werres, I.

²⁰ Weber, "When Does Our Liberation Come?" 18.

²¹ Just because same-sex desiring men were officially prohibited from having sex with each other, that certainly did not mean they actually stopped having sex. For an excellent study on homosexuality and the United States armed forces during the Second World War, see Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: Plume Books, 1990).

decision not to strike down Paragraph 175 is best understood as an extension of the anti-homosexual policies in place in the United States. Even Werres, who lived through the Third Reich and occupation period, was attuned to the international dimensions of the institutionalized homophobia that allowed Paragraph 175 to escape denazification: “All of the Allies had anti-homosexual laws in their own countries, so they had no inkling to change anything here.”²²

Enforcing Paragraph 175 was not a top priority in the first years of occupation. The governments of the Western Allies had more pressing matters to tackle than policing sexuality; the economy had to be restarted, millions needed to be fed, and a new, democratic government sympathetic to the West had to be established, especially as the early battle lines of the Cold War were drawn. That did not mean, however, that law enforcement authorities did not police sexuality at all. Karl Gorath, who spent seven years in various concentration camps for allegedly having sex with a male lover, was among those freed upon the liberation of Auschwitz on January 27, 1945. Two years later, though, Gorath was convicted under Paragraph 175 again – and in a horrible twist of fate – by the same judge who had sentenced him nine years prior.²³ This was not uncommon, as jurisdiction was quickly handed back over to German courts, except in the case of war crime trials. Many of the same law enforcement and judicial officials who had targeted homosexuals as part of their duties in the Nazi period retained their positions after 1945.²⁴ Gorath’s story is just one among an astounding number of arrests for “indecentcy.” An

²² SARCH archives, Ordner 86: Werres, I.

²³ Karl Gorath (alias Karl B.), interview with Jörg Hutter http://www.joerg-hutter.de/karl_b_.htm#The (Accessed July 13, 2015.)

²⁴ Dieter Schiefelbein, “Wiederbeginn der juristischen Verfolgung homosexueller Männer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Die Homosexuellenprozesse in Frankfurt am Main 1950/1951,” *Zeitschrift für Sexualforschung* 5 (1992): 59-73.

estimated 1,100 to 1,800 men were arrested annually for violating Paragraph 175 in the American zone of occupation between 1945 and 1949.²⁵

The Allied decision to endorse tacitly Paragraph 175 by not striking it from the German penal code had lasting effects on how the treatment of homosexuals under Hitler would later be remembered, presented, and understood. On numerous occasions after the founding of the Federal Republic in 1949, West German officials pointed to the Allied decision as justification for the continued use of the law.²⁶ While other victims of the Nazi regime told their stories and lobbied for official recognition, fear of further persecution under Paragraph 175 relegated homosexuals to a prison of silence. When Pierre Seel reflected on his experience as a homosexual camp prisoner in Nazi-occupied France, he stated poignantly at the end of the war, “Liberation was only for others.”²⁷

***Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and Defining Victimhood in the Early Federal Republic**

In May 1949, the Western Allies merged the three, western occupation zones into a single state, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Soon it was dubbed West Germany to distinguish it from the eastern German Democratic Republic that was established under Soviet supervision a few months later. In August, West Germans voted in their first federal elections, and the newly founded Christian Democratic Union (CDU) gained the majority in the *Bundestag*, the Federal Parliament seated in the new capital of Bonn. As the head of the conservative, largely Catholic party, Konrad Adenauer became the Federal Republic’s first chancellor. The mission of the

²⁵ Statistisches Reichsamts, “Statistik des Deutschen Reiches,” *Vierteljahrshefte zur Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, 1955 (Berlin: Berlin Buttfammer & Mühlbrecht) 6f. Cited in Weber, “When Does Our Liberation Come?” 20.

²⁶ See Hans-Georg Stümke “Wiedergutmachung an homosexuellen NS-Opfern von 1945 bis heute,” in *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuell: Verdrängt und ungesühnt*, ed. Burkhard Jellonnek and Rüdiger Lautmann (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002), 329-338.

²⁷ Pierre Seel, *I, Pierre Seel, Deported Homosexual: A Memoir of Nazi Terror*. Translated by Joachim Neugroschel, (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 88.

sixty-nine year old was to stabilize the young democracy while also gaining more autonomy for the West German state, which was still under the supervision of the Western Allies. Part of that process was coming to terms with Germany's Nazi past.

Since the 1970s, the historiography of the West German attempt to master its past (the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) has portrayed the Federal Republic's first decade as one in which West Germans simply did not talk about the Third Reich.²⁸ In 1983, the West German historian Hermann Lübke stated that his countrymen's silence regarding the Nazi past was a "functional prerequisite for the stabilization of democracy in the Federal republic."²⁹ But, as Robert Moeller and others have shown, the trope of "silence" with regards to the Nazi past in the 1950s unduly simplifies the politics of memory at play during the early years of the Federal Republic.³⁰ West Germans did address the Nazi past, though in very selective ways. The destruction of Germany's economy, military, infrastructure, and the complete loss of their country's autonomy led many Germans to believe that they had suffered the most during the war. The flood of ethnic Germans who were expelled from their homes in the eastern territories, coupled with the gradual return of German prisoners of war from Soviet territory, reinforced the "Germans as victims" narrative.

²⁸ There is a substantial historiography on the Germans' reactions to their Nazi past. For some of the most important texts in English, see: Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (London: Routledge, 2002); Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999); Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); and Konrad H. Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

²⁹ Hermann Lübke, "Der Nationalsozialismus im politischen Bewußtsein der Gegenwart," *Historische Zeitschrift* 236 (1983): 579-99. Cf. Herman Lübke, "Verdrängung? Über eine Kategorie zur Kritik des deutschen Vergangenheitsverhältnisses," in *Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit: Historikerstreit und Erinnerungsarbeit*, ed. Hans-Hermann Weibe (Bad Segeberg: C.H. Wässer, 1989), 94-106.

³⁰ Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

The war crimes trials against former Nazis also had a drastic impact on how West Germans understood victimhood.³¹ After it had become apparent that the crimes of the National Socialist state exceeded the boundaries of normal warfare, Allied prosecutors charged many of the accused with “crimes against humanity,” a new criminal category defined as the “murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts” committed against civilian populations as well as “persecutions on political, racial, or religious grounds.”³² This definition was also the basis for the United Nation’s definition of “genocide” adopted in 1948. Ultimately, the series of war trials held in the occupation zones and, subsequently in the Federal Republic, gradually brought the magnitude of the Nazis’ genocide of the Jews (and its centrality in the overall efforts of Nazi leaders to forge a new Germany) to the fore in the mind of West Germans. Other victims of Nazi violence, however, remained largely unmentioned during the trials and were therefore marginalized in the public’s recollection of the past. This included non-Jewish victims of systematic genocide, especially the Roma and Sinti and “euthanasia” patients, but also others who were persecuted, but not targeted for extermination, such as homosexuals and “asocials.”

The geopolitics of the emerging Cold War also affected the impact that the trials had in the West German collective memory. The Western Allies were ultimately willing to bring the occupation and legal processes against former Nazis to an end so that the Federal Republic could be fully enlisted as an ally against the Soviet Union.³³ The Cold War repositioning of West Germany as an ally against the “real” threat of Soviet communism further bolstered the notion

³¹ The most famous of these trials was the International Military Tribunal, which was held in Nuremberg between October 29, 1945 and October 1, 1946. In total there were nearly 6,000 Nazi trials in West German territory between 1945 and 1980. See Devin O. Pendas, *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, 1963-1965: Genocide, History and the Limits of the Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.

³² Pendas, *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial*, 9.

³³ Holocaust scholar Donald Bloxham states, “the imperative of reconciliation with Germans in the face of the perceived Soviet threat required the termination of trials.” See Donald Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11.

that most Germans were fundamentally good people and had just been led astray by a handful of Nazis.³⁴ Therefore, the Western Allies also contributed to the formation of the “Germans as victims” narrative that took hold in the early years of the Federal Republic.

There were many voices in the dialogue over the past in West Germany during the 1950s and 1960s, from governmental agencies and the media to survivor organizations. But, in many ways, the West German judicial system took the lead by using the law to interpret who was – and was not – officially considered a victim of the Nazi regime. Historian Devin Pendas asserts that, “the legacy of the Nazi past was largely juridified and transferred to the realm of law.”³⁵ This was also true with regards to the suffering of homosexuals under the swastika, as the law came to represent the dominant authority on how to interpret and understand the Nazi persecution of same-sex desiring men and whether to acknowledge it as persecution at all.

Family Politics and the Continued Marginalization of Homosexuality

When the Federal Republic of Germany was founded in the spring of 1949, there was little question among the new West German politicians that the statute against “indecent among men” would remain in the new penal code. The Adenauer administration was dedicated to “family politics” (*Familienpolitik*), a series of policies aimed at protecting Germany’s youth from immoral temptations such as pornography, while also shoring up the traditional German family and firmly establishing heterosexuality as the normal, healthy German sexuality. Politicians found particularly urgent the need to repair what they perceived as damage that the years of war had done to the family, which was understood as an institution vital to the prosperity of the society and state. In September 1951, Bernhard Winkelheide, a spokesman for

³⁴ Bloxham *Genocide on Trial*, 12.

³⁵ Pendas, *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial*, 22.

the ruling Christian Democratic Union, told members of the Bundestag, that “more than any other societal institution, the family had fallen into the whirlpool created by the collapse” of Germany in 1945.³⁶ In 1953, the West German government formed the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs (*Bundesministerium für Familienfragen*), a conservative and pronatalist ministry meant to address what were perceived as a wide range of problems facing German families.

The majority of the West German population remembered the Nazi past as a twelve-year epoch that shattered the traditional notions of what it meant to be a good German man, woman, and family. When it came to matters of sex, the Nazi period was portrayed as licentious, promoting pre- and extra-marital sex for the prized “Aryan” citizens of the Reich, while prohibiting it for vast swaths of the population that the state deemed “inferior.”³⁷ The Nazi party, so this interpretation went, continuously overstepped the state’s boundaries and invaded the private space of the home by encroaching on decisions that were normally left to families to decide. Through their eugenic policies, National Socialists dictated who could marry whom, and which of its citizens could reproduce. Moreover, according to the retrospective view, the Nazis had undermined parental authority over their children through mandated participation in party-sponsored youth leagues, like the Hitler Youth.³⁸ The task of raising good German children, of instilling ethics and morals in the next generation, was usurped from parents by the state; traditional family structures fell by the wayside as Hitler emerged as Germany’s national father.

Konrad Adenauer, whom many regarded as the father figure of the new German state, was convinced that rebuilding traditional German families would be a key element in bringing

³⁶ Bernhard Winkelheide, in *Verhandlungen des deutschen Bundestages*, (1.) Deutscher Bundestag, 162. Sitzung, 13 Sept. 1951, 6959. Quoted in Moeller, *War Stories*, 17.

³⁷ Clayton J. Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany: Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945-1969* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 26 and Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 73-77.

³⁸ Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 26.

West Germany out of the shadows of the Third Reich and repairing the damage wrought by National Socialism.³⁹ And as the name of Adenauer's party suggests, the family envisioned by the Christian Democratic Union was built on Christian morals and values. Heterosexual men and women would remain chaste until marriage and then raise children, thus creating a strong nuclear family. Not surprisingly, Christian activists and moral reform groups gained influence during the Adenauer era. Lobbying by these organizations ensured that bills proposed to legalize abortions failed, and that the advertising of birth control remained illegal.⁴⁰ Groups like the League of People's Guardians (*Volkswartbund*), an organization with close Catholic ties that had been founded in 1898, campaigned against "ethical decline," which included all forms of "immorality" including "trash and pornography."⁴¹ Such measures were supported by both the ruling party in the Bundestag and the majority of the West German population, thus ushering in an era of political, social, and moral conservatism that would last nearly two decades.⁴²

For a number of reasons, homosexuality stood in direct contradiction to the aims of Adenauer's family politics. For one, homosexual men and women allegedly renounced their duty to marry, procreate, and form nuclear families. Male homosexuality in particular did not fit the new, and de-militarized notion of masculinity that formed during the Adenauer era. After the devastation of two world wars, the ideal of manhood that emerged in 1950s West Germany was embodied by a devoted husband and father instead of a rugged soldier. In other words, the model

³⁹ Charles Williams, *Adenauer: The Father of a New Germany* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000); Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer: From the German Empire to the Federal Republic, 1876-1952*, Vol. 1 (New York, Berghahn Books, 1995), and *Konrad Adenauer: The Statesman, 1952-1967* Vol. 2 (New York, Berghahn Books, 1997).

⁴⁰ Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 28.

⁴¹ Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 26.

⁴² There are many excellent studies of this conservative turn, but for a particularly enlightening examination, see Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*, especially chapters two and three.

man embraced women and children, not guns.⁴³ Moeller explains that “a man’s role as father was central to his existence as a citizen of a liberal democracy,” because he created a stable home through marriage and instilled democratic ideals into his children.⁴⁴ Full citizenship, then, was predicated on a man fulfilling a very specific ideal of heterosexual masculinity.

Homosexuality certainly did not fit into this new ideal of the German nation during the Adenauer era. The homosexual man represented a dangerous threat to the reestablishment of the German family (and thus the state), and because he failed to live up to his duty as husband and father, he forfeited his right to full citizenship. “Sexual outsiders would remain political outsiders,” Moeller writes, “in a society where political rights, defined by the sexual contract that accompanied the liberal social contract, dictated that men’s claims to citizenship were grounded in their identities as husbands and fathers.”⁴⁵ Same-sex desire among women did not seem to pose as dangerous a threat to the new Germany, and so only male homosexuality remained illegal, thus continuing the policies and legal parameters of the *Kaiserreich*, Weimar, and Nazi periods of Germany’s history. The desire for the reestablishment of sexual order, which entailed the belief that “corrupting homosexuals thwarted the progression of young men to democratic fatherhood,” vindicated the West German state’s decision to not only uphold the Nazi-era version of Paragraph 175, but to fully utilize it to combat male homosexuality.⁴⁶

⁴³ Moeller, *War Stories*, 88-122. The tying of notions of full citizenship to heterosexuality is also a phenomenon that Margot Canaday explores in her book *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁴⁴ Robert G. Moeller, “Private Acts, Public Anxieties,” 542. For more on the development of a new, West German masculinity, see Clayton Whisnant, “Styles of Masculinity in the West German Gay Scene, 1950-1956,” *Central European History* 39, no. 3 (Sept. 2006): 359-393.

⁴⁵ Moeller, “Private Acts, Public Anxieties,” 542-43.

⁴⁶ Moeller, “Private Acts, Public Anxieties,” 542.

Paragraph 175: Criminality and Homosexuality in the FRG

While the Nazi state treated homosexuals as racial and political threats to the German nation, and the Federal Republic under Adenauer saw same-sex desiring men as a danger to democracy itself, both regimes asserted that men who engaged in “indecent” with other men were criminals. Recollections and memories about homosexuality during the Third Reich only bolstered the perceived connections between homosexual sex and criminality in the Federal Republic. On the rare occasions that public officials or West German citizens mentioned the topic of same-sex sex under the swastika, it was not to discuss the fate of homosexuals in concentration camps, but instead to focus on the murder of the openly homosexual and allegedly treasonous SA leader Ernst Röhm in 1934. This scandal was utilized as a reminder of the supposed “criminality, sexual excess, and political betrayal” of not only Röhm personally, but of ostensibly all homosexual men.⁴⁷ When the legal experts of the Criminal Code Commission (*Strafrechtskommission*) convened in 1954 to discuss, among other things, the fate of West Germany’s laws regarding sex and morality, some members cited Ernst Röhm as evidence of the “dangers of the creation of [homosexual] cliques” within the highest echelons of political and military power.⁴⁸

Three years prior, the Cologne branch of the League of People’s Guardians published *The Third Sex: The Criminality of Homosexuality*, written by Richard Gatzweiler. In the work, the Bonn municipal court judge claimed that homosexuals – who represented a “cancerous ulcer” to the German people – were also a threat to the “young German democracy.”⁴⁹ Just as Röhm and his circle of homosexuals had done during the Third Reich, Gatzweiler wrote, homosexual men

⁴⁷ Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 43.

⁴⁸ Moeller, “Private Acts, Public Anxieties,” 533.

⁴⁹ Richard Gatzweiler, *Das dritte Geschlecht: Um die Strafbarkeit der Homosexualität* (Cologne: Volkswartbund, 1951), 29.

in West Germany were busy forming a “state within a state.” In this regard, memories of homosexuality under Hitler surfaced to reinforce the widely held notion that men who gave into same-sex desires also partook in any number of criminal activities and should be treated as enemies of the state. Referring to the escalating purge of homosexuals from the US federal government, Gazweiler, wrote, “The USA has recognized the danger of secret homosexual organizations and espionage groups. We must also be careful!”⁵⁰ According to Gatzweiler, the Federal Republic of Germany needed Paragraph 175 as a matter of national security.

But one did not have to be involved in legal debates or high politics to encounter tales of homosexuality under Nazism. In the late 1940s, Werner Landers, a barkeep in Hamburg, was shocked to learn that his mother had found out that he was a *wärmer Bruder* (“warm brother,” German slang for a homosexual man). Landers’ mother was fine with the fact that her son was different, but she feared for his safety, and consequently gave him a warning: it had not been too long ago that homosexuals disappeared and ended up in concentration camps.⁵¹ As an adolescent in Hamburg during the early 1960s, Peter M. heard his stepfather talking to a group of friends around the kitchen table: “Under Adolf, the *warme Brüder* were sent to the work camps. And if that wasn’t enough, then they were thrown into the gas chamber, and the problem was solved.”⁵² For many young men who found themselves attracted to other men, these occasional mentions of the Röhm scandal or learning of the presence of homosexuals in the concentration camps reified the notion that their same sex desires remained a criminal offence, something that should be

⁵⁰ Gatzweiler, *Das dritte Geschlecht*, 30. For more on the US government’s purge of homosexuals, see: David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Baxter, “Homo Hunting;” and Canaday, *The Straight State*.

⁵¹ Bernhard Rosenkranz and Gottfried Lorenz, *Hamburg auf anderen Wegen: Die Geschichte des schwulen Lebens in der Hansestadt*, rev. edn (Hamburg: Lambda Edition, 2006), 115. Later that year, in 1949, a jealous lover denounced Werner to the Hamburg authorities, and Werner was arrested for violating Paragraph 175.

⁵² Peter M., interview with Clayton Whisnant, July 17, 1999, Hamburg. Quoted in Whisnant, “Hamburg’s Gay Scene in the Era of Family Politics, 1945-1969,” (doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 145-146.

hidden in the young democratic Federal Republic. Rather than acting as historical roots that grounded a contemporary identity, for gay West Germans, history became a lesson in closeting their sexuality and their memories.

Such examples reveal that no one had “forgotten” that homosexuals had been persecuted by the Nazi regime. The mainstream press in the Federal Republic ignored the fate of homosexual men during the Third Reich, but there was no silence surrounding the topic among the population, not even in West German homes. Nevertheless, most of the discussion about the Nazi treatment of homosexuals was directly related to debates over Paragraph 175. “For an emerging generation of homophile activists of the early 1950s,” historian Clayton Whisnant writes, “the survival of the Nazi-era version of Paragraph 175 was a sign that, underneath the trappings of democracy, Germany had not in fact changed that much.”⁵³

The notion that a manifestation of fascism lived on in West German law was the basis for the first major challenge to Paragraph 175 in late 1950. An appellant, listed only as “N.” had been arrested in the fall of 1949 for having sex with another man. N. immediately appealed his conviction and the trial eventually reached the Federal High Court (*Bundesgerichtshof*). On March 13, 1951, the court summarily rejected the notion that the 1935 version of Paragraph 175 constituted a “realization of national socialistic goals or thoughts.” The entire German penal code had undergone a thorough revision, and many laws that contained the spirit of National Socialism had been stricken from the books. Paragraph 175, however, survived these rounds of scrutiny, argued the court, and “That in itself should speak for its continued validity.” The law

⁵³ Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 35. The term “homophile” was often the term that contemporaries used to describe the homosexuals and homosexual rights organizations of the 1950s and 1960s. Historians of sexuality have also used the term when writing about this period.

had been written and amended in “an orderly fashion” and was, therefore, not unconstitutional. The High Court ruled that Paragraph 175 would remain in effect.⁵⁴

Only three months later, the Federal High Court struck down a second challenge to the sodomy law. Activists had argued that the law contradicted Article 3 of West Germany’s constitution, which upheld the equality of women and men. Because Paragraph 175 only criminalized male homosexuality, it was discriminatory and therefore unconstitutional. On June 22, 1951, the High Court ruled that the differences in Paragraph 175’s treatment of male and female homosexuality were based on “the naturally given differences between the sexes,” and thus, the law did not contradict the constitution.⁵⁵ The 1951 decisions came as a mighty blow against homophile activists hoping to topple Paragraph 175, but it was a court case in 1957 that would most firmly demonstrate that the Federal Republic of Germany meant to uphold the Nazi-version of the law.

In the mid-1950s, Günter R. and Oksar K. had both been arrested separately and sentenced to over a year in prison for violating Paragraph 175. They appealed their case and took it all the way to the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*), the ultimate authority on the constitutionality of Germany’s laws.⁵⁶ When the appellants argued that the law was sexist, the Constitutional Court, like the High Court before it, claimed that there were natural differences between men and women that dictated that the two sexes be treated differently in some matters; Paragraph 175, then, was not biased against men. Further explaining its reasoning, the justices of the Constitutional Court relied on testimony from a sociologist who asserted that the stronger sex drives of male homosexuals rendered them a greater danger to West German

⁵⁴ *Juristenzeitung*, Nr. 17, 1951. Quoted in Stümke “Wiedergutmachung an homosexuellen NS-Opfern,” 334.

⁵⁵ *Neue juristische Wochenschrift* 4 (1951): 810. Quoted in Stümke and Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*, 455-456.

⁵⁶ The *Bundesgerichtshof* (Federal High Court) is Germany’s highest court on all matters of criminal and private law, while the *Bundesverfassungsgericht* (Federal Constitutional Court), as the name suggests, reviews cases concerning the constitutionality of German laws.

society than lesbians posed.⁵⁷ Unlike homosexual men, who more often fell victim to their “unshackled sexual needs,” lesbians could more easily abstain from same-sex sex since women had weaker sex drives to begin with. Finally, homosexual women who decided to embrace the lesbian lifestyle tended to remain monogamous, therefore causing less of a disturbance to the public order.⁵⁸ In yet another instance of continuity between the approach to homosexuality across the 1945 divide, members of the Constitutional Court utilized ideologies that were nearly identical to those used by Nazi jurists before them to justify the continued legality of lesbian sex.

Additionally, the appellants argued that Paragraph 175 infringed on the right to freely develop one’s personality, which was guaranteed by Article 2 Paragraph 1 of the constitution. The Constitutional Court denied that Paragraph 175 was a “forcible confinement of the existence of people with homosexual feelings” on the assertion that these “feelings” did not constitute an innate part of an individual’s personality.⁵⁹ Just as the Federal Minister of Justice had also announced that same year, the Constitutional Court decidedly ruled that Paragraph 175 in its 1935 form did not contradict the West German constitution, and would thus remain on the books.⁶⁰ The 1957 Constitutional Court decision echoed a previous ruling of the Hamburg State

⁵⁷ *Entscheidungen des Bundesverfassungsgerichts*, Vol. 6 (Tübingen, 1957), 408-409. The sociologist giving the testimony was Helmut Schelsky. Hans Giese, the director of the Institute for Sexual Research in Frankfurt also testified before the Constitutional Court in 1957. For further discussion of this testimony and the 1957 case in general, see Robert G. Moeller, “The Homosexual Man Is a ‘Man,’ the Homosexual Woman Is a ‘Woman’”: Sex, Society, and the Law in Postwar West Germany,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4, no. 3 (Jan., 1994): 395-429; Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 108-110; Stümke and Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*, 356-365 (the authors also provide excerpts from the court’s decision on pages 460-477); and Ralf Dose, “Der §175 in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (1949 bis heute),” in *Die Geschichte des §175: Strafrecht gegen Homosexuelle*, ed. Freunde eines Schwulen Museums in Berlin e.V. in Zusammenarbeit mit Emanzipation e.V. Frankfurt am Main (Berlin, 1990), 125-133.

⁵⁸ The Federal Constitutional Court, quoted in Stümke and Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*, 360.

⁵⁹ Stümke and Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen*, 471. The Hamburg District Court disagreed, however, and in 1951 it sentenced two men convicted of violating Paragraph 175 with the most lenient punishment allowed by the law: a fine of just three marks. As justification, the Hamburg court declared that any law that demanded German citizens to suppress their sex drive was asking too much of them. See Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 29.

⁶⁰ Stümke, “Wiedergutmachung an homosexuellen NS-Opfern,” 336.

Court: “The wording of Paragraph 175 may have been reworked in 1935, but this reformulation does not represent...a typical Nazi law, and it will remain in effect today.”⁶¹

As a definitive conclusion, the Constitutional Court declared in 1957 that its “validation for the criminalization of same-sex indecency is granted by public opinion.”⁶² Paragraph 175 pre-dated the Third Reich, and legal prohibitions against same-sex sex existed in German lands even before the founding of the German Empire in 1871. The historical “moral sensibility of the people” (*Volksempfinden*), therefore, demanded that the law remain in place. What the lawmakers did in 1935 (the Court did not mention that these lawmakers were National Socialists) was not to align Paragraph 175 with typical Nazi ideals, but instead simply address a technicality in the enforcement of the moral law, namely the issue that “limiting criminal acts to only those that were ‘intercourse-like’ presented prosecutors and the police with great difficulties in providing evidence.”⁶³ According to the Federal Constitutional Court of 1957, then, the Nazi amendment of Paragraph 175 to protect the moral fortitude of the German people was an appropriate clarification of a law that still, nearly twenty years later, aligned with what judges understood as the moral consensus in German society.

Because different agencies of the West German state consistently interpreted the 1935 version of Paragraph 175 as a normal German law rather than an exemplification of Nazi ideology, it remained in the penal code. As a result, over 100,000 homosexual men were arrested between 1949 and the law’s eventual liberalization in 1969. Just over 59,000 of those men were

⁶¹ The Great Criminal Division (*Großstrafkammer*) of the Hamburg State Court, February 13, 1948. Quoted in Bernhard Rosenkranz, Gottfried Lorenz, and Ulf Bollmann, *Homosexuellen-Verfolgung in Hamburg von 1919-1969* (Hamburg: Lambda Edition, 1999), 126.

⁶² Quoted in Stümke, “Wiedergutmachung an homosexuellen NS-Opfern,” 336.

⁶³ Bundesverfassungsgericht 1957, quoted in Friedrich Naumann-Stiftung, ed. *Dokumentation §175*, (Bonn, 1981). (Anm. 17), 32.

eventually convicted for “indecent among men.”⁶⁴ (See Figure 1) In East Germany, for comparison, the number of men convicted for homosexuality was drastically lower, rarely over one hundred convictions per year, and after an amendment of the East German criminal code December 1957, authorities all but stopped enforcing Paragraph 175.⁶⁵



Figure 1: This graph shows that the number of annual § 175 convictions remained relatively low during the Kaiserreich (1871-1918) and Weimar (1918-1933) periods, rose drastically under Nazi rule (1933-1945), fell during the Allied occupation (1945-1949) and then rose dramatically again in the FRG. A total of 53,480 convictions were sentenced during the Third Reich; West German jurists gave out 59,316 convictions during the first twenty years of the FRG. Statistics from Rainer Hoffschmidt, “140.000 Verurteilungen nach ‘§175’” in *Invertito 4* (2002): 149.

The law itself was not the only holdover from the Nazi era; in many cases, even the judges on the bench were ex-Nazis or had been trained by Nazi jurists.⁶⁶ There were also startlingly similar tactics used to police male homosexuality in West Germany. Police forces in

⁶⁴ Statistics taken from Angelika von Wahl, “How Sexuality Changes Agency: Gay Men, Jews, and Transitional Justice,” in *Gender in Transitional Justice*, ed. Susanne Buckley-Zistel and Ruth Stanley (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 191-217.

⁶⁵ The rationale behind this decision was that “an act did not warrant criminal punishment if it had no deleterious effects upon individuals, society, or the project of constructing socialism.” East Germany did continue enforcing Paragraph 175a, the statute against using coercion or force, especially abusing a position of authority to force someone into sexual encounters. For a thorough examination of the situation of homosexuals living in East Germany, see Erik G. Huneke’s “Morality, Law, and the Socialist Sexual Self in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1972,” (doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 2013), esp. 207-211.

⁶⁶ In a 2012 interview, the judge Klaus Beer recalled that the jurists who trained him were mostly either ex-Nazis or individuals who had been trained by Nazis. Susanne Höll, ‘Der Richter und das Opfer’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 18, 2012, 3.

the Federal Republic continued to use surveillance to compile registries of convicted, known, or even suspected homosexuals. These “pink lists” (*rosa Listen*) were available to law enforcement agencies across the country and contained the names of thousands of men (in 1954, West Berlin’s pink list contained the name of 3,500 men, while 4,679 men were on Cologne’s list).⁶⁷

West German police agencies also relied heavily on denunciations by the public to arrest homosexual men. During the summer and fall of 1950, over 280 men were placed under police investigation in Frankfurt am Main for involvement in homosexual activities. One hundred of those men were ultimately arrested, of which seventy-five were indicted. All of these cases resulted from the testimony of one seventeen-year old callboy.⁶⁸ In some cases, West German law enforcement even utilized entrapment to ensnare homosexual men. Readers of the mainstream and homosexual presses were shocked to read about the case of a government official who had been arrested in Wiesbaden for violating Paragraph 175 in 1953. The trial quickly turned scandalous when the official revealed that his bosses at the Hesse State Prosecutor’s Office had ordered him to infiltrate the local homosexual scene, and even having sex when necessary in order to gain sufficient information to arrest as many men as possible.⁶⁹

There were numerous consequences of an arrest for violating Paragraph 175 beyond the prison sentence or fine. Many men lost their driver’s license if it was discovered that their name was on a pink list; they could also lose their job and have their certifications or professional membership revoked. A Paragraph 175 verdict almost certainly meant that these men were forcibly outed to their family and friends, often resulting in family crises, social ostracization,

⁶⁷ Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 30.

⁶⁸ Dieter Schiefelbein, “Wiederbeginn der juristischen Verfolgung homosexueller Männer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” 59.

⁶⁹ “Ein Prozeß in Wiesbaden...” *Humanitas* 4, October 1953, 4-5. The trial also received attention in *Der Spiegel*. See “Verfassungsschutz: Wie bei Edgar Wallace,” *Der Spiegel* 45, November 4, 1953, 16-17; and “Rückspiegel: Der Spiegel berichtete...” *Der Spiegel* 48, November 25, 1953, 41.

and the loss of personal relationships. Some men fled West Germany and went into exile to avoid prosecution. Unfortunately, suicide was not an uncommon occurrence among those who became branded immoral and outcast as sexual criminals. One young man poisoned himself in the back aisle of a theater; the cleaning staff found his corpse when they were closing up for the night. A nineteen-year-old in Frankfurt threw himself off the *Goetheturm*, a 140-foot tall observation tower on the outskirts of the city. In total, seven of the nearly one hundred men convicted during the 1950 wave of arrests in Frankfurt killed themselves.⁷⁰

The state's exclusion of homosexuals from the definition of Nazi victimhood both allowed for and was reinforced by the continued use of Paragraph 175 and methods of persecution against tens of thousands of men. If homosexuals were not remembered or understood as victims of Nazi injustice, then law enforcement in West Germany could reject the stigma of operating under National Socialist ideals or using fascist methods. In 1955, the Bonn jurist Hans Langemann even wrote in the police journal *Kriminalistik* that, given the political threat homosexual men posed, the Gestapo had been justified in their persecution of homosexuals during the Third Reich.⁷¹

Dissenting Memories: Survivor Testimony from Pink Triangle Prisoners

As the West German state continued to utilize historical narratives and contemporary policies to construe homosexuality as immoral and illegal, the mainstream press had virtually nothing to say about the suffering of homosexuals during the Third Reich. A 1950 article in the weekly news

⁷⁰ Schiefelbein, "Wiederbeginn der juristischen Verfolgung homosexueller Männer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," 64.

⁷¹ Langemann was referring explicitly to the rather widespread belief that homosexuals tended to band together in cliques, were easy targets of Communists blackmailing them into subverting the West German government, and generally fostered resentment towards the German government for enforcing Paragraph 175, which they saw as unjust. See his essay "Homosexualität und Staatsgefährdung," *Kriminalistik* 9 (1955), 88-90.

magazine *Der Spiegel* did mention that homosexuals had once “worn a pink triangle on their chest” in concentration camps, but the rest of the lengthy article focused on the massive wave of arrests of homosexual men that was currently underway in Frankfurt. That the prosecutors and judges were still using the Nazi version of Paragraph 175 to convict hundreds of Frankfurters was never mentioned; instead, the author was concerned that, at the current rate, Frankfurt’s court system would be overwhelmed with cases, suggesting that perhaps the city should focus solely on prosecuting homosexual prostitutes.⁷²

With only the rarest of exceptions, publications about the Nazi era – whether they were Holocaust survivor testimonies or scholarly studies of the period – did not mention that homosexuals were also persecuted by the Hitler regime. Those that referenced homosexuals did so only in passing. Directly after the war, Eugen Kogon, who had been a political prisoner in Buchenwald, wrote what remains one of the most significant firsthand accounts of life inside the concentration camps. First published in 1946, his book dedicated more attention to homosexual concentration camp prisoners than any other book for the next fifteen years. In two paragraphs (out of nearly four hundred pages), Kogon describes that the fate of the men “marked with the pink triangle” can only be described as “ghastly.”⁷³ The autobiography of Auschwitz Commandant Rudolf Höss, first available in German in 1958, also makes mention of homosexual concentration camp prisoners, noting that they were often segregated from the other inmates and that they were subjected to various methods of conversion therapy.⁷⁴ In his 1966

⁷² “Homosexuelle: Eine Million Delikte,” *Der Spiegel* 48, November 29, 1950, 7-10.

⁷³ Eugen Kogon, *Der SS-Staat: Das System der deutschen Konzentrationslager* (Munich: Karl Alber Verlag, 1946). The book has since gone through 44 reprintings. Kogon’s work was first translated into English as *The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System Behind Them*, trans. Heinz Norden (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1950). The quotations provided above are taken from page 44 of the 1968 edition published by Berkeley Books.

⁷⁴ Rudolf Höss’ autobiography, written while in prison in Poland in 1946-47, was first made available in German in as “Kommandant in Auschwitz: Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen von Rudolf Höss, Band 5 der Reihe *Quellen und Darstellungen zur Zeitgeschichte*, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1958). Five years later, another edition

account of his time in Dachau, Raimund Schnabel mentions homosexuals on one page, writing that among the “cheap hustlers and blackmailers” there were some “exceptional people whose deviance could be called tragic.” Before moving on, Schnabel concluded, “The prisoners with the pink triangle never lived long.”⁷⁵

Disparate references to the fate of homosexual concentration camp inmates existed, buried deep inside the testimonies of other camp survivors. West German readers looking to discover the men with the pink triangle in the history books, however, were left wanting. When the German edition of William Shirer’s *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* was released in 1961, it was the first major historical study of the Nazi regime and sparked controversy in Germany. Yet, Shirer never mentioned the fact that homosexuals were among the many groups interned in concentration camps; it was highlighted, however, that an early leader of the Nazi movement, Ernst Röhm, was homosexual.⁷⁶ In Karl Bracher’s *Die Deutsche Diktatur*, which was published in 1969 and long enjoyed a position as “the definitive” account of the Nazi dictatorship, the only mention of a homosexual was Röhm, a Nazi perpetrator.⁷⁷ By not mentioning homosexuals as victims, scholars effectively erased them from history.

Homosexual men themselves attempted to add their own voices to the growing dialogue about the Federal Republic’s homosexual citizens. By pointing to the glaringly obvious parallels between the Nazi and West German approaches to same-sex activity, homosexual men attempted to reframe their treatment as unjust and unconstitutional persecution in a democratic society, rather than legitimate enforcement of the law. In a letter to the editor of the Swiss homophile

was published, edited by the historian Martin Broszat, *Kommandant in Auschwitz: Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen des Rudolf Höß* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1963). The first English translation was *Commandant of Auschwitz: the Autobiography of Rudolf Hoess* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1959).

⁷⁵ Raimund Schnabel, *Die Frommen in der Hölle* (Frankfurt am Main: Roederberg, 1966), 53.

⁷⁶ William L Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Fawcett, 1960). For the German edition: *Aufstieg und Fall des Dritten Reiches*, (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1961).

⁷⁷ Karl D. Bracher, *Die deutsche Diktatur: Entstehung, Struktur, Folgen des Nationalsozialismus* (Cologne, 1969).

magazine *Der Kreis*, a West German man wrote, “For us, what is now happening... is a continuation of what we held to be permanently ended with the destruction of the Third Reich, [but]... the words of the prosecutor and judge betray a complete clinging to a long obsolete belief in Nazi ideologies.” The author continued, “I would like all similarly inclined men to know that there is barely any difference between the methods of the Nazi police and those that are used today by the officers of the Federal Republic.”⁷⁸ By using a journal with an international audience to highlight the continuation of discriminatory ideologies and practices, this German man was challenging the claim that the Federal Republic had been thoroughly democratized.

The enforcement of Paragraph 175 inflicted mental, physical, social, and legal damages on thousands of West German men. The law also explains why the Nazi persecution of homosexuals was not better known in the West German public. If homosexual men wanted to speak out about their experiences during the Third Reich, they would have to admit to acts that the Federal Republic still deemed illegal. Negotiating life in a criminalized realm put enormous pressure on homosexual men, most often forcing them to keep their experiences during the Third Reich to themselves. Sometime in the 1950s, Heinz Dörmer, who had spent almost five years in the Neuengamme camp near Hamburg for an offence against Paragraph 175, was working in a theater in Flensburg. There, he recognized one of his coworkers as a fellow Neuengamme inmate who had also been convicted of “indecentcy.” Both agreed that they should never mention their time in the camp to anyone, not even to each other in public. “It wasn’t beneficial and could have consequences. Therefore we kept our silence.”⁷⁹

The hostile atmosphere towards homosexuality forced West Germany’s homosexual men and women to keep their sexuality a secret, hidden away in what became referred to as “the

⁷⁸ Letter aus Deutschland, *Der Kreis*, 18, August 1950, 23-24.

⁷⁹ Andreas Sternweiler, ed., *Und alles wegen der Jungs: Pfadfinderführer und KZ-Häftling Heinz Dörmer, Lebensgeschichte* (Berlin: Rosa Winkel, 1994), 150.

closet.”⁸⁰ Fear of legal and social persecution also created a closet of sorts for memories of the Nazi past. Just as their homosexuality could not be expressed openly, pink triangle survivors also had to closet their experiences. By the early 1950s, however, homosexuals in the Federal Republic had begun creating alternative spaces for themselves in which they could, at least partially, come out of the closet and interact with each other. As they rebuilt the network of homosexual organizations, presses, and locales that the National Socialists had destroyed, many chose to shun the clinical sounding “homosexual” and began to refer to themselves as “homophiles.” These homophile scenes and cultures also offered a safe space in which they could begin to speak about their experiences in the Third Reich.

Some of these experiences were published in the budding homophile press.⁸¹ For example, in February 1952, *Die Insel* published an article that called the Nazi persecution of homosexuals a “shocking example of inhumanity and a source of shame that every self-respecting German should not forget.”⁸² Several months later, the journal, now under the title *Der Weg*, published an open letter that called for everyone to remember that homosexual men had also “survived concentration camps and gas chambers.”⁸³ In September 1958, *Der Weg* published an article about the 1938 trial of a homosexual man that turned into a political scandal involving Herman Göring’s destruction of files suggesting that some of the “old fighters” of the

⁸⁰ Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

⁸¹ The individuals running these homosexual publications sought to re-establish the network of homosexual newspapers, periodicals, and magazines that the Nazis had destroyed in the early 1930s. Unfortunately, statistics regarding circulation and readership are not available. Many publications closed after only running a few issues; some reopened later under different names; moreover, due to the fear of Paragraph 175 convictions, most publications did not keep lists of subscribers. *Der Kreis*, a Swiss journal was probably the largest, and it was released in German, French, and English editions, and was likely distributed to thousands of readers. By 1950, *Die Insel* had printed 16,000 copies in total. It changed names to *Der Weg* in 1952, but only printed 500 copies by 1969. See Johannes Werres, “Alles zog sich ins Ghetto zurück,” in Joachim Hohmann, ed. *Keine Zeit für gute Freunde*, (Berlin: Foerster, 1982).

⁸² Weltbund für Menschenrechte angeschlossen an die internationale Freundsloge Bremen, “Wir rufen Euch,” *Die Insel: Monatsblätter für Freundschaft und Toleranz*, 2, no. 2, February 1952, 24-25.

⁸³ D.B., open letter to the Präsidium des 2. Internationalen Kongresses für sexuelle Gleichberechtigung, Frankfurt am Main, in *Der Weg zur Freundschaft und Toleranz*, 2, no. 9, 1952, 3.

early Nazi movement had been influenced by a homosexual author.⁸⁴ In the early 1960s, the article “Redemption for Punishments during the Nazi Period” connected the topic of Nazi persecution to contemporary politics when the author questioned why Paragraph 175 convictions were not included in the cases that the Federal Ministry of Justice wanted to overturn for being too harsh. The author left the reader with the question: “One is always left asking: Why are all of the other people who were persecuted by the Nazis successful in getting compensation, while only the homophiles remain?”⁸⁵ Many of the authors, who wrote anonymously or under a pseudonym, expressed the hope that telling these stories of the Nazi past would positively influence the fight against Paragraph 175 and for the official recognition of homosexuals as Nazi victims. For these authors, then, historical recognition and current issues of civil rights were inextricably linked. Keeping silent on past persecution would only hinder contemporary attempts at political reform.

The most extensive account of the experience of a pink triangle survivor appeared in *Humanitas*, a homophile magazine published in Hamburg that was self-consciously political. Calling itself the “organ of the struggle,” it offered commentary on issues ranging from homosexual rights and the death penalty to the remilitarization of West Germany.⁸⁶ Between February 1954 and February 1955, *Humanitas* published a series of seven articles written by a homosexual concentration camp survivor. The author, writing under the pseudonym L.D. Classen von Neudegg, recalled that, “out of the mosaic of memories of the haunting years of

⁸⁴ Hans Hagen (pseudonym for Erich Lifka), “Der Fall Heinz Ruda,” *Der Weg* (September 1958), 268. It is almost certain that the author is referring to the Czechoslovakian Heiz Rutha. For more information on Rutha, see: Mark Cornwall, *The Devil’s Wall: The Nationalist Youth Mission of Heinz Rutha* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

⁸⁵ P. Gerhard Dippel: “Tilgung von Strafen aus der NS-Zeit,” *Der Weg* Nr. 4 (1961), 87.

⁸⁶ Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany*, 92.

tyranny, the blood red days of internment in Sachsenhausen shine most clearly in my mind.”⁸⁷

While documenting in vivid detail the horrors of everyday life in Sachsenhausen and Oranienburg – a place he called a “city of skulls”⁸⁸ – Neudegg returned to two themes throughout his articles. First, he highlighted the isolation of the men “branded with the pink triangle,” both in the camps and after the liberation of 1945. Second, Neudegg continuously emphasized that homosexual survivors must use their past experiences as motivation to fight for justice in the present. Already in the second of his articles, he wrote, “The future of the homophiles has only two possibilities: Courage can lead to freedom, or resignation can lead to demise.”⁸⁹ Nine issues of *Humanitas* later, Neudegg wrote,

The groaning wheel of world history turns further into fog and darkness. But, we survivors carry the names and scars of the fallen brothers in our hearts and haven’t given up the fight against the Hydra of hate, ignorance, and the lack of mercy against our fellow man! Rather, we’ve taken up the fight for now and forever!⁹⁰

Neudegg felt optimistic about the future of the push for homosexual rights, but the future of the homosexual press in West Germany would turn out to be much bleaker. In 1953, the Bundestag passed the Law against the Distribution of Written Material Endangering Youth, which prohibited the public sale of printed material that promoted “immorality” or glorified crime, war, or racial hatred.⁹¹ Although the law did not mention homosexuality specifically, the review boards in charge of identifying “dangerous material” placed homophile periodicals on the

⁸⁷ L.D. Classen von Neudegg, “Ecce homo – oder Tore zur Hölle: Aus meinem KZ-Tagebuch,” *Humanitas* 12 (1954), 359.

⁸⁸ Neudegg, “Aus meinem Tagebuch 1939-1945: KZ Oranienburg,” *Humanitas* 5 (1954), 163.

⁸⁹ Neudegg, “Schicksale: Ein Blick zurück,” *Humanitas* 3 (1954), 85.

⁹⁰ Neudegg, “Ecce homo – oder Tore zur Hölle,” 360.

⁹¹ Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*, 109. See also: Rainer Herrn, *Anders bewegt: 100 Jahre Schwulenbewegung in Deutschland* (Hamburg: MännerschwarmSkript, 1999), 46. The name of the law was reminiscent of the 1926 Law to Protect Youth from Trashy and Dirty Writings (*Gesetz zur Bewahrung der Jugend vor Schund- und Schmutzschriften*). See Margaret F. Stieg, “The 1926 German Law to Protect Youth against Trash and Dirt: Moral Protectionism in a Democracy,” *Central European History* 23, 1 (Mar., 1990): 22-56.

list of banned publications since they allegedly promoted immorality. The sudden loss of revenue forced *Humanitas* and other homophile publications out of business within months of Neudegg's last article. Homophile activists had been fighting against Paragraph 175 for years in West Germany. Yet, the journalist and activist Johannes Werres noted that the passing of the 1953 "trash and smut" law was the moment in which homosexuals noticed that the tides had firmly shifted against them.⁹² Paragraph 175 was an old law; it had survived four political regime changes since its origin in 1871. In a way, then, while homosexuals in West Germany were dismayed that their new state had maintained the anti-sodomy law, they could not have been fundamentally surprised. The 1953 law, on the other hand, represented a deliberate action demonstrating the resolve of lawmakers in the Federal Republic to combat alleged sexual deviance in earnest.

Paragraph 175 occupied a central place in the collective memories of German homosexuals because it represented a legal continuity of persecution between the Hitler and Adenauer eras. It was arguably this new 1953 law, however, that most directly prohibited the establishment of a more widespread recognition of the suffering of homosexual men under the Nazis by taking away the only medium in which pink triangle survivors were able to articulate their stories. When the periodicals, including those that were published domestically and abroad, were forced from West German shelves in 1953, so too were the only voices that portrayed homosexuals as victims rather than criminal perpetrators.⁹³ Where social stigma and Paragraph

⁹² Johannes Werres, "19450-1980: Homosexuellen-Bewegung in Deutschland," unpublished essay. No date. SARCH archives, Ordner 86: Werres, I.

⁹³ Copies of the Swiss homophile publication *Der Kreis* continued to be smuggled into West Germany after the "trash and smut" law went into effect in 1953. See the recent docu-drama *Der Kreis*, directed by Stefan Haupt, (2014). For more information on West German homophile magazines, see: Volker Janssen, ed., *Der Weg zu Freundschaft und Toleranz: Männliche Homosexualität in den 50er Jahren* (Berlin: Rosa Winkel Verlag, 1984).

175 had created a “closet” for the expression of pink triangle memories, the “trash and smut” law effectively destroyed it.

This demonstrates, yet again, the unequal access to the public sphere in which collective memories of the past are negotiated. The voices, the very experiences, of West German gay men were illegal and therefore carried little or no weight in politics or the public eye. Various branches of the Federal Republic, on the other hand, used their full authority to assert that the state was acting in the best interest of the German people and rejected claims that it was using a law imbued with National Socialist ideals. And while the Law against the Distribution of Written Material Endangering Youth was not meant to be a way to control the writing of German history, it ultimately had a lasting impact on past and present politics by outlawing the publication of dissenting opinions, voices, and memories from those homosexuals who had survived the Hitler regime. It would be nearly twenty years before stories about the men with the pink triangle reappeared in the homosexual or mainstream West German press.

Wiedergutmachung: Compensation and the Definition of Victimhood

While this pair of laws construed male homosexuals as criminals and prevented an official acknowledgment of the situation homosexuals faced during the Third Reich, compensation laws legislated whom the Federal Republic would officially consider victims of Nazi Germany. The legal definitions of victimhood that resulted from the debates about who deserved restitution from the West German government reflected the notions of suffering that had emerged in the immediate postwar years. Here, too Germans saw themselves as the primary victims of the war. But, the process of deciding who did and did not deserve aid from the Federal Republic in rebuilding their lives after World War II was never just about money; all parties involved

understood that the conditions of the Federal Republic's compensation packages would also shape how Germany's actions under Nazi leadership would be understood by future generations

Generally, the process of compensating the Nazis' victims is referred to as *Wiedergutmachung*, a word that actually brings three specific processes under one umbrella term: the restitution of confiscated property (*Rückerstattung*), financial compensation (*Entschädigung*), and legal rehabilitation for unjust criminal convictions (*Rehabilitation*).⁹⁴

Taken as a whole, the term *Wiedergutmachung*, which literally translates as "a making good again," implies more than legal or financial procedures; it asserts a manner of moral atonement for past wrongs. While critics of the term claimed that it trivialized the Nazis' genocide and persecution by implying that these events could ever be "made good again," the term's proponents hoped that it would "appeal to people's conscience" more than cold, legal language such as indemnification or restitution would.⁹⁵

In her study on *Wiedergutmachung* and transitional justice, Angelika von Wahl asserts that there are two types of compensation that can be granted by a government.⁹⁶ Symbolic compensation or reparations may come in the form of official recognition of suffering and injustice via speeches, commemoration ceremonies, or even monuments. Material compensation or reparations, on the other hand, are monetary payments or other programs of concrete support such as vocational training, restitution of property, or provision of health care. During the early decades of West Germany, only a small percentage of the Nazis' victims received symbolic reparations of any kind, and an even smaller portion received material reparations from the

⁹⁴ Susanna Schrafstetter, "The Diplomacy of *Wiedergutmachung*: Memory, the Cold War, and the Western European Victims of Nazism, 1956-64," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 17, no. 3 (Winter 2003): 459-60.

⁹⁵ Schrafstetter, "The Diplomacy of *Wiedergutmachung*," 459.

⁹⁶ Wahl, "How Sexuality Changes Agency," 191-217.

Federal Republic. Some groups, such as homosexuals, the mentally and physically disabled, and the Roma and Sinti, were denied both in the first decades of the Federal Republic.

The general framework of compensation for the victims of the Nazi regime was established by the Allies during the years of occupation. When the Federal Republic was founded in 1949, it was understood that the new government would standardize the compensation laws from the individual occupation zones and apply them nationwide.⁹⁷ West German politicians from across the political spectrum concluded almost unanimously that those most in need of compensation from the new government were German POWs and expellees returning from the east. To this end, Chancellor Adenauer established the Ministry of Expellees, Refugees, and the War-Damaged within months of West Germany's founding.⁹⁸ This cabinet-level ministry busied itself with handling the compensation of Germans who suffered losses during the war, and Adenauer himself negotiated the *Wiedergutmachung* of Jewish victims. But, there was no high-level government agency established to benefit the other groups that had been persecuted by the Third Reich.

By early 1952, the Allies sought to hand over more authority to the West German state and take the next step in gradually bringing the era of limited sovereignty to an end. One condition of the Treaty of Transition (*Überleitungsvertrag*), signed in 1952, was that the Federal Republic should handle equally “all people who were persecuted on the basis of their political beliefs, racial reasons, their religion, or their ideology.” As historian Hans-Georg Stümke notes, this “formulation of so-called ‘typical Nazi injustice’ would prejudice the later judicial practice [of compensation] in the Federal Republic” for decades to come.⁹⁹ Defining victims only in

⁹⁷ Stümke, “Wiedergutmachung an homosexuellen NS-Opfern,” 330.

⁹⁸ Moeller, *War Stories*, 35. The *Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge, und Kriegsgeschädigte* existed from 1949 until it was placed under the Ministry of the Interior in 1969.

⁹⁹ Stümke, “Wiedergutmachung an homosexuellen NS-Opfern,” 330.

racial, political, or religious terms excluded entire groups of people whom the Nazis had persecuted.

In 1956, the West German Bundestag passed the Federal Compensation Law (*Bundesentschädigungsgesetz*, BEG), which replaced a similar but less extensive law from 1953. Under the BEG, only those who had been persecuted for reasons of race, religion, or political/ideological belief and who still lived in West Germany at year's end 1952 were eligible. Persons who had lived in Nazi Germany, were persecuted for the aforementioned reasons, but who had chosen to relocate to Israel after the war's end were also eligible for compensation. By concluding that only those persecuted because of race, religion, or ideological belief were eligible for compensation, the BEG built on the precedent established by the definition of crimes against humanity during the Nuremberg war trials, the United Nation's definition of genocide in 1948, and the Allies' earlier suggestion for compensation legislation. The BEG further constricted the circle of officially recognized victims to West German nationals, thus excluding the millions of non-Jewish Polish and Soviet victims of the Nazi quest for *Lebensraum*. Apparently, as historian Susanna Schrafstetter has noted, the BEG "did not regard the war of extermination in the East as a specifically Nazi-perpetrated injustice." The Nazis' non-German victims would have to take the issue of compensation up with their own national governments since the Federal Republic was already making war reparation payments to a number of states.¹⁰⁰

Because they were imprisoned as common criminals and not – according to the West German government – persecuted on racial, political, or religious grounds, homosexuals were not eligible for any form of compensation under the BEG. Even the homosexual men who had

¹⁰⁰ Schrafstetter, "The Diplomacy of Wiedergutmachung," 462. See also Ulrich Herbert, "Nicht entschädigungsfähig? Die Wiedergutmachungsansprüche der Ausländer," in *Wiedergutmachung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, eds. Ludolf Herbst and Constantin Goshler (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1989), 273-302.

spent years in concentration camps were not eligible to apply. Several did submit a petition, however, hoping against all odds that their government would approve their case anyway. Karl Gorath, who had spent time in Auschwitz and was then sentenced again during the occupation period, applied multiple times, but each application was denied. Josef Kohout also applied more than once, but the review board consistently denied his application on the grounds that he was a “repeat offender.”¹⁰¹

For the men with the pink triangle, the 1956 BEG was nothing new; for years German authorities had been denying homosexuals’ applications for compensation. In 1947, for example, Ernst Nobis sought reparations for his terrorization under the National Socialist regime. Not only had he served an eighteen month prison sentence for violating Paragraph 175, he had submitted to castration when the Gestapo picked him up upon the completion of his sentence and threatened him with “protective custody” in a nearby camp. The review board denied Nobis’s petition since the 1935 version of Paragraph 175 was still in effect.¹⁰² In the same year, Helmut Höppner applied for financial aid from the city council of West Berlin and did not even mention that his homosexuality had played a role in his arrest. The council’s reply stated, “Yes, you were arrested for political reasons, but our records indicate that you were also placed in a concentration camp due to an infraction of §175; therefore, your application is denied.”¹⁰³ Bruno Bouchard bypassed the city council and wrote directly to the Allied Denazification Commission and asked to stop being harassed and to finally be acknowledged as a victim. After stating that his ID card had been confiscated, Bouchard mentions that the commission should note that under the original version of Paragraph 175, he would not even have been found guilty. Whereas the

¹⁰¹ Weber, “When Does Our Liberation Come?” 22.

¹⁰² Weber, “When Does Our Liberation Come?” 22.

¹⁰³ Correspondence to Helmut Höppner, June 9, 1947. Schwules Museum (SM) archives, C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 6 (Nachwirkungen und Aufarbeitung): 3 (Rehabilitation/Wiedergutmachung).

pre-1935 version of the law required proof of “intercourse-like” (penetrative) sex for a conviction, the Nazi version was so vague as to allow prosecutors to sentence men even for alleged “lustful intent.” Furthermore, if his arrest and placement in a concentration camp was not enough to officially classify him as a victim of Nazi terror, the commission should take his forced castration into account.¹⁰⁴ The archives hold no reply from the Denazification Commission, but it is almost certain that the commission denied Bouchard any aid.

The West German government was not the only body that excluded homosexuals from the circle of victims and thus from the national memories of Nazi victimhood that were gradually emerging during these years. The various victims’ organizations that sprang up across the country also consistently barred homosexual men from joining. In the late 1940s, Dr. Rudolf Klimmer petitioned the Association of the Persecuted of the Nazi Regime (*Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes*) to acknowledge homosexuals as victims and lobby on behalf of their compensation. The Association rejected Klimmer’s petition, stating (incorrectly) that homosexuals had never resisted the Nazi regime.¹⁰⁵ When Heinz Dörmer sought to join the Committee of Former Inmates (*Komitee der ehemaligen Häftlinge*) in Hamburg, he lied and applied as a “career criminal,” since he knew that he would never get accepted as a homosexual survivor. Unfortunately, some of the committee members knew Dörmer personally and therefore knew that he was actually a “175er.” They rejected his application. Dörmer later recalled, “They wanted to keep the circle of recognized victims as small as possible.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Bruno Bouchard to the Hauptausschuss Opfer des Faschismus” in Berlin. SM archives, C.6.3.

¹⁰⁵ Wahl, “How Sexuality Changes Agency,” 206. For a study on homosexual resistance fighters, see Manfred Herzer, “Schwule Widerstandskämpfer gegen den Nationalsozialismus. Neue Studien zu Wolfgang Cordan, Wilfried Israel, Theodor Haubach und Otto John,” in *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle*, eds. Jellonnek and Lautmann, eds.127-146.

¹⁰⁶ Sternweiler, ed., *Und alles wegen der Jungs*, 153-154.

Such examples prove, yet again, that there was no silence on the part of homosexual concentration camp survivors. It is true that many chose to keep their experiences a secret, but several men did tell their stories, call for the repeal of Paragraph 175, and apply to be acknowledged as a victim of Nazi injustice. Everywhere they turned, pink triangle survivors found only rejection. No one – not the federal and state governments, not the courts and the conservative parties, not the majority of the population, and not even fellow concentration camp survivors – acknowledged them as legitimate victims of Nazi injustice. Since homosexuals were denied the freedom of the press and the right to publicly gather, it was impossible to organize their own victims’ associations and lobby for their acknowledgement and compensation.¹⁰⁷ As Wahl states, “Gay men found all aspects of the political opportunity structure closed to them.”¹⁰⁸ The men with the pink triangle were forced to go it alone as they sought to be “made good again.”

Homosexual survivors did, however, find at least a nominal chance for compensation when the Bundestag passed the General Consequences of War Law (*Allgemeine Kriegsfolgendengesetz*, AKG) at the end of 1957. Under the AKG, individuals who had been excluded from the federal compensation law, such as homosexuals and so-called asocials, could apply for aid from the Federal Republic if they had been imprisoned in a concentration camp. However, the name of the legislation itself asserted that these groups were not actual victims of the Nazi regime itself, but rather the casualties of the outcomes of warfare, collateral damage of sorts. When the deadline for applications came on December 31, 1959, only fourteen men (out of the estimated 1,750 – 3,500 pink triangle survivors¹⁰⁹) risked exposing themselves to further

¹⁰⁷ Stümke, “Wiedergutmachung an homosexuellen NS-Opfern,” 334.

¹⁰⁸ Wahl, “How Sexuality Changes Agency,” 208.

¹⁰⁹ An estimated 5,000 to 15,000 homosexual men were sent to concentration camps during the Third Reich. Geoffrey Giles asserts that about 65% of those men died in the camps. See Geoffrey J. Giles, “Legislating

prosecution by revealing they had been persecuted because of their homosexuality.¹¹⁰ All fourteen petitions were denied. These rejections should not be surprising; the West German High Court, Constitutional Court, and the Ministry of Justice had clearly and consistently ruled that Paragraph 175 did not contradict the West German constitution; the review board of the AKG, then, simply continued down this course, agreeing that convictions based on a constitutional law were unworthy of federal compensation.

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In 2012, Klaus Born became the first of the nearly 100,000 homosexual men arrested under Paragraph 175 after 1945 to speak openly about the use of the Nazi version of the law in the Federal Republic, stating that the conviction destroyed a piece of his soul. When asked whether the men sentenced with Paragraph 175 in the Federal Republic should receive *Wiedergutmachung*, or restitution, Born stated, “A pardon of my conviction would be important, and it would be the right thing to do. But compensation?” He dismissed the idea with a wave of his hand. “That would be enough for some people. But the truth is, you can’t make amends for it, you can’t ‘make it good again,’ not with all the money in the world.”¹¹¹

Cases like Klaus Born’s reveal that the year 1945 was not as meaningful to homosexuals living in defeated Germany as it was to others. The war was over, but the legal and social persecution of homosexuals was not. The generation of homosexuals who had survived Hitler’s “Thousand Year Reich,” as well as those homosexual men born in the postwar years, quickly became skeptical of West Germany’s promises of freedom and democracy during the Adenauer

Homophobia in the Third Reich: The Radicalization of Prosecution against Homosexuality by the Legal Profession,” *German History* 23 no. 3 (2005): 352.

¹¹⁰ Stümke, “Wiedergutmachung an homosexuellen NS-Opfern,” 331.

¹¹¹ Susanne Höll, ‘Der Richter und das Opfer’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 18, 2012, 3. Born was sentenced to six weeks in prison, but once the verdict was reached, the judge decided that the time Born had already served during the trial sufficed and he was released.

era, promises that did not seem to apply to them. While female homosexuality was not criminalized by the German penal code, lesbians also faced harassment, violence, and discrimination on all fronts. Outside the small yet steadily-growing homosexual scenes in cities like West Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, and Munich, homosexual West Germans would find virtually no support or empathy. One homosexual concentration camp survivor stated in 1954, “Germans tend to believe that the former prisoners of those camps were ethically or morally inferior, or otherwise they wouldn’t have been thrown in there. And naturally one can’t have compassion for a criminal!”¹¹²

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, the trope of “silence” in postwar West Germany towards the Nazis’ homosexual victims does not capture adequately the cacophony of voices engaged in debates over the legacy of the Third Reich’s treatment of homosexual men. Numerous survivors who had worn the pink triangle in a concentration camp raised their voices, introducing their life stories, their memories, into to the public sphere via any channel available to them: court cases, denazification commissions, compensation review boards, victim associations, and the homophile press. The stories of these men, however, were consistently ignored, suppressed, and rejected by agents whose voices carried more authority.

One of the most drastic consequences of the politics of memory surrounding the meaning of the Nazi past was the continued exclusion of homosexuals from the rights, privileges, and protections of full citizenship. In a reflexive process, memories justified discriminatory laws, but the mere existence of these laws labeled homosexuals as criminals not only in the present, but in the past as well. Ultimately, the confluence of sexuality and the politics of memory created what historian Margot Canaday has called a “stratified citizenry.”¹¹³ Although all citizens nominally

¹¹² L.D. Classen von Neudegg, “Aus meinem Tagesbuch 1939-1945: KZ Oranienburg,” *Humanitas* 5 (1954), 163.

¹¹³ Canaday, *The Straight State*, 4.

enjoyed the same rights by virtue of being West German, homosexuals experienced life as second-class citizens. The result of the politics of memory can be felt today: 59,316 men who lived in a democratic country were sentenced with the Nazi version of a law, and still have convictions on their records.¹¹⁴

In the context of Adenauer's family politics, the Federal Republic was dedicated to upholding and enforcing Paragraph 175 in its own campaign against homosexuality. This meant that the men convicted under the law during the Third Reich could not be remembered in the postwar years as victims of Nazi injustice, because doing so would draw startling connections between the Hitler and Adenauer eras. Studying the impact of Paragraph 175 and even the 1953 "trash and smut" law, then, reveals the ability of legislation to simultaneously generate certain collective memories while causing the active forgetting or "closeting" of others.

Homosexual men were not alone in being excluded from the various processes of commemoration and *Wiedergutmachung* in West Germany's earliest decades. Many groups, including the Roma and Sinti, the mentally and physically disabled, the victims of medical experimentation and "euthanasia" programs, were disqualified from any form of compensation under the Federal Compensation Law of 1956. Even those who were punished for resisting the Nazi regime were excluded since they were technically "enemy combatants" and "saboteurs" of their own government.¹¹⁵ Like homosexuals, these were minorities, people who did not fit into contemporary West German ideals of upstanding morality. And like homosexuals, they were not forgotten; selective remembering is not the same as forgetting.¹¹⁶ These peoples were victimized

¹¹⁴ Wahl, "How Sexuality Changes Agency," 205.

¹¹⁵ Schrafstetter, "The Diplomacy of *Wiedergutmachung*," 463. In 1960 – under pressure from the United States – the Bundestag decided to compensate all victims of "pseudo-medical experiments" regardless of nationality or residence. Schrafstetter, 465.

¹¹⁶ Moeller, *War Stories*, 16.

for a second time as the memories of their suffering and persecution were marginalized in the wider West German understanding of the Nazi past.

As the next chapter will explore in further detail, the year 1969 proved to be, in many ways, much more significant for West Germany's gay men than 1945. Important changes to "the shameful paragraph" cleared the path for the emergence of a modern gay rights movement, one that would prove to have the most dramatic impact on the "rediscovery" of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals after an era of silence that was not really a silence at all.

CHAPTER THREE

“Come Out for Yourself...Come Out for Justice:” The Nazi Past, Sexual Citizenship, and Transatlantic Gay Rights Activism, 1969-1989

On Sunday, October 11, 1987, nearly a quarter-million gays, lesbians, and their supporters marched on Washington, D.C. It was by far the largest national rally ever staged for gay and lesbian rights, dwarfing the attendance at a march eight years prior.¹ According to the *Boston Globe*'s coverage of the protest, “Many marchers wore buttons and sweatshirts emblazoned with pink triangles.” The *Washington Post* noted that during a peaceful protest on the steps of the United States Supreme Court, hundreds of lesbians and gay men scattered “pink triangles like confetti.”² Even the official logo for the 1987 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights was a likeness of the US Capitol dome superimposed over a pink triangle.³ How did the pink triangle go from being a badge of damnation worn by prisoners in Nazi concentration camps to being used decades later during a national gay rights march an ocean away? In this chapter, I not only explore the evolution of this particular symbol, but also interrogate the ways in which the political use of the pink triangle as a gay rights logo both reflected and facilitated transformations in understandings of same-sex identities on both sides of the Atlantic.

Despite the fact that homosexual concentration camp survivors had spoken out about their experiences for decades, their voices reached only a limited audience, namely West German

¹ The first march, in October 1979, drew anywhere from 75,000 to 125,000 attendees. See: Amin Ghaziani, *The Dividends of Dissent: How Conflict and Culture Work in Lesbian and Gay Marches on Washington*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), especially Chapter 3. According to *Bay Windows* (Oct. 22, 1987), a Boston gay newspaper, somewhere between 500,000 and 650,000 people attended the second national march in October 1987, but other sources put the number closer to 200,000 (*Boston Globe*, Oct. 12, 1987; *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1987).

² Sue Wong, “200,000 Gays and Supporters Rally in Washington to Press for Rights,” *The Boston Globe*, (October 12, 1987), front page; Karlyn Barker, “Gay Activists Arrested at high Court: Peaceful Civil Disobedience by 572 Culminates Week’s Events,” *Washington Post*, October 14, 1987.

³ The History Project (THP): Documenting GLBT Boston archives, Collection 5, Series 1: March on Washington 1987. Folder 5.1.A: Filers & Pamphlets.

jurists and officials in charge of administering compensation and legal rehabilitation to Nazi victims. When gay rights activists in the Federal Republic of Germany began using the pink triangle during demonstrations and protests in the early 1970s, then, they were the first to inform the wider West German public about a chapter of German history that had been suppressed since the war's end. By integrating the Nazi past into gay rights politics, activists simultaneously advocated for gay and lesbian rights, informed the West German public about the persecution of homosexuals during the Third Reich, and sought to change the official, state-sanctioned discourse surrounding the legacy of this persecution. Moreover, by drawing connections with anti-gay policies in the past, activists presented contemporary discrimination against gay and lesbian citizens in the Federal Republic as a failure on the part of the German people to adequately learn from their Nazi past.

It was only a matter of months after West German gay activists adopted the pink triangle that activists in New York began using the symbol in political demonstrations. The swiftness with which the pink triangle and narratives of Nazi persecution appeared across the Atlantic indicates a transatlantic flow of information that emerged from the turbulent social and political movements of the 1960s. The rise of the New Left and political context of the "1968" generation were fundamental in creating an atmosphere in which gay rights movements could flourish locally and globally. The 1968 revolutions also established transnational connections among activists in different countries, connections that facilitated the spread of the pink triangle and information about the fate of homosexuals under the swastika.

As part of this dynamic, the experiences and suffering of homosexual men under the Nazi regime were transformed into collective memories that were no longer limited to Germany alone. As American gay activists adopted the pink triangle (as a political badge and collection of

memories), they crafted new forms of memories that linked their own present challenges and political efforts with a chapter of German history. Thus, although the representations of the pink triangle victims were sometimes different in West German and American contexts, the Nazi persecution of homosexuals provided gay and lesbian activists on both sides of the Atlantic a common history that could be referred to in the course of political activism. This dissemination of memories contributed to the transformation of gays and lesbians into an international political minority and helped establish a gay identity that transcended local and national boundaries.

In both West Germany and the United States, activists used the Nazi past as a tool to renegotiate the relationship between sexuality and citizenship in the present. In the Federal Republic, activists asserted that if Germany had truly been reformed into a prosperous, democratic society, then it could not continue to embrace Nazi-era mentalities towards homosexuality and use special laws, such as Paragraph 175, to regulate the private lives of minorities. In the United States, gay activists rhetorically linked anti-gay policies to Nazism and asserted that as long as their government continued to discriminate against homosexuals, the ideals of liberal democracy had not yet been fully achieved. This chapter, then, speaks directly to the role of history in the denial, affirmation, and protection of human rights and civil liberties.

Sexual Politics and the Amendment of Paragraph 175

During the 1960s, the political landscape in the Federal Republic of Germany underwent significant shifts. Konrad Adenauer, who had been chancellor of West Germany and leader of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) since 1949, resigned in October 1963. By 1966, the left-wing Social Democratic Party came to power as a coalition partner with the CDU

in the Bundestag, West Germany's federal parliament seated in the capital city of Bonn. Three years later, liberals and Social Democrats composed the majority in the Bundestag.⁴

The 1960s also caused extensive changes in social, cultural, and political values across the globe. Influenced by leftist philosophies such as Marxism and second wave feminism, demonstrators in Berlin, Berkeley, Prague, Warsaw, Rio de Janeiro, and Cape Town protested against imperialism and authoritarian governments, the use of atomic power, racial segregation, social inequality, and sexism. The rise of the New Left, composed primarily of a new generation born after the end of World War Two and the defeat of fascism, was skeptical of communist parties and other groups that had been the bedrock of earlier leftist activism. Members of the New Left protested for the expansion and protection of minority rights, global peace, and a sexual revolution. Amidst the general atmosphere of change in the decade, a series of pivotal events rocked the world in 1968: the assassination of the US civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; city-wide strikes and protests in Paris; the Soviet military suppression of the Prague Spring; a mass murder during a protest in Mexico City; and reports of the US Military's My Lai Massacre in Vietnam. As such, the year 1968 has become a shorthand that encapsulates the social and political upheavals that characterized the "long sixties."⁵ It was in this context of social change that an organized, politically active gay rights movement (*Schwulenbewegung*) emerged in West Germany in the early 1970s.

To understand how the use of the Nazi past in the transatlantic gay rights movement shaped the relationship between sexuality and citizenship in West Germany (and later in the United States), one must first recognize that sexuality had been central to states' conceptions of

⁴ Robert Moeller, "Private Acts, Public Anxieties, and the Fight to Decriminalize Male Homosexuality in West Germany," *Feminist Studies* 26, no. 3. (Fall 2010): 535.

⁵ There is a growing literature that seeks to situate the 1968 movements in a global context. See, for example: Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker, eds. *1968: The World Transformed*. A publication of the German Historical Institute. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

citizenship long before the first gay rights marches took place in the 1960s and 1970s.⁶ Robert Moeller's work reveals the ways in which policy makers in the FRG conceptualized the ideal citizen as both a husband and a father; both a wife and a mother. Therefore, persons embodying "true" West German citizenship had to conform to heterosexuality, monogamy, and parenthood. These were not simply abstract ideals. As Chapter Two demonstrated, there were material consequences for those who did not fit into this norm. The West German criminal code, for example, denied civil rights and the full benefits of citizenship to a range of individuals it defined as sexually deviant, including homosexuals.

Recent work by historian Clayton Whisnant traces the postwar political and legal debates surrounding Paragraph 175, the most relevant piece of legislation concerning homosexuality and civil rights.⁷ Although Whisnant does not situate these legal debates as discourses of sexual citizenship, it is clear that when politicians and jurists in the FRG debated the fate of Paragraph 175, they were both implicitly and explicitly expounding on the nature of homosexuality, the extent of civil rights, and their relationship to the definition of citizenship. In the decades after the war's end, West German homophile organizations asserted that a truly democratic society could not condone the use of the version of Paragraph 175 that was amended by the Nazis in 1935. Doing so violated the basic rights that the Federal Republic's constitution had granted to every citizen, especially Article II-Paragraph I, which guaranteed all German citizens the right to freely develop their personalities. In the 1950s, West German jurists countered that Article II provided citizens the right to develop their personalities only as long as it did not "offend against

⁶ For overviews on sexuality and citizenship in Germany, see: Annette F. Timm, *The Politics of Fertility in Twentieth-Century Berlin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁷ Clayton Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality in West Germany: Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945-69* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

the constitutional order of the moral law.”⁸ Moreover, the court argued, since Paragraph 175 only criminalized certain acts and not personalities, it did not violate Article II. West German homosexuals, on the other hand, asserted that it was impossible to separate homosexual acts from homosexual individuals themselves.

By arguing that same-sex desire constituted more than sexual acts, and indeed represented an expression of a subjective identity and a part of one’s personality, these homosexuals sought to form a new, broader definition of personhood, in which sexual desire – in its various manifestations – was simply one aspect of an individual. As full individuals, homosexual men and women were also full and equal citizens who should enjoy all civil rights granted by West Germany’s constitution (*Grundgesetz*, or Basic Law). As long as homosexuals could be placed under surveillance, arrested, and fired from their jobs, it also meant that they were excluded from the benefits and protections of full citizenship. In practice, then, West Germany’s homosexual men had been relegated to second-class citizens.

It was in the context of these debates that the Federal Ministry of Justice created the Criminal Code Commission (*Strafrechtskommission*) in 1954 to evaluate West Germany’s laws governing sexuality, which included Paragraph 175. For some lawmakers, jurists, and homosexual civilians in both liberal and radical leftist circles, Paragraph 175 had become a measurement of the extent to which the Federal Republic had adequately dealt with the continuities of its Nazi past. Even an official of the Ministry of Justice understood that the government’s decision whether or not to amend Paragraph 175 would affect more than the legality of certain sexual acts. If the government chose to uphold the 1935 version of the law yet again, it could, as historian Robert Moeller noted, “prompt political charges of an unwillingness

⁸ Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz. “Gesetze im Internet.” https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_gg/englisch_gg.html (Accessed January 15, 2016.)

to confront the worst legacies of National Socialism.”⁹ Other social commentators weighed in on the issue as jurists and legislators debated the future of Paragraph 175. The conservative, openly homosexual, and Jewish professor of theology, Hans-Joachim Schoeps, who spent eight years as a refugee during Nazi rule, stated, “Since the gas ovens of Auschwitz and Maidanek burned, one should think twice, or three times, whether one also in the new criminal code wants to continue to treat the minority of homosexuals as people for whom there must be separate laws.”¹⁰ In West Germany, then, the politics of memory over the implications of the Nazi past influenced the debates over the legal and constitutional rights of the country’s homosexual citizens. Many of the jurists advocating for a liberalization of Paragraph 175 were not doing so to advance homosexual rights, per se. Instead, the burden of Germany’s recent past convinced them that the Federal Republic should be especially mindful of how it treated its minorities.

By the spring of 1969, a new version of Paragraph 175 was proposed that would set the age of consent at twenty-one for homosexual men. This would legalize same-sex sex among consenting adult men while still appeasing lawmakers who argued there was a need to protect Germany’s male youth. On May 9, 1969, the reform of Paragraph 175 came to the floor of the Bundestag; 255 members voted in favor of the law’s amendment, 61 voted against, and 202 abstained. Five days later, the bill passed in the Bundesrat, the legislative body representing the West German states. Almost thirty-four years to the day after Nazi jurists amended Paragraph 175, the reform bill was published on June 25, 1969, and then went into effect on the first of September. Adult, male homosexuality was legalized for individuals twenty-one years or older. The law still represented a fundamentally different treatment of the sexual lives of heterosexuals and homosexuals, however, since the age of consent for heterosexuals was sixteen.

⁹ Moeller, “Private Acts, Public Anxieties,” 534.

¹⁰ Hans-Joachim Schoeps, “Soll Homosexualität strafbar bleiben?” *Der Monat* 15, no. 171 (Dec. 1962): 26-27.

In many cases, changes in legislation regarding sexuality are the result of action by grassroots activists. As the amendment of West Germany's anti-sodomy law demonstrates, however, legal change initiated from the top-down can also grant greater personal freedoms to minorities, and thus pave the way for further activism. It is important to note, that the amendment of Paragraph 175 did not signal a fundamental change in lawmakers' understanding of homosexuality; many of the policymakers still understood same-sex sex as a deviant act. Yet, when the act occurred between consenting adults, it was a victimless crime. Moreover, the new version of the law did not mention same-sex sexuality among women, thus carrying on a century-long tradition of failing to acknowledge lesbianism as serious issue. Ultimately, the amendment of Paragraph 175 in 1969 represented a shift in which adult, male homosexuality was relegated to a moral or ethical issue, rather than a legal matter.

The Pink Triangle, “Coming Out,” and Identity Politics in the FRG

Two years after the government's amendment of Paragraph 175, important developments among West Germany's homosexual population spilled over onto the national stage. On July 3, 1971, the director Rosa von Praunheim premiered his film *It's not the Homosexual Who's Perverse, but Rather the Situation in which He Lives* at the twenty-first annual Berlin International Film Festival. The highly controversial film, which provoked both hetero- and homosexual viewers alike, was soon broadcast across the airwaves by public television stations across the Federal Republic, though initially only during the late-night slots.¹¹

¹¹ “Schimpf für Rosa,” *Stern* “Fernsehen” section. Nr. 15, 1978. This article in a mainstream German magazine is about how *It's not the Homosexual Who's Perverse* is being banned by West German TV networks. The *Westdeutsche Rundfunk* (WDR), a public broadcasting station, on the other hand, got hundreds of calls and letters from viewers after its first showing of the film on January 31, 1972. The WDR said that four-fifth of the responses were from heterosexual viewers, the majority of whom supported the showing of the film, but only regretted that it was only shown so late at night. Schwullesbisches Archiv Hannover (SARCH) archives, Ordner 86: Personalakten: P-Q, Folder: Rosa von Praunheim.

Scholars and contemporary observers alike credit the debates instigated by the Praunheim film with initiating West Germany's gay movement. In January 1973, for example, a gay political action committee in Aachen informed readers of their newsletter that, in their city "as with so many others in West Germany, everything began with the screening of the Praunheim film."¹² The showing of *It's not the Homosexual Who's Perverse* across the country proved to have lasting impact. Less than a year later, gay groups from across the Federal Republic converged in the city of Münster, and on April 29, 1972, initiated what came to be the first gay rights demonstration in West Germany.¹³ More than seventy West German gay groups were formed over the next two years.¹⁴ By 1980, the number of gay groups nationwide had risen to 148.¹⁵ In November 1980, members of the Münster Homosexual Initiatives reflected with a hint of surprise, that the gay rights movement in the Federal Republic had begun not with a conflict with state authorities as it had during the Stonewall Riots in New York, but rather with the showing of a movie.¹⁶

Most relevant for this chapter is that the film and subsequent discussions also revealed a rift among West Germans with same-sex desires or orientations. Praunheim portrayed West Germany's middle-class, bourgeois (*bürgerlich*) homosexuals, who tended to be more conservative and belong to an older generation, as "conformist buffoons" who only wanted to parrot the dominant

¹² "Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers..." *GSR information*, Newsletter of the Gesellschaft für Sexualreform, Aachen. Nr. 1/1973, 1. Centrum Schwule Geschichte Köln (CSG) archives, Ordner # 270.

¹³ Andreas Pretzel and Volker Weiß, eds. *Rosa Radikale: Die Schwulenbewegung der 1970er Jahre* (Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2012).

¹⁴ Michael Holy, "Jenseits von Stonewall – Rückblicke auf die Schwulenbewegung in der BRD von 1969-1980" in *Rosa Radikale*, eds. Pretzel and Weiß, 46-48, ff. 16.

¹⁵ Sebastian Haunss, *Identität in Bewegung: Prozesse kollektiver Identität bei den Autonomen und in der Schwulenbewegung* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 202.

¹⁶ Flier from the Homosexuelle Initiative Münster, Nov. 1980. SARCH archives, Ordner 81: Orte-M, Folder: Münster. Recent historical scholarship has clearly demonstrated that gay rights activism was underway well before the June 1969 riots at the Stonewall Inn in New York City. But Stonewall continues to occupy the central place in popular conceptions of gay history as *the* start of gay rights activism. As this chapter shows, the "Stonewall myth" was also widespread in West Germany.

heterosexual society and enjoy a comfortable life of consumerism.¹⁷ These homosexuals, according to the film, were content with living with the concessions of the 1969 amendment of Paragraph 175, even though the law still represented blatant discrimination, because it regulated the sexual lives of its hetero- and homosexual citizens differently.

On the other hand was another group, to which Praunheim himself belonged. These were the individuals who positioned themselves as leftist revolutionaries who sought to liberate human sexuality from the traditional, Christian moral strictures imposed by mainstream society and politics. As such, they clearly situated themselves within the framework of the larger, social movements of the 1968-generation. These gay liberationists increasingly rebuked the labels “homosexual” and “homophile,” which harkened back to what they saw as conservative and conformist identities, and began using the term *schwul* (“gay”).¹⁸ This faction asserted itself as the more politically active group of the Federal Republic’s gay population, and ultimately became the leader of the national movement to emancipate West Germany’s gays and lesbians from social and legal repression.

One of the first, and eventually the largest and most significant of West Germany’s gay liberation groups was the *Homosexuelle Aktion Westberlin* (HAW). The HAW was founded on August 15, 1971, by a group of around one hundred students who credited Rosa von Praunheim’s film with cultivating the feeling of solidarity necessary to form an organization with the purpose of protesting for gay emancipation.¹⁹ While the HAW was established to address gay issues specifically, members of the group clearly saw the treatment of gays and lesbians as interrelated with broader social, economic, and political concerns.

¹⁷ “SPIEGEL Titel: “Bekant, daß ihr anders seid”, *Der Spiegel*, March 12, 1973, 47.

¹⁸ “*Homosexuell*” remained in use much longer in Germany than “homosexual” did in English. A partial explanation is that in the FRG, “*Homosexuelle/r*” was transformed into a political term/identity, thus the new equivalent of *gay* (*schwul*) did not come to prominence as quickly as it did in English. Among many politically active gays in the USA, the term “homosexual” was seen as cold and clinical; thus “gay” was adopted more widely and quickly.

¹⁹ *HAW Info #1* (Newsletter of the Homosexuelle Aktion Westberlin) Schwules Museum (SM) archives, “*HAW Info*,” bound collection.

Peter Hedenström, a founding member of the HAW, later expressed in an interview that from early on one of the concerns of the group was how to make gay activists visible to the rest of the West German public.²⁰ The desire for visibility stemmed from two sources. One was a political necessity; members of the HAW wanted to fight what they saw as a public misconception of all gays and lesbians as criminals or mentally ill. Moreover, increased visibility was meant to demonstrate that gays and lesbians, while a minority, could become a political force to be reckoned with. The push for gays and lesbians to “come out” and make their homosexuality openly known also served another, more important purpose. According to many of the gay liberationists, personally accepting and then making public one’s homosexuality was a precondition for liberating gays as a group from wider social stigmatization. In other words, the first step to ending suppression against gays and lesbians in society was for gay individuals to first end the self-suppression of their own sexuality. Members of the HAW’s feminist subcommittee asserted that adopting and wearing an official “gay symbol” in public would promote gay emancipation by forcing the symbol’s wearer to publicly identify as gay.²¹

This represents a drastic shift in political tactics from those employed by the homophile groups of the 1950s and 1960s. It also represents a shift in the perception of the relationship between sexuality and citizenship. Many of the assertions of homophile organizations – both in West Germany and the United States – were based on claims of citizens’ right to privacy. Citizens had the right to perform consensual sexual acts in private, including those that were homosexual in nature. The gay emancipation movement of the 1970s, however, renounced the claim to privacy, asserting

²⁰ Peter von Hedenström, interview with W. Jake Newsome. Berlin, February 11, 2014.

²¹ SM archives, Sammlung Holy. Feministenpapiere. The feminist sub-committee was composed solely of gay men who adhered to feminist ideology. The feminist sub-committee should not be confused with the HAW’s *Frauengruppe*, which was for lesbians.

instead that citizens in a democratic society – whether gay or straight – had not only the right to personally claim a sexual identity, but also the right to express one’s sexuality freely and openly.²²

The HAW’s feminist committee discussed at length the group’s need to adopt an official emblem, and it is clear that this was not simply a matter of aesthetics or branding. The committee hoped that the HAW’s logo would embolden all gays and lesbians in West Germany to join the work of the leftist gay groups throughout the entire country. Several possibilities were put forward for consideration. One suggestion was the Greek letter Lambda, which had been used by some of the American gay liberation groups because of the Lambda’s use in science to represent kinetic energy and potential. The Lambda was rejected, however, for being too abstract and not explicitly referring to homosexuality or oppression. Members also suggested a crossed out §175, but this suggestion was abandoned because it focused too narrowly on a single law.²³

In 1972, a Hamburg publishing house released the autobiography of a homosexual concentration camp survivor, written under the pseudonym Heinz Heger.²⁴ For members of the HAW feminist committee, the title of the slim book offered a solution to gay movement’s problem of identification and visibility: *The Men with the Pink Triangle*. In the fall of 1972, the subcommittee called for a vote during an HAW meeting to adopt the pink triangle as the group’s official logo, but the motion was defeated. Meeting minutes reveal that there was still a pervasive fear of publicly outing oneself as gay; too many members feared violent reactions or other forms of discrimination. The ideal of nation-wide emancipation for all West German gays would remain empty, committee members asserted, “until someone finally stands up and claims his gay

²² Diane Richardson, “Constructing Sexual Citizenship: Theorizing Sexual Rights,” *Critical Social Policy* 20, no. 1 (2000): 105-135.

²³ SM archives, Sammlung Holy. Feministenpapiere.

²⁴ Heinz Heger, *Die Männer mit dem rosa Winkel: Der Bericht eines Homosexuellen über seine KZ-Haft von 1939-1945* (Hamburg: Merlin-Verlag, 1972). Heinz Heger is a pseudonym for Josef Kohut.

identity publicly.”²⁵ A full year later, a second vote was called, and the feminist group reiterated its belief that the HAW – and West Germany’s gay movement at large – needed not just any symbol, but the pink triangle specifically. As support for their argument, they noted that the Frankfurt group *RotZSchwul* had already begun using the pink triangle unofficially. This time the vote passed, and in October 1973, the *Homosexuelle Aktion Westberlin* became the first group in the world to officially adopt the pink triangle, which three decades prior had been worn by homosexual concentration camp inmates, as a gay rights logo.²⁶

Gay liberation and rights groups across West Germany – from Munich, Nuremberg, and Stuttgart, to Frankfurt, Marburg, and Bielefeld – soon followed the HAW’s lead and began using the pink triangle in their demonstrations. In 1976, protesters in Würzburg, for example, carried a large banner, emblazoned with a pink triangle over the words: “Gays were murdered in concentration camps. And today?”²⁷ When the first issue of *Unter Uns* (“Between Us”), a gay magazine published in Cologne, appeared on the shelves in the summer of 1977, the letter from the editor suggested that while other symbols were prominent in other countries, the pink triangle was the symbol of the gay movement in West Germany.²⁸ Gays and lesbians in Wuppertal formed a political action group, and they chose the name “Pink Triangle Wuppertal.” Members told a journalist from a gay politics magazine that “The naming of the group should remind everyone of the largely unknown annihilation of homosexuals in Hitler-Germany...At the same time, we want our group’s symbol to indicate the continued oppression of homosexuals in 1970s Germany, too.”²⁹

²⁵ SM archives, Sammlung Holy. Feministenpapiere.

²⁶ SM archives, Sammlung Holy. Feministenpapiere.

²⁷ *Emanzipation* Nr. 3, 1976, Cover.

²⁸ *Unter Uns*, Nr. 1, May/June 1977, 3. The authors of *Gay News Germany* also commented on *Unter Uns*’ presentation of the gay rights symbols. *Gay News Germany* Nr. 75, Jahrgang 7, Juni 1977, pg. 12.

²⁹ “Aus den Gruppen,” *Emanzipation* Nr. 3, 1978, 35.

Ultimately, not everyone in the gay community approved of the pink triangle once it gained currency as a gay emancipation logo. Although lesbians were initially active in promoting the pink triangle and the gay liberation movement more broadly, by the 1980s there was a pronounced split between gay men and lesbians. This rift occurred in both West Germany and the United States largely as a result of second-wave feminism and the critique that the gay movement was too patriarchal and shunned issues of racial and gender diversity.³⁰ Many lesbians began to claim the black triangle as a symbol of lesbian activism, one that signified their history and their contemporary situation as comparable, yet distinct from that of gay men. The black triangle had denoted so-called “asocials” in the concentration camps, a broad category that included alcoholics, drug addicts, pacifists, prostitutes, and other individuals who did not fit into the Nazi ideal *Volk*. And there are records of lesbians being imprisoned as “asocial” for abandoning their alleged national duty to marry and procreate.³¹ There continued to be limited resistance to the pink triangle within the gay community well into the 1990s. Sarah Hart, a senior editor of the gay magazine *10 Percent* wrote in 1993, “To equate the discrimination and harassment of the present with the savagery inflicted upon the lesbians and gay men of the Holocaust trivializes their suffering.”³² And in 1996, political scientist Amy Elman wrote that, because the pink triangle “served as a distinctive emblem of Nazi heterosexism which signified and even hastened the destruction of gay men, I argue that it should be abandoned as a positive

³⁰ For more information on this divide, see: Vicki L. Eaklor, *Queer America: A people's GLBT History of the United States* (New York: the New Press, 2008), Chapter 6; also: Pretzel and Weiss, *Rosa Radikale*.

³¹ Claudia Schoppmann has conducted the most detailed research into the fate of lesbians in the Third Reich. See her works: *Nationalsozialistische Sexualpolitik und weibliche Homosexualität* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1991); *Zeit der Maskierung: Lebensgeschichten lesbischer Frauen im "Dritten Reich"* (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1993); *Days of Masquerade: Life Stories of Lesbians During the Third Reich*. Translated by Allison Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); and *Verbotene Verhältnisse: Frauenliebe 1938-1945* (Berlin: QuerVerlag, 1999).

³² Sara Hart, “A Dark Past Brought to Light,” *10 Percent* (Winter 1993): 74. This issue sparked a heated debate among the magazine’s readers. For more on this debate see Erik N. Jensen, “The Pink Triangle and Political Consciousness: Gays, Lesbians, and the Memory of Nazi Persecution,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 1/2, Special Issue: Sexuality and German Fascism. (Jan. – Apr., 2002): 319-349.

symbol for the movement.”³³ This limited opposition did not keep the pink triangle from becoming a core symbol of the gay liberation movement.

The spread of the pink triangle signifies the dissemination of a specific strain of gay activism throughout West Germany. The coming out of individuals, the formation of gay organizations, and the adoption of a gay liberation logo all created an awareness among gays and lesbians that there were people like themselves throughout the Federal Republic, who not only shared similar sexual desires or orientations, but an aspiration to engage in political activism, as well. And as more and more groups used the pink triangle and adhered to the goals of the gay liberation movement as laid out in numerous manifestos, group documents, and fliers, individuals who came out and joined the movement began sharing and using similar political strategies and reifying a particular definition of what it meant to be “gay.” This was a reflexive process, because just as activism shaped identity (political groups publicly defined to audiences what “gay” meant), the acceptance and embodiment of this particular gay identity also demanded political activism. Thus, by tracing the dispersal of the pink triangle, it is possible to track the spread of a certain, politically active same-sex identity.³⁴

Goals of Using the Pink Triangle in West Germany

There were many ideological reasons for adopting the pink triangle as a logo of gay liberation.

First, gays and lesbian individuals could publicly declare their homosexuality to themselves, family, friends, and to the wider public. The sudden proliferation of pink triangles on individuals,

³³ R. Amy Elman, “Triangles and Tribulations: The Politics of Nazi Symbols,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 30, no. 3 (1996): 1-11.

³⁴ It is important to keep in mind that although members of the gay rights movement claimed to represent the demands of gays and lesbians as a political minority, the definition of “gay” that they asserted was just one, specific idea of what it meant to be a same-sex desiring individual. It was a definition that not all individuals with same-sex desires, orientations, or identities accepted. For example, there were certainly people who were attracted to the same sex – and who may have lived openly as such – but who felt that this same-sex orientation was not something that defined them as a person; therefore, they did not identify with the gay rights movement.

in gay rights marches, and on fliers plastered on park benches, train station walls, and throughout universities in cities across the Federal Republic also acted as a collective “coming out” of the organized gay movement itself.

The logo also came to symbolize particular goals of the gay liberation movement beyond providing visibility. For example, groups in cities across West Germany demanded that their government officially acknowledge that homosexuals had suffered unjustly during the Third Reich and then compensate homosexual concentration camp survivors. After the men with the pink triangle had been excluded from the Federal Compensation Law of 1956, the next fifteen years witnessed no progress. In 1970, one observer stated that in a time in which German politicians and judges still adhered to the sentiment that homosexuals were “moral criminals,” restitution (*Wiedergutmachung*) was impossible.³⁵ In 1979, a lesbian activist in Mainz distributed a flier that reprinted the May 1957 decision of the Federal Constitutional Court, which stated that “The version of Paragraph 175 that was amended during the National Socialist regime does not represent a typical Nazi mindset, and the law was amended in an orderly [legal] fashion.” The flier’s author boldly claimed, “That means that the massacre of the homosexuals under fascism conforms with the spirit of the new, oh-so liberal, Federal Republic.” The flier then concluded that this was how West Germany’s highest court was able to justify the fact that gay concentration camp survivors would receive no compensation of any form.³⁶ For many West Germans, such fliers and information campaigns were their first exposure to the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. In this way, the use of the pink triangle in gay activism represented an “outing” of sorts for a history that had been suppressed for decades.

³⁵ Spectator: “Das dritte Reich noch nicht zu Ende,” *Uni*, Nr. 8 (1970), 8-9. SARCH archives, Ordner 87: NS Alte Quellen).

³⁶ “Schwulen gegen Faschismus und Unterdrückung,” flier by Viola Fliederwild. SARCH archives, Ordner 81: Orte-M, Folder: Mainz.

By the 1980s, thanks to the work of these gay groups in influencing politics and informing the West German public of the fate of homosexuals under Hitler, gay organizations gained political allies in the Bundestag. Members of both the Social Democratic Party and the new environmentalist party, the Greens, joined in the sustained effort to push for changes in the federal regulations regarding Holocaust compensation. When it became apparent that the federal government would not change its stance, activists and politicians pushed for the West German states to take up the cause. Chapter Four will demonstrate the challenges and limited successes of these local-led efforts to acknowledge and provide aid for homosexual concentration camp survivors.

Gay emancipation groups throughout the Federal Republic more broadly sought to end social and legal discrimination against West German gays and lesbians by informing the public about contemporary oppression and pushing for legal reforms. To this end, a team in the sociology department at the University of Bielefeld produced a documentary entitled *The Pink Triangle? But, that Was a Long Time Ago...*³⁷ Promotional material for the film, released in 1975, states that, “In the concentration camps of the Hitler-Fascists, there was a group of prisoners who are, still to this day, gladly ‘forgotten’ in the writing of history: the homosexuals.”³⁸ It quickly becomes apparent, however, that the film itself is not concerned with documenting the situation of “the men with the pink triangle.” Only five minutes at the beginning of the film are dedicated to informing viewers of the fate of homosexuals under Hitler. The rest of the documentary details various forms of discrimination that gays and lesbians faced in the Federal Republic. Ironically, referencing that this “gladly forgotten” chapter of history had

³⁷ *Rosa Winkel? Das ist doch schon lange vorbei...* Produced by Peter Recht, Christiane Schmerl, and Detlef Stoffel of the Fakultät für Soziologie, Uni Bielefeld (1975/1976).

³⁸ Promotional flier for Stoffel’s *Rosa Winkel?* film. The flier states that the film examines “the direct line of gay suppression from fascism to the present, and what gays are doing about it. SARCH archives, Ordner 87: NS Widerstand, Filme, Bent, and Bücher Verbrennung.

yet to be researched lent historical legitimacy to the filmmakers' argument in the present that gays and lesbians faced widespread discrimination. In a message that greatly resembled Hans-Joachim Schoeps' 1963 claim that "For homosexuals, the Third Reich hasn't ended yet," the *Pink Triangle?* film asserts that "After the war, the behavior of the Federal Republic's leaders and populations towards gays barely changed."³⁹ In many ways, the film was correct.

The documentary garnered attention and prompted political action among the emancipation groups. In July 1975, the Braunschweig Homosexual Taskforce (*Arbeitsgruppe Homosexualität Braunschweig*, AHB) led an information campaign throughout the city streets after watching and discussing the *Pink Triangle?* film. The local newspaper reported, "With a flier campaign, the AHB is currently attempting to bring a renewed awareness of the persecution of homosexuals under the National Socialist regime, and to compare it with the ostracization of homosexuals in the present day."⁴⁰ The *Braunschweiger Zeitung* continued, stating that, "The pink triangle has been chosen as their symbol, and it's worn on one's lapel as a symbol of emancipation, and also as a way to publicly denote oneself as 'different'... The AHB says that the present isolation gays must face is a form of mental persecution experienced at the workplace, in the search for housing, and in interactions with families and acquaintances."⁴¹ The AHB was retrieving a memory that was important in its own right, but then using it to make a point about contemporary issues, as well.

By utilizing the concentration camp badge and pointing out the continued existence and use of Paragraph 175, most organizations sought to draw direct connections between the situation of gays and lesbians in Nazi Germany with those living in the Federal Republic. Even

³⁹ SARCH archives, Ordner 87: NS Widerstand, Filme, Bent, and Bücher Verbrennung.

⁴⁰ Note the false use of "renewed." "Ein 'rosa Winkel' als Symbol der Emanzipation: Aktion der 'ABH'," in *Braunschweiger Zeitung* (July 15, 1975). SARCH archives, Ordner: Orte – Braunschweig.

⁴¹ "Ein 'rosa Winkel' als Symbol der Emanzipation: Aktion der 'ABH'," in *Braunschweiger Zeitung* (July 15, 1975). SARCH archives, Ordner: Orte – Braunschweig.

after the amendment of Paragraph 175 in 1969, gay activists continued verbally attacking the federal government, asserting that any separate law governing the sexual lives of homosexuals differently than those of heterosexuals was not only discriminatory, but also inconsistent with the ideals of democracy and citizenship. In 1973, Paragraph 175 was amended yet again. This time, the age of consent for male same-sex sex was lowered from twenty-one to eighteen, which was still higher than the age of consent for heterosexual sex. The wording of the law was also changed in 1973. The derogatory term “indecency” (*Unzucht*) was replaced with the more neutral “sexual acts” (*sexuelle Handlungen*); despite the change in terminology, the purpose of the law remained the same. The Initiative Group on Homosexuality in the city of Mainz (*Initiativegruppe Homosexualität Mainz*, IHM) also pointed out that despite small changes to Paragraph 175, all West Germans were still repressed by a series of laws governing sexuality, including Paragraphs 174, 175a, and 176.⁴²

While these activists were utilizing the pink triangle and narratives of the Nazi past to achieve specific goals, they were also fundamentally challenging the broader correlation between sexuality, citizenship, history, human rights, and civil liberties. The same flier from the Mainz gay group went on to express that as long as legislation, state actions, and social practices continued to deny homosexuality as a valid and legal form of sexual expression, “*everyone is denied the ability to develop and experience every aspect of their personalities.*”⁴³ Viola Fliederwild, a lesbian activist from Mainz, crafted and distributed a collection of fliers to gay groups across the Federal Republic. One of these fliers, compiled in 1979, asked readers:

⁴² Paragraph 174 of the criminal code prohibited incest and the sexual abuse of dependents, such as prisoners, institutionalized persons, or hospital patients. Paragraph 175a gave a severe punishment (up to ten years in prison) for any male who abused a position of power to sexually abuse another male. Paragraph 176 criminalized pedophilia, defined as sexual relations with a child fourteen years or younger.

⁴³ “Warmer Brüder gegen Kalte Krieger,” flier of the *Initiativegruppe Homosexualität Mainz*, SARCH archives, Ordner 81: Orte – M. Folder: Mainz. My emphasis added.

“Normalcy? No thanks!”⁴⁴ Fliederswild’s rhetoric, which was indicative of discourse gay activists employed in West Germany and the United States, challenged the limited and exclusionary definition of what “normalcy” entailed. In doing so, Fliederswild and others sought to challenge the assumption that one had to conform to mainstream definitions of “normal” in order to receive the full benefits of citizenship.⁴⁵

Another of Fliederswild’s fliers makes this goal explicit by expounding on what she proposed as twelve specific demands of the gay rights movement. Seven of the demands referred to legal matters and civil rights, including: the full repeal of Paragraph 175, an end to the raids on gay meeting places, the prohibition of the registration of gays and lesbians on “pink lists” compiled by the state, and the protection of “the full rights to freely develop one’s personality without any limits defined by age, sexual orientation, or anything else.”⁴⁶ Seven years later, the “Pink Ticket” – a gay party running for election to the University of Braunschweig’s student council – wrote in their campaign materials that, “The Nazis’ special law (*Sondergesetz*) was carried over into the criminal code of the FRG and was only weakened in 1969. Special legislation that discriminates against gays as ‘abnormal’ persists to this day, *despite the principle of equality that guides the Federal Republic’s constitution.*”⁴⁷

In the mid-1970s, *Links Unten*, a leftist newsletter published in Freiburg, ran an article entitled, “The Pink Triangle: the Meaning of an Old and New Gay Symbol,” in which the author highlighted the hypocrisy of a government whose constitution proclaimed to enshrine the liberties and equality of all citizens, yet continued to enforce a separate law governing the lives

⁴⁴ Flier compiled by Viola Fliederswild, July 1979. SARCH archives, Ordner 81: Orte – M. Folder: Mainz.

⁴⁵ Elisabeth George is currently writing a dissertation in which she shows how the LGBT communities in the Ozarks challenged the notion of “normalcy” beginning in the 1960s. See: “Queer Life in the Queen City and Beyond: Resistance, Space and Community Mobilization in the Southwest Missouri Ozarks, 1939-2003,” (doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo), especially her chapter: “‘Consensual Kissing is Not Sodomy:’ The Policing of Homosexuality and the Defense of *The Normal Heart*.”

⁴⁶ Flier compiled by Viola Fliederswild, July 1979. SARCH archives, Ordner 81: Orte – M. Folder: Mainz.

⁴⁷ “Wahlzeitung,” Rosa Lista. January 1986. SARCH archives, Ordner: Orte-Braunschweig. My emphasis added.

of a sexual (and increasingly political) minority. “We wear the pink triangle,” the article read, “to present ourselves publicly and to draw attention to the pseudo-democratic scams in our social order.”⁴⁸ A representative of Munich’s gay group, *Homosexuelle Aktion München*, appealed to his fellow West Germans, “We don’t want to hide in bars or alone at home anymore... We want to do everything that all other people get to do!”⁴⁹ The pleas from these Munich activists resembled those from Mainz’s Viola Fliederwild in that they sought to present gays and lesbians as normal West German citizens who should no longer have to feel shame and hide.

It is significant to note that the majority of gay groups in West Germany were not only involved in gay rights activism. The second oldest gay liberation group in the Federal Republic, *Rote Zelle Schwul (RotZSchwul)*, founded in Frankfurt am Main by Martin Dannecker (who also wrote the script for the influential Praunheim film), was deeply involved in the student movement. The group’s name – Red Cell Gay – signifies the Marxist leanings of the organization, and in West Germany’s first gay rights demonstration, Dannecker helped carry a large banner that read: “Brothers and sisters, ‘warm’ or not, fighting capitalism is our duty!”⁵⁰ West Berlin’s HAW took part in a number of social causes beyond gay rights. The first demonstration that the group ever participated in, for example, was a march for workers’ rights.⁵¹ Even after the gay liberation movement became less radical and revolutionary by the end of the 1970s, gay rights groups across the Federal Republic continued to advocate for a wide range of issues facing minorities. In September 1980, members of

⁴⁸ “Der Rosa Winkel: Bedeutung eines alten und neuen Schwulenabzeichens,” *Links Unten*, Nr. 4. SARCH archives, Ordner: Berlin – 1971-1985.

⁴⁹ “Wir Tragen den Rosa Winkel, *Blatt*, 48. No date given. SARCH archives, Ordner: Berlin – 1971-1985.

⁵⁰ “Warm brothers” (*warme Brüder*) was a derogatory term for homosexual men. The motto rhymes in German: “*Brüder und Schwestern, ob warm oder nicht, Kapitalismus bekämpfen ist unsere Pflicht!*” This banner and motto have become relatively famous in German gay history. For an overview see: Holy, “Jenseits von Stonewall.”

⁵¹ Peter Hedenström, interview with W. Jake Newsome. Berlin. February 11, 2014. The American scholar and activist James Steakley also mentioned this in an interview on November 19, 2015. Gay activists advocating for a wide range of issues was not unique to West Germany. American gay activists also campaigned for a broad range of civil rights. And the recent film *Pride* depicts the true story of British gays and lesbians taking part in a 1984 coal miner’s strike. *Pride*, directed by Matthew Warchus (BBC Films, 2014).

the Nuremberg gay group *Fliederlich* joined with other activists to protest against “Stop the Foreigners,” an anti-immigrant initiative led by the extreme right wing National Democratic Party of Germany.⁵² Gay activists in Cologne often used the pink triangle and other references to the Third Reich as they fought the rise of neo-Nazi violence against minorities in the late 1980s (*Image 1*).⁵³

It is clear, then, that gay activists’ use of the pink triangle and narratives of the Nazi past were significant beyond gay activism specifically. These protesters did not consider themselves to be solely gay rights activists; they advocated for a number of issues, all of which they understood as interconnected and interdependent. Gay rights, workers’ rights, immigrant rights, the right to freely develop one’s personality – all of these, and more – were considered necessary components of achieving full human rights. Gay rights, then, were just one facet of defining a broader understanding of personhood, and therefore a broader definition of civil rights that, everyone – by nature of being an individual and citizen – should expect to enjoy as a member of a liberal, democratic society.

Gay activists in the Federal Republic understood that Germany’s recent history added a particular potency to the debates over civil rights and citizenship in a liberal democracy. In this context, the discourse used by gay activists often presented the



Image 1: “Stop the Brown Danger – Gays and Lesbians against Nazis!” This sticker was posted in protest to Neo-Nazi violence. Source: CSG archives, Ordner #278.

⁵² “Schwule gegen Nazis!” Open letter to “Sisters in Wiesbaden,” from Wolfgang Senft. January 12, 1981. SARCH archives, Ordner 81: Orte: N-R; folder Nürnberg.

⁵³ Ordner #278 at the Centrum Schwule Geschichte Köln archives is dedicated to gay groups’ reaction to homophobic violence by neo-Nazi groups.

treatment of homosexuals – as a sexual and political minority – as a litmus test for the extent to which Germans had actually progressed from the era of fascism. In August 1979, the General Homosexual Action Committee (*Allgemeine Homosexuelle Aktionsgemeinschaft*, AHA), which was founded in West Berlin in 1974 as an alternative to the leftist-oriented HAW, published a pamphlet in which the group asserted, “Our gay way of life is certainly not the norm for the whole society, but the treatment of gays is a way to gauge the development of freedom in society.”⁵⁴ In 1989, on the fortieth anniversary of West Germany’s founding, the Munich gay magazine *Südwind* weighed in on this gauging of freedom in society. “Forty years of democracy and freedom in the Federal Republic of Germany are not forty years of freedom for gays.”⁵⁵

Ultimately, the success of the pink triangle as a gay activist logo was tied to the fact that it was recognizable to West Germans as a concentration camp symbol. This was due to a greater awareness of the details and nature of the Holocaust in the broader public by the 1970s. Members of the 1968 generation, the first born after the defeat of Hitler, expressed a greater willingness to confront more directly the crimes of the Nazi state, but also the role that everyday Germans (their parents and grandparents) had played in Nazi atrocities.⁵⁶ Part of this process of coming to terms with the Nazi past was exploring the hitherto largely ignored history of the Nazis’ non-Jewish victims, rather than focusing primarily – as much of the previous generation had – on the suffering of Germans themselves. Therefore, the gay emancipation movement’s rediscovery, and then politicization, of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals is part of the larger West German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or attempts to come to terms with the Nazi past. Peter Hedenström, a

⁵⁴ “Schwule für den Frieden,” pamphlet of the *Allgemeine Homosexuelle Aktionsgemeinschaft*, SARCH archives, Ordner: Orte-Berlin, 1971,1985.

⁵⁵ “40 Jahre BRD,” *Südwind*, Nr. 4 (1989), 4.

⁵⁶ Dagmar Herzog demonstrates that sexuality played a vital role in the West German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in her book *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

founding member of West Berlin's HAW who was present at the meeting in which the group voted to adopt the pink triangle, later recalled that the symbol was perfect for the emerging gay liberation movement not only because it solved the problem of gay visibility, but because, "at its core, the pink triangle represented a piece of our German history that still needed to be dealt with."⁵⁷

Gay organizations were not the first to integrate Holocaust imagery into their political rhetoric. As information about the atrocities of the Third Reich spread, the Holocaust came to represent what historian Wilfried Mausbach called a "shared moral universe," a means through which contemporary actors came to conceptualize notions of guilt, innocence, complicity, good, and evil.⁵⁸ Protests against America's war in Vietnam, for example, drew endless comparisons to the Holocaust. In 1967, the philosopher Günter Anders suggested that, "the Vietnamese, charred by napalm, resembled the Jews cremated in Auschwitz."⁵⁹ The treatment of African-Americans in the United States drew comparisons with the situation of Jews living in Hitler's Germany.⁶⁰ Activists in the American Disability Rights Movement also employed the image of the Holocaust from time to time. Dr. Bill Bronston, who helped expose the horrid conditions of residents living in New York State's Willowbrook State School once claimed that, "for many, Willowbrook was like a concentration camp, a living hell of neglect," adding that, "Nobody ever left the institution except when they died."⁶¹ Thus, when gay activists adopted the concentration camp badge as the

⁵⁷ Peter Hedenström, interview with W. Jake Newsome. Berlin. February 11, 2014.

⁵⁸ Wilfried Mausbach, "America's Vietnam in Germany – Germany in America's Vietnam: On the Relocation of Spaces and the Appropriation of History," in Belinda Davis, Wilfried Mausbach, Martin Klimke, and Carla MacDougal, eds. *Changing the World, Changing Oneself: Political Protest and Collective Identities in West Germany and the US in the 1960s and 1970s* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 54. See also: Harold Marcuse, "The Revival of Holocaust Awareness in West Germany, Israel, and the United States," in *1968: The World Transformed*, eds. Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker. Publications of the German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 421-438.

⁵⁹ Günter Anders, "Der amerikanische Krieg in Vietnam oder Philosophisches Wörterbuch heute," *Das Argument* 9, no. 45 (1967): 349-97, esp. 360.

⁶⁰ Dan Puckett, "Reporting on the Holocaust: The View from Jim Crow Alabama," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 25, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 219-251.

⁶¹ David Goode, Darryl Hill, Jean Reis, and William Bronston, *A History and Sociology of the Willowbrook State School* (Washington, D.C.: American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 2013), 137-140.

logo of gay rights activism, they stepped into a shared moral universe in which others already navigated.

The Pink Triangle in Transatlantic Activism

The widespread social and cultural changes of the 1960s also brought new understandings of sexuality, politics, and the relationship between the two in the United States. Those who supported sexual liberation challenged the primacy of traditional, heterosexual, monogamous relationships, and sought to free alternative expressions of sexuality from stigmatization. Across the Western world, and especially on the American West Coast, countercultures such as “hippies” promoted “free love,” asserting that human sexuality was a beautiful, creative force that should not be stifled.⁶² Gradually, premarital sex became less taboo and the sale of contraceptives rose. Among the changes brought by the sexual revolution was the assertion that sexuality was a fundamental aspect of personhood. As such, there should be no need to suppress or keep private one’s sexuality, whether it was heterosexual or homosexual in nature.

It was in this atmosphere that the homophile activist politics of the 1950s and 1960s gave way to gay liberation tactics. The Stonewall Inn tavern in New York City was a favorite gathering spot for local gays and lesbians, particularly those who were poor, people of color, transgendered, or gender non-conforming. One June 28, 1969, Stonewall patrons violently resisted a routine police raid and initiated five days of riots.⁶³ It was not the first time that gays and lesbians had resisted discrimination or police brutality by force, but the Stonewall Riots

Kathryn Lawton, a doctoral candidate at the State University of New York at Buffalo is currently writing a dissertation on the disability rights movement and the long processes of deinstitutionalization in the United States.

⁶² While the hippie and free love culture was most prominent on the American West Coast, there were hippie communities across the US Midwest and upper South. For more, see Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁶³ Every history of the gay rights movement will contain information on the Stonewall Riots. For some introductory information, see: Marc Stein, *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2012); and Eaklor, *Queer America*.

ultimately led to gay and lesbian demonstrations across the country, and is often cited as the beginning of the gay rights movement in the United States.⁶⁴ In many ways, the American gay liberation movement acted as a model for similar developments in other countries, such as West Germany, whose own gay rights movement began two years later in the summer of 1971. This included an emphasis on the political implications of coming out. Gay activists used slogans like “Gay is Good!” as a way to encourage other gays and lesbians to come out, and as a way to alter the widespread conception that homosexuality was criminal or a mental illness.⁶⁵ The New York-based Gay Activists Alliance began using the lowercase Greek letter Lambda as a gay rights logo in 1969, and it soon became a way to provide visibility for individuals and the movement.

In August 1974, however, gay activists in New York City donned a new symbol. The activists wore pink triangle armbands as they protested in support of a gay rights bill that was in the city council. The bill was opposed by a group of Orthodox Jews, and David Thorsdtad, one of the organizers of the gay supporters, later recalled that picketers wore the pink triangle “in an effort to demonstrate that homosexual men had been fellow victims with Jews (and others) in the Nazi concentration camps.”⁶⁶ The arrival of the pink triangle in New York City came just six months after the *Homosexuelle Aktion Westberlin* adopted it as its own logo. The swiftness with which knowledge of homosexuals under the swastika traversed the Atlantic is telling. Organized gay liberation movements in each national context were still young, and local gay press outlets were only in their early years. There was not an international gay press with a widespread

⁶⁴ The origins of the American gay rights movement are actually much more complicated. For a fascinating study on why Stonewall became the gay rights legend while other riots did not, see: Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crago, “Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth,” *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 5 (October 2006): 724-751.

⁶⁵ “Gay is good” was coined by famed activists Frank Kameny. See: David K. Johnson, “Franklin E. Kameny” in Vern L. Bullough, *Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context* (New York: the Haworth Press, 2002), 209-218.

⁶⁶ David Thorstad, president of the Gay Activist Alliance (1975-76), in an e-mail message posted to AOL Gay and Lesbian Community Forum on March 13, 1996. Quoted in Jensen, “The Pink Triangle and Political Consciousness,” 328.

readership to speak of, and there was no historical scholarship on the Nazi persecution of homosexuals.⁶⁷ Heinz Heger's autobiography, *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, was not yet available in English. The lack of literature on the topic in general indicates that this information had to spread through personal interactions.

This personal transfer of information and memories was possible because, like the other social movements of the “long sixties,” the gay rights movements in the United States and West Germany were not simply international. They were truly transnational.⁶⁸ Activists across the world envisioned the collective struggle for individual rights as connecting them to an imagined community of global revolution.⁶⁹ The German activist Joscha Schmierer later recalled, “In our eyes, the shrinking world...once again coalesced into a unified world in 1968, in which not only was everything bound up with everything else, but everyone could also act globally in an effective way.”⁷⁰ Advances in telecommunications technology allowed individuals and groups to communicate with likeminded contemporaries in distant corners of the globe more quickly. As the costs of international travel lessened, it became easier for people themselves to cross borders and interact with fellow activists. In short, this transfer of information and ideas created

⁶⁷ The International Committee on Sexual Equality (ICSE) was founded by the Dutch *Cultuur en Ontspanningscentrum* (COC) in 1951, and acted until its dissolution in 1963 as an umbrella organization that encouraged international cooperation among national homophile organizations. The ICSE collected and sold copies of national homophile publications such as *ONE* (USA) and *Der Kreis* (Switzerland) to their relatively small international audience. For more on the ICSE, see Leila Rupp, “The Persistence of Transnational Organizing,” *American Historical Review* 116, nr. 4 (Oct. 2011): 1014-1039.

⁶⁸ Making the distinction between “transnational” and “international” is a way to refer to two different phenomena. “International” connotes a process that happens concurrently in more than one nation. “Transnational,” on the other hand, describes something – in this case a social movement – that international in scope, in that it takes place in more than one nation. But “transnational” means that there is a flow of information, people, ideas, etc. across national borders. So, for a phenomenon to be transnational, events in the separate countries have to be truly linked rather than happening simultaneously.

⁶⁹ Fink, et al. 1968, 21.

⁷⁰ Joscha Schmierer, “Der Zauber des großen Augenblicks: Der international Traum von ’68,” in *Die Früchte der Revolte: Über die Veränderung der politischen Kultur durch die Studentenbewegung*, ed. Lothar Baier et al. (Berlin, 1988), 124-25.

transnational identities that were shared via a public sphere that encompassed and connected individuals and activists groups around the world.

The recent scholarship on the global movements of the 1968-era completely ignores the gay rights movement despite the fact that gay activists participated in and drew from other movements that are traditionally considered part of the 1968 movement.⁷¹ As gay rights activists also protested against war, against the use of atomic power, and for workers' and minority rights, they contributed to the growing atmosphere of global protest. Through international exchanges of information and sharing of history, members of the gay emancipation movement became central players in the processes that ultimately formed transnational identities among protestors across the globe. Through such exchanges, gay activists in West Germany were able to learn about the Stonewall Riots in New York and then inspire Germans to fight for gay liberation. Similarly, North American activists learned about the pink triangle and the Nazis' persecution of homosexuals and subsequently used that history in their own activism.

The West German gay activist Peter Hedenström recently recalled that it was possible for readers of the West German gay press to get information about important developments in the US gay movement, since there were always short articles on gay news in foreign countries.⁷²

While most gay and lesbian activists may have received information from the press, my research indicates that individuals from West Germany and the United States also travelled across the

⁷¹ For example, *1968: The World Transformed*, edited by Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) contains seventeen chapters on different themes or geographical locations, but none of the studies even mention the gay rights movement. Similarly, *Changing the World, Changing Oneself: Political Protest and Collective Identities in West Germany and the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s*, edited by Belinda Davis, Wilfried Mausbach, Martin Klimke, and Carla MacDougall (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010) contains studies on the New Left, the African American civil rights movement, protests against the Vietnam War, Cold War politics, and terrorism, but does not even have an entry for "homosexual" or "gay" in the index. Martin Klimke's recent book *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010) also ignores the existence of gays and lesbians in the transatlantic student movement.

⁷² Beginning in 1982, the *Schwule Pressechau* hired a professional clipping service to collect articles from the West German press that dealt with gay and lesbian issues in Western Europe and North America. The Schwules Museum in Berlin has the complete *Schwule Presseschau* in their library.

Atlantic, bringing with them news, ideas, and the foundation for a transatlantic sense of camaraderie. Hedenström personally travelled to the United States on numerous occasions and made contacts that would ultimately come to shape the development of gay activism and gay life in Berlin for decades.⁷³

Hedenström's first time in the United States was in the early 1970s, at the very beginning of the gay emancipation movements. He had met an American who was staying in West Berlin, and together with him travelled back to New York City. There, Hedenström spent time at the famous Firehouse, which was a gay community center and headquarters for the Gay Activist Alliance, a group whose goal was to "secure basic human rights, dignity, and freedom for all gay people."⁷⁴ Hedenström later recalled of his interaction with members of the GAA: "I learned many things from these people and brought some stuff back to [West] Berlin." At meetings of the HAW, Hedenström told his fellow members what activists were doing in New York, but he asserted that on some level, it was about more than politics or strategies. "It was personal. Our feeling was that we were discussing our family, so I had to tell our people here what was going on over there."⁷⁵ Hedenström's comments reveal that there was not only an awareness that similar struggles were underway across the Atlantic, but that activists in West Germany possessed a feeling of kinship with American activists, and these feelings were fostered through transatlantic ties.

Hedenström travelled to the United States for a second time in the late 1970s, spending two to three more months in New York City. While he worked as a dishwasher at a gay club, he sought to get involved in American gay politics. "I was very outspoken, very assertive at that

⁷³ Peter Hedenström, interview with W. Jake Newsome. Berlin. February 11, 2014.

⁷⁴ Toby Marotta, *The Politics of Homosexuality: How Lesbians and Gay Men have Made Themselves a Political and Social Force in Modern America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981).

⁷⁵ Peter Hedenström, interview with W. Jake Newsome. Berlin. February 11, 2014.

time,” he recalled.⁷⁶ Hedenström’s outgoing and emphatic personality also brought him into the milieu of people who would come to be influential in the American gay movement, such as the playwright Larry Kramer and film historian Vito Russo. These contacts created more opportunities for transatlantic flows of people and information. Hedenström was so impressed with Russo’s slideshow “The Celluloid Closet,” for example, that he convinced Russo to come back to Berlin with him and present the material to a West German audience.⁷⁷

Rosa von Praunheim, whose film played such an influential role in the West German gay movement, also represents one of these transatlantic connections. In 1942, Praunheim was born in Riga, Latvia with the name Holger Radtke.⁷⁸ In the 1960s, the aspiring filmmaker took his new name: “Rosa,” the German for “pink,” was a reference to the pink triangle; “Praunheim” was the name of the Frankfurt neighborhood in which he grew up. He had made several short films throughout the 1960s, but his breakthrough was *It’s not the Homosexual Who’s Perverse*. Interestingly, Praunheim states that as he and Martin Dannecker shot the film, they had no idea about the gay rights movement that was underway across the Atlantic.⁷⁹ In May 1971, two Americans, whom he had met in Berlin, invited him to visit in New York, and just a month before his film was to premiere, Praunheim made his first trip to the United States. It was during this trip that he first learned about the Stonewall Riots and the militant beginning of the

⁷⁶ Peter Hedenström, interview with W. Jake Newsome. Berlin. February 11, 2014.

⁷⁷ “The Celluloid Closet” was a presentation consisting of a lecture, slideshow, and film clips that Russo gave across the US and Europe between 1972 and 1982, in which he explored the ways that Hollywood had portrayed gay and lesbian characters. In 1981, Russo published his research as a book: *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981). In 1996, Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman wrote and directed a documentary, *The Celluloid Closet*, based on Russo’s research.

⁷⁸ Anja Reich, “Erst jetzt hat Rosa von Praunheim erfahren, dass er in einem Rigaer Gefängnis geboren wurde und wer seine leiblich Mutter ist. Ein Gespräch mit dem Filmemacher über die lange Suche nach sich selbst,” *Berliner Zeitung*, February 16, 2008. http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/erst-jetzt-hat-rosa-von-praunheim-erfahren--dass-er-in-einem-rigaer-gefaengnis-geboren-wurde-und-wer-seine-leibliche-mutter-ist--ein-gespraech-mit-dem-filmemacher-ueber-die-lange-suche-nach-sich-selbst-warum-bin-ich-so-verrueckt-,10810590_10539432.html (Accessed January 23, 2016.)

⁷⁹ Rosa von Praunheim, *Armee der Liebenden oder Aufstand der Perversen* (Munich: Trikont Verlag, 1979) 7.

American gay rights movement.⁸⁰ He spent his days at the Firehouse discussing ideas and strategies with members of the Gay Activists Alliance. And although he had not known about the American gay movement before his trip, he became emboldened to learn that many of the messages he had recently included in his soon-to-be-released *It's not the Homosexual Who's Perverse* paralleled the characteristics of the American movement that he found so attractive: the necessity for radical political action, the importance of making one's homosexuality public, and the need for solidarity and camaraderie among gays and lesbians of all backgrounds.⁸¹

Praunheim's "fury against the passivity and lethargy of the gays in Germany" motivated him to devote his work to informing West German gays and lesbians about what was going on in the United States, as well as using American gay activism as a model to build a similarly militant, radical movement in the Federal Republic.⁸² After the premiere of *It's not the Homosexual Who's Perverse*, Praunheim spent the next four years travelling back and forth between West Germany and the United States, working on a documentary about the American gay rights movement. He visited several different cities, including New York, Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Boston, and conducted interviews with prominent gay individuals, such as Christopher Isherwood, and influential activists such as Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon (founders of the Daughters of Bilitis), Vito Russo, and Jim Kepner. The documentary *The Army of Lovers, or The Uprising of the Perverse* was released in 1979, along with a 325-page book of the same name that contained transcripts of interviews, as well as addresses and contact information for

⁸⁰ Rosa von Praunheim, *50 Jahre pervers: Die Sentimentalen Memoiren des Rosa von Praunheim* (Cologne: Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1993), 127-128.

⁸¹ Praunheim, *50 Jahre pervers*, 128.

⁸² Praunheim, *Armee der Liebenden*, 9.

thirty-five gay organizations in thirteen different American cities.⁸³ This would be a valuable resource for gay West Germans seeking to establish contact with their American brethren.

Praunheim was not the only German to document their transatlantic journeys. In the mid-1970s, Patrick Schneider spent three months travelling around the United States, visiting New York City, San Francisco, New Orleans, and Chicago. Upon his return to West Berlin, Schneider composed a thirty-two-page report of his trip. The purpose or intended audience of the report is unclear, but it is evident that the trip made quite an impression on Schneider; he named it “From the Long and Difficult March into the New Society: Rays of Light from the American Gay Movement.”⁸⁴

There are other examples of West Germans and Americans crossing the Atlantic, though not always in an explicitly political context. The West Berliner Peter Hedenström recalled that there always seemed to be Americans in the gay scenes of the city. When asked what those Americans were doing there, Hedenström responded, “I’m not sure. But there seemed to always be at least one around. They were just travelling, I guess.”⁸⁵ Roland Müller, who considered himself a leftist activist in the 1970s, travelled to San Francisco in 1982 to attend the first “Gay Olympics,” an international, gay sporting event that has since been forced to change its name to the Gay Games.⁸⁶ The experience had a profound impact on how Müller understood himself and the world. “To see all of these gay people – from all over the world – gathered in one place, not

⁸³ *Armee der Liebenden oder Aufstand der Perversen* (1979) directed and produced by Rosa von Praunheim. The book of the same title was published by Munich’s Trikont Verlag in 1979.

⁸⁴ Patrick Schneider, “Vom langen und schwierigen Marsch in die neue Gesellschaft: Streiflichter aus der amerikanischen GAY-Bewegung.” SARCH archives, Ordner: Ausland U-Z.

⁸⁵ Peter Hedenström, interview with W. Jake Newsome. Berlin. February 11, 2014.

⁸⁶ Roland Müller, interview with W. Jake Newsome. Berlin. November 26, 2013. For some works that explore the social and political implications of sport, see Susan K. Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women’s Sport* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); and Erik N. Jensen, *Body by Weimar: Athletes, Gender, and German Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

afraid to say ‘I’m gay’...It was really an empowering moment.”⁸⁷ A letter received by the Marburg Gay Group (*Schwulengruppe Marburg*) in the spring of 1979 reveals that individuals sought connections even when they themselves did not or could not cross national boundaries. Harold C. Walker, a resident of San Francisco, had written the letter and asserted that he was looking to “meet and correspond with others in the Organization.”⁸⁸ The language of Walker’s letter seems general enough that he could make multiple copies and distribute them far and wide. The archives do not provide an insight into whether Marburg’s gay group replied to Walker or not, but the letter itself is yet another example of personal, transatlantic ties.

The Pink Triangle and “Grafted Memories”

These transatlantic connections help explain how the pink triangle and information about the experiences of homosexuals under Hitler made their way to the United States in the face of a complete lack of information available in English. The absence of published material makes it difficult to trace the flow of this information and pinpoint the moment when knowledge of the pink triangle and its past arrived in the United States. My research, however, has led me to believe that we can say with a degree of certainty that it was a particular individual, James Steakley, who first introduced Americans to the treatment of homosexuals under Hitler.

In 1946, James “Jim” Steakley was born in Miami, Florida, though he and his family did not live there for long. Steakley’s father was an officer in the US Army Air Corps (a predecessor to the US Air Force), and they moved around often. Beginning in 1956, Steakley’s family spent four years living in Wiesbaden, West Germany. The time spent abroad affected him deeply and was the reason he ultimately chose to pursue studies in German language and literature. Upon the

⁸⁷ Roland Müller, interview with W. Jake Newsome. Berlin. November 26, 2013.

⁸⁸ Letter from Harold C. Walker to the Marburg HAG (Homosexuelle Aktionsgruppe), March 1, 1979. Sent with the letter was a photograph of Walker. SARCH archives, Ordner 81: Orte – M, folder: Marburg.

completion of his senior year as an undergraduate at the University of Chicago, Steakley got the chance to return to West Germany. He received a scholarship to spend the 1968-1969 academic year at the University of Frankfurt. “Well, that was *the* year, you know,” Steakley commented, “and it shaped me in a lot of ways.”⁸⁹

Steakley returned to the US in the fall of 1969 to begin graduate school at Cornell University. During two years of coursework, he decided to write his dissertation on German literature and wanted to include an introductory chapter on German history to provide context for the rest of his work. As such, he crossed the Atlantic again in 1971 to live for a year in West Berlin. Arriving just weeks after the premiere of the Praunheim film, Steakley quickly immersed himself in the nascent gay rights movement. He joined the newly-formed HAW and developed an extensive network of connections throughout the city.⁹⁰ It was during this stay in West Berlin that Steakley learned of the fate suffered by homosexuals during the Third Reich.

After returning to the US to work on his doctorate, Steakley received an invitation in the spring of 1973 to move to Toronto to collaborate on a project with a gay liberation group. The group had established a gay liberation newspaper, which they called *The Body Politic*. The periodical was meant to inform readers in North America about important developments in the gay rights movement. Upon learning about his findings about gays in the Third Reich, the collective encouraged Steakley to provide a series on Germany’s gay history. His work appeared in a five part series, and when his article, “Homosexuals and the Third Reich” appeared in January 1974, it proved to be a definitive moment in the incorporation of the Nazi past into

⁸⁹ James Steakley, interview with W. Jake Newsome. November 19, 2015.

⁹⁰ Steakley also reiterated that the HAW was comprised almost exclusively of leftist, Marxist students from universities around West Berlin. As a result, the HAW participated in a number of demonstrations that were not explicitly or exclusively for gay rights. James Steakley, interview with W. Jake Newsome. November 19, 2015.

American gay politics.⁹¹ Steakley was the first to offer a substantive account of homosexual persecution during the Third Reich to an English-speaking audience. By the end of the decade, and especially by the 1980s, gay activists in the United States used the pink triangle and other Holocaust imagery widely in their activism. In many instances, American gay activists used the pink triangle in ways similar to how their West German counterparts did. The logo fit well the American activists' emphasis on the importance of "coming out." A 1987 flier made this connection explicit; imposed over a large, pink triangle was the motto: "Come out for Yourself; come out for your Friends; come out for Justice!"⁹²

It would be mistaken to assert that Steakley simply imported a German collective memory of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals across the Atlantic and then passed it along to North American readers of his work. The transfer of ideas, memories, and historical information is not static. Understandings of a topic change as they are introduced in a new setting and to a new audience. The term "collective memory," then does not adequately capture the complex processes that allowed the gay community in the US to adopt German memories as their own when there were no American gays or lesbians in Nazi concentration camps. Instead, I suggest that "grafted memories" may be a more apt metaphor, because it implies that although memories may originate externally, they ultimately become enmeshed in one's own subjective memory and sense of place in history.⁹³ As memories of Nazi persecution were grafted to fit an American context, they were enriched with meanings that were both common to and distinct from their German origins. But, like medical grafts, grafted memories only function successfully if they are a good fit. These memories of a gay German history "fit" American activists because they, too,

⁹¹ James Steakley, "Homosexuals and the Third Reich," *Body Politic*, January/February 1974, 1.

⁹² Flier. THP archives, MS Coll: 5, Series I: March on Washington (1987) – Subseries A: General, Fliers & Pamphlets.

⁹³ The concept of "grafted memories" was inspired by Alison Landsberg's *Prosthetic Memories: the Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

were gay. Thus, the formation of pink triangle memories in West Germany and the United States helped form the basis of a shared, transnational gay history that connected gays and lesbians on both sides of the Atlantic.

Gay activists in the Federal Republic of Germany used the pink triangle as a way of affirming a positive identity for its wearer, but the symbol also had a very specific, charged meaning in the German context. As a way to bring widespread acknowledgment of homosexual suffering during the Third Reich (in order to assure legal compensation for survivors), the pink triangle in West Germany was part of a unique process of coming to terms with a Nazi past that American activists using the same symbol did not share. Moreover, the continued existence of Paragraph 175 – even after its amendments in 1969 and 1973 – remained a clear target for West German gay activists comparing discrimination against gays and lesbians with Nazi ideologies and practices. In America, the rhetoric of gay activists using the pink triangle was different and often more varied than in the West German context. When American activists used the logo, they tended to focus on the general victimization of homosexuals in the past and present, rather than focus on the repeal of specific laws or the compensation of Holocaust victims. This nuanced, yet significant difference again highlights that these grafted memories took on a life of their own in America.

One of the most significant differences in the American and German memories lies in the ways in which Americans characterized the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. In general, activists in the US made very little differentiation between the treatment of homosexuals under the Hitler regime from that of other groups, such as the Jews, who were singled out for complete extermination. In essence, what emerged was a narrative of systematic gay genocide, or what

some even called a “Homocaust,” with hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of gay victims.⁹⁴ West German scholars, who began to research the Nazi persecution of homosexuals in earnest in the 1980s, later refuted the notion that the Nazi regime sought to eradicate all homosexuals in the Reich, and discredited such high numbers of victims.⁹⁵ Moreover, Joachim Müller, a scholar on the topic in Germany, claimed that the gay genocide narrative originated in the United States, where the gay rights movement found it politically expedient to draw parallels between the Jewish Holocaust and an alleged gay Homocaust.⁹⁶ It is true that James Steakley’s 1974 article contended that homosexuals were systematically hunted and murdered by the Nazi state in a way that mirrored the genocide of the Jews. Moreover, while he admitted that it was impossible to know how many homosexual men were thrown into concentration camps, Steakley estimated that it was “perhaps hundreds of thousands.” The article, along with *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*, the book he published the following year, which included a chapter entitled, “The Final Solution,”⁹⁷ framed the Nazi persecution of homosexuals in terms of a gay Holocaust.

⁹⁴ In a lecture given at New York University in 1974, Louis Crompton argued that Hitler’s persecution of homosexuals was only the latest chapter of a gay genocide that stretched back to the Christianization of the Roman Empire. See: Louis Crompton, “Gay Genocide: From Leviticus to Hitler,” in *The Gay Academic*, edited by Louie Crew, 67-91 (Palm Springs: ETC Publications, 1978). Purposefully using terminology that explicitly compared the homosexual and Jewish persecution under the Third Reich, Frank Rector spoke of a “gay genocide” and “extermination” in *The Nazi Extermination of Homosexuals* (New York: Stein and Day, 1981). Richard Plant’s famous 1988 book *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals* also promotes these ideas, and even as recently as 1991, the Italian historian Massimo Consoli used “Homocaust” as the title of his book, Massimo Consoli, *Homocaust: il nazismo e la persecuzione degli omosessuali*, (Ragusa: La Fiaccola, 1991). Also, www.homocaust.org remains an active website today, maintained by Lewis Oswald.

⁹⁵ The historiography on the topic will be examined in detail in Chapter Four. For works that argue against the “gay genocide” narrative, see: Burkhard Jellonnek, *Homosexuelle unter dem Hakenkreuz: die Verfolgung von Homosexuellen im Dritten Reich* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 1990) and Burkhard Jellonnek and Rüdiger Lautmann, eds., *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle: Verdrängt und ungesühnt* (Schöningh: Paderborn, 2002).

⁹⁶ Joachim Müller, “Zum ‘Mahnmalstreit’ in Berlin 2006/2007, um Kuss-Symbole-Widmung-Zielsetzung. Versuch einer Materialsammlung. Vergleichbarkeit der Lebenssituation lesbischer Fraeun mit der Lebenssituation schwuler Männer im Nationalsozialismus (und nach 1945): Ergebnisse der Faktensuche in einer Auswahl verfügbarer Quellen.” 2007. Unpublished. SARCH archives.

⁹⁷ James D. Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany* (New York: Arno Press, 1975).

Yet, by his own account, Steakley got his information about Hitler's homosexual victims from German sources. While in West Berlin in 1971-72, he read Heinz Heger's autobiography and also discovered *The Fate of the Ostracized: The Persecution of Homosexuals in the Third Reich and its Position in Society Today*, a book published in 1969 by a German journalist, Harry Wilde.⁹⁸ Wilde had collected pieces of information regarding homosexual concentration camp prisoners that could be found in a handful of publications, such as Eugen Kogon's autobiography and the memoir of the Auschwitz commandant Rudolph Höss.⁹⁹ *The Fate of the Ostracized* began with a discussion of the pink triangle as a concentration camp badge and described the Nazi policies towards homosexuals as a "Final Solution."¹⁰⁰ The foundations of a "Homocaust" narrative, therefore, were already set, and set in German. Steakley himself offered some insight into why the earliest understandings of this history so closely resembled the fate of Hitler's Jewish victims: "There was no historical scholarship on the topic yet. I wrote what I knew. I took the Wilde book at its word. You have to understand that there was no 'gay history' yet, and certainly not a history of gays in the Nazi period. There were a lot of gaps, and I used the situation of the Jews to help me make sense of the fragmentary information available for gay victims."¹⁰¹

The Pink Triangle and Sexual Citizenship in the USA

Gay liberation activists across the United States understood the struggle for gay and lesbian rights as inextricably tied to broader human rights, civil liberties, and understandings of

⁹⁸ Harry Wilde, *Das Schicksal der Verfeimten: Die Verfolgung der Homosexuellen im "Dritten Reich" und ihre Stellung in der heutigen Gesellschaft* (Tübingen, Katzmann-Verlag, 1969).

⁹⁹ For a discussion of how these autobiographies addressed the existence of homosexual concentration camp prisoners, see Chapter Two of this dissertation.

¹⁰⁰ Wilde, *Das Schicksal der Verfeimten*, 25.

¹⁰¹ James Steakley, interview with W. Jake Newsome. November 19, 2015.

citizenship. The Student Homophile League (SHL) of Harvard University noted that activists had drawn these connections even before the influential Stonewall Riots in 1969. Referring to an annual “Reminder Day” demonstration, held in front of Independence Hall by gay activists in Philadelphia, the SHL stated, “It was an attempt, begun in 1965, to point up and dramatize the fact that a significant minority, the homosexual minority, was still systematically denied by society and its government, those basic rights and freedoms so nobly enunciated by the Declaration of Independence.”¹⁰² Harvard’s SHL, then, framed the violation of gays and lesbians’ rights as fundamentally un-American.

The Nazi past became a rhetorical tool for gay activists in their quest to extend all civil rights to America’s gay and lesbian citizens. In 1977, for example, lawmakers in Miami passed a bill that protected the gay and lesbian residents of Dade County, Florida from various forms of discrimination. While many people opposed the ordinance, the singer-turned-activist Anita Bryant became the face of the opposition. Bryant organized the Save Our Children coalition that successfully overturned the Dade County ordinance and then went on to lead campaigns against gay rights throughout the United States. It did not take gay activists long to draw comparisons between Bryant and the Nazis. In June 1977, protesters in San Francisco carried posters depicting Bryant’s face alongside posters of Adolf Hitler, Idi Amin, Josef Stalin, and hooded members of the Ku Klux Klan. In West Germany, too, many activists employed sensationalist claims about the nature of the Nazis’ treatment of homosexuals and fears of another “Homocaust.” In the summer of 1975, a demonstration by gay activists in Braunschweig asserted that 400,000 gay men had been murdered by the Nazi regime, and that gays living in the Federal

¹⁰² Memo from Eastern Regional Homophile Conference (ERCHO) to non-ERCHO eastern homophile organizations. Subject: 1970 Christopher Street Liberation Day Demonstration. Date: March 16, 1970. THP archives, Misc. Collection 10: Series 1: Student Homophile League, Folder 2: SHL Correspondence.

Republic had “every reason to fear a repeat of this type of persecution.”¹⁰³ Canadian activists also linked anti-gay policies to Nazism. In February 1981, the Metro Toronto police initiated a large-scale raid on locations that were known to be hangouts for gay men and women, culminating in the largest mass arrest of civilians since World War II. Afterwards, demonstrators wore shirts that read “Germany 1934, Toronto 1981.”¹⁰⁴ Four short words sought to draw a red thread through half a century of persecution and suggest a continuity between the persecution of gays in the Third Reich and the discrimination gays faced in decades later in Toronto.

The specter of the Holocaust was not only used to attack opponents, however; it was also used as an attempt to forge political alliances. In the very public debate over the gay rights ordinance in Miami, for example, proponents recognized that the Nazi past could be useful not only in calling Bryant a Nazi, but also in establishing a sense of solidarity among fellow victims of the Nazi regime. A letter to the editor that appeared in the *San Francisco Sentinel* stated, “In Miami, the pink triangle must become a central part of the campaign to defeat the repeal of the gay rights ordinance. The Jewish vote is essential to our victory in Miami, and the pink triangle can make the difference.”¹⁰⁵

Many activists believed that highlighting persecution in the past was actually necessary for proving that there was discrimination in the present. Members of a Toronto gay liberation organization reported that when they met with local politicians, they were met with skepticism that discrimination against gays and lesbians actually existed on any significant scale.¹⁰⁶

According to these politicians, there was no need for special anti-discrimination legislation.

¹⁰³ “Ein ‘rosa Winkel’ als Symbol der Emanzipation,” *Braunschweiger Zeitung*, July 15, 1975. In “Freiheit für die Schwulen: Braunschweigs schwule Stadtgeschichte,” published by Jugendnetzwerk LAMBDA Niedersachsen und Verein für sexuelle Emanzipation VSE e.V. 1991 or 1992. SARCH archives, Ordner: Orte-Braunschweig.

¹⁰⁴ Michael Lynch, “BENT 1934/1981: A Play-Goer Reflects on Repression Then and Now,” *The Body Politic*, April 1981, 28.

¹⁰⁵ Randy Alfred, “Fighting for Our Lives...and Others,” *San Francisco Sentinel*, April 7, 1977, 6.

¹⁰⁶ James Steakley, interview with W. Jake Newsome. November 19, 2015.

Activists in West Germany faced similar cynicism. When discussing Paragraph 175, the Minister President of Bavaria and chairman of the Christian Social Union, Franz Josef Strauss, claimed in 1982 that the law did not represent judicial “discrimination” against gays and lesbians because it was needed to protect West Germany’s children and youth.¹⁰⁷ On both sides of the Atlantic, the use of the pink triangle became a way of demonstrating a continued need for legal protection.

By 1985, gay groups across the US began planning a massive gay and lesbian rights march on Washington, D.C. Notes and minutes from the meetings of various planning committees reveal that these political action groups sought to frame the violation of gay and lesbian Americans’ rights as bound to broader issues of civil rights and liberties. The Boston March on Washington Committee, for example, issued a statement that read: “As members of the lesbian and gay movement, we too are affected by rising racism and sexism which oppresses people of color and women; thereby the liberation of gays and lesbians is intricately linked to the struggles against racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism.”¹⁰⁸ A Supreme Court ruling in 1986 added extra weight to the debate over gay rights. In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of a Georgia law that criminalized homosexual sex.¹⁰⁹ The Progressive Coalition of Lesbians and Gay Men for Civil Rights, a group in Boston, planned a demonstration in front of the Massachusetts State House in the wake of the Supreme Court’s decision. A flier advertising the march tied US sodomy laws to the Holocaust (*Image 2*). It prominently featured a large triangle; faceless, crudely-drawn human figures fall from the edge of the triangle, seemingly into oblivion. Above the triangle is a version of a famous quotation from Holocaust survivor Martin Niemöller. As a whole, the flier represents an explicit use of Holocaust imagery

¹⁰⁷ “Homosexuelle werden nicht diskriminiert,” *Gay Journal*, November 1982, 3.

¹⁰⁸ Pamphlet: Be Visible! Be Proud! Come to the March on Washington for Lesbian & Gay Rights, October 11.” THP archives, Ms Coll: 5, Series I: March on Washington (1987) – Subseries A: General, Fliers & Pamphlets.

¹⁰⁹ *Bowers v. Hardwick*. Argued March 31, 1986. Decided June 30, 1986. Legal Information Institute of the Cornell University Law School: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/478/186> (accessed April 18, 2016).

to highlight that sodomy laws violated the rights of American citizens. “The recent Supreme Court decision upholding Georgia’s sodomy law threatens the privacy and civil rights of all people in the US,” the flier stated. It concluded, “The Lesbian and Gay Community is outraged [that] equal protection under the law does not include us.”¹¹⁰

After the court’s decision, the plans for a national march on Washington gained greater urgency. One call to action that was distributed to political gay groups across the United States quoted the Supreme Court’s official dissent, written by Justice Harry Blackmun: “Depriving individuals of the right

to choose for themselves how to conduct their intimate relationships poses a far greater threat to the values most deeply rooted in our nation’s history than tolerance of nonconformity could ever do.”¹¹¹ In another document a gay group asserted that gays and lesbians of different political leanings had put aside their differences and organize a national march. The Supreme Court’s



Image 2: “Repeal Sodomy Laws:” 1986 flier from the Progressive Coalition of Lesbians and Gay Men for Civil Rights. Source: THP archives: Ms Coll: 5, Series I: March on Washington (1987) – Subseries A: General, Contact Lists

¹¹⁰ Flier. THP archives, Ms Coll: 5, Series I: March on Washington (1987) – Subseries A: General, Fliers & Pamphlets.

¹¹¹ U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun. Quoted on flier, “Call to Action for a new March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. THP archives, Ms Coll: 5, Series I: March on Washington (1987) – Subseries A: General, Fliers & Pamphlets. Read Blackmun’s entire dissent for the 1986 *Bowers v. Hardwick* case online: Legal Information Institute of the Cornell University Law School: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/478/186> (accessed April 18, 2016).

ruling “made it clear that the struggle for gay liberation is intimately linked to the struggle for a more just society.”¹¹²

When the March on Washington Committee, Inc. – the organizational headquarters for the national march – decided on a logo for the demonstration, scheduled for October 1987, it chose a symbol that it knew powerfully bound together issues of civil rights and a dark chapter of history. The official logo of the 1987 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay

Rights, which was emblazoned on t-shirts, bumper

stickers, pins, posters, and other paraphernalia,

was a silhouette of the US Capitol Dome

superimposed over a pink triangle (*Image 3*). A

letter from the national headquarters sent out to

various sub-committees and regional planning

offices in preparation of the march underscored

the perceived importance of the upcoming march,

by rhetorically linking civil rights, privacy, the act

of coming out, and the Holocaust. “Dear friends,

we are *not* going back into the closet,” the letter

began. “We are *not* going to be herded into any concentration camps. We are not giving back the

hard-won rights we have fought for. And we are not going to tolerate the police in our bedrooms.

Not now – not ever.”¹¹³



Image 3: The front of a t-shirt from the 1987 march. Source: “March on Washington '87,” Wearing Gay History, the Digital Archive of Historical LGBT T-Shirts. <http://www.wearinggayhistory.com/items/show/3274>. Accessed April 11, 2016.

¹¹² Letter written by Melani McAlister of the Boston March on Washington Committee. No date, no recipient. THP archives, Ms Coll: 5, Series I: March on Washington (1987) – Subseries A: General, Miscellaneous Newsletters & Correspondence, 1986-1987.

¹¹³ Letter from the March on Washington Committee, Inc. to their members. THP archives, Ms Coll: 5, Series I: March on Washington (1987) – Subseries B: Meetings, Agendas, Minutes, National Organizing Committee 08/1986 – 09/1987

By the time of the 1987 national march, the debates and discourses resulting from the rising death toll of the AIDS crisis had already drawn rhetorical ties between sexuality, citizenship, and the Nazi past. The death of thousands of people – many of whom were gay men – paired with what many perceived as calculated inaction on the part of the Reagan administration, resulted in numerous comparisons with the Holocaust. Larry Kramer, who was a playwright and outspoken advocate for healthcare for HIV-positive individuals, even named his account of the epidemic *Reports from the Holocaust: The Making of an AIDS Activist*.¹¹⁴ In 1986, a leftist organizer in New York City named Avram Finkelstein and five colleagues decided that the American gay and lesbian communities needed a new impetus (embodied by a visual symbol) that would motivate them to organize and aggressively demand support during the AIDS crisis.¹¹⁵ And when the conservative author William F. Buckley, Jr. wrote in the *New York Times* that all HIV-positive individuals should be tattooed (on the arm for IV-drug users, and on the buttocks for gay men), Finkelstein chose to use his own Holocaust reference as the collective's symbol.¹¹⁶

After six months of planning, Finkelstein and his colleagues finished the poster that was meant to act as a new catalyst for political activism in the gay community. The poster was composed of a fuchsia triangle imposed over a solid black background.¹¹⁷ The motto under the triangle, “Silence = Death,” was full of implications that were tied to the Nazi era. On the surface, the motto was meant to imply that remaining silent and refraining from opposing discriminatory practices could lead to fatal consequences, analogous to what had happened in

¹¹⁴ Larry Kramer, *Reports from the Holocaust: The Making of an AIDS Activist*, (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

¹¹⁵ Avram Finkelstein, interview with W. Jake Newsome. July 1, 2014.

¹¹⁶ William F. Buckley Jr. “Crucial Steps in Combating the Aids Epidemic; Identify All the Carriers.” *The New York Times*, Op-Ed, March 18, 1986. http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/07/16/specials/buckley-aids.html?_r=1 (Accessed February 9, 2016).

¹¹⁷ Finkelstein noted that choosing fuchsia rather than a basic pink was part of the reclamation of the symbol. In conjunction with inverting the triangle so that the peak faced upwards, the change in color was meant to be a “disavowal of the victim question.” Avram Finkelstein, interview with W. Jake Newsome. July 1, 2014.

Nazi Germany. In another way, however, the motto was a complete reversal of the situation of gay men during the Third Reich; for them, “silence” and hiding one’s sexuality often meant escaping detection by the Nazis. Thus, silence equaled life. During the AIDS crisis, however keeping silent about one’s HIV status would lead only to death.

In 1987, the activist group AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power (ACT UP) adopted Finkelstein’s inverted fuchsia triangle and “Silence = Death” motto. Its poster would come to represent AIDS activism around the world. But this was not the group’s only move to utilize Holocaust imagery in their activism. The same year, ACT UP also put together an exhibit that was displayed in the window front of Manhattan’s New Museum. The installation featured a neon pink triangle and “Silence = Death” motto over a large photograph of Nazi officials facing conviction in the Nuremberg War Trials. Superimposed in front of the Nazi criminals were the faces of city and state officials who – according to ACT UP – denied help for those infected with HIV and AIDS. According to the group, it was not their intent to say that the state officials were Nazis; the intent, as implied by the installation’s title, “Let the Record Show,” was rather to say that history would be the ultimate judge of these officials. Either way, gay rights activists had yet again utilized Holocaust imagery in their activism.¹¹⁸

The use of the pink triangle and the linkages gay activists created between the Holocaust and human rights further fueled an intense and heated renegotiation of sexual citizenship. AIDS activists holding posters or wearing shirts adorned with a pink triangle and the “Silence = Death” motto asserted that all citizens of the United States had a right to healthcare, regardless of sexuality or HIV-status. As citizens, there was an expectation that the government would do everything in its power to protect them—a clear stance against comments by some conservative

¹¹⁸ Exhibition: “Let the Record Show...” New Museum digital archive: http://archive.newmuseum.org/index.php/Detail/Occurrence/Show/occurrence_id/158 (Accessed September 8, 2015.)

politicians and social commentators who suggested that the rights of healthcare were not understood as universal. Similar public debates were underway in West Germany, and the influential conservative politician Peter Gauweiler sparked controversy when he called for forced-testing of anyone suspected of having the virus, and the quarantining of everyone who tested positive.¹¹⁹ Such sentiments, when coupled with Buckley's comments about tattooing individuals with HIV reveal that, some people in conservative circles felt that HIV positive individuals forfeited some of their basic civil rights by allegedly endangering the health of the national body through the spread of a deadly disease. Clearly, his calls for tattoos and registration shows that Buckley felt HIV positive people had given up their right to privacy. He also suggested that women who intended to marry men with the virus should surrender their reproductive rights. Such a woman, Buckley argued, should only be granted a marriage license if she agreed to sterilization so that she could not pass on the virus to her children.¹²⁰ Discourses of sexuality, public health, privacy, and civil liberties converged in the public debates about AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s.

Shared Histories & Transatlantic Identities

In his provocative work *The Holocaust in American Life*, Peter Novick asserts that invoking the Holocaust in present-day campaigns to dramatize victimhood, or even to guilt people into complying with one's own goals, has become a common political tool for many groups, not just gay activists.¹²¹ Though there are glaring examples that substantiate this claim, Novick's

¹¹⁹ Rosa Flieder, April-May 1987, 11. See also Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*, 252; Jensen, "The Pink Triangle and Political Consciousness," 332.

¹²⁰ William F. Buckley Jr. "Crucial Steps in Combating the Aids Epidemic; Identify All the Carriers." *The New York Times*, Op-Ed, March 18, 1986. http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/07/16/specials/buckley-aids.html?_r=1 (Accessed February 9, 2016.)

¹²¹ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).

observation may prove too simplistic in explaining all instances in which the Nazi past has been utilized for current purposes. In a compelling article, historian Eric Jensen argues that, apart from being politically expedient, memories of Nazi persecution “served as a locus for gay identity.”¹²² Jensen’s work reveals just how widespread the pink triangle and narratives of the Nazi period had become in the context of gay rights activism, which in itself fostered a sense of community. The historian Jonathan N. Katz elaborated on this point when he wrote in 1989 that, “By displaying the pink triangle as an act of resistance, we transform a Nazi badge of shame into its opposite: a memorial to the anonymous homosexuals slain in hate. It is a symbolic marker of our solidarity with all those who fight injustice.”¹²³ Therefore, even core symbols that originated in the atmosphere of hate and oppression can be transformed to embody a message of solidarity and to help establish a positive sense of selfhood.

I argue that we can take Jensen’s observations further, however. The pink triangle not only helped shape local gay identities, but also more broadly contributed to the formation of a transatlantic gay identity that connected gay activists in West Germany and North America with a shared history. In June 1978, for example, after becoming the first openly gay person elected to public office in California, Harvey Milk told a crowd that San Francisco’s gay and lesbian population would actively fight against discriminatory measures. “We are not going to sit back in silence as 300,000 of our gay brothers and sisters did in Nazi Germany. We are not going to allow our rights to be taken away and then marched with bowed heads into the gas chambers.”¹²⁴ Milk felt comfortable using German history as his own, because – as is evidenced by his use of “brothers and sisters” – their identity as gay and lesbian provided a fundamental connection that

¹²² Jensen, “The Pink Triangle and Political Consciousness,” 328.

¹²³ Jonathan Ned Katz, “Katz on History: Signs of the Times – The Making of Liberation Logos,” *The Advocate*, October 10, 1989, 49.

¹²⁴ Harvey Milk, speech on June 25, 1978. Quoted in Randy Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk* (New York, 1982), 364.

was perceived as more important than their national identities. The appropriation of history was extensive enough that when the West German gay magazine *him* sent reporters to cover New York's celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, the resulting article was entitled, "New York under the Banner of the Pink Triangle."¹²⁵

The Nazi experience was not the only past that was referenced in the formation of this shared transatlantic, gay identity. Memories and histories also flowed eastwards across the Atlantic as gay Germans incorporated chapters of the American past into their sense of history. The 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City came to play an influential role in the consciousness of gay rights activists in West Germany. The gay press in West Germany closely followed the major developments in the American gay rights movement, including the annual parades and events commemorating the Stonewall Riots. The *Tageszeitung* – a major, politically-left leaning German newspaper founded in 1978 – reported in June 1979 that gay rights groups in Bremen, Cologne, Stuttgart, and West Berlin had organized Germany's first "Christopher Street Day," a reference to the name of the street on which the Stonewall Inn was located.¹²⁶ Four days later, the same newspaper called the events the first "Gay Pride Day" in the Federal Republic.¹²⁷ Every year since 1979, West Germans celebrated "Christopher Street Day" with "Gay Pride" marches, "Stonewall Demos" and "Gay Freedom Day" parades. The use of the English words for these events represents a creation and transference of collective memories, symbols, and identities between American and German gays. There was no comparable gay rights movement in East Germany although the communist state decriminalized adult male homosexuality in 1968, one

¹²⁵ Michael Föster, "New York im Zeichen des Rosa Winkels," *him*, September 1979, 54.

¹²⁶ "Schafft ein, zwei, drei – viele 'Stonewalls,'" *Die Tageszeitung*, June 25, 1979. SARCH archives, Ordner 86: Bewegungsgeschichte.

¹²⁷ "Zehn Jahre Befreiungskampf der Lesben und Schwulen," *Die Tageszeitung*, June 29, 1979. SARCH archives, Ordner 86: Bewegungsgeschichte.

year before Paragraph 175 was amended in West Germany.¹²⁸ This at least partially explains why the West German gay community did not share similar collective memories of the Nazi past with their brethren on the other side of the Iron Curtain, even though they had developed strong transatlantic ties with gays and lesbians an ocean away.¹²⁹

In a 1985 pamphlet called “Christopher Street: Gays are Everywhere,” the Braunschweig-University Gay Group (*Homosexuellen-Unigruppe-Braunschweig*) lamented that many of Germany’s gays and lesbians still knew very little about potentially the most important part of “their” history: the 1969 Stonewall Riots.¹³⁰ Currently, the website of the *Centrum Schwule Geschichte-Köln* (Cologne Center for Gay History) contains a timeline of the major developments in the gay history of the early Federal Republic. The entry directly above the 1969 amendment of Paragraph 175 is about the New York City Police Department’s raid on the Stonewall Inn.¹³¹ Such examples demonstrate that through the exchange of memories and histories –whether it is the Nazi past in American activism, or the Stonewall Riots in German consciousness – a transatlantic, political gay identity was forged among Americans and Germans that, in many ways, superseded the importance of local, national identities.

¹²⁸ For a thorough examination of the situation of homosexuals living in East Germany, see Erik G. Huneke, “Morality, Law, and the Socialist Sexual Self in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1972,” (doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 2013). See also: Lemke, Jürgen Lemke, *Ganz normal anders: Auskünfte schwuler Männer* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1989). There is also a recent documentary: *Out in East Berlin: Lesbians and Gays in the GDR*, directed by Jochen Hick and Andreas Strohfeldt (2013).

¹²⁹ For some of the scholarship on East German memories of the Nazi past, see: Annette Leo, “Die Auseinandersetzung mit der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit in der DDR,” in *Geeinte Nation – Geteilte Geschichte: Die deutsche Gesellschaft nach der Wiedervereinigung*, edited by Wolfgang Benz and Jörg Leuschner (Salzgitter, 1993); Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1997).

¹³⁰ “16 Jahre Stonewall,” *Christopher Street: Schwule sind überall*. Pamphlet compiled and distributed by the Homosexuellen-Unigruppe-Braunschweig, ASTA-Schwulenreferat. SARCH archives, Ordner: Orte-Braunschweig.

¹³¹ Centrum Schwule Geschichte Köln: Chronik: Frühe Bundesrepublik. <http://www.csgkoeln.org/bibliothek/fruehe-bundesrepublik> (Accessed April 2, 2016).

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This chapter has demonstrated the power of visual symbols to embody a multitude of resonating messages and meanings that invoke powerful emotions, shape identities, and inspire people to take political action. In the early 1970s, the pink triangle came to represent a chapter of Holocaust history. It was a symbol that itself became a form of knowledge used to empower an emerging gay movement. In gay activism, the pink triangle symbolized the persecution of homosexuals during the Holocaust and a second persecution as these victims were erased from history. But it simultaneously represented membership in a community, courage to come out, and pride in claiming a positive identity.

Ultimately, the establishment of the pink triangle as a popular symbol of gay activism, culture, and identity represents a two-part process. First is the making of a shared past. When members of the *Homosexuelle Aktion Westberlin* chose the pink triangle as their gay rights logo, they initiated a process in which personal memories (as presented by Heger in his autobiography) were transformed into collective memories shared by gay West Germans and embodied by a single symbol. In the atmosphere of the “global 1968” revolutions, these memories were grafted into an American context through personal ties forged by activists in the Federal Republic and the United States. The pink triangle, therefore, became a marker for a sense of community and common historical roots among gays and lesbians on both sides of the Atlantic. Second, the pink triangle denotes a utilization of this new, shared past to strengthen contemporary political demands. As a result, the Nazi past and sexual citizenship in the present became powerfully intertwined. By harkening back to the Third Reich, the pink triangle was meant to be a lesson that, in a post-Holocaust world, nations should take care of how they treated their minorities, and ultimately, that gays and lesbians should no longer be treated as second-class citizens.

Consequently, the Nazi past contributed not only to the establishment of a transatlantic gay identity, but also to the formation of gays and lesbians as an international political minority.

In using the pink triangle beginning in the 1970s, West German and American gay activists referred to a history that had largely not been written yet. As the next chapter will demonstrate, however, this led to a grassroots movement to fill a void in the publicly acknowledged narratives about the Nazi period, and more thoroughly explore a past that the historical profession had hitherto refused to study.

CHAPTER FOUR

“Remembrances of Things Once Hidden:” The Grassroots Efforts to Construct the Pink Triangle Past in Germany and the United States, 1979-2008

“Nearly a quarter of a million homosexuals were executed by the Nazis between 1937 and 1945, along with the six million Jews...Many know about the yellow star, but the pink triangle still lies buried as a virtual historical secret.”¹ When Ira Glasser, Executive Director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, wrote these words in *The New York Times* in 1975, his sentiments rang true. The Nazi persecution of homosexuals remained a virtually unknown chapter of history, especially in the United States. In the previous chapter, however, I demonstrated that after the transatlantic gay rights movement began to confront the wider public in West Germany and the United States with the pink triangle past, the secret was out.

In this chapter, I examine the relatively sudden and dramatic increase in discourses – first within the gay community, and later in the mainstream public – about the fate of homosexuals under Hitler. Beginning in the late 1970s, articles in the emerging gay presses in West Germany and the United States chronicled the treatment of the Nazis’ homosexual victims. Authors on both sides of the Atlantic published poetry and novels as an attempt to make sense of the traumatic past. A stage play depicting the life of homosexual concentration camp inmates became an international, critically-acclaimed success. Collectively, these various representations of the persecution of homosexuals under the National Socialist regime constituted a grassroots effort on the part of gay men and women to explore, research, document, and present to the public a history that the traditional historical profession had shunned. In short, members of the

¹ Ira Glasser, “The Yellow Star and the Pink Triangle,” in *The New York Times*, Sept. 10, 1975, 45. Historical evidence now shows that the number of victims that Glasser asserted was greatly exaggerated. Current records indicate that the Nazis arrested 100,000 gay men, roughly half of whom were convicted. An estimated 5,000 to 15,000 homosexual men were sent to concentration camps.

gay community utilized a number of media available to them to piece together an understanding of their past, thereby writing their own history.

The rise of the gay rights movement also initiated a grassroots wave of historical scholarship that was primarily conducted by gay men and women themselves. By the 1990s, however, the Nazi persecution of homosexuals was no longer a niche topic of interest only for the gay community. Gradually, historians of the Third Reich acknowledged that studying the fate of homosexuals was necessary to more accurately understand the history of Germany under National Socialism. Moreover, the focus on gay victims both reflected and contributed to a larger shift in the historiography. Beginning in the 1970s, scholars sought to integrate the perspective of the Nazi victims into the history of the Third Reich. These scholars broadened the spectrum and the definition of victims, which then contributed to redefining our understanding of National Socialist society. The scholarship on National Socialism and homosexuality ultimately contributed to scholars' acknowledgment of how fundamentally issues of sexuality were connected to Nazi ideologies of race. Therefore, studying the persecution of homosexuals became an indispensable part of understanding the nature of the Nazi state.

This chapter not only traces the ways in which gays and lesbians pieced together their own history and how this history came to have a larger resonance; it also explores the hitherto unstudied correlation between the politics of memory on the one hand, and sexual citizenship on the other. Contemporary political factors at play during the gay rights movement shaped how people remembered, portrayed, and ultimately understood the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. In turn, the collective memories of homosexual persecution became tools with which political actors – from individual politicians to groups of activists and governmental organizations – negotiated what they understand as the best way to interpret and make sense of the past. These

politicized memories had cultural, social, legal, and financial repercussions. Whereas homosexuals had once been remembered as criminals justly punished for violating the national anti-sodomy law, by the 1980s, there was a shift that led to a growing acknowledgment that homosexuals were victims of persecution. This, in turn, led to renewed debates over compensation and legal rehabilitation for the men with the pink triangle.

The politics of memory and issues of sexual citizenship often came to a head in the debates surrounding the process of memorializing gay victims beginning in the mid-1980s. There was a growing sense that it was the right of gay and lesbian individuals, as citizens of a liberal democracy, to be included in memorials that commemorated such an important chapter of the national past. Therefore, memorials often became sites of negotiation over memory and citizenship: who would be allowed to participate in and belong to the national history? Although there was initial resistance to the call for memorializing gay victims, there now exist monuments throughout the world honoring the homosexuals who died at the hands of the Nazis. From the inclusion of homosexual victims in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1993 to the 2008 dedication in Berlin of the National Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime, the discourses surrounding these memorials place the Nazi persecution of homosexuals into a new context. No longer is it presented as solely a gay issue. Rather their persecution is presented as a violation of global human rights.

In this chapter, I ultimately argue that the gradual acknowledgement that what happened to homosexuals under Nazi rule was injustice corresponds with the expansion of gay rights in contemporary societies. This is due to two main reasons. First, as Chapter Three demonstrated, gay rights activists in West Germany and the United States used memories of the Nazi past as a tool to advocate for the civil rights of gay men and women. This in and of itself led to a greater

awareness of that chapter of history on the part of the wider public. Second, there is a reciprocal nature between memory and sexual citizenship. As the American and German societies gradually acknowledged that LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals deserved acceptance and rights in the present, it led to a broader openness and willingness on the part of mainstream society to explore the fate of gay men and women during the Third Reich. In turn, exploring that history of persecution reinforced the momentum for acceptance and protection of the rights of the LGBT community in the present.

Therefore, what began largely as a history about gay men written by gay men for gay men, ultimately became a multidimensional discourse that included and affected people beyond the gay community. Through a complicated confluence of scholarly and non-scholarly debates beginning in the 1980s, the public grappled with not only the legacies of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals, but also wrestled with the importance of the acceptance of diversity in contemporary society.

The Pink Triangle in the Gay Press

The reform of Paragraph 175 in the West German Criminal Code in 1969 not only legalized consensual, male adult homosexuality in this part of Germany, but also cleared the way for the reemergence of a gay press. Gays and lesbians in cities across the Federal Republic began publishing a number of new periodicals, from monthly newsletters to weekly magazines. The most successful of these publications was *Du & Ich* (“You and I”), which ran its first issue in October 1969, just one month after the liberalization of Paragraph 175. *Don* and *him* were two additional glossy magazines with color photographs and articles on a number of issues that appealed to a wider gay and lesbian audience. Others catered to a particular readership. *EMMA*,

for example, became a leading feminist newspaper, and *Unsere Kleine Zeitung* (“Our Little Newspaper”) was a periodical written by and primarily for lesbians.²

At the same time, a gay press was also emerging in the United States. Periodicals such as *Washington Blade* in the District of Columbia, *Christopher Street* in New York, and *Gay Sunshine* in San Francisco reported on local and national issues facing gay men and women across America. The early gay press in the United States was meant to do more than simply inform or entertain readers. Editors of Boston’s *Gay Community News* articulated what they saw as the importance of their newspaper: “We play an activist role in the gay and lesbian community by encouraging debate, by generating controversy, by helping to mobilize gay men and lesbians into action.”³ The same could be said of the gay press in the Federal Republic, especially those outlets that were dedicated primarily to political news, such as *Emanzipation*, or *Gay Journal*, published by a group in Heidelberg that chose to use English as its title.

All of these gay publications ran stories about the treatment of homosexuals during the Third Reich. Given the large, combined readership of these periodicals, the information presented in their pages reached a much larger audience than the protests and demonstrations of gay rights activists, although this audience was almost exclusively homosexual.⁴ For nearly two decades, the gay press was the primary source for anyone seeking information on the fate of

² Due to a lack of funding, many of these publications failed before they ever fully got off the ground, changed editorial staff often, or were bought only to appear under a different name. *him* began publishing in April 1970 in Hamburg. A decade later, in an attempt to increase sales, it changed its layout and name to *HimApplause*, but the publication went under in April 1981. In May 1970, for example, a publisher in Cologne released *Sunny*, which only five months later, reappeared under the name *Don*. By 1984, the Cologne publishers were forced to sell *Don* to a company in Frankfurt am Main, and three years later, the magazine changed its name again to *Don + Adonis*; the magazine published its final issue in the fall of 1995. *Du und Ich*, Germany’s longest running gay magazine, ceased publication in summer 2014. Magazines founded since the 1980s have seemed to stand the test of time.

³ Solicitation in the *Gay Community News* for readers to donate and become a “GCN Sustainer.” Archives of The History Project: Documenting LGBTQ Boston (THP archives). Collection 5 Series 1 – March on Wasington 1987, Folder: Ntl L&G March on Washington 1987.

⁴ Complete circulation statistics for these early periodicals are not available.

Hitler's homosexual victims. How these gay press outlets framed this persecution, therefore, greatly influenced how West Germans and Americans understood this history.

One of the earliest publications to mention the Nazi persecution appeared in *Uni*, a magazine published by a homosexual group in Denmark. The 1970 article presented the National Socialists' atrocities against homosexuals as a targeted, systematic genocide. "Around 100,000 gays were convicted and sent off to concentration camps," the author stated.⁵ "Never before in the history of mankind have homophiles been so systematically persecuted and eradicated... The Jews were the only group that the Nazis treated more horribly."⁶ Comparing the persecution of homosexuals with the genocide of the Jews became a common occurrence in the gay press, giving way to the common (mis)understanding of a gay Holocaust or "Homocaust." When Heinz Heger published his autobiography, *The Men with the Pink Triangle* in 1972, it added another component to the Homocaust narrative. Heger suggested that pink triangle prisoners were treated most horribly of all in the unwritten hierarchy of camp life.⁷ As Chapter One demonstrated, there is evidence to support this claim, even if other tenets of the Homocaust narrative – namely the exaggerated number of victims and the assertion that the Nazis sought to annihilate all homosexuals – have been since discredited. Because Heger's was the first book-length account by a gay concentration camp survivor, it played an important role in shaping how subsequent generations would understand this chapter of history.

⁵ Interestingly, the number of victims of this gay genocide that the author provided were not as high as other authors would later assert.

⁶ "Spectator: "Das Dritte Reich noch nicht zu Ende," *Uni*, 1970. Schwullesbisches Archiv Hanover (SARCH archives), Ordner 87: NS Alte Quelle & Lesben. *Uni* was an "international newspaper for friendship, information, and tolerance," published by the International Homosexual World Organization (IHWO) beginning in 1969. This is not to be confused with the IHWO (*Internationale Homophilen Welt Organization*) that was founded in Hamburg in 1969. For more information, see: Raimund Wolfert, "Gegen Einsamkeit und 'Einsiedelei:' *Die Geschichte der Internationalen Homophilen Welt-Organization*, (Hamburg: Männerschwarm, 2009).

⁷ Heinz Heger, *Die Männer mit dem rosa Winkel: Der Bericht eines Homosexuellen über seine KZ-Haft von 1939-1945* (Hamburg: Merlin-Verlag, 1972).

Within a few months of the release of Heger's book, *Du & Ich* ran a three-page article entitled, "The Degenerates in the Concentration Camp," composed of excerpts from *The Men with the Pink Triangle*.⁸ The article was accompanied by gruesome images of skeletal corpses in Nazi camps. *Emanzipation* also reprinted a gay concentration camp survivor's testimony. "A Crown of Thorns," appeared in the magazine's spring 1977 issue.⁹ Nearly a decade later, amid renewed calls for the West German government to acknowledge homosexuals as official victims of Nazi injustice, *Du & Ich* ran a collection of homosexual survivor testimony, including an excerpt from Heger's memoirs, under the tagline: "A necessary reminder of a past that quite simply isn't past yet."¹⁰

In other instances the West German gay press wrote about the Nazi persecution of homosexuals without resorting to reprints from other works. In 1976, several of West Germany's gay magazines drew the readers' attention to the newly released film *Pink Triangle? But That Was a Long Time Ago*. The film raised important questions about the continuities of discrimination of homosexuals from the Third Reich to the Federal Republic. *Emanzipation* explained to its readers that, "The *Pink Triangle?* film forces us, in our opinion, to undertake a more thorough examination of 'our' history" and to "contemplate the origins of gay oppression."¹¹ The editors of *Du & Ich* stated, "Because this rare, important, and powerful film has slim chances of being introduced to a wide audience through the mass media, *Du & Ich* is publishing a few excerpts from the script here."¹²

⁸ "Die Entarteten im KZ," *Du & Ich*, November 1972, 10.

⁹ "Die Dornenkrone: Ein Bericht aus dem KZ Sachsenhausen," *Emanzipation*, March/April 1977, 26. This article was a reprint of one originally published in a homophile magazine twenty-three years prior. See: L.D. Classen von Neudegg, "Schicksale: Die Dornenkrone: ein Tatsachenbericht aus der Strafkompagnie Sachsenhausen," *Humanitas*, February 1954, 58-60.

¹⁰ Michael Föster, "Deutsche Weihnacht: Galgen unterm Tannenbaum," *Du & Ich*, December 1980, 67.

¹¹ "Rosa Winkel..." *Emanzipation*, March/April 1977, 25.

¹² "Rosa Winkel? Das ist schon lange vorbei..." *Du & Ich*, Nr. 6 (June 1977), 8.

The gay press often brought up the Nazi past during particular political battles or events in contemporary West Germany. In May 1975, for example, *Emanzipation* printed an article with the headline, “Mass Murder of Homosexuals Unexposed to this Day.” The article ran on the thirtieth anniversary of the end of World War II, a day that some in the Federal Republic saw as a moment of defeat, while others celebrated as a day of liberation. “No one, though, thinks about the meaning of this day for homosexuals,” wrote the author.¹³ Articles such as this one pointed out that the continuity of discriminatory laws and practices represented a denial of “liberation” for West Germany’s gay citizens. However, not everyone was pleased with what could be interpreted as an instrumentalization of the past. In a letter to the editor of the Munich-based *Südwind*, one gay man wrote that the discovery that homosexuals had also died in camps must have come as a “pleasant surprise” for West German gays and lesbians. “It was especially practical for those seeking to initiate the gay rights movement in the early 1970s,” he continued. The Nazi past “saved us from having to insist on our rights armed with nothing more than our self-respect. Instead, the comfortable path of guilt and pity offered itself to us.”¹⁴

The gay press in the United States, too, provided readers with information about the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. As the previous chapter demonstrated, in 1974 James Steakley’s article “Homosexuals in the Third Reich” in *The Body Politic* introduced the English-speaking world to the pink triangle.¹⁵ The subsequent articles in various American gay press periodicals,

¹³ “30 Jahre später?...Massenmord an Homosexuellen bis heute unaufgeklärt.” *Emanzipation* Nr. 3 (1975), 1.

¹⁴ Robert Reck, Letter to the Editor, “Die Liebe zum Feind: Kontroverse um Schwule Gedenktafel,” *Südwind*. Nr. 5 (1988), 6. Recognizing the political utility of casting oneself as a Nazi victim, the author then ponders: “How much harder it must be for gays in other nations who don’t have a few deaths to point back to.” This sentiment is similar to those expressed by Norman Finkelstein, who claimed that the Holocaust had become convenient for advancing Jewish issues. Finkelstein was Jewish himself. See: Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso, 2000).

¹⁵ James Steakley, “Homosexuals and the Third Reich,” *Body Politic*, January/February 1974, 1. The collective that published *The Body Politic* changed its name in 1978 to The Pink Triangle Press after the success of Steakley’s article. “We chose this name to reflect our interest in our history and our commitment to vigilance.” <http://www.pinktrianglepress.com/our-name> (accessed February 13, 2016).

especially in the 1970s and 1980s, situated gay men in the spectrum of victims of the Nazi terror. These articles, however, largely did not make an effort to provide any comparative analysis or introduce important distinctions between the victims of systematic genocide and those that were persecuted but not targeted for extermination.¹⁶ In the summer of 1975 the San Francisco-based *Gay Sunshine* reported that the Nazis sent gays “in the droves” to camps, where they met their death. Ultimately, the author estimates that 430,000 gays died of “illness, neglect, suicide, medical experiments or the gas chambers” in “Hitler’s final solution.”¹⁷ That fall, *Gay Community News* noted that the Nazi rule “resulted in the slaughter of thousands of Gays in the death camps, whose memory is not commemorated in the plaques with the other victims.”¹⁸ The cover page of an issue one month later had a large pink triangle with the tagline: “This Logo is a Reminder.”¹⁹

By far the most extensive coverage of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals appeared in *The Wisconsin Light*, a gay and lesbian newspaper published in Milwaukee. Dr. Terry Boughner was a historian and founder of the newspaper, and beginning in September 1988, he published a twenty-six part series entitled “A Time to Die.” Boughner informed readers that the series was the result of ten years of research, including several trips to Europe to interview over twenty gay concentration camp survivors. The narrative Boughner constructed can certainly be characterized as a Homocaust. “This is not a pretty story,” he wrote. “This is the story of the Pink Triangle, the

¹⁶ One notable exception was an article that ran in a Memphis gay periodical. The 1980 article stated that, “homosexuals were not to be eliminated. Instead they were to be reeducated.” Therefore, this article clearly demarcated itself from others that promoted a narrative of gay genocide. Scott Correll, “The Pink Triangle,” *Memphis Gaze*, May 1980, 3.

¹⁷ W. I. Scobie, “Death Camps: Remembering the Victims.” *Gay Sunshine News: A Journal of Gay Liberation*. Nr. 25 (Summer 1975), 28.

¹⁸ The Most Rev’d Mikhail F. M. Itkin, C.L.C., “Visitors from the Holocaust,” *Gay Community News* (September 20, 1975), 5.

¹⁹ *Gay Community News*, Vol. 6, No. 14, October 28, 1978, 1.

Holocaust of the Gays in Nazi Germany.”²⁰ The series represents a litany of horrors: prisoners subjected to medical experiments; rape scenes; a man being forced to eat the flesh of his dead lover.²¹ More significant, however, is the fact that Boughner argued throughout the series that the Nazis’ attempted genocide of homosexuals was the original “final solution,” and only later were Heinrich Himmler and Joseph Goebbels able to convince Hitler that the same methods should be applied to Jews. Therefore, “the Jews joined the Gays and Lesbians on the road to extermination.”²² Ultimately Boughner concluded that, “There is reason to believe that the total number of Gays and Lesbians murdered at Auschwitz may have come closer to three quarters a million people;” and that was just one camp.²³ He argued that not much had changed since the end of the war. “What the Nazis failed to do, historians of the Holocaust, Jewish and others, have almost succeeded in accomplishing.”²⁴ He continued to assert: “By them denying us our history, they are saying we are subhuman and not fit to be remembered. Damn them! The Nazis annihilated us, the chroniclers erase our memories and so kill us again.”²⁵

Certainly, Boughner’s work did a great deal to raise a limited readerships’ awareness of the suffering of the men with the pink triangle. It is worth noting, however, that Boughner’s series is full of historical inaccuracies and over-generalizations; moreover, he provides no documentation for any of his sources, and none of his claims can be substantiated. The point is not to discredit his entire work. Conducting interviews with gay concentration camp survivors in West Germany during the 1980s was not an easy task. But it is telling that, although highly

²⁰ Terry Boughner, “Introduction: A Time to Die,” *The Wisconsin Light* 1, no. 12, September 22 – October 5, 1988, 1. The twenty-six part series ran from September 1988 to November 1989.

²¹ Part VII of the series goes into especially gruesome details of some of the horrors that homosexual prisoners faced. See: Terry Boughner, “A Time to Die, VII,” *The Wisconsin Light* 1, no. 18, December 15, 1988 – January 11, 1989, 2.

²² Terry Boughner, “A Time to Die, VIII,” *The Wisconsin Light* 2, no. 1, January 12 – 25, 1989, 2.

²³ Terry Boughner, “A Time to Die, XVIII,” *The Wisconsin Light* 2, no. 13, June 29 – July 12, 1989, 2.

²⁴ Terry Boughner, “A Time to Die, XXII,” *The Wisconsin Light* 2, no. 1, January 12 – 25, 1989, 2.

²⁵ Terry Boughner, “A Time to Die, XIII,” *The Wisconsin Light* 2, no. 18, September 7-20, 1989, 2.

flawed, such a narrative could be published and thereby contribute to raising a greater awareness of homosexual suffering during the Third Reich.

In many instances, the American gay press positioned narratives of the Nazi experience in the immediate context of current political debates. The primary goal of these articles was to motivate them to take political action, rather than solely educate readers on a chapter of history. A reader in Charlotte, North Carolina, wrote a letter to the editor of *The Weekly News* – the bulletin of south Florida’s Coalition for Human Rights – suggesting that in the fight against anti-gay activist Anita Bryant, gays needed to rely more heavily on the power of history that was represented in the symbol of the pink triangle.²⁶ Editorial comments in *The San Francisco Sentinel* argued that gays and lesbians should have no compassion for anti-gay crusaders like Bryant or their families. “We must all be ever aware that mass murders similar to Nazi Germany’s could occur in this country.”²⁷

In 1980, *Gay Community News*, which had published a story several years earlier stating that “thousands” of homosexuals had been slaughtered by the Hitler state, ran another story in which the author asserted that had been too conservative an estimate. “The actual figure probably rests at close to one million.”²⁸ The broader aim of this article was to warn readers about the rise of the New Right in American politics, and the author had altered the history of the pink triangle to fit current political needs. *The Advocate*, one of the most influential American gay magazines, also called on the specter of the Holocaust to motivate gay Americans to remain vigilant against

²⁶ W.S., Charlotte, N.C. Letter to the Editor. *The Weekly News: A Volunteer Publication for Gay Information*. Vol. 1, No. 35, May 2, 1978, 1.

²⁷ W.E. Beardemphl, “Editorial Comments,” *San Francisco Sentinel*, February 24, 1977, 5.

²⁸ W.J. Kreckl and Ian Johnson, “The New Right as an Old Trick,” *Gay Community News*, Vol. 7, No. 40, May 3, 1980, 8.

the conservative backlash of the New Right. The front page of the November 1992 issue was emblazoned with a swastika and the headline: “The Rise of Fascism in America.”²⁹

The gay presses in Germany and the United States reinforced the transatlantic ties that the gay rights movements had established. Bookshops, such as West Berlin’s Prinz Eisenherz, and publishers, such as the Rosa Winkel Verlag, benefited from mutual partnerships and exchanges of information with American institutions, like Giovanni’s Room, a gay bookstore in Philadelphia.³⁰ All major gay press outlets in the Federal Republic contained a “news from America” section in nearly all issues, especially in the 1970s. These sections contained information on a number of stories ranging from travel tips to important developments in the American gay rights movement.³¹ Interestingly, much of what gay and lesbian West Germans read about America in the gay press came from a single person. Johannes Werres was a gay West German journalist who, writing under at least six pseudonyms, relied on contacts he had made during a trip to the United States in the 1950s to report on a number of issues.³² Rainer Hoffschildt, a researcher in Hanover, later recalled: “As it turns out, almost everything we knew about America, we learned from Werres.”³³

²⁹ “The Rise of Fascism in America: Why Antigay Hate Groups are Flourishing in Oregon and Colorado – and Which States are Next,” *Advocate*, November 3, 1992. Cover story by John Gallagher; full story on page 37.

³⁰ Peter Hedenström, interview with W. Jake Newsome. Berlin, February 11, 2014.

³¹ The West German gay press followed with particular interest the developments in the national battle between gay rights activists and the anti-gay “Save our Children” campaign led by Anita Bryant. But there were reports on a number of different stories. A February 1973 article in *him* informed readers that a group of gay students at the State University of New York at Buffalo had formed a Gay Law Students Organization to help protect the legal rights of gay men and women in the area (“Homosexuelle Jurastudenten bilden Zusammenschluß,” *him*, February 1973, 21.). The Munich-based *Südwind* covered a bizarre story from Florida with its article “Concentration Camp Practices in a U.S. Prison” (“KZ-Praktiken in US-Knast,” *Südwind*, Nr. 3 1990, 20). The incident, also covered by the *New York Times*, centered around a Polk County sheriff who forced all homosexual inmates to wear a pink armband, because “all hell would break loose” if they were allowed to mix un-marked among the general prison population (“Pink Bracelets for Homosexuals in Florida Jail are Challenged,” *The New York Times*, December 3, 1989. Available online: <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/12/03/us/pink-bracelets-for-homosexuals-in-florida-jail-are-challenged.html>, Accessed March 19, 2016.)

³² The pseudonym that Werres used most often was Jack Argo, but others included: Julius Mesenbach, Gay Guy, Heins Bär, Norbert Weissenhagen, and Hans Daniel.

³³ Rainer Hoffschildt. Conversation with W. Jake Newsome. January 15, 2014.

American gay press outlets, too, ran stories about their brothers and sisters across the Atlantic, though not nearly as often as the German press reported on developments in America. In 1978, Boston's *Gay Community News* published "Gays Organize in Germany," an interview with Egmont Fassbinder, a leading West German gay activist who was visiting several gay groups in the United States and Canada. A year later, New York's *Christopher Street* reported on the rise of Neo-Nazis in West Germany and what it meant for gays and lesbians.³⁴ When American gay press outlets published articles about Germany, they were mostly about the Nazi period. Therefore, a transatlantic conversation of sorts also took place around the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. In February 1977, *Christopher Street* ran a cover story entitled "What the Nazis Did to Gays."³⁵ The author of the seven-page article was Richard Plant, a gay, Jewish émigré from Germany. Given his German heritage, Plant also interacted with the West German gay press, and in doing so, strengthened the transatlantic ties. In August 1981, for example the German periodical *Gay Journal* began a five part series called "The Homocaust." The articles, which came to be the basis for a book published a decade later, presented the Nazis' homosexual policies as a gay Holocaust.³⁶ After reading the series, Plant wrote a letter to the editor in which he stated, "I don't want to encroach on the young journalist's territory, but he only has a vague idea about what happened back then."³⁷

Plant's book *The Pink Triangle*, published in 1986, was based on documents that were only available in German, and provided a more accurate history than those presented in previous articles in the American gay press. For example, *The Pink Triangle* stated that between ten and fifteen thousand gay men had been imprisoned in concentration camps, and the book also

³⁴ Barry Mehler, "In Neo-Nazi Germany," *Christopher Street*, June 1979, 60.

³⁵ Richard Plant, "What the Nazis did to Gays," *Christopher Street*. Cover story. February 1977, 4.

³⁶ The five part series in *Gay Journal*, written by Massimo Consoli, ran from August to December 1981. Consoli later published: *Homocaust: Il nazismo e la persecuzione degli omosessuali*, (Milano: Kaos, 1991).

³⁷ Prof. R.P. in N.Y. "Letter to the Editor," *Gay Journal*, (March 1982), 2.

dedicates space to the postwar situation of gay victims. Plant's work received some criticism after it was published, but it has remained a major voice in the transatlantic discussions of the pink triangle past in the gay presses of these two countries.³⁸

Beginning in the 1970s, when historical scholarship on the subject was still lacking, these articles in the gay press acted as a primary source of information for millions of readers. By the 1980s, these articles increasingly mentioned the fate of lesbians in Nazi Germany. Moreover, they portrayed the Nazi past as a part of "gay history" at large and thus reinforced the notion that gays and lesbians living in West Germany and the United States shared a common historical experience. Terry Boughner, the American author of the *Wisconsin Light* series, stated that studying the Nazi persecution of homosexuals had a profoundly personal impact on him: "I can frankly state that never before nor since have I felt so drained, so full of sorrow and anger – and so very much a Gay."³⁹ In many ways, it did not matter if the content of that history was – as historians have later come to demonstrate – not entirely accurate; the gay press was filling a void left by academia and the mainstream press and, in doing so, helped to shape a generation's understanding of gay history.

History on the Stage: Fictional Accounts of the Pink Triangle Past

By the close of the 1970s, members of the gay community in the United States found other ways to grapple with the pink triangle past. These included fictional representations of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. The fictional character of such works should not diminish their

³⁸ Richard Plant, *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War against Homosexuals* (New York: New Republic Books, 1986). One reviewer in the *Los Angeles Times* (November 23, 1986) critiqued Plant's book for focusing too much on the Nazi perpetrators and not enough on individual fates of homosexual victims. But, this is the result of the sources available on the topic. http://articles.latimes.com/1986-11-23/books/bk-12363_1_concentration-camps (Accessed March 24, 2016)

³⁹ Terry Boughner, "Introduction: A Time to Die," *The Wisconsin Light* 1, no. 12, Sept. 22 – Oct. 5, 1988, 4.

importance in shaping how (mostly gay) Americans – and later, Germans – understood the plight of homosexuals under Hitler. It added yet another angle to the variety of narrative strategies used to build a history of gay men and women.

Fiction about the Nazi persecution of homosexuals includes a handful of novels, such as Lannon Reed's *Behold a Pale Horse: A Novel of Homosexuals in the Nazi Holocaust* (1985) and Robert Reinhart's *Walk in the Night: A Novel of Gays in the Holocaust* (1994).⁴⁰ By far the most influential fictional account, however, was offered by Martin Sherman's drama *Bent*. When the play premiered in London's West End in 1979, the famous actor Ian McKellen played the main character. One year later, the play opened on Broadway with Richard Gere as the lead. The same year, *Bent* opened in cities across West Germany, and since its debut, has been performed in over thirty countries and has been nominated for many awards, including a Tony Award and a Pulitzer Prize for Drama. In 1997, *Bent* was adapted into a successful Hollywood movie of the same name, and award-winner Clive Owen played the main role of Max.⁴¹ Given the success of the play and the ensuing movie, *Bent* reached a far wider audience than any publication in the gay press, and later any academic publication, could hope to achieve. Sherman's narrative played a significant role in both raising awareness of the persecution as well as shaping the way audiences in the wider transatlantic world understood that persecution.

Martin Sherman attributed James Steakley's research as having greatly influenced the production of *Bent*.⁴² This influence is apparent in the script, which follows the story of several gay men living in Germany during the early years of Nazi rule. The play begins with a display of

⁴⁰ Lannon D. Reed, *Behold a Pale Horse: A Novel of Homosexuals in the Nazi Holocaust*, (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1985); Robert C. Reinhart, *Walk the Night: A Novel of Gays in the Holocaust* (Boston: Alyson Books, 1994). Most recently, a graphic novel was published in French. See: Michel Dufranne, Milorad Vicanovic-Maza, and Christian Lerolle, *Triangle Rose*, (Toulon: Quadrant, 2011).

⁴¹ Ian McKellen – who had been knighted since his role in the stage production of *Bent* – was also cast in the movie version, but this time as the older, gay Uncle Freddie.

⁴² Martin Sherman, interview with Michael Lynch, "Bent 1934/1981: A Play-Goer Reflects on Repression Then and Now," *The Body Politic*, No. 72, April 1981, 28.

the lavish and raucous nightlife of Berlin. Max, the main character, is with his lover, Rudy, at a rowdy cabaret, which seems to be a popular gathering place for gay men and lesbians. Viewers of the play get the feeling that although the Nazis are already in power, the situation for homosexuals has not really changed from the liberal atmosphere of the Weimar Republic. In fact, there are several uniformed Nazi officials in the bar engaging in same-sex activity, as well. From a well-to-do family, Max is self-centered, used to getting his way, and giving in to his every physical desire. At the end of the night, he takes one of the SA officers home to have sex. This turns out to be a fatal mistake.

As it turns out, the play opens during the Night of the Long Knives, an operation in which Hitler ordered the murder of the openly homosexual SA-Chief Ernst Röhm and other individuals who could potentially pose threats to Hitler's power. This is significant for a number of reasons. First, it sets into motion the major plot trajectory for the rest of the play. But, by beginning the play on the night of the Röhm purge, Sherman glosses over one and a half years of persecution in Berlin during which Nazi leadership ordered the disbanding of all homosexual publications and organizations, as well as the closure of all homosexual locales. More significantly still, the play neglects the fact that the bloody purge of Röhm and many other individuals was a mission to eliminate political rivals. Instead, the Night of the Long Knives is portrayed as a concerted operation to hunt down and murder all gays in the Nazi state. In short, the play depicts the event as the beginning of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. The entire play takes place between 1934 and 1936, before the outbreak of World War II, before Kristallnacht, and before the "Final Solution" of the Jews was implemented. Therefore, one gets the impression that what is happening to gays is isolated; it is not part of broader discriminatory measures aimed at all individuals who do not fit into the *Volksgemeinschaft*, nor is it a general

outcome of warfare. After watching the play, one feels that gays were the Nazis' first and perhaps primary targets.

On the morning after the opening scene, members of the SS burst into Max's apartment and slit the throat of the gay SA officer. Max and Rudy manage to escape this particular raid, but they cannot avoid the Nazi crackdown for much longer. Eventually, the two are arrested and put on a transport to Dachau. Along the way, Max is warned that being a homosexual in a concentration camp is even worse than being a Jew. Max imparts on a series of grotesque undertakings as a way to prove to the SS guards that he is not gay. First, he beats his gay friend to death, but the guards are not convinced. As a final test, the guards observe as Max has sex with the corpse of a teenage girl. Satisfied that Max is not "bent," the guards give him a yellow star instead of a pink triangle upon arrival at Dachau.

Scholars have since demonstrated that the play and subsequent movie were historically inaccurate. In many ways, both reinforced the notion of a systematic gay genocide or Homocaust. One of the central tenets of the play (and both of the aforementioned novels) is that to be a pink triangle prisoner was to be assigned the worst fate of all. Both *Bent* and *Behold a Pale Horse* assert that to identify as a Jew meant having a better chance at survival. The claim that homosexuals were treated most severely of all inmates in Nazi concentration camps sparked controversy among other survivor groups and fueled what historian Eric Jensen calls a "crass game of competitive victimhood," in which victim groups "compete" for a unique place under the umbrella of Nazi persecution.⁴³ Some Jewish Holocaust survivors passionately contested the claim that the pink triangle condemned its wearer to be the "damnedest of the damned" inside the camps, a trope that appeared in most accounts of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals, including Heinz Heger's

⁴³ Eric Jensen, "The Pink Triangle and Political Consciousness: Gays, Lesbians, and the Memory of Nazi Persecution," in *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 11, No. 1/2, Special Issue: Sexuality and German Fascism (Jan. – Apr., 2002), 345.

autobiography, the play *Bent*, and Richard Plant's monograph.⁴⁴ In a response to an op-ed written by Richard Plant in the *New York Times*, Herbert Loebel wrote, "As a survivor of Auschwitz, I can assure him that any Jewish inmate would have gladly swapped his yellow triangle for the homosexual's pink one."⁴⁵

Dialogue throughout *Bent* also implies that men like Max are being arrested for *being* gay. This disregards the fact, as discussed in detail in Chapter One, that Paragraph 175 criminalized homosexual acts, not homosexuality or homosexuals themselves. Dorthe Seifert argues that, "The emphasis on sexual identity rather than sexual behavior in the literary works points to different perceptions of what homosexuality *is* or *was* at the time of the Third Reich."⁴⁶ By portraying that homosexuals were persecuted for what they were rather than what they did, *Bent* confirmed a tendency prominent in the 1970s and 1980s to conflate the persecution of homosexuals with the fate of the Jews. This was not wholly the result of a manipulation of history for present needs, but resulted primarily from the lack of available information about the lives of homosexuals under the swastika. Gay men and women in West Germany and the United States were left to fill in the gaps, and fictional accounts such as Sherman's represent a way to make sense of the past by using a narrative that was readily available: the Jewish Holocaust.⁴⁷

Seifert argues that the importance of these fictional accounts lies not in their historical accuracy. Indeed, she writes that the historical reality presented by *Behold A Pale Horse* is "so incongruent with the historical facts that the reader cannot rely on any of the information that is

⁴⁴ In his autobiography, Heger wrote, "We were to remain isolated as the damndest of the damned, the camp's 'shitty queers.'" Heger, *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, 34.

⁴⁵ Herbert Loebel, "Gays weren't Doomed," *The New York Times*, November 25, 1989, 22. Loebel referenced: Richard Plant, "Nazis' Forgotten Victims: Gays," *The New York Times*, November 7, 1989, A23.

⁴⁶ Dorthe Seifert, "Between Silence and License: The Representation of the National Socialist Persecution of Homosexuality in Anglo-American Fiction and Film," *History and Memory* 15, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2003): 109.

⁴⁷ Jensen also argues that the postwar gay movement often used the genocide of the Jews as a template to understand the persecution of homosexuals. See Jensen, "The Pink Triangle and Political Consciousness," 342.

presented in the novel.”⁴⁸ The importance of these accounts, then, was that they provided the basis for a contemporary gay identity by establishing a sense of historical roots, a feeling that gay people had a past. Günter Grau adds that in the process of establishing historical roots, victims and survivors can “regain a forward-looking perspective,” and thus establish a more positive and self-empowered identity.⁴⁹ *Bent* in particular came to act as a source for laying historical roots for the transatlantic gay identity that emerged during the gay rights movement. A reviewer of the play recently reaffirmed the central place that the play occupies in modern gay literature, art, and culture: “*Bent* is culturally for the Gay and Lesbian community a landmark play that helped their community and the greater community to re-evaluate the manner in which they looked at history.”⁵⁰ Similarly in 1997, a film critic for the *New York Times* wrote, “In establishing the pink triangle, a concentration camp badge denoting homosexuality, as a symbol of embattled gay pride, *Bent* has earned its place in cultural history.”⁵¹

In addition to providing a historical legitimacy to a modern gay identity, these fictional accounts also urged their audiences to come out and accept this identity, which was a central tenet of modern gay politics and gay identity. In *Behold a Pale Horse*, being gay and being Jewish are almost played out against each other as mutually exclusive identities. The main character – who is both gay and Jewish – ultimately accepts his gay identity over his Jewishness even though doing so meant worse treatment. The novel presents the choice as “a source of strength and pride.”⁵² In *Bent*, too, the main character eventually comes to terms with his homosexuality. He comes out by putting on the pink triangle of his slain lover, and commits

⁴⁸ Seifert, “Between Silence and License,” 106.

⁴⁹ Grau, “Final Solution of the Homosexual Question?” 339.

⁵⁰ Kevin Jackson, “Bent,” *Kevin Jackson’s Theatre Diary* (blog), February 23, 2010. <http://kjtheatrereviews.blogspot.com/2010/02/bent.html>; (Accessed March 23, 2016).

⁵¹ Stephen Holden, “Sent from Gay Berlin to Labor at Dachau” (review of the film version of *Bent*) in *The New York Times*, November 26, 1997, E5.

⁵² Seifert, “Between Silence and License,” 115.

suicide by running into the electric fence. One of the play's central messages becomes clear to viewers: if you are gay, you have to come out, no matter the cost. This message was not lost on viewers. "The play invites the spectator's imagination to leap from the historically specific situation of Nazi-persecuted gays to the brutality of any society against gays," wrote one commentator. "Sherman clearly wants this play to have a paradigmatic function."⁵³ Two years later, a critic in Toronto asserted that, "*Bent* dramatizes a new urgency for putting on our pink triangles for all the world to see."⁵⁴

It is interesting to note that no fictional accounts originated in West Germany, though *Bent* went on to be a hit there. Even before the play came to the Federal Republic, the West German gay magazine *him* reported on its success in London and New York.⁵⁵ The play made its German premiere at the National Theater in Mannheim in 1979, and was subsequently performed across the country under the title *Rosa Winkel* (Pink Triangle). For many West Germans, gay and straight alike, this play was the first information they had ever encountered about the Nazis' homosexual victims, and *Rosa Winkel* garnered waves of attention in the mainstream press. The national weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel* informed its readers that, "a Broadway play about homosexuals in Hitler's concentration camps is now playing in Germany."⁵⁶ A few months later, the *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, Germany's largest regional newspaper, reviewed the play in an article entitled, "Love behind the Barbed Wire."⁵⁷ One commentator stated, "I ask myself if the play shouldn't have been on a German stage a long time ago."⁵⁸ After seeing the play in

⁵³ Mel Cooper, "...but not broken," *The Body Politic*, November 1979, 39.

⁵⁴ Michael Lynch, "Bent under Hitler, Bent under Ackroyd," *The Body Politic*, April 1981, 28.

⁵⁵ Dominique Francois, "*Bent*," *him*, October 1979, 40.

⁵⁶ Heinz Schubert, "Theater: Rosa Winkel," *Der Spiegel*, April 21, 1980, 229.

⁵⁷ Wolfgang Platzek, "Liebe hinter Stacheldraht: Martin Shermans Stück über Homosexuelle im KZ," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 29, 1980. SARCH archives, Ordner 87: NS Widerstand, Filme, Bent, und Bücher Verbrennung.

⁵⁸ Frank Arlig, "Bent: Schwule Boulevard," *HE*, January 1980, 17. SARCH archives, Ordner 87: NS Widerstand, Filme, Bent, und Bücher Verbrennung.

Cologne, one viewer articulated the critique more clearly: “It’s actually very shameful that the American playwright Martin Sherman, who is unknown over here, had to come and bring the horrible persecution and extermination of homosexuals during the Nazi time to our stages.”⁵⁹

As was the case in the United States, the play was about more than entertainment. It represented a cultural event and a watershed moment in the wider acknowledgment of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. Gay groups across the Federal Republic organized outings for their members to go see the play together. *Schulz*, the gay community center in Cologne, even reserved an entire local theater for a night. There was an introduction to the historical context of play before its special performance for the *Schulz* members, and afterwards, the cast, production team, and audience members engaged in lively discussion about this poignant chapter of German and gay history.⁶⁰ It is clear that *Bent*, and its German counterpart *Rosa Winkel*, were meant to educate and inform viewers. The vast majority of the playbills and programs that accompanied the play in West Germany contained articles on the history of the pink triangle. In the program for *Bent*’s 1980-1981 run at the Schiller Schlosspark Werkstatt Theater in Berlin, audience members could find twelve pages of information, constituting half the program, on the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. These pages included extensive excerpts from Heinz Heger’s *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, but also a contribution on “Homophobia and Fascism” from Rüdiger Lautmann, who would eventually become one of the world’s leading experts on the topic.⁶¹ A 1981 program from Hamburg’s Theater im Zimmer only mentioned the cast and crew of the play on the back page. The rest of the playbill was dedicated to historical material, including excerpts

⁵⁹ This quote, attributed to W. Ringelband from the *Weser-Kurier*, was included under “critical acclaim for *Rosa Winkel*” in the playbill at the Theater der Keller in Cologne. Centrum Schwule Geschichte Köln (CSG) archives, Ordner: Varia 3, #298.

⁶⁰ Schulz (Schwulenzentrum) at “Theater der Keller” in Cologne, December 14, 1988. SARCH archives, Ordner: 87 – NS Widerstand, Filme, Bent, und Bücher Verbrennung.

⁶¹ *Bent* by Martin Sherman. Playbill for Berlin’s Schiller Schlosspark Werkstatt Theater. 1980/1981 theater season. SARCH archives, Ordner: 87 – NS Widerstand, Filme, Bent, und Bücher Verbrennung.

from Heger's book, an extensive history of Paragraph 175, and a broader analysis of anti-gay discrimination in German history.⁶² The play was meant to be a truly educational experience for audiences. And with no access to, or support from, the history departments in West German universities, the gay press and these *Bent* playbills were often the only place that researchers could hope to share information and reach an audience. By the mid-1980s, however, this was about to change.

“Treated like a Stepchild:” Pink Triangle Scholarship in the Historical Profession

Scholars came relatively late to the increasingly public discussion over the legacy of the Nazis' persecution of homosexuals, and when they did join, theirs was just one voice among many. In 1967 Wolfgang Harthausen offered the first extensive historical account with his chapter, “The Mass Murder of Homosexuals in the Third Reich,” but it was included in a psychology book meant to explore the “problem of homosexuality.”⁶³ Two years later, the West German journalist Harry Wilde published the first book-length study, which framed the Nazis' anti-homosexual policies as a “Final Solution.”⁶⁴ The next account would not appear for nearly a decade. In 1977, sociologist Rüdiger Lautmann became the first scholar to utilize Nazi records and provide a detailed study of the fate of homosexuals in the concentration camps.⁶⁵ Most significantly, Lautmann and his team were the first to offer an accurate estimate of the number of Nazis'

⁶² *Bent (Rosa Winkel)*. Playbill from Theater im Zimmer, Hamburg. 1981/1982 season. Schwules Museum (SM) archives. C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 7 (Erinnerungskulturen): 2 (Publizistische Darstellungen).

⁶³ Wolfgang Harthausen, “Der Massenmord an Homosexuellen im Dritten Reich,” in Wilhart S. Schlegel, ed. *Das große Tabu: Zeugnisse und Dokumente zum Problem der Homosexualität* (Munich, 1967), 7-37.

⁶⁴ Harry Wilde, *Das Schicksal der Verfehten: Die Verfolgung der Homosexuellen im 'Dritten Reich' und ihre Stellung in der heutigen Gesellschaft*, (Tübingen, 1969). Wilde's book was the basis for James Steakley's influential article “Homosexuals in the Third Reich” in *The Body Politic* (Jan./Feb. 1974). (James Steakley, interview with W. Jake Newsome. November 19, 2015).

⁶⁵ Rüdiger Lautmann, Winifried Grikschat, and Egbert Schmidt, “Der rosa Winkel in den nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern,” in Rüdiger Lautmann, ed., *Seminar: Gesellschaft und Homosexualität* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 325-365.

homosexual victims based on archival evidence. They concluded that during Hitler's twelve year reign, approximately 5,000 to 15,000 gay men were locked away in concentration camps.

During the 1980s, a growing number of researchers in West Germany began to conduct scholarly research on the topic. In 1981, Hans-Georg Stümke, an author and gay rights activist, and the Hamburg journalist Rudi Finkler published a book that would come to be standard reading for anyone interested in the persecution of homosexuals.⁶⁶ *Pink Triangle, Pink Lists: Homosexuals and "Healthy Public Opinion" from Auschwitz to Today* provided not only a general history of homosexuality in Germany since the founding of the *Kaiserreich*, but also a detailed exploration of homosexuality under National Socialism, including interviews with anonymized survivors. The five hundred page book purposefully drew comparisons and connections between the persecution of homosexuals during the Third Reich, on the one hand, and the ongoing legal and social discrimination faced in the Federal Republic, on the other. One hundred pages of appendixes made available primary sources on a wide range of related topics to anyone interested in further research.

In 1983, a group of four German researchers published *Gays and Fascism*, which contained a brief interview with a gay concentration camp survivor. It was the first publication to include a discussion of the situation of lesbians under the Nazi regime.⁶⁷ At the end of the decade, Hans-Georg Stümke published his *Gays in Germany: A Political History*, a work that put the persecution of gay men and women in Germany in a much larger context stretching back to the Middle Ages. His final chapter, on the situation of gays and lesbians in East and West

⁶⁶ Hans-Georg Stümke and Rudi Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen: Homosexuelle und "Gesundes Volksempfinden von Auschwitz bis heute*, (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1981).

⁶⁷ Heinz-Dieter Schilling, ed. *Schwule und Faschismus* (West Berlin: Elefant Press, 1983).

Germanys, also included information about the refusal of the Federal Republic to issue reparations to gay victims of the Nazi regime.⁶⁸

Apart from Stümke, none of the aforementioned researchers were trained as historians. “All of the early works came from outside the historical discipline,” Stefan Micheler and Jakob Michelsen later observed.⁶⁹ Homosexuality remained a taboo topic in the historical discipline in the Western world, and certainly in Germany. Writing in 1989, the scholar-activists Andreas Salmen and Albert Becker observed that beginning in the 1970s, gays and lesbians in the Federal Republic concluded that they would have to write their own history, whether they possessed a degree in history or not.⁷⁰ Similarly, members of an American gay organization asserted that if gays did not write their own history, mainstream authors would either continue ignoring it or simply get it wrong. As evidence, they pointed to a recent article in the *Boston Globe* that stated, “the pink triangle was worn by gays under duress in Nazi Germany.”⁷¹ Clearly outraged, the authors of the gay pamphlet retorted, “The pink triangle was a little more than a sign of ‘duress’ in the Nazi concentration camps.”⁷²

The rise of the gay rights movement, then, not only spurred interest in the past for political goals in the present; it also initiated a grassroots wave of historical scholarship on gay history written by and for gay men and women themselves. This remained the case for decades,

⁶⁸ Hans-Georg Stümke, *Homosexuelle in Deutschland: Eine politische Geschichte*, (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1989).

⁶⁹ Stefan Micheler and Jaakob Michelsen, “Geschichtsforschung und Identitätsstiftung: Von der “schwulen Ahnenreihe” zur Dekonstruktion des Homosexuellen,” in Detlef Grumbach, ed., *Was heißt hier schwul? Politik und Identitäten im Wandel*, (Hamburg: MännerschwarmSkript Verlag, 1997), 101.

⁷⁰ Andreas Salmen and Albert Eckert, *20 Jahre bundesdeutsche Schwulenbewegung 1969-1989*, (Köln: Bundesverband Homosexualität e.V., 1989), 65. Lautmann and Jellonnek estimated that at the dawn of the new millennium, four-fifths of the scholars researching the Nazi persecution of homosexuals were themselves either gay or lesbian. See Jellonnek and Lautmann, *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle*, 12.

⁷¹ “Gay Pride Report,” *Boston Globe*, June 14, 1987. THP archives, Collection 5, Series 1: March on Washington 1987, Folder: Ntl L&G March on Washington 1987.

⁷² “Why we need to write our own history,” in pamphlet: “Come Out New England: National Lesbian and Gay March on Washington.” THP archives, Collection 5, Series 1: March on Washington 1987, Folder: Ntl L&G March on Washington 1987.

and as late as 1994, Micheler and Michelsen stated that while gay history was established in countries like the United States and the Netherlands, this was not the case in Germany. “There aren’t funds or institutional support,” such as conferences and journals dedicated to the research of gay history.⁷³ As gays and lesbians fought for rights in the present, they also sought to understand their past. James Steakley reflected that the emergence of gay history during the 1970s was a profoundly personal and important development. “For a lot of gay individuals, when they became aware that they were gay, they would feel isolated. They weren’t aware that there were others out there like them. They weren’t aware of any sense of community, or of any historical antecedents for what they were feeling.”⁷⁴ The push, then, to research and write the history of gay men and women was a vital part of giving a historical grounding to their identities as individuals and as a group in the present.

The increased research on this topic often created controversial debates that were not confined any longer to gay publications. In May 1981, for example, representatives of the German Society for Sexual Research called for further study of the topic of homosexuality, writing in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* that “thousands of prisoners with the pink triangle were tormented and exterminated in the concentration camps.” One week later, Heinz Junge, the secretary of the Sachsenhausen camp memorial, responded angrily: “Where do these gigantic numbers come from? Why the exaggeration?” He went on to (falsely) claim that only one hundred gay prisoners had ever been in Sachsenhausen, and most of them, he added, were not “real” homosexuals; the majority had been apprehended for simply fooling around with another man. Junge went on to say that “175ers” were not politically active individuals, and most did nothing to oppose the fascist regime. He made sure to add at the end: “more than a few were

⁷³ Micheler and Michelsen, “Geschichtsforschung und Identitätsstiftung,” in Grumbach, ed., 105.

⁷⁴ James Steakley, interview with W. Jake Newsome. November 19, 2015.

actually in the ranks of the SS and SA.”⁷⁵ Junge’s letter sparked outrage among the handful of scholars who were knowledgeable of the history. In an article entitled “What is a ‘175er’ Worth?” Hans-Georg Stümke accused Junge of parroting old Stalinist accusations that the Nazi party was actually founded and run by violent homosexuals.⁷⁶ Lautmann responded in his own letter to the editor, criticizing Junge for getting hung up on numbers and overlooking the fact that this history had been swept under the rug since the Nazis’ defeat. Continuing to engage in honest research on the topic could act as a memorial to the “otherwise ignored abuses and...continuing social suppression” of gays and lesbians.⁷⁷

Well into the 1990s, researchers were still striving to convince those in governmental positions and the historical discipline that Germany’s gay history – especially the fate of homosexuals under Hitler – needed to be supported, researched, and preserved. In 1995, Jens Dobler, one of the leading experts on modern gay German history, was horrified to learn that the State Archive in Hamburg had been destroying case files of men convicted with Paragraph 175 under the Hitler and Adenauer regimes.⁷⁸ In an article titled “This is Not a Case for the Shredder,” the *Tageszeitung* reported that “files concerning the Nazis’ persecution of gays are allegedly being destroyed in Hamburg. Unique sources for future research are lost.”⁷⁹ In March 1996, the scandal continued, with the Hamburg archive denying that it singled out information on “forgotten victims” for disposal. Norbert Finzsch, a historian in Hamburg, called the loss of

⁷⁵ Heinz Junge, “Die mit dem ‘rosa Winkel,’” Letter to the Editor. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, May 27, 1981. SM archives, C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 6 (Nachwirkungen und Aufarbeitung): 1 (Aufarbeitung Allgemein).

⁷⁶ Stümke qtd. in “Was ist ein ‘175er’ wert? Streit um ‘rosa Winkel’ im KZ,” *Gay Journal*, January 1982, 1.

⁷⁷ Rüdiger Lautmann, “Die mit dem ‘rosa Winkel,’” Letter to the Editor. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, June 16, 1981. SM archives, C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 6 (Nachwirkungen und Aufarbeitung): 1 (Aufarbeitung Allgemein).

⁷⁸ Jens Dobler, letter to Dorian Hasselhoff (Büro für gleichgeschlechtliche Lebesfragen, Potsdam). July 12, 1995. SARCH archives, Ordner 87: NS Alte Quelle & Lesben.

⁷⁹ Jan Feddersen, “Kein Fall für den Reißwolf,” *Die Tageszeitung*, October 21-22, 1995. SARCH archives, Ordner 87: Alte Quelle & Lesben.

the files an “academic catastrophe.”⁸⁰ Continued investigation revealed that the Hamburg archive was running out of room, so the city-state’s senate had ordered the archive to get rid of the information on gays to make space for more “archive worthy” material.⁸¹

In the United States, too, researchers became interested in uncovering information about the Nazi treatment of homosexuals beyond what they read in the gay press. Already in 1974, Charles Shively, a Professor of History at Boston State College, proposed a course for the fall semester entitled “Homosexuality in World History.” His lecture on the Nazi regime was called “The Final Solution for Homosexuals,” and as sources, he cited Hans Bleuel’s *Sex and Society in Nazi Germany* and James Steakley’s 1974 article in *the Body Politic*.⁸² Other individuals, too, took it upon themselves to research the topic. In the summer of 1979, Jok Church, who had recently accepted his own identity as a gay man, committed to use his skills as a journalist to research the fate of gay men in Nazi Germany. He placed ads in various gay press outlets sure to reach readers from New York, Florida, California, and everywhere in between.⁸³ One such ad read: “Mr. Church [is] interested in contacting survivors of Nazi persecution to be interviewed.”⁸⁴ One person responded to Church’s ads. Horst Reimer had been born in Berlin to an aristocratic family. He was arrested by the Nazis for violating Paragraph 175 and learned while in prison that he had been scheduled for transport to Buchenwald concentration camp. He sent word to his family, and his mother and aunt bribed the prison officials. Reimer was able to

⁸⁰ Quoted in Cornelia Bolesch, “Wichtige Akten über Nazi-Opfer vernichtet?” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, March 12, 1996, 40.

⁸¹ Silke Mertins, “NS-Justizgeschichte im Reißwolf,” *TAZ Hamburg*, May 22, 1996. SM archives, C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 6 (Nachwirkungen und Aufarbeitung): 1 (Aufarbeitung Allgemein).

⁸² THP archives, Collection 11: the Daughters of Bilitis, Series 3: DOB Correspondence: Folder 11- General Correspondence, 1970-1997. The archives don’t reveal if the course was ever approved or if he taught it. But it does demonstrate that there was, already in 1974, an interest in teaching gay history, and an effort to inform American university students about the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. For the works Shively provided as sources, see: Hans Peter Bleuel, *Sex and Society in Nazi Germany*, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1973); and James Steakley, “Homosexuals and the Third Reich,” *Body Politic*, January/February 1974, 1.

⁸³ Jok Church, interview with W. Jake Newsome. December 29, 2015.

⁸⁴ “Surviving the Nazis,” *Weekly News Bulletin*, April 10, 1979, 8; also: “Search for Gay Survivors of the Death Camps,” *Christopher Street*, June 1979, 66.

flee to Switzerland, before travelling on to the United States in the 1950s. He was eighty-eight years old when he answered Church's ad in 1979, and the two spent three days together in Los Angeles discussing Reimer's life story. Church recorded the interview, with plans of producing a report for radio, but he ultimately never did anything with it. Reimer stipulated that his interview could only be published if other gay survivors stepped forward to break the silence together. None ever did.⁸⁵

Frank Rector's 1981 *The Nazi Extermination of Homosexuals* was an exception to the trend of gays being the only ones to write about the topic. Rector provided the first English book-length account of the homosexual persecution during the Third Reich. However, his work drew immediate criticism due to its over-generalizations and lack of evidence.⁸⁶ During the same period, some of the relevant work by German scholars was translated into English and appeared in academic journals. Rüdiger Lautmann and Erwin Haeberle both contributed articles to the 1981 issue of the *Journal of Homosexuality*, and Haeberle wrote a separate article for the *Journal of Sex Research* the same year.⁸⁷ Five years later, Richard Plant published his aforementioned book, *The Pink Triangle*.⁸⁸ While Plant's book has since received criticism for mischaracterizing the Nazis' anti-homosexual policies, it remained the English standard bearer on the topic for decades.

⁸⁵ Jok Church, interview with W. Jake Newsome, December 29, 2015.

⁸⁶ Frank Rector, *The Nazi Extermination of Homosexuals*, (New York: Stein and Day, 1981). Susan Jacoby wrote a critical review: "Nonfiction in Brief," *The New York Times*, May 10, 1981 <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/05/10/books/nonfiction-in-brief-by-susan-jacoby.html?pagewanted=all>, (Accessed March 20, 2016), and Rector wrote a scathing reply as a letter to the editor, "Nazis and Homosexuals," *The New York Times*, April 18, 1982. <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/04/18/books/1-nazis-and-homosexuals-073501.html>, (Accessed February 19, 2016).

⁸⁷ Rüdiger Lautmann, "The Pink Triangle: The Persecution of Homosexual Males in Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany," *Journal of Homosexuality* 6, no. 1-2 (1981): 141-160. Erwin J. Haeberle, "Stigmata of Degeneration: Prisoner Markings in Nazi Concentration Camps," *Journal of Homosexuality* 6, no. 1-2 (1981): 135-139. Erwin J. Haeberle, "Swastika, Pink Triangle and Yellow Star: The Destruction of Sexology and the Persecution of Homosexuals in Nazi Germany," *Journal of Sex Research* 17, no. 3 (Aug., 1981): 270-287.

⁸⁸ Richard Plant, *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War against Homosexuals* (New York: New Republic Books, 1986).

In West Germany, more individuals and groups now sought to inform the public of the fate of homosexuals under Hitler through exhibits and events. In December 1979, the *Allgemeine Homosexuelle Arbeitsgemeinschaft, e.V.* (General Homosexual Committee, AHA) in Berlin hosted a public lecture on the lives of gay men in concentration camps.⁸⁹ In January 1983, gay groups in Bonn put together “Homosexuals during Fascism and Today,” as part of an “Anti-Fascist Event Week” in the capital city.⁹⁰ For two days in June 1986, the *Bildungswerk für Demokratie und Umweltschutz e.V.* partnered with the *Schwulenbereich der Alternativen Listen* to host a seminar in West Berlin on “Homosexuality and Fascism.” The purpose of the seminar – which was free and open to anyone in West Germany – was to encourage new research on the persecution of, resistance by, and survival of gay men in the Third Reich. Speakers scheduled for the seminar included German scholars such as Burkhard Jellonnek and Manfred Bruns, as well as Richard Plant from New York City.⁹¹

In the mid-1980s, the historian of medicine Walter Wuttke put together a travelling exhibit called “Homosexuals in National Socialism.” The exhibit toured high schools and evening schools throughout southern Germany during the summer of 1986, including locations in Ulm and Biberach an der Riss.⁹² The *Südwest Presse* reported that the exhibit “illustrates the racial and political basis for the persecution of homosexuals in the Third Reich, but also shows

⁸⁹ Around 120 guests came to hear the lecture, held at the *Haus der Kirche*, a religious community center in Berlin’s Charlottenburg borough. Reports indicate that several teachers asked for further information so that they could integrate the material into their lessons on the Holocaust, and the *Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes* (Association of Those Persecuted by the Nazi Regime, VVN) wished to include information from the lecture in their newsletter. “Schwule im KZ – zu Recht?” *Emanzipation* (March/April 1980), 7.

⁹⁰ “Der ‘rosa Winkel’ Schicksale im KZ: Ausstellung über ‘Homosexuelle im Faschismus und heute,’” *General-Anzeiger für Bonn*, January 27, 1983. Found in *Schwule Presseschau*, compiled by the Allgemeiner Studentenausschuß (AstA) der Freie Universität Berlin (“Eingegangen: 28. Feb. 1983.”). Schwules Museum.

⁹¹ Einladung zum Seminar “Homosexualität und Faschismus.” CSG archives, Varia 2, Ordner #297.

⁹² For information on the exhibit, see the collection in the SM archives C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 7 (Erinnerungskulturen): 4 (Veranstaltungen).

the connections to the discrimination of this minority group in postwar Germany.”⁹³ The exhibit was the result of collaboration on the part of numerous individuals and organizations, including Hans-Georg Stümke, Rüdiger Lautmann, Claudia Schoppmann, the Rosa Winkel Verlag, the Federal Archives of Koblenz, the State Archives of Stuttgart, the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site and Archives, as well as the Greens, a new, left-leaning, environmental political party.⁹⁴ Throughout the 1990s, there was an explosion of lectures, exhibits, and events dedicated to the study of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals, including local studies and the fate of lesbians under the Third Reich.

In 1991, Richard Plant’s book was translated and released in German, and he started an international book tour to promote it.⁹⁵ Plant’s research and book tour through Germany garnered attention in mainstream press outlets, including the *Tageszeitung* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.⁹⁶ Plant himself wrote an article for the major national newspaper *Die Zeit* entitled “The Victims with the Pink Triangle: What the Nazis did to Gays has long been Suppressed.”⁹⁷ The publishing of Plant’s book in German highlighted what had become one of the major research questions in the scholarship on the Third Reich’s anti-homosexual policies, namely: did the Nazis aim to annihilate homosexuals or to cure them of their alleged sexual perversion?⁹⁸ Plant’s work presented the Nazis’ efforts largely as an attempted genocide of homosexual men. A year

⁹³ “Homosexualität im Nationalsozialismus: Vernichtungsmaschinerie wird eindringlich dokumentiert,” *Südwest Presse*, June 2, 1986. SM archives C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 7 (Erinnerungskulturen): 4 (Veranstaltungen).

⁹⁴ Homosexuelle im National-Sozialismus, Ausstellungskatalog. Catalogue. CSG Library.

⁹⁵ Richard Plant, *Rosa Winkel: Der Krieg der Nazis gegen die Homosexuellen*, (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1991).

⁹⁶ Edgar Peinelt, “Nachbilder des Rosa Winkels,” *Die Tageszeitung*, March 2, 1990, 13. Tilman Krause, “Opfer waren sie alle,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 2, 1991, 12. Micha Schulze, “Neue Thesen wider das Versäumnis der Wissenschaft,” *Die Tageszeitung*, July 5, 1991. SM archives C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 7 (Erinnerungskulturen): 2 (Publizistische Darstellungen). Detlef Grumbach, “Die furchtbaren Jahre,” *Die Zeit*, August 16, 1991. SM archives C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 7 (Erinnerungskulturen): 2 (Publizistische Darstellungen).

⁹⁷ Richard Plant, “Die Opfer mit den rosa Winkeln: Was die Nazis den Schwulen antaten, wurde lange verdrängt,” *Die Zeit*, December 1, 1989. Schwules Museum archives: C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 6 (Nachwirkungen und Aufarbeitung): 3 (Rehabilitierung/Wiedergutmachung).

⁹⁸ Hans-Georg Stümke, “Vergessene Opfer des Nationalsozialismus: ‘Endlösung’ oder ‘Umerziehung?’” *Die Zeit*, March 29, 1991, 42.

prior, however, a German historian published his doctoral dissertation on the topic as a monograph. In his book *Homosexuals under the Swastika*, Burkhard Jellonnek ultimately challenged many of the prevailing understandings of the treatment of homosexuals under Hitler.⁹⁹ After Plant went on his book tour in West Germany, Jellonnek undertook his own, partially as a way to correct what he saw as flaws in Plant's conclusions.¹⁰⁰

Primarily, Jellonnek refuted the narrative of gay genocide that had, to that point, dominated the understanding of homosexual persecution in the Third Reich. He reaffirmed the research conducted by Lautmann and others that put the number of gay men who died in concentration camps between 5,000 and 15,000. Most significantly, however, Jellonnek argued that the Nazis sought to eradicate homosexuality, not homosexuals. Ultimately, he asserted that the Nazi leadership believed that most men arrested for violating Paragraph 175 could still be reeducated and converted to useful Aryans who contributed to the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This spared them from the gas chambers. Jellonnek concluded that the "National Socialists' homosexual policy did not culminate in notions of extermination, nor did it aspire to the radical obliteration of all homosexuals in the sense of a 'Final Solution.'"¹⁰¹

In his book, Jellonnek noted that in comparison to the historical research on other victims of the Nazi regime, homosexuals "had been treated like a stepchild."¹⁰² The amount of scholarship on the topic had increased dramatically by the time of a groundbreaking international

⁹⁹ Burkhard Jellonnek, *Homosexuelle unter dem Hakenkreuz: Die Verfolgung von Homosexuellen im Dritten Reich*, (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 1990).

¹⁰⁰ For example, Richard Plant did a reading at Berlin's famous Prinz Eisenherz bookstore in February 1991. Five months later, Jellonnek did a reading from his book at Prinz Eisenherz on July 5, 1991. See Micha Schulze, "Neue Thesen wider das Versäumnis der Wissenschaft," *Die Tageszeitung*, July 5, 1991 and Detlef Grumbach, "Die furchtbaren Jahre," *Die Zeit*, August 16, 1991. SM archives C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 7 (Erinnerungskulturen): 2 (Publizistische Darstellungen).

¹⁰¹ Jellonnek, *Homosexuelle unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 36.

¹⁰² Jellonnek, *Homosexuelle unter dem Hakenkreuz*, 9

conference held in the city of Saarbrücken in 1996, however.¹⁰³ Jellonnek, who had since become the Director of the Saarland State Office for Civic Education (*Landeszentrale für politische Bildung des Saarlandes*), organized “Opposing Oblivion,” the largest conference ever dedicated to the topic of the persecution of homosexuals during the National Socialist regime. Over thirty researchers, politicians, and journalists from five different countries made presentations on different aspects of this history, ranging from thoughts on the “Homocaust” debate and the fate of lesbians to the delayed commemoration of the victims and the continued lack of rehabilitation or compensation for survivors. Pierre Seel, a gay, French concentration camp survivor, and Gad Beck, a gay Jewish man who survived the war years in Berlin, were also present to provide eyewitness accounts. Several years later, the papers presented at the conference were published as an edited collection: *National Socialist Terror against Homosexuals: Suppressed and Unatoned* remains the most comprehensive publication on the topic in any language.¹⁰⁴

The event was advertised as a “historical *and* political conference” dedicated to studying both “the persecution of homosexuals in the Third Reich” and “the unresolved compensation of homosexual victims in the Federal Republic of Germany.”¹⁰⁵ The presence at the conference of a number of governmental agencies, including the Saarland Ministry for Women’s Affairs, Labor,

¹⁰³ Not everyone was pleased with the conference or found it to be “groundbreaking.” Conference organizers, for example, had invited Professor Ilse Kokula, one of the first scholars to research the fate of lesbians under Hitler’s rule, to act as a moderator on a panel. She rejected the organizer’s invitation, stating, “It’s a pity that over the course of a three-day conference, only one panel is dedicated to ‘Woman-Love in the Third Reich,’ even though,” Kokula asserted, “I do believe that the number of gay men in existence is quite similar to the number of lesbian women, and indeed that this was the case in the Nazi era, too.” She pointedly concluded: “This is no history conference with real political consequences. Rather, it’s just a presentation of male suffering, male desires to research themselves, and male grandstanding. All in all, it’s a very conventional concept.” Letter from Prof. Dr. Ilse Kokula to Dr. Burkhard Jellonnek (April 3, 1996). SM archives: C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 7 (Erinnerungskulturen): 3 (Gedenkortorte): 1 (Gedenkort Berlin), Ordner: Initiative Homo-Monument.

¹⁰⁴ Burkhard Jellonnek and Rüdiger Lautmann, eds. *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle: Verdrängt und ungesühnt*, (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002).

¹⁰⁵ Conference program for: Wider das Vergessen: Die Verfolgung von Homosexuellen im Dritten Reich – Die unterbliebene Wiedergutmachung für homosexuelle Opfer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Saarbrücken Kongresshalle 30.9 bis 2.10.96. CSG Library. For more information on the conference (including press coverage), see CSG archives Ordner #274.

Health, and Social Affairs and Germany's Central Agency for Civic Education (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*), indicated the willingness of state and federal governments to uncover details surrounding this hitherto largely ignored past and acknowledge the importance of the topic.¹⁰⁶ In her greeting at the conference's commencement, Dr. Rita Süßmuth, then President of the German Federal Parliament, emphasized that the history of Hitler's homosexual victims provided "both an occasion and a duty to contemplate the relationship of our own present society with its minorities."¹⁰⁷ Again, here we see the role that the history of the Nazis' homosexual victims played in shaping a broader understanding of the contemporary civil rights of minorities in a democratic society.

By the end of the decade and into the twenty-first century, the history of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals had become a rather expansive field to which scholars across Europe and North America contributed. Some of these works examine the terrorization of homosexual men from a macro perspective, while others are local studies that provide more details of the persecution in a particular city. A growing number of publications, primarily by historian Claudia Schoppmann, shed light on the fate of lesbians during the Hitler years. And recent work by Geoffrey Giles and Andrew Wackerfuss has begun to study the nature of homosexuality within the ranks of Nazi organizations such as the SS and SA. At least two documentaries, including the successful *Paragraph 175*, have been released in an effort to inform a wider audience.¹⁰⁸

But more importantly, by the 1980s and certainly by the 1990s, the Nazi persecution of homosexuals was no longer a topic that was of interest solely for gay men and women. The topic had become, and continues to be, increasingly integrated into the larger historiography of the Third Reich as part of the seminal trend to expand on the social history of the Nazi state.

¹⁰⁶ Other organizations also lent financial and organizational support, such as the German Gay Association, the Association Against Forgetting and For Democracy, the Gay and Lesbian Studies Program and the University of Bremen, and Homosexuals and the Church.

¹⁰⁷ Conference program for: *Wider das Vergessen*. CSG Library.

¹⁰⁸ These works are too numerous to list here in the footnotes. See my dissertation's bibliography for a full list.

Therefore, the study of the Nazis' homosexual victims both reflected and contributed to a historiographical shift away from primarily studying the systems and mechanics of state-sanctioned persecution and genocide; instead, more scholars sought to understand the everyday realities of the Third Reich. In exploring, for example, the role of women in the Nazi state, or by questioning the definition of complicity in a totalitarian regime, historians strove to challenge the simplified dichotomy between perpetrator and victim. As a part of this trend, scholars also paid greater attention to groups that had been marginalized, including the Nazis' various non-Jewish victims, which included the Roma and Sinti, victims of euthanasia programs, people with disabilities, and homosexuals. For example, Rüdiger Lautmann contributed an essay on gay concentration camp prisoners to Michael Berenbaum's edited collection *A Mosaic of Victims*, published in 1990.¹⁰⁹ By 1998, another edited collection on "the known, unknown, the disputed, and the reexamined" aspects of the Holocaust, contained two chapters on homosexual victims.¹¹⁰

As scholars explored more source material, the histories they wrote became less a litany of police records and generalized horror stories and began offering a more human face to the victims of persecution. Several additional autobiographies by gay survivors have been released since Heinz Heger's in 1972, and scholars have published collections of interviews with survivors.¹¹¹ For decades, Rainer Hoffschmidt, a researcher in Hanover, has dedicated his work to

¹⁰⁹ Rüdiger Lautmann, "Gay Prisoners in Concentration Camps as Compared with Jehovah's Witnesses and Political Prisoners," in *A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis*, ed. Michael Berenbaum (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 200-206.

¹¹⁰ Günter Grau, "Final Solution of the Homosexual Question? The Antihomosexual Policies of the Nazis and the Social Consequences for Homosexual Men," and Rüdiger Lautmann, "The Pink Triangle: Homosexuals as 'Enemies of the State,'" in *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed and the Reexamined*, eds., Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 338-357.

¹¹¹ Two autobiographies that were published in the 1990s: Pierre Seel, *Moi, Pierre Seel, déporté homosexuel*. (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1994); Gad Beck, *Und Gad ging zu David: Die Erinnerungen des Gad Geck, 1923 bis 1945*, (Berlin: Edition diá, 1995). For works that contain homosexual survivor testimony, see: Hans-Georg Stümke and Rudi Finkler, *Rosa Winkel, Rosa Listen: Homosexuelle und "Gesundes Volksempfinden" von Auschwitz bis heute*, (Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1981); Ilse Kokula, *Jahre des Glücks, Jahre des Leids: Gespräche mit älteren lesbischen Frauen*, (Kiel: Frühlings Erwachen, 1986); Lutz van Dijk, "Ein erfülltes Leben – Trotzdem..." *Erinnerungen Homosexueller 1933-1945*. (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992); Claudia Schoppmann,

identifying as many gay prisoners and victims as possible. So far he has discovered the names and life-stories of over 20,000 male homosexual victims of Nazi persecution.¹¹² Such work is part of a larger trend in Holocaust studies to focus more on individual victims' lives as a way to transform the staggering, yet cold, statistics of the Holocaust into personal stories that readers could more closely relate to.

The inclusion of non-Jewish victims, including homosexuals, in this trend has changed how scholars, and eventually those outside of academia, have understood the Nazi state by demonstrating how many groups of people were affected by its policies. The study of (homo)sexuality in Nazi Germany also reveals that the Third Reich was not only an anti-Semitic dictatorship, but was also driven by broader racial and biological concerns.¹¹³ So although gay men and women were never slated for extermination under Hitler's reign, the continued study of their persecution, harassment, torture, and even murder can help us to understand the Holocaust of the Jews by exploring the lengths to which the Nazis went in order to forge a "master race."

Confronting the Past and "Making it Good Again"

In West Germany, the increased exposure of the public to the history of gay persecution came amid a continued effort to confront the legacies of the Nazi regime in German history. There was

Zeit der Maskierung: Lebensgeschichten lesbischer Frauen im "Dritten Reich." (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1993); Lutz van Dijk *Einsam war ich nie: Schwulen unter dem Hakenkreuz, 1933-1945*. Unter Mitarbeit von Günter Grau. Nachwort von Wolfgang Popp. (Berlin: Querverlag, 2003).

¹¹² Among the 20,000 individuals that Hoffschildt has identified by name, 3,725 were concentration camp prisoners, 2,330 died as a result of their persecution (or from suicide), and 1,541 were imprisoned in "Emsland camps," which were a series of labor, penal, and POW camps that were located in Lower Saxony during the Third Reich. Rainer Hoffschildt, e-mail message to W. Jake Newsome, March 22, 2016.

¹¹³ Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933, 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Richard Wetzell, David Pendas, and Mark Roseman are currently working on a forthcoming edited collection entitled *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking the Third Reich*. See also: Edward R. Dickinson and Richard Wetzell, "The Historiography of Sexuality in Modern Germany," *German History* 23 (2005): 291-305; Mark Fenemore, "The Recent Historiography of Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Germany," *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 3 (2009): 763-779; Susanne zur Nieden, ed. *Homosexualität und Staatsräson: Männlichkeit, Homophobie und Politik in Deutschland 1900-1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2005).

a growing awareness and acknowledgment of the wide range of Hitler's victims. The speech by Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker on the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II proved to be a symbolic turning point in the German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in general, and the acknowledgment of homosexual suffering in particular. In his speech before the Bundestag on May 8, 1985, Weizsäcker became the first federal politician to officially acknowledge the Nazis' "forgotten" victims: "We commemorate the Sinti and Romany Gypsies, the homosexuals, and the mentally ill who were killed, as well as the people who had to die for their religious or political beliefs."¹¹⁴

By the 1980s, gay activists and advocates had found political allies in West Germany's Social Democratic Party and the new Green Party. A renewed debate ensued over the compensation of homosexuals and other Nazi victims, which garnered much attention in the mainstream media across the Federal Republic. In June 1986, the *Tagesspiegel* reported that the government was prepared to improve the *Wiedergutmachung* ("making good again," or restitution) of all Nazi victims.¹¹⁵ Thanks to pressure from some members of the federal parliament, especially Christian Ströbele of the Green Party, the Bundestag agreed to reopen the issue of compensation payments for victims who had not been allowed to apply under the 1956 Federal Compensation Law.

It is worth noting that one of the greatest champions of *Wiedergutmachung* for homosexual victims was the Green Party. Although the Greens supported (and continue to support) gay rights, they were not a gay rights organization or a gay political party. This

¹¹⁴ For an English transcript of Weizsäcker's speech, see: Richard von Weizsäcker, "Speech in the Bundestag on 8 May 1985 during the Ceremony Commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the End of the War in Europe and of National-Socialist Tyranny." Office of the Bundespräsident (ret.) Richard von Weizsäcker. Translated by the Auswärtiges Amt Germany. https://www.lmz-bw.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Medienbildung_MCO/fileadmin/bibliothek/weizsaecker_speech_may85/weizsaecker_speech_may85.pdf (Accessed March 21, 2016).

¹¹⁵ "Senat soll Wiedergutmachung für NS-Opfer verbessern," *Tagesspiegel* (June 24, 1986). SM archives: C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 6 (Nachwirkungen und Aufarbeitung): 3 (Rehabilitierung/Wiedergutmachung).

demonstrates that, by the late 1980s, issues of gay rights and the atonement for what the German state under Nazi rule did to homosexuals had become topics of concerns for an ever-wider circle of citizens, not just gay and lesbians. Politicians such as the Green Party's Volker Beck, who became the first openly gay member of the Bundestag in 1994, understood that part of advocating for equal rights for West Germany's gay citizens in the present entailed undertaking a more honest confrontation of the national past, including restitution for all of the Nazis' victims.

On June 24, 1987, men and women representing the so-called "forgotten victim groups," went before a hearing of the Bundestag Committee on Internal Affairs to plead the case for victims who had been previously excluded from the process of *Wiedergutmachung*. The committee agreed to add an amendment to the 1957 "General Consequences of War Law (*Allgemeine Kriegsfolgenengesetz*, AKG) that would create a "Hardship Fund" for those who had, until that point, been left out of the compensation processes. Article 5 of the AKG-Hardship Fund Regulations clearly asserted, however, that, "the Hardship Benefits were not compensation (*Entschädigung*) or a redress (*Wiedergutmachung*) for Nazi injustice, but instead represented financial aid that was granted to victims only under certain conditions." As if to make its point clearer, the article stated that "the Hardship Fund is a non-statutory regulation; a legal entitlement to payment does not exist."¹¹⁶ When Representative Ströbele of the Green Party learned that Bundestag President Philipp Jenninger had moved on to offer financial aid, but not full, official *Wiedergutmachung*, he called the act a "third-class funeral service" for these victims.¹¹⁷ The press seemed to echo these sentiments. The *Tageszeitung* reported that the federal

¹¹⁶ §5 of the Allgemeine Kriegsfolgenengesetz Richtlinien (AKG-RL). Text and commentary available: "Härteleistungen aus dem AKG-Härfonds," compiled by Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Schwule Juristen. <https://www.lsvd.de/bund/buch/15.html> (Accessed March 21, 2016)

¹¹⁷ "Beerdigung dritter Klasse," *Der Spiegel*, December 8, 1986, 14.

government had reached a half-hearted agreement: “Money without Atonement.”¹¹⁸ An article in *Die Zeit* declared that the decision was “No Great Gesture,” lamenting that, “For the Nazis’ forgotten victims, all there will be is a ‘Hardship Fund.’”¹¹⁹

As the name suggests, the AKG-Hardship Fund sought to deal primarily with social hardships, not with defining certain actions as injustice. Using the term “hardship” and attaching it to the preexisting General Consequences of War Law rhetorically framed what had happened to any of these “forgotten victims” as simply hardships that occurred during the course of normal warfare. It did not define the Nazi persecution of homosexuals as injustice or even include “National Socialist” anywhere in the name of the stipulation. In doing so, the Bundestag not only relinquished guilt from the Nazi regime, but also relieved the Federal Republic of any responsibility to make these forgotten victims “good again” as it had for Jews and German POWs.

The requirements set forth by the AKG-Regulations forty years after the war’s end made it all but impossible for applicants, all of whom were in their 60s and 70s by that point, to receive an affirmation of their suffering. Historian Jörg Hutter states that, “At first glance, all of these different rules and requirements reveal an eternally confusing picture.”¹²⁰ Proving that one had been treated in an “excessively unjust” manner by the Nazi regime was not enough to qualify for benefits. Applicants also had to document that they were “currently in dire straits.” The AKG-Guidelines laid out specific income barriers that established what qualified as “dire straits” in

¹¹⁸ Klaus Hartung, “Geld ohne Wiedergutmachung,” *Tageszeitung*, November 4, 1987. SM archives, C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 6 (Nachwirkungen und Aufarbeitung): 3 (Rehabilitierung/Wiedergutmachung).

¹¹⁹ Gunter Hofmann, “Keine große Geste: Für die vergessenen NS-Opfer wird es nur einen Härtefonds geben,” *Die Zeit*, December 4, 1987. SM archives, C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 6 (Nachwirkungen und Aufarbeitung): 3 (Rehabilitierung/Wiedergutmachung).

¹²⁰ Jörg Hutter, “Zum Scheitern der Politik individueller Wiedergutmachung,” in *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle*, ed., Jellonnek and Lautmann, 349.

1980s West Germany.¹²¹ Applicants also had to prove with medical certificates that they had suffered considerable damage to their health.¹²²

For gay men who decided to apply for aid, a Paragraph 175 conviction – even under the Nazi version of the law – was not enough to meet the eligibility requirements. They also had to prove that their situation was an example of an “exceedingly specific case of Nazi injustice.” This, according to the Hardship Fund reviewers, meant detention in a concentration camp. Spending time behind the barbed wire, though, did not automatically represent adequately “excessive” injustice. To qualify for recurring Hardship Benefit payments, for example, applicants had to prove (the onus was on the applicant to provide adequate documentation) that they had served “at least nine consecutive months in a concentration camp, an arbitrary or excessive deprivation of liberty in other detention centers, or had to live in hiding under inhumane conditions for at least thirty months.” Almost as if to exclude as many people as possible, the regulations noted, “The latter is only eligible if it caused a permanent damage to one’s health resulting in a 50% disability.”¹²³

As a result of the impenetrable maze of bureaucratic red tape, documentation, time, and effort required for aid from the Hardship Fund, only seventeen homosexual survivors applied to the AKG-Hardship Fund central office in Cologne. Two were granted recurring payments; six were issued a one-time benefit payment.¹²⁴ One applicant died before the board reached a decision. The application of one man was rejected because he had served “only” seven months in a concentration camp.¹²⁵ Seven more applications were rejected for various reasons. One could

¹²¹ §4, Paragraph 2 of the AKG-Härteregungen, Quoted at <https://www.lsvd.de/bund/buch/15.html>.

¹²² “Considerable damage to health” was quantified as 50% disabled as a result of “unjust” measures, or 80% disabled by “general adverse health effects.” §4, Paragraph 1 of the AKG-Härteregungen. Quoted at <https://www.lsvd.de/bund/buch/15.html>.

¹²³ §7, paragraphs 1 & 2 of the AKG-Härteregungen. Quoted at <https://www.lsvd.de/bund/buch/15.html>.

¹²⁴ Jörg Hutter, “Zum Scheitern der Politik individueller Wiedergutmachung,” 350-51.

¹²⁵ Richtlinien der Bundesregierung über Härteleistungen (Anm. 35), §7, Abs. 2, Ziffer 1.

argue that the regulations for the 1987 AKG Hardship Fund were purposefully designed to be so stringent and convoluted as to further exclude these unwanted victims, whom the Bundestag only reluctantly agreed to “offer aid to” in the first place. These Hardship benefits, then, can be seen as a way for the West German federal government to save face amid growing pressure from groups asserting that all of the Nazis’ victims deserved aid from the FRG, which was seen as the Nazis’ successor state.

In a 1987 report assessing the federal government’s performance on issuing compensation to the Nazis’ victims, the Bundestag asserted that it was “not probable” that the low number of homosexual applicants could be attributed to the continued use of Paragraph 175. Instead, the report’s author continued, in light of the low numbers, “One assumes that those affected had other reasons, reasons having nothing to do with the law, for why they never applied, or that the circle of homosexuals affected by concentration camp internment is simply much smaller than previously thought.”¹²⁶ It seems that even forty-five years after the Nazis’ defeat, the Federal Republic of Germany found it easier to blame homosexual victims for not coming forward – or to simply assume that there were never that many homosexual men persecuted in the first place – than to acknowledge them as legitimate victims of Nazi injustice. By the time the Bundestag published its 1987 report, no homosexual concentration camp survivor had received a single cent from the West German government.

Because the Federal Government in Bonn yet again proved reluctant to help these victims, several of the West German states stepped in to offer support. The states of Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg, Lower Saxony, and Schleswig-Holstein implemented their own hardship provisions between 1987 and 1990. Again, as the federal AKG-Hardship Fund was in theory,

¹²⁶ Deutscher Bundestag, Referat Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, ed., Wiedergutmachung und Entschädigung für nationalsozialistisches Unrecht. Öffentliche Anhörung des Innenausschusses des Deutschen Bundestages am 24. Juni 1987, in: Zur Sache 87/3, pg. 372.

these state foundations were open to all Nazi victims who had not received recognition, compensation, or legal rehabilitation from the Federal Government to that point. Generally, these state funds had more inclusive regulations, though some implemented further stipulations. For example, in addition to the minimum of nine months' internment in a concentration camp stipulated by the federal AKG-Hardship Fund, Berlin's foundation asserted that no one could receive a payment if they had served more than three years (total) in prison or in a camp.¹²⁷ And being that many of the pink triangle prisoners were resentenced during the occupation period or during the first two decades of the Federal Republic, their total time spent in imprisonment excluded them from even applying for Berlin's Hardship Benefits. Out of these five states that implemented Hardship Funds, twenty-one homosexual men applied for aid; eleven received payments of some kind. The only man to apply in Berlin was rejected because he was not living in poverty at the time of application. As of a 1996 report, the states of Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein had yet to receive a single application from a homosexual victim.¹²⁸

The unification of the two German states in 1990 brought drastic changes to the German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or the process of coming to terms with the past. Unification also forced Germans to reevaluate their position on the legality of homosexuality in the new, united Germany. Would, for example, West Germany's Paragraph 175 (liberalized in 1969 and 1973) be extended to the former East German states where homosexuality had been decriminalized completely in 1989?¹²⁹ After years of deliberation and in the face of growing public pressure and

¹²⁷ Berliner Landesregierung: Satzung der Stiftung 'Hilfe für Opfer der NS-Willkürherrschaft,' Drucksache des Abgeordnetenhauses von Berlin, Nr. 10/1895, Berlin den 3.12.1987, pg 4.

¹²⁸ Jörg Hutter, "Zum Scheitern der Politik individueller Wiedergutmachung," 350-51.

¹²⁹ In 1950, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) re-instated the old pre-1935 version of Paragraph 175, but beginning in the late 1950s, did not usually prosecute consensual sex acts between two adult men. When East Germany introduced its own criminal code in 1968, the old Paragraph 175 became Paragraph 151, which made sex between an adult (male or female) and a minor (under 18 years of age) of the same sex a criminal offence. This paragraph remained in force until it was taken off the books in 1989. For more information, see Kurt Starke, *Schwuler Osten: homosexuelle Männer in der DDR*, (Berlin: Links Verlag, 1994). Outlets in the mainstream press

changing social attitudes, German lawmakers fully struck Paragraph 175 from the criminal code on March 10, 1994. The Bundestag of the newly-unified Germany also stipulated that homosexual concentration camp survivors living in the new states that constituted the former East Germany would not be eligible for any reparation payments of any kind.¹³⁰

“Beaten to Death, Silenced to Death”: Memorializing the Nazis’ Homosexual Victims

As the Nazi persecution of homosexuals received attention in the gay press, on stages throughout the country, in historical scholarship, and in the context of *Wiedergutmachung* debates, there was a push to include Hitler’s homosexual victims in West Germany’s public acts of remembrance. These acts include the broader process of commemoration, which entails a number of gestures meant to honor someone or a historical event. In this way, commemoration can be in the form of a speech, a vigil, or a ceremony. Memorialization, or the construction of physical memorials or monuments, is a specific form of commemoration. Not surprisingly, the inclusion of homosexual victims in rituals and sites of commemoration devoted to the era of the Third Reich met resistance and sparked public debates. This is because commemorative ceremonies and memorials are one of the most public instances in which citizens and governments negotiate how the past is best remembered, honored, and presented. Since the representation of the past is always tied to contemporary issues, gay West Germans saw the exclusion of homosexuals from commemorative events as an encroachment of their citizenship in the present. This stems from the notion that part of being respected and treated equally in the present is receiving equal representation in the national past.

also commented on this legal question. For example, see: ““De Maiziére wird nicht auf stur schalten,”” *Die Tageszeitung*, May 19, 1990. SM archives, C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 7 (Erinnerungskulturen): 3 (Gedenkorte): 1 (Gedenkort Berlin).

¹³⁰ “NS-Opfer erneut vergessen,” *Südwind*, Nr. 4 (1992), 28.

In May 1980, southern Bavaria witnessed one of the earliest initiatives in this vein, staged by Munich's new Society for Sexual Equality (*Verein für sexuelle Gleichberechtigung*, VSG) and the group "Homosexuals and the Church" (*Homosexuelle und Kirche*, HuK). The event, held at the Protestant Church of Reconciliation (*Versöhnungskirche*) on the former Dachau camp grounds, included a worship service, a lecture on the history of homosexuality under the swastika, and the laying of a wreath in honor of those who died.¹³¹ The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported that the worship service was meant to be a first step in making the fate of homosexuals during the Third Reich known to the public. Protestant pastor Hans Philippi, who led the event, proclaimed that, "the Churches have to play a special role in the discussion with these disadvantaged groups."¹³² In the decades to come, nondenominational religious groups, especially the HuK, played a significant role in the push to acknowledge, memorialize, and ultimately compensate the homosexuals who were persecuted by the Nazi regime.

Throughout the 1980s, several commemorative acts, including wreath-laying ceremonies, occurred across West Germany. In the summer of 1982, activists staged a march through downtown Munich to break the silence surrounding the Nazi persecution of homosexuals.¹³³ Beginning in 1984, gay groups in East Germany began laying a wreath at the main memorial at the former Sachsenhausen camp north of Berlin; they demanded that a plaque to homosexual victims be installed on the camp grounds.¹³⁴ As part of the annual gay pride celebrations the following year, gay groups in West Berlin travelled to East Germany. One of their

¹³¹ "Gedenkgottesdienst für homosexuelle KZ-Häftlinge, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. May 9, 1980. Archive of the KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau, Ordner: Ausstellung Dezember 1984.

¹³² Philippi also purported that "supposed Christian morals" were at least partly responsible for the death of homosexuals in the concentration camps. "Homosexuelle erinnern an ihre Verfolgung," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 11, 1980. Archive of the KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau, Ordner: Ausstellung Dezember 1984.

¹³³ *Keller-Journal*, June/July 1982, 4.

¹³⁴ Press release from HuK Berlin. November 15, 1992. Subject: "Einweihung einer Gedenktafel für homosexuelle NS-Opfer in Sachsenhausen." SM archives, C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 7 (Erinnerungskulturen): 3 (Gedenkorte): 1 (Gedenkort Berlin).

representatives gave a commemorative speech at Sachsenhausen. Upon returning to the Federal Republic, the historian and activist Hans-Joachim Müller wrote in a press release that the remembrance of gay victims had suddenly become “official” since East Germany had granted permission for the commemoration.¹³⁵ By the 1990s, nearly all concentration camp memorial sites in Germany staged annual commemoration ceremonies for the Nazis’ homosexual victims.

In the summer of 1989, a different type of commemorative act took place that clearly brought the politics of memory to the fore of the West German public. After decades of never speaking publicly about his experience, a homosexual concentration camp survivor decided to break his personal silence. Nineteen members of a Bremen gay organization travelled with the survivor, “Karl B.,” on a commemorative trip to Auschwitz, where he had been imprisoned. According to one source, the twenty men resolved to make the journey to Auschwitz partially to honor all of the people who died in the death camp, but also to “confront the correlations between the past and present in Germany,” where the suffering of men like Karl B. had yet to be officially recognized by the government. The Bremen Gay Help and Advice Center for Homosexuals released a statement indicating that, “Part of the mission [of the Center] is to explore and discover which historical roots fuel present-day violence against gays. The trip to Auschwitz was an attempt to trace these causes.”¹³⁶ The Center, then, drew explicit connections between confronting memories of the past and the implications for contemporary rights.

The trip of a gay concentration camp survivor to Auschwitz gained extensive coverage in the mainstream West German press, and Karl B. became somewhat famous through a series of

¹³⁵ It is also significant to note that the collective memory had not only become “official,” but had also transcended the Iron Curtain. Hans-Joachim Müller. Press release. July 8, 1985. SM archives, C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 2 (Kriminalisierung, Erfassung, Verfolgung, und Vernichtung): 6 (Internierung): 16 (Sachsenhausen).

¹³⁶ Christoph Kranich, Marcus Kaminski, and Jens Michelsen, eds. for the “Poitgruppe” of the Rat+Tat-Zentrum für Homosexuelle. “Schwule in Auschwitz: Dokumentation einer Reise.” (Bremen: Geffken, GmbH, 1990). Gefördert durch die Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Bremen, 3.

interviews in major newspapers.¹³⁷ This is partially because he finally personalized a chapter of history that had, to that point, remained rather abstract in the public sphere. Due to the paucity of archival sources, the vast majority of mainstream newspaper articles that dealt with the Nazi persecution spoke in generalizations and tended to focus on legal cases and statistics. Now, with Karl B., the public could see the face of a man whom the West German state had denied for decades was a real victim of Nazi injustice. Suddenly, the issues of acknowledgment, commemoration, and *Wiedergutmachung* of homosexual victims became more personal. The pamphlet published by the Bremen Gay Help and Advice Center acknowledged that Karl B. had been awarded a meager one-time payment from the 1987 Bremen Hardship Fund, but then pointedly ask readers: “Does 5,000 Deutsche Marks come close to truly making amends for six years in a concentration camp?”¹³⁸

The Bremen Center published a pamphlet documenting the landmark trip that included information about Karl B., photographs from the trip, and short articles written by scholars. One of the main goals of the pamphlet was to show both gay and straight readers that they should not be complacent with the advancements in rights and social tolerance that gays and lesbians had achieved in the previous decade of gay rights activism. The past – represented here by the poignant emblem of Auschwitz – acted as a reminder that there still remained much work to be done before everyone was treated equally. The pamphlet also highlighted a theme that runs throughout this chapter, namely that acknowledging, documenting, or even commemorating the

¹³⁷ For a selection of the articles on Karl B. and the trip to Auschwitz, see: “Die vergessenen Leiden des Karl B.,” *Weser Kurier*, March 23-24, 1989; “Wiedersehen mit Auschwitz,” *Die Tageszeitung*, July 13, 1989; “Auch nach 40 Jahren keine Grausamkeit vergessen: Ex-Häftling fuhr nach Auschwitz,” *Nordsee Zeitung*, October 2, 1989; Lutz van Dijk, “Vergessene Opfer: Eine Gruppe Homosexueller unternahm eine Gedenkreise nach Auschwitz,” *Die Zeit*, October 27, 1989, 85; Lutz van Dick and Christoph Kranich, “Zeugnisse des Schreckens: Schwule besuchen die KZ-Gedenkstätte in Auschwitz,” *Magnus*, October 1989, 48. All of these articles can be found in C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 2 (Kriminalisierung, Erfassung, Verfolgung, und Vernichtung): 6 (Internierung): 2 (Auschwitz). Chapter six of Lutz van Dijk’s book, “*Ein erfülltes Leben trotzdem... Erinnerungen Homosexueller 1933-1945* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1992), is also dedicated to Karl B.

¹³⁸ Kranich, Kaminski, and Michelsen, eds. “Schwule in Auschwitz,” 3.

fate of homosexual victims is not sufficient; if West Germans were to claim to treat gays and lesbians equally in the present, they also had to make amends for past injustices.¹³⁹

Similar issues were at stake in the push, beginning in the mid 1980s, to include homosexual victims in the construction of physical memorials and monuments. As was the case with the various commemorative ceremonies in previous years, gay and lesbian activists themselves drove the movement to memorialize homosexual victims with monuments, although new scholarship and the partial political and legal acknowledgment of homosexual suffering also contributed to this dynamic. In 1979, gay West Germans were dismayed to learn that the government of another country was memorializing the victims of a German regime before either German state had even acknowledged homosexuals' suffering as legitimate. City officials in Amsterdam had plans to construct a memorial to the homosexuals persecuted under the National Socialist regime.¹⁴⁰ "The Dutch are shaming the Germans," wrote a reporter in *Gay News Germany*.¹⁴¹ One West German citizen wrote a letter to the editor in the *Tageszeitung* expressing both his support for the proposed memorial in Amsterdam and his outrage that the Federal Republic was not yet planning to build one in Bonn.¹⁴² In the fall of 1984, West German gay groups learned that another memorial to the Nazis' homosexual victims would be constructed. Yet again, it would not be in Germany. A collective of gay organizations in Austria had received permission to install a commemorative plaque at the Memorial Site of the Mauthausen Concentration Camp in upper Austria. On December 9, 1984, the Vienna Gay Initiative

¹³⁹ Christoph Kranich, Marcus Kaminski, and Jens Michelsen, eds. for the "Poitgruppe" of the Rat+Tat-Zentrum für Homosexuelle. "Schwule in Auschwitz: Dokumentation einer Reise." (Bremen: Geffken, GmbH, 1990). Gefördert durch die Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Bremen.

¹⁴⁰ The Amsterdam pink triangle memorial is not only a huge monument, but is also located in a very public spot near the city center where nobody can miss it.

¹⁴¹ "Kommentar: Denkmal für verfolgte und in KZ's getötete Homosexuelle," *Gay News Germany*, January 1980, 12.

¹⁴² Frodo Kaiser, "Heil Kohl," *Die Tageszeitung*, October 8, 1982. In *Schwule Pressechau*, compiled by the Allgemeiner Studentenausschuß (AStA) der Freie Universität Berlin. Eingegangen: 18. Oktober 1982. SM Library.

dedicated the world's first memorial to the homosexual victims of Nazi persecution. Although plans for the Amsterdam monument had begun in 1979, it was not completed until 1987.

Soon, West German gay groups coordinated their efforts to establish pink triangle memorials on German soil. One of the earliest, longest, and most public debates over the memorialization of homosexual victims surrounded the memorial site at Dachau. In February 1985, the Munich chapter of HuK ("Homosexuals and the Church") submitted a petition in the name of several Munich gay groups to the *Comité International de Dachau* (International Dachau Committee, CID), an organization of former prisoners that helped run the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site. The gay groups wanted to dedicate a memorial during the May ceremonies commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the camp's liberation by US soldiers in 1945. The memorial, which was based on the one at Mauthausen and would become a model for several other throughout Germany; it was a large triangle made of pink granite, with the inscription: "Beaten to Death, Silenced to Death: Dedicated to the Homosexual Victims of National Socialism." The CID denied the petition. This was not the first time that opposition to memorializing Dachau's homosexual inmates was articulated. In 1960, Hans Zauner, then mayor of the town of Dachau, told a reporter, "You must remember that many criminals and homosexuals were in Dachau. Do you want a memorial for such people?"¹⁴³

Upon receiving a rejection for a second petition, the Association for Sexual Equality (VSG) launched a campaign in the local and national press, claiming that, "Whoever silences the persecution of homosexuals ultimately approves of it."¹⁴⁴ In the summer of 1988, federal politicians, including the leader of the German Social Democratic Party, Hans-Jochen Vogel,

¹⁴³ Hans Zauner, interviewed by Llew Gardner for the *Sunday Express*, 1960. Quoted in Jensen, "The Pink Triangle and Political Consciousness," 321.

¹⁴⁴ Verein für sexuelle Gleichberechtigung VSG e.V., Pamphlet, "Aufstellung des Gedenksteins der Münchner Schwulengruppen für die homosexuellen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus." Archive of the KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau, Folder: VSG-Schwulen Gruppe ab 1986.

wrote letters to the CID expressing their support of the pink triangle monument.¹⁴⁵ That same year, when it became apparent that the CID would not revisit its decision, the HuK turned to the *Evangelische Versöhnungskirche* (Protestant Church of Reconciliation) for support. As an autonomous religious institution on the Dachau memorial grounds, the church did not require the CID's approval for what it could or could not memorialize. In 1988, the *Versöhnungskirche* agreed to house the pink triangle memorial in its courtyard. That is where it remained until June 1995 when, after a decade of struggle and years of growing international pressure, it was allowed into the camp museum's memorial hall. In doing so, gay men were finally included in the official memory presented by the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site.¹⁴⁶

Dachau was not the only concentration camp memorial site at which gay groups encountered resistance. Gay groups were excluded when the administration of the Bergen-Belsen Camp Memorial decided that it would renovate its information center in 1987, although many other groups were invited to provide input for the new design. That same year, gay activists organized a combination commemoration and protest event that coincided with the official annual ceremony commemorating the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen camp in Lower Saxony.¹⁴⁷ Pressure from and cooperation among local scholars, activists, and politicians eventually succeeded. When the new information center opened in 1990, it incorporated information on homosexual victims although they were still excluded from the official memorial on the camp

¹⁴⁵ Letter from Dr. Hans-Jochen Vogel to the leadership of the CID. 4 July 1988. Archive of the KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau, Folder: VSG-Schwulen Gruppe ab 1986.

¹⁴⁶ For a more detailed account of the Dachau memorial debate, see: W. Jake Newsome, "Liberation was Only for Others: Breaking the Silence in Germany surrounding the Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals," *The Holocaust in History and Memory* 7 (2014): 61-65.

¹⁴⁷ Aufruf von dem Bundesverband Homosexualität, BVH. Zu den Gedenk- und Protestveranstaltung für homosexuelle und andere KZ-Opfergruppen in den KZ Dachau und Bergen-Belsen am 11. Januar 1987. CSG archives, Varia 2, #297.

grounds. It would take nearly another decade before homosexuals were added to the list of victims at Bergen-Belsen.¹⁴⁸

Initiators of pink triangle memorials did not always face such bitter resistance. In the early 1990s, when Jörg Lenk campaigned to construct a memorial in Cologne, the entire process went relatively smoothly. This had much to do with local politics and demographics. Cologne has historically been known as Germany's most gay-friendly city. Lenk later recalled that gays and lesbians occupied important positions in the city administration and local businesses, so getting the necessary permits and funding to build a memorial in the heart of the city was only a matter of time.¹⁴⁹ This "gay conspiracy," as Lenk jokingly called it, certainly contributed to the lack of opposition to the memorial, but just as important was Cologne's position as a forerunner in the development of *Alltagsgeschichte*, or "everyday history." Proponents of *Alltagsgeschichte* had already begun efforts to approach the study of the Third Reich from the perspective of the multiple different victim groups, and to acknowledge the different ways that various groups had suffered. By the time the Cologne memorial was officially dedicated in 1995, memorials to the Nazis' homosexual victims had been established in five other locations throughout Germany: the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial Site in Hamburg (1985), Nollendorfplatz in Berlin (1989), the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp Memorial Site (1992); in Frankfurt am Main (1994), and finally the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site (1995).

"We Died There, Too:" American Memorialization of Pink Triangle Victims

The construction of memorials also contributed to forging transatlantic gay memories and identities. The American gay press followed the process of memorialization in West Germany.

¹⁴⁸ For detailed information regarding the debate surrounding the memorial and information center at Bergen-Belsen, see: SARCH archives, Ordner: Bergen-Belsen (I).

¹⁴⁹ Jörg Lenk, interview with W. Jake Newsome. Cologne, Germany. January 27, 2014.

When the pink granite triangle plaque was installed at Neuengamme in May 1985, the *Advocate* reported on it.¹⁵⁰ And readers of the gay press in North America could also follow the bitter struggle over the proposed memorial at Dachau. In October 1986, *The Body Politic* reported that, “Dachau lives on in committee’s rejection of pink triangle monument.”¹⁵¹ When the memorial was finally installed in Dachau’s memorial hall, the VSG acknowledged that international pressure from activists, politicians, and philanthropists abroad – especially from the United States – played a large part in the successful outcome.¹⁵²

Americans not only reported on German memorialization of Hitler’s homosexual victims. They themselves also memorialized the men with the pink triangle. Thanks to the work of gay rights activists, fictional accounts such as *Bent*, and the growing literature of historical scholarship, there was an increasing acknowledgment and awareness in America that thousands of homosexuals had died under the Hitler regime in Germany. Consequently, there was much anticipation to see how the new United States Holocaust Memorial Museum would address the persecution of homosexuals when it opened its doors in 1993.¹⁵³ As the nation’s official voice on the Holocaust, the way that the museum handled the homosexual victims would also be understood as the US government’s stance on gays and their place in contemporary society. Internal documents from the museum’s institutional archives reveal that this point was not lost on museum administrators. One memo addressed the inclusion of information on homosexual

¹⁵⁰ “News Brief: Hamburg, West Germany,” *Advocate*, June 11, 1985, 25.

¹⁵¹ “Victims’ memorial denied,” *The Body Politic*, October 1986. The Stonewall National Museum and Archives (Ft. Lauderdale, Florida).

¹⁵² Verein für sexuelle Gleichberechtigung VSG e.V., Pamphlet, “Aufstellung des Gedenksteins der Münchner Schwulengruppen für die homosexuellen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus.” Archive of the KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau, Folder: VSG-Schwulen Gruppe ab 1986.

¹⁵³ In November 1978, President Jimmy Carter created the President’s Commission on the Holocaust. One year later, the Commission – chaired by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel – recommended the establishment of a national Holocaust memorial museum in Washington, D.C. The U.S. Congress unanimously approved the funding of the memorial in 1980, and construction began in October 1988. The USHMM was dedicated in April 1993. For a fascinating and detailed history of the USHMM, see: Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum* (New York: Viking, 1995).

victims: “There will be hell to pay if we do not, and rightfully so.”¹⁵⁴

One problem facing museum administrators was the lack of physical material relating to the homosexual persecution. Additionally, the scholarship on the topic remained broad and general; there was essentially nothing, except for the autobiography of Heinz Heger, about specific individuals. So, the museum turned to both researchers and everyday citizens for help. Ads were placed in American gay press periodicals, asking for readers to come forward if they had any physical material, such as documents, letters, or pictures, pertaining to homosexuality in Nazi Germany.¹⁵⁵ The museum also hired Klaus Müller, a historian at the University of Amsterdam, to help lead the research on homosexual victims. Using his connections throughout Europe, Müller was able to provide vital information for the museum’s permanent exhibit, such as mug shots of homosexual victims at Auschwitz, arrest records from German police stations, and even interviews with survivors. One of the major projects that Müller spearheaded while working at the museum was including biographies of gay men and lesbians for the personal identity cards that visitors receive at the beginning of the permanent exhibit.¹⁵⁶

The dedication ceremonies and the official opening of the museum in April 1993 happened to coincide with a massive March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. The simultaneity of the events garnered attention in the gay and mainstream press. In anticipation of the event, the *Detroit News* published an article titled, “The Pink Triangle Tells another Side of the Holocaust,” and gay newspapers such as *The Washington Blade* released a series of articles with titles like “Forgotten Victims: New Museum Documents the Lives of Gay Holocaust Victims.” The article in Boston’s *Bay Windows* was eloquently

¹⁵⁴ Internal Memo, January 17, 1992. USHMM Institutional Archives, Box 2010.077/bx 1 – Klaus Müller, Folder: Outreach – Feminist, Lesbian, Gay.

¹⁵⁵ For one such ad, see: *Lesbian Connection*, Vol. 14, Issue 2, Sept/Oct 1991, 3.

¹⁵⁶ Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, 187-188.

titled: “Remembrances of Things Once Hidden.”¹⁵⁷

Many gay men and women who were in D.C. for the national gay rights march praised the museum for its efforts to include information on homosexual victims. “Thank you for not letting the world forget we died there, too,” read one visitor comment card.¹⁵⁸ Ultimately, however, the museum received criticism from visitors and gay organizations for not dedicating adequate space to the persecution of homosexuals. One visitor commented, “What about the half million gays killed?” Another wrote, “As a gay man, I am dismayed at the paucity of information on the Nazi persecution of homosexuals...I trust this museum is not guilty of passive homophobia.”¹⁵⁹ To remedy this lack of information, the museum commenced large-scale fundraising campaigns to finance further research on the topic. By October 1996, the museum’s Gay and Lesbian Campaign had raised one million dollars, half of which was to go directly to research projects.¹⁶⁰ While museum administrators sought to integrate better the story of homosexuals into the main exhibit, in 1999 the museum also appointed Ted Phillips to design a separate, yet permanent, travelling exhibit on the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. In Phillips’ two years of research, he worked closely with American and German scholars, even traveling to Berlin to meet with curators who had worked on similar projects. The exhibit was unveiled in Washington, D.C. in 2002, and then began travelling around the country in 2003. Since then, it has been on display in over fifty cities, and has predictably garnered both support and

¹⁵⁷ Deb Price, “The Pink Triangle Tells Another Side of the Holocaust,” *Detroit News*, March 19, 1993; “The Forgotten Victims: New Museum Documents the Lives of Gay Holocaust Victims,” *The Washington Blade*, Vol. 24, No. 18, 1993; Mark S. Malkin, “Remembrances of Things Once Hidden: Holocaust Memorial Vigil Pays Homage to Gay War Dead,” *Bay Windows*, April 29, 1993, 6-7.

¹⁵⁸ Visitor comment card. USHMM institutional archives, Box 2010.077/bx. 1 – Klaus Müller (Institutional Archives); Folder: Klaus – Mail & Calls.

¹⁵⁹ Visitor comment card. May 26, 1993. USHMM institutional archives, Box 2010.077/bx. 1 – Klaus Müller (Institutional Archives); Folder: Responses – Homosexual Persecution.

¹⁶⁰ USHMM institutional archives, Box 2010.077/bx. 1 – Klaus Müller (Institutional Archives); Folder: Gay & Lesbian Campaign, Oct. 1996.

criticism.¹⁶¹

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's inclusion of homosexuals in its exhibits was not the only American commemoration of homosexual victims. Every year since 1995, Patrick Carney and around one hundred volunteers have assembled a temporary, one-acre large pink triangle installation on the side of Twin Peaks park, overlooking San Francisco for the annual Gay Pride weekend. At first, the display was simply meant to "add a little extra color" to the San Francisco valley during the Pride festivities.¹⁶² Soon, however, Carney realized that the majority of people had no understanding of the pink triangle's origins. So, he added informative plaques at the viewing platform atop Twin Peaks and organized a commemoration ceremony in which local and state politicians, gay community leaders, and the public gather to hear the history of the iconic symbol. According to Carney, the main purpose of the annual display is to educate people about the hate of the past. But, as the years have gone by, the commemoration ceremony has taken on the feel of a celebration. Celebrity guests read a prepared script of the pink triangle's history and there is a pink champagne shower. Of significance is that the speeches from politicians place the symbol in a global context. The speeches only briefly acknowledge the specific German context of the origin of the pink triangle, and instead use it as a starting point to de-historicize and globalize the persecution of gays and lesbians. These commemorative acts have transformed the pink triangle from a symbol representing a particular point in history into an emblem that teaches a lesson not just for gays and lesbians, but more broadly about the importance of safeguarding human rights and an appreciation for diversity in a globalized world.

Located within eyesight of the temporary, annual pink triangle display lies the Pink

¹⁶¹ Edward "Ted" Phillips, interview with W. Jake Newsome, Washington, D.C., April 8, 2014. According to Phillips, he was once accused by a visitor of the exhibit while it was in Phoenix, AZ, of "forcing gay history onto America when it didn't want it" in an attempt to "force the agenda of gay marriage."

¹⁶² Patrick Carney, "The Pink Triangle of Twin Peaks," *Bay Times*, June 14-20, 2012, 16.

Triangle Park and Memorial. Dedicated in 2001, it is the first permanent, freestanding memorial in the United States devoted to homosexual victims of Nazi persecution. The park is made up of fifteen triangular posts among a garden of roses to represent the estimated 15,000 gay men imprisoned in concentration camps. The park's designers wanted it to be a contemplative site of remembrance, and though the park is specifically dedicated to victims of a precise episode in history, the message is meant to transcend both time and space. It was the designers' hope that that visitors would "think about how persecution of any individual or single group of people damages all humanity."¹⁶³ Thus, the text on this memorial also reflects shifts in discourse that frame the Nazi persecution of homosexuals as not only a gay issue, but one of human rights. Indeed, the park was dedicated on international Human Rights Day in December 2001.

In unified Germany, many gay groups felt that the issue of commemoration had not yet been adequately settled. Beginning in the early 1990s, several gay organizations called for a national memorial dedicated to the Nazis' homosexual victims. In January 1994, the Gay Monument Initiative hosted a discussion in Berlin under the topic: "Pink Granite in front of the Chancellery? Do we need a memorial for the gay Nazi victims?"¹⁶⁴ The following year, the Lesbian and Gay Union of Germany (*Lesben- und Schwulenverband Deutschland*, LSVD) published a memorandum, "Remember the Homosexual Victims of National Socialism," which laid out their reasoning for the need of a national memorial. Not surprisingly, from the beginning, the planning of such a monument was surrounded by controversy. For the most part, the debates were not over whether the memorial should be built, though some critics did oppose placing it in Berlin. Then Governing Mayor of Berlin, Eberhard Diepgen, for example, opposed

¹⁶³ www.pinktrianglepark.org. Accessed February 10, 2016.

¹⁶⁴ Invitation for a discussion: "Rosa Granit vor's Kanzleramt? Brauchen wir ein Denkmal für die schwulen NS-Opfer?" (by Initiative Schwulen Denkmal) – Diskussion am 24. Januar 1994 in Schwulen Museum. SM archives, C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 7 (Erinnerungskulturen): 3 (Gedenkorte): 1 (Gedenkorte Berlin).

the establishment of a “memorial mile” in the capital of the newly unified Germany.¹⁶⁵ Ekkehard Klaus, the Manager of Concentration Camp Memorial Sites in Berlin and Brandenburg, also expressed reservations about building “too many” Holocaust memorials in Germany. “We mustn’t devalue our commemoration through an inflation of memorials,” he stated in 1999.¹⁶⁶

Primarily, however, the discussions about a national memorial to homosexual victims was about whom the memorial should commemorate. Whereas many of the memorial’s supporters wanted to include both gay men and lesbian women in the memorial, a handful of historians spoke out vehemently against the inclusion of lesbians. In an open letter to the German State Minister for Culture, Bernd Neumann, a group of twenty-five gay activists, scholars and leaders of the Buchenwald, Dachau, and Ravensbrück Concentration Camp Memorial Sites wrote that the inclusion of lesbians in the Berlin memorial would “lead to a distortion and falsification of history.”¹⁶⁷ In an argument that sounded disturbingly analogous to the initial resistance to the inclusion of gay men in memorials on the grounds that they were not “real” Holocaust victims, historian Joachim Müller called the inclusion of lesbians in memorials dedicated to homosexual victims a revision of history for the sake of “a policy of feminist political correctness.”¹⁶⁸ In essence, Müller argued that lesbians had not really been persecuted by the Nazi regime, at least not in the same way gay men had been. Again, this mirrors the politics of memories that had, for decades, asserted that what had happened to homosexual men during the Third Reich was not really persecution. In the face of allegations of misogyny and

¹⁶⁵ ‘Neuer Streit um Holocaust-Mahnmale: Auch Sinti und Roma wollen eigene Gedenkstätte in Berlin’, *Wiener Zeitung*, August 25, 1999, http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/welt/weltpolitik/364076_Auch-Sinti-und-Roma-wollen-eigene-Gedenkstaette-in-Berlin-Berlin.html (accessed January 11, 2016).

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Elke Vogel, “Neuer Streit um Mahnmale zum Holocaust: Warnung in Berlin vor Denkmals-Inflation,” *Ostthüringer Zeitung*, August 31, 1999. SM archives, C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 7 (Erinnerungskulturen): 3 (Gedenkorte): 1 (Gedenkort Berlin).

¹⁶⁷ Bianca Beli, “Aufregung um lesbischen Kuss,” *Der Standard*, April 8, 2010, <http://derstandard.at/1269449160030/Debatte-Aufregung-um-lesbischen-Kuss> (accessed January 11, 2016).

¹⁶⁸ Joachim Müller, “Leserbrief,” *HuK Info*, No. 126, September 1997, 60.

discrimination, those who opposed inclusion of lesbians in the Berlin memorial asserted that they were simply adhering to the historical evidence. While homosexual men had to fear Paragraph 175, lesbianism was never legally criminalized.¹⁶⁹ In the open letter to Minister Neumann, Alexander Zinn explained that although there were certainly lesbians in the concentration camps, they were not interred on the basis of their sexual orientation, a situation that significantly differed from that of homosexual men.¹⁷⁰

The debate over whether to include lesbians in the national monument spilled over into the public sphere, especially since taxpayer money would fund any potential national memorial. In December 1996, the *Tageszeitung* reported that, “A planned memorial for homosexual Nazi victims in the capital city is pitting gays and lesbians against each other. They’re contesting whom the Nazis persecuted worst.” Ultimately, the article asks: “Who does the Homo-Monument commemorate?”¹⁷¹ In the end, the LSVD and the Remembering the Homosexual Victims of National Socialism Initiative opted for an inclusive memory, dedicating the future monument to all homosexuals – men and women – who faced persecution under the Nazi regime. Accordingly, on May 3, 2001, these two organizations officially called for a national memorial. Over two years later, on December 12, 2003, the German Bundestag passed a resolution to fund the monument.¹⁷²

Construction for the project began in the summer of 2007, and the Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime, located on the edge of Berlin’s Tiergarten Park and across the street from the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, was

¹⁶⁹ For a summary of why the Nazis chose not to criminalize lesbianism, see Chapter One of this dissertation.

¹⁷⁰ Blei, “Aufregung um lesbischen Kuss.”

¹⁷¹ Jan Feddersen, “An wen erinnert ein Homodenkmal?” *Die Tageszeitung* (December 10, 1996). SM archives, C (Deutsches Reich, 1933-1945): 7 (Erinnerungskulturen): 3 (Gedenkorte): 1 (Gedenkort Berlin).

¹⁷² For a more detailed study of this national memorial, see: Jennifer Evans, “Harmless kisses and infinite loops: Making space for queer place in twenty-first century Berlin,” in *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures: Europe since 1945*, eds., Matt Cook and Jennifer V. Evans (London: Bloomsbury, 2014): 75-94.

unveiled to the public on May 27, 2008. Multiple governmental agencies were represented by dignitaries such as Klaus Wowereit, then Governing Mayor of Berlin, and State Minister for Culture, Bernd Neumann, who regretted in his speech that the commemoration of the Nazis' homosexual victims came "very late."¹⁷³ The plaque that accompanies the monument directly links past and present issues of social tolerance and acceptance of human diversity in unified Germany. "With this memorial, the Federal Republic of Germany intends to honor the victims of persecution and murder, to keep alive the memory of this injustice, and to create a lasting symbol of opposition to enmity, intolerance, and the exclusion of gay men and lesbians." The presence of the memorial, then, is meant to deploy a memory of the past as a shield against contemporary discrimination. The legacy of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals, which is memorialized within eyesight of Germany's national parliament building, explicitly ties the politics of memory together with the manifestation of sexual citizenship in the Federal Republic. As the plaque at the memorial states: "Because of its history, Germany has a special responsibility to actively oppose the violation of gay men and lesbians' human rights."¹⁷⁴

The establishment of the Berlin memorial not only reflects complicated notations at work in finding a consensual politics of memory, but also represents a significant shift in the relationship between the German government and the pink triangle past. The federal government not only officially memorialized the Nazis' homosexual victims; amid discussions of funding the national monument in 2002, the Bundestag also officially apologized to all homosexual victims, and pardoned them of their Paragraph 175 convictions. The pardons went into effect on the symbolically significant day of May 17 (17.5) of that year. Finally, almost sixty years after the

¹⁷³ Cited in Rainer Schulze, "Himmler's Crusade against (Male) Homosexuality and the Continuing Stigmatisation of LGBT People after 1945," *The Holocaust in History and Memory* 4 (2011): 34.

¹⁷⁴ Plaque text. Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime. Text available online: <http://www.stiftung-denkmal.de/en/home/news/detail/article/denkmal-fuer-die-im-nationalsozialismus-verfolgten-homosexuellen.html> (Accessed April 22, 2016).

defeat of National Socialism, the German government changed its stance on the persecution of homosexuals, thus allowing pink triangle victims to enter into the officially sanctioned German memory of the Nazi past. In addition to removing legal blemishes from survivors' records, granting a sense of official legitimacy to their victimization, and establishing a more inclusive national memory, the Bundestag's decisions also made any pink triangle survivors who were still alive eligible for full restitution, including financial compensation. Unfortunately, the government's apology and pardon came so late that most survivors had already passed away.

Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, the Bundestag's 2002 pardon was only for men convicted under Paragraph 175 during the Nazi regime, not those convicted with the same law in West Germany between 1949 and 1969. Two years earlier, the Bundestag voted only to express its regret for, rather than pardon, the homosexual men who continued to be criminalized for decades after the end of the war.¹⁷⁵ Such an action again highlights the nuances of the politics of memory. Ultimately, the German government found it easier to pardon those convictions issued by a regime of the past, one that had been morally discredited in its entirety. The Bundestag's 2002 apology therefore represents a somewhat dubious sleight of hand in which it was able to cast the German state in a progressive light for pardoning the Nazis' victims, while at the same time neglecting to exonerate the post-war Paragraph 175 convictions. Doing so would have required the government to admit that it had willingly upheld and actively convicted people with the Nazi version of a law. As a result, the men who were convicted under Paragraph 175 in West Germany after the Second World War, still have convictions on their records.

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Beginning in the 1970s, different and often competing narratives of the Nazi persecution of homosexuals emerged in West Germany and the United States. By the 1990s, these various

¹⁷⁵ Susanne Höll, "Der Richter und das Opfer," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 18, 2012, 3.

memories began to gradually converge into a more cohesive, collective understanding of what happened to homosexuals under Hitler. In large part this was due to the emergence of solid historical scholarship that utilized archival evidence and survivor testimony to piece together a more accurate picture of the terrorization that homosexual men and women faced during the Third Reich. As more scholarship became available, the broader collective narrative – as manifested in the press, museum exhibits, commemoration ceremonies, and public lectures – moved away from the notion of a gay genocide or “Homocaust,” and recognized that previous claims of hundreds of thousands or millions of murdered gays were inaccurate.

To date, there are ten separate memorials across Germany dedicated to homosexuals persecuted under National Socialism. There are just as many pink triangle monuments spread out across the world from Amsterdam and Anchorage, to Sydney and San Francisco.¹⁷⁶ The construction of these pink triangle memorials in different countries demonstrates that the transatlantic gay identity that began in the context of gay rights activism in the 1970s has now taken on global dimensions. The existence of these memorials indicates that people throughout the world feel that the Nazi persecution of homosexuals is not simply a chapter of German history; it is not a historical event that only Germans should commemorate and memorialize. What began in the 1970s as a grassroots quest to uncover the history of a particular victim group evolved over time into a transatlantic historical narrative that all people – gay and straight, men and women, liberals and conservatives – should face and learn from. In short, by the dawn of the new millennium, the pink triangle past had become a moral lesson about global human rights.

¹⁷⁶ Monuments dedicated to homosexuals persecuted by the Nazis that are not located in Germany include: Mauthausen Concentration Camp Memorial Site (1984), Amsterdam (1987), Bologna (1990), Twin Peaks Annual Pink Triangle Display (since 1995), San Francisco (2001), Risiera di San Sabba Concentration Camp (Italy, 2005), and Tel Aviv (2014). The following memorials utilize the symbol of the pink triangle and are dedicated to victims of homophobic violence, but not specifically to homosexual victims of the Nazi regime: Anchorage (USA, 1999), Sydney (2001), and Montevideo (2005).

CONCLUSION:

“Remembering Must Also Have Consequences”

In 2015, the world celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the end of World War II and the liberation of Nazi concentration camps across Europe. It was a moment that provided occasion to reflect on the legacy of the National Socialist regime’s persecution of homosexual men and women. Information regarding this persecution had been silenced by the state apparatus of the Federal Republic of Germany and by a conservative majority of the West German public for decades after the war’s end. A series of laws forced homosexual men to keep their painful memories of persecution a deeply buried secret, along with their sexuality. Acknowledging or talking about their past experiences opened them up to legal prosecution and social ostracization. The handful of Nazi victims who resolved not to keep their memories locked away and who came forward and spoke about their experiences – whether it was to apply for financial aid in rebuilding their destroyed lives, to attempt to have their Paragraph 175 conviction overturned, or to simply seek accountability for the injustice they suffered – were all told that they were criminals, not victims of “typical” Nazi injustice.¹ As such, their voices were silenced as the history of the Third Reich was written. In 1981, one observer noted that the suppression of homosexual victims’ memories “amounts to the most scandalous historical lie in modern European memory.”²

Throughout this dissertation, I have demonstrated that the politics of memory surrounding the persecution of homosexuals during the National Socialist regime wrought profound and, all-too often, fatal consequences for gay men living in West Germany. For twenty

¹ The Great Criminal Division (*Großstrafkammer*) of the Hamburg State Court, ruled on February 13, 1948 that, “The wording of Paragraph 175 may have been reworked in 1935, but this reformulation does not represent... a typical Nazi law, and it will remain in effect today.” Quoted in Bernhard Rosenkranz, Gottfried Lorenz, and Ulf Bollmann, *Homosexuellen-Verfolgung in Hamburg von 1919-1969* (Hamburg: Lambda Edition, 1999), 126.

² Michael Lynch, “Bent under Hitler, Bent under Ackroyd,” *The Body Politic*, April 1981, 28.

years, the Federal Republic of Germany continued to enforce the version of Paragraph 175 that Nazi jurists had amended during the Third Reich. As a result, between 1949 and 1969, the Federal Republic convicted 59,000 citizens for engaging in “indecentcy among men.” The Nazi court system had sentenced 53,000 men during its twelve-year reign. Although 1945 had brought an end of the Nazi terror, it did not represent a complete liberation for homosexual men in Germany, who had to fear further imprisonment, or for German lesbians who faced political and social ostracization. The West German state’s decision to uphold and enforce the Third Reich’s version of Paragraph 175 highlights troubling continuities between a defeated totalitarian regime and a new democratic state.

Until the 1970s, anyone seeking to learn about the fate of homosexuals in the Third Reich would be left wanting. Since then, however, grassroots efforts have led to a combination of activism and scholarship that began to document this history in ever-greater detail. In addition to a number of museum exhibits, novels, documentaries, stage plays, and articles in the gay and mainstream presses, there now exists a robust scholarship on Hitler’s homosexual victims. Thus, my dissertation clearly shows that it is not always professional scholars who discover, frame, and then research historical topics. As was the case here, a complex and heterogeneous confluence of factors, including popular culture and social activism, brought a topic to the awareness of the general public, which in turn inspired historical scholarship.

In the previous chapters, I have shown how a number of actors – ranging from conservative judges to gay rights activists – crafted and deployed collective memories of the Nazis’ persecution of homosexuals to achieve a variety of ends. Politicians and jurists in the Federal Republic ignored and suppressed pink triangle survivors’ memories of persecution, thus justifying the continued use of Paragraph 175 and other discriminatory practices. Later, activists

utilized collective memories of the Nazi past to advocate for a fuller integration of gays and lesbians into the experience of citizenship in Germany and the United States. By the 1990s, however, denials that homosexuals had suffered injustices in Nazi Germany were not the only obstacle that gay activists and scholars faced in their efforts to inform the wider public about this history. Anti-gay activists also stepped into the politics of memory and manipulated the growing historical scholarship to fit their own agendas. In 1995, for example, the conservative Christian activist Scott Lively co-authored *The Pink Swastika*, in which he argued that the Nazis had actually been a close-knit band of violent homosexuals.³ Such sentiments reveal that the politics of memory have many outcomes.

In 1985, West Germany's president Richard von Weizsäcker became the first German government official to acknowledge homosexuals as one of the many victims of Nazi terror. In the years since, the suffering of homosexuals during the Third Reich has been increasingly recognized during official commemoration ceremonies in Germany and around the world. The US Holocaust Memorial Museum, an institution funded by the US federal government, has recognized the victimhood of homosexuals since it opened in 1993. The state of Israel invited gays and lesbians to participate in Holocaust memorial services at Yad Vashem for the first time

³ Scott Lively and Kevin Abrams, *The Pink Swastika: Homosexuality in the Nazi Party* (Founders Publishing, 1995). There is also an online version of the book at www.thepinkswastika.com. Lively is currently under litigation for crimes against humanity. He is being sued by a Ugandan human rights organization for violating international law by intentionally contributing to the persecution of Ugandan homosexuals through his advisory role in the crafting of Uganda's "Kill the Gays" bill. See Sarah S. Kilborne, "Hate on Trial: What the Case Against Scott Lively Really Means," December 16, 2014. http://www.slate.com/blogs/outward/2014/12/16/scott_lively_alien_tort_statute_means_lgbt_ugandans_can_sue_him_in_america.html (Accessed April 2, 2016). See also: "Sexual Minorities Uganda v. Scott Lively," Center for Constitutional Rights. <http://ccrjustice.org/home/what-we-do/our-cases/sexual-minorities-uganda-v-scott-lively> (Accessed April 2, 2016); "The War on Gays: Strange Bedfellows," *The Economist*, May 4, 2013. Available online: <http://www.economist.com/news/international/21577043-american-christian-zealots-are-fighting-back-against-gay-rightsabroad-strange-bedfellows> (Accessed April 1, 2016).

in 2006.⁴ These examples, coupled with the construction of pink triangle memorials in seven different countries, represent a growing willingness on an international scale to commemorate the thousands of homosexual men and women who suffered in Germany under the swastika. The proliferation of these memorials should not overshadow the profound resistance and hostility that memorial organizers faced. But their existence is a clear sign of change after the forty years in which no government official of any nation even acknowledged homosexuals as victims.

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In his speech at the 2010 Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Nazism, Günter Dworek of the Lesbian and Gay Union of Germany proclaimed that, “Remembering must also have consequences.”⁵ Dworek’s statement again highlights the politics of memory by asserting that it is not sufficient to honor the memory of the Nazis’ homosexual victims. He asserts that remembering a past injustice can – and should – lead to meaningful action aimed at rectifying that injustice. The Bundestag’s 2003 pardon of Paragraph 175 convictions issued under Nazi rule was certainly an example of memories having political consequences. Yet, the pardon came too late to have much of an impact on the thousands of men for whom it would have meant the most. The vast majority of the men who managed to survive the atrocities of the Third Reich died knowing that their democratically elected government considered them “indecent” and a criminal. It is difficult to state with any certainty how many gay victims of the Nazis were alive in 2003 to have their record exonerated by the Bundestag’s pardon. None stepped forward to claim compensation payments that they were entitled to now that they were officially recognized

⁴ “Israel Acknowledges Gay Holocaust Victims for First Time,” *Advocate.com*, April 27, 2006. <http://www.advocate.com/news/2006/04/27/israel-acknowledges-gay-holocaust-victims-first-time> (accessed April 1, 2016).

⁵ Günter Dworek, speech at the commemoration ceremony for the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of National Socialism, January 27, 2010. Speech text from an online press release: <http://www.lsvd.de/presse/pressespiegel/pressespiegel/article/gedenken-muss-auch-konsequenzen-haben-11482.html> (Accessed April 21, 2016).

victims. After a lifetime of state-sanctioned persecution and discrimination, it is easy to assume that the Bundestag's pardon was seen as too little too late.

For many activists, politicians, and scholars, there remains another political arena in which the Federal Republic can reassert its dedication to the rights and civil liberties of its minorities by confronting the Nazis' legacy of homosexual persecution. The Bundestag's 2003 pardon was only valid for those convicted under Paragraph 175 during the Nazi reign. That means that the 59,000 men sentenced after 1945 still have those convictions on their record; to date, the Bundestag has only expressed its deepest condolences to those men. Recently, there have been local efforts to rectify this situation. In 2011, the Berlin Senate hosted a conference with the goal of documenting the history of the men sentenced with the Nazi version of Paragraph 175 in the Federal Republic, encouraging these men to come forward and speak about their experiences, and exploring possible avenues for legal and financial recourse. Members of the Berlin Senate have been spearheading the effort to overturn these convictions and offer some type of restitution with the hope that the federal government will soon follow suit. Klaus Lederer, the chairman of the Left Party in Berlin's Senate, asserted in 2012 that the flurry of apologies, auspices, investitures, and the signing of agreements represent nothing but the "primacy of symbolic politics." What is needed, Lederer said, is "engaged, courageous, and financial public action."⁶ Memories must have consequences.

Throughout this dissertation, I have demonstrated that the experience of citizenship for many gays and lesbians in West Germany and eventually the United States was directly related to the politics of memory surrounding the Nazi persecution of homosexuals. This was true during the *Wiedergutmachung* (restitution) debates in the Federal Republic during the 1950s and 1960s,

⁶ Robert Niedermeier, "Paragraf 175: Eine Etschuldigung reicht nicht." Queer.de, March 29, 2014. http://www.queer.de/detail.php?article_id=21294 (Accessed April 2, 2016)

and it became more pronounced during the transatlantic gay rights movement beginning in the 1970s. The political and legal debates about the Paragraph 175 convictions that were sentenced after 1945 show that these politics of memory remain highly relevant in Germany today. In 2014, a gay group in Cologne initiated the “No Future without Memory” campaign in which it advocated for full equality for Germany’s LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) citizens. A necessary part of doing so, according to one group member, is honoring the thousands of men who were legally persecuted by the German state in both the Hitler and Adenauer eras. In a campaign they are calling “The Comeback of the Pink Triangle,” members of the Cologne group are advocating that the rainbow flag – currently the predominant symbol of the gay community – be replaced with the original gay rights logo. The group stated in a press release, “The pink triangle is being forgotten, both as a symbol of Nazi oppression and as a symbol of the international emancipation movement of the 1970s. In 1994, Paragraph 175 was repealed. Twenty years later, the memory is already fading.”⁷

The group’s statement speaks to a theme that has run throughout this dissertation: the reciprocal relationship between sexual citizenship and the politics of memory. Efforts to acknowledge past atrocities created a broader awareness for the need of fairness in the present. Subsequently, the acknowledgment of equality in the present paved the way for further incorporation of the aggrieved into the writing of history. Yet, the Cologne group’s statement would suggest that as gays and lesbians have achieved a greater degree of social acceptance and legal protection against discrimination, interest has waned – or there is less of a perceived need – among the wider gay community to focus on past persecution. This should not be taken to mean that the Nazi persecution of homosexuals is being forgotten (again) or is in danger of becoming

⁷ “Zukunft braucht Erinnerung: Das Comeback des Rosa Winkels,” Queer.de, May 13, 2014. http://www.queer.de/detail.php?article_id=21558 (Accessed April 1, 2016.)

irrelevant in gay history and culture. It means, rather, that the history of Nazi persecution has been divorced from a specific symbol of the LGBTQ community and has been more broadly incorporated in scholarship and public awareness at large.

Since the 1990s, the pink triangle has taken on a life of its own, one that focuses on pride and a positive affirmation of a gay identity. This explains how a symbol that began as a concentration camp badge could, half a century later, appear on banners in gay pride parades, sales and marketing campaigns targeted at the gay community, and in gay pop culture. In 2011, for example, the American pop superstar Lady Gaga released her award-winning single “Born this Way,” a song that became an anthem promoting acceptance of the global LGBTQ community. In the opening scene of the accompanying music video, a florescent pink triangle frames the singer as she begins her message to LGBTQ individuals: “A different lover is not a sin...God makes no mistakes...You were born this way.”⁸ The evolution of the pink triangle from a concentration camp badge to gay rights logo and then more broadly a fixture in gay culture speaks to the polyvalent nature of symbols to embody multiple meanings. It also represents the power of human agency to transform symbols and imbue them with significance.

Although the historical meaning of the pink triangle may have changed over time, the Nazi past remains a powerful memory in the politics of LGBTQ equality. When the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in June 2015 that marriage was a constitutional right of all Americans, including same-sex couples, gay groups in Germany once again called on history to advocate for social change in their own country. Birgit Bosold, the curator of

⁸ LadyGagaVEVO. “Lady Gaga – Born this Way.” YouTube video, 07:19. Posted February 27, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wV1FrqwZyKw> (Accessed March 11, 2016). For studies of the economic impact of the LGBTQ movement, see: Alexandra Chasin, *Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes to Market* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2000); Justin Bengry, “Courting the Pink Pound: *Men Only* and the Queer Consumer,” 1935-39,” *History Workshop Journal* 68 (2009): 122-148. Bengry currently has a monograph, “The Pink Pound: Capitalism and Homosexuality in Britain,” under contract with the University of Chicago Press.

Homosexualität_en, a popular exhibit on gay German history that ran for six months in 2015 at the German Historical Museum in Berlin, recently called Germany “the motherland of the homosexual revolution.” For decades, Germans such as Magnus Hirschfeld were leaders in sexology and homosexual rights advocacy. Yet now, Bosold asserted, Germany “is limping behind” other nations that are granting broader rights to all of their citizens, regardless of sexual orientation.⁹ It is a sentiment that is reminiscent of West German gay activists’ shock in the 1980s that other countries were constructing pink triangle memorials before either postwar German state. So, memories of Germany’s past continue to be important in the politics of LGBTQ rights.

One of the central aims of my dissertation has been to show that public discourses of Hitler’s homosexual victims have transformed collective memories of the Nazi past into a moral narrative that has a resonance beyond the gay community. These memories continue to be enmeshed in state policies, juridical thinking, and parliamentary democracy at large in unified Germany. In 2014, the Director of the Central Office for Civic Education in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia spoke during the annual commemoration ceremony at Cologne’s Memorial for the Gay and Lesbian Victims of National Socialism. In her address, Maria Springenberg-Eich told the crowd that, “a critical examination of the legacy of National Socialism and *all* of its crimes has become an essential component of the democratic process in our country.” That included an honest confrontation with the history of homosexual persecution and the fact that it did not end with the fall of the Third Reich. “Whenever minorities have been discriminated against in the Federal Republic, and then have resolved to fight for their equality, the confrontation with the Nazi past was always an important reference point in the public debate.”

⁹ Quoted in Sarah Hofmann, “Berlin ist schwule Hauptstadt & stolz darauf,” Deutsche Welle, June 29, 2015. <http://www.dw.com/de/berlin-ist-schwule-hauptstadt-stolz-darauf/a-18541582> (Accessed March 31, 2016).

This was not merely a politicization of the past for present goals, she asserted. Germans had – and continue to have – important lessons to learn from grappling with their past. “It is important for us not only to honor the Nazis’ victims on particular anniversaries or days of remembrance... Remembering the crimes of Nazism should also bring out a public sensibility that tolerates and truly respects human diversity.”¹⁰ Acknowledging and commemorating the fate of homosexuals during the Third Reich, then, has come to be a necessary part of Germany’s *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or attempts to come to terms with its past, and therefore draw lessons about the treatment of minorities in the present. Grappling with the state-sanctioned persecution of homosexuals in Nazi Germany continues to be a central aspect of reconciling contemporary definitions of citizenship with the various expressions of human sexuality.

The delayed and gradual awareness, acknowledgement, commemoration, and finally memorialization of the Nazis’ homosexual victims both reflected and contributed to shifting social attitudes towards gays and lesbians in the present. This long process points to the correlation between the advent and success of new social movements on the one hand, and the larger German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* on the other. In this way, issues of commemorating the pink triangle past are also matters of sexual citizenship and the politics of memory. Equal representation in the national past is not only part of being treated equally in contemporary society; it is, I argue, also a right that every member of society should enjoy. Hitler’s homosexual victims eventually received official representation in Germany’s past when the national memorial in their honor was dedicated in 2008. The physical location – within eyesight of the federal parliament and chancellery buildings in Berlin as well as of the national Holocaust Memorial – was meant to signify the importance of the memory it honored and the lessons it

¹⁰ Maria Springenberg-Eich, Leiterin der Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, Nordrhein-Westfalen, speech during the annual commemoration ceremony at the Memorial for the Gay and Lesbian Victims of National Socialism. Cologne, Germany. January 27, 2014.

offered for contemporary life. Every year since its dedication, members of local, state, and federal governments attend the commemoration ceremonies, a notable occurrence given that representatives of the Federal Republic actively denied for decades that homosexuals had been victims of Nazi injustice.

As this dissertation has demonstrated, the lessons gleaned from the legacy of the persecution, discrimination, and terror that homosexual men and women faced in Nazi Germany reached an international audience. This was not unique to the history of homosexuals under Hitler. The transformation of pink triangle memories into transnational political and cultural narratives reflected and contributed to a larger internationalization of the Holocaust in the last quarter of the twentieth century.¹¹ Through political discourse, popular culture, social activism, and scholarship, the Holocaust became a reference point in which individuals and societies at large came to conceptualize notions of good, evil, guilt, complicity, and justice. Therefore, the ethical lessons garnered from studying the terrorization of homosexuals in the Third Reich contributed to the transformation of the Holocaust into what historian Wilfried Mausbach called a “shared moral universe” that shaped contemporary political discourse and action.¹²

These lessons found a particularly receptive audience across the Atlantic, in the United States. I have shown how a transnational exchange of people, ideas, and memories helped to lay the foundations of a gay history that transcended national borders, thus forging a transatlantic gay identity in the context of social activism. In America, too, the pink triangle past ultimately resounded beyond the LGBTQ community. During a speech on Holocaust Remembrance Day in

¹¹ For a fascinating study of the Americanization of the Holocaust, see: Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).

¹² Wilfried Mausbach, “America’s Vietnam in Germany – Germany in America’s Vietnam: On the Relocation of Spaces and the Appropriation of History,” in *Changing the World, Changing Oneself: Political Protest and Collective Identities in West Germany and the US in the 1960s and 1970s*, eds., Belinda Davis, Wilfried Mausbach, Martin Klimke, and Carla MacDougal (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 54.

2012, US President Barack Obama stated that it was important for the world to recognize the multitude of minorities, including gays and lesbians, who fell victim to Nazi atrocities. The story of these victims should never be forgotten, Obama argued, because it contained a message about the cost of being a bystander during a time of need. “We must tell our children about how this evil was allowed to happen: because so many people succumbed to their darkest instincts, and because so many others stood silent.”¹³

It is apparent that today, the Nazi persecution of homosexuals has come to represent more than a history of a particular minority. Instead, it has become an ethical and moral lesson about responsible citizenship, the importance of tolerance, and the acceptance of diversity in a globalized society. This history, as it turns out, has much to teach all citizens about the fragile nature of human rights and civil liberties in modern democratic life.

¹³ “Speeches and Remarks: Remarks by the President at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,” April 23, 2012. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/04/23/remarks-president-united-states-holocaust-memorial-museum> (Accessed April 4, 2016). The internationally recognized day for Holocaust Remembrance Day (In Hebrew: Yom Hashoah) marks the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Because it corresponds to the twenty-seventh day of Nisan on the Hebrew Calendar, there is not a set date for Holocaust Remembrance Day, but it usually falls in April or May each year. This should not be confused with International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which was designated by the United Nations as January 27 to mark the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

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Sammlung Holly: Homosexuelle Aktion Westberlin (HAW), Feministenpapiere

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GLBT Historical Society Archives (GLBT, San Francisco)

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Buttons: Slogans
Ephemera Collection: ACT UP National
Ephemera Collection: ACT UP SF Box 1
Ephemera Collection: ACT UP SF Box 2
Ephemera Collection: Protests, etc.

Stonewall National Museum and Archives (SNMA, Ft. Lauderdale)

Box: Buttons – Coming out, gay/queer, pride/march, symbols (lambda/triangle)
Box: Buttons – Florida (2)
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