Teenage Sexuality in Nazi Germany

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Throughout the years of Nazi rule in Germany, public welfare agencies, party organizations, local officials, and the police were involved in the moral and sexual development of teenagers. The ideas of the eugenics movement and racial thought had been circulating in Germany for decades, and elements long adopted by Hitler and the Nazi Party now became the policy of the state. The Nazi regime carried these ideas further, acting in line with the belief that race was the binding force and the racial community the fundamental element of the nation. Race became the organic embodiment of society and state. Efforts to recreate the nation along racial lines meant the implementation of measures to control in particular the sexual behavior of its young people. This commitment was reflected in legal reforms introduced in the mid-1930s.¹

A preoccupation with youth, and especially their moral and sexual development, was widespread, shared in varying degrees by political leaders, representatives of the Ministry of Health, police officials, and the Hitler Youth organization. Much of this interest stemmed from the conviction that a morally strong and healthy German youth would result from a decisive shift in policy and the adaptation of the ideals of the racial hygienic theorists.²


A number of agencies were involved with the development of children from infancy through young adulthood. The Ministry of Health gave considerable attention to these years and especially to teen sexuality. It also sponsored research and studies on aspects of this issue, in large part because it was ultimately responsible for the healthy growth of Germany's adolescents. The Hitler Youth, the organization most actively involved with young people during their formative years, showed a great deal of interest. The criminal police shared many of the party’s concerns, and its rank and file dealt most directly with those teens whose behavior transgressed accepted and permitted norms. Aside from family members, teachers, and employers, the police were often the first to encounter wayward and promiscuous youths as well as maladjusted teens.\(^3\)

The concern of political leaders and officials was justified, because during the mid-1930s teen promiscuity, sexual offenses, venereal disease, and prosecutions of homosexual acts increased steadily. The problems first became noticeable to the police, then local officials and community-based social service agencies. Soon the changes were reflected in the data compiled on arrests and convictions. Not surprisingly, these data provided a more accurate representation of the concerns of the time, of the prejudices and anxieties of the police, than the actual incidence of crime. In Nazi Germany, with its exaggerated interest in morality and sexuality, periodic efforts to crack down on an alleged problem, to eradicate criminals and asocials from the ranks of society, led to a surge in arrests and prosecutions.\(^4\)

Nevertheless, anxiety mounted. Opinions on the cause of these problems differed. As the extent of immorality and deviancy from accepted norms became evident and as the anticipated gains did not come about after 1933, observers blamed the despised Weimar Republic for instilling in youth what they viewed as distorted or even perverted values. They maintained that the changes of the 1920s, with a widely believed breakdown in family structure and morality, constituted “sexual Bolshevism” or “the Americanization of German society” and were responsible for the troubles. A few criminologists went so far as to accuse the Jews of deliberately causing this “spiritual poisoning.”\(^5\)

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The outbreak of war in 1939 affected immediately and directly the issues of teenage morality and sexual behavior. Increasingly, the disruptions and dislocations caused by the war effort—the congregation of troops near towns and villages, the growing employment of teens, the absence of parents, and the lessening of public control enabled teenagers to explore social mores, test values, and explore sexual preferences. The wartime experiences pointed out even more sharply the inability of the Nazi regime, with its overriding drive to establish a political and social system based on race, to channel teenage morality and sexuality into paths of its choosing and along the lines of its propaganda and ideology.

This article examines teenage sexuality during these years, 1933–1945. The first part deals with legitimate and illegitimate heterosexual behavior among teens. The second part looks at the more troubling issue for the Nazis of homosexuality among youth. The efforts of the regime to shape sexual behavior and mores formed the basis of the discussion of these issues and also provided the sources. During these years a host of reports, memoranda, police records, and statistics were generated about teenage sexuality, most often because of alleged transgressions. Often, this documentation reveals more about official and party attitudes than the actual realities.

**Mixed Messages and Mixed Results**

When the Hitler regime came to power in 1933 it promised fundamental changes in the political system and the moral revival of the German people, now that the liberal Weimar Republic had been thrust aside. The objectives of the Nazi Party, reflecting widely held racial ideals, included population growth and the strengthening of the “racial community” through a variety of measures. The new policies, heavily based on traditional values and ideas derived from the eugenics and racial hygienic movements, meant that the social reforms of the Weimar Republic, and the accompanying sexual experimentation and changing gender roles, had to be discarded. What the Nazi leaders viewed as the moral decay and political divisiveness of the Weimar Republic needed to be replaced with a fit and healthy social organism, the racial community, a *Volksgemeinschaft*, based on the principles elaborated by Hitler.  

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In this emerging view of a new social order, the youth of Germany gained importance, as Hitler had already asserted in *Mein Kampf*. They were targeted by an energetic campaign to convince them of their moral importance to the Third Reich as the regime sought to guide their maturation and sexual development into approved channels, largely as propagators of a new generation. "Since the Nazi takeover there were a host of new opportunities for providing a balanced and healthy moral and sexual development for the youth," wrote a researcher in 1937. "This important but difficult task was given new emphasis and meaning because now real possibilities of success have emerged." 

Many officials, from Hitler and Himmler to low-level political figures, believed that the youth of Germany would recognize and embrace these new values. In advocating such changes, the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls, the *Bund deutsche Mädel*, played important roles, for their purpose was to inculcate the youth with a sense of duty and obligation to the *Volk*, "the highest organism shaped by God and whose maintenance is a divine command." The new regime claimed to champion a healthy and wholesome value system, one based on traditional morality that benefited the entire racial community. The government moved to eliminate the pernicious influences that it believed had been corrupting German youth. Already in 1933 the regime asserted that "the objectives of the national government of the national state is also the moral renewal of the German *Volk*." 

A number of problems had to be addressed. In 1935, rumors of large numbers of pregnancies among members of the League of German Girls circulated. According to reports compiled and circulated by the exiled Social Democratic Party (SPD) "catastrophic moral conditions" reigned. "Boys and girls between the ages of 14 to 20 are often morally fully defective." In one community, the League of German Girls discharged seventeen members because they had become pregnant. In Mannheim, it was alleged that twenty-five teenage girls went through their church confirmation, all of whom were pregnant. Over the next several years a number of similar reports, accounts of teen promiscuity and pregnancies, were recorded throughout Germany and publicized by

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7 Burleigh and Wippermann, pp. 201–2.
the SPD which desired to point out the failures as well as the hypocrisy of the Nazi regime.\footnote{\textit{Deutschland-Bericht der Sopade 2 (June 1935)," in \textit{Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Sopade), 1934-1940} (hereafter \textit{DB}) 2 (1935) (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), pp. 693–94; for further incidents, see pp. 707–8; also October 1936, \textit{DB} 3 (1936), pp. 1317–18, June 1937, \textit{DB} 4 (1937), pp. 850–51, and December 1938 \textit{DB} 5 (1938), pp. 1399–1400.}

While teen pregnancies could be accepted, some other aspects of teen behavior were disturbing. Sexual assaults involving teenage offenders persisted throughout the decade, as documented in police and court records. While the incidence of reported cases fluctuated but did not change appreciably from the 1920s, anything less than a sharp drop was unacceptable to law enforcement officials and the Nazi leadership. Assaults by juveniles characteristically involved male teens who targeted younger children. According to psychologist Eugene Schweizer, one of the few who studied the problem, the spark that triggered an attack on another youngster might well have come from an article in the newspaper that dealt with a sex crime or some related offense. And, he noted, adolescents read such articles with considerable interest. There were other influences. Some authorities maintained that the jokes teenage males told among themselves, the erotic sketches or pictures they liked to view, the games they played, or the taunting of an older youth about masturbation aroused their sexual drives to a point where they could no longer control them.\footnote{Schweizer, pp. 40–47; Erhard Porschmann, \textit{Der minderjährige Sexualverbrecher und seine Stellung im Strafrecht} (Dresden, 1936), pp. 62–63; "Schundlekture als Ursache der Jugendverwahrlosung," \textit{Jugendwohlfahrt} 27 (1938): 163–65.}

Still, officials persisted in their hope that the energies released during maturation might be channeled into constructive and socially useful activities. The sublimation of these drives would lead, it was believed, to a drop in sexual offenses. Emphasis was once again placed on the institutions championed by the Nazis, such as the family and the Hitler Youth, which could best help the adolescent cope with these impulses and drives.\footnote{Schweizer, pp. 40–47; Porschmann, pp. 55–59.}

While the interest in teen sexual behavior and moral offenses remained strong, the actual number of youths prosecuted on criminal charges was small, about 10–15 percent of all recorded convictions throughout the 1930s and 1940s. In most years, the figure never climbed higher than 5 percent. These numbers, however, identify only those incidents reported, investigated, and actually heard in court. An expert concluded that the number of unreported crimes was far greater than the official data indicated, and it was, therefore, not possible to
project with accuracy the actual number of moral offenses. An untold number of victims chose not to report the crime, and usually they did not tell friends or their parents.\(^{13}\)

The figures did little to deter the leaders of Nazi Germany who sincerely believed that the political revival begun in 1933 would invariably lead to a moral and spiritual awakening. They also remained convinced that crime would be eliminated. There was good reason for the Hitler regime to be satisfied with the impact it had on moral offenses and crime, at least initially. During the first year of its rule, the data collected by the Reich Ministry of Justice showed a drop in convictions on moral offenses by 9 percent.\(^{14}\) Officials were quick to applaud the moral revival taking place, and they believed that the figures would continue to drop. The enthusiasm was, however, short lived—in 1935 the conviction rate soared reflecting an intensified official interest, tougher police pursuit, and more important, a change in the paragraph of the criminal code that dealt with homosexual activity. Only in 1937 did the figures show a slight drop. Data from throughout the Reich confirmed this upward trend, with teen moral offenses in Bavaria, for example, jumping 50 percent between 1933 and 1937. In urban areas the climb was greater still.\(^{15}\)

The most common teenage moral offense remained sexual assault, with the victims primarily other children. Reports from throughout the Reich reveal how such incidents were handled. In September 1934, for example, police in Darmstadt arrested two male teenagers for moral offenses. One of the youths, age seventeen, had had intercourse with girls only seven, eight, and nine years old. The teen was prosecuted and convicted; he received a sentence of four months in jail.\(^{16}\) Similar charges were brought against three teenagers in Lohr during the summer of


\(^{14}\) Behm, p. 56.


\(^{16}\) On the 1920s, see Elizabeth Harvey, Youth and the Welfare State in Weimar Germany (Oxford, 1993), p. 195; the cases of H. B. and H. E. can be found in Hessisches Staatsarchiv Darmstadt, StDi Jug 1934 St. Nr 19.
1937. At the trial one youth told the court: “I followed reports of moral trials in the newspapers and that led me more and more to the decision to commit one.”

During the late 1930s, reports from other parts of the Reich showed that sexual assaults had still not subsided. Police arrested in the summer of 1939, for example, an eighteen-year-old in Dachau for molesting children at a local swimming hole. Investigators stated that the offender showed “signs of feeblemindedness,” and sent him to a medical institute in Munich for examination. No report of the examination is available. The younger was placed on trial, and during it his father pleaded with the judge, insisting that “my wife and I will do everything possible in the future to prevent our son K. from committing criminal acts. We will be especially careful not to let our son K. go swimming alone.” In spite of the alleged seriousness of the crime, the youth was released from custody. In another case that gained considerable local attention, a seventeen-year-old boy murdered a preschooler in July 1937, after having sexually assaulted him.

The number of convictions of teenagers for other sexual offenses, such as incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, remained very low. Youngsters accused of having committed incest did come before the courts throughout the 1930s. Police near Speyer arrested a young worker in the summer of 1937 who had engaged in sexual intercourse with his sister for the past two years. One year later, a twelve-year-old boy was taken into custody by the Speyer police because he allegedly had sexual relations with his sister on at least fifteen to twenty occasions. Such incidents were not entirely new. Already during the Weimar Republic, criminologists maintained that incest occurred most often among poor youths who lived in crowded apartments where the entire family slept in one room. In such conditions, the children witnessed the sexual activities of their parents, and that, a criminologist concluded, led some


20 District President of the Pfalz, “Monatsbericht,” Speyer, September 7, 1937, and August 11, 1938, BII, MA106676.
brothers and sisters to imitate the adults. A program to combat this problem, called “a bed for every child,” was launched.21

That only a few teenagers were convicted on charges of rape indicates that it was not a common offense among this age group. There were, however, occasional reports such as the case of eight youngsters who sexually assaulted a middle-aged woman in Franconia. Other moral offenses, such as indecent exposure and bestiality, involved teenagers only rarely, the incidents restricted to certain areas.22 For example, indecent exposure tended to be more common in urban areas, while bestiality was more of a rural problem where farm animals were plentiful. In one case, a youth from the village of Dürrnbach was taken into custody by police and charged with sexually assaulting cows on several different occasions. The court termed him “a clear danger for public order and morality.”23

Beyond citing a handful of specific offenses, reports from throughout the Reich expressed the concern of local officials about the loose behavior and sexual permissiveness that, in their eyes, had become more common, even though no specific crime had been committed. In Speyer, for example, the overall crime rate remained steady until 1937 when incidents of moral crimes rose sharply and numerous complaints about teen behavior were heard. Writing in 1939, an official in Würzburg claimed that “the moral depravity of grammar school aged children has increased to a shocking degree, even among the youngest of them.” The situation remained serious throughout 1939, especially in urban areas.24

During the late 1930s, a Hitler Youth official named Leo Pelle turned his attentions to rural areas, even though it had long been maintained that cities and urban life undermined the morality of young people who went there in search of employment or to report to a work detail. Now, a new and serious cause of sexual decay had been uncovered by him in the countryside—the dances that had become a regular part of rural life. Pelle viewed the dances as such a threat to morality that he felt compelled to warn the public. The extreme nature of his concerns, his affected moral outrage, reveal more about the attitudes of petty Hitler Youth officials than about social and moral issues. In an article that ap-

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21 Pörschmann, p. 63.
peared in *Deutsche Jugendhilfe* Pelle described these dances. Held on Saturdays, Sundays, or sometimes during the week in restaurants decorated in what he called “pseudo-city style,” the dances quickly became “a threatening sickness that presents a serious danger to the behavior and morals of the growing youths, particularly the girls.”

The dances were well attended and especially popular among those young people just out of school. Local boys and girls flocked to them in search of a good time. Girls outnumbered boys usually, and the bulk of them were in their late teens. While most came to dance, it was clear to Pelle that “music and dance are not the only reasons by far. Between the dances the couples disappeared into the darkness behind trees and shrubs” for sexual encounters. He complained that “the girls quickly got used to changing their boyfriends often,” and noted that unwanted pregnancies were sometimes the result. To his chagrin, youngsters were not the only ones who enjoyed these dances; “the number of drunken men in the arms of married women is striking,” Pelle wrote. “Together they smoked, drank, talked dirty, and every so often danced.”

Some parents of teenagers who frequented the rural dances did not care about the behavior of their children. “Many fail to recognize the dangers, or they are indifferent,” Pelle bemoaned. “As long as the daughter does not get pregnant, they maintained that ‘That’s the way it is today,’ and ‘The girls want something from life too.’” In the countryside, some parents welcomed an early marriage, and they encouraged daughters to find a husband. Other parents were simply too busy or distracted by their work schedules or military service to monitor the behavior of their children. Those who were strict with their children were called “senile,” and told by the teenagers that they did not understand them. Furthermore, the employers of girls in domestic work were reluctant to say anything about their lifestyle. They feared that the girls would simply leave, and household help was hard to find.

While the police sometimes intervened, there was little they could do to halt what Pelle viewed as an erosion of teen morality. Occasionally, local police issued a warning to a youngster, “but that could not be enforced.” Even though the law forbade youths under sixteen years of age from attending the dances, there was little that could be done against them if detected. Bar owners “talked their way out of trouble by saying he didn’t know the girl, or he thought she was older. He has no interest in being careful, for he simply wants their money,” was one observer’s

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26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
conclusion. In most cases, it was not feasible to take a youngster into custody. The result was that “you simply closed your eyes to it.”

That few measures of consequence were taken to deal with this issue led some local officials to conclude that “these innumerable pleasure spots and the lack of police control or involvement was part of the state’s population policies. The state wanted more children and they tried to get the sexes together early.” Clearly mixed messages were being sent to the youth who enjoyed the dances and the opportunities to mingle with members of the opposite sex. It is also clear that officials of the youth organization as well as local leaders viewed these events askance and were unwilling to see teenagers having a good time.

In his observations on rural dances, Pelle identified yet an additional issue that caused him great concern, namely an openness about contraception among the girls. He quoted a local doctor who told a parent: “That should not surprise you. Girls 15 and 16 years old are familiar with condoms, and they carry them in their handbags.” A few officials voiced their concern, because, it was maintained, “sexuality aroused by drunkenness, leads neither to a lot of children, nor to a sound marriage and family.” In addition, such behavior “causes premature activity among immature youths. Girls lose their natural female feeling of shame. The widespread availability of contraceptives invariably effects them in marriage too.” Those who got in the habit of using birth control as an adolescent would, it was believed, continue to use it after marriage. The result would be fewer children for the Reich and a drop in the size of the population, thereby directly threatening the racial policies of the Nazi regime.

In spite of these trends and the rising conviction rate of some moral offenses, most law enforcement officials and criminologists asserted that the problem of teen immorality was more apparent than real. The increased number of convictions, they argued, resulted from the more intensive pursuit of those involved in abhorrent or deviant sexual activities, and not from a shift in behavior. Rigorous enforcement of the law, particularly those adopted by the Nazis to mold society along racial lines, was in fact desirable, they argued, and the growing number of youngsters caught within the web of the police enforcement was necessary if moral offenses and deviancy were to be halted. By the late 1930s, the conviction rate of teen moral offenders had peaked, and a drop set in. Many officials believed that the Nazi regime’s efforts to curb deviant behavior and to launch a moral revival had been successful.

28 Ibid., pp. 100–103; Schweizer (n. 5 above), pp. 98–99.
30 Ibid.
The Impact of War

The outbreak of war in 1939 brought about far-reaching changes. Criminologists and police authorities feared a recurrence of the problems and the sharp rise in crime experienced during the First World War. There was widespread concern that the longer the war lasted the more serious the consequences. That teenage moral offenses were to increase uncontrollably during the early years of the war was not immediately apparent, and between 1939 to 1940 the conviction rate actually fell by 24 percent. Most criminologists had anticipated an initial drop in the numbers as police pursuit slackened. During 1941, however, the trend took an unmistakable turn, gaining 40 percent. The figures remained at this high level through 1942. But these numbers only offer a glimpse of the extent of the problem as they include only those youths arrested and prosecuted. Local reports provide a more accurate and revealing view of teenage sexuality during the war.

Already in 1939, accounts from different parts of the Reich voiced alarm and trepidation that matters were getting out of control. In Frankfurt am Main, for example, a sevenfold increase in moral offenses had been recorded. A representative of the city's youth agency maintained that such problems were found in most big cities, and were not unique to Frankfurt. He thereby did not directly address the problem. Police in Regensburg uncovered a large number of moral offenses in the fall of 1940 involving school pupils. Other areas experienced similar problems and a disturbing rise in moral offenses. An official in Bad Neustadt an der Saale, for example, became alarmed at what he termed the "increased brutalization" of the youth after a schoolteacher reported that one of his pupils had drawn a picture of the "female sexual organ" on the blackboard. School girls in the same town complained about the "continual harassment" from boys. While such adolescent pranks could hardly be deemed criminal, moral offenses committed by adolescents and a general decay in behavior continued to be reported in many parts of the Reich through late 1941.


33 "Krieg und Jugendverwahrlosung."

34 Ibid.; "Monatsbericht," Regensburg, October 19, 1940, B II, MA106673; "Ansteigen der Kriminalität."
Officials in communities near Münster voiced alarm at the misbehavior and “a lack of discipline” they observed among teenagers. The situation was similar in Dortmund, where illicit liaisons proliferated during the war, because, it was maintained, girls had become more sexually active. If detected and confronted, a local official wrote, “they excuse their behavior by saying ‘The Führer wants more children, doesn’t he?’ Or, ‘What do you want, I’m a German mother,’ and ‘Others do it too.’ If asked why they changed sex partners so often, the girls answered that everyone does it like that. Or, ‘the boys do this, so we can do it too.’”

The western and southern parts of the Reich recorded a sharp rise in immorality and unbridled sexual activity among teens, especially girls, some of whom were only fourteen or fifteen years old. The Higher SS and Police Leader in Munich described what he termed “the shocking picture” of teenage promiscuity, and noted that the “continual detailed reports” of illicit sexual relations between young girls and soldiers were “particularly shocking.” In addition, fully 32 percent of the girls examined by police in Munich had contracted a sexually transmitted disease. The number of teenagers placed in homes or foster care because of sexual depravity reached a ten-year high in 1939, and the number continued to grow.

In some parts of the Reich the decay of teen morality was less apparent and officials were not as worried. A few communities reported that after an initial problem in 1939, conditions actually improved. By the following year, and after a strengthening of the measures to combat wayward youths, the problem appeared to be under control. The Nazi Party leadership in Hesse-Nassau, for example, spoke in the summer of 1940 about a markedly improved situation as stricter measures took effect. In addition, Cologne, Ansbach, and the state of Württemberg all reported an improvement in behavior among area teenagers. In general, the year 1940 was one of respite for law enforcement officials, as the stern measures appeared to have been successful. This proved to be only a temporary improvement.

Judging from arrest figures and local reports, the situation worsened during 1941 as a new wave of arrests of teenagers for illicit behavior

35 “Monatsbericht,” Würzburg, April 11, 1941, B II, MA1966781; “Monatsbericht,” Ansbach, April 7, 1941, B II, MA106679; W. Knopp, Kriminalität und Gefährdung der Jugend. Lagebericht bis zum Stande vom 1. Januar 1941, pp. 139, 145, 148. Knopp’s study was labeled “Streng vertraulich! Nur für Dienstgebrauch!” (Strictly confidential! For official use only!).


37 Knopp, pp. 145, 149.
spread across the Reich. The figures compiled by the Reich Statistical Office recorded an increase of about 40 percent in convictions for moral offenses, the first major jump since the mid-1930s.\textsuperscript{38} Such a dramatic change could not but alarm officials who were able to do little to combat it. An official from a district that recorded a large number of sexual offenses could only write that he regretted the “sinking of the youths’ morals.” The district attorney in Düsseldorf described in February 1942, the “sad depravity apparent in teenage offenses.” Reports of a worsening state of adolescent morality persisted and were common through late 1942.\textsuperscript{39}

The erosion of social and economic conditions within Germany during the final years of the war affected teen behavior and morality adversely. While the data compiled by the Reich Statistical Agency for the first half of 1943 are incomplete, local reports indicated that there was no improvement. The juvenile court in Nuremberg, for example, complained about the depravity and immoral behavior of that city’s young girls, and it placed the blame on the parents. In almost every criminal case, noted an official, the parents were not concerned about their child’s misdeeds, nor were they willing to do anything about it. “The mother’s indifference and stupidity in questions of child raising is often shocking,” he concluded.\textsuperscript{40}

In other parts of Germany, complaints about teenage behavior were numerous. A report from Bad Tölz in the spring of 1943 summed up the situation in the countryside:

The Gendarme posts complain again and again about the unrestrained, promiscuous conduct of the youth. They loiter and wander around the streets after darkness. They view films that are forbidden for them. Even the 15 and 16 year olds have uninhibited sexual relations. Their insubordination toward parents and employers is shocking. The schools seem to have lost every influence and the parents a great deal. If the police say something to them, the youths answer that they will soon be in the Labor Service or the military, and they will have had nothing from their adolescence. The girls simply laugh.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39}Der Generalstaatsanwalt, Düsseldorf, February 1, 1942, BAK R22/3363; “Monatsbericht,” Augsburg, November 10, 1942, B II, MA106684.
\textsuperscript{41}“Monatsbericht,” Munich, March 10, 1943, B II, MA106671.
With teenage morality apparently deteriorating and local officials becoming more vehement in their condemnation, criminologists focused on the factors responsible for the current situation. The causes, some concluded, were similar to those that had precipitated a similar problem during the First World War. Criminologists and court officials identified as a leading culprit the lack of parental supervision. Fathers, who according to this view had “raised the young persons and guided them into the correct channels with a strong hand,” were now in the military and no longer at home. Mothers also worked long hours and were so “overburdened with work at home” that they could not devote much time to the children. “Often the parents lack the recognition of the importance of being strict, which is so necessary in war when harmful influences threaten the youth,” a judge complained in 1942. Many parents were allegedly “too taken with their children” to enforce the strict discipline, and they frequently made excuses for their children’s misbehavior.42

The Hitler Youth organization worked hard at keeping teenagers in line, but it also contributed to a general uneasiness. Some parents held it responsible for the misbehavior of their children. Meetings, they argued, kept youngsters out long after dark, particularly in the winter months. Some of the children returning home got into trouble as they roamed the streets. Other teens went truant, telling their parents they were going to the meetings but in fact they hung out with friends. Teenagers often used the Hitler Youth as an excuse to get out of the house, and parents complained that they were unable to monitor their children’s nocturnal wanderings. Furthermore, the Hitler Youth had in some parents’ view eroded their authority because the leaders “spoke of the church and the family in a derogatory manner. This undermined the religious beliefs that provided the moral cement needed by so many young people.”43

Within the Hitler Youth, many of the local unit leaders were not able to control the youngsters, nor did they provide a model of behavior for the teens to emulate. Often, the most capable leaders had been inducted into the military, commissioned as officers because of their leadership capabilities and experience. The loss of talented leaders and their replacement by less dynamic and effective individuals caused a crisis within the Hitler Youth. Discipline and enthusiasm of the youngsters declined,

43 “Betrifft: Zunahme der Jugendverwahrlosung” (n. 36 above).
and a number of the new leaders did considerable harm by the poor example they set.\textsuperscript{44}

The war contributed to the decay of teen morals in another way—it brought more youngsters into the workplace. Many teenagers were now drawn away from their parents and school at a time when their values and morals were being formed, and they went to labor camps or workshops. The work camps were intended to strengthen the youth’s moral character, but became “often the center of moral offenses,” an official complained in 1942.\textsuperscript{45} Some camps were shut down because of serious sexual excesses. In communities near the work camps, rumors of wild sexual behavior flourished.\textsuperscript{46}

For many teenagers, labor camp service provided their first stay away from home and unsupervised contact with members of the opposite sex. Illicit relationships were inevitable. Similar problems came from placing youngsters in workshops with adults or by drawing them into cities where jobs were available. For many youngsters it was an exhilarating experience, being away from home and earning money for the first time. The excitement of the big city and the newly acquired independence sometimes led to what Werner Knopp, a Hitler Youth official who authored a major study of juvenile delinquency, viewed as problems, namely smoking, drinking, and promiscuous behavior.\textsuperscript{47}

The war, with the enlistment of large numbers of young men into the armed forces, caused further worries for local officials. Soldiers stationed at bases near villages and cities and the frequent movement of troops through the railway stations, some local officials maintained, attracted teenage girls. The striking uniforms and demeanor of older men, some not much older than themselves, and war propaganda to “support our boys,” led some girls to shamelessly chase after the soldiers. Wherever military bases were situated, young girls, some as young as thirteen, lined up outside waiting to be taken to the nearest park or convenient hotel, it was asserted in a 1941 study of juvenile delinquency. The result of these liaisons was frequently an unwanted pregnancy or venereal disease.\textsuperscript{48}


\textsuperscript{46}Knopp (n. 35 above), pp. 166–67.

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., pp. 165–66; “Krieg und Jugendverwahrlosung” (n. 32 above), p. 2; Brockman, pp. 66–70; Wagner (n. 4 above), p. 373.
The police lacked sufficient manpower to continue patrolling the streets of most cities adequately. The absence of a police presence, growing since the outbreak of the war, led to an increase in the number of teenagers wandering the streets at all hours of the day and night. With the risk of reprimand for being out after curfew sharply diminished, young people became more daring and open. The police manpower shortage intensified as the war continued, and the situation on the streets of German cities appeared to worsen.49

While the incidence of moral offenses was growing rapidly during the war, a trend even more alarming to local officials was the steadily dropping age of those involved. Reports from localities frequently noted the promiscuous behavior of school-age girls, some no more than twelve or thirteen years old. Investigations launched in early 1940 by the criminal police near Nuremberg, for example, uncovered widespread immoral behavior and sexual experimentation among school pupils. A group of youngsters, ages six to fifteen, carried out what an official termed the “worst indecent acts, boys with each other and with girls, too.” In one case, an eleven-year-old boy sexually abused a six-year-old girl so severely that she had to be placed in the care of a physician.50

The age of those involved alarmed officials especially because such incidents were by no means uncommon. The district attorney in Nuremberg, concerned about the erosion of teen morality, told of twin sisters pregnant from the same fifteen-year-old. Also in Nuremberg, a sixteen-year-old girl had group sex with four young boys in a church, in front of the altar. In Schweinfurt, an eleven-year-old girl had intercourse with seven classmates, “one right after another,” all only ten or eleven years of age. In another case, a group of fourteen school pupils had engaged regularly in sexual intercourse for a year and a half before detection in the summer of 1941. Also, in a nearby community, police uncovered thirty-three children involved in similar illicit activities.51

Even though such behavior had certainly taken place for decades prior to the war, the years of Nazi propaganda and policies that emphasized the creation of a racial state found a deep resonance among local officials who had come to expect that such behavior was a thing of the past. The directors of a Racial and Political Office concluded that most of the

sixteen- to eighteen-year-old girls in the area were “no longer virgins.” Later in 1942, a scandal involving “about forty children” who had repeatedly engaged in sexual intercourse, broke in a village near Würzburg. The ages of those involved ranged from ten to fourteen years. Reports from 1942, 1943, and 1944 continued to note cases of youngsters, barely in their teens, engaging in illicit sexual activity.52

Reports of promiscuity among teenagers came from throughout the Reich. At a school in Augsburg, for example, “the girls passed a note during the lessons that described the love-making of another fourteen-year-old pupil and her boyfriend,” an official wrote. “In general, the girls spoke about sexual intercourse in a cynical manner.”53 What was viewed as a particularly serious situation developed in Frankfurt where groups of teenagers met regularly for parties in vacated apartments. At these so-called “House-Fests,” teens danced and drank, and “it often resulted in fornication,” noted a police official in 1944. Because of “the lack of space, several couples would be in the same room.” Soldiers on leave often joined these parties. The seriousness of the problem became evident when six of these youngsters contracted gonorrhea. In other parts of the city, a local official commented, “half-grown girls” were found who engaged in such frequent and indiscriminate sexual intercourse that it was believed “they presented a serious health problem because of venereal disease.”54

A study carried out from October 1941, to March 1944, near Lüneburg confirmed the worst suspicions. Of the 168 teenage girls examined at a youth internment center, 70 percent had already engaged in sexual intercourse. Almost 90 percent of the girls had lost their virginity before the age of seventeen and the girls characteristically had multiple partners, with 57 percent having admitted to sexual relations with more than one male. The girls were also well acquainted with contraceptives, and most said that they used some form of birth control on a regular basis. Many of the girls earned spending money through casual prostitution. As one expressed it, “We’d go to a nearby military base, and we’d get plenty of money if we let them do everything to us.” Practically all of the


53 “Monatsbericht (Lagebericht),” Augsburg, February 8, 1941, B II, MA106684.

girls admitted to having had intercourse with soldiers, often without ever knowing their partner’s name. While hardly a representative study of society as a whole, this investigation did show that illicit sexual behavior and its worse consequences remained a problem.\footnote{Hermann Oestmann, “Ergebnisse von Untersuchungen an weiblichen Jugendlichen Insassen einer Jugendarrestanstalt im Verlauf von 2 1/2 Jahren insbesondere auf dem Gebiet der Geschlechtsmoral und der Geschlechtskrankheiten,” (Ph.D. diss., Hamburg, 1944), pp. 1, 2, 7-19.}

THE PRESENCE OF SOLDIERS

There was widespread agreement that the quartering of soldiers had a detrimental effect on the morality of teenage girls. “Most all reports noted the general loosening of morals of teenage girls in cities with garrisons, and wherever soldiers were quartered,” wrote a Hitler Youth official. The appearance of young men in uniform, ready to go to war for the Fatherland, exerted a powerful attraction in Germany as in other nations. Some observers believed that indiscriminate sexual relations between soldiers and teenage girls were caused by the intense propaganda launched by the Nazis to “bring people and the soldiers closer together.” Many girls came from good families and it was, an official maintained, their “love and honoring of soldiers” that led to their loss of innocence. When soldiers in Krefeld, for example, wondered why school-age girls gave themselves so freely and willingly, girls told them, “we’d do anything for soldiers.” The problem was widespread and was to be found wherever soldiers were barracked.\footnote{Knopp (n. 35 above), p. 165; “Der Sieg der Frauen,” Das Schwarze Korps (January 4, 1940).}

Most of the girls involved in these illicit liaisons were in their mid-teens, but some were younger. In the fall of 1940, a thirteen-year-old grade school pupil in Ansbach was sent to a foster home because of her promiscuous affections for soldiers.\footnote{“Monatsbericht des Regierungspräsident,” Ansbach, September 6, 1940, B II, MA106678.} At the same time, an official in Augsburg commented on the “sorrowful appearance of the immoral actions among young persons, especially females who, though hardly 14 years old, chase after the soldiers and have sexual intercourse with them.” Residents of Dachau complained that “one could no longer take a walk through the park, because the benches and some of the grassy areas were taken over by soldiers and girls.” Another complaint was that the park near the military base was littered with used condoms.\footnote{“Monatsbericht (Lagebericht) des Regierungspräsident,” Augsburg, September 9, 1940, B II, MA106683.}
Frequently the liaisons grew out of casual meetings at dances sponsored for the soldiers. Trucks from military bases in Kassel, for example, went to neighboring villages in order to bring girls to the dances. Girls openly told the recruits, “you can go with me without worrying. I’m already 16.” An official with Hamburg’s Youth Agency concluded that the soldiers all too often exploited the inexperience of the teenage girls who “engaged indiscriminately in behavior inappropriate for young ladies.”

Teenage girls continued to be attracted to men in uniform. By early 1941, reports of such behavior grew in frequency throughout the Reich. Near Königsberg, officials complained that girls only thirteen and fourteen years old were “retrieved nightly from the base where they went to have sexual relations with the soldiers.” When police checked hotels in the area, they found a number of girls under the age of eighteen with military men. It was not uncommon for the girls to register under false names and run off without paying the bill. Girls, it was reported, would frequently have relations with more than one soldier.

According to reports from Naumburg, it was “the order of the day” to see young girls running around with soldiers until late at night. There, as in other cities, Hitler Youth patrols attempted to control the problem by checking the ages of girls, and those under sixteen had to return home. Members of the patrols, however, could do little if challenged or defied by the military men accompanying the girls. Some officials suggested combining the Hitler Youth with regular police patrols, but limited manpower made it unlikely that effective countermeasures could be launched. Most authorities were only able to observe the problem and voice their concerns.

Although officials throughout Germany repeatedly expressed their anxiety about what they perceived as the deterioration in morality among teenage girls, some members of the public took it less seriously. After all, they reasoned, official propaganda had called for close relations between members of the armed forces and civilians. Furthermore, the SS newspaper, *Das schwarze Korps*, contained an article in its January 4, 1940 issue that asserted that the highest service to the nation was to propagate children, and it did not matter if they were born out of wedlock. The newspaper argued that the mistakes of the First World War and the sharp drop in births were not to be repeated.

59 Knopp, p. 166.
61 Generalstaatsanwalt, Naumburg (Sale), July 27, 1942, BAK R22/3380, p. 5.
62 “Der Sieg der Frauen.”
In some instances intimate relationships between teenage girls and soldiers were romanticized. To cite one example, a publishing company based in Stuttgart distributed a postcard that addressed this issue and thereby reveals an aspect of popular opinion. It showed a farm girl lying on the grass in the forest with a young member of the military next to her. Under the picture was a poem about their relationship. It was a familiar story about a young girl who goes into the woods to pick berries and encounters a hunter. He warns her to leave the forest. Continuing on her way, however, she meets the hunter’s son, now in the army. He offers to help her, fills the basket, and takes her to his father’s cottage. It becomes clear what happened there—nine months later she has a child. Although conclusions cannot be drawn from a single postcard, the fact of its existence does, nevertheless, contribute to the view that such liaisons were not always condemned. 63

LABOR CAMPS AND FOREIGN WORKERS

Some of the state’s efforts to keep teens off city streets by providing them with employment sometimes hastened immoral behavior. At the labor camps, for example, unemployed youths from urban areas were placed in the countryside where the fresh air and hard work, plus security from air raids, would, it was reasoned, strengthen them physically and morally. Often, this did not occur, and reports of licentious behavior came from a large number of labor camps and neighboring jurisdictions. “In the constant and prolonged living together, the bad influences of morally threatened or corrupted girls can affect the others,” wrote a Hitler Youth official in 1940. “The negative elements can never be totally excluded.” Often those living near the camps complained about the flagrant immorality. But he asserted that such uneasiness was caused by what he termed the “greatly exaggerated” rumors, “political propaganda,” and “horrible fables.” The problem did exist and many official complaints were lodged about the conditions that prevailed at these camps. 64

The directors of a number of labor camps maintained a careful watch on the youths, thereby preventing the worst of the immoral acts and sexual excesses. Opinions on their effectiveness, however, varied. An official in Celle maintained that the chance of a leader having a positive effect on camp residents, “assuming that she is morally upright herself,” was, however, generally slight, especially in those camps established to aid the

63 “Es wollt ein Mädchen früh aufsteh’n” (Stuttgart: Verlag Grieshaber & Säuberlich), postcard.
64 Knopp, pp. 167–68.
war effort. The control over young girls stationed at these was, he con­
cluded, “considerably less” than the Reich Labor Service camps.65

The threats were all the more serious if the girls were far away from
home. In addition, to be effective, the leader of a labor camp had to
provide a dynamic and positive example to the youths residing there.
This was not always the case. The director of a girl’s labor camp near
Augsburg, for example, was dismissed in March 1941, after “a traffic
developed between the girl’s labor camp and the boys from the sur­
rounding area that led into the beds of the girls.” Many of the teens were
sent home. The concerns of the local populace were not assuaged, and
only two months later, with a new staff, relationships with local boys had
again developed. At this point, the police intervened.66

A particularly “lively traffic” between girls in work camps and local
men developed when the camps were placed near military bases, or in
areas where foreign workers or POWs were stationed. In fact, illicit rela­
tions between young Germans of both sexes and foreigners were com­
mon, and they often became the source of outrage among local
residents. Although affairs had occurred before the outbreak of war, liai­
sions involving younger German girls and foreign workers had, in the
words of a policeman near Würzburg, “become uncomfortably notice­
able.”67

As the number of foreign workers and POWs sent to Germany grew,
the situation, in the views of officials and among the general public,
worsened. Reports of illicit relationships became common. In some in­
stances, the dealings were simply innocent acts of kindness directed to­
ward the foreigners. For example, two farm girls were arrested after
giving food to Polish POWs who worked with them. Young Germans
and foreigners often met at dances, and this caused considerable anxiety,
especially in rural areas. Girls in a village near Halle danced with Slovak
men, in spite of a ban. A police patrol in Munich uncovered in one bar
eighteen Bulgarian students, almost all of whom were with German
girls.68

65 “Auszug aus einem Bericht des GStA in Celle von 4 April 1942,” BAK R22/1176.
66 “Monatsbericht des Regierungspräsident Schwaben und Neuberg,” May 8, 1941, B
II, MAI06684; Knopp, p. 166; Brockman (n. 2 above), pp. 67–68.
67 Gendarmarieposten—Rötingen, “Betr.: Verhalten der Landdienstmädchen in La­
ger Aufstetten,” May 30, 1942, Staatsarchiv Würzburg (hereafter StAW), Gestapo­
68 Geheime Staatspolizei, “Betr.: Verboten Umgang mit Kriegsgefangenen,” October
26, 1942, StAW, Gestapo­akten, Vol. 15; Generalstaatsanwalt bei dem Kammergericht,
Betr.: Lage­bericht Berlin, February 1, 1940, BAK R22/3356; “Monatsbericht des Regier­
ungspräsident in Ansbach,” June 6, 1940, B II, MAI06678; Knopp (n. 35 above), p. 168;
“Betr.: Zunahme der Jugendverwahrlosung” (n. 36 above), p. 4.
Local authorities often expressed their concern about the incidence of sexual relationships between Germans and foreigners, which was viewed as a more serious and widespread problem than simply hanging out together. A Security Service report from July 8, 1940, noted that “in recent times the number of reports of undignified behavior of German girls with foreigners of other races has grown.”69 In an area of eastern Germany, officials spoke of “regular lovers’ dramas” that grew out of these relations. A nearby camp for civilian Polish workers was “frequently a point of attraction” for local girls. In one case, a fifteen-year-old girl and a friend went into a Polish POW camp near Halle where “they danced naked and had intercourse with several men.”70 In Glatz, a seventeen-year-old girl had sex with a Polish POW after he told her that Poland would win the war. As the war continued, reports of such relationships persisted. An official in Augsburg reported in March 1944 that “forbidden dealings with foreigners and POWs are still very common.” Most of these cases involved girls and young women who had had affairs with French or Serbian POWs.71

Such incidents were numerous. In Detmold, an eighteen-year-old girl was prosecuted in early 1945 for affairs with French POWs. At the same time, two school girls, ages fourteen and sixteen, came before a special court in Nuremberg because of their involvement with French POWs two years previously. In each case, the parents allegedly supported their youngsters’ relationships, telling them that by “marrying a Frenchman you won’t have as many children as with a German.” The mothers were also prosecuted. Elsewhere, school girls openly expressed their preference for French men because, as one put it, “they do it better.” Girls involved with foreigners were sometimes arrested by the Gestapo and frequently received severe jail sentences.72

While most of the cases of illicit relationships involved German females and foreign males, the employment in the Reich of women from other nations generated “an increasing amount of criticism among the


70 Knopp, pp. 168–69.

71 Ibid.

racially conscious members of the *Volks*-community.” And this led an official to complain in August, 1941, that the “conditions in this regard have recently become unbearable.” Now, he asserted, German boys and soldiers were involved with foreign women who worked in industry and agriculture. Women from France and Belgium sometimes alarmed the local populace with what was viewed as outrageous behavior. As a prosecutor in Stuttgart commented, these women were fresh and insulting to members of the German Girl’s League, and they spent a lot of time in cafes, movie houses, and bars. They also attracted the attention of many German men. Officials recognized that the large numbers of foreign women caused “many problems and abuses, particularly in sexual affairs,” because among these women were “many big city whores.”

Military personnel were criticized frequently for being “too close” to such women. An official in Renttingen expressed his outrage over the shameless behavior of soldiers who “smooch and kiss French women in broad daylight.” Couples met in any one of several bars that catered to foreign women. The situation in Renttingen became so serious that the local Nazi leader issued a statement to all those employing foreigners that intimate “relationships between German citizens and foreigners were sexually and morally unbearable.” He appealed openly to the “racial consciousness” and honor of the German males.

The “lively traffic” between French women and German men also led to protest in Ulm where some residents found the behavior outrageous. A Nazi Party member wrote that “as a veteran of the First World War, I can understand certain needs of the soldiers, but this could not justify the intimate relations between French women and German soldiers at home which were carried out in such a shameless fashion.” Some women corresponded with German soldiers, and one allegedly received letters regularly from four different enlisted men. Often this led to other problems—family arguments, unwanted pregnancies, venereal disease, or beatings. For example, in February 1941, a young Polish girl working on a farm near Würzburg met a German soldier and after some discussion took him back to her room. They engaged in sexual intercourse. When the farmer and two other men discovered the couple, they “threw the soldier to the floor and gave him an orderly beating,” it was reported.

74 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
The Gestapo arrested the girl who acknowledged in a statement to the police that she knew intimate relations with Germans would be severely punished.78

Some young German males had to face other problems as a result of their liaisons. On an outing near Stuttgart, three youths, all under eighteen years of age and a fourth over eighteen, met several French women. They arranged to meet in a ski cabin, and on several different occasions spent the night together. When the police investigated this case they found that two of the women had a venereal disease which they had passed to the boys. The police charged the three younger boys with curfew violations. No charges were levied against the oldest boy "because sexual intercourse with female foreign workers, even when they are citizens of an enemy state and a significant affront to the public is apparent, cannot be prosecuted."79

In fact, foreign women were seldom punished for sexual relations with German males, except if the women were Polish. German women were, however, regularly taken into custody, even for innocent acts of kindness toward foreigners. That a double standard was in operation caused resentment, especially because relationships between German males and foreign women were flaunted. "The bitterness and anger about these conditions is very large among all segments of the population," wrote an official in Ludwigsburg. Another more troublesome problem was the behavior of German teenage males who "actively sought contact with these women," going to bars where French women congregated. At night, these youths tried to gain entrance to their living quarters, and "sometimes the room would be literally under siege." Many of the youngsters found on the streets after curfew were boys with Belgian women. "They went for walks, and along the way had intercourse with them," complained an official in Ludwigsburg.80

Promiscuous behavior among German teenagers alarmed the rest of the population. Reports from throughout the Reich expressed the consternation of the local residents at the rampant decay and degeneration of adolescent morality. The public was outraged because this promiscuity, blatant and common, violated their own morals, and this steady decline presaged a moral decay that was extensive and threatening to Germany's future. The recognition of the need for a society of physically strong and morally fit youngsters remained widespread, and the behavior of many teenagers caused alarm. The war brought new problems, and increasingly it became clear that more than accepted morality was at

78Ibid.
79Generalstaatsanwalt, "Betrifft: Lagebericht" (n. 73 above).
stake. With the mounting promiscuity came other serious problems, such as venereal disease, illegitimacy, and abortions which also led to other serious criminal acts.\textsuperscript{81} Even more troublesome, however, was the matter of homosexuality among the youth.

**Teenage Homosexuality**

Few aspects of sexuality attracted as much attention from political leaders and law enforcement officials as did homosexuality, and the extent of that interest is most clearly demonstrated in the criminal statistics. Of all the recorded juvenile offenses, violation of §175 of the criminal code, sexual relations between members of the same sex, increased the fastest in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{82} Ranked twelfth in frequency of convictions in 1931, this offense climbed to the fifth position by the end of the decade, an increase of more than 500 percent. Data gathered by the local police forces and the Reich Statistical Agency revealed in hard numbers the dramatic rise in arrests and convictions of juveniles on charges of homosexual activity. Such changes were also reflected in reports issued by local judicial and Hitler Youth officials. Even though the total numbers remained small, teen homosexuality became a problem that political leaders, the Hitler Youth organization, and local police authorities could not ignore.\textsuperscript{83}

Shortly after coming to power in 1933, the Nazi government turned its attention to this issue. Already in 1934, the first year to reflect the interests and priorities of law enforcement professionals under the new


regime, convictions increased 14 percent, an indication that local authorities were pursuing this matter with additional intensity. Prosecutions of teens shot up by 47 percent from 1935 to 1936, in part reflecting the radical change in the criminal code, and within the overall figures which went from 4 percent in 1933, to 12 percent in 1936, and to 21 percent in 1937. As in most societies, these numbers—arrests and convictions for a particular offense—reflect the interest of Nazi political leaders and local law enforcement officials in eliminating what they viewed as an abhorrent lifestyle and abnormal behavior that posed a serious threat to society and the racial community. Most observers readily blamed the problem on the moral laxity of the Weimar Republic and the efforts made in the 1920s to decriminalize homosexuality.84

In the view of most police officers, members of the judiciary, Hitler Youth leaders, and local government officials, homosexuality was a repulsive and criminal act, one that led to serious social and political problems. They focused their attention largely on homosexual activity among males, and showed little interest in lesbians.85 Furthermore, the police were more concerned with cases involving an adult male and teenage boys than an adult male with young girls, because, as a Munich police officer commented in 1937, “the difference between the seduction of a virgin and leading a boy to homosexual relations is so great that every analogy has to be rejected.” The criminal code acknowledged this sentiment by making sexual relations with a female minor a misdemeanor and homosexual relations with a male teen a felony.86

Occasionally, interest in lesbian activity among teenagers would surface. Discussions on the revision of the criminal code included a close look at §175 and its application to lesbians. In 1938, Dr. Rudolf Klare, 


one of Nazi Germany’s leading authorities on homosexuality, called attention to this issue again by asserting that lesbians were as common as male homosexuals. Furthermore, he wrote, “it presents precisely the same dangers for the racial community and its inner values as does male homosexuality.” Klare was an isolated and extremist voice who tried to gain attention for what he viewed as a serious problem, which had emerged more prominently during the years of the Weimar Republic and with the beginnings of the women’s movement. Although in his opinion lesbian activity was “not genuine homosexuality,” he argued forcefully that it ought to become a punishable offense under the criminal code.

The concerns of Klare were echoed in a 1943 Hitler Youth pamphlet, guidelines for combating homosexuality within its ranks, which insisted that lesbian activity also had to be combated vigorously. This interest came late, and throughout the 1930s teenage girls were rarely prosecuted under §175. Judging from local reports, the incidence of lesbian acts seemed to have been much lower than homosexual relations among adolescent boys.

Male homosexuality was clearly more important in Nazi Germany because of the widely held belief, for many a conviction, that such relations threatened the very future of Germany, demographically and politically, and therefore racially. For the Third Reich to survive and for the society to be organized anew under racial guidelines, “the moral and physical health and endurance of the members of our Volk must be preserved,” wrote an official of the Hitler Youth. He added that the state had the responsibility to “protect the Volk, especially the youth, from immoral influences.” Each generation had, in his view, an obligation to the racial community “to maintain and propagate itself.” Therefore, male homosexuality had to be combated because the state “must destroy the enemies of the Volk who attempt to divert our most precious item, the youth, from their natural inclinations.” The belief that boys who engaged in any type of homosexual activity would lose interest in heterosexual relations was widespread.

In addition to the perceived racial threat presented by teen homosexuality, officials argued that it endangered the state politically. Homosexuals, it was widely believed among the Nazis, could be easily blackmailed.

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88 Ibid., pp. 14–17; on Rudolf Klare and his views, see Stümke and Finkler, pp. 222–34.
89 Reichsjugendführung, Sonderrichtlinien: Die Bekämpfung gleichgeschlechtlicher Verfehlungen im Rahmen der Jugenderziehung, June 1, 1943, BAK R22/1196, pp. 4–5.
Another common assumption was that they would use a position of authority to corrupt youngsters in their command, and in fact such offenses were not unknown in the ranks of the Hitler Youth. More serious was the presumption that when homosexuals gained positions of leadership or authority, they would assemble around them a clique of subordinates who were similarly inclined. Selection and promotion would be based not on merit but on "personal affection," and this would seriously harm the moral and political fabric of German society.

Furthermore, it was argued that homosexual activity eroded the established sense of loyalty to the Volk and to the state. "Homosexual ties, because they rest on the bonds of sexual relations, are stronger than the responsibility of honor owed to the Volk, to the state, and to the family," wrote the author of a pamphlet on combating homosexuality. Reflecting these homophobic prejudices, police pursuit of homosexuals had already intensified in 1933, as the arrest figures demonstrated. After the Nazis came to power, known hangouts and bars were watched more carefully and police patrolling of railway stations and public rest rooms became more frequent and deliberate. In addition, reports of homosexual experimentation in schools, boarding schools, religious schools, labor camps, and detention centers were investigated rigorously and prosecutions followed, especially if an adult male was involved. Along with the criminal police, the Gestapo pursued adult homosexuals who were blamed for leading youngsters astray.

The incidents investigated by the police varied widely in terms of their seriousness. Many of the adolescents arrested and prosecuted under §175 of the criminal code had been involved in nothing more than acts of teenage sexual experimentation as they explored their own sexuality. The fondling of a classmate or masturbating with another boy were not uncommon occurrences at boarding schools and the all male labor camps. As teenagers became more aware of their sexual maturation and as long as they were confined with members of their own sex, experimen-

91 Tetzlaff, p. 5; Arno Klönne, Jugend im Dritten Reich: Die Hitler-Jugend und ihre Gegner (Munich, 1982), pp. 205–6; Rempel, pp. 50–53, 85, 88–89; Karl Heinz Huber, Jugend Unterem Hakenkreuz (Frankfurt am Main, 1982), p. 270.
93 Reichsjugendführung, pp. 5–6.
tation was bound to occur. Still, a number of more serious incidents did come to the attention of the police, who uncovered cases involving more than twenty youngsters and adults. An additional threat was teenage male prostitution, widespread in the early 1930s and again during the early 1940s.

The arrest of youngsters on charges of engaging in homosexual acts remained common throughout the 1930s. Records from the Hitler Youth district near Wiesbaden, for example, reveal the frequency in that area. During the summer of 1936, police apprehended a half-dozen teens from a local school who admitted that they had often masturbated with one another. In the same local, police arrested a group of boys who had engaged in sexual relations with each other while on a camping trip. In another case, several teenagers at a Hitler Youth camp in Rehburg were caught masturbating each other and they were turned over to the police. In Offenbach, a fifteen-year-old boy was taken into custody in late 1937 for involvement in what local authorities called “numerous immoral acts” with fellow school pupils, all boys. These incidents had been going on for more than three years in the dormitory. In each case the charge was the same—violation of §175 of the criminal code. The frequency of such acts in dormitories led officials to the conclusion that simply living in an all male dorm might cause an otherwise normally inclined youth to turn to a classmate for sexual gratification.

**Some Explanations**

Either unwilling or unable to look more closely at the issue or think more deeply about teenage sexuality, local authorities remained concerned and perplexed. Some specialists—criminologists, child psychologists, and social workers—were, however, well versed in the literature on adolescent development and did conduct research into the sexual behavior of adolescents. These specialists tended to view teenage homosexual behavior as an inborn trait, as a manifestation of the youths’ coming to terms with their own sexuality—which often meant experimentation as they dealt with new impulses and desires, or as the consequence of having been led astray by an older male. Among the specialists, in contrast

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95 Rauscher, pp. 246, 250, 252.
96 Pörschman, p. 62; Klare (n. 83 above), p. 127; Behm, pp. 60–61; Reichsjugendführung, p. 6.
to party officials and Hitler Youth leaders, there was the widespread view that such activities were not necessarily proof that those involved were homosexuals, or that the sexual preference of these youths would never be in established and accepted channels. A few researchers writing in the 1930s did view homosexuality in racial terms and concocted theories explaining it as the result of racial mixing. 98 Most frequently, several criminologists and child psychologists maintained, the cramped living quarters, the lack of contact with members of the opposite sex, and a growing curiosity about sexual development led a male teen to other males for mutual gratification. The situation worsened when young men lived together in a dormitory for extended periods of time, as criminologists recognized that the awakening of sexual impulses during puberty was strong. Adolescent psychologists tended to be more tolerant than the police, and they also took a more reasoned and balanced approach. 99

Opinion on this issue differed among party officials, but virtually all viewed teenage homosexuality as a serious matter, a genuine threat to the racial fabric of German society. The vehemence and hostility of the rhetoric was set by Hitler and Himmler. According to a widely held opinion, teenage homosexual experimentation or activity of any kind was "simply the first step in the direction of unnatural perversities which can lead to serious consequences." 100 Police worried that the sexual preferences of adolescents would be distorted for life if they were aroused by a homosexual act at a time when the youth lacked contact with females and was thereby unable, as an official in the Hitler Youth expressed it, "to go the natural way." They hoped that after one such encounter most of the adolescents would resume normal sexual behavior. Many, it was feared, "remained stuck in homosexuality." Adolescent sexual experimentation could easily damage normal development and might well harm the youngster’s future dealings with women, it was argued. It could also easily lead to a "variety of perversities." 101

A number of officials shared this harsh view and insisted that the homosexual encounters identified at boarding schools and labor camps were abnormal, deviant acts that did not result from the close living quarters or from adolescent sexual experimentation. "In most cases,
these things were introduced into the school from the outside," wrote a Hitler Youth official who tried to explain away the problem. Instead, homosexual pupils, adults, or older teenagers who had exploited a position of authority were held responsible. Following this line of reasoning, the problem was allegedly particularly serious in boarding schools which had been established on the basis of "false world views or false leadership and educational principles." This thinly veiled attack was directed against Catholic schools, which were common in Germany and had high enrollments.

Hostility toward parochial schools was particularly strong and increasingly, Catholic boarding schools were identified openly as institutions dangerous to the normal and healthy sexual development of teens. At these schools, it was maintained, youngsters were exposed to "false teachings," and unnatural sexual ideals. "For in these institutions the youngsters are instilled with the ideal that monks are the highest type of humanity," wrote a Hitler Youth official. "The idealization of an unnatural life style leads to homosexual behavior which is so very common in the Catholic cloister schools."

Police officers and party leaders were keenly interested in incidents of homosexuality that took place at Catholic schools, especially if a priest or a member of the clergy was involved. Such incidents received considerable attention in the press as the regime used them to discredit the Catholic church and its schools. According to party propaganda, priests and monks regularly seduced boys in their care. Arrests and prosecutions on trumped up charges were not uncommon. In one case, a sixteen-year-old pupil was arrested for having been, as the Nazis viewed the incident, victimized by a monk at a cloister school near Munich. The youngster then had sexual relations with a number of other boys at the school. The situation led a court officer to conclude that "the youth's statement clearly showed the sad moral conditions existing at Cloister Scheidegg."

During the summer of 1935, a Saarbrücken court prosecuted a case that fed party propaganda and hysterical reaction to incidents of homosexual behavior. The case involved a thirty-one-year-old Catholic chaplain who was accused of engaging in sexual relations with at least a dozen boys. Police maintained that during the six months prior to his arrest, the chaplain had masturbated a number of children. The trial received a

102 Knopp, p. 95.
103 Ibid., pp. 95–96.
104 Ibid.
Pursuit and Punishment

Regardless of where the homosexual incidents involving teenagers were reported, the police began a rigorous investigation immediately, interrogating subjects, questioning friends, and searching for the names of others who had been involved. Frequently, they uncovered a web of alleged homosexual activities that involved a large number of teens, reinforcing the popular stereotype that it “spread like an epidemic.” When such a group was identified at a school, for example, all of the pupils implicated were expelled. Occasionally, they received prison terms, but these were characteristically short. A Hitler Youth official defended the moderate sentences handed out, and he maintained that the fact that the teenagers had been taken into custody and shown the seriousness of their deeds was sufficient to deter them from such behavior in the future.

Throughout the 1930s, incidents of homosexual experimentation at schools and labor camps were neither isolated nor exceptional. Nine pupils were dismissed from a school in late 1937 near Amberg after authorities uncovered their participation in homosexual activities. Police in other Bavarian communities continued their intensive investigations throughout the decade, identifying similar behavior in a number of schools. Near Ansbach, for example, the situation at a home for boys was viewed as being so serious that the Nazi Welfare Organization took over its administration in order to “prevent further moral damage.”

Along with boarding schools, summer and labor camps were frequently the sites of homosexual activities and experimentation among teenagers. Officials in Ansbach, for example, closed a camp that was operated by a Protestant youth organization after a seventeen-year-old boy was observed having intercourse with another thirteen years old. The older youth was described in a governmental report as “completely morally depraved,” and he had already been thrown out of the Hitler Youth because of an affair with a “disgusting, degenerate woman.”

After the outbreak of war in 1939, new cases of teenage homosexual-

107 Reichsjugendführung (n. 89 above), p. 6; Knopp, pp. 95–96.
ity continued to surface, but judging from local governmental reports and police data, the incidents were reported or detected less frequently. For example, in 1942 police took into custody four boys from a home near Würzburg who had been engaging in homosexual relations for some time. Near Augsburg, police arrested five teenagers at a dormitory for young apprentices in December, 1944, on the same charge. Such incidents were noted only occasionally during the war years in the monthly governmental reports.\(^{110}\)

Throughout the 1930s, most alarming to local law enforcement officials was the large number of youngsters who appeared to have been involved in many of the cases. Often, what began as an investigation into the activities of perhaps only a handful of teenagers expanded to include several dozen youngsters and adults. The police actively pursued such cases, determined to track down as many participants as possible. For example, in a village near Wiesbaden, police arrested a sixteen-year-old, described as “burdened by hereditary depravity,” who had allegedly engaged in homosexual acts with more than forty other youngsters. A case involving a larger number of children was uncovered in Eichstatt in 1938 when police arraigned 120 boys, ages eight to eighteen, for what was termed “moral offenses of the most serious kind.” A number of the youths were prosecuted, and during the trial it was revealed that at least fifty-three of them had engaged in illegal homosexual behavior for more than two years. The criminal acts had taken place at school, even in the classroom when the teacher stepped out. Almost all of the teenagers had engaged in oral sex and anal intercourse. The punishment of the boys was, however, light; most received jail sentences of between ten days and three months. Some were placed on probation.\(^{111}\)

Typically, those incidents involving the largest number of participants were found among groups of youngsters who had been engaging in homosexual activity for several years or longer. Early in 1939, eleven boys were indicted in Kitzingen for having taken part in an estimated 350–400 homosexual acts over a five-year period.\(^{112}\) The fact that such groups could remain active for so long suggests that adolescents in Nazi Germany were responsive to such behavior, just as they had been during the years of the Weimar Republic, and that sexual experimentation remained

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112 Knopp, pp. 98–99.
common. New participants were easily identified. The longevity also suggests that the intensity of police pursuit varied, especially within different parts of the Reich.\footnote{Jellonnek, “Staatspolizeiliche Fahndungs-methoden” (n. 92 above), pp. 343–56.}

Reports of similar incidents came from a number of communities. In Helgoland, for example, police began in 1938 the investigation of a case that came to include forty-seven teenage boys and twenty-seven adult males. The homosexual acts had allegedly been taking place for more than a decade, with other youngsters continuously introduced, usually by friends or classmates.\footnote{Knopp, pp. 98–99.} While most of the cases included adults and minors, individual adult males were sometimes arrested after having had sexual relations with a large number of boys. For example, police took into custody a thirty-one-year-old barber who, according to a newspaper account, had over the course of eight years engaged in “all types of unnatural sexual acts with at least seventy teenagers.”\footnote{“Strafen für Verführung Jugendlicher,” Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, Berlin, January 12, 1940.}

In Regensburg, police broke up another large group of homosexuals in 1938, thereby ending a decade of its activity. A steady stream of new and young participants made its longevity possible, with boys introducing friends to the group. Police concluded that such behavior explained why “this type of homosexual offense spreads like a disease that is not found in other criminal acts.”\footnote{“Monatsbericht,” Regensburg, August 8, 1938, BII, MA106673, p. 13.} As more cases involving large numbers of youngsters were detected, police grew even more alarmed. They had long held the view that such behavior posed a serious threat to the youth, and in line with these perceptions, the extent of the problem was apparently greater than previously believed. Furthermore, the police acknowledged that a number of homosexual groups remained at large because detection was often difficult. Such incidents simply served to feed the prejudices and fears of the police.\footnote{Behm (n. 13 above), p. 60; Knopp, pp. 94–95.}

Throughout the 1930s, the number of adult males that continued to be arrested on charges of “unnatural,” that is, homosexual, relations with minors, surged, largely because of the 1935 changes in the law, thereby reinforcing a widely held view among the police and party officials that incidents of homosexual behavior among juveniles could largely be attributed to a sinister influence. In 1938 and 1939, for example, the figure surpassed the 7,400 mark with more than 5,000 arrests coming during the first half of 1939. These figures include only those detected, arrested, and convicted under §175 of the criminal code. Officials con-
continued to recognize that the problem was much greater than the conviction rate indicated.\textsuperscript{118}

During the course of the investigations of what the police termed homosexual cliques, they often uncovered at the center either an older adolescent, an employer, a teacher, or other male figure of authority. For example, a wave of teenage homosexual offenses reported in Bavaria during the summer of 1936 had allegedly been generated by young military recruits. The young men had been dismissed from the army and sent home because of homosexual acts. There, they continued to pursue boys from their home community.\textsuperscript{119}

Officials determined that some teachers had engaged in homosexual relations with pupils and the number of youngsters involved was frequently large. For example, an elementary school teacher arrested in 1937 had had sexual relations with more than fifty pupils over a four-year span, and forty-one of these were identified as members of the Hitler Youth. A prominent member of a homosexual clique broken up in 1938 was a teacher who had repeatedly engaged in sexual relations with male pupils. He typically invited the youngsters to his home for what he termed "pre-military examinations." During the course of these he would touch and eventually have intimate relations with the juveniles. In another case, the chaplain at a cloister school in Neuss was arrested for having engaged in sexual relations with more than seventy pupils over several years.\textsuperscript{120}

\textbf{Teenage Male Prostitution}

Another serious aspect of the teen homosexual issue was the enduring problem of teenage male prostitution. While precise figures are lacking, police did view it as widespread and serious. Their number appeared to have increased rapidly during the early 1930s, because of the unemployment and social disruption of the Depression.\textsuperscript{121} After the Nazis came to power in 1933, the new regime initiated a vigorous campaign against teenage prostitution, and an attempt was made to remove these young males from the streets. The police did achieve some initial successes, and

\textsuperscript{119} "Monatsbericht des Regierungspräsident von Oberbayern," Munich, October 9, 1936, BII, MA106670, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{120} Knopp, p. 201.
\textsuperscript{121} Behm, p. 61.
one official asserted that the problem had in fact "disappeared quickly." A short time later, however, teenage male prostitutes could still be found in most of the larger cities, and they continued to loiter near railway stations, public rest rooms, and known hangouts.\textsuperscript{122}

Prostitution was a means for some male teenagers to get easy money as they quickly recognized that some older men would pay generously for immoral services. These youngsters were characteristically introduced to this illicit trade by a friend or older boy who boasted of the easy money. Often, they were youngsters who had fled from a work camp. Pimps also looked for runaway boys who might be persuaded or pressured into working for them. In spite of the ongoing police crackdown, the number of male prostitutes was large enough to cause widespread concern throughout the 1930s.\textsuperscript{123}

The problem remained particularly serious in the larger cities, and Hamburg, long known for its night life and sailors' quarter, was a major center. Officials in Hamburg voiced their worries about teenage homosexuality and prostitution. The danger for boys, they maintained, was particularly great in the inner city and near St. Pauli, areas where more than a third of the city's youth lived.\textsuperscript{124} Hans Kruse, who worked for the local youth agency in Hamburg, maintained that youngsters from the inner city were frequently exposed to adult homosexuals who offered them money in return for their participation in a homosexual act. Some teenagers took up casual prostitution in order to gain extra pocket money, and Hamburg attracted individuals interested in all types of sexual activity. At night, young male prostitutes could be seen on the streets plying their trade. Their number alarmed the authorities who feared they would become professionals and thereby be irrevocably committed to a lifetime of prostitution and crime. Further, such youths would, the argument ran, also be lost from the racial community and would never contribute to it in any fashion.\textsuperscript{125}

Youths who engaged in prostitution also presented authorities with a serious health problem. As their numbers increased so, too, did the incidence of sexually transmitted disease. In response, Hamburg's officials


\textsuperscript{123}Behm, p. 61; Rauscher (n. 82 above), p. 252; Knopp, pp. 97–98; Lassen (n. 84 above), pp. 247–48.


\textsuperscript{125}Kruse, p. 95; Reichsjugendführung (n. 89 above), pp. 5–6; Jellonnek, \textit{Homosexuelle} (n. 97 above), pp. 299–302.
called for stern measures to combat and eradicate male prostitution, insisting that “all social, legal and police means must be used.” The punishments had to be harsh enough to act as a deterrent, and hardened teen prostitutes had to be removed from the streets. Furthermore, most of these youngsters, it was alleged, “had not only a faulty and inadequate upbringing, but they had inherited abnormalities as well.” They were described as “emotionally deprived, lacking in feeling, compulsive, ethically insensitive, and mentally deficient youngsters,” characteristics that both explained away the problem and made the youths undesirable and unwanted members of society. Such youngsters could, according to a memo on a set of guidelines issued to combat teen homosexuality, be subjected to psychotherapy or later be castrated.126

Courts, in turn, when dealing with teenage male prostitutes, often handed down tough sentences, intended to serve as a warning and a deterrent. Terms of incarceration for a year or more were not uncommon. In Düsseldorf, for example, a sixteen-year-old boy, charged on various counts of prostitution, was convicted and sentenced to one year in jail. Police officials maintained that an intensification of the pursuit of these offenses and the harsher sentences from the courts did much to reduce the problem.127

A number of officials were not satisfied with the measures taken and remained convinced that teenage homosexuality and prostitution were out of control. To deal with the situation more effectively, Heinrich Himmler, Reichführer SS, ordered the establishment of the Reich Center to Combat Homosexuality and Abortion in October 1936. It served as a clearinghouse for information, recording arrests and conviction data for the entire country in an effort to thoroughly and fully document the extent of these problems. Separate card files dealt with teenage male prostitutes and pedophiles.128 In 1937, the number of minors arrested for violation of §175 of the criminal code was 800. The figure declined the following year, dipping to 587, and in 1939 to 300. Shortly after the outbreak of the war, police and Gestapo launched a major effort against homosexuals and male prostitutes. A raid carried out in Düsseldorf net-

127 Knopp (n. 35 above), pp. 93 and 97–98. “Meldungen zur Bestrafung” (n. 94 above), pp. 4076, 4079.
128 Grau (n. 82 above), pp. 139–44; Schoppmann (n. 82 above), pp. 186–204.
ted a large number of teen prostitutes. The police also attempted to arrest the pimps who made male prostitution a viable and enduring enterprise. 129

It was the pimps who frequently provided the youngsters with a place to live and customers, and many had themselves started out as teen prostitutes. They later turned to pimping after becoming too old for the preferences of many customers or they recognized the opportunity to earn more money. In just one of the cases that went to trial as a result of the September 1939 police raids in Düsseldorf, the district attorney noted sixty-two incidents of blackmail and theft and nine incidents of homosexual prostitution. This was not unusual. The defendants in other cases were arraigned on 237 counts of robbery and 186 counts of blackmail. These types of cases fueled the popular belief that male prostitution invariably led to a host of other criminal offenses. 130

The Düsseldorf raids were among the last of the large scale efforts to curb teen male prostitution. The number of arrests did remain low during the early 1940s, with only a few isolated incidents recorded. In 1939, the data collected by the Reich Statistical Office for violations of §175 of the criminal code fell by 29 percent in just one year. In 1940, the number dipped another 38 percent. Arrests, however, continued to generate local attention, especially in smaller communities. 131 In Augsburg, for example, a seventeen-year-old boy was arrested and charged with two counts of unnatural sexual acts that had allegedly occurred in the family bathtub. The arrest of the son of the mayor of a small village on the Chimsee sparked a great deal of local attention when it was reported that he had engaged in homosexual acts with at least a dozen other boys. 132

Although the criminal statistics were at first glance encouraging, most observers recognized that for the war years the figures did not accurately record the number of violations of §175 of the criminal code. The depleted manpower of local police forces, their ranks shrunk by conscription, meant that the police had to be more selective in the deployment of their limited resources. In most cities, foot patrols were reduced in number and throughout the Reich the police focused on vio-

129 Lassen, p. 226; Knopp, pp. 93, 97–98.
130 Knopp, pp. 93, 97–98; “H. K.,” Düsseldorf, Hauptstaatsarchiv, Gestapoakten 34, 682.
131 Knopp, p. 89; “Entwicklung der Jugendkriminalität . . . 1942” (n. 118 above), table I.
lent crime and property offenses. Many violations of the criminal code were ignored, not reported, or not investigated thoroughly.\textsuperscript{133}

**Homosexuality and the Military**

Another factor that played a role in the drop in arrests and convictions under §175 of the criminal code was the induction of large numbers of young men into the armed forces. They were therefore no longer subject to the jurisdiction of civilian courts. More severe than their civilian counterparts, military courts came down hard on homosexual offenders. Sentences of several years’ imprisonment or even the death penalty were not unheard of. Within the armed forces the number of prosecutions was, in fact, large, averaging between twenty to thirty a week for the duration of the war. This reflected the extent of the problem and the determination of military leaders to eliminate homosexuality from the ranks.\textsuperscript{134}

While the average number of prosecutions for the war years remained high within the military, some commanders were not particularly concerned with the problem, at least at the start of the conflict. During the early years, commanders tended to overlook incidents of homosexual activity, particularly among the younger members of the ranks. The offenses occurred most frequently after the soldier returned from leave, an observation that prompted an army physician to conclude that the “increased sexual demands of the time” were responsible. The adjustment to the celibacy of barracks life, particularly in the occupied areas of eastern Europe where fraternization was strictly forbidden, was apparently difficult. However, as long as the soldier continued to do his job in a satisfactory manner, an indiscretion might be overlooked because those involved were typically “otherwise good and useful soldiers.”\textsuperscript{135}

As the war continued, the demand for harsher punishments grew among the highest echelons of Nazi leadership, with Hitler and Himmler lashing out against any homosexual activity and calling for the death penalty in some instances. Homosexuality among young men was now viewed as an even more serious threat to the moral and political life of Nazi Germany, and its leaders were determined to eliminate it. The concerns of Hitler and Himmler became state policy and prosecutions increased and sentences became longer.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{133}Meyer (n. 13 above), pp. 24–28.
\textsuperscript{135}“Meldungen zur Bestraffung” (n. 94 above).
\textsuperscript{136}“Erlaß des Führers,” “Betr.: Erlaß des Führers” (n. 100 above); “Der Führer über die Pest der Homosexualität in Wehrmacht und Partei, Aktenvermerk aus dem Führer-
The Wehrmacht came to combat homosexuality within its ranks vigorously. Leaders of the military remained sensitive to public opinion, wishing to preserve its image as a tough, effective fighting force. If the extent of homosexuality within the armed forces became widely known, if knowledge of the prosecutions spread among the general public, if it were picked up by Allied propaganda, it was believed that the reputation of the military would suffer. As a result, officials had to proceed with caution. When new guidelines were issued by the Reich Youth Leadership in 1943, the Wehrmacht requested only eighteen copies. It was, as one military commander explained, “concern with undesired foreign propaganda” that forced them to keep efforts secret and on as small a scale as possible.\textsuperscript{137}

The preoccupation with secrecy was widespread, especially when dealing with incidents of alleged homosexual behavior. Officials in the Hitler Youth organization and local administrators anxiously discussed the distribution of material to combat the problem of teenage homosexuality. At a conference held in November 1942, the author of a pamphlet entitled “Combating Homosexual Offenses in the Area of Youth Affairs” spoke out against the widespread distribution of the guidelines. It was classified “for official use only” and “strictly confidential,” and he argued that it had to remain restricted. The number of those familiar with its contents therefore remained small, with only 5,000 copies distributed throughout the Reich. The intention was that a single copy be sent to Hitler Youth dormitories where the director alone would read and act on its recommendations. Some officials advocated the distribution of an abridged version to a wider audience.\textsuperscript{138}

The intense concern with secrecy was understandable. By the early 1940s the extent of homosexual behavior among teenage males was recognized. It was widespread and occurred at what many viewed as an alarming rate. While a large number of the incidents involved relatively innocent acts, usually manifestations of adolescent sexual curiosity and experimentation, most officials could not view it in terms of the process of maturation, which sometimes did result in such behavior. They remained firmly wedded to popular prejudices, conservative moral values, and the racial ideology championed by the Nazi regime. Local party leaders and law enforcement officials were convinced that orderly and normal youths would not engage in what they viewed as degenerate, re-

\textsuperscript{137} Deutscher Gemeindetag (n. 126 above).
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
pulsive, and unnatural acts. And they believed that such experimentation would lead the teenager to a lifetime of homosexuality.

Officials in Nazi Germany were also unable to recognize that much of the regime’s ideology, with its emphasis on male strengths and features, which while denigrating females, encouraged the maturing adolescent to focus on the beauty of the male personality and body. Females were termed weak and soft, fit only to be mothers. Male virtues and strengths were those to be admired and emulated. Furthermore, large numbers of male teenagers were placed together in dormitories or labor camp barracks, often supervised by someone not much older, and without any contact with members of the opposite sex. For many it was a short step to homosexual experimentation.

**Conclusion**

When the Hitler regime came to power in 1933 it promised far-reaching political changes and a new commitment to traditional values. The Nazis blamed the Weimar Republic for what many viewed as the deep-seated decay in social and moral life, a poison that had shaken and even threatened political life. Teen sexuality became an issue of particular importance, because the new Germany was to be a society based on race and the youth were the key to the future. Sexual behavior took on political significance, and healthy youngsters, guided by traditional bourgeois values and morality, were viewed as essential to the future of German society and the racial community. It was widely maintained that the well-being of youth guaranteed both the health of the nation and its ongoing racial purity. The moral revolution promised by the Nazis in 1933 turned out, in some ways, to be other than expected. To many, it seemed clear that teenage morality continued to deteriorate. Sometimes this came as a direct, if not intended, consequence of Nazi policy. When officials attempted to control and regulate this behavior, they encountered more trouble. Police actions to curb the problem simply led to an increase in the number of arrests and prosecutions, and the statistics reflect more accurately the intensity of police pursuit than the true incidence of moral offenses. In short, the leaders of Nazi Germany, its local authorities, criminologists, and the police, had seriously overestimated the regime’s ability to shape teenage behavior and the willingness of teens to adopt their values.

Teenage homosexuality presented the authorities with a compelling and urgent problem. In the prevailing view homosexuality was not only a violation of the criminal code but also an act of treason to the racial community, a deliberate effort to undermine its strengths and to sabotage the drive to create a racial state. This crime, and the revisions to the
criminal code that expanded the coverage of §175 radically, was all too reminiscent of the years of the despised Weimar Republic when morality allegedly disintegrated and Germany was seriously weakened as a consequence.\footnote{Klare, "Hoheitsträger" (n. 84 above), pt. 2, p. 17.} Teenage homosexuality was a highly charged emotional issue. Most of the leaders and police found it offensive and therefore lacked understanding or concern. Those who engaged in such behavior, regardless of age or circumstances, were viewed as morally deficient and therefore they had to be punished. Such individuals had to be weeded out of the racial community, especially adults who were viewed as the culprits in luring many innocent teens into homosexual experiences.

Homosexual experimentation and activity among teenagers was widespread and therefore viewed as a grave threat to the well-being of the racial state. Officials remained captives of their own prejudices as homophobia became state policy, and they dared not acknowledge openly the extent of homosexual activity for fear of providing fuel for anti-Nazi propaganda abroad. The problem had to remain a secret, and remedial measures, especially those targeting the youth, had to be hidden, particularly during the war. By failing to face the issue directly, officials were destined to limited successes, in spite of occasional vigorous efforts and ruthless repression, in the control of teenage homosexuality. The importance of ideological dogma and the compelling drive to create a racial state overshadowed all practical questions and thwarted efforts to deal with the varieties of teenage sexual behavior. Further thwarting official efforts to deal with teen sexuality were traditional bourgeois values, which caused officials to exaggerate the extent and seriousness of illicit behavior, both heterosexual and homosexual. They frequently overreacted to incidents of sexual experimentation, and the exaggerated accounts further document their inability to deal with youthful excesses.

Teenage sexuality in Nazi Germany remained a matter of concern for political leaders and law enforcement professionals, an issue they fully expected to resolve to their expectations but one that continued to defy their efforts. During the prewar years, the regime firmly believed that its policies toward the youth, its efforts to rally the youngsters of the nation behind National Socialism, would invariably lead to an improvement in behavior and morality. The ideals of Nazism, it was held, would speak to the youth who in turn would recognize their importance for the future of the Nazi state. No concerted policy emerged in terms of providing positive models of sexuality and moral behavior for the youth. To be sure, a number of studies into teenage sexuality were launched, and a more intense police pursuit of some offenses was undertaken. These efforts did little other than to identify that a problem existed, that teenag-
ers continued to behave as they had for decades previously. Official rhetoric and calls for a racially pure Germany found resonance among the youth, but not always as expected. As arrest figures and reports from local officials throughout Germany document, teen behavior did not improve, and the racial policies led a number of youths to further sexual experimentation.

The situation worsened during the war. The initial drop in moral offenses, expected by most criminologists and law enforcement professionals as the overall crime rate fell, was short lived. Many came to recognize the causes of the precipitous decline in teenage sexuality and correctly identified factors associated with the war as responsible. But officials could do little other than observe and comment. Although some legislative changes came during the war—for example, the introduction of Youth Arrest and the stiffening of penalties for serious offenses—the response of leaders throughout Nazi Germany remained largely the same—they voiced outrage and showed a gross lack of understanding of teenage behavior because the youth were just not willing to follow the policies designed by the elder generation.